

# BookSmarts

A quarterly newsletter from Nebraska Book Company >> www.nebook.com >> Winter 2005

## Connect2One Offers More at 2005 CAMEX in New Orleans



Though they'll be coming to work hard, preparing for the upcoming purchasing season, college bookstore buyers from across

the nation will be hard-pressed to leave this year's CAMEX in New Orleans without being touched by a bit of the city's unique spirit. From jazz and zydeco to crawfish and gumbo, New Orleans—or N'awlins, as the locals call it—offers visitors a taste of old-world exotica right here in the U.S.

Though the show officially begins on Sunday, February 27, Connect2One (C2O) members will be coming to the Big Easy a day early to participate in the buying group's popular and newly expanded Partner Insight sessions. These useful presentations allow buyers to hear from vendors directly about their upcoming products and programs. C2O Program Director Paula Haerr says,

"By attending these sessions, our buyers can really maximize the efficient use of their time at the CAMEX show." In fact, the sessions were so popular last year that they've been expanded to cover a full day for this year's show, up from a half-day last year.

The new "Low Minimums" sessions will be useful for smaller stores or for larger stores that want to control inventory levels with just-in-time deliveries. And, the always-popular "Idea Exchange" session will allow members to hear successful strategies from their colleagues across the country.

Building on the enthusiastic response to the annual "Paula's Picks" selections, in which Haerr tags items she feels will be the "hot" products of the show, C2O will be adding "Michelle's Best Buys" this year, covering apparel and souvenir items flagged by C2O's Michelle Johnson. While "Paula's Picks" will be identified with cherry pink ribbons, teal blue ribbons will highlight "Michelle's Best Buys." These fun and informative

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Bourbon Street,  
New Orleans

**Be sure to stop by  
the NBC booth (#2039)**

to receive your gift certificate to the famous Café Du Monde for a coffee, souvenir mug and an order of mouth-watering beignets!

# NBC People → →

## Make the Buyback Difference



**NEBRASKA BOOK COMPANY'S JERRY HILLER KNOWS A THING OR TWO** about buyback. After all, he's been in the buyback business with the company since 1983. Back then, the job required a good working knowledge of textbooks and how they were priced, a love of the road and off-the-charts interpersonal skills. Hiller remembers, "You'd get to the point where you'd remember the prices accurately, add them up in your head, and operate fast enough to move the lines so kids wouldn't get disgruntled." These days, computers help out with the price "lookup" process and efficiency, but a buyback professional still needs to know books. Textbook bundling and multiple ISBNs have complicated the process and people who work with books on a daily basis are best suited to deal with that effectively.

Interestingly, though, Hiller's pre-computer experience recently came in handy. A year ago, he was buying books at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York, when the campus network went down, succumbing to a virus that had entered the system via a professor's computer. Without missing a beat, Hiller sprang into action: "We got the old "red book" (Buyer's Guide) out, got a book list from the store and added them up manually." Having done it this way in the past—even twenty years ago—was an advantage. "It really is kind of like riding a bike," Hiller muses.

"You have to provide as much value for your customers as you can," Hiller says. He adds, "Plus, we're convinced we give our customers the best prices for their books." These two factors help keep Nebraska Book Company at the forefront of the buyback game.

Hiller says, "Everybody has computers these days, but levels of buying proficiency vary in terms of both book knowledge and computer use. Having that book knowledge and being familiar with every capability of the buyback software is something we believe sets us apart from our competition." To that end, all of the company's operations people, who assist with buybacks, go through "buying school" before they ever buy a single book. "That proves to be a great benefit," Hiller says.

### People Make the Difference

NBC's Advantage Program offers customers incentives, including pricing premiums, to keep NBC as their purchasing partner. According to Hiller, though, it all comes back to people.

**"You have to provide as much value for your customers as you can. Plus, we're convinced we give our customers the best prices for their books."**

- Jerry Hiller, NBC

"We try to send the same people back to the same buybacks on a consistent basis," Hiller states. "It really creates another employee for the store, in that the buyers learn about the books used on a particular campus and the frequency with which they're used." He continues, "Having that knowledge really adds a lot of credibility to the process. Not only does that credibility add value, I think it is also vastly underrated in the marketplace today." The key is that this accumulation of knowledge only comes with time and experience—something NBC book buyers have in surplus.

Another crucial component to maintaining NBC's philosophy of putting relationships first is the fact that the company experiences very low turnover. In many cases, their buyback people have been working for the company for ten or twenty years. "Often times, it gets to be like working with family", Hiller says. This is something that can only add to the customer's comfort level during what is often a stressful time.

In fact, it's not unusual for retired NBC employees to participate in buyback on a freelance basis. For many, they just can't get it out of their blood. This points to a level of commitment and competence that can't simply be quantified.

There are probably easier jobs out there, but Hiller doesn't want any of them. In fact, to him, it's more than just a job. He sums up, "A buyback is a cooperative effort between the store and NBC to serve the students on campus. It's hard work but very gratifying when, after all is said and done, the interests of the students, the store and NBC have been served."

# Advocacy Update: Bundling & Customization



**THE ISSUE OF PUBLISHERS BUNDLING** extra materials with new textbooks has gained a lot of attention lately. Though educators may not realize it, by requiring their students to purchase bundled or customized texts, they are preventing them from purchasing used texts at a substantially lower cost. Connect2One (C2O) has been at the forefront of this issue, helping bookstore managers educate faculty on the drawbacks of requiring bundled texts.

