



Boulder Bookstore,
Boulder, CO



American Booksellers
Association

Annual Report 2024

OUR MISSION

**ABA works every
day to help
independent
bookstores across
the US survive
and thrive.**





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LETTER

from the CEO

ABA was honored to support our members this past year, and I'm proud to present ABA's 2024 Annual Report.

The vitality of independent bookstores was undeniable in 2024. ABA's membership grew by 18%, and 323 new brick-and-mortar, pop-up, and mobile stores opened across the US. This marks the fourth consecutive year with more than 200 new store openings.

In many ways our 2024 Annual Report echoes 2023: Hundreds of new stores. The largest Winter Institute in ABA history. The largest Children's Institute in ABA history. The most successful Independent Bookstore Day to date.

But the numbers only tell part of the story. This momentum occurred despite significant challenges: the usual ones like thin margins, rising costs, and Amazon's chokehold on our industry, and urgent threats that shook the very foundation of our work as the right to read and access books faced sustained, coordinated attacks.

"...the passion, purpose, and authenticity of independent bookstores matter more than ever. We are honored to serve and support you in this vital work."

Our mission – to help independent bookstores survive and thrive – remained at the core of everything ABA did. Guided by ABA's Ends Policies, we delivered on that mission with financial responsibility: staying on budget, receiving a clean audit from an independent auditor, and dedicating 80% of resources directly to programming, exceeding the nonprofit Program Expense Ratio benchmark.

In 2024, ABA hosted Institutes that brought hundreds of booksellers, authors, business partners, illustrators, and publishers together to learn, partner, network, and be in community. We offered over 100 virtual educational and networking opportunities and continued offering

member resources like our business book club, educational podcast, affinity meetups, and resource library. This year we focused on cash flow for our members, bringing critical cash flow education to regional summer and fall trade shows, offering financial literacy sessions, and individualized financial counseling for members.

ABA doubled our free expression team this year, created a hotline for members facing



harassment, published *The Right to Read Handbook*, and offered essential education sessions to equip members with the tools and resources needed to defend their right to free expression.

We continued lobbying for the Credit Card Competition Act, legislation with the potential to transform bookstore finances. Recognizing the unique power of indie bookstores to engage voters in critical elections that could impact their businesses, we partnered with the League of Women Voters to support voter turnout. We actively opposed legislation that directly affected our members and made it easy for your voices to be heard through our Voter Voice campaigns. We also worked closely with publishers to create efficiencies in the industry, reduce obstacles to selling books, and advocate better terms for independent bookstores.

IndieCommerce 2.0 saw continued progress in 2024. More stores migrated to the new platform and with your feedback, we continued to enhance its functionality and design.

ABA launched the ABCs campaign to strengthen our industry with three foundational tools: ABACUS, our free financial benchmarking survey for members; Batch, a free platform for industry payment efficiency; Sales Reporting, a free service to amplify the impact and visibility of the indie channel. We increased bookseller participation in all three and helped secure participation in Batch from the final Big 5 publishers, along with several indie publishers.

All of this was accomplished thanks to the dedication and efforts of the people who work for ABA. And while this report highlights many of ABA's key accomplishments in 2024, it can't fully reflect the scope of our work on behalf of members – nor can it capture the magic and importance of what independent bookstores bring to the world. We witnessed that magic first-hand at the more than 150 independent bookstores our team visited across the country again this year. Each one was unique, yet all shared the same dedication to community and to books.

In a world increasingly driven by billionaires and algorithms – and in an industry threatened by the politicization of books – the passion, purpose, and authenticity of independent bookstores matter more than ever. We are honored to serve and support you in this vital work.

—Allison K Hill, CEO



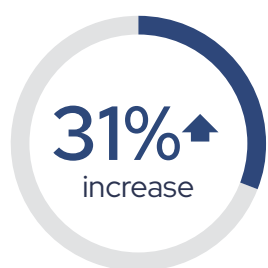
INDIES BY THE NUMBERS

The State of the Independent Bookstore

The growth in the indie channel continued in 2024, confirming once again that The Future is Indie.

