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REFERENCE

LOGOS BOOKS

## But don't call Logos Books disorganized

By TOM LONG BUSINESS

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SANTA CRUZ — Jazz saxophone riffs drift through the store, breezing past a professorial-looking fellow glancing through a book on mushrooms.

Ten feet away, a mohawked girl wearing Army boots is reaching up for a hardback book of fiction, one of the thousands of hardbacks that line the walls and stock the aisles.

In the back of the store, people are flipping through the alphabetized racks of used albums, in search of everything from obscure jazz to Billy Joel. A tie-dyed refugee from the '60s scans some of the discounted new books while his earth-mother mate pushes baby in a stroller around the huge room dedicated to paperback fiction and mystery novels.

Customers come in the back door, wander through the store and walk out the front onto the Pacific Garden Mall. A small pickup truck pulls up in front and two young men stagger in, carrying boxes filled with books.

Logos Books & Records. Where else?

John Livingston came to Santa Cruz in 1969 specifically to start a used-book store. He had worked for Moe's Books in Berkeley while getting his degree in political philosophy there, and he had noticed that store did two things differently than other used-book stores — it took the business seriously and it kept its shelves extremely well-organized.

Livingston thought he could make the same approach work in Santa Cruz.

"I just thought the formula was appropriate here," Livingston says. "It's a very cost-conscious town and generally Northern California was the vanguard of cultural changes going on in that period.

"Also, I wanted to live here," he admits.

When Livingston brought Moe's sense of organization to Santa Cruz, he also brought that store's approach to purchasing.

"Buy high, sell high," Livingston explains. In other words, instead of offering a seller \$1.50

for a boxload of paperbacks, Logos inspects each book and, if it decides to purchase the volume, it offers the seller about a quarter of the book's original cash worth. Often sellers take their booty in trade slips, which are worth about a third more than the cash price.

Then it sells the book for about half its original worth. The entire process develops a sense of respect for the book's continued worth and for the store's product.

As a business, Logos has certainly earned respect over the years. Livingston started out in a small shop space downtown, next to County Bank. After four years, "I wanted a bigger location and I had the opportunity to buy this building..." Livingston says.

So Logos moved to its current location on the south end of the Mall. And began expanding. And expanding. And expanding.

"Part of the problem with used books is that space is at an absolute premium at all times," Livingston says. And so the store has kept growing. First it gobbled up some of the parking lot behind

triguing books.

"All the books have roughly the same profit margin," Livingston says.

One of the most notable things about Logos is that it doesn't have the musty, crammed and chaotic atmosphere of many used-book stores. Smaller stores such as the Book Loft in Santa Cruz and the Chimney Sweep in Scotts Valley can be dream havens for browsers, but for those looking for a specific title in a hurry, the efficient layout and roominess of Logos can't be beat.

"We just take the care to make it easy to find things," Livingston says.

The organization of the shelves extends into the organization of the store's employees. "We have a very careful, very extensive training period for all of the buyers," Livingston says. "It takes six months of training for a buyer to be on his own. And I insist that all buyers can do both books and records. That way we never build up a payroll of people who are limited in one area."

And wise buying is one of the

the original building. Then it swallowed the drugstore next door. Then the back of the clothing store on its other side.

Along the way, Logos has swallowed up the inventory of some of its competitors as well. The store is now easily the biggest dealer of used books in the county, and probably one of the most organized such stores of its size in the state.

All this expansion is probably the truest indication of the store's success. Livingston feels that the store's diversity, its organization and its attention to personnel development are major reasons the growth has continued.

"Records carried us initially, while we were building the stock," he says. "Since then, it's been between used books, new books and records — one department has always carried us.

"I also think we emphasize areas that a lot of stores don't — scholarly books, art books — along with the flashy hot stuff," Livingston says. "A lot of places will rely on what they can move quickest, but we rely on the in-

keys to success in the used-book biz. It's also one of the things that limits expansion into a chain, according to Livingston.

"The biggest problem inherent to this business is that each location has very specific needs," he says. "I would never buy the same way in Berkeley or Palo Alto that I buy here.

"You could never develop a store this quality (in a chain)," Livingston says, although he's heard that such a chain is being established. "I can't imagine they could do a good job of it. The buying is too critical," he says.

