

Middle East book sales are booming

By New York Times
and Pantagraph reports

For several weeks, books about the Middle East have enjoyed unusually brisk sales, but Thursday — one day after the start of the war in the Persian Gulf — bookstores were besieged by customers wanting anything about the region they could get their hands on. Many stores also reported a run on maps.

Both B. Dalton Bookseller in Eastland Mall, Bloomington, and Waldenbooks, College Hills Mall, Normal, are no exception.

A spokesman at B. Dalton said the store has been getting constant calls about books, maps and other information on the Persian Gulf. "We're out of the world map," the spokesman said.

Another popular item at both B. Dalton and Waldenbooks is "Desert Shield Fact Book," produced by Game Designers' Workshop Inc. of Normal.

Elsewhere, Bill Heath, floor manager of a Dallas branch of the Bookstop chain, said, "We had a big display of Middle East books in the front of our store, but now we're just about out of everything."

At the Rand McNally Map and Travel Center in Manhattan, "maps about the Middle East have been flying out of here for the last week," said Daniel B. Edwards, the assistant manager. By midday, the store sold more than 60 of the 100 maps that had arrived Wednesday. Another 100 are on order.

Anchor Books on Thursday ordered an additional 35,000 copies of "From Beirut to Jerusalem" by Thomas L. Friedman, the chief diplomatic correspondent of The New York Times. The book, in its 22nd week on The Times's paperback nonfiction best-seller list, is currently No. 2. "It has been Anchor's fastest-selling book in years," said Martha Levin, Anchor's publisher.

Times Books, a unit of Random

House, received orders Thursday for 24,000 copies of "Saddam Hussein and the Crisis in the Gulf" by Judith Miller of The New York Times and Laurie Mylroie, the Bradley Foundation Fellow at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University. The publisher ordered an additional printing of 50,000 copies of the paperback.

Pantheon Books, which published the paperback edition of "Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq" by Samir al-Khalil, received orders for about 1,500 copies in the last two days.

The 43 Doubleday Book Shops reported "a dramatic increase" in sales of books about the Middle East, including "The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power" (Simon & Schuster) by Daniel Yergin.

The Knightsbridge Publishing Co. said it had received orders for an additional 60,000 copies of "The Rape of Kuwait," a heavily promoted paperback by Jean Sasson.

The Kuwaiti Embassy in Washington paid to send 200,000 copies of it to American troops in the Persian Gulf, The Washington Post reported; the publisher acknowledged that this was so, but said no government contributed to the book's publication or its domestic distribution.

Two months ago, Pathfinder Press published "U.S. Hands Off the Mideast!: Cuba Speaks Out at the United Nations," and this week it received a sharp increase in orders, according to Rich Stewart, a spokesman. Stewart also said Pathfinder alone paid for the book.

A spot check showed that this book was also doing well. Patrick Koehn, trade books manager at the Michigan Union Bookstore at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, said the book was the store's most popular Middle East title.