

By SUE SHAUGHNESSY

"People are less ashamed today to ask for the trashy novels than they have been in the past year-and-a-half."

"The older people are buying the trash while the young people are buying good non-fiction."

"'Portnoy's Complaint' is for the birds, and now people are checking books before they buy, and not relying merely on an author's name."

"People are buying more non-fiction than fiction. I don't know if they are reading the books, but our non-fiction sales have gone up over the past few years."

"Our circulation of non-fiction is up, but maybe that is because today's fiction is so poor."



# What's Moving In Book Sales?

FOUR OF THE SPEAKERS operate or work in bookstores in the area, and the fifth is a local librarian discussing the circulation patterns of a district library. In the order they spoke, they are:

- Phyllis Keib, a clerk in the Marwil Book Store in the Westland Shopping Center, for the past 1½ years.
- Leo Gurskis, manager of the Little Professor Book Store in Livonia's Sheldon Center.
- Dorothy Higgins, owner of the Little Book Store in Livonia.
- Milton Marwil, owner of the three Marwil Book Stores in the metropolitan area.
- And Mildred Droegge, librarian at the Farmington District Library.

WHAT ARE the best sellers in Observerland?

Top in the fiction field is Mario Puzo's "The Godfather," which has been listed on the best seller list for the past 53 weeks. Running a close second is a book entitled "Thy Daughter's Nakedness" which is not listed on the best seller list.

Downtown Detroit bookstores trouble keeping the novel "The Anderson Tapes" in stock, while that particular book was never mentioned by personnel of the local stores.

All of the book stores report that sales of non-fiction have increased during the past few years.

A rule of thumb seems to be that people will buy fiction in paperbacks, while the non-fiction works are purchased in the hard-cover editions.

Like all rules of thumb, however this is not always true. The book stores report that many of the non-fiction works sold to students and younger people are in the paperback line.

WHO BUYS the formula novel of today that contains the right mixture of sex and violence and or suspense?

All of those contacted agreed that the main market is middle-age housewives or senior citizens. College and high school students and the younger generation have the reputation of buying quality books—especially those in the non-fiction lines.

A manager in a local store said that "I have another store, and there is a special sec-

tion there for the current best-sellers in that location. That spot in the store is filled with the retirees."

That same person reports, however, that people have come back and told him about "the rough stuff" in some novels and added that they have not finished reading the book.

Miss Higgins says that when she first opened the Little Book Store about four years ago, she had many requests for the Henry Miller novels. "I haven't had a person ask for one of Miller's books in a year," she says.

Is there a reason for the decline in requests for a specific author? Miss Higgins thinks that "the saturation point for such works has been reached" among her clientele.

MISS HIGGINS' store is the only one of four new stores visited that reported a rise in the sale of fiction over non-fiction.

An elementary school librarian, Miss Higgins says that she will not stock or display books or magazines that might be unsuitable for high school youth. Her store is also located on the main street of a residential area rather than in the confines of a shopping center where the other three stores were located.

WHAT'S SELLING in the non-fiction field?

All of the stores report increased sales of "The Population Bomb" by Paul Ehrlich, and Miss Keib, the Marwil clerk, says that the author's appearance on the Johnny Carson Show spurred sales.

Interestingly, this work does not appear on the current best-seller list. Neither does any book dealing with environment or ecology.

Personnel from the stores report numerous requests for books dealing with the environmental crisis since public concern has become focused on this problem.

Whether the stores can meet this demand is another question. Miss Higgins contends that the lack of "good titles in the field of ecology and population planning" hinders her from meeting customer demands.

Both Gurskis and Peter McDougall, manager of the Little Professor Book Store in Plymouth, report an increase in sales of

books dealing with Rembrandt and his work. This can be traced to the recent Rembrandt exhibit in the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Marwil says that "any book that deals with a topic that's in the news we have a demand for."

The Plymouth store also reports that many books dealing with the development and training of horses are sold in the location. This trend reflects the characteristics of the area; a large number of stables are under Plymouthite ownership.

MARWIL ALSO SAYS that if a book is made into a movie which is currently making the circuit, you'll find a renewed interest in the original publication.

An example is the biography of Gen. George Patton and the re-issue of the work with the release of the movie.

Another example is the appearance of Hoar's depression era novel, "They Shot Horses, Don't They?" in paper back form.

Marwil says that his stores have stocked this work "periodically over the years" but adds that "the novel's reappearance is another example."

THE INCREASED interest in non-fiction is also reflected in area libraries.

Both the Livonia and Plymouth libraries report that the adult circulation of books includes more works of non-fiction than novels.

Pauline Henriets, librarian in the Noble Branch of the Livonia Library, says that how to gardening, decorating and mechanics books are very popular, along with travel books.

Especially popular volumes are Dr. Haim Ginott's books "Between Parent and Child" and "Between Parent and Teenager," according to the librarian.

This demand will probably continue through the coming months because the Livonia Town Hall Series has just announced that Dr. Ginott will be a featured speaker during the 1970-71 series.

IN FARMINGTON, Mrs. Droegge says that the most popular books among the adults are

Fraser's "Mary, Queen of Scots," and "The Peter Principle" by Peter & Hull in the non-fiction line and "The Godfather" in fiction.

All are on the current best seller lists.

Mrs. Droegge also reports a seasonal demand on travel books currently is under way, along with an increase in requests for Leroy Augenstein's "Cage, Let Us Play God."

She also says that the trend of people looking ahead is evident in the requests for information about setting up a small business. "Most of these people plan to establish a business in the northern part of the state in 10 to 15 years," she says. "Maybe the ecology crisis is taking its toll in this way." Mrs. Droegge adds.

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## In Used Books:

# 'Clean, Romantic Novels Sell'

It's obvious what is important when you enter the small shop in Farmington.

Books literally cover every available inch of wall space, fill the shelves set up in the center of the floor and take up a good portion of the floor around a small cashier-desk combination.

These aren't the shiny new \$6 publisher's editions, but rather the slightly dog-eared, musty and worn books that were published in days past.

Books are important, but this is a used—not a new-book store.

BERTHA CUNNINGHAM, who with her husband Jerry owns and operates the store, was delighted to talk about the kinds of books they sell.

Mrs. Cunningham said that many of the novels that are sold were by such authors as Kathleen Norris, Emily Loring, Taylor Caldwell, George Herbert Meyer and Francis Parkinson Keyes.

"Let's face it, these are nice clean romantic novels, and the ladies love to read them," she says.

"We have people who just come in to browse," she ex-

plained, "and I often have no idea that they want a book. A man came in the other day and asked me about a book that had been on the shelf for months."

"When I told him that the book was sold, he said that he had been looking at it over the past few months and I had no idea that he was thinking about the book," she explained.

"DEALING IN USED books is interesting because you never know what you'll find," Mrs. Cunningham says. "Often a person will ask for a book

that we don't have in stock, but we promise to keep an eye out for it and we usually find it."

In addition to the romantic and gothic novels, which Mrs. Cunningham says are popular among housewives, the store also reports a demand for old cookbooks and medical directories and books.

"Of course, we can always sell anything that deals with sports, trains or airplanes," she says, "but we also have a demand for any type of how-to-do-it book.

OTHER SELECTIONS that sell in the used book field are westerns, science fiction to both young and not-so-young customers and books of poetry.

Mrs. Cunningham says there are also many requests for children's books such as the Nancy Drew mysteries and the Hardy Boys stories.

"People who have read these books as children come in asking if we have them in stock so they can buy them for their children," she says.