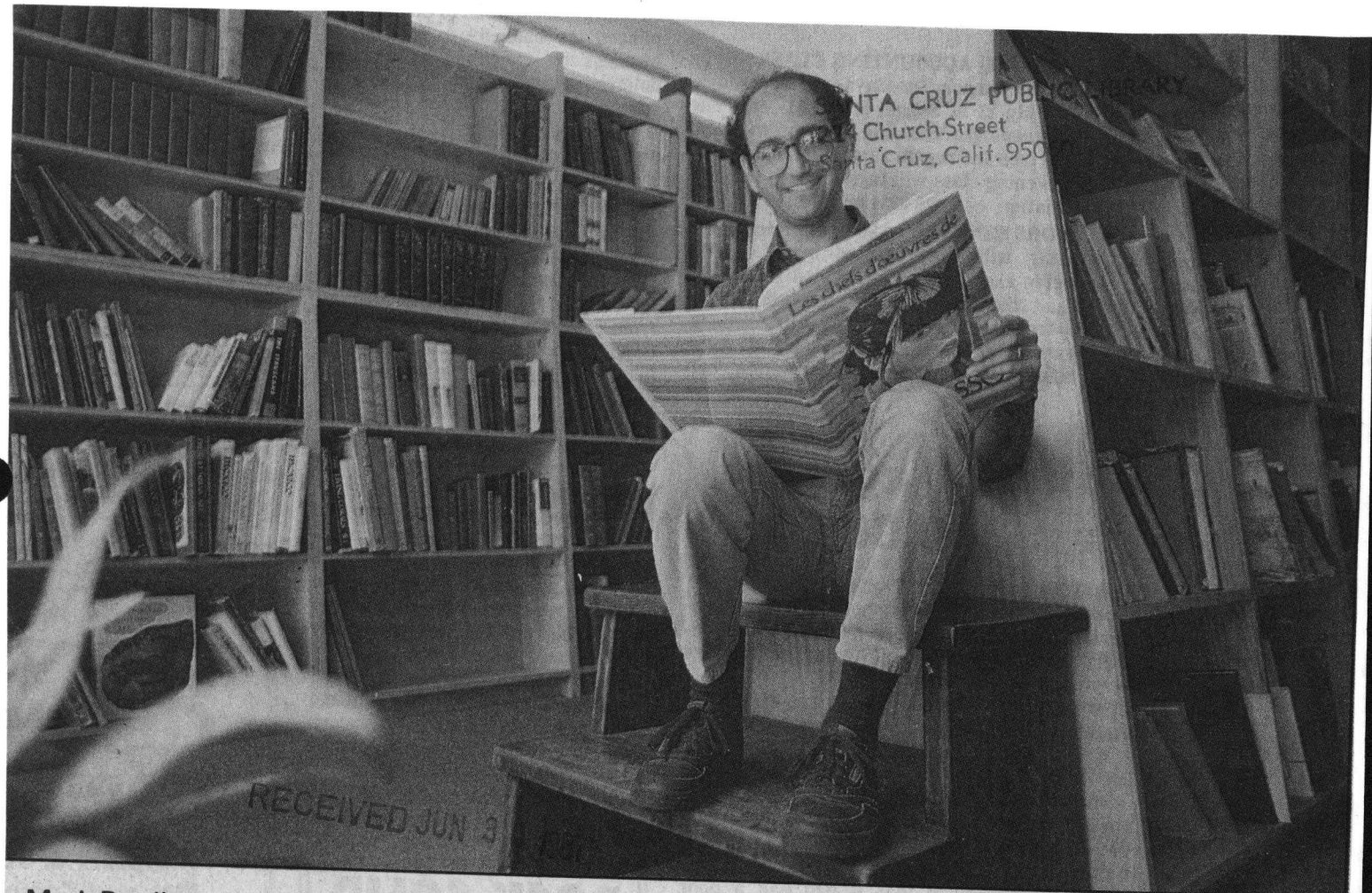
Despite its success, Livingston still has some unorthodox attitudes about Logos as a business.

"I'd much rather buy a book from a guy who's a regular customer as opposed to the guy who's going around collecting stuff and wants cash for it," Livingston says. "I'm not excited about doing that.

"I never thought of myself as a businessman when I started," he says. "I'm attracted to this as a recycler."

# You can call it unorthodox

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Mark Bradlyn, co-manager of Logos, takes a break among books that are getting a second chance.

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel