



Professional Booksellers School Basic Bookselling Course Spring 2026



Class Days: Ten Tuesdays, March 10 to May 19, 2026

Class Times: 7 pm ET/ 6 pm CT / 4 pm PT

Deans

Susan Kehoe, Owner, Browseabout Books, Rehoboth Beach, DE

Heather Herbert, Owner, Children's Book World, Haverford, PA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A Bookstore is only as good as its booksellers

Our Basic Bookselling Course is designed to welcome staff into a career in bookselling. It is intended as a primer for frontline booksellers with a year or less experience. The course introduces staff to life inside a bookstore and to the wider bookselling industry. Students will learn the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in bookselling, including: merchandising, hand selling, creating shelf talkers and other reviews, customer service, and creating displays that sell. The course uses a combination of lectures, in-class discussions, and hands-on work to support beginning booksellers learn how to help their stores succeed. Students will learn the vocabulary of bookselling, the range of resources available to support bookselling such as BINC, Netgalley, Bookshop.org, ABA and regional trade associations. They will also learn how to use Edelweiss to find book information and to post reviews.

PURPOSE: This course is designed for booksellers and new store owners who have been in the field for one year or less. Students must work in a bookstore, whether brick-and-mortar, pop-up, or mobile or be on the path toward opening a bookstore.

This course is not designed to teach bookstore finances, store management, or how to open a bookstore. *This course is not for someone who does not own a business, work in, or plan to work in the Independent Bookstore world.*



COURSE CONTENT OVERVIEW

We will introduce booksellers to:

- The Independent Bookstore industry, including the ABA, Regional Trade Associations, BINC, Edelweiss, Bookshop.org, Libro.fm, and more
- Daily life in bookstores, including different jobs and roles
- Why and how stores choose the books that they stock, and how these connect to a store's mission statement and/or customer base
- The traits, skills, and practices that make a frontline bookseller successful, including understanding where to find information on books, customer service skills, and how effective hand-selling works
- How a store's layout, inventory displays can drive and increase sales
- How bookstores operate financially, including margins, COGS, turns and sidelines

REQUIRED ACCESS AND RESOURCES:

- Access to the internet
- Primary email account to receive communications
- Access to Zoom to participate in classes
- A Discord account (an invitation to join the course's server will be emailed to you)

ATTENDANCE: Weekly online attendance is required for all participants. Students are allowed to miss a class or two, but if multiple weeks are missed by a student, it may impact the student's chance of certification. Because the course is only 10 consecutive weeks, missing any number of classes will impact your ability to succeed and comprehend the material. Please try to be on time to each class. Please reach out to the one of the Deans of the course if any issues arise throughout the class, and we will address them individually. All classes will be recorded for later review, if necessary.

COMMUNICATION: Information and announcements will be shared during each class, through Discord, and via email. Students may ask questions during the specified Q&A sections of each unit or ask questions in Discord. We ask that conversation in the Zoom chatbox be limited specifically to the course material and that side conversations happen in private or on Discord.

HOMEWORK: Each week students will be assigned homework specific to each class. In addition, students are expected to complete a shelftalker each week. These will be explained and modeled in Class 1.

Homework will be uploaded into Discord. Each student will have their own homework



channel, visible only to that student and the instructors. Homework for each class is due by the beginning of the following class. Instructors will respond to homework within a week. Homework turned in late will be responded to before the end of the course.

GRADING: Weekly assignments and the final project are Pass/Fail. Any failing grade will be provided feedback on how to bring the assignment up to the standard that instructors are seeking. The final project is required in order to receive certification. No work will be accepted after the final date announced in class.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Class 1 – March 10, 2026: Welcome & Introduction to the Industry

Class 2 – March 17, 2026: Tools of the Trade: Edelweiss and Ingram

Class 3 - March 24, 2026: Overview of Bookstore Finances

Class 4 - March 31, 2026: The Shape of the Store

Class 5 - April 7, 2026: Inventory & Curation

Class 6 - April 14, 2026: A Day in the Life of a Bookseller

Class 7 - April 21, 2026: Out of the Box Bookselling

Class 8 - April 28, 2026: Handselling is a Skill

Class 9 - May 5, 2026: Handselling Children's Books

Office Hour - May 12, 2026: Meet in small groups for help with final project

Class 10 - May 19, 2026: Student Presentations

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After the course, students will:

- Know how to write effective shelf-talkers
- Understand effective and confident hand-selling techniques.
- Be familiar with the bookstore industry, including ABA, Regional Trade Associations, and BINC.
- Know how to use Edelweiss to find book information and post reviews.



