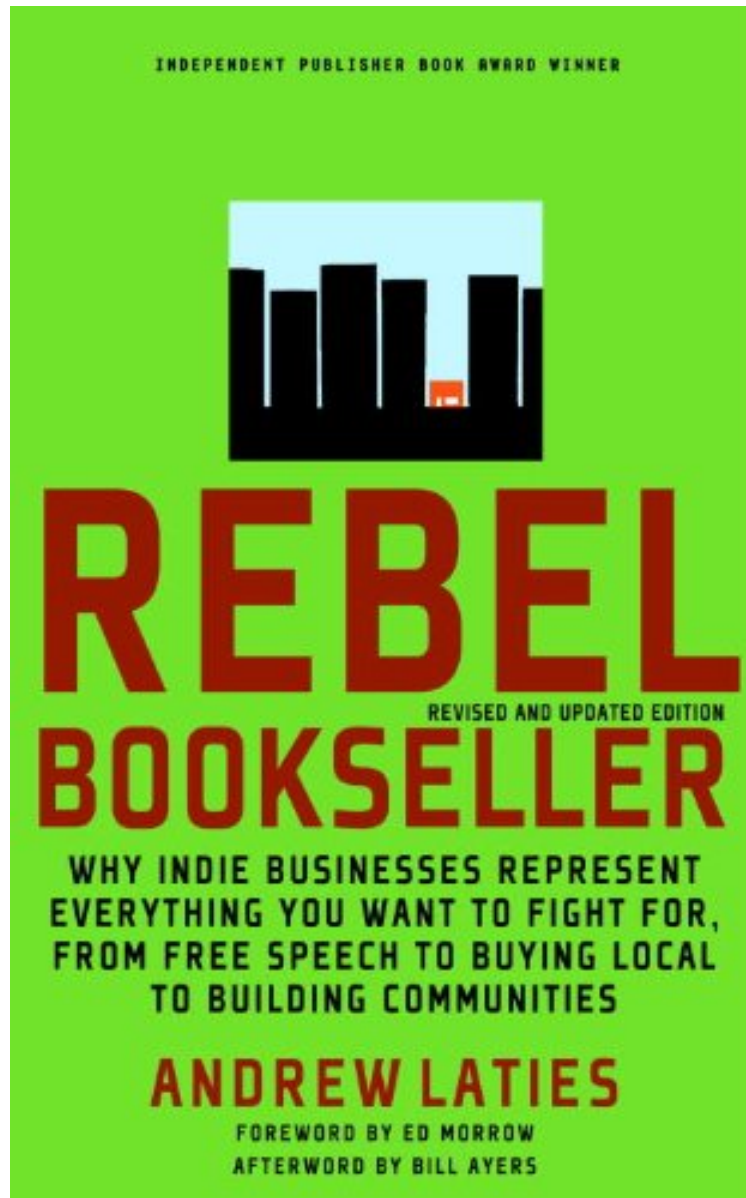


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# Rebel Bookseller: Why Indie Bookstores Represent Everything You Want to Fight for from Free Speech to Buying Local to Building Communities

Andrew Laties

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Andrew Laties : Rebel Bookseller: Why Indie Bookstores Represent Everything You Want to Fight for from Free Speech to Buying Local to Building Communities before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it

would be worth my time, and all praised Rebel Bookseller: Why Indie Bookstores Represent Everything You Want to Fight for from Free Speech to Buying Local to Building Communities:

5 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Strange, unorganized, bitter tale of bookselling

