

DEALER PROFILE

ATLANTIC NEWS

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BY TREVOR J. ADAMS

Hey, Magazines Canada Members! Welcome to a new hotsheet series that focuses on our valued distribution partners—our dealers! These occasional hotsheets will showcase some of the stores where MC's distribution member magazines are sold, the awesome people who run them—and the awesome people who shop there too! A great read for our distribution members but also anyone who cares about selling magazines in Canada!

Atlantic News in Halifax, N.S., is a feast for the senses: the smoky-vanilla scent of stacks of magazines and fresh-brewed coffee, the friendly hum of conversation, the crisp, clean feel of new magazines, so shiny you expect the ink to still be wet.

Opened in 1973, the newsstand is in a historic building near the city's quaint Schmutville neighbourhood, where colourful heritage homes stand shoulder to shoulder. It's a local institution, and a key player in the East Coast magazine industry, carrying a raft of local and Canadian titles, from the mainstream to the obscure, alongside publications from around the world.

Michelle and Stephen Gerard ran the shop for many years, and when word began circulating last year that Chris Green, a fourth-generation Californian with no history in the community, bought it, folks worried.

"Customers were coming in to thank me for buying," he recalls. "But after the smile they'd lean forward and say, 'Don't mess it up.'"

They needn't have worried. Chris is married to a Maritimer and his children attend university in the region, so he wanted to become part of the community. A former international school administrator who worked abroad for many years, he couldn't find employment in his field when they moved to Halifax, but had long been interested in running a shop like Atlantic News.

"Any place I go, I look for places like this — magazine stands, bookstores," he says, adding he met former co-owner Michelle Gerard on his first visit. "I came in asking a million questions and she said, 'Hmm, that's interesting' ... Michelle and Stephen had been



Image courtesy: Atlantic News

looking to sell and when we started talking and we hit it off. It was important for them, they'd had a number of different offers, to have the place continue along a path they had put it on very firmly... There was a

fear from the customers that the place was going to change and become a hair salon or whatever happens to a lot of these places.”

Consistency was important to all involved in the sale.

“In our discussions, it was almost like I was vetted by Stephen and Michelle’s kids but also by the staff,” Green says. “They had an input. Meeting the staff and finding out that they wanted to stay ... was crucial. I step in and they know how this place works and they’re teaching me.”

He points to Dawn, a retired international business consultant who lives nearby and works two shifts a week, simply because she loves doing it. One of her shifts is Sunday, when subscribers come in to pick up their international newspapers. “They will come in and they’re very kind, but they see me and they say, ‘Where’s Dawn? Part of my routine is seeing Dawn,’” Green says. “Those relationships have been a great part of it.”

And at the heart of everything is that expansive selection of magazines and newspapers, alongside a variety of local books.

“You can get the *New Yorker* in a lot of places,” Green says. “Through our distributors we bring in a lot of stuff from the U.K., which makes us unique. And the local and Canadian pieces are so important. As I learn about Magazines Canada and what they do for small outfits, it’s just so important. It would be really hard for us to get those magazines if it wasn’t for Magazines Canada. Supporting the industry and supporting people like us, it’s a public service what they do. I really appreciate Magazines Canada and I hope they keep going strong.”

And he sees opportunities to adapt to how people shop today to get those Canadian titles in more hands.

“I’m very excited to take this truly analog store and find places to digitize that make it smoother ... like getting the website up to speed,” he says, adding that his brother, an artist in California, is in the process of building a Shopify-based site so expatriate Haligonians can order online. “A big draw of this place is being here but as you know, there’s a lot of people who used to live here but are now abroad and still want

to support it, or order for someone else. Getting the website up to speed will help augment what we do.”

He’s also keen on promotional opportunities, such as developing a podcast where he interviews locals about their memories of Atlantic News. “Halifax is a big growing city and it’s cosmopolitan, but it still has the feel of a small town in a lot of ways, which I really appreciate,” he says.

And more than anything, he wants the business to remain a hub of that community.

“People come in here, and they run into their friends and neighbours,” he explains. “One customer said, ‘It’s like coming to a nice cocktail party’ because they come in and see somebody they haven’t seen in a couple weeks.”

MORE ATLANTIC MAGAZINE FAVOURITES

- **Downtown Comics:** Since 1997, Downtown Comics has been aptly billed as the “friendliest comic book store” around, offering a range of magazines, new and back issue comics, graphic novels, collectibles, mystery boxes, board games, trading cards, and more. 141 Duckworth St., St. John’s, N.L. downtowncomics.ca
- **The Inside Story:** Established in 1982, this independent shop is chockablock with exciting magazines, new book titles, and beloved classics, and friendly faces. In the heart of the small town, it’s a popular place to meet friends and cozy up by the fire with a good book. 1016 Central Ave., Greenwood, N.S. theinsidestory.ca
- **Island Treasures:** Family owned and operated since 1982, Island Treasures boasts two locations offering regional publications, traditional music, souvenirs, and all manner of local food, clothing, and gifts. 44 Maple Valley Rd., Corner Brook, and 16 High Street, Port Aux Basques, N.L. islandtreasuresnl.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Trevor J. Adams is senior editor/copy chief with Advocate Media who has been working in the Atlantic Canadian magazine industry since 1998. He’s senior editor/copy chief with *Saltscapes* magazine and has published three books. In 2023, he earned the Bronze Quill Award from News Media Canada.

