THE SHELVE ME HOW-TO SHEET

How to Make Your Book Orderable by Libraries and Bookstores

Being listed on Amazon makes your book available to Amazon shoppers. It does not automatically make it easy—or financially workable—for a library or bookstore to order.

THE REAL PROBLEM
Most bookstores and libraries buy through established wholesalers, distributors, or approved vendors. They also evaluate the terms attached to the book—not just whether the book exists online.

Your first fix: become orderable

Before you pitch a single store or library, search for your ISBN through the wholesale or vendor channel your target uses. If staff cannot find the book there—or the buying terms do not work—you are asking them to solve your distribution problem for you.

Use this five-point shelf-ready check:

☐ Unique ISBN: Your print edition has its own ISBN, and the publisher name and book details are accurate.

☐ Wholesale availability: The book can be found and ordered through a recognized wholesale or distribution channel—not only from your Amazon page.

☐ Trade terms: Your pricing leaves room for a standard bookseller discount. Bookstores also commonly prefer returnable stock.

☐ Professional metadata: Title, author, description, subject codes, price, format, publication date, and cover match everywhere.

☐ Retail-quality package: The cover, spine, interior, editing, and price can sit beside traditionally published books without explanation or apology.

Circle the first box you cannot confidently check. That is the first barrier to fix—before outreach.

STOP PITCHING TOO SOON

Then Give Them a Reason to Say Yes

Orderable does not mean automatically selected. A buyer still needs to know why this book belongs in their store or collection.

1. Choose one realistic target	Start with a bookstore or library where the subject, genre, audience, author connection, or local interest is an obvious fit. “My book is for everyone” is not a reason to stock it.
2. Check the buyer’s policy	Look for the store’s consignment, local-author, or submission policy. For libraries, look for a purchase-request or local-author submission process. Follow that process exactly.
3.Preparea one-page sell sheet	Include the cover, title, author, ISBN, format, retail price, publication date, short description, audience, trade terms, ordering source, reviews or relevant proof, and your contact information.
4. Make the request specific	Ask for the appropriate next step: buyer review, local-author consideration, a purchase request, event consideration, or permission to submit materials. Do not send a vague “Will you carry my book?” message.

A 60-second orderability test

Hand your ISBN to someone who has never seen your Amazon listing. Ask them to locate the print book, confirm the retail price, identify where a trade buyer can order it, and find the discount and return terms. If they cannot do that quickly, a busy buyer probably will not either.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Fix the Path Before You Ask for the Shelf

Use the checklist below before contacting your first buyer.One missing item can stop the order even when the book itself is excellent.

☐ Search your print ISBN outside Amazon and record the ordering source.

☐ Confirm that the format, price, description, and publisher information match across channels.

☐ Review your wholesale discount and returnability settings.

☐ Identify one bookstore and one library that are a genuine audience match.

☐ Find and save each organization’s submission or purchasing policy.

☐ Create your one-page sell sheet before making contact.

Amazon Is One Market. Your Book Needs Access to the Rest.

In Selling Beyond Amazon: Full Market Access, you’ll learn how the book trade works, where your title needs to be available, and how to create a real path to bookstores, libraries, schools, specialty retailers, and more.

REGISTER FOR FULL MARKET ACCESS

A quick note: Every bookstore and library has its own buying and submission policies. The American Booksellers Association states that books offered to its bookseller members must be available through wholesalers on standard, returnable terms. The American Library Association also provides guidance on marketing titles to library buyers.

Sources: American Booksellers Association, Publisher Opportunities (bookweb.org/publisher-opportunities-details); American Library Association, Marketing to Libraries: Basics (libguides.ala.org/marketing-to-libraries).