

# Professional Booksellers School Inventory Management Course Overview 2026



[Carol Price](#), Dean

(add Dean's email to your safe sender list)

**Course Office Hours:**

by appointment in Discord

**Inventory Management 2026**

**Course Meeting Days:** Wednesdays

**Course Meeting Times:** 6pm to 8pm EST/5pm CST/4pm MST/3pm PST

**Course Length:** 1/7/26 - 5/13/26

+ Inventory Management System due 5/27/26

(2 video classes, 14 live classes, 4 bye weeks for Winter Institute, post-IBD, and two religious holidays)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** The Inventory Management Module is a module of The Professional Bookseller Certification Program of The Professional Booksellers School, Inc. The module is designed to teach owners/managers and/or store buyers how to efficiently select and order the new book inventory that will sell best for your particular store; how and when to order direct from publishers for better discounts; how to maintain cash flow via returns, turns, and budgets; how to integrate marketing and merchandising into your buying process so that your carefully selected inventory actually sells; and how to analyze and improve your buying process over time.

In addition to live classes and pre-and post-course video classes, students will also receive access to a comprehensive PDF textbook that supports your learning and includes the required homework assignments for certification-track students.

**CERTIFICATION VS AUDIT TRACKS:** Students may register for either the certification track or the audit track. There is no penalty for switching from one track to the other mid-way through the course.

The certification track has attendance, homework, and end-of-course Inventory Management System (IMS) requirements. The IMS is the main course takeaway, along with the textbook.

For the IMS, students will first choose how you will organize the contents of your inventory management system, if you don't already have a system in place. Then, throughout the course, with each homework assignment, students will be fine tuning the system, adding to it, reflecting on it, and organizing it. At the end of the course, students will be graded on the comprehensiveness of your IMS system, the narrative written on how and why your system works for you, and how much effort you've put into it. It must include, at the very least:

- 1) Calendar and task manager for buying appointments and other tasks
- 2) Returns procedures and schedule
- 3) Restocking procedures and schedule
- 4) Frontlist ordering procedures and schedules
- 5) Database for vendor info, promo info, sales rep contact details, etc.
- 6) Various documents for procedures, checklists, buying criteria, community demographics, templates, etc.

More information on the IMS requirements will be provided in the certification requirements in the textbook.

Students come in with varying levels of experience. An inventory management certificate demonstrates that no matter your experience level, you have mastered the course material and met the objectives below. Experienced buyers should realize they may already know much of the information covered here, yet we hope the course will provide them with new tips and techniques and help them fine-tune their existing systems. Newer buyers will generally need to allocate more time for homework than experienced buyers, and should use the class to ask questions, and to design and implement new systems.

The audit track is designed for store owners and experienced buyers interested in learning the finer points of inventory management practices, but who may not have the time or need to fulfill the certification requirements.

Audit students are welcome to complete any and all homework assignments if they wish instructor feedback on their work or to reinforce their learning.

**PREREQUISITES/COREQUISITES:** Participants must have a current membership with the American Booksellers Association (ABA) and/or their regional booksellers association. Preference is given to participants who are employed by or own a retail bookstore (this includes a mobile, decentralized, pocket, or pop-up shop) that has at least 25%+ new book inventory. The course will briefly touch on sidelines (gift items, used books, remainders), but its focus is on buying **new** book inventory. *This course is not intended for used-only, online-only, or reseller stores. This course is not for someone who does not own, work in, or plan to work in an independent bookselling business.*

**OBJECTIVES:** As a result of your full participation in all classes for this course along with completing the homework assignments successfully, you will be able to:

- Track your frontlist buying for budgeting purposes
- Consider different strategies when your constraints change (time vs money/space)
- Calculate inventory turns, as well as cost of goods sold for inventory purchased at different terms
- Create/document your store's special order promise, procedures, and workflow
- Demonstrate an understanding of your community, store identity, and demographics
- Set and/or document your store's buying criteria
- Establish and/or document communication procedures between the buyer and other staff/departments
- Centrally track vendor information (including publisher promotional offers and co-op policies) and your store's buying systems and procedures
- Determine the distributor for a small press
- Know the value of a good sales rep and how to request and work with one
- Tune your Ingram account settings to match your sales volume and to minimize freight charges
- Use key tools on iPage (search, selection lists, stock check) and import from Ingram into your POS, if possible
- Create a direct publisher frontlist order using an Edelweiss rep markup and import it into your POS, if possible
- Use Edelweiss features such as tags, filters, notes, and custom exports
- Understand industry children's book terms like F&G or middle grade