323

bookstore businesses
opened in 2024



247

storefronts

9

online

55

pop-ups

12

mobile

21

Black-owned

60

BIPOC-owned

247

bookstores planning
on open



19

Black-owned

29

BIPOC-owned

37

bookstore businesses
closed in 2024

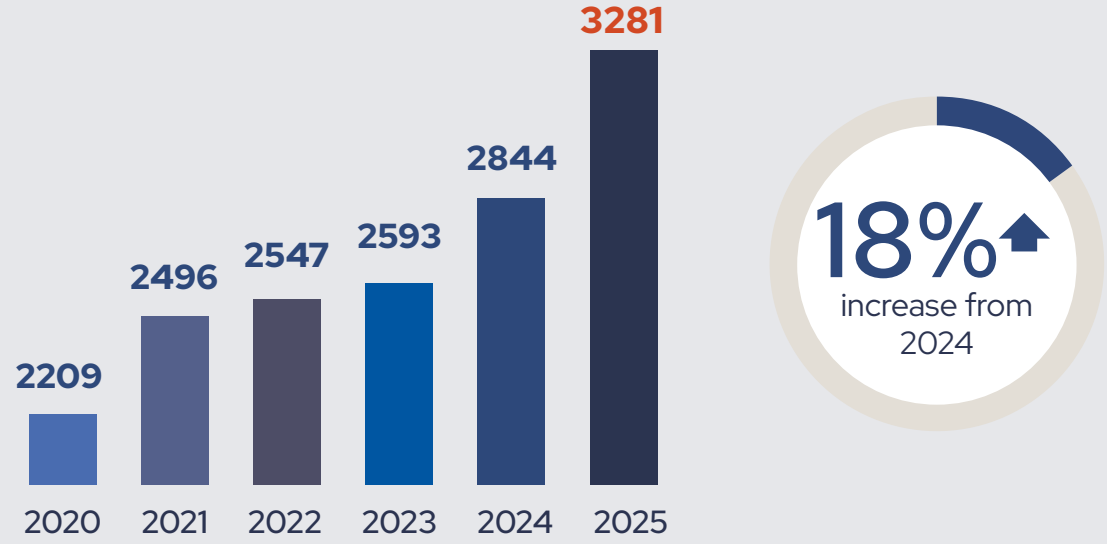


*Note: some members do not
share their racial identity.*

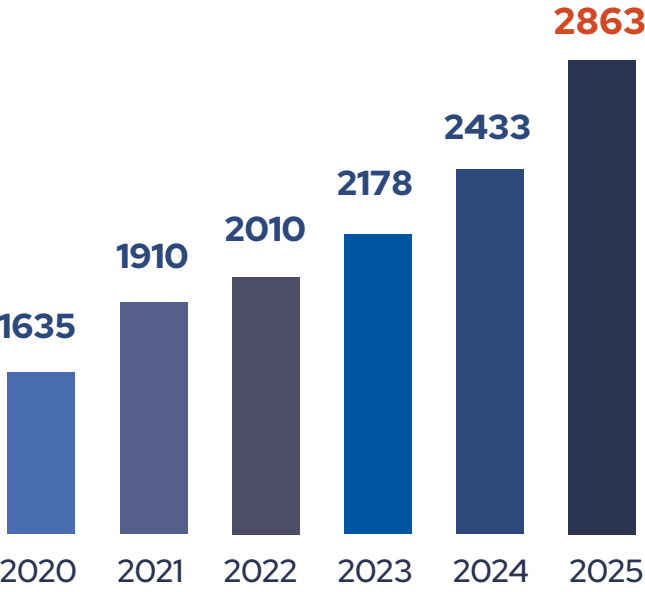
ABA BY THE NUMBERS

Membership

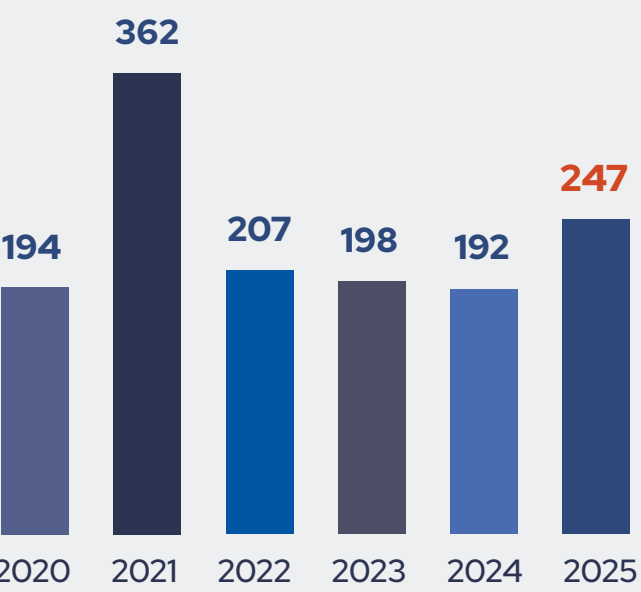
Member Locations



Bookstore Companies



Provisional Members



INDIES BY THE NUMBERS

ABACUS

2024 marked the **highest participation in history** for ABACUS, ABA's financial benchmarking report for independent bookstores. ABACUS helps stores compare their financials to other similar stores and identify areas to improve profitability.