Some time ago, C2O began offering a free bundling and customization help kit to its members. The package included e-mail and letter templates that could be tailored for any store's particular situation. The response to this kit has been overwhelming. The alliance's Executive Director, Mark Palmore, says, "There's a groundswell of concern out there from the stores, and the majority with whom I've spoken have agreed with our stance and have requested the help kits."

The results are already coming in. The following excerpts from actual letters to faculty and their responses are indicative of the impact store managers are having on the situation. (Names have been withheld.)

These represent only a few of the many such letters that have been received. (More can be viewed at [www.connect2one.com](http://www.connect2one.com).) They give a clear indication that the tactic is working: that by educating instructors as to the costs of bundling, bookstore managers are effectively saving students and their parents money that would have otherwise gone to purchasing unnecessary materials.

For more information on this issue, or to receive a bundling and customization help kit, please e-mail Mark Palmore at [mpalmore@nebook.com](mailto:mpalmore@nebook.com).

*From: (Bookstore Manager)  
To: (Professor)*

*While processing your book order, I noticed that you have included a textbook package that includes the, "Content Select Research Database." Just to clarify, will you be using the added material, or will the textbook alone serve your students?*

*I ask you because, though the additional material comes free with the text, it is only available with a new textbook (\$74.25). Because this text is due for a new edition in June, students will not be able to sell it back at the end of the quarter - whether they buy it new or used (\$56). I (and I'm sure they) would prefer to save them about \$20, especially when they won't be able to sell the book back.*

*I don't mean to influence your choice of course materials. If you do intend to utilize the additional material, I will certainly order it. But I wanted to make you aware of this situation. Please let me know what you prefer at your earliest convenience.*

*Thanks, (Bookstore Manager)*

*From: (Professor)  
To: (Bookstore Manager)*

*Thanks for checking... No, I most likely will not use the, "Content Select Research Database." I would rather give the option (to students) to buy and sell used texts. Please just order the textbooks (and the annual edition's reader for the course).*

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*From: (Bookstore Manager)  
To: (Professor)*

*Hello \_\_\_\_\_, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm the manager of \_\_\_\_\_ Bookstore. I wanted to clarify your spring term book order of \_\_\_\_\_. You have ordered a package containing an additional book. Will the additional book be required reading for the students?*

*Publishers are doing so much of this packaging these days to sell new textbooks that often students are being forced to buy new textbooks with non-necessary books included. These bundles don't allow students to purchase cheaper used textbooks, or to sell back to the bookstore the book they already have. I am not trying to influence textbook decisions and will gladly order this package for your students. I just want to make sure it really is required.*

*Thanks for your time. (Bookstore Manager)*

*From: (Professor)  
To: (Bookstore Manager)*

*Thanks \_\_\_\_\_. I had not thought of these issues. My students had asked about the possibility of case studies to supplement their reading, so I thought this was a good idea. I do not think I will require it. I just wanted to give students the option of more in-depth material if they wanted it. But I did not think of the possibility they'd want to buy a cheaper used textbook or sell back at the end of the semester. In light of that, can you change the order to just the textbook, without the casebook?*

*Thanks, (Professor)*

**“There’s a groundswell of concern** out there from the stores, and the majority with whom I’ve spoken have agreed with our stance and have requested the help kits.”

- Mark Palmore, C2O



➤ Camex cont'd

visuals aid buyers in preparing for the critical back-to-school selling season by highlighting items that represent certain price points, bestsellers, new products or by offering promotional opportunities.

CAMEX 2005 will be C2O's fifth co-location with the National Association of College Stores (NACS). Each year has seen increased attendance for the alliance. Paula Haerr says, “It’s been very successful for us. Last year we signed up 32 new members.” C2O's Executive Director Mark Palmore chimes in, “We also had record attendance at our education day.”

➤ Bundling & Customization cont'd

From: (Bookstore Manager)

To: (Professor)

Hello, Professor \_\_\_\_\_, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm the textbook manager of \_\_\_\_\_ Bookstore. I would like to clarify your Fall 2004 textbook adoption for \_\_\_\_\_. You have ordered a package containing the following components: \_\_\_\_\_ w/password.

Will the additional materials be required for the students? Publishers often add unnecessary materials to force the sales of new textbooks. These bundles don't allow students the option of purchasing less expensive used textbooks or to sell books back to the bookstore at the end of the term.

I am not trying to influence textbook decisions, and I will gladly order this package for your students. I just wanted to bring this to your attention and make sure the additional materials are required.

Thank you.

Sincerely, (Bookstore Manager)

From: (Professor)

To: (Bookstore Manager)

Just the textbooks, thanks!

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- Paula Haerr, C2O

Palmore has advice for members planning on attending: “Make sure you return your Connect2One RSVP as soon as possible. Plan on arriving in New Orleans on Friday, February 25, so you won't miss any of the following morning's sessions. Book rooms early at [www.camex.org](http://www.camex.org) for best availability.”

He sums up, “If you have any questions, talk to your Nebraska Book Company representative or visit [www.camex.org](http://www.camex.org) or [www.connect2one.com](http://www.connect2one.com).”

## We Want Your Business-Not Your Customers

- We believe the student is your customer.
- We believe the bookstore is our customer.
- We believe in integrity in business dealings.
- We believe college bookstores should be independent.
- We believe in providing solutions to keep your business independent.



Nebraska Book Company

P.O. Box 80529  
4700 South 19th Street  
Lincoln, NE 68501-0529  
(800) 869-0366

[www.nebook.com](http://www.nebook.com)