- Understand what the IndieNext list is and how to nominate a book you loved to it
- Price sidelines to achieve a desired profit margin
- Create schedules and criteria for restocking and returning
- Use Pubeasy to check publisher stock levels and/or place orders
- Determine the appropriate publisher to return books to
- Generate a publisher overstock return pull list and develop a returns schedule
- Understand the publisher promo and co-op system and how they affect a store's bottom line
- Set buying performance goals and know how to track and analyze your performance
- Be aware of the benefits of advanced tools like Pubnet and Edelweiss Analytics
- Personalize the techniques you learned in class to apply to your store's specific situation

#### **REQUIRED ACCESS AND RESOURCES:**

##### **For both tracks:**

- Able to access the internet
- Create a free account on the Professional Booksellers School Inc. web page at <http://professionalbooksellers.com>
- Have or create a primary email account to receive course communications from [hello@professionalbooksellers.com](mailto:hello@professionalbooksellers.com) (please add this email to your Safe Senders list)
- Able to use Zoom video conferencing software to participate actively in classes (be on screen, use the microphone)
- Able to view documents in PDF, Google Docs, and Excel or Google Sheets formats
- Have/be ready to create organizational system(s) for calendars, tracking deadlines, reminders, projects, and essential inventory manager information, in platform(s) of your choice
- Have/create a free [Discord](#) account to communicate with instructors and other students, download handouts, and attend office hour sessions
- Have time to join in weekly class and participate in breakout rooms. Class times are up to two hours, normally between 1 ½ hrs and 2 hrs

##### **For certification track:**

- Access to a desktop/laptop computer (Mac or PC); Mobile devices can be used to watch class, but a desktop or laptop is needed for certain homework assignments
- Access to an inventory management system that tracks individual inventory and supports purchase orders/receiving (Anthology can provide test software if needed.)
- Access to an Ingram account with an iPage login with buying privileges and permission from your store owner/manager to place at least one real Ingram order (We can provide a test account if needed.)
- Schedule availability to attend at least 10 of the 14 classes live (Check class time in your time zone NOW. Classes will usually range between 1 ½ to 2 hours in length, but will not exceed two hours. Classes start promptly at the top of the hour as scheduled.)
- Have already, or have permission (if needed from owner/manager) to set up at least one account with a Big 5 publisher (Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Hachette, Simon & Schuster, or MPS) (Contact [eileen@professionalbooksellers.com](mailto:eileen@professionalbooksellers.com) if you need help setting up your first account.)

- Have already or be ready to set up the email address and password to an Edelweiss account linked to your store that has buying privileges enabled (If your store is not supportive, we can provide instructions on how to create a test account.)
- Have permission if needed and technical capability to import an Edelweiss or Ingram or Faire order into your POS system (you can void/delete it afterward if need be)
- Have or be ready to create a [Pubeasy](#) account (free) linked to your store and at least one of the store's Big 5 vendor accounts (including permission from your store owner/manager to establish this if not already in existence) (We can provide a test account if needed.)
- Have time in your schedule to spend an average of 2 hours per week on homework assignments and completing your course project
- Be familiar enough with Excel or Google Sheets to create a basic formula (e.g., multiply two different cells together), or be prepared to spend a bit of time to learn how to do this in order to complete certain assignments
- Have access to your store's owner/bookkeeper for certain homework assignments

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## CLASS DESCRIPTIONS

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**Pre-Course Introductory Video:** How to Successfully Complete the Inventory Management Module  
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**Watch the 30 minute Introductory Video**

We'll discuss the value of this course, our syllabus, and the importance of inventory management for profitable, successful stores; the Strategic Inventory Management **System** you'll create and be graded on as part of the course; the tools and mechanics of accessing class files and then turning in homework; best tips to get the most out of this online course; the expectations of the instructors, guest speakers, and participants.

