



*Friends of Curtis Memorial
Library*

Annual Report

November, 2021



Curtis Friends Annual Report
November 1, 2020-October 30, 2021

Twice-Told Tales bookstore opened in July of 2015 at its first location on Pleasant Street, Brunswick. In the fall of 2019, we moved to our current location at 200 Maine Street. The bookstore is operated by the Friends of Curtis Memorial Library with two goals: providing quality used books at reasonable prices to our community and financially supporting programs at Curtis Library.

The COVID pandemic continues to have an impact on our day-to-day operations. The store has remained open since our reopening in June of 2020 and we are continuing to follow recommended safety protocols (masks, sanitizing etc.) to protect our volunteers and customers. The COVID situation has prevented us from holding special events and sales, such as the Friends' Appreciation events. We hope, in the future, to be able to offer these events again. We thank our customers who have been fully cooperative with our safety protocols.

At our current location, 200 Maine Street, we became a more visible part of Brunswick's main shopping area. With this increased visibility, we have increased our customer base. In conjunction with the Downtown Association's Music on the Mall Summer Series in July and August we stayed open until 6:00 pm on Wednesday evenings. Late closing one day a week was a convenience for many customers so we continued this opportunity for later shopping into early October.

Areas of operation breakdown into the following divisions: Storefront, Volunteers, Sorting Room, Online Sales, and Publicity.

Storefront: a somewhat ambiguous term, is what is presented in the bookstore and the arrangement of the many hundreds of books to make the browsing experience maximally pleasant and efficient for customers. We pay special attention to the choice of books placed in the windows to draw various types of readers' attention as they walk or drive by.

The Storefront committee is responsible for shelf-space allocation; determining the categories to which books are assigned (sometimes more than one), the signage that identifies these categories, and deciding where physically the categories are shelved (always subject to the shifting amount and variety of book donations). Working with the volunteers who are responsible for the individual categories, we occasionally move or reassign physical spaces according to the extent of inventory and customer interest. For example, to expand the very popular category of Biography we moved Writing/Usage/Grammar to a newly available shelf. To make room for the new category of authors who write across disciplines we moved Business to empty shelves nearby. We occasionally introduce a new category, as with Vintage books.

Working with other committees, particularly the Publicity committee, the Storefront committee decides on Special Sales, Promotions and Pop-Ups, the timing of which is often a question of inventory and/or special events or holidays. The outdoor blue Sales Cart is both an eye-catching attraction to pedestrians and an effective means of promoting popular and prolific fiction and mystery and romance writers.

Special Sales or Promotions over the course of the past year were as follows:

November: As the pandemic settled in we offered 50% off on Armchair Traveling and Parenting and Teaching (as schools went to remote learning).

December: Offered 10% off Gift Certificates every Saturday in December.

January: In the spirit of optimism, 20% off all areas, all month.

February: Featured (regularly priced) titles in all categories related to Black History Month.

March: Featured (regularly priced) titles in all categories related to Women's History Month.

April: With return of spring, 50% off Gardening Books.

May: Due to over-supply Biographies and Memoirs 50% off all month. May 10-15 surprise Pop-Up Sale: All Fiction \$1.00

June: Three Pop-Up Sales. June 7-12 Cooking and Crafts \$1.00; June 18-19 Fathers' Day - any book with Father/Dad/Grandfather/Patriarch/Son/Daughter in the title \$1.00; June 28-July 3 CDs 50 cents

July: Debut of new and improved blue Summer Sale Cart of Prolific Authors (aka Beach Reads).

August: Teachers' Appreciation Sale. 50% off all children's, young adult, parenting and education books to educators including home schooling parents.

September: Two week 50% off one item to anyone who had read the TTT column in the weekly CML newsletter and knew to say the secret word. (Attempt to evaluate effectiveness of this particular piece of publicity)

October: Overflow Science Fiction replaces Beach Reads on Sale Cart, 50 cents each.

Ideally, Storefront actions should be invisible, with books and other items being found naturally and almost inevitably in their appropriate places. Therefore, we are always gratified to hear, from social media and customer comments, that TTT is extremely well-organized and an especially rewarding place to browse and shop.

Volunteers: We are extremely fortunate to have 41 capable and dedicated volunteers to manage the front of the store. We are open six hours per day, six days a week. Three volunteers fill each of the two shifts per day stocking shelves with new arrivals, helping customers find books they are searching for or suggesting good books for some new literary adventures. They also tote all the bags and boxes of donations from the front of the store all the way to the back where they are sorted and processed. Our volunteers' friendly spirit of helpfulness and enthusiasm for literature keeps our customers returning regularly.

Sorting Room: A dedicated crew of volunteers works in the sorting room evaluating donations, cleaning all books thoroughly, and sorting them by genre before they are shelved in the front of the store. The overflow books are shelved in the sorting room waiting until there is room for them on the storefront shelves. Books we cannot sell are often donated to other nonprofit organizations. The sorting room volunteers are a vital part of the store's operation although this part of the process is not often visible to customers.

