

Published July 7th, 2010

The Evolution of the Retail Bookstore

By Sophie Braccini



Dave Simpson presents his new bus/bookmobile to his business neighbors (L-R) Louis Richards (Sandy's), Wendy Scheck (Lamorinda Weekly), and Anthony Ruiz (FastFrame) Photo Andy Scheck

The possibilities are endless and Simpson is just starting to explore his options.

On Thursday, July 1st, Big Blue was parked in front of the Lafayette Bookstore. Inside, Simpson was treating visitors to finger food and refreshments, while showing off the inside of the bus. On nice wooden shelves, novels, essays and children's books were lined up and friends of the bookstore moved around exchanging ideas for the future of the bus.

"I teach a writing class in the Bookstore and I plan to continue in the bookmobile," said Barbara Millman Cole, "Me, too," added her friend Karen Morison-Knox, who teaches editing, "and as a Moraga resident, I can't wait to see the bookmobile go there for classes and bookselling."

That's where the dream begins; the bookmobile can go any place where there are people craving a bookstore, even in a book-deprived town like Moraga. "I will be able to take Big Blue to farmers' markets, to BART stations, to business parks, or where ever people want to see us," says Simpson.

It is not surprising that it was Simpson who hatched the idea. His past successes include 'pop-up' bookstores that he manages for conventions. Organizing an environmental or medical symposium? Simpson can set up a bookstore just for that event.

"One night I was on the brink of falling asleep, during that relaxed period of the day where the brain can be really creative, and the idea of the bookmobile came to me," recalls Simpson. He went on the internet to look for a bookmobile and found, in Ypsilanti, Michigan, the object of his dreams. All he had to do was pick it up and drive it home. "There are a few such buses that work with public libraries, but as far as bookstores on wheels, there are only two or three in the whole country," says a beaming Simpson.

The realization of the bookmobile's possibilities is just beginning. "Since we have been on the brink of losing our store, our link to the other brick-and-mortar businesses in the area have been reinforced," says Simpson, "and we have already started to strengthen local bonds and plan events."

On Saturdays, Big Blue will be stationed at Fastframe at 3571 Mount Diablo Boulevard in Lafayette for a weekly used-book event. "I can outfit the bookmobile for different types of events," says Simpson, "what I need now is a storage place to stock all of the books."

Micheline Reeder, a member of one of the book clubs that met at the Lafayette Bookstore, wondered about future meetings. "We will continue to organize our book club meetings and will make custom book presentations for those who want it," says Simpson. Just imagine...you get your book club together, or a dozen of your book-loving friends, and the bookmobile comes to you. "I will continue to work with Dave," says Grana, "our community of readers appreciates hearing about our favorite books." Simpson and Grana will simply have a mobile office, powered with bio-diesel and solar panels, outfitted for business as usual.

Simpson is using Facebook to communicate news about the big blue bookmobile, the site is <http://www.facebook.com/pages/>

The-Bay-Area-

Bookmobile/122397051136379.



"We will have more new releases in the bookmobile than we had in the store," says Dave Simpson. Photo Andy Scheck

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