501

locations

441

bookstore
companies

5%↑

increase from
previous report

Education, Inspiration + Support: Strengthening Our Community



McNally Jackson Books
Seaport, New York, NY

STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY

Winter Institute

FEBRUARY 11-14, 2024

Winter Institute 2024 in Cincinnati was ABA's biggest Winter Institute to date with over 850 booksellers in attendance and 1,751 total attendees.

The **conference program** included five days of keynote speakers, education, networking, and affinity groups to help booksellers with their businesses.

Keynotes included James Rhee, William Ury, Michele Norris, and Doris Kearns Goodwin, and were a highlight of the event.

864

booksellers

1,751

attendees

9.4%[▲]

increase
from 2023



COMMUNITY

Children's Institute

JUNE 10–12, 2024

Children's Institute 2024 in New Orleans was the largest in ABA history with nearly 750 attendees, including 379 booksellers and 161 first-time attendees. Three full days of **educational programming** featured keynotes by Renée Watson, Rex Ogle, Mark Oshiro and a Spotlight on Black Publishing, followed by a rousing round of karaoke with Drag Story Hour.

379

booksellers

5.5%↑

increase

747

attendees

161

first-time attendees



COMMUNITY

Independent Bookstore Day

APRIL 27, 2024

ABA's national celebration of independent bookstores was the largest in Indie Bookstore Day history.

Bestselling author and former poet laureate Amanda Gorman served as the Independent Bookstore Day Ambassador. She shared,

"Independent bookstores are vital hubs of creativity and community. They offer curated selections that foster discovery for readers, while providing vital support and a platform for diverse voices for writers and other creators. They are the true modern-day town square, the beating heart of our communities, and a place for meaningful interaction and human connection."

To better prepare and support participating bookstores, ABA created a comprehensive [**Indie Bookstore Day Planning Guide**](#) for the first time to better support members.



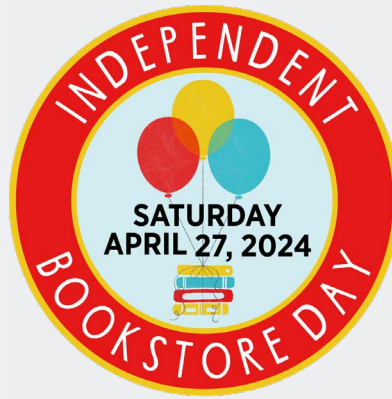
Courtney Wallace, Program Director of Independent Bookstore Day at Gramercy Books in Columbus, OH



The Village Bookstore, Pleasantville, NY

1,216

stores participating
from all 50 states!



14.4%↑

increase from
year prior



Watchung Booksellers, Montclair, NJ



Odyssey Bookstore, Ithaca, NY



Aaron's Books in Lititz, PA



The BookSmiths Shoppe, Danbury, CT

COMMUNITY

Summer/Fall Regional Trade Shows

AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER 2024

ABA was excited to meet with members at this year's regional shows, **visiting more than 70 stores**, and presenting the education session, "Prioritizing Cash Flow: 10 Areas to Review for Improved Cash Flow and Profitability."



