

Story ends for Long Beach's Acres of Books

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LONG BEACH - Surrounded by dust-covered, half-empty shelves, chipped wooden crates and neon sale signs, Acres of Books owner Jackie Smith could not hold back the tears Friday as she spoke about the fast approaching closing of her landmark store.

"I'm unhappy that it's ending on my watch," said an emotional Smith. "It's been like going to a funeral and hearing everyone tell you what a wonderful person he was."

After nearly 75 years in business, Acres of Books will close its doors permanently today to make way for a redevelopment project.

The store will be open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. to give last-minute shoppers a chance to take advantage of the 90-percent-off markdowns and gather artifacts, from crates to paintings.

Since the announcement earlier this year of the closing of the 12,500-square-foot property, customers have been showing up at the store in masses to stock up on clearance items, said Smith.

"We've sold more than 400,000 books in just a few months," said Smith. "People are taking

desks, chairs, file cabinets, everything."

Smith said the remaining books will be sold to wholesalers and Internet vendors.

A nostalgic Smith said she will take an Acres of Books sign at the rear of the store painted by her son Don and a photo of her husband's grandfather, founder Bertrand Smith, who opened Acres in 1934.

Now that Smith and her husband, Phil, have resigned themselves to the fate of the store, plans are to travel and "enjoy life" post Acres.

"I would have kept going until I turned to dirt," Smith said. "I've had a hell of a lot of fun."

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WANT TO GO?

Acres of Books is located at 240 Long Beach Blvd.

The store will be open for the last time today from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For information, call 562-437-6980 or go online at www.acresofbooks.com

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