By Chris NI grabbed Rebel Bookseller while traveling. I was excited to read it, but didn't have a chance and finally got to it around 9 months later. I've struggled to explain how I feel about this book--in the end, I've come to realize that parts of this book are fascinating and well written, but they are spread throughout and are not more than 25% of the work. The rest of the time, the subject matter is largely unfocused, repetitive and uninteresting. As the author himself notes, he's been accused of being a bitter man by publishers, and having mental problems by his wife. Both show in this book. It seemed to be several different things for several different audiences. The title and front cover pulled me in, promising a book about why indie booksellers fight for free speech, communities and apple pies, or some such. I'd love to read such a book, but I never encountered it in Rebel Bookseller. The back of the book promises a history of problems in the publishing and bookselling industry for the past few decades. This sort of comes through in the book, but generally is so technical that it is boring unless you're a bookseller or so accusatory you get tired of hearing how the man is out to get everyone, and how every indie store is targeted. The book has two sets of parallel chapters--chapters titled Chapter 1, etc and chapters titled 1st Rant, etc. The rants were generally excellent reading, and having finished the book, I wish he had simply put the rants together and published them as some sort of long form essay or something. They were insightful, fresh, and provided a good look into the bookselling industry for people like me--who frequent bookstores, understand the basics of both bookselling and publishing, and have always had an academic sort of interest in finding out more. Each took an idea (they weren't so much rants as passionate speeches) and explained something booksellers should do or know. However every 2 or 3 page rant was followed by a much longer chapter. The chapters were partly memoir of Andrew Laties' life as a bookseller (to use the term loosely), and partly tale of how independent booksellers survived some turbulent years in the industry. I've never heard of Laties, but I'm also not in the business. Reading this book, it seems he either had every major idea in bookselling over the past two decades, or was willing to take credit for all of them. Based on the explanations of very simple bookstore business concepts--such as the ability to return books to printers--and the content of the rants, it seemed as if this book was targeted towards non-bookstore owners with an interest in bookstore management. Yet the volume of technical detail, most of it rather boring for anyone other than someone in the business. While I'm sure details of trade group presentation you gave two decades ago are thrilling to you, it seemed rather like the person who won't shut up at a cocktail party to me. I understand you wrote a really witty script for your presentation in a small group session. Excerpting sections of it (and why were you keeping it for 20 years?) isn't required. Moreover, while Laties story was interesting at times, the information about how he grew his store was very much geared towards him setting up a niche children's educational bookstore at a specific moment in the industry that then failed, and had him set up another store as a gift store in a museum where less than 20% of the inventory is books, and ending managing someone else's bookstore after that failed. It almost seemed the perfect bookstore owner trajectory in reverse. I can't imagine how most of his story would be useful as anything other than a case study today--certainly not for people actually setting up a store today. Finally, I found the tone of the book very off putting, as if he wanted you to sympathize with what he went through and root for him to succeed, but would turn and be vindictive and gleeful any time anything happened to anyone else. He seemed to have an axe to grind with nearly everyone he's ever encountered professionally--including customers. Apparently they're at fault for not spending great sums of money at independent bookstores, and for buying books and messing up the displays and shelves. At the same time. Throughout this work Laties repeatedly chronicles business failures--but rather than present them as lessons learned and educational opportunities, he instead uses them to blame nearly everyone else. It is never his fault, he is brilliant, but the man is out to get him. The writing is confusing, and he haphazardly refers to names and dates in such a way you feel like you're expected to know who people are or what was happening in his life at the time without being provided any other information. My favorite part comes toward the end when he starts telling you stories about people coming up to him and saying how he changed their life in a strangely tacked on chapter that jumps 8 years into the future and was obviously stuck in for the 'revised and updated edition'. I was waiting for a hand to emerge with a collection plate. You can see why I'm disappointed in this book. I really wanted to enjoy it, and I pushed through it in hopes that some of the chapters would be good, but it was just poorly done. In short--I can't think of a situation in which I'd recommend it. It isn't focused, it seems to have several radically different audiences in mind, and the tone will likely put you off. I'd say if you're really interested, borrow a copy and read just the rants. They're good at least.

11 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Awesome book-buy at your local indie

By LindacbuggI loved this book!! I have been a bookseller for 22+ years and it is not just a job to me, it is my career! I remember when BigNasty came to our town killed our wonderful indie store. People had no idea what they had lost until it was gone. I remember when I worked for Borders after this(I know I know-but you have to make choices sometimes-work for a chain store or don't work at a bookstore at all. My soul couldn't handle being away from books) and people would come in asking for donations for various things like Boy Scouts or other non-profits. Well, Border's branch stores have no control over this and I would tell them to contact corporate to see if they would be will

to help them out knowing damn well they wouldn't. What I really wanted to do was scream at them as if they hadn't stopped shopping at the wonderful indie store we used to have who did all kinds of things for the community there would have been a source for their donations. We lost a store that did story times, book clubs, fund raisers, local authors and many other things for the community. The money came from the community and stayed in the community. Shop local-Support your indie stores-keep your tax dollars in your community.

The revival of independent bookselling has already begun and is one of the amazing stories of our times. Bookseller Andy Laties wrote the first edition of *Rebel Bookseller* six years ago, hoping it would spark a movement. Now, with this second edition, Laties's book can be a rallying cry for everyone who wants to better understand how the rise of the big bookstore chains led irrevocably to their decline, and how even in the face of electronic readers from three of America's largest and most successful companies—Apple, Amazon, and Google—the movement to support locally owned independent stores, especially bookstores, is on the rise. From the mid-1980s to the present, Andy Laties has been an independent bookseller, starting out in Chicago, teaching along the way at the American Booksellers Association, and finally running the bookshop at the Eric Carle Museum in Amherst, Massachusetts. His innovations were adapted by Barnes Noble, Zany Brainy, and scores of independent stores. In *Rebel Bookseller*, Laties tells how he got started, how he kept going, and why he believes independent bookselling has a great future. He alternates his narrative with short anecdotes, interludes between the chapters that give his credo as a bookseller. Along the way, he explains the growth of the chains, and throws in a treasure trove of tips for anyone who is considering opening up a bookstore. *Rebel Bookseller* is a must read for those in the book biz, a testament to the ingeniousness of one man's story of making a life out of his passionate commitment to books and bookselling.

• "A must-read." --Publishers Weekly (starred review of first edition)• "Everything you always wanted to know about the book business but were afraid to ask." --Eric Carle, author of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*• "Andy has put so much passion into his book that it is impossible to read before bed: the book incites a disturbing concoction of adrenalin and hormones that rages against that good night. Not only does Andy not go gently there, he refuses to go, period. This book is heartfelt and honest." --Bernie Rath, former executive director, American Booksellers Association

About the Author ANDREW LATIES co-founded Children's Bookstore, Children's Bookfair Company, Children's Museum Store, Povertyfighters.com, and Eric Carle Museum Bookshop, and Vox Pop. He shared the 1987 Lucile Micheels Pannell Award for bringing children and books together. ED MORROW is co-founder of Northshire Bookstore in Manchester, Vermont, and has served as president of both the New England and the American Booksellers Associations. BILL AYERS is distinguished professor at University of Illinois, founder of Small Schools Workshop and Center for Youth and Society, and author of fifteen books on teaching and children's rights.