

Retailing

# Independent bookstore Offbeat Books to open in south Atlanta in effort to combat 'flattening of culture'



Independent bookstore Offbeat Books is set to open this year in Atlanta's Peoplestown neighborhood.

JOANN VITELLI | ATLANTA BUSINESS CHRONICLE



By [Rachel Cohen Noebes](#) – Staff Reporter , Atlanta Business Chronicle  
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Metro Atlanta native Lindsi Bollinger is seeing her dream come true.

Bollinger, a lifelong avid reader, will open her own independent bookstore, Offbeat Books, this fall at the soon-to-open [Terminal South development](#) in Peoplestown.



Those who are chronically online may know that millennial women often joke on social media of eventually leaving their day jobs behind to open a shop. It would sell coffee, books or flowers – or better yet, all three. Bollinger has made it happen at the ripe age of thirty.

Having worked in retail since she was 15 years old, Bollinger said she felt “the crunch” of turning 30 and realized she wanted to figure out a long-term plan.

The real push to start her own business, however, was Bollinger's frustration with the “flattening of all culture,” particularly literary culture, which she blames largely on [Amazon](#).

“It perpetuates this feedback loop of people only wanting to buy best sellers on Amazon,” Bollinger told Atlanta Business Chronicle. “Authors see that, and so then they just write more that's like the stuff that's already popular, and then it just monotonizes all of culture.”

She said that independent bookstores are what keep literature alive by highlighting authors and titles that might not be seen at large booksellers or in a mainstream environment.

If a book has a particularly “off the wall” premise, it can be difficult to condense that information into something a data scraper can understand and sell to people online, she said. Bollinger dedicates time going through platforms such as Goodreads and Edelweiss to search for debut authors and covers that catch her attention.

More than just a place to get book recommendations from insightful sources, Bollinger said she hopes that, like many independent businesses, Offbeat will be a community hub, a shared physical space.



Besides giving customers something they can't get on the internet and a reason to pay full price for a book, the shop-owner said, to put it "bluntly," that "people are lonely."

"It's not awkward and weird if you all show up to do a predetermined thing," said Bollinger, who plans to host book clubs, Dungeons & Dragons groups, and more. "I think it can be really helpful for people to break out of their shells and be willing to meet some new people,"

To give the 1,200-square-foot space an "ethereal" and "whimsical" feel with its decor, Bollinger said the goal is to make visitors feel as if they are entering an 18th century astronomy lab, creating an immersive atmosphere.

"I want it to feel like you're stepping out of time," she said.

Perhaps some of the "magic" she wants her customers to feel when visiting the store is reflective of the magic she hopes Offbeat will play in her own life.

Her partner is a public-school teacher, and she is an alum of Oglethorpe University. She said it's a goal for Offbeat to become involved in reading programs at both institutions.

Bollinger said she also hopes anyone who works for the store will feel they can exercise autonomy and make creative decisions.

She doesn't want Offbeat to just reflect her vision, but the vision of all the people who work there.

"My No. 1 goal is to have a cool place to work for the rest of my life," Bollinger said.