Politics and Prose, Washington, DC



Loyalty, Washington, DC



East End Books Seaport, Boston, MA

COMMUNITY

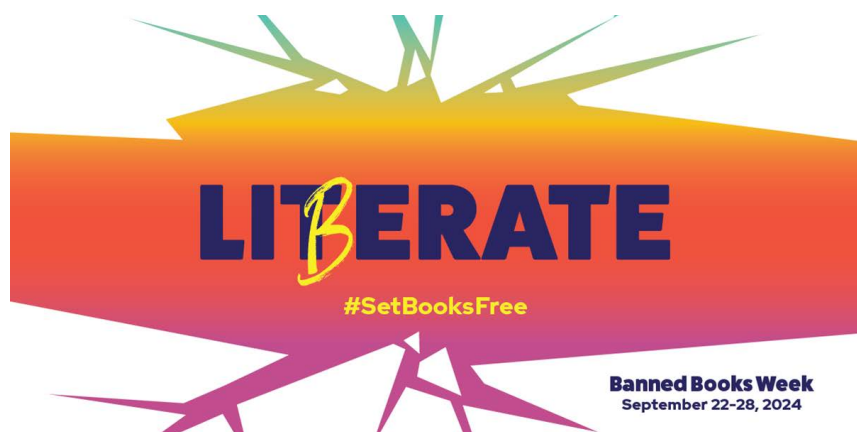
Banned Books Week

SEPTEMBER 22-28 2024

Over 725 member stores signed up to receive ABA's Banned Books Week kits, including displays, materials, and digital resources.

ABA held the Second Annual Banned Books Week Instagram Display Contest.

Leading up to and during Banned Books Week, Associate Director of ABFE Philomena Polefrone made appearances across the country to raise awareness about book bans and *The ABA Right to Read Handbook*.



725

Banned Books
Week kit member
store sign-ups



Powell's Books, Portland, OR



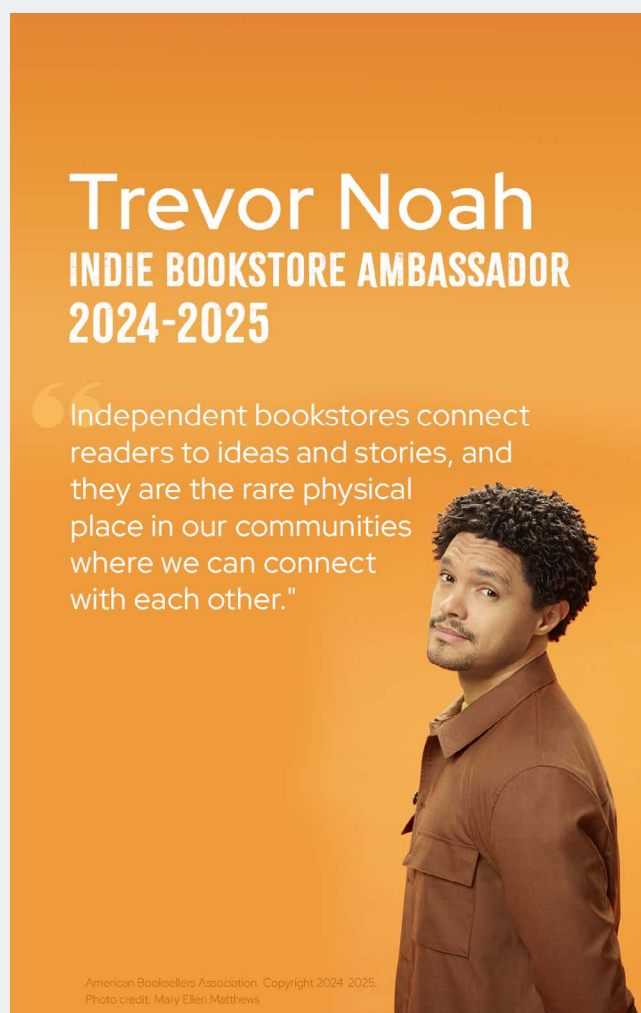
San Marco Books, Jacksonville, FL
Display contest winner