Online sales make up a significant part of Twice-Told Tales revenue. The Online committee volunteers process donations of books, music CDs, and audio books, as well as list items, ship the sold items, and electronically track the process.

At times it is overwhelming to see donations pour into the store, but the fact of the matter is that donations are our lifeblood. Every donation is evaluated for condition, appropriateness, and saleability when it is received. Obvious items that are not listable online are moved onto the next phase of the process: cleaning and sorting. Books with ISBN's are electronically scanned and listing candidates identified. Older books without ISBNs are manually evaluated against the sites that sell books online. These books are then listed on either Amazon or ABE. The listing often consists of meeting or beating the price of existing similar items that are for sale. More esoteric items can take extra research both to evaluate them and then to describe them to potential buyers. All items we list must have a picture, either the stock image offered by the listing site or our own photo which we add to the listing. All listed items are then shelved in the online sales area. Occasionally visits are made to the homes of individuals in possession of a large number of potentially listable books.

The goal of listing items obviously is to sell them, so the whole online selling process is important. Packing items securely, shipping them in a timely manner, and providing tracking information to the buyer are essential parts of the process. Additionally, appropriate interactions with buyers, potential buyers, and the listing sites may also be necessary. Adhering to the best practices of bookselling adds to our reputation as dependable professionals in the trade.

Finally, we maintain an electronic inventory of every item we have ever listed online. When items are sold, this inventory is updated with the sale information. Monthly summaries of the new and sold listings are provided to the Curtis Friends Board of Directors.

Online Sales Highlights for Fiscal Year 2020-2021 (Oct-Sept):

New listings in the year: 2690 (2142 Amazon, 548 ABE) (130 Maine)

Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Bollingen Series, XX, 20 volumes with index, Amazon
Democracy and Leadership, by Irving Babbit, 1924, Amazon
Synopsis of the Lichens of New England, the Other Northern States, and British
America, 1848 inscribed first edition, ABE
The Dream Keeper and Other Poems, by Langston Hughes, first edition, 1932 first
printing, with illustrations by Helen Sewell, ABE

Sales in the year: 1342 (988 Amazon, 334 ABE, 19 store) (88 Maine)

Mark Twain, 18 volume set, 1896, beautiful red cloth boards with gold cornstalk MT monograms, 400+
word description, ABE, sold in 8 days!
A Passamaquoddy – Maliseet Dictionary, brand new in shrink wrap, large book, sent to Texas,
ABE, had been listed over for 3 years
Howard Hodgkin, the Complete Paintings, exquisite celebration of virtually all of Hodgkin's work,
ABE, sold in 2 months
Uncle Tom's Cabin, 1852, early UK edition, beautifully rebound in polished tan calf leather
incorporating portions of the original covers, gilt pages edges all around, another 400+ word
description, ABE, sold in a month and shipped to the UK

We sold 59 books that had only been listed for a day or less (46 Amazon, 13 ABE)

We sold 69 books that had been listed over four years ago (7 Amazon, 60 ABE, 2 in the store)

Foreign Destinations: Australia, Austria, Canada, Belgium, Brazil, China, Denmark, Finland, France,
Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Lithuania, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, New
Zealand, Norway, Puerto Rico, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland,
and United Kingdom

Other Interesting Sales:

