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## INTERNATIONAL FEATURE

# Redefining Borders

*Borders, the \$4.1 billion global retailer of books, music, movies, periodicals and gift and stationery items, has launched a 29,000 sq. foot (2,700 sq. metre) concept store in its hometown of Ann Arbor in Michigan. The new concept, designed by JGA, was more than 18 months in development and testing and represents a significant enhancement over the company's existing stores.*

In an age defined by Apple's iTunes and Amazon's Kindle, consumers have many places to engage and interact with the products typically found at a bookstore. And with competition exploding in what was for decades a fairly static category, Borders set out to create an all-new shopping experience that would set it apart from the competition.

"Borders had to evolve beyond being simply a seller of books, music and movies to becoming a true 'headquarters for knowledge and entertainment,'" says Ken Nisch, Chairman, JGA. "The new design concept had to differentiate Borders from all other competitors - online and bricks-and-mortar - prompting customers to bypass the competitors to take advantage of an experience that blends the best of the traditional book store with new and exciting options that reflect the way consumers live today. The concept had to invite, energize, interconnect, commingle, challenge, promote discovery, create "neighborhoods of thought" and to do it in a way that is uniquely Borders."

A new, contemporary storefront element embodies the new architecture and reinforces the iconic elements of the brand - the white page, the red underscore, the spine of a book and the Borders logo. Double storey glass windows allow the light in, offer a view into the Seattle's Best Coffee cafe and beckon customers into the store.

Consumers are greeted at the entry with the store's Launch Pad. A variety of fixtures make the books more appealing to look at from a visual merchandising perspective, while adding a variety of scale and presentation options for books ranging from reference to lifestyle. These iconic fixtures provide an open flow shopping pattern versus a more traditional definition of a hard race track at the entry. Contiguous with the cafe, magazines and multimedia areas, this Launch Pad provides an opportunity for this corner of the store to be much more editorially current to today's events, featuring news titles, periodicals and topical multimedia.

A prominent service desk in Borders signature red is a key element bordering this area. Throughout the store, red is used as a call to action, be it technology, marketing, transaction or community events.

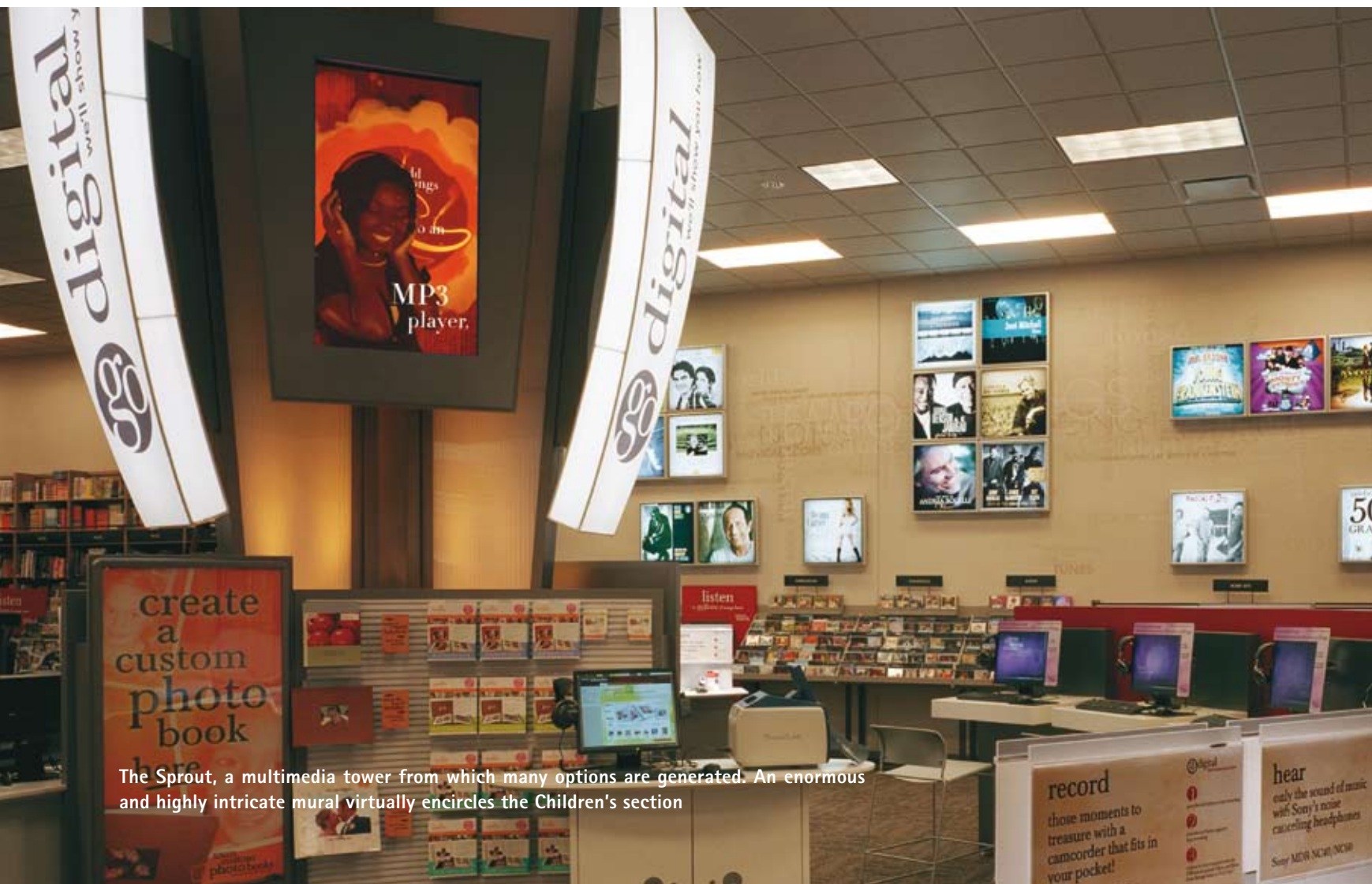
Attracting the guest further into the store is a technology-rich zone featuring the Sprout, a multimedia tower that becomes a virtual wellhead from which many options are generated. Here customers can use multiple computer kiosks and stations dedicated to unique new services including music and book downloading, mixing and making custom CDs, researching family ancestry, creating photo albums, and even personal publishing. Surrounding this area are two semi-circular



