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Independent bookstores fight for survival on *Paperback Dreams*

-- New documentary available nationally to PBS stations this fall --

-- Airs on KQED's Truly CA Sunday, November 16 at 6pm --

September 8, 2008, San Francisco CA--- In a time of increasing competition from mega-chains and online retailers, many local businesses are fighting for survival. Through the tumultuous story of two beloved Bay Area booksellers, Cody's and Kepler's, *Paperback Dreams* captures the David and Goliath struggle faced by countless independents around the country. Directed by filmmaker Alex Beckstead, *Paperback Dreams* will air Sunday, November 16 at 6pm on KQED Public Television 9 as part of the *Truly CA* independent film series, and will be available to PBS stations nationwide in November (check local listings).

Paperback Dreams opens in the heyday of the independent bookseller, when the availability of great works in affordable paperbacks sets the stage for bookstores like Kepler's and Cody's to become vibrant meeting places for intellectual growth and activism. Figures such as Joan Baez and Firoozeh Dumas appear in the film to recount the vital role these stores played in various social causes throughout the years. *Paperback Dreams* then shifts to present day, where independent stores now have to contend with chains such as Borders, websites such as Amazon, and the many box stores that sell books as "loss leaders."

In this challenging climate, owners and patrons make a very moving case for the resounding relevance and importance of independent bookstores. Andy Ross, owner of Cody's, likens the feeling of purchasing the well-known bookstore to purchasing Yosemite National Park. In a suspenseful and heartbreaking sequence, we watch Andy gamble everything he owns on a bold and expensive attempt to compete with chains.

Today, the ground beneath the feet of both stores continues to shift. In June 2008, Cody's was forced to close the doors of its last store. Kepler's closed last summer after fifty years in business. The loss of the store was mourned from handwritten posters on the shop's shuttered windows to the pages of *The New York Times*. And then—in a scene straight out of *It's a Wonderful Life*—Kepler's loyal customers came to the rescue and the store reopened after 40 days. But not every community has the funds to stage such a dramatic rescue. For the rest of us, the future of literary culture is uncertain. *Paperback Dreams* documents the struggle of the independents to survive, and demonstrates that their role in bringing new ideas to readers remains as essential as ever.

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About Filmmaker

Alex Beckstead is a San Francisco-based documentary filmmaker. *Paperback Dreams* is his second ITVS-funded project. The first, *Trailer Park Blues*, is an honest but sensitive portrait of his grandfather's lifelong struggle with alcoholism in a trailer park north of Phoenix, AZ. Beckstead also produced segments in Kenya and Uganda for the 2005 PBS special *Ending AIDS: The Search for a Vaccine*. This one-hour documentary tells the story of one of the greatest medical challenges of our time: finding a vaccine to prevent HIV/AIDS. His other credits include Associate Producer of *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*, a two-hour prime time PBS special that was both a biography of Islam's founding prophet, and a profile of contemporary American Muslims. He also directed a new companion documentary for a DVD release of the HBO dramatic series *Deadwood*. Beckstead's first film, the short documentary *SXE*, screened at the 1999 Sundance Film Festival.

About Truly CA

Truly CA is KQED's series of independent documentaries about life in the Golden State. It airs monthly on Sundays at 6pm on KQED 9. *Truly CA* is a KQED production presented in association with the Bay Area Video Coalition and Film Arts Foundation. Support for *Truly CA* is provided by The Campaign for the Future Program Venture Fund, Ambassador James C. Hormel, and the members of KQED.

About KQED Public Television

KQED Public Television 9 (www.kqed.org), a service of Northern California Public Broadcasting, Inc. (NCPB), is the nation's most-watched public television station. KQED produces local weekly series in high definition and available on Comcast On Demand including: *QUEST*; *Spark*; *Check, Please! Bay Area* and *This Week in Northern California*; and national series: *Jacques Pepin: More Fast Food My Way* and *Jean-Michel Cousteau: Ocean Adventures*. KQED's digital television channels include KQED HD, KQED Life, KQED World, KQED Kids, and KQED V-me, and are available 24/7 on Comcast. Download programs for viewing and video podcasts at www.kqed.org, featuring unique content on one of the most-visited station sites in public broadcasting.

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