- Synergetic 2, by R. Buckminster Fuller, small paperback in acceptable (poor) condition, Amazon, sold in 78 days
- Law, Legislation, and Liberty, volume 2, sold in two days including supplying requested photos to the buyer in the UK, Amazon, when volume 3 was listed a couple of days later, the same buyer bought it immediately
- Na Melo'o Kawa Kahiko, Ancient and Traditional Chants of Hawaii, Amazon, 169 days, sent to Japan
- Ararat, a first edition of poetry by Louise Gluck (Pulitzer and Nobel Prize winner) ABE, 18 days
- Maine Fishing Depth Maps, spiral bound, sold in a day. Amazon, there are various editions of these out-of-print books and they always sell
- East of the Sun and West of the Moon, beautifully illustrated children's book, ABE, took almost 4 years to sell, sent to Switzerland
- Visitors Guide to the Centennial Exhibition and Philadelphia, 5/10 to 11/10/1876, ABE, listed for over five years
- Catwings, by Ursula LeGuin, children's book, shipped to South Korea, Amazon, 7 days
- Insect Poisons, Allergens, and Other Invertebrate Venoms, negotiated sale, had been listed for 2 years
- Salish Indian Sweaters, ABE, 143 days
- Horton Hears a Who Pop-Up, Dr Seuss, Amazon, listed over a year ago
- Parsley, kids book by Ludwig Bemelmans (author of the Madeline books), 1955 reprint with no dust jacket, partially cut page, crayon marks, "priced to sell" (and it did!), third copy that we have sold, Amazon, 85 days
- Crochet for Barbie Doll, Amazon, a year
- Radio Times Guide to TV Comedy, Amazon, 6 months
- The Path That is Light, beautiful self-published book, 1910, 500+ word description including the history of the Druid Universalist religion, inscribed by assistant to the author and leader of the British religion to a leader of the American Universalists as part of a failed attempt to get money from them, ABE, 6 months
- Faithfully Charleston, spiral bound cookbook from St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Charleston, sold to someone in Charleston (surprise!), Amazon, 2 months
- Outlander, Diana Gabaldon, audio book on CD, Amazon, sold on the day it was listed
- History of Brunswick, sold in the store to a person who had requested it (the request was put upstairs on the shelf where the book would be shelved), sold to a woman who was brought up in the house that is now the Pejepscot Museum, sold in the store
- Minnesota Public Radio Presents Keepers: Morning Show Favorites, (audio CD), sent to Minnesota, Amazon, 3 months
- S. Petersen's Field Guide to Creatures of the Dreamlands, paperback, only acceptable (poor) condition, rough cover, edge wear, written in, almost didn't bother scanning it, would not have made it past our sorters, Amazon, 9 days
- World Split Apart, thin paperback of Solzhenitsyn's Harvard Commencement Address, Amazon, 9 days
- The Joy of Rhubarb, Amazon, 70 days
- Eros the Bittersweet (Canadian Literature), a book about romantic love, to a Jordanian prince in the Royal Palace, Amman, Jordan, Amazon, two months

Publicity: Finding ways to “get the word out” is what publicity is all about and we use a number of different methods to draw attention to Twice-Told Tales Quality Used Books.

Probably the most far-reaching means of publicity we have these days is electronic, including both social media and emails. A dedicated volunteer manages our social media, posting frequently on our Facebook and Google pages. We have been collecting great customer reviews on Google and have added many new Facebook followers this past year. One of our most popular posts of the year was our Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Read post for Earth Day reminding folks that when you donate or buy a book at Twice-Told Tales, not only are you giving these items new life but funds raised through the sale of these items go to support the purchase of new books at the Curtis Memorial Library. That created a nice positive ripple effect on Facebook and we added a number of new Facebook followers that week.

Another volunteer is the liaison with the library and writes the Twice-Told Tales articles that are included in the library’s weekly eBlast emails. People who read this column were treated to a 50% Off One Book special in early September with the eBlast only “Know the Secret Word” sale.

We maintain an email contact list and send out event and information emails to almost 7000 recipients. Monthly notices of upcoming events are distributed as well as information about our special sales as they happen.

We have been advertising our surprise Pop-up Sales through all these online marketing methods and have been getting great reactions and customer turn-out. Our \$1 on All Fiction pop-up sale in May drew the attention of 4,714 people on Facebook, including two gentlemen who follow our page and drove all the way up from New York City just to check out the sale! (They bought a fair amount too.)

We also use printed media to alert customers about the bookstore hours and events. We have Twice-Told Tales information bookmarks which are given out to customers, both at the store and to online purchasers. Our event and special sales information is displayed via the colorful flyers that a volunteer creates for the store windows and library. In the past, we have created lobby cards which were placed at the train station and at local lodging establishments. We are considering creating a new version of that.

In addition to the posting of the flyers, we try to use our visible Maine Street location to our advantage. We have been creating reading-related pennants for the front windows each month, starting with the “Welcome 2021. Turn the Page” windows in January. Our favorite was the summery “S’more you read. S’more you know”, which drew attention to the bookstore during the Music on the Mall concerts right across the street. We also have two large outdoor posters, one of which is always outside the store on the sidewalk, weather permitting, attracting passers-by. We have a second sandwich board which we place on the Mall during community events, such as the Farmers’ Market. We also have a display at the Brunswick Visitor’s Center for one month each year. Occasionally, we purchase advertising for outreach and to support local non-profit community events.

Our publicity is helping us reach an increasing number of people and draws many new customers into the store. The TTT word is spreading! We were very gratified this year to be named a finalist in Downeast Magazine’s “Best of...” Issue as one of five best bookstores.

All of our bookstore inventory is donated. We are very grateful to the many people in the Brunswick area and beyond who have thought of Twice-Told Tales when they are reducing their own book collections. We continue to accept gently used books, in good condition, and in a variety of genres.

The store’s success and Friends member contributions have allowed the Friends to maintain our substantial level of financial support for Curtis Library. Adult and children’s programming, book acquisition, and staff development, are just some of the library programs supported by store sales and contributions to Curtis Friends. We thank all of you for your contributions of time, books, and financial support. We look forward to continue being a valuable resource to the community in the years to come.

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2021-2022**

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