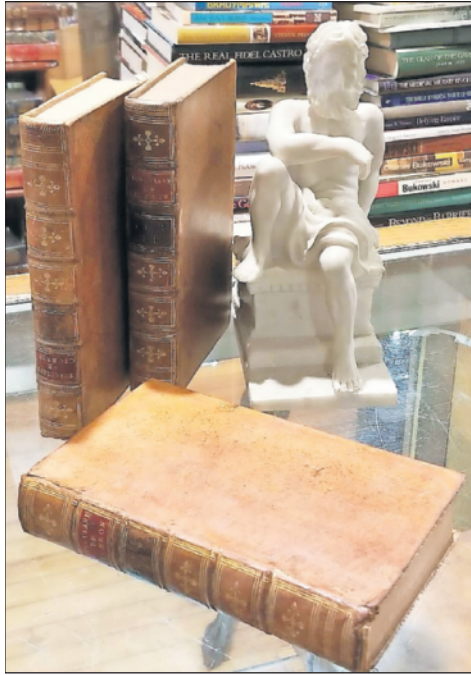


Calling all bibliophiles

More than 35,000 choices available at Act 2 Books in Flemington



At Act 2 Books you're sure to find that special edition or rare copy of a favorite novel among the stacks curated throughout five categorized rooms.



From Hollywood to horror to military history to Americana and anything in-between, every book is its own master work.

That quaint house on Central Avenue in Flemington with Victorian lamps dotting the property is actually a treasure trove for the discerning bookworm or collector.

Among the 35,000 choices at Act 2 Books you are sure to find that special edition or rare copy of a favorite novel among the stacks diligently curated throughout five categorized rooms.

"Not one random book is in the store," said owner Mike Uhde of his inventory. "Every single book on our shelves is a book that we selected. There's never a junky book in here. We're really careful about what we buy, what we put on the shelf."

From Hollywood to horror to military history to Americana and anything in-between, every book is its own master work. How can something "used" be so cherished? Well, does a second edition of "Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austen peak your interest? Or an autographed first edition of Stephen King's "Eyes of the Dragon?"

Uhde accumulates the books from estate sales, private collections, and auctions throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic.

"I just love books ... and libraries," he said of the venture. "I'd always been a big supporter of libraries in New Jersey."

Originally, he started out with a bookmobile packed with 4,000 new and used books and drove around Brooklyn, Manhattan and Newark three days every week. Eventually, the bookmobile transitioned to a building in Monmouth County. Then, internet competition ultimately forced his focus toward selling just used books and a move to the Flemington location.

"You could just see the writing on the wall," he said. "Between e-books on popular fiction, and Amazon on everything else, it was just too difficult to be a brick-and-mortar bookstore to compete against those guys."

Over Memorial Day weekend, Act 2 Books will be underwriting the annual Flemington Summer Book Fest (www.summerbookfest.com) for the 19th consecutive year. More than 3,000 book lovers are expected to pore over the abundant selection of paperbacks and hardcovers from May 27 to May 30 on the grounds of the bookstore. Over 10,000 books and records will be available at the event for just 99¢ each.

"If you're a brick-and-mortar store, you have a much different existence than somebody who is an online seller," Uhde said. "You really become part of the community. There is a responsibility to leverage our physical presence so that we add value and help to the community."

At Book Fest, local authors also participate by showcasing their published work and connecting with potential buyers. In addition, on "Treasures in the Attic" day, free book appraisals are offered.

As a passionate bibliophile and philanthropist, Uhde "hates to see books go to waste" so he has donated 50,000 books, over 10 years, to the GetFocused.org program which promotes reading and exercise for children.

Act 2 Books also provides backdrops for movies as well as Broadway shows including "The Music Man," and the "Gotham" TV series. A warehouse containing one million books is now dedicated just to set design for the entertainment business.

Six days a week, except for Monday, you can peruse the catalogued bookshelves while enjoying a free cup of coffee at the store located at 24 Central Station from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesday through Saturday, with hours on Sunday from noon to 6 p.m. The vast selection is listed online at www.Act2Books.com as well. Non-perishable food



Peruse the catalogued book shelves while enjoying a free cup of coffee at Act 2 Books, located at 24 Central Station in Flemington.

items can be donated any day at the bookstore in exchange for a free book.

"It's a nice way to make a living. Nobody comes into a bookstore cranky," Uhde said. "It's a very, very pleasant environment."

— Debra Stevko Miller



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