COMMUNITY

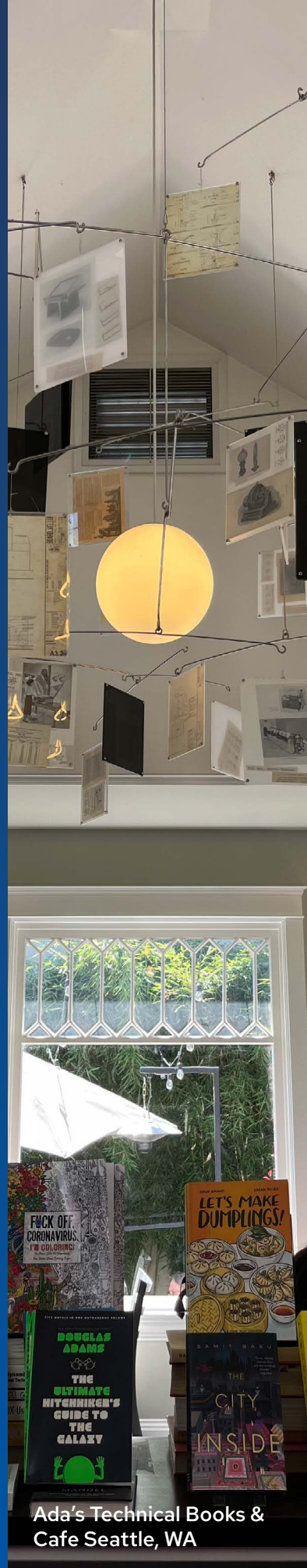
Indies First

NOVEMBER 20, 2024

This was the **12th anniversary of the national campaign** in support of independent bookstores in conjunction with Small Business Saturday, the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Trevor Noah, comedian and former host of the Emmy® Award-winning *The Daily Show* on Comedy Central served as ABA's Indie Bookstore Ambassador!



Advocating for Independent Bookstores



Ada's Technical Books &
Cafe Seattle, WA

Advocacy

ABA advocated for the interests of independent bookstores throughout 2024, engaging in numerous initiatives targeting legislation, antitrust issues, and regulatory compliance.



Key Legislative Advocacy

A significant focus for 2024 was the Credit Card Competition Act (CCCA). ABA helped bring multiple fly-ins in Washington DC along with other members of the Merchants Payments Coalition. These efforts aimed to encourage lawmakers to support the CCCA, which seeks to introduce competition into the credit card processing market and lower swipe fees for retailers. ABA also submitted written testimony in support of the CCCA in November. Efforts were also made to support reduced debit card fees and oppose delays to existing reductions.

Addressing ADA Website Compliance was another advocacy priority. ABA met with congressional offices, including the Senate Small Business Committee, regarding meritless lawsuits claiming websites were not ADA compliant. This led to Illinois Senator Laura Murphy introducing an ADA Website Compliance bill, which was drafted with ABA's guidance. ABA further organized a coalition of small business associations to address this issue.



CREDIT CARD TRANSACTION FEES NOTICE

Banks drive up costs with credit card "swipe fees"

THERE IS A SOLUTION TO BRING DOWN PRICES

Scan the code and ask your legislators to support the Credit Card Competition Act – a bill that will allow competition in the credit card marketplace and bring down prices.

DEMAND ACTION by visiting
bookweb.org/advocacy



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Antitrust and Industry Concerns

ABA actively participated in Small Business Rising, a coalition advocating for stronger antitrust enforcement against Amazon's anticompetitive practices. This included regular coalition meetings and a "SBA: Dump Amazon" social media campaign protesting Amazon's co-sponsorship of National Small Business Week. Additionally, ABA submitted a comment opposing the Visa/Mastercard settlement. The court later rejected the settlement, referencing ABA's submission.

Member Support and Outreach

ABA provided guidance to members on Beneficial Ownership Information (BOI) reporting requirements. (These requirements were later challenged in court.) ABA partnered with LIG Solutions to offer health insurance to members and regularly updated members on ABA's advocacy on their behalf in *Bookselling This Week*, ABA's weekly e-newsletter. The Advocacy team met with booksellers at Winter Institute, Children's Institute, and Summer/Fall Regional Shows to discuss advocacy and free expression issues with members and hear their concerns..

Other Initiatives

Notably, ABA's Advocacy team reached out to the Department of Justice and the NY State Bar Association regarding frivolous ADA lawsuits. ABA conducted numerous legislative outreach actions, including campaigns, email outreach, submitted testimonies, and meetings with lawmakers, focusing on various topics like swipe fees, antitrust, and debit cards. ABA also mobilized members via Voters Voice, giving them an easy way to have their voices heard on issues pertaining to their businesses.

ABFE

American Booksellers for Free Expression (ABFE), ABA's free expression initiative, stepped up efforts to meet another historic increase in book bans across the country – PEN America recorded over 10,000 instances of school book bans in the 2023–2024 school year, almost triple the figure from the previous year. We raised awareness, opposed anti-book state legislation, offered education, and released our first book.

The ABA Right to Read Handbook

In time for Banned Books Week, ABA published *The ABA Right to Read Handbook: Fighting Book Bans and Why It Matters*, a resource for the general reader who wants to join the campaign for free expression. Available in indie bookstores and on indie-supportive platforms, the handbook offers a brief history of US book bans, interviews with advocates, and step-by-step guides that meet aspiring advocates where they are. The book was covered in *Shelf Awareness*, *The Washington Post's* Book Club newsletter, and more.



