

Placerville store proves people want a 'real' book to read

By Sam McManis, Sacramento Bee

Noam Chomsky is rubbing spines with Ann Coulter. The Amish and Mennonites share space, presumably peacefully, with the Salem witches. Henry James and Henry Kissinger stand sternly side by side looking off at some fixed point, their visages oozing importance.

All over The Bookery, a wonderfully eclectic literary treasure on Main Street in Placerville popular with tourists and locals alike, tomes of every subject matter and ideology imaginable (about 300,000 titles by unofficial count) are crammed into a labyrinthine, M.C. Escher-like 1,800-square-foot building.

People have been known to get lost amid the stacks and, thus, late to their Tahoe reservations, but that's one of the charms of the place. For 30 years – the last 28 under the ownership of fast friends Nancy Dunk and Celia Lux, and their trusty black lab, Abby – The Bookery has served as something of a rabbit hole of knowledge into which those wanting to feed their heads can tumble.

Nothing is too esoteric or prosaic for this used – but hardly used-up – bookstore. There are sections on beekeeping and blacksmithing, whole shelves devoted to “Sea Disasters” and “Urban Legends.” To show just how well The Bookery knows its clientele, there even is a self-referential “Books on Books” display located near the restroom.

Oh, and about that bathroom: Yeah, there are shelves of books there, too, because hardcore bibliophiles want to peruse even when they use the facilities.

But the bathroom's big draw, what often draws giggles of delight, is the motif. Glued, jigsawlike, onto the four walls and ceiling are bookmarks, scraps of paper, cancelled checks, photos, even high school graduation programs.

"Those are all things we found in the books the first few years we started buying them," Dunk said. "People love that. We worried that we'd have to spend more money on toilet paper, because it's such a big draw."

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