**Please note:** Certification students who are not currently working as buyers but have aspirations to become buyers in the future may need to do some additional work before the course begins to gain access/create logins on the required elements that were outlined above in "Required Access/Resources."

**Pre-Course Homework (this is a lot, DO NOT WAIT until the day before live classes to begin):**

- ✓ Make sure that the email address you've provided to PBS dean and staff is the one where you'll be able to receive our weekly class emails.
- ✓ Make sure that the Edelweiss login email you've provided to PBS dean and staff is the correct one for you to access Edelweiss and that it is set up for you to have "buyer" permission. If you need help with this step or have not yet accessed Edelweiss before please contact the Dean immediately!
- ✓ All students should install the latest version of Zoom software on their computer and set up the course meetings, Zoom link, and office hours times on their calendar (with reminders). See the class schedule at the end of this document.
- ✓ Review the syllabus carefully to decide if you want to choose a "skip" class or not; be sure to

notify the Dean before the start of live classes which one you choose, if any, and why.

- ✓ Students who haven't used or signed up for Discord in the past should create a free account and review our handout on Discord, which will be provided prior to the start of class.
- ✓ Research (if you don't already use) various organizational apps and calendar systems that you could use to track buyer appointments, set up your returns schedule, and other projects; information essential to your work as a buyer such as detailed vendor info and promo codes, ways to track your projects and inventory management experiments etc. A list of possibilities (not comprehensive!) will be provided to you in lead-up to the beginning of the course but what you choose is totally up to you.
- ✓ Introduce yourself on Discord after joining the IM server (a time-sensitive joining link will be shared with you).
- ✓ Read Introductory chapters in textbook, review the glossary in the textbook, and review other resources as provided in Discord and on the PBS website student resource page.
- ✓ Bookmark PBS website, add Discord app to your task bar and set up notifications so you don't miss important communication.
- ✓ CONTACT THE DEAN if anything in the introductory material, video, or homework is not clear to you or if you have any difficulty completing these tasks.
- ✓ Read textbook chapter 1 before live class begins.

### **Live Class 1: Book Buyer Overview**

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This is an overview of the skills, systems and tools you will need to succeed as a book buyer. We will also cover some industry background material, including industry-specific terminology, the benefit of publisher reps, and standard operating procedures.

### **Live Class 2: Using Wholesalers & Ingram Tips & Tricks**

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Buying direct from publishers gives the best discounts, but nearly everyone in the industry also has an account with Ingram, the industry's largest wholesaler, or other wholesalers such as Bookazine. This class will cover their myriad offerings. We will also discuss how their tools can help you purchase frontlist, whether you decide to purchase directly through a wholesaler or via the publisher. Topics will include: selection lists, street smart vs street smart select, shipping minimums, etc.

### **Live Class 3: Special Order Workflow & Website Fulfillment**

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What is your customer special order promise and what procedures/systems do you have in place to deliver on it? Where, if anywhere, do you draw the line at free speech vs hate speech or other ethical issues? Are you fulfilling website orders and managing pre-order campaigns, which are a growing part of the business for many indies? This class will include information on two common website fulfillment options, Indiemerch, and Bookshop.org.

#### **Live Class 4: Buying Criteria**

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You can't stock everything. How should your store's mission and/or your community's demographics inform your buying? How do you decide what to buy or not? When do you have enough info to buy a title? Reduce decision fatigue, unconscious bias, etc. by creating buying criteria in advance and fine-tuning them over time.

#### **Live Class 5: Frontlist Buying**

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Buyers get the best discounts and margins by moving more and more frontlist buying directly to publishers. We will cover how to buy frontlist directly from publishers using Edelweiss in conjunction with a publisher rep, the most typical process for most stores. This class will include a short video presentation on Edelweiss by a company representative, and live Q&A with the rep.