Legislation

ABFE redoubled our efforts against book ban legislation and in support of some legislation that proactively limits the spread of book bans. These efforts included advocate training, updates on bills of concern, and written testimony on bills of concern.

Social Media

ABFE’s social media continued to grow in 2024, reaching over 1,000 on Instagram by the end of 2024 – an increase of more than 75% over the course of the year. Throughout the year, ABFE created and amplified interviews with booksellers and free expression advocates, spread the word about ABFE initiatives like the Banned Books Week kits and our bookseller-exclusive Banned Books Week assets, and amplified the work of our allies and members.



Direct Support for Stores

This year stores faced an increase in harassment. In response to direct outreach from stores experiencing harassment, ABA provided guidance and support. Many of these incidents were focused on LGBTQ+ books or events. ABA also shared resources with members to help them prepare for potential harassment.

Events

Associate Director of ABFE Philomena Polefrone continued holding education events in-person and online, including at Winter Institute, *The ABA Right to Read Handbook* book tour, and virtual events with organizations like Red Wine and Blue.

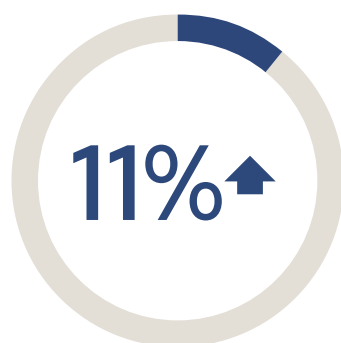


Driving Digital Success for Independent Bookstores in 2024

In 2024, ABA underscored its dedication to member success by significantly advancing IndieCommerce 2.0, the only US not-for-profit e-commerce platform tailored for independent bookstores. This vital platform empowers stores in an increasingly digital retail landscape.

IndieCommerce 2.0 offers a modern, intuitive interface and powerful bookselling tools, including access to over **14 million titles** and seamless integrations. The platform's impact was evident in positive sales trends: aggregate online sales across **IndieCommerce sites rose 11%** in Q1 2024 year-over-year, with **average sales per store increasing by 15%**.

IndieCommerce 2.0 remains a cornerstone of the ABA's mission to ensure the long-term success of independent bookstores.



IndieCommerce traffic was **11% higher** in Q1 2024 than Q1 2023



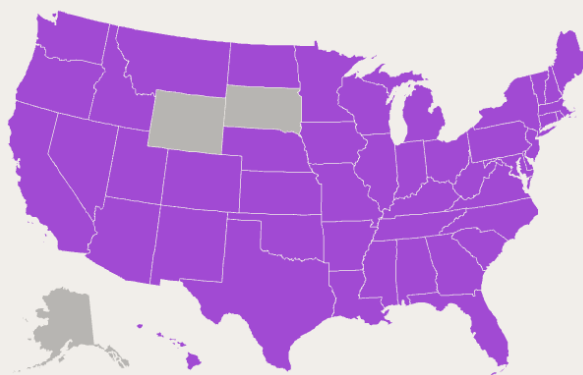
IndieCommerce average sales **increased 15%** per store in 2024

PARTNERSHIPS

Partners

USA Today

ABA continued a partnership with *USA Today* to share weekly indie bookstore features on their Books page and linking to a US map. In 2024 we reached a milestone with 50 indie bookstores featured!



National Book Foundation

ABA partnered with the National Book Foundation for a display contest in honor of their 75th National Book Awards. The winning indie bookstore (This House of Books, Billings, MT) won tickets to the awards ceremony in New York City.

League of Women Voters / VOTE411

In 2024, a new partnership between ABA and League of Women Voters (LWV) recognized the power of indie bookstores in their communities and mobilized the stores to help engage voters and get folks registered and to get out the vote. Stores collaborated with local chapters hosting nonpartisan civic programming and sharing the League's online voter information tool [VOTE411.org](https://www.vote411.org). This initiative helped remind indie bookstores that elections impact their businesses and remind those communities that indies are hubs for engagement.



The Book Cabin, Lake George, NY

SUPPORTERS

Thank-Yous

Thank you to all of the **publishers, authors, poets, illustrators, wholesalers, and business partners** who made ABA's work possible in 2024.

