



MACS Times

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

READY, SET, READ!

If you are an avid reader, working for the world's largest distributor of books and entertainment, is like being a kid in a candy store. In January, they announced a contest to see who could read the most books within the year. I thought this would be an easy task, I have just completed book #39. I took a look at the leader board and to my surprise, I was in 7th place! The employee in the lead had read 70 books!

There was no way I would be able to catch up. I looked over my shoulder and saw that my bookcase wall was overflowing. It no longer had books piled up neatly and in decorating positions, featuring little mentos on top. My picture frames with family memories were faced down, and textbooks from my college days were bulging from the top of the bookcase to the ceiling. My goodness, it was almost as bad as my grandmother's house, whose pride, and joy was a set of outdated encyclopedias, sitting untouched for many moons. Clearly, it was time for me to move in to the future.

An essay titled *As We May Think*, written by Vannevar Bush in 1945, spoke to some extent on the many kinds of technology that was invented after its publication. This would include online encyclopedias, personal computers, the Internet, and speech recognition. Bush envisioned the ability to retrieve several articles or pictures on one screen. He saw the possibility of embedding video, highlighting passages, and inserting notes that could be stored and recalled together. He also believe that people would create links between related articles, mapping the thought process, and path of

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each user and saving it for others to experience.

Bush's vision has come to pass, and the future is now for us to explore and utilize. The future is also here for our college retail stores. In order to be successful we must target our core customers, the students. Our customers have higher expectations and their needs are changing. They have been born into the technological world and have become used to instant gratification. In visiting many college and university campuses, we found that students also want a larger voice on campus.

College stores, like my bookcase, have to provide options to fit various lifestyles. This would include technology, multimedia, print on demand, and digital interaction. Your core products just as your students are changing, and we must all move toward the future. With fewer visits to the campus and less purchasing needs of textbooks we need to be more accessible. Be a visionary! Incorporate new selling platforms. Students are purchasing on the Internet and mobile phones.

What good is your story if no one knows who you are or what you have to offer? Start by communicating your offerings, and marketing your strengths. Partner with students, faculty, and your community. Manage your relationships and social networks. Get to know your customer. Are you sending emails to your students and faculty with various marketing campaigns? Are you collecting student data? Do you know why the faculty is sending students to other purchasing destinations and not to your campus store? I'm not a big believer

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