

SPECIAL ISSUE

JANUARY 2026

ALL ABOUT Book Publishing

AUTHENTIC VOICE ON PUBLISHING IN INDIA

CULTURAL
AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
AS CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

WHY FRANCE
STILL BELIEVES
IN BOOKSTORES

WEBTOONS:
A GLOBAL CREATIVE BRIDGE
BETWEEN INDIA AND FRANCE

A FRESH APPROACH
TO A PLANET-FRIENDLY
BOOK WORLD



THE FUTURE OF
books

— INDIA-FRANCE YEAR OF INNOVATION —



**AMBASSADE
DE FRANCE
EN INDE**

*Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité*



FRANCE AND INDIA ARE EMBARKING ON A LANDMARK YEAR DEDICATED TO INNOVATION.

Throughout 2026, the India-France Year of Innovation will highlight strategic cooperation across science, culture and education with a focus on health, aerospace, sustainable development, and cultural and creative industries.

Through a wide range of events across the country, this flagship initiative invites French and Indian innovators to engage, collaborate and create meaningful shared impact.

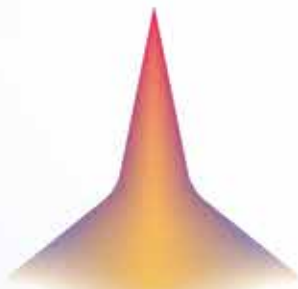
Connect with us and be part of a year shaping the future of Indo-French cooperation. Contact: innovation.new-delhi-amba@diplomatie.gouv.fr

INDIA FRANCE

इन्वेंटि
innovation
इंनोवेशन 2026



**HEALTH,
WELL-BEING
& FOOD**



AEROSPACE



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
& ENERGY TRANSITION**



**CULTURAL
& CREATIVE
INDUSTRIES**

INNOVATION IS A DRIVING FORCE IN INDO-FRENCH TIES

The India-France Year of Innovation 2026, announced during the State visit of President Emmanuel Macron to India in January 2024, marks a bold new chapter in the strategic partnership between France and India. At its core lies the idea that innovation is a vital driving force in Indo-French ties.

Building on several key initiatives, such as the Indo-French co-presidency of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Action Summit hosted by Paris in February 2025, this cross-cutting initiative reflects a joint vision of President Macron and Prime Minister Narendra Modi: the pursuit of innovation in its broadest sense, spanning the technological, industrial, social, environmental, cultural and artistic dimensions of the Indo-French relationship.

In a rapidly shifting global landscape, with AI and emerging technologies transforming every sector, India and France are uniquely positioned to build new bridges. That is why 2026 will focus on high-impact areas where Indo-French collaboration matters most: cultural and creative industries, aerospace, health, food and well-being, sustainable development and energy transition.

The India-France Year of Innovation not only symbolises progress, but also underscores the coming together of two great nations, two rich cultures, and two innovation ecosystems. From seabed to space, from code poetry to digital healthcare, from sustainable ecosystems to new forms of storytelling, every spark of innovation contributes to a shared constellation of ideas.

The first event of the year 2026 will be *The Future of Books*, a first-of-its kind initiative jointly developed by the cultural department of the Embassy of France in India, France Livre - The French Publishing Network, and the platform Publishing Next. This professional programme, bringing together key French and Indian players, will take place alongside three leading events in the Indian publishing calendar: the New Delhi World Book Fair, the Chennai International Book Fair and Jaipur Bookmark.

At the heart of *The Future of Books* lies a shared conviction that France and India have much to gain from deepening their longstanding cooperation in the fields of books and ideas. France's internationally recognised leadership in trailblazing book policies,



Thierry Mathou

forward-looking initiatives to nurture a diverse book ecosystem, and a dynamic publishing scene with French writers recognized internationally, have long nurtured meaningful partnerships with India's dynamic book market and growing literary festivals' scene.

This programme seeks to take this relationship further by fostering collaboration across the entire publishing ecosystem and addressing key issues shaping the sector's future: from cultural policies to the advent of artificial intelligence in publishing, from the craze for audiovisual adaptations to the global rise of comics, webtoons and IPs, from sustainable practices in publishing to innovative approaches in the book industry.

I warmly invite professionals from across the book sector — publishers, translators, literary agents, booksellers, festival organisers, and other industry stakeholders — to join *The Future of Books*, which will mark a new chapter in the publishing dialogue between France and India.

Thierry Mathou - Ambassador of France to India



POWERING PUBLISHING



- 03** Editorial: Innovation is a Driving Force in Indo–French Ties
by Thierry Mathou
- 06** Cultural and creative industries as cultural diplomacy
by Sabine Sciortino
- 08** The French Institute In India on keeping pace with new trends
by Julia Trouilloud
- 12** The French cultural exception: supporting pluralism through regulation
by Nicolas Georges
- 14** Inside the French Book Market
by Nicolas Roche
- 17** A Rewarding Journey into Global Publishing
by Shubhali Chopra
- Bringing French Literature to Tamil Readers
by Ananth Daksnamurthy
- 18** Building Stronger Indo-French Publishing Bridges
by Ramesh K. Mittal

BRIDGING LITERATURES: INDIA & FRANCE

- 22** Championing Global Voices at Éditions Zulma
by Laure Leroy
- 24** Bringing Indian Literature to France: A Journey of Vision and Exchange
by Rajesh Sharma
- 26** From Tamil Nadu to Gallimard: The New Momentum of Indian Language Literatures
by Kannan Sundaram
- 27** Latitudes of Longing: An Indian Novel Finds a Global Voice
by Shubhangi Swarup
- 28** Reception of foreign literature in India On Indian Readers Embracing Global Stories
by Arpita Das
- 29** On Selective Globalism and Cultural Resonance
by Pranav Johri



