

## The PA, BA and AAA join together for OpenBooks – a new initiative to reach the next generation of book industry talent



The Publishers Association, Bookseller’s Association and Association of Author’s Agents are proud to collaborate on the development of **OpenBooks** – a brand new series of free, accessible online events primarily targeting young talent from underrepresented backgrounds.

OpenBooks will launch to the trade with a conversation starting event on the subject of future talent at The Bookseller’s FutureBook Conference on 18 November 2022.

OpenBooks will launch to young people across the UK in February 2023, via a hub at: [www.publishers.org.uk/openbooks](http://www.publishers.org.uk/openbooks) with a series of virtual live events and panels, plus short video content, all aimed at inspiring and connecting to their interests, creative skills, and passions.

Aimed primarily at 14 to 19-year-olds from underrepresented backgrounds, OpenBooks will showcase a range of book-related career options across publishing, bookselling, literary agenting and beyond. Drawing in a wide range of inspiring speakers, events will be curated to bring insights into the book industry, demystifying career options, identifying routes in, and positioning the books industry alongside other inspirational creative industries such as film, TV and music.

Events will be open to all and freely available to watch online at any time, reducing barriers to accessibility, including travel and cost.

The initiative will be promoted via UK schools and education settings, community groups, youth organisations, bookshops, and other networks, as well as directly to young people online.

OpenBooks has been made possible by public funding from the National Lottery through Arts Council England, along with key support from individual companies from across the industry; enabling the events to reach as many as 100,000 young people.

OpenBooks is in consultation with industry partners and groups to ensure that a wide variety of needs and community priorities are taken into consideration. The initiative is intended to help remove barriers, increase transparency, and demystify an industry which is often perceived to be inaccessible — contributing to wider work to build a workforce that better reflects society, addressing issues of equality and inclusion. Further conversation will continue through the planning process, with the opportunity to provide comments, suggestions and feedback by contacting [openbooksevent@gmail.com](mailto:openbooksevent@gmail.com).

Rebecca Smart, Co-CEO of DK and Council Member of the Publishers Association says:  
*“This is the first initiative of its kind that spans the whole book trade, and the PA is delighted to be working with the BA and AAA in order to reach out to the next generation of talent. We know the industry is still too opaque and we are ambitious about changing that via OpenBooks.”*

Meryl Halls, MD of the BA adds:

*“The BA is delighted to be working with our industry partners on this ground-breaking event. We know that bookselling is often the primary route in to the book industry, and bookselling can act as the training ground for booksellers, publishers and even authors. We know that booksellers make the best publishers, and booksellers themselves are community-builders, curators and enthusiasts for books of all types; we’re passionately committed to diversifying bookselling, and to making bookshops welcoming beacons to all who might want to enter the book trade. What better place to love books? So we are foursquare behind this project and excited to see the next generation of booksellers coming through,”*

*“It’s been fascinating and exciting working as part of the steering committee for OpenBooks,” said Mary Kennedy, learning and development manager at Waterstones, “we are really looking forward to being part of the FutureBook panel, and the OpenBooks event next February, advocating with other booksellers the crucial work bookshops do to create lively, fun and interesting high streets and vibrant reading communities. Working with publishers and agents in putting this together has really reinforced what a vividly creative industry we’re part of, and it’s great to think we can convey that excitement to young people who might not have thought of a career in books.”*

Catherine Clarke, President of the AAA, says: *“OpenBooks is a brilliant collaborative project which springs from the recognition across our vibrant book industry that a huge number of talented young people from all backgrounds don’t know about it or feel excluded from it. With enthusiastic and generous support from many book trade bodies, and the Arts Council, OpenBooks aims to change that, and the AAA is proud to be a founding member of this initiative.”*

#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

\* All speakers at OpenBooks events will be paid for their time

\* The PA’s 2021 workforce survey shows that there has been an increase in the diversity of the publishing workforce, but that there are still areas which need to be improved on, with 15% from ethnic minority groups, 13% having a disability, 13% identifying as LGB and 1% as trans. Socio-economic background remains a major barrier to inclusion, with 67% from professional backgrounds.

**\* Join the OpenBooks conversation at launch at FutureBook’s panel: Future talent: retaining and recruiting for tomorrow** (chaired by Miriam Robinson):

*What is the future for our publishing, bookselling and agenting teams? How do we recruit from a wider pool of dynamic young people to build an industry that is exciting, fresh and inclusive. What can we do to retain the talented workforce that we already have? In a creative industry that has the potential to inspire, how do we create meaningful and lasting change? We’ll discuss all this and more with a panel of experts across publishing, bookselling, agenting and beyond.*

Panellists will include:

