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# Booksellers in 'Recovery Mode' at NCIBA Fall Discovery Show

By Jason Boog | Oct 23, 2017



The deadly and

Authors and the editor of the 'All the Women in My Family Sing' essay collection sign copies of the book.

destructive California wildfires that have displaced thousands loomed over the Northern California

Independent Booksellers Association's 2017 Fall Discovery Show. Held at the South San Francisco Conference Center from October 18-20, the trade show inspired comfort and community at a moment when booksellers around the region needed it most.

The NCIBA show was "very emotional," said Bellah Michele, a bookseller from Copperfield's Books. The bookstore has eight different stores in Sonoma, Napa and Marin Counties, so the wildfires in these regions hit the booksellers especially hard. "Everybody knows someone who has lost everything," she said.

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While their Sonoma headquarters are intact, the NCIBA staff have been out of the office for the last two weeks as recovery operations continue throughout the region. "Honestly, because of the fires, there's no comparison to this year," said NCIBA executive director Calvin Crosby. "The fires have put everyone behind. We have stores in Napa and Sonoma that haven't been open for days at a time. Now we're in recovery mode, but it's going to be awhile before people come back. The devastation is horrific."

Despite these massive external obstacles, NCIBA hosted a dynamic and inspiring trade show. "The organization is in good shape," said Crosby, citing reduced rent, lighter payroll, and efforts to optimize and amplify social media across its member stores. The show's registration was up compared to last year, but the director expected attendance to be down slightly this year.

The conference provided plenty of moments of comfort and community, from Discovery Show BINGO cards to a special "Stock the Crock Reception" where NCIBA staffers dished out warm carrots, chili, and brownies straight from slow cookers. As attendees shared the food, author Phyllis Good discussed recipes from *Stock the Crock: 100 Must-Have Slow-Cooker Recipes, 200 Variations for Every Appetite*.

Elise Cannon, the v-p of ales at Publishers Group West, earned laughs all weekend while pitching the popular title *Goat Yoga*—a book written by members of a Nashville yoga studio that adds live goats to its practice. "Everyone loves this book," she said. "You want to know why? We live in some really tough times right now. You've got hurricanes, fires, our current administration. We need to be physical, we need to reach out to each other, and we need to laugh."

Other buzzy books included *My Absolute Darling*, a debut novel by Gabriel Tallent, *Obama: An Intimate Portrait* by Presidential photographer Pete Souza; *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Encyclopedia: The Ultimate Guide to the Buffyverse Book* by Lisa Clancy and Nancy Holder; *Where the Past Begins* by Amy Tan; and *Pashmina*, a graphic novel by Bay Area author Nidhi Chanani.

The Los Angeles poet Yrsa Daley-Ward gave an afternoon keynote on Thursday, reading from her new collection, *Bone*, and talking with Diesel, A Bookstore owner John Evans. The next day, *Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore* and *Sourdough* author Robin Sloan hosted a packed author brunch. Speakers included

literary luminaries Isabel Allende and Armistead Maupin alongside critically acclaimed detective novelist Joe Ide and former-Stanford-dean-turned-author Julie Lythcott-Haims. The programming concluded with a speculative fiction panel featuring Kim Stanley Robinson, Andy Weir, and Maggie Shen King.

American Booksellers Association CEO Oren Teicher left the trade show particularly optimistic about new stores opening in the region. "The enthusiasm and energy that these new owners and new stores have is superb," he said. "It bodes well for the long-term viability of our business." Among the new stores this year were Barn Owl Books in Quincy, Calif.; Books on B in Hayward, Calif.; Black Bird Bookstore in San Francisco; and East Bay Booksellers (a new incarnation of Diesel Books) in Oakland.

The booth for the Book Industry Charitable Foundation (Binc), the nonprofit which provides assistance to booksellers in times of need, was a particularly popular destination.

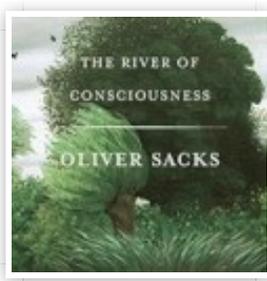
"The industry has been incredibly generous," said Binc executive director Pamela French. Nevertheless, the group will need to raise upwards of \$100,000 this year to continue to help more than 20 booksellers displaced by the wildfires in California, not to mention the assistance needed for booksellers in other regions affected by hurricanes.

"It feels good to be with book people. It's heartwarming and reassuring to be with everybody in the same place," French said.

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