Book Publishing
JOURNAL OF THE INDIA PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION

Special Issue January 2026

Editorial & Publishers Office: 406, Sant Nagar, East of Kailash, New Delhi-110065, INDIA, Ph: (91) 011-26232482, 35620043, 9313480469
www.allaboutbookpublishing.com

Managing Editor : Shweta Khurana
Associate Editor : Varsha Verma, Smita Dwivedi
Design : Sanjeev Kandwal



Institut français India

The Institut français India (IFI) is a section of the Embassy of France in India dedicated to nurturing and enabling meaningful human exchanges between France and India. As the cultural, educational, and scientific wing of the French diplomatic mission, it drives a wide spectrum of collaborations. Its Books & Debates department acts as an interface between French and Indian publishing professionals, promotes literary exchanges and intellectual dialogue.

www.institutfrancaisindia.in

BOOKSTORES IN SPOTLIGHT



- 30** Why France Still Believes in Bookstores
by Guillaume Husson
- 34** A Bright Horizon for India's Bookshops
by Leonard Fernandes
- 37** Rethinking bookstores as cultural destinations!
by Ajay Jain
- 38** Curation, Community, and Culture
Three Pillars for Success
by Raman shresta
- 40** Taking Books Beyond the Bookstore
by Mohit Batra

TRANSMEDIA STORIES



- 42** Média - Participations: Turning Stories into Global IPs
by Vincent Montagne
- 44** The Matriochkas on Channeling the Market for Audiovisual Adaptation
by Maïlis Vauterin and Delphine Clot
- 47** Webtoons: a global creative bridge between India and France
by Josselin Azorin-Lara

IN FOCUS: THE PUBLISHING ECOSYSTEM

- 50** From Shared Journeys to a Collective Vision
by Violaine Faucon
- 52** Redefining feminist publishing with Dalva!
by Juliette Ponce and Marie-Anne Lacomme



- 55** Writing at the crossroads of ecology, imagination, and activism
by Corinne Morel Darleux
- 56** The Quiet Power Behind Literary Recognition
by Jean-Paul Hirsch
- 59** Literary Prizes, Visibility and the Life of Books
by Neige Sinno
- 61** Translating the Breath of literature
by Marie Darrieussecq

AI IN PUBLISHING

- 62** AI in Publishing: Efficiency Without Compromising Editorial Integrity
by Meru Gokhale

SUSTAINABILITY IN PUBLISHING

- 64** A Fresh Approach to a Planet-Friendly Book World
by Gaëlle Bohé

CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AS CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Sabine Sciortino, Director for Cultural, Educational, Academic and Scientific Diplomacy at the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE), shares how sustained public policy, a strong diplomatic network and targeted international programmes are helping French creativity travel the world—while building long-term partnerships and reinforcing France’s global influence.

How is France strengthening its creative and cultural industries, and why does the government consider these sectors essential for economic growth and global influence?

Cultural and creative industries (CCIs) play a strategic role in France’s economy and international influence. According to the EY Panorama of Cultural and Creative Industries 2025, CCIs generate over €102.7 billion in revenue, represent 2.9% of France’s market GDP, and support more than 1.1 million jobs, including direct, indirect and induced employment. Since 2019, their value added has increased by over 21%, a faster growth rate than many traditional industrial sectors. These figures confirm the central role of CCIs as drivers of innovation, attractiveness and soft power. They are now among the top three sectors of the French economy in terms of value creation and employment.

Several public institutions contribute to this dynamic, including the Ministry of Culture, the Institut français and local authorities. For the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, CCIs are a core pillar of cultural diplomacy: they foster dialogue between cultures, strengthen long-term partnerships and enhance France’s global presence.

Between 2020 and 2022, the Ministry launched a dedicated “CCI priority mission” in 37 embassies. Given its success, this approach was extended to the entire diplomatic network. As a result, over 300 CCI projects were supported between 2023 and 2024. Our ambition today is clear: to make the promotion of CCIs a systematic reflex of international cultural cooperation.

Our action focuses on several key priorities: participation in major international events (biennales, festivals and fairs), support for emerging talents, structuring partnerships with public and private stakeholders, investment in fast-growing sectors such as immersive technologies and video games, and the promotion of Francophone cultures and linguistic diversity, particularly in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

What are the most significant government programmes France has launched and how have these programmes made a visible difference?

France’s support for CCIs relies on a broad set of instruments. The Institut français, as the Ministry’s main cultural agency for international cultural cooperation, implements flagship programmes including cultural seasons and artistic residencies. One emblematic model is the network of Villas, which extends the legacy of the Villa Medici. Today, more than 50 residency programmes across seven Villas worldwide support artists and researchers developing projects rooted in dialogue with host countries.

The Ministry also relies on its extensive diplomatic network. Cultural attachés, including specialists in cinema, books and audiovisual sectors, lead dedicated actions to support CCI exports and help structure local ecosystems. To foster innovation, the Cultural and Creative Industries Programme (PICC), implemented since 2022, is a cornerstone of our strategy. It has already supported over 100 projects across all CCI sectors, covering incubation, expertise, networking, promotion and market access. In parallel, major Cultural Seasons, such as France–Brazil 2025, Mediterranean 2026 and Ukraine 2026, provide a powerful framework for co-creation and long-term international partnerships.



