

BOOK PUBLISHING

Weekly News and
Analysis of Events
Shaping the
Book Industry

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Christian Retailers Challenge Amazon, B&N.com For Internet Book Sales

Asked about their sales on Barnes & Noble.com or Amazon.com, Christian publishers answer with words such as "fantastic" and "tremendous." But when the subject turns to Internet sales through Christian retailers, their response is notably less enthusiastic.

Christian retailers are working to change that, with e-commerce initiatives intended to capture a share of a market they say has huge potential. At the Christian Booksellers Association International Convention in New Orleans, LA, last week, booksellers outlined their plans and progress in pursuing the online Christian book buyer.

Parable Christian Stores (San Luis Obispo, CA) said about 130 of its 330 member stores have signed up for its Private Label Sites program since its January launch. Through the program, Parable sets up and runs Web sites for local retailers, using Ingram's Spring Arbor Distributors to fill the orders. At the CBA convention, Parable introduced a new feature that allows for greater individuality on the sites. Parable, whose stores had a combined \$422 million in revenues in 1999, would not disclose sales figures for the program.

Community Will Come With More Commerce

iBelieve.com, the Internet spin-off of Family Christian Stores, said its sales have doubled every month since the site launched in January—though, like Parable, it declined to reveal specific figures. During its first six months in operation, the site has focused more on "community" and "content" than commerce. Now that's changing.

"Commerce will play a more prominent role in what you see on the site and bring us a more balanced

Quotable

"I'm looking for a Grisham for the CBA and I haven't found that person yet."

Barbara Lillard, senior editor for adult fiction at Bethany House Publishers, on the state of the Christian fiction market.