- Understand the traits, skills, and practices that make a bookseller successful.
- Have an overview of different jobs and roles inside the bookstore, and how frontline booksellers can support book buyers, merchandisers, and event staff.
- Understand how to build and sell from effective displays
- Have “back pocket” lists of recommended books for effective handselling

Professional Booksellers School, Inc.’s Code of Conduct

The Professional Booksellers School, Inc. (PBS) values the dignity of everyone with whom we interact. Our safety and anti-harassment policies are critical to ensuring that this core value guides how we speak and how we act. All participants in PBS courses and events are required to adhere to PBS's code of conduct, as described below. This includes booksellers, PBS staff, instructors, speakers/presenters, guests, donors, volunteers, and all affiliated students.

PBS is committed to a broad vision of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This includes providing a harassment-free experience for everyone, regardless of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), ability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in all of its activities or operations. We do not tolerate harassment, discrimination, or other disrespectful or unlawful behavior based on any of these characteristics. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for our students, staff, volunteers, instructors, donors, subcontractors, vendors, and clients.

Behaviors that violate this policy include, but are not limited to:

- Offensive verbal comments related to any protected category above
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Unwelcome propositions, attention, words, or conduct of a sexual nature
- Unwelcome virtual contact inside or outside of PBS settings
- Inappropriate or obscene jokes, remarks, or gestures
- Intimidation, stalking, or trolling
- Disrespect towards difference of opinion
- Sustained disruption of speakers, conversations, classes, or events
- Unauthorized screenshots, photography, or audio or video recording

PBS expects all participants in its programs to follow established rules throughout official classes, office hours, virtual platforms, and related social gatherings.

PBS takes any violation of this policy seriously. Accordingly, participants who violate this policy may, in the judgment and discretion of PBS, be asked to stop; may be expelled from a PBS class or event, without refund if applicable; may be prevented from

attending future PBS classes or events; may be banned from virtual platforms; and may have future PBS participation privileges revoked.



If you are being harassed, observe someone else being harassed, or have concerns about potential violations of this policy, please notify PBS staff immediately. PBS will take all appropriate action in response to protect anyone affected by violations of this policy.

Privacy Statement

For Stores

PBS asks for both public (address, etc) and private (square footage, POS, sales levels) information from stores who are enrolled. We ask for this information to help us understand and support students. The only public-facing information in our website directory is the store's name, address, contact information, and regional trade association. PBS uses both private and public information to analyze the effectiveness of our courses and our school, but reports only aggregate data. All other store information is protected and available only to PBS staff.

For Individuals

PBS asks for both public (bookstore, job title) and private (home address, demographic, years of experience) information from individuals who are members. The only public-facing information is the student's name, bookstore, job title, and earned certifications. PBS uses both private and public information to analyze the effectiveness of our courses and our school, but reports only aggregate data. All other information is protected and available only to PBS staff. The exception to this is for students who are receiving financial support or reimbursement from their regional association, with whom their enrollment, attendance, and certification status will be shared.

For Homework

We recognize that homework can contain personal or sensitive information. Student homework assignments are uploaded into a location available only to the individual student, PBS staff, and instructors, with the exception of projects delivered live in class. These projects are announced well in advance and student presentations are never recorded. All student homework for PBS is owned by the student, not PBS or the student's employer, and is confidential and protected. All shared, spoken, shown, submitted, and typed information is protected and confidential and not to be discussed, saved, or shared outside of applicable PBS classes, platforms, or events without express permission.