The iconic fixtures provide an open flow shopping pattern



A prominent service desk in Borders signature red is a key element in the area



The Sprout, a multimedia tower from which many options are generated. An enormous and highly intricate mural virtually encircles the Children's section



A large oculus draws customers towards the destination zones



An enormous and highly intricate mural virtually encircles the children's area

low walls to provide a degree of definition and consumer privacy. On either side of the Sprout are the in-store multimedia areas, presented on highly flexible fixtures designed to evolve with this category's ever-changing landscape.

Further into the store, a large oculus draws consumers toward the destination zones, like Travel, Cooking and Wellness, using skylights, interior wall graphics, unique lighting and distinctive shade-like graphic elements.

"Each zone is highlighted by a large focal wall, where large flat-screen elements, marketing, and lifestyle relevant graphics create smaller zones within", Kathi McWilliams, Creative Director, JGA. "Each area provides a more intimate focus on the categories, using circular feature tables, endcaps and a department focal wall, as well as in-section flat panel screens that broadcast a wide variety of inspirational and helpful programming direct from Borders and its content partners."

For the Children's destination, Borders commissioned award-winning Australian children's author and illustrator, Colin Thompson, to create an enormous and highly intricate mural that virtually encircles the children's area. Based on a whimsical and imaginary book-inspired world, its vibrant colours are set against white fixtures with multicolour translucent inserts. Two large cut-out hot air balloons suspended from the ceiling add to the experience for young visitors.

The Graphic Novel Destination is marked by a distinctive image collage, within an internally illuminated ceiling structure, that uses highly cropped and densely coloured elements featuring vivid characters taken from the iconography of the graphic novels world. In the values/impulse zone, a series of pinwheel fixtures provide a browsing environment leading up to the other impulse-related products.

A semi-circular community area provides a space for in-store activities ranging from author readings, book signings, book club meetings and live music performances. This zone is highly versatile as an activity-appropriate environment using flexible technology, staging furniture and lighting to easily convert from an interactive group activity and performance center to an author reading and discussion venue.

The overall character of the store uses a series of warm, neutral tones with a series of reader-and-listener quotes and design motifs to provide a neutral, soft and warm background to the dynamic foreground elements within the store's destinations.



The Graphic Novel Destination featuring vivid characters from the iconography of graphic novels



A new contemporary storefront element reinforces the iconic elements of the brand

"Overall, this new concept store is a key part of our long-term strategic plan", says George Jones, Chief Executive Officer, Borders Group. "We set out to differentiate Borders and give customers a reason to choose us over other retailers and we have achieved that goal spectacularly. I am proud of what we have created and am confident that customers will really embrace it."

The new concept is scheduled to be rolled out to 13 other locations across the USA this year ●

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Elliptipar

**Floors**  
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