Sabine Sciortino

“ For the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) are a core pillar of cultural diplomacy: they foster dialogue between cultures, strengthen long-term partnerships and enhance France’s global presence. ”

Which sectors, such as publishing, film, design, gaming, or museums, show the highest potential for future development?

France's national CCI strategy covers 14 sectors, with particularly strong international positioning in video games, digital creation, design and fashion, craftsmanship, music, film and audiovisual production.

Digital cultures, including video games, immersive creation and XR, are among the fastest-growing fields. The Novembre Numérique programme enables the French cultural network to deploy ambitious digital programming worldwide and was significantly reinforced in 2025.

While CCIs generate over €102.7 billion in revenue, exports account for only around 17%, revealing strong potential for international growth. This is precisely where France's diplomatic and cultural network plays a key role.

At the same time, attention is given to emerging or less familiar sectors such as architecture, sound creation, immersive realities, series production and fashion, which represent new opportunities for international development.

Could you highlight how you support the book sector for its export internationally?

The book sector remains a key component of France's creative economy. In 2024, publishing generated approximately €7.8 billion in revenue, representing nearly 8% of total CCI turnover, according to the EY Panorama 2025.

International support for books relies on a targeted strategy led by the cultural cooperation network,

starting with specialized attachés for book. In 2023, 21 expatriate agents dedicated to the book sector were posted in 18 countries, including India.

A central tool is the Publication Assistance Programme (PAP). It provides financial support for translation rights, facilitates professional exchanges and strengthens France's presence at global events. Participation in international festivals, fairs and markets, thanks to the support of the Cultural and Creative Industries Programme (PICC) are key levers of France's cultural diplomacy.

A recent example was the invitation of France as Guest of Honour at the Kerala Literature Festival, which saw a delegation of 15 authors and 9 publishing houses from France and a dedicated two-day "Publishers' Meet" between French publishers and Indian publishers from the southern states.

"The Future of Books" is another such example that gives French publishers the opportunity to participate in three major professional fairs and explore new avenues for collaborations with their Indian counterparts in fast-growing sectors such as audiovisual adaptations, IPs development and digital applications.

Sabine Sciortino is Director for Cultural, Educational, Academic and Scientific Diplomacy at the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE), since 17 November 2025. A graduate of Sciences Po Paris with a specialization in international relations, she has served as a career diplomat at the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs since 2010. With broad experience in France and abroad — particularly in Asia and the Middle East — she has developed recognized expertise in cultural and educational diplomacy, politico-military affairs, and the management of multicultural teams in crisis environments.

Next call for applications in April 2026
To apply, visit www.villaswagatam.in

VILLA
SWAGATAM

A network of literary and artistic
residencies across South Asia and France

THE FRENCH INSTITUTE IN INDIA ON KEEPING PACE WITH NEW TRENDS

As the India–France Year of Innovation gathers momentum, publishing is emerging as a key site of cross-cultural collaboration. Julia Trouilloud, Attaché for Books and Ideas at the French Institute in India, outlines how translations, co-creation and new formats are shaping new spaces of literary exchanges between France and India.

The India–France Year of Innovation invites us to imagine new possibilities across creative fields. How do you see publishing becoming a space for innovation between France and India?

The India–France Year of Innovation encourages us to explore new ways of connecting our creative ecosystems and publishing is certainly one of the most fertile spaces for exchange.

Co-creation and adaptation across multiple formats are dynamic spaces for innovation. This January, Pratham Books will publish a new version of *The Little Prince* in 5 Indian languages, illustrated by Priya Kuriyan and adapted by Anushka Ravishankar with our support. By transforming this French classic into a fully illustrated children’s album with an Indian twist, our hope is to make it more relatable for young Indian readers and carry St Exupéry’s universal message even further.

Accessibility and affordability are also keys to our philosophy. Ultimately, books carry ideas, values and worldviews. Currently, many great contemporary French books that have been translated into English are not available in India or if they are, they are in imported editions with prohibitive prices. We wish to work with Indian publishers and/or distributors to have local editions of these books, at affordable prices available in the Indian subcontinent only. This is an objective we pursue, especially for books that talk about important topics that are not as much talked about in India. This is what we did with Annie Ernaux’s and Neige Sinno’s books that now exist in a local Indian edition.

Last but not least, our objective is to create spaces for conversation between Indian and French publishing professionals. Not only do we invite French publishers to India but we also grant fellowships for Indian publishers to go to France. In-person meetings are essential to create lasting bonds and trustworthy professional relationships. “The Future of Books” is one such initiative that aims to bring French and Indian professionals together to look at the latest developments in publishing such as the growth of audiovisual adaptation, the rise of global IPs and the interest for new formats such as webtoon and audiobooks. We hope this initiative will lead to more collaboration between our two industries.



Julia Trouilloud

“The French Institute in India is constantly evolving to keep pace with new trends. To stay relevant, we have to adapt our tools and our programmes to the world we live in.”

The French Book Office has been instrumental in building literary bridges. How is it evolving to keep pace with new trends?

The French Institute in India is constantly evolving to keep pace with new trends. To stay relevant, we have to adapt our tools and our programmes to the world we live in.

A great example of this philosophy is the Villa Swagatam, which was born out of the realization that cultural exchanges cannot happen overnight and that we should be more mindful of our ecological footprint. The program enables writing and artistic residencies lasting from 1 to 3 months, across 30 residency spaces in France and India. Indian residents get first-hand, in-depth experiences of France thanks to our residency partners. They are programmed in major literary spaces in France and so do French residents coming to India who participate in the Indian literary festivals. This program has become pivotal in our cooperation model and renowned writers such as Meena Kandasamy, Jacintha Kerketta or Paramita Singh will go to France under the Villa Swagatam program this year.