APPENDIX: To Learn more, we recommend reading (not required):



How to Resist Amazon and Why, Updated & Expanded: The Fight for Local Economics, Data Privacy, Fair Labor, Independent Bookstores and a People-Powered Future, Danny Caine, Microcosm Publishing, 2022

Danny Caine, owner of Raven Book Store in Lawrence, Kansas has been an outspoken critic of the seemingly unstoppable Goliath of the bookselling world: Amazon. In this book, he lays out the case for shifting our personal money and civic investment away from global corporate behemoths and to small, local, independent businesses.

How to Protect Bookstores and Why: The Present and Future of Bookselling, by Danny Caine, Microcosm Publishing, 2023

As bastions of culture, anchors of local retail districts, community gathering places, and the sources of new ideas, inspiration, and delight, bookstores have the capacity to save the world. Therefore, we need to protect them and the critical roles they fill in our communities. Danny Caine makes a compelling case for the power of small, local businesses in this thoughtful examination of the dynamic world of bookstores

The Art of Libromancy: On Selling Books and Reading Books in the Twenty-first Century, Josh Cook, Biblioasis, 2023

With Amazon's growing power in both bookselling and publishing, considering where and how we get our books is more important now than ever. The simple act of putting a book in a reader's hands—what booksellers call handselling—becomes a catalyst for an exploration of the moral, financial, and political pressures all indie bookstores face.

Literary Publishing in the Twenty-First Century edited by Travis Kurowski, Wayne Miller, and Kevin Prufer (Milkweed Editions)

Bringing together a wide range of perspectives—industry veterans and provocateurs, writers, editors, and digital mavericks—this collection reflects on the current situation of literary publishing, and provides a road map for the shifting geography of its future: How do editors and publishers adapt to this rapidly changing world? How are vibrant public communities in the Digital Age created and engaged? How can an industry traditionally dominated by white men become more diverse and inclusive?

Diary of a Bookseller, by Shaun Bythell, Melville House, 2017

The Diary of a Bookseller is Shaun Bythell's funny and fascinating memoir of a year in the life at the helm of The Bookshop, in the small village of Wigtown, Scotland—and of the delightfully odd locals, unusual staff, eccentric customers, and surreal buying trips that make up his life there as he struggles to build his business...and be polite.



Rebel Bookseller: Why Indie Bookstores Represent Everything You Want to Fight for from Free Speech to Buying Local to Building Communities, Andrew Laties, Seven Stories Press, 2011

Laties's book can be a rallying cry for everyone who wants to better understand how the rise of the big bookstore chains led irrevocably to their decline, and how even in the face of electronic readers from three of America's largest and most successful companies—Apple, Amazon, and Google—the movement to support locally owned independent stores, especially bookstores, is on the rise.

The Radical Bookstore: Counterspace for Social Movements, Kimberley Kinder, University of Minnesota Press, 2021

How does social change happen? It requires an identified problem, an impassioned and committed group, a catalyst, and a plan. In this deeply researched consideration of seventy-seven stores and establishments, Kimberley Kinder argues that activists also need autonomous space for organizing, and that these spaces are made, not found. She explores the remarkably enduring presence of radical bookstores in America and how they provide infrastructure for organizing—gathering places, retail offerings that draw new people into what she calls “counterspaces.”

In Praise of Good Bookstores by Jeff Deutsch, Princeton University Press, 2022

Do we need bookstores in the twenty-first century? If so, what makes a good one? In this beautifully written book, Jeff Deutsch—the director of Chicago's Seminary Co-op Bookstores, one of the finest bookstores in the world—pays loving tribute to one of our most important and endangered civic institutions. He considers how qualities like space, time, abundance, and community find expression in a good bookstore. Along the way, he also predicts—perhaps audaciously—a future in which the bookstore not only endures, but realizes its highest aspirations.

The Little Bookstore of Big Stone Gap: a memoir of friendship, community, and the uncommon pleasure of a good book, Wendy Welch. St. Martin's, 2013

Wendy Welch and her husband had always dreamed of owning a bookstore, so when they left their high-octane jobs for a simpler life in an Appalachian coal town, they seized an unexpected opportunity to pursue their dream. The only problems? A declining U.S. economy, a small town with no industry, and the advent of the e-book. They also had no idea how to run a bookstore. Against all odds, but with optimism, the help of their Virginian mountain community, and an abiding love for books, they succeeded in establishing more than a thriving business - they built a community.