

BOOKSELLING **THIS** Week

Booksellers Wowed by Above the Treeline

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On Friday, January 27, at ABA's First Annual Winter Institute, one of the sessions capping two days of educational programming was "Above the Treeline," presented by ATL founder John Rubin. Whether gauging by booksellers' comments or by the number of attendees who signed up for the ATL online software product (www.abovethetreeline.com) in the days immediately following the Winter Institute, it is clear that Rubin's session was a big hit.



"There were a lot of questions and a lot of good dialogue with the attendees," Rubin told *BTW*. "There was a lot of enthusiasm for the software." And the result, Rubin noted: Since last Friday, 12 more booksellers have signed up for ATL -- a product designed to help bookstores improve finances by optimizing inventory selection.

At the Winter Institute session, Rubin demonstrated the software to more than 150 booksellers, and ABA CEO Avin Mark Domnitz provided information about the special discount for ABA member booksellers who subscribe to ATL under a recently announced [partnership arrangement](#) between ATL and ABA.

Through this partnership, all ABA member bookstores that subscribe to Above the Treeline beginning January 1, 2006, will have their set-up fee (around \$1,500 on average) waived. Above the Treeline will cover 50 percent of the fee, and ABA will cover the other half of set-up costs for members. In addition, all current and future ABA member bookstores that subscribe to Above the Treeline will receive up to 10 percent off the standard monthly subscription fees (between \$50 and \$350 based on store size).

Danny Givens of Givens Books in Lynchburg, Virginia, attended the ATL session and was so impressed with the presentation and the product that he signed up on the Monday following the Winter Institute. "At 9:00 a.m. on Monday, I was e-mailing John [Rubin]. It's a no-brainer."

Givens said that the ATL software is very close to being revolutionary. "It's one of the most useful tools that I've encountered in years -- I can manage my inventory, my sales ... and be right there in terms of what I should have in my store. If I implement this right, it's going to save more money than any other tools I've seen in years."

ABA Board member Linda Ramsdell of Galaxy Bookshop in Hardwick, Vermont, also attended the ATL session at the Winter Institute, and echoed Givens' sentiments. She said the session was packed, filled with a mix of attendees: some "who are 'power users' of ATL, as John calls them; people who had been reading about ATL in *Bookselling This Week*; and also people who didn't know that much about it."

Overall, Ramsdell reported that the ATL presentation went over very well with booksellers. "It was remarkable hearing all the collective 'oohs and ahs' during the presentation," she said. "People were impressed with the power of the program. The whole [Winter Institute educational programming] was about profitability, and that program demonstrated that it does increase profitability."

This was not the first time that Ramsdell had heard of ATL, but "it had always been a little out of our [price] range," she explained. "But with the [ABA member discount], it made it affordable for us. I think we're going to find that it is well worth it. We're really excited."

Pat Rutledge of A Book for All Seasons in Leavenworth, Washington, said after the panel, "I'm signing up. This is what the industry needs."

Said Ramsdell, "You would think that, being the last session at the end of two very intense days, that people's enthusiasm might be somewhat limited, but [Rubin] really energized booksellers to go back and use the tool to be more successful."

Overall, Givens said that the ATL session simply capped off a great two days of educational programming. "Avin and Oren [Teicher, ABA COO] are great communicators and the staff at ABA is great," he said. "This whole Winter Institute was fantastic -- one of the best conventions I've been to in years.... I'm a bookstore and toy store. I have 16,000 square feet of everything, so I go to a lot of shows to pick up new information. This is one of the best I've been to."

Demonstrations of Above the Treeline will be provided at ABA's regional programs or a demonstration can be arranged by contacting Rubin at info@abovethetreeline.com. --*David Grogan*

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