

The physical stores tap into vast intelligence [Amazon](#) has on its online customers' browsing, buying and reviewing habits.

The Santana Row store holds about 3,500 titles in all and employs 15 people.

The store isn't especially large, Cast acknowledged Tuesday. That means the company needs to be choosy about which books make the short-list to physical form in the store, using a mix of online reviews and a set of company curators.

"That's not to say they are all best-sellers ... that's not it at all," she said. "What we do is we use the information about what people read, how they read and why they read and take that information to select the books."

That data is powerful. Inside the shop, it's easy to get sucked in.

Looking for a page-turner? Amazon's new store has a section for books that readers on its Kindle digital devices typically finished in three days or less.

Not sure what kids' books are popular anymore? The store's children's section, which takes up roughly a fourth of the space in the shop, is stocked with the most popular kids books on [Amazon.com](#). Every book in the store is paired with a placard that shows the book's rating on Amazon.com and a review from a reader.

Like the online version of [Amazon Books](#), the store offers suggestions to customers based on their interests — as well as a physical store can. If a shopper spots a book they know they liked, often a sign on the shelf lets them know the four to five books next to it are suggested reading.

Perhaps the most striking difference between a traditional bookstore and [Amazon Books](#) is that the books all sit cover-out on the shelves. That takes up more room on the shelves, but democratizes the experience, Cast said, adding that in earlier iterations of Amazon Book stores around the country, the titles that sat spine-out didn't sell as well as the those that showed the full cover of the book.

"We like to say we give them the opportunity to communicate their own essence," she said. "It also gives us the opportunity to put a review card underneath."

Shoppers can scan the cover of the book or the barcode using a kiosk or with their phone using the [Amazon](#) mobile application to find out more about their potential purchase, including its price.

The app points out in big, red lettering that [Amazon Prime](#) members get 40 percent off.

In the middle of the store, [Amazon](#) electronics or products compatible with Amazon products line long tables. Among them the Kindle, the company's [Echo](#) smart speaker and a handful of third-party smart-home products that integrate with Echo.

The art of location

And though nearly every part of the store has been curated like a science, using [Amazon's](#) vast trove of online data, picking out a location is still very much an art and a learning process, Cast said.

[Amazon Books](#) joins a spate of online-first retailers at Santana Row including luxury electric carmaker Tesla, eyeglass retailer Warby Parker and audio speaker company Libratone, which is also [branching out from an online-only model](#).

[Amazon Books](#) in Walnut Creek will also include a cafe. An exact opening date for the East Bay store hasn't been released, but it's on Amazon's list of 2017 store openings, which also includes Bellevue, Wash., New York City and Los Angeles. Cast wouldn't provide further details on planned store openings beyond those already announced.

"We're just getting started ... and you can imagine as time goes on we'll be in a lot of different places," she said. "We're learning about geographies, we are learning about the many different characteristics of customers and we're learning about what kind of locations are strongest for our customers and people who love to read."

Janice Bitters

Commercial Real Estate Reporter
Silicon Valley Business Journal