#### **Live Class 6: Buying for Children**

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Children's buying is intimidating for some buyers and so easy for others that they constantly overbuy. We'll discuss why buying for children can be different than buying for adults, what kinds of information about children's books can help you better choose and sell them, how to buy for school bookfairs, and other important info to consider.

#### **Live Class 7: Building the Buzz with Customers & Staff**

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Why buy a book if you don't have a plan for how you are going to sell it? Who else in the store needs to take action on your buy to implement that plan by building the display, creating a social media post, or putting the book in the newsletter? How will you keep them informed efficiently (even if it's just yourself wearing a different hat)? Can you stack functions and create info/systems that work for both staff and customers?

#### **Live Class 8: Managing & Buying Non-Book Inventory**

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Many stores turn to higher-margin sidelines to lower their average COGS or create a specific ambiance for their store, but sidelines are often nonreturnable so buyers need to be thoughtful. We'll discuss the pros and cons of sidelines, the myriad types of products that bookstores also sell, how to price nonreturnable product, how to handle special receiving and inventory issues related to sidelines, etc.

### **Live Class 9: Restocking Backlist**

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You can't perpetually carry every book you've ever stocked. How do you decide what to restock and what to let go? How do you decide whether to restock through a wholesaler or the publisher? Do you have a workflow process that maximizes your time and your discount? Do you have a system for placing your event orders in a timely fashion? Do you know the best process for placing event or B2B orders? This session will include a short video presentation on Pubeasy by MVB, the company that operates the Pubeasy and Pubnet services, which enable booksellers to efficiently place electronic orders directly with publishers, followed by live Q&A with company rep.

### **Live Class 10: Wrangling Returns**

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One of the benefits of being a book buyer is returnability. Is your store taking full advantage of that benefit? How do you decide what returns schedule will work best for your store? How do you determine where to send your returns? What is your target returns rate? We think it's important for buyers to be involved in the returns process so that you get insight into your mistakes as well as your successes.

### **Live Class 11: Buying Smarter**

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This whole course is focused on helping you buy smarter, but what does that mean? Everyone is buying with limits in place, whether that's a budget handed down by your boss, the limited number of hours in your workday, a tiny store, or a self-imposed goal of achieving a turns rate of 4 while maintaining a returns rate of less than 18%. How do you work around and within those limits? How do you know if you're doing a good job? We'll consider what you are learning over time as a book buyer and whether you are becoming more efficient and buying "smarter," looking at some data you can use to track to evaluate your work, and efficiencies you can use to save time and money.

### **Live Class 12: Understanding Book Buyer Math**

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We believe everyone in the book industry should know how to calculate Cost of Goods Sold and inventory turns, but as a buyer you absolutely have to master these concepts as they inform everyday decisions. Inventory is the biggest bookstore expense and COGS is one of the main drivers of store profitability and longevity. Cash flow is nearly as important as profitability and managing section space

and turns well can help keep your store off credit/shipping hold. The basic formulas for these calculations are very simple!

**Live Class 13: Taking Advantage of Publisher Promos & Co-Op**

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Are you taking advantage of the myriad publisher backlist promos to stock titles for your upcoming seasonal displays or backlist books for your upcoming author events at an extra discount? Once you have established publisher accounts for your frontlist buys, publisher promos and co-op are an added financial bonus that more stores should be taking advantage of. This is a brief overview of publisher promos and co-op and how they benefit your bottom line and might affect your buying decisions.

**Live Class 14: Budgeting for Buyers**

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A good buying budget can help you make informed decisions about curating your inventory, identify your growth opportunities and where you might be over- or under-spending, manage risk, and better control cash flow. It also helps you to know not only *what* to spend your money on, but *when* to spend it, which is just as important. Instead of thinking of budgeting in the traditional way of a line-by-line spreadsheet that accounts for every single dollar you spend, we like to think of it more as intentional spending. If you align your purchases with your inventory goals and track your spending to ensure it stays aligned, you're budgeting!

**Post-Course Wrap-Up Video: Inventory Management Systems**

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We'll cover the next steps to finish up your Inventory Management System to a level compatible with certification as well as your next steps as a buyer once the course is complete. We'll give suggestions for how you can begin integrating what you have learned into your daily work.