

Bookshops in the Cultural Life of a Nation

"To read is to fly: it is to soar to a point of vantage which gives a view over wide terrains of history, human variety, ideas, shared experience and the fruits of many inquiries."

- A C Grayling, Financial Times (in a review of A History of Reading by Alberto Manguel)

Books are the leading cultural industry in Europe. Over half a million new titles are issued by European publishers every year.

Books are at the heart of the knowledge economy on which established western economies are increasingly dependent. They seed the creativity of television, film and theatre and play a pivotal role in education, from cradle to grave.

"To learn to read is to light a fire; every syllable that is spelled out is a spark."

- Victor Hugo

Books help to promote intellectual freedom and oppose censorship; a fundamental aspect of the human right to freedom of expression and the exchange of ideas.

Books can and do change lives. Research by the National Literacy Trust has shown that literacy has a significant and positive impact on an individual's happiness and success.

"The booksellers are generous liberal-minded men."

- Samuel Johnson – The Great Charm of Literature (from Boswell's Life of Johnson)

"The smallest bookstore still contains more ideas of worth than have been presented in the entire history of television."

- Andrew Ross, Professor, Department of Cultural & Social Analysis, New York University

Booksellers are 'cultural agents', providing the public with unbiased, reliable and informed personal advice; promoting literacy and reading – the fundamental basis of a knowledge society.

Booksellers help parents and children to select books that will not only increase their literacy skills, but also lead to a lifelong love of books and reading – making the link between pleasure and learning; releasing the opportunities presented in today's digital society.

"What I say is, a town isn't a town without a bookstore. It may call itself a town, but unless it's got a bookstore it knows it's not fooling a soul"

- Neil Gaiman - American Gods

Bookshops are havens for everyone, building community character and contributing to the distinct flavour of a neighbourhood.

Bookshops are literary and cultural hubs, bringing members of the community together to discuss books, exchange ideas and meet authors.

Bookshops support local and national causes and events, including reading groups, schools, libraries, arts organisations, festivals and charities.

"Give me a man or woman who has read a thousand books and you give me an interesting companion. Give me a man or woman who has read perhaps three and you give me a dangerous enemy indeed."

- Anne Rice, *The Witching Hour*

Copyright nurtures and protects the value of creativity, innovation and originality. Authors, publishers and booksellers need financial returns to survive and offer the widest range of books.

Although booksellers are not usually the rights holders, they support the concept of copyright as passionately as authors and publishers in *Copyright – EBF Statement of Principles*.

The Booksellers Association of the UK & Ireland Ltd
www.booksellers.org.uk