



## Barnes & Noble jazzes up site with book-related videos

By Jayne O'Donnell and Christine Dugas, USA TODAY

Barnes & Noble (BKS) plans to launch a multimedia network on its website Monday with two video programs and more than 700 other book-related videos, organized by genre and including author interviews and book readings.

It's the latest salvo in what *Internet Retailer* editor Kurt Peters calls an "online video revolution" in retail. Websites use video to give shoppers new ways to interact with products and, of course, to boost sales. Just as bricks-and-mortar stores want to keep shoppers inside as long as possible to increase the chance they'll buy, websites know you'll spend more if you hang online longer.

Barnes & Noble, the leading bookseller, is using a soft sell with its video programs, which its digital media vice president, Mike Skagerlind, calls "mini documentaries." One show, *Tagged*, tells the stories behind recommended books, such as how and why the authors began research for the first group of books featured, which have prison themes. An editorial board for the chain chooses the books to highlight from among all genres.

The other new show, *Book Obsessed*, features readers discussing their literary passions; they include a romance-novel lover and a couple who met at a mystery-novel convention and buy dozens of mysteries a week.

Barnes & Noble's announcement follows news two weeks ago that Borders (BGP), ranked No. 2 in sales, is putting digital downloading centers in more than a dozen stores in 2008. The popularity of YouTube, Peters notes, has led more online retailers to offer videos, which can more clearly illustrate the look, size and use of products to consumers.

Other retailers stressing video:

- During back-to-school season last fall, J.C. Penney (JCP) featured "webisodes" of a video series called *Flipped*, which featured Chip and Pepper Foster, the twin designers behind some of the chain's jean and young menswear lines. Penney's chief marketing officer, Mike Boylson, says this and other upcoming multimedia efforts help the store connect with young shoppers.

- Diamond and jewelry retailer Ice.com started adding online videos with audio about six months ago to better showcase jewelry. Ice.com has set up its own studio and plans to add 300 more videos each month until it has videos of all 7,000 products.

- Online pet supply store Doctors Foster and Smith is building a studio and plans to introduce videos later this year. The focus will be products and education, such as how to clean your dog's ears or eyes.

Peters says the latest plans raise the bar so even smaller retail sites will have to find a way to add video.

Barnes & Noble's multimedia splash fits with larger trends. Some of the leaders in online video are entertainment retailers, such as those selling books, movies and CDs, says Mila Goodman of digital marketing agency Resource Interactive. They have better access to the content for quality video.

Barnes & Noble is "creating the type of experience that consumers are seeking," says Goodman, who calls the move "pretty awesome." Keeping the artistic quality high and the marketing understated should pay off for the bookseller, she says, because consumers don't want to be "overtly sold to."

Video "is a fantastic way to bring alive literary culture," says Skagerlind, who joined the bookseller last year after 12 years with Nickelodeon's Nick.com.

"It's a way to discover new books and new authors in a way they might not have found. If you don't know what you're looking for, search is not necessarily the best tool to use, so this is a fantastic canvas to have."