

When you want to be found

Yesterday, I was browsing through books in my favorite used bookstore (where you can get most soft cover books for \$2 each, a real bargain, and most books are in great shape to boot). As I was making my way through the Fiction section, I came across Diane Ackerman's *The Zookeeper's Wife*, which is the *real* life story of a Polish woman who saved Jews during World War II, thus making it a non-fiction book. I came across a Denise Mina book that should've been housed in the Mystery section. I came across memoirs and biographies. In short, there were a lot of books that were not classified correctly and therefore shelved in the wrong place.



Bookstore picture courtesy of Kaboompics

Being in the wrong place makes it hard to be found.

The used bookstore is volunteer-run, and it may be too much to ask volunteers to know what each book is or where it belongs. Since books are donated, there is no inventory. On the other hand, in a regular bookstore, books are shelved by ISBN numbers and inventories are computerized. It'd be rare that a book was shelved in the wrong place, unless a customer put it back where it didn't belong. If you were looking for a particular book, you could ask someone to look it up to see if it is available and if so, where it is located.

Classification is important, especially on the internet.

The internet is more like the used bookstore than it is like the organized world of Barnes & Noble. The internet is pretty much volunteer-run and the volunteers are each website's owners. In other words, on the internet you self-classify—you put yourself on the right (or wrong) shelf.

As the website owner or manager, you choose how you want your site to look, what content to include, and what keywords to use. You choose whether you will optimize your site to be found on search engines (SEO) and whether you will do it well (use the right tools, or hire a professional) or not.

When you want to be found, especially online, you have to know how to describe yourself and where people would look for you. You have to know how you are classified and what keywords people use to find you.

You must understand yourself and your market.

In the used bookstore, there are some volunteers who are avid readers, some who are aces at alphabetization and organization, and some who just want to help but have no clues. The volunteers who can alphabetize, organize *and* know books well are the ones who know the right place to shelve a book.

You have to understand exactly what to do, and how the world

classifies you. You may think that you do one thing (like Mattress Firm thinks it sells “sleep solutions”) while most customers see you differently (customers shop for mattresses not sleep solutions). It may be tempting to figure out some fancy description to help you stand out, but unless you classify yourself correctly and use the more common keywords searchers would use, you will not be found.

Don't be the memoir languishing in the fiction section. Classify your website correctly and use the right keywords.