MPIBA Bookseller Summer Camp Workshop:
Holiday Prep Starts Now

BOOKS & PRODUCTS

● Consider ALL of the fall and winter holidays as well as local and regional celebrations.
● Re-evaluate your fall/holiday frontlist orders:
  ○ Check on orders, update quantities
  ○ Create a calendar of pub dates.
● Review your bestselling books since March to see what you need to stock up on.
● Place your orders for non-book/gift items:
  ○ Consider “bundles” of books, greeting cards, and gift items.
  ○ Consider Greeting Card bundles.
● Review the robust list of Indies First and other publisher specials.
● Plan for ordering the MPIBA Holiday Gift Guide titles that work for your store.
● Attend FallCon 2021:
  ○ Look for titles you might have missed
  ○ Find additional gift items to stock
● Understand and communicate potential supply chain issues:
  ○ Find a good source of information (sales reps, phone reps, Edelweiss, Publishers Weekly)
  ○ Decide how you’ll communicate delays and pub date changes with staff.
  ○ Decide how you’ll deal with special orders not arriving in time, or being out of stock on big books.

MARKETING & EVENTS

● Plan and prep your marketing in advance!
● In all communications with customers:
  ○ Voice the importance of shopping local for the holidays.
  ○ Encourage your customers to shop on-line (if applicable), and promote your store’s URL.
● Make sure your buyers are communicating with marketing.
  ○ Promote things you ordered in large quantities
● Plan your holiday events and festivities:
  ○ IndiesFirst/Small Business Saturday (Saturday, November 27)
  ○ Cyber Monday (Monday, November 29) -- promote your website
  ○ Cider Monday (Monday, November 29) -- promote the warm fuzzy of in-store shopping
  ○ Holiday storytimes.
  ○ Holiday “book talk” or “gift talks” for your customers.
  ○ Author events (signed books make great gifts!).
  ○ Ladies Night Out gift market (with other local vendors).
● Research community holiday celebrations and coordinate marketing efforts or create a holiday pop-up shop to reach new audiences.
• Reach out to the media to get news coverage for your store and any specific holiday events or promotions.
• Plan to give your website a general update with current information and fresh content.
  ○ Plan for updating with seasonal and holiday graphics and recommendations for each holiday.
  ○ Promote sales of e-books and audiobooks by curating content on your website.
• Order your MPIBA Holiday Gift Guide Catalogs and sign up to send via email.
  ○ Plan newspaper insertions and direct mail campaigns.
• Prep holiday shopping social media and/or email campaigns
  ○ Title suggestions for every type of gift.
  ○ Evergreen content: “Books make great gifts”, “Give gift cards”, etc.
  ○ Weekly themes (picture books, history, cookbooks, fiction, etc.)
• Plan to promote gift cards and gift certificates -- easy gift ideas!
• Promote your store as a venue for private, after-hours shopping parties to customers who are interested in inviting family and friends.
• Promote pre-orders for big holiday books:
  ○ Customers can get holiday gifts ordered early!
  ○ Remember to have someone look at pre-orders regularly, and adjust orders.

BOOKSTORE & DISPLAY
• Schedule time for general store upkeep:
  ○ Dust shelves, clean windows, rearrange fixtures.
  ○ Update and replace worn shelf-talkers.
  ○ Evaluate and update store signage.
• Create a holiday display plan:
  ○ Window displays.
  ○ Festive decorations.
  ○ “Wrapped and ready to go!”
  ○ Gift recommendations.
  ○ Holiday Gift Guide Catalog (order display materials from MPIBA).
• Think about how you can honor the holidays while being inclusive:
  ○ Celebrate diverse cultures and religions.

STAFF CONSIDERATIONS
• How might staffing needs change for the busy holiday season?
  ○ Will you need to hire “holiday help”?
  ○ Will you have extended hours?
  ○ When might you see spikes in traffic due to community happenings?
  ○ Can work be done outside of open hours? (restocking, filling displays, etc.)
• Establish schedule expectations for the holidays:
  ○ Create a policy for holiday time-off requests.
  ○ Create an overtime policy.
  ○ Make sure both new and current staff are aware of all expectations.
• Create and update sales and customer service expectations and training:
  ○ Encourage staff to thank customers for shopping indie and local.
  ○ Do you say Happy Holidays vs. Merry Christmas? Or?
General reminders for your best customer service practices.

- Decide how you will inform staff of promotions, displays, important books.
  - Plan a rep night with your staff.
- Make sure everyone knows where supplies can be found and restocked.
- Offer training to diversify skills (gift wrapping, taking special orders, etc.)

- Make plans to take care of your staff and yourself during the busy holiday season.
  - Offer an extra (paid) day off in January.
  - Make sure everyone has two consecutive days off (their own weekends).
  - Provide snacks, water, break stations (holiday cookies!)
  - Allow for breaks in staff schedules.
  - Plan some fun, like dress-up days, or a staff celebration, or?
  - Encourage self care.

Other Things to Consider as the Holidays Approach

- Update and promote your shipping policy
  - “Order by in order to receive by” dates.
  - Look at USPS & UPS dates.
  - Explore shipping options to ease staff time:
    - PirateShip
- Update Your Holiday Hours (impacts staffing, marketing, etc.)
- Check your inventory of business and office supplies and other critical items:
  - Shopping bags
  - Register supplies
  - Toilet paper
  - Printer paper, pens, staples!
  - Display materials.
  - Sticky notes and event supplies.
  - Check your sources, and inform/empower staff to buy/restock supplies.

- Decisions about gift wrapping:
  - Offer it? Or not?
  - Bring in a non-profit organization to manage it?
  - Plan for staff time.
  - Order gift wrap

- Think about how to deal with increased requests for non-profit support.