The Publication Assistance Programme (PAP) has been a key link between French and Indian publishers. How is it adapting to changing publishing trends?

The Publication Assistance Programme covers every format and every Indian language. Our primary concern is the quality of translations. No matter the format in which they are published, our role is to ensure the fidelity to the original text and its quality, thanks to a very strict quality check done by our team of experts.

One measure we have taken is to significantly reduce the number of projects we support. There is a hyperproduction of books and French books are a niche market so we want to work with publishers who are ready to promote the book actively.

To help promote the books we support, we have also started a programme called Pardon My French! designed to give more visibility to French books in translation through curation, social media campaigns, and special events. We run hand-in-hand with passionate booksellers willing to bring a different flavour to their offer.

Translation plays a vital role in bringing cultures closer. What innovations do you foresee strengthening translation exchange between our two countries?

There is a real scarcity of seasoned translators from French to Indian languages. Yet, translators are the most essential bridges to bring our cultures closer. To address this issue, we run online training programs called "Translator's Factories" that cover many Indian languages. From this year onwards, we also started a new Villa Swagatam residency dedicated to translators.

In the framework of the France-India Year of Innovation, we are running an experiment with the Centre for Translation at Ashoka University to foster "four-hands" translation. Each duo will be constituted of an expert in French language and a professional translator. The objective is to have them work in tandem, using the English text as a bridge but constantly referring to the French text to make sure the original ideas are not lost in translation.

I believe translation grants and translation residencies are essential to support the incredible work that translators do. The French National Book Centre offers residencies for foreign translators to spend 1 to 3 months in France with a fellowship but no Indian translator has applied in years despite our efforts to promote this programme. We hope that more will do in the future.

“ I truly believe that, by working closely together, India and France can do wonders. My role is simply to ensure that the right people meet and that our projects benefit our two countries.

What new forms of collaboration or co-creation excite you most?

It is hard to say as we have so many projects in preparation for 2026. I would say *Desibel* is perhaps one of my favourites because of its scope and the multiple partners involved. *It* aims to amplify Indian creative voices in the field of AVGC-XR (Animation, Video Games, Comics and Extended Reality).

It was born out of the realization that India has an incredible wealth of stories and artists but does not have the existing funding ecosystem for them to thrive. The first initiative is the launch of an imprint by Westland Books in February 2026 with 24 original creations adapted from Indian modern classics. Another initiative is the organization of the first major retrospective exhibition on the history of Indian storytelling brought together as a collaboration between the *Museum of Art and Photography* in Bangalore and the *International Centre for Comics and Image* in Angoulême. Curated by Amruta Patil, the show will open in Bangalore in July 2026 and will be accompanied by a ground-breaking publication on the history of Indian comics.

I truly believe that, by working closely together, India and France can do wonders. My role is simply to ensure that the right people meet and that our projects benefit our two countries.



Julia Trouilloud is Cultural Attaché for books and ideas at the French Institute in India, New Delhi. Her role is to foster connections between the French and Indian publishing industries across the entire book chain and to create spaces for dialogue between France and India. Before joining this position, she worked with the French Institute in Paris and Seoul and lived in India between 2013-2017.

Nanki paints her own world

Laurence Hugues

Illustrations
Ananya Aparajita Singh

VILLA
SWAGATAM





Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's

The Little Prince

Adapted by Anushka Ravishankar

Illustrated by Priya Kuriyan



THE FRENCH CULTURAL EXCEPTION: SUPPORTING PLURALISM THROUGH REGULATION

From the landmark Lang Law to recent legislation on digital pricing and delivery charges, Nicolas Georges, Director of Books and Reading at the French Ministry of Culture, details the regulatory mechanisms France has developed to support diversity, equal access to books across the country and the existence of a dense distribution network.

Role of the Ministry of Culture in Book Sector

The central administration of the Ministry of Culture defines the major strategic orientations of the State's cultural policy and ensures coordination among the various industry professionals responsible for its implementation. It is responsible for designing the sector's regulatory policy, in constant coordination with national organizations representing literary professions and activities (the National Publishing Union, the French Booksellers' Union, national organizations representing authors' interests, etc.).

This regulatory policy is particularly structuring for the book sector, whether in terms of economic regulation (the fixed book price law, regulation of delivery charges, sector-specific exemptions from intercompany payment deadlines) or regulation through copyright law (collective management of the public lending right in libraries, mandatory rules governing publishing contracts).

The central administration works with private, inter-professional operators that have sovereign objectives (ensuring proper application of the law, remuneration for library lending, etc.) and/or objectives requiring inter-ministerial coordination (supporting the presence of French books worldwide). Examples of these inter-professional operators include France Livre, which organizes the presence of French publishers at all international book fairs and trade shows in order to facilitate rights exchanges, and the Centrale de l'édition, which pools the transport of books abroad and to overseas territories and helps apply the 1981 law on book pricing in those overseas territories.

The central administration does not operate any grant or application-based support activity for projects led by professionals in the book economy; this responsibility is shared between the National Book Center (Centre national du livre) and the Regional Directorates for Cultural Affairs (DRAC). Indeed, it would be impossible for such aids to be left to the discretion of the administration itself due to the risk of "state-sponsored art".

Cultural Exception: A Publishing Perspective

"Culture is the heritage of the world's nobility," said André Malraux, the first French Minister of Cultural Affairs and one of the major architects of the French cultural exception.