-Rowzat Burton – Head of Talent and Development, Hachette UK

In her three years at Hachette UK, Rowzat has been integral in the design of Hachette’s four-pillar framework, which is now used across its recruitment, skills and career development. Rowzat has a track record in designing and delivering award winning

development programmes across the voluntary, education, retail, media, financial companies including the BBC, Standard Chartered Bank and Business in the Community. She is committed to increasing diversity, enabling companies to be future focused and enjoys the challenge of introducing new ways to discover and develop others. Earlier this year Rowzat re-imagined work experience in publishing, creating a successful programme for over 1,000 students aged 15 - 18. In her own words: *'I love creating a workshop, a mentoring scheme or an experience and then seeing how people seize that opportunity and have more confidence to move their career and the company forward.'*

-Neil Griffiths – CEO and Co-Founder, Arts Emergency

Neil co-founded Arts Emergency in 2011 and became Chief Executive in 2015. Prior to becoming CEO, Neil worked for a variety of global rights campaigns and human rights charities. He was voted one of the 50 most influential UK fundraisers in 2013, 2014 and 2015, and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by London Metropolitan University in 2020 for his work as a distinguished humanitarian. He is a lifelong activist and campaigner. @\_griff

- Yasmin Hemmings – Programmes Manager, Creative Access

Yasmin works as Programmes Manager at Creative Access, delivering initiatives designed to maximise people's skills and support career progression within the creative sector. She has 8 years of experience leading participatory programmes across a variety of cultural settings and has previously worked within the education teams at the Barbican Centre, Philharmonic Orchestra, English National Opera and London Symphony Orchestra. Yasmin is also an Advisory Board Member for Young People in the Arts, a volunteer-run network for arts professionals at the outset of their careers.

-Zain Mahmood – Head of Books and Ecommerce, Waterstones

Zain leads the commercial strategy and manages the buying teams for the Waterstones estate. His responsibilities also include the commercial management of [waterstones.com](https://www.waterstones.com) and the Foyles website and all new commercial ecommerce projects for the business.

-Jemma McDonagh, Deputy Managing Director - The Marsh Agency

Jemma is Deputy Managing Director at The Marsh Agency, working across UK and international rights sales on behalf of many renowned authors. She is also a committee member for the Association of Authors 'Agents where she co-chairs the Association's industry inclusion working group. Before joining The Marsh Agency in 2010, Jemma worked at Gregory & Company Authors 'Agents and Orion Publishing Group.

\* **ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND** is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in [Let's Create](#) that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high quality cultural experiences. We invest public money from Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

Following the Covid-19 crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. We are also one of the bodies administering the Government's unprecedented £1.96 billion Culture Recovery Funds. Find out more at [www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19).

National Lottery Project Grants is the Arts Council's open access programme for arts, museums and libraries projects. The fund supports thousands of individual artists, community and cultural

organisations thanks to National Lottery investment. National Lottery players raise over £30 million for good causes each week, funding arts, heritage, sports, voluntary and charity projects around the UK. Over £43 billion has been raised for Good Causes since the National Lottery began in 1994.

\* **THE ASSOCIATION OF AUTHORS AGENTS (AAA)** is a British voluntary trade association whose members are all UK-and Republic of Ireland-based literary agencies.

The Association of Authors' Agents exists to provide: a forum that allows member agencies to discuss issues arising in our profession, a collective voice for UK literary agencies in public affairs and the media, a code of conduct to promote best practice amongst members, and regular panel events and training sessions for our members among other support.

<http://www.agentsassoc.co.uk>

\* **THE BOOKSELLER'S ASSOCIATION (BA)** is the membership organization for booksellers in the UK & Ireland, and represents over 95% of booksellers. The BA exists to support, advise and work with its members to provide business-critical products and services for booksellers. These include National Book Tokens, our gift card which prompts increased footfall and keeps gift spending in the book trade; Batchline and Batch, our award-winning EPOS, stock management and payments service, which saves time, money and hassle when settling invoices and organising returns; a full range of money-saving affinity deals; a free Business Support Helpline; Booktime magazine; government lobbying and representation work across the nations and regions; networking opportunities and events; and Books Are My Bag, our range of consumer-facing activity and campaigns, which include Indie Book of the Month, Independent Bookshop Week, Bookshop Day, the Books Are My Bag Readers Awards, Christmas Books and Summer Books catalogues and more.

\* **THE PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION (PA)** is the member organisation for UK publishing, representing companies of all sizes and specialisms. Our members produce digital and print books, research journals and educational resources across genres and subjects.

We exist to champion publishing to the wider world and to provide our members with everything they need to thrive. We have helped change laws, improved business conditions and inspired people to become publishers.

We are passionate about the capacity for books and reading to make life better for people.

[www.publishers.org.uk](http://www.publishers.org.uk) | @PublishersAssoc

Follow our activity, and for updates on social media via **#OpenBooks**

Project managers Kat McKenna, Katherine Woodfine and Nina Douglas, and the wider steering group can be reached on [openbooksevent@gmail.com](mailto:openbooksevent@gmail.com).



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