
BOOKSELLING **THIS** Week

BALLE Conference Draws Booksellers to Vermont

Jun 13, 2006

The [Business Alliance for Local Living Economies](#) (BALLE) held its fourth annual conference, "Creating Sustainable Communities," in Burlington, Vermont, from Thursday, June 8, through Saturday, June 10. The event attracted people from various walks of life, including farmers, entrepreneurs, economists, authors, and a number of independent booksellers.



The aim of BALLE's conference was to allow those people who "share a commitment to creating an economy that preserves community character and vitality, promotes economic justice, and protects ecological health and diversity" to connect and share ideas.

Hut Landon, executive director of the Northern California Independent Booksellers Association (NCIBA), attended the three-day event and participated in a "Local First" Campaigns panel on Thursday. "Overall, I was very impressed by the scope of the event," said Landon. "The sessions I attended were very worthwhile and motivating. There were very practical sessions that allowed people to share information ... if someone had a great idea or logo, everyone was saying, 'Steal it! Use it as your own'.... They were looking toward the greater common good."

Several booksellers told *BTW* that Thursday's sessions on Local First Campaigns were the most relevant. The morning events included three sessions: one for beginners who were interested in learning how to start a campaign; an intermediate session for those in the first phases of creating a campaign; and an advanced session for anyone who already participates in a Local First campaign.

Chris Morrow of Northshire Bookstore in Manchester Center, Vermont, attended the intermediate session on Thursday, because he is in the midst of starting a statewide IBA. On Thursday, June 15, the new Vermont group will meet to put together "the framework for the alliance," he told *BTW*. "We're at the stage where we need to do something."

So for Morrow, the conference came at just the right time. "There was good energy generated by the BALLE conference," he said. "It was very well done and very well organized. I'm looking forward to next year in San Francisco."

Liza Bernard of Norwich Bookstore in Norwich, Vermont, a member of the Vermont IBA, said she attended to gather information and was happy to find out how to "approach the topic without



having to reinvent the wheel.... I came away feeling energized and excited."

Mitch Gaslin of Food for Thought in Amherst, Massachusetts, is a member of the New England Booksellers Association planning committee, and he attended the conference because one proposed item for NEBA's strategic plan is "to encourage booksellers to set up [independent business alliances]." He added, "I'm also interested in doing it here in Amherst."

Gaslin attended the beginner's session and found that some information was more useful than other information. "I'm definitely glad I went," said Gaslin, who stressed that he wasn't criticizing the session. "[It's just that] we in the book industry are much farther along [in terms of learning about and creating IBAs] than we realize," he said.

BALLE's Thursday events also included the presentation "Best Practices -- Local First Campaigns & Network Innovations" with Michelle Long of [Sustainable Connections](#) and Leanne Krueger-Braneky of Sustainable Business Network (SBN) Philadelphia. And, in the afternoon, Michael Shuman, author of *The Small-Mart Revolution: How Local Businesses Are Beating the Global Competition*, discussed "The 10 Arguments Against Local First (and how to blow them out of the water)."

For more information about this subject, [click here](#).

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