Since 1959, France has implemented a few legislative and regulatory measures pertaining to artistic creation, granting special status to audiovisual works and productions to protect them from free trade rules. These measures are based on the idea that cultural creation is not a commodity like any other and that its trade must therefore be protected by rules other than those of the market alone.

The book industry in France enjoys special attention from the government authorities. The single price strategy, support for publishers and authors, and the ban on free delivery of books all contribute to the diversity on offer.

Public action aimed at the book industry has several objectives: preserve and stimulate diversity in publishing; bolster the influence of French books around the world; promote economic development based on a balance between supportive and interdependent players (authors, publishers, retailers), conducive to the distribution of books in all regions and to all audiences.

To achieve these objectives, it relies on regulatory tools, mainly in the fields of economic regulation and copyright; forward-looking analysis and evaluation based on economic studies; and mechanisms for financial intervention.



Nicolas Georges

“These measures are based on the idea that cultural creation is not a commodity like any other and that its trade must therefore be protected by rules other than those of the market alone.

Preserving Bibliodiversity Through Regulation

Several landmark laws have been passed. The law on book prices, known as the “Lang Law,” enacted on 10 August 1981, is a key marker of cultural policy in France. It regulates the prices charged by retailers: they can offer a 5% discount to individuals and a 9% discount to organizations such as local authorities, works councils, etc as against the price set by the publisher. Competition therefore focuses more on the service offered to customers than on price.

It has three objectives: Equality for citizens in terms of books, which will be sold at the same price throughout the country; Maintenance of a very dense decentralized distribution network, particularly in less privileged areas; And support for pluralism in creation and publishing.

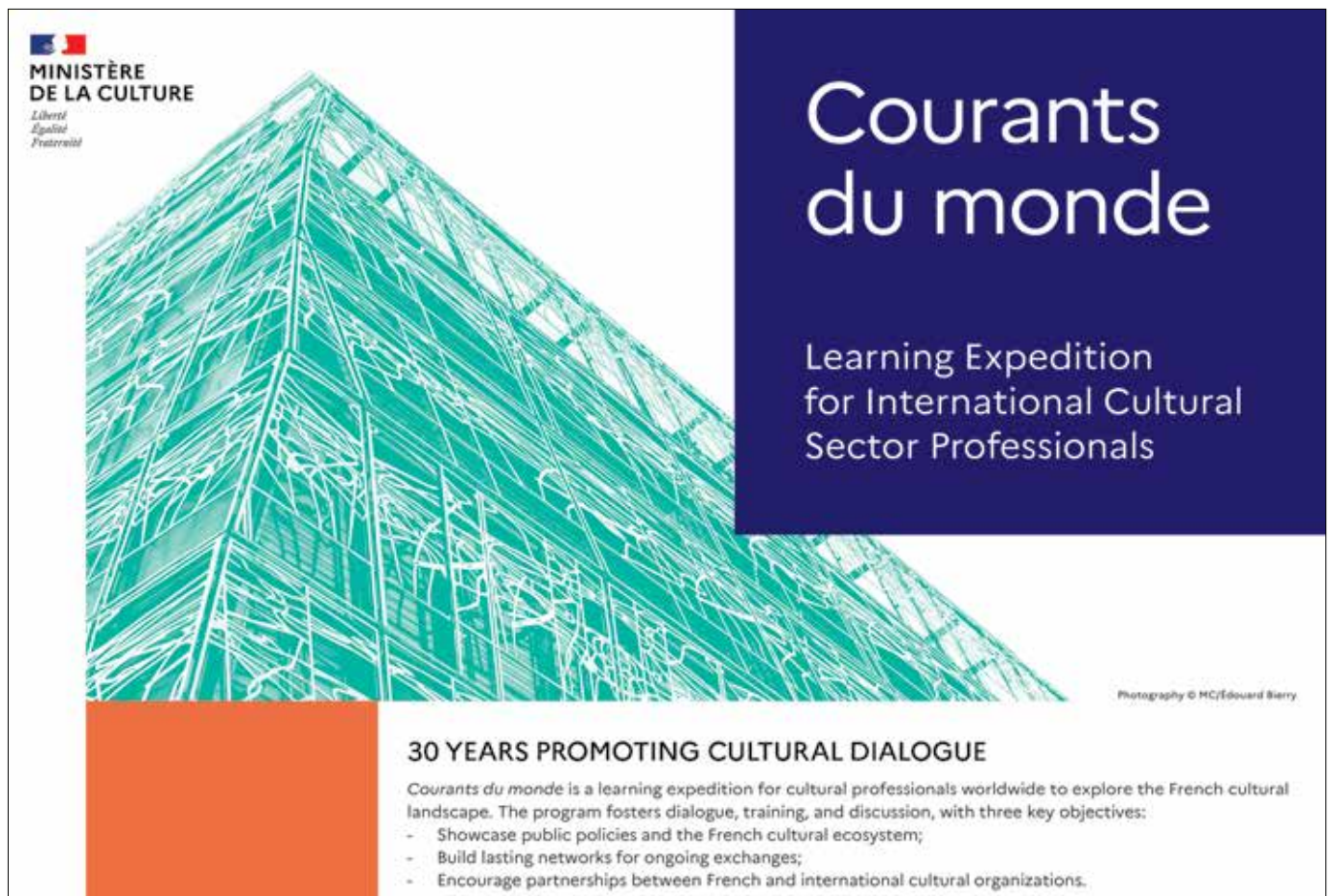
The Act of 26 May 2011, regulating the price of digital books, has reinforced existing book pricing

regulations. By prohibiting price competition, this measure aims to preserve a diverse digital distribution network, protect creative diversity, and maintain the level of remuneration for all players in the creative chain. The retail price set by the publisher is binding on anyone offering digital books to buyers located in France, regardless of where they are based.

