



# BOOKS

This holiday season, spice the shelves with rare first editions, out-of-print tomes, signed copies, and best-selling page turners. ■■■■■■ by LAURA SCHIFF



TIRED OF DASHING through packed malls every holiday season? Whether the bibliophile on your list is dreaming of a first edition, or you want to spruce up your own ho-ho-hum library, 'tis the season to buy online. From familiar faves like Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble.com, to mom-and-pop booksellers that are among the best-kept secrets in cyberspace, we've scoped out some merry little sites to help you find whatever your favorite bookworm is fa-la-la-longing for.

## ADVANCED BOOK EXCHANGE

([abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com)) The world's largest network of independent booksellers has 22 million titles, about 5 percent new, the rest used or out-of-print. Search inventories of over 6,700 vendors, specifying signed or first edi-

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([amazon.com](http://amazon.com)) Search by kids' ages, audio, or large type at the largest online bookseller. Out-of-print titles must be special-ordered. Purchase Circles show top-sellers by city, corporation, government entity. Gift Wizard recommends titles based on recipients' interests. E-cards and gift certificates available. Recent negative press regarding privacy and price-testing policies. No eBooks available. **A**

## BARNES & NOBLE.COM

([bn.com](http://bn.com)) The highest number of titles available for immediate

shipping. Gift Finder recommends based on relationship and hobbies. Gift certificates available. Over 4,000 eBooks, including exclusive one-year deals with Microsoft Reader for books like Patricia Cornwell's *The Last Precinct*. Exclusive *Harry Potter* cover art. Used and out-of-print books are refundable. **A-**

## BOOKFINDER.COM

([bookfinder.com](http://bookfinder.com)) A no-frills meta-search engine that scours over 20,000 online sources for new, out-of-print, first edition, or signed books. Shipping is direct from the seller, so no price mark-ups. No gift services or phone help. Strict privacy policy. **B**

## DARK DELICACIES

([darkdel.com](http://darkdel.com)) America's largest all-horror bookstore, with more than 5,500 new and used titles. Specializes in signed editions and hard-to-find Brit imports. Low prices. No secure server. Cards and gift wrap available. Screenwriter/director Frank Darabont is a big fan. **B-**

## TIP SHEET

- DO** Save all receipts for returns and exchanges.
- DO** Call or e-mail independent dealers if you don't see a title you're looking for. They often don't post all inventory online.
- DO** Know the author or book title for quickest search results.
- DON'T** Send credit-card info over an unsecured server.

## HOLLYWOOD BOOK CITY HYPERLINK

([hollywoodbookcity.com](http://hollywoodbookcity.com)) A family-owned Burbank, Calif., bookstore for hard-to-find entertainment titles. Eighty percent used or out-of-print inventory. Ridiculously slow, disorganized site is being rebuilt for fast, easy browsing of books, scripts, vintage magazines, autographs, storyboards (*Star Wars*, *Blade Runner*), and movie press kits. Secure server. Whoopi Goldberg, Ray Bradbury shop at the actual store. **C+**

## POWELL'S BOOKS

([powells.com](http://powells.com)) Largest independent bookseller, with stores located in Portland, Ore. Rock-bottom prices and all orders over \$50 ship free. Caters to kooky reader quirks with sections on Y2K, Role Playing Games, Artificial Intelligence. Limited cookie use restricts site capabilities—don't expect any personalized gift suggestions. **A-**

## THE WRITING'S ON THE WEB

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