

Design a 21st Century Indie Bookstore

An “Indie” (or independent) bookstore is a store that is independently owned and not part of a large chain. Every bookstore, whether independently owned or part of a large corporate structure, has a civics learning role as a provider of ideas and information to readers. In this activity, you design an Indie bookstore to meet the needs of 21st-century people, notably children and young adults, in your community to be informed participants in a democratic society and government system.

How often do you visit your local bookstore?

Do you even have a bookstore near where you live?

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there is one bookstore for every 54,299 persons in the United States (“[Don’t Turn the Page on Bookstores](#),” Hait, 2021). California, with the most people, has the most bookstores.

Still, millions of people in urban and rural areas do not have a bookstore nearby to visit. Book browsing and buying is hardly ever part of their media experience.



Picture of Bookstore by [LubosHouska](#) is under [Pixabay License](#)

Despite the enormity of book sales through Amazon, the rise of eBooks, the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a decline in book and magazine reading among young people, bookstores remain prominent features of today's media environment.

In fact, bookstores have been rebounding in recent years -- book sales have increased, young people are elevating books on TikTok (see "[The rise of BookTok: meet the teen influencers pushing books up the charts](#)"), and "**Indie**" **bookstores** are operating in communities all across the country.

An "Indie" (or independent) bookstore is a store that is independently owned and not part of a large chain, like Barnes & Noble. In the century before Amazon was founded in 1994, most bookstores were independent. Then, large chains and online providers took over and independent stores declined. But now people are beginning to return to the in-person experiences a bookstore offers.

While bookstores are private businesses and not public organizations, they are places to go for ideas and information, and every member of our society uses ideas and information to make choices and decisions about political issues. Every bookstore -- through the materials it carries and the ways it makes those materials visible and accessible to customers -- plays a role in how people think about government, public policies, and social and political change.

Activity: Design Your Own Indie Bookstore

In past years, to get more customers, bookstores have added in-store features like free Internet access, coffee shops, reading nooks with comfortable chairs and pillows, additional products (e.g., toys, cards, and art supplies), free or low-cost educational workshops for children, and adults, and targeted selections of books, magazines and other reading materials.

There is even a new app, [Tertulia](#), that seeks to replicate some of the actual bookstore experience by using a mix of artificial intelligence information and suggestions by human editors to generate a daily listing of five books you might want to read.

Design a diagram for a floor plan for your Indie bookstore.

- As you create your diagram, think about how your store will engage in community-building, accessibility, and inclusion of many points of view and ideas for change. Would you include, for example, a [work station for caregivers](#)?
- Also, consider how you will integrate technology and digital materials with print books.
- Critically analyze the logos of other Bookstores - both independent and large chain ones.
 - What are common colors used? Why?
 - What are common symbols/icons used? Why do you think that is?
- Then, create a logo for your bookstore.
- Next, design a lineup of events for your bookstore to engage customers in critical conversations and civic engagement activities (e.g., speaker series, Poetry slam, book club, voter engagement drive).
- Finally, design a mission statement for how your store connects to people's civic needs.
 - Most indie bookstores are aware of and seek to be responsive to the needs of their community. For local, state or national elections, a store might create a display of voting materials or for a debate about solar arrays a store might showcase materials about environment protection and green energy. The goal is to provide everyone with accurate, reliable, fair information on which they can base the decisions they have to make as voters and members of society.
 - Design a mission statement in the form of a sign, meme, poster, or even a TikTok video.

Designing for Learning: Student-Created Activity Example

[Design a 21st Century Indie Bookstore](#) by Lucia Beurer

Connecting to the Building Democracy for All eBook

[Building Democracy for All: Freedom of the Press and News/Media Literacy](#)



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