The Act of 21 December 2021 on libraries reaffirms the need to develop strategic documents dedicated to public reading, with the formalization of regional and inter-municipal reading development plans.

The « Darcos » Act of 30 December 2021 reinforces the principle of fixed book prices by further regulating online practices. It thus provides for a minimum delivery service charge when orders are not picked up at a retail bookstore. It also requires all retailers to clearly distinguish between new and used books in their offers.

Nicolas Georges has been Director of Books and Reading at the French Ministry of Culture (Directorate for Media and Cultural Industries) since 2010. He has a rich experience in senior civil service positions, a career dedicated to heritage and literature, and in-depth knowledge of contemporary cultural policy issues.



MINISTÈRE DE LA CULTURE
Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité

Courants du monde

Learning Expedition
for International Cultural
Sector Professionals

Photography © HC/Édouard Barry

30 YEARS PROMOTING CULTURAL DIALOGUE

Courants du monde is a learning expedition for cultural professionals worldwide to explore the French cultural landscape. The program fosters dialogue, training, and discussion, with three key objectives:

- Showcase public policies and the French cultural ecosystem;
- Build lasting networks for ongoing exchanges;
- Encourage partnerships between French and international cultural organizations.

INSIDE THE FRENCH BOOK MARKET

French literature is experiencing a moment of remarkable energy, and its connection with India has never been stronger. Nicolas Roche, Director of France Livre – The French Publishing Network speaks about this dynamic partnership and the trends reshaping the French book world. His organization is responsible for the international development of French publishing companies and organizes the Paris Book Market every year in June.

What themes and reader trends are currently shaping French literature?

France remains one of the most dynamic literary markets in the world — in size, in influence, and in creative energy. By volume, it stands on par with the UK and Italy combined, and French is still the second most translated language worldwide after English. That international visibility is sustained by a striking diversity of voices and by publishers, who actively champion their authors abroad, supported by institutions like France Livre and the Institut français.

The latest 2025 barometer from the Centre national du livre offers a clear snapshot of the country's reading culture: 56% of French people describe themselves as regular readers, 63% have read at least five books over the past year, and they average 18 books annually. New formats are reshaping habits too — one in three French people have tried an audiobook, signalling a broader definition of reading and a diversification of audiences.

In terms of trends, France mirrors the global landscape. Traditional literary fiction remains strong, while romance has surged with a wide and diverse readership. Humanities and social sciences continue to draw global interest. Meanwhile, two notably dynamic sectors, children's books and graphic novels are exploring every theme and engaging readers across all ages.

Overall, the French market shows a rare balance, firmly rooted in a long literary tradition, yet agile enough to embrace new genres, new formats, and new reading behaviours. A market that doesn't just follow global trends — it helps shape them.

“India is a priority market for France Livre, because it offers enormous potential for long-term, two-way partnerships between book professionals.”



Nicolas Roche

How are French publishers and authors adapting to digital change, audiobooks, and new reading platforms?

France remains primarily a print-led market. The fixed book price law has helped preserve one of the world's densest networks of physical bookstores, which keeps access to printed books exceptionally easy. As a result, digital books account for only about 10% of the market and have shown limited movement in recent years.

French publishers are nonetheless adapting strategically to the digital landscape. E-books are fully integrated into production workflows, but the real shift is happening in audio. Audiobooks are growing fast: publishers are rapidly expanding their catalogues, and global platforms have entered the market with subscription models that accelerate adoption.

The audio segment is still in an investment phase. For many publishers and authors, it has become the most dynamic lever of digital transformation today.

How do you view the deepening France–India relationship in terms of books, ideas, and creative exchange?

The cultural connection between France and India has never been stronger. A great deal of credit goes to the Institut français in India, which has worked tirelessly



Publishers meet at the Kerala Literature Festival 2025

for years to promote French literature across the country. Their efforts have supported the translation of French works into multiple Indian languages, helping our authors reach a readership as vast and diverse as India itself. They have also enabled French publishers, together with France Livre, to better understand a market that is complex, multilingual, and constantly evolving.

Beyond translation, the Institut français has multiplied publishing support programmes, organised discovery trips across several Indian states, and created opportunities for French professionals to grasp the expectations, needs, and rhythms of the Indian side. This has built genuine bridges between the two industries.

The intellectual exchange is equally vibrant. French authors and more broadly, French creators regularly travel to India, contributing to public debates, festivals, and conversations. For its part, France Livre has maintained a strong and long-standing presence at the New Delhi World Book Fair for decades, a tangible sign of France's commitment to this partnership.

How would you describe the dynamic partnership between France and India?

The relationship has reached a level of genuine maturity, and it keeps deepening because it is built on reciprocity and a real appetite for exchange on both sides.

We strongly encourage Indian editors, scouts, translators, and other industry professionals to join professional study trips and tailored programmes that offer direct insight into the French publishing ecosystem. And every June, the Paris Book Market

provides a particularly engaging way to discover the breadth of French publishing. It's a focused, collegial setting where professionals can meet the right counterparts, explore catalogues, and get a vivid sense of the diversity and creativity of the French market.

In short, the partnership works so well because it flows both ways, enabling each side to learn and to build long-term, meaningful collaborations.

What collaborations does France Livre have in India with publishers, institutions, or literary festivals?

