

Bookstores still relevant – become a destination

By Ann Patchett, *New York Times*

The pilgrims have been coming to Nashville for as long as the Grand Ole Opry has been on the radio. They come for Fan Fair and Taylor Swift concerts or just to walk down Lower Broad in cowboy boots. Parents visit their children in college. Conventioneers deplane by the thousands. Nashville is a hip city now, with a food scene, an art scene and two poorly performing professional sports teams.

With all the reasons to travel to Nashville, one might be surprised to learn that some people come just to see a small independent bookstore. It's true. The Book Faithful journey to Music City because they still like their novels printed on paper. They come because they've heard about the shop dogs, or because someone told them years ago that bookstores were moving onto the endangered species list and they wanted to see one that was thriving in its natural habitat: in a strip mall, behind Fox's Donut Den, beside Sherwin-Williams Paint Store. Some come in hopes of seeing a favorite author read, or catching a glimpse of the author who co-owns the store.

That would be me.

Karen Hayes and I opened Parnassus Books in November 2011. This summer, when Pickles and Ice Cream Maternity went out of business, we took down the adjoining wall and doubled our space. Business is good, which, by bookstore standards, means we spring for employee health insurance and pay the rent.

Karen and I are vocal supporters of the Shop Local movement, while at the same time benefiting from the Destination Bookstore travelers.

Read the whole story