

# President's Message

Nancy Frater



## Diversity Vs. Uniformity

*“The beginning is the most important part of the work”*

– Eleanor Roosevelt

A 1975 Russian film, *The Irony of Fate*, bases its plot on the premise that modern complexes are built the same and that no one can distinguish one city from another. After a party in Moscow, one of the inebriated characters is put on a plane and later wakes up in Leningrad, believing he is still in Moscow. He gives the taxi driver his address, except it turns out that in Leningrad there is a street with the same name, the same apartment building and the same apartment layout. He even gets himself into this strange apartment and falls asleep without realizing he is not at home. The Irony of Fate *or* is it the Fate of Irony—when our cities and communities are now turning into the Soviet model of 30 plus years ago.

In Great Britain, a few years ago, a major newspaper spearheaded a campaign to save the country's small and independent stores. The key micro issues were things like rent and pricing, however the macro issues were topics such as smart growth and development—in other words what would constitute a healthy, vibrant community. BookExpo Canada speakers Bill McKibben and Jeff Milchen echoed this idea by proposing strategic business alliances which would promote a sustainable environment, and a dynamic culture and economy.

In some countries booksellers have taken up the mantle to help themselves. In Great Britain, the “Independent Booksellers’ Group” gets together twice a year and chooses a selection of books to take advantage of volume discounts. In France, Independents have an opportunity to survive and enrich their individual communities because chains are not allowed to undercut their prices by more than five per cent. In New York City, Independents are building on ABA’s IndieBound program by collaborating on a plan to share information, strengthen communication and attract more residents and visitors to their bookstores. We all know the drill—Independents champion free thought and expression because inventory is chosen by owners who reside in their own communities. Independents benefit the reader through their expert service, stock selection and recommendations. Independents support communities by boosting local economies and celebrating uniqueness in culture and the arts.

### Let the Rumpus Begin!

A round of applause for CBA’s Marketing Committee—members have worked diligently to roll out the first phase of our new marketing campaign which will be launched in bookstores across Canada on November 15. The Committee’s *Independents Matter* Idea Kit is downloadable with tips on how to get involved and make it work for your store. Author events, store displays, testimonial forms, contests and promotions, neighbour alliances and contact with local officials are just some of the ways you can kick start your own campaign. Marketing materials including posters in various sizes, bookmarks, logos, a YouTube video as well as the new reusable *Independents Matter* bags (order now!) provide support.

Join your fellow booksellers in celebrating the new *Independents Matter*—a national grassroots campaign with a community focus to promote the benefits of shopping locally at independently-owned stores—a first step towards renewal.

If Canada claims that its diversity is its strength, then let’s at least have diversity at the retail/community sector!

Yours in independence,  
Nancy Frater (booklore@bellnet.ca)