A special thanks to **James Patterson** and **Book Industry Charitable Foundation (Binc)** for their generous support of booksellers this year.

B Bookshop.org®

And thank you to **Bookshop.org** for their continued support. In 2024, Bookshop.org helped generate around \$5.5 million for indie bookstores – \$2.9 million came from direct affiliate sales, and another \$2.6 million was shared from the central earnings pool. They also helped spread the word about the importance of independent bookstores in communities and in the world. ABA is proud to be a Bookshop.org investor and we thank them for their continued efforts on behalf of our members.



Greenlight Bookstore
Brooklyn, NY

RESOURCES

New + Continuous ABA Support

Here's what's new in 2024:

Education

- [Prioritizing Cash Flow: 10 Areas to Review for Improved Cash Flow and Profitability](#) *(Presented live at the Summer/Fall Regional Association Conferences and as a Virtual Webinar for ABA members)*
- [New Member Series: Intro to ABA Benefits](#)
- [New Member Series: Meet The Partners](#)
- Webinars:
 - [Safeguarding Your Shelves: Business Insurance Basics for Book Retailers](#)
 - [Webinar: Anti-Racism in the Bookstore](#)
 - [Workers' Compensation: Navigating Claims, Compliance, and Coverage](#)
 - [Book Bans & Store Liability: Leverage Insurance to Safeguard Your Business](#)
 - [Facilitating Banned & Diverse Book Donations](#)
 - [Local Voter Engagement: A Conversation with ABA and League of Women Voters](#)
 - [Legalizing Book Bans: How State Legislatures Undermine the Freedom to Read](#)
 - [Emergency Drag Story Time Security Webinar: Best Practices, Case Studies, and Challenges](#)
 - [Community Conversation on Recent Threats to Drag Events: Experiences, Support, and Response](#)
 - [\(Web\)Pages of Protection: Cybersecurity and Cyber Insurance For Bookstores](#)

New Business Services/Discounts for Members

- [Page Anchor](#)
- [PayUSA](#)

- [WithFriends](#)
- [Pixel+Ink Creative](#)
- [Wolf & Wren Press](#)
- [RISEWITHUS](#)

[See BookWeb.org](#) for the full list for discount partners and services.

Marketing Assets

- Anti-Amazon Campaign [Indies Take The Gold summer campaign](#)
- Seasonal Holiday Campaigns
 - [Analog Adventures fall campaign](#)
 - [Indie Bookstore Rewind winter campaign](#)
- [Trevor Noah Indie Bookstore Ambassador](#)
- [Building an Indie Future: A.B.C. Campaign](#)

ABA Perennials

Education

- [Winter Institute: Wi2024 Cincinnati](#)
- [Children's Institute: Ci2024 New Orleans](#)
- [Business Book Club](#)
- ["Welcome to Bookselling" Onboarding Resource](#)
- [Developing a Bookstore Business Plan](#)
- [Suggested Steps to Opening a Bookstore](#)

Virtual Networking

- [Affinity Group Meetups](#)
- [New Member Series](#)
 - Store Ownership 101
 - Intro to ABA Benefits
 - ABA Partnerships

- [ShopTalks](#)
- Dedicated ABA Children's Group ShopTalks
- ABA Open House/ABA Board Office Hours

Marketing Campaigns & Assets

- [Independent Bookstore Day](#)
- [Indies First](#)
- [Indies Introduce](#)
- [Indie Next Program](#)
 - Indies Next List
 - Kids' Indie Next List
 - Reading Group Guide
 - Indie Gift Guide for Genre Lovers
 - Matchbook Marketing Email Program for Indie Customers
- [Indie Bestsellers List](#)
- [Marketing & Social Media Calendar Handouts](#)
- Anti-Amazon Campaign
 - [#SBADumpAmazon](#)
- Seasonal Holiday Campaigns
 - [Jólabókaflóð fall campaign](#)
- Support Indies First posters and social media graphics
- Veterans Day Member Independent Bookstores graphic
- Banned Books Week BINGO card and Checklist
- Best Books for Young Readers catalog
- James Patterson Holiday Bookstore Bonus Program
- Boxed Mailing
- Preorder Calendar
- Buzz Books Editors Panels



American Booksellers
Association

For more information on ABA programs,
contact info@bookweb.org.

View consolidated financials on BookWeb.org.