France Livre's mission is to connect French publishers with their counterparts around the world, and India is a key focus of that work. We coordinate the "France" stands at major international book fairs, including in New Delhi — creating spaces where French publishers can meet Indian editors, scouts, and rights managers.

We also organise numerous professional encounters, both in France and abroad, often in close partnership with the Institut français. Whenever possible, we join forces with their initiatives or with programmes emerging directly from the field — whether they come from Indian institutions like the NBT, from local publishers, or from literary festivals looking to strengthen their international dimension.

In essence, France Livre acts as a bridge: we facilitate dialogue, we help create opportunities, and we make sure French publishers can engage with India in a meaningful and productive way.

“ Every June, the Paris Book Market provides a particularly engaging way to discover the breadth of French publishing. ”



Paris Book Market 2025

What are the main objectives of France Livre’s engagement in India?

India is a priority market for France Livre, because it offers enormous potential for long-term, two-way partnerships between book professionals. Our main objective is to deepen these professional connections not only by supporting the presence of French publishers in India, but also by creating opportunities for Indian publishers to engage directly with the French ecosystem.

The Indian market is rich, multilingual, and complex, and building meaningful relationships takes time. It needs meetings, repeated exchanges, and a shared understanding of how each side works. Trust (professional and cultural) is essential for lasting collaboration. Our work in India is therefore built step by step, through steady dialogue and mutual confidence.

How does France Livre help small and medium publishers reach global audiences?

France Livre supports publishers of every size, from major houses to the smallest independents and ensuring strong representation for small and medium publishers is a core part of our mission. Independent presses play a crucial role in the international vitality of French publishing, and we make sure their voices are present wherever France engages abroad.

Backed by French public authorities, notably the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs independent publishers receive preferential membership and accessible conditions to join collective stands and professional programmes, allowing full participation in international fairs, rights meetings, and promotional initiatives.

It’s one of the reasons we now count 350 members publishers: because France Livre provides a platform where small and medium houses can gain visibility, connect with global partners, and find their place on the international stage alongside larger players.

What message would you like to share with Indian readers, writers, and publishers?

I would simply invite Indian readers, writers, and publishers to follow their curiosity. In France, nearly 18% of new titles each year are translations, and this openness to world literature is a powerful way to discover new voices and new ideas. We hope Indian audiences will feel the same freedom to explore French writing — whether in fiction, the humanities and social sciences, children’s books, or graphic novels.

The French publishing landscape is diverse, offering something for every taste and imagination, and we look forward to sharing it while deepening creative dialogue between our countries.

“ The Indian market is rich, multilingual, and complex, and building meaningful relationships takes time.

Nicolas Roche has more than thirty years’ experience in publishing. First editor at Gallimard Jeunesse, he then had sales responsibilities in several publishing houses including Retz, Nathan, Magnard-Vuibert and Plon-Perrin, followed by his position as General Manager of Editions Stock (Hachette book group). Prior to joining France Livre in 2018, he was CEO of Centre Pompidou Publishing.

EXPERIENCE AT THE PARIS BOOK MARKET 2025

A REWARDING JOURNEY INTO GLOBAL PUBLISHING

Shubhali Chopra is acquisitions and commissioning editor for Hachette India.

Building Global Connections

The Paris Book Market was a great platform to meet and discuss business with publishers from France and other countries. It was bustling with colleagues from across the world and was a breeding ground for ideas, potential translation projects and co-publishing opportunities.



Expanding Non-Fiction Horizons

The areas where it can do better is by approaching more publishers to showcase their lists for non-fiction reference. I say this because it is headlined as a book market and not a literary fair. There is a vast avenue for publishing books in that sector, we at our publishing house have a separate division to cater to it and would love to see more representation for that potential.

Navigating Rights and Financial Hurdles

A barrier we faced is that English rights are usually given out bundled for the UK and the Commonwealth, hence the negotiations are taking a bit longer as the rights owners try and free those up. The second barrier is of course financial, when planning colours.

Current Projects and Future Endeavors

I am currently discussing the rights for a couple of European comics and re-introducing them to the Indian market after a long break in their availability. Another project I am keen to discuss are large-size visual reference books that cover global art, mythology and General Knowledge concepts in India. The French Publishers have stunning illustrations that set them apart and I am looking to bring some of those for the Children's non-fiction list.

Shubhali Chopra is the acquisitions and commissioning editor for the Reference division at Hachette India, building market-led non-fiction lists. Part of the Paris-based Hachette Group, the company publishes over 70 books annually and is India's third-largest publisher.

BRINGING FRENCH LITERATURE TO TAMIL READERS

Aananth Daknamurthy is the founder of Two Shores Press, India.

Discovering Contemporary French Voices

Before my visit, I already sensed that French literature was far broader than the modern classics Tamil publishers repeatedly retranslate, Camus being the obvious example. But, this awareness became much clearer. Participants introduced me to a vibrant range of contemporary French writers such as Virginie Despentes, Constance Debré, and Raphaëlle Red, whose boldness and stylistic experimentation could genuinely broaden the Tamil literary landscape, which is still relatively conservative.



The Strength of the French Book Market

One of the clear strengths of the French book market is the sheer range of original writing, particularly young, bold voices producing boundary-pushing work. These books could resonate strongly in India if introduced with the right positioning and marketing.

Challenges in Bringing French Works to India

An important realization for me was that many remarkable French works may never reach readers in Indian languages unless they first appear in English because acquisitions happen if a translator brings the project. Even then, many publishers hand over the entire process to the translator without really engaging with the book. I personally cannot work that way. I need to be involved editorially, and I cannot operate on the assumption that a grant will cover all costs.

