

Why Barnes & Noble is Turning to Used Books for Sustainability

One thing that remains consistent throughout generations of change is the importance of literature. Since 1886, [Barnes & Noble](#) has served readers across the nation, and over 190 million physical books are sold annually. Additionally, there are over 600 Barnes & Noble bookstores in the United States.

Barnes & Noble says it wants to create a healthy environment for readers. With the current increase in concern regarding global greenhouse gas emissions, Barnes & Noble hopes to make a positive impact in mitigating the impacts of climate change. With these goals in mind, in January, Barnes & Noble became the first omni-channel bookseller to launch a sustainability initiative.

Sustainability Launch Day

On the day of the Barnes & Noble Sustainability Initiative launch, I attended a store in Los Angeles. Crowds formed in two lines, both of which wrapped around the sides of the building. One line led to a tent with the signage “Donate Your Used Books,” where adults 60 and older received \$5 in-store credit per used book donation. “I have been collecting books for over 50 years. Why shouldn’t they go to a great cause?” said one older gentleman at the back of the line. The second line led to a tent with the signage “Read a book, plant a tree.” Here, attendees of all ages purchased used books, and students were able to get a tree planted in their name for buying a pre-owned novel. Students were overjoyed to sign their names on certificates signifying their participation in planting a tree by purchasing a used book.

In addition to promoting sustainable reading, [Barnes & Noble Education Inc. \(BNED\)](#) offers growth opportunities for students in the education sector. This sustainability event not only encourages students’ educational involvement but also spreads awareness of the importance of environmentally conscious behaviors. Barnes & Noble communications officials say the initiative works to encourage students to pursue higher education while taking part in climate-related educational efforts.

The Impact of Paper Manufacturing

As one of the largest booksellers in the United States, Barnes & Noble is also one of the biggest companies that sells paper products. Environmental groups say one of the largest contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions is the loss of forests from paper manufacturing. The publishing industry’s environmental impact has drawn public scrutiny, and Barnes and Noble is using used book sales to reduce paper production.

The pulp and paper industry accounts for about 15% of total wood consumption, and the United States is the second largest paper producer and consumer in the world, according to the [World](#)

[Wildlife Fund](#). Environmental groups say the unsustainable production of paper for books contributes to deforestation. Barnes & Noble's program is intended to encourage customers to donate and purchase used books at its stores.

Measuring Company Impact

Carbon footprint is a measurement tool that Barnes & Noble takes into consideration when running its large bookselling business. To offset the amount of paper being created for new books that are purchased, Barnes & Noble has partnered with The Nature Conservancy's "[Plant a Billion Trees](#)" program. This program aims to restore forests across the globe. The organization plants trees and informs the public about how connected biodiversity loss is to climate change. The Nature Conservancy pledged to plant a tree for every used book purchased by a student at Barnes & Noble.

Partnering with impact organizations such as the Nature Conservancy offers an opportunity for companies like Barnes & Noble to make an impact in protecting the natural world. This initiative reflects the growing trend to promote reuse and reduce environmental impacts.

More information about the initiative is available on barnesandnoble.com

For more information, contact Abby Cariño at accarino@usc.edu

###