We had a lively gathering of Vermont booksellers in Rutland last week for lunch, conversation, and a visit to Phoenix Books. This was the first of NEIBA’s planned state-by-state bookseller meetings—a revival of the old “Shop Talk” events and a chance for booksellers to meet, eat, and talk about burning issues. We were happy to have ABA Board member Chris Morrow attend and he talked about what the ABA is thinking about, from publisher meetings regarding better terms of sale to increasing the efficiency of IndieCommerce. Among many other topics, we spent a lot of time taking about Vermont-specific advocacy issues, as well as the packaging concerns raised at the last All About the Books meeting. Watch the NEIBA Bookseller Facebook Forum for more information about this. (And if you haven’t been connected with this group yet,
2018 Higher Education Scholarship Recipients

Twenty-seven booksellers have been selected to receive more than $100,000 as part of the Book Industry Charitable (Binc) Foundation's 2018 Higher Education Scholarship Program.

The recipients were selected from 159 applicants comprised of bookstore owners, booksellers, former Borders Books employees, or their dependents. In total, $109,000 was awarded to help booksellers from 23 stores in 21 states reach their educational goals at 27 different schools.

The 2 recipients from New England are: please email beth@neba.org and I'll send you an invitation. Next gathering: Maine in late June...and CT, RI, NH, and MA to follow. Stay tuned!

Notes From the NEIBA Advisory Council

Interview with a Bookseller

As I am sure is the case with all your stores, at The Toadstool Bookshop in Keene we have a plethora of wonderful booksellers with myriad interests and personalities, but I couldn't pass up the opportunity to shine the spotlight on Jeff Smull, one of the original toads.

When I first started here (back in 2011 after the collapse of Borders) I was nervous; coming from the big bad corporate empire and entering the indie world I felt like an outsider. I shouldn't have worried and no one greeted me more warmly than Jeff.

His incomparable knowledge and friendly demeanor make him one of our bookstore’s greatest assets... I often tell him he’s never allowed to retire!

Tell us your bookseller story... how, when and where did you get started? What various positions have you held:
I helped open the Toadstool Bookshop in Keene, New Hampshire in 1983 and managed it for the next 25 years. In 2008, I retired from management but have continued to work part-time at The Toadstool as a buyer, on-and-off store designer, and general dogsbody. I'm currently working two days a week and am enjoying my 35th year of bookselling.

Being our only original Toad left at the Keene location what are some of your memories of the changes that have taken place:
During the first 20 years, every day was exciting...
Kirsten Goodale, recipient of a $3,500 Binc Scholarship Award
School: Southern Maine Community College
Major: Nursing
Hometown: Portland, ME
Store: Sherman's Books, Portland, ME
Educational plans: After receiving her associate's in nursing, Kirsten plans to go back to school for a master's in midwifery. In between, she may take classes to become a doula or lactation consultant.
Favorite Books: The First Bad Man by Miranda July; and Ancient Bodies, Modern Lives by Wenda Trevathan.

Brian Wallace, recipient of a $3,500 Binc Scholarship Award
School: Community College of Vermont
Major: Computer System Management
Hometown: South Burlington, VT
Store: Phoenix Books, Essex, VT
Educational plans: After completing his degree in Computer Information Technology, Brian plans to continue to work part time while continuing his education. He hopes to someday own a bookstore of his own.
Favorite Book: A Short History of Nearly Everything, by Bill Bryson

because we were growing so rapidly. We opened the store in a 1,400 square-foot space and by 2003 had grown into a nearly 20,000 square-foot book and music emporium. Lots of change, almost all of it positive. Two years ago, we moved the store to a downtown Keene location that includes a café.

I have found serving readers in the same place for 35 years to be an extraordinarily satisfying experience. I've watched children grow into adulthood and have children of their own, and I've watched their parents transition into retirement and grandparenthood. I've recommended many books to these folks over the decades, and they've reciprocated with reading suggestions that have enriched my reading life. It's been a partnership of shared passion.

Having spent many years in the industry is there a piece of advice you would offer to newbies:
I would encourage new booksellers to forge and maintain strong bonds with their colleagues by participating in NEIBA and ABA events. No one knows the troubles and triumphs you've seen like your fellow booksellers.

What's your favorite genre:
I read everything, but mostly fiction. The best novel I've read recently is "Exit West" by Moshin Hamid, which portrays, through a magically realistic narrative, the human cost of the current refugee crisis.

Is there a book that you find yourself returning to time and again... what's the draw:
I return again and again to Alice Munro, William Maxwell, John Cheever, David Mitchell, William Boyd, and so many others. The joys of rereading cannot be overstated. It's a different experience every time.

If money were no obstacle and you could design your very own bookstore, what unique flourish would you put on it:
I've always wanted to have a bird in the store that I could teach to recite some of my favorite poems. I think that would be a hoot, and if it got too annoying I could just put the cover back over the cage.

~ Betsy Covert, Toadstool Bookshop, Keene NH