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President's Message

by Stephen Cribar



Committed Independents Can Change the Bookselling World

There are a lot of unknowns in the book industry these days—that we know for sure. All the same, earlier this month three out of four groundhogs saw their shadow, forecasting six more weeks of winter. By the time you read this there could be only a few weeks of winter weather left, whatever that means in your neck of the woods. Yet scientific studies have shown that groundhog predictions have a success rate of around 37-39% so we could still have an early spring. Such is the way with predictions.

That is why it's interesting to hear and read

All this is certainly why it's very important for us to get together and talk about the issues, the future, and our love of books.

about all the predictions regarding the future of the book and, of course, the future of bookstores. Okay, so Apple's iPad is now here and we will have to wait a while longer to see exactly how this gadget changes the publishing / reading landscape, but it's not all clear sailing in the digital world. There are already a couple of battles raging: Macmillan is fighting Amazon in an electronic pricing duel; Rupert Murdoch, whose company owns HarperCollins, has joined in discussions criticizing Amazon's e-book pricing process, saying it devalues the book; and of course there's always the Google battle.

Yet we have certainly seen better times. Here in Canada there has been some very bad news with McNally Robinson closing two stores, and the announcement that Vancouver's Duthies would close its doors after 53 years in business. But, as they say, when one door closes another opens. We will miss Richard Bachmann of A

Different Drummer Books in Burlington who recently retired, but longtime bookseller Ian Elliot has purchased the store. McNally Robinson also emerges as a stronger independent bookseller, and there are also some new bookstore openings and expansions to celebrate.

The Book Keeper in Sarnia, Ontario and Collected Works Books & Coffeebar in Ottawa have both expanded. Page 233 is a new book store in Amherstburg, Ontario and Of Swallows, Their Deeds & the Winter Below a new one in Toronto. There are also a number of rumours about other openings and expansions across the country. Come to think of it we should try to focus more on the good news, because there is good news out there. So if you have a good news story, please let us know.

There's no doubt that things are changing, and as booksellers, we'd be foolish to stand still, but where to start? All this is certainly why it's very important for us to get together and talk about the issues, the future, and our love of books.

As Margaret Mead once said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

A lot of work is going on behind the scenes to put things together but here's what we have so far:

CBA Annual Conference (May 28-30)
 SURVIVE, REVIVE & THRIVE: *Redefining Your Bookstore for Today's Marketplace*
 Delta Toronto Airport West Hotel

We've decided to move things out of downtown Toronto to help offset costs and to piggy back onto the Retail Council of Canada's conference:

STORE — Canada's Retail Conference (May 31–June 1)
 Toronto Congress Centre

More information on both conferences will be forthcoming, but we believe you will all be pleased with the venue and content come May. 