



# MACS Times

SUMMER 2008

The Newsletter of the Middle Atlantic College Stores, Inc. serving Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia since 1970.

## WHAT I LEARNED

by **Melissa Hiller**  
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### A BOOKSTORE MANAGER'S FIRST YEAR

When I was first asked to contribute to this newsletter, I was flattered. My second thought was, what could I share with my fellow managers that would enlighten or educate? After all I was the new kid on the block. A true "freshman" in this crazy world we call college retail. After ruminating over it for a few days, it hit me. I could share my insights and observations about my first year. Perhaps by looking back at my experiences, a few of you may take a trip down memory lane on what your first year was like.

I'll start by saying I am still standing! I have now survived four book rushes and I think I still have most of my wits about me. I began my bookstore career four weeks before the start of fall semester 2006. I heard the horror stories about the lines, the complaints, computer system malfunctions, and the long hours from my seasoned staff. I will admit I was a bit skeptical. I had worked in different industries and most of the time was spent in customer service and sales. I prided myself on my ability to calm even the fiercest of customers. How bad could it be?

Well it was trial by fire those first couple of weeks. I would arrive home in the evening and announce to my husband, "I am all talked out!" (Much to his pleasure) How could I keep this up? But as quickly as it started, it was over, leaving empty shelves, and beleaguered staff in its wake. Once I could collect my thoughts, I started listing things we needed to change. My staff and I sat down and exchanged ideas on how we could do this better, and the next time we did in fact do it better. But as you know no

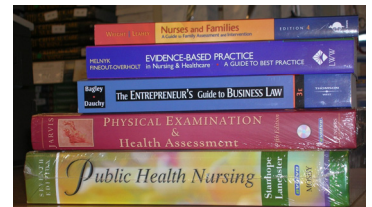
matter how well prepared you are, there are some things that you just can't prevent. That leads me to the things that I have learned....

- No matter how much staff you hire and train, someone will get sick, or leave. That first year we had several surgeries, hospital stays, and accidents. My husband remarked one evening, "What are you doing to your staff?"
- I discovered that not all faculty and administration understand the textbook dilemma. Used vs. New, bundled packages, persistent publisher reps, and the endless complaints from customers about the price of textbooks.
- Older staff members could run circles around me during rush. Some of my staff are 10-20 years my senior and their energy is amazing.
- There are students who overcome great odds at all levels to attend school. Many are the first generation to attend college. I feel privileged to serve those students.
- I have learned that my fellow managers are the most supportive of any industry I have worked. Many are willing to share suggestions, experience, and even lend a hand if necessary. Competition is replaced by camaraderie.

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