Thoughtful Acquisition and Future Plans

We are in the process of securing translation rights to a few French titles. We are being deliberate rather than rushing to acquire a large list. I personally scout titles, so many of the books haven't yet appeared on anyone else's radar in the Tamil market.

*Aananth Daknamurthy is an emerging voice in indie publishing and the founder of Two Shores Press, operating between Tiruchirappalli and New York. In 2026, he will publish the Tamil edition of Sarah Jollien-Fardel's *Sa préférée* (Sabine Wespieser).*

BUILDING STRONGER INDO-FRENCH PUBLISHING BRIDGES

Ramesh K. Mittal, President of Federation of Indian Publishers (FIP) & then Chairperson, CAPEXIL offers a comprehensive view of the Indian publishing ecosystem at a moment of rapid transformation. He also outlines how policy, technology and international collaboration, particularly Indo-French partnerships, can shape a resilient, globally relevant future for books from India.

What are the size and characteristics of the Indian publishing ecosystem ?

According to the India Book Market Report (IBMR) 2022, powered by Nielsen BookData in association with the Federation of Indian Publishers, the Indian print book publishing market was valued at approximately ₹69,640 crore in FY 2021–22, with estimates placing it at around ₹1,00,000 crore in FY 2024–25. The report projects a strong growth trajectory, with the market expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of nearly 19% over the medium term, driven largely by school education, higher education, and professional publishing.

While the ecosystem is predominantly education-led, trade publishing remains a strategically important segment, valued at approximately ₹3,700–4,000 crore, accounting for around 4% of the overall print publishing market by value. Though smaller in size, trade publishing plays a critical cultural and soft-power role, and IBMR 2022 notes that it is poised for steady growth, particularly in Indian languages, children's publishing, and rights-led international collaborations.

“ Though smaller in size, trade publishing plays a critical cultural and soft-power role (...) it is poised for steady growth, particularly in Indian languages, children's publishing, and rights-led international collaborations.

What do you see as the key growth areas for the Indian publishing ecosystem in the next five years?

Over the next five years, Indian publishing growth will be driven by five key factors:

- Regional & Indian-language publishing: supported by NEP 2020 (New Educational Policy) and multilingual education.
- Children's and young adult publishing: aligned with experiential learning and early literacy.
- Digital, audio, and accessible formats: including

audiobooks and inclusive publishing.

- Academic, professional, and STM content: particularly in emerging areas like AI, data science, climate studies, and public policy.
- Exports and rights-based publishing: where India is increasingly becoming both a content creator and rights seller, not



Ramesh K. Mittal

merely a low-cost producer.

India's growing middle class and global Indian diaspora further amplify demand for diverse, high-quality content.

What are the main challenges faced by Indian publishers today?

Indian publishers face several structural and transitional challenges:

- Piracy and unauthorised copying, especially photocopying and digital infringement.
- Taxation and cost pressures, including GST on inputs such as paper, royalty, and printing services.
- Fragmented retail and distribution, particularly beyond metropolitan cities.
- Low per-capita reading expenditure, despite a large literate population.
- Rapid technological shifts, including AI and text-and-data mining, requiring balanced copyright frameworks.

Addressing these challenges requires policy alignment, stronger copyright enforcement, and industry-government collaboration.

What would you say are common challenges faced by India and France in the publishing arena?

India and France—despite differing market maturity—share important common challenges:

- Balancing cultural diversity with commercial sustainability
- Protecting authors' and publishers' rights in the digital and AI era
- Ensuring discoverability of quality content amidst platform dominance
- Supporting independent publishers and bookstores
- Adapting to changing reading habits, especially among younger audiences

Both India and France recognise publishing not merely as an industry, but as a cultural and strategic knowledge sector.

What areas can India learn from French publishing policies—and vice versa?

India can draw valuable lessons from France's cultural policy framework, particularly:

- Fixed book price regimes that protect bookstores
- Strong public support for translations and literary exports
- Robust copyright enforcement mechanisms
- Institutional support for authors and independent publishers

Conversely, France can benefit from India's strengths in:

- Scalable educational publishing
- Multilingual content production
- Cost-efficient printing and manufacturing
- Large-scale readership outreach and market diversity

This mutual learning underscores the complementarity of both ecosystems.

“Both India and France recognise publishing not merely as an industry, but as a cultural and strategic knowledge sector.”

What initiatives could strengthen Indo-French publishing collaborations?

Strategic collaboration can be strengthened through:

- Bilateral translation grants and co-publishing funds
- Rights exchange platforms and publisher fellowships
- Joint participation in book fairs and literary festivals
- Knowledge-sharing on AI, metadata, and discoverability

Are there plans for new policies, funds, or fellowships under FIP and CAPEXIL in the next five years?

FIP and CAPEXIL can actively work to facilitate structured B2B engagement, policy dialogue, export promotion, and institutional partnerships between



Roundtable on the markets for Indian Languages

Indian and French publishers. Over the next five years, they are exploring:

- Publisher exchange and residency programmes
- Translation and rights-promotion support
- Capacity-building initiatives for young publishers
- Policy advocacy aligned with global copyright frameworks

These initiatives aim to strengthen cross-cultural knowledge flows and sustainable publishing ecosystems.

How do you see the future of books in India?

The future of books in India is resilient, inclusive, and globally relevant. Print will continue to coexist with digital and audio formats. Indian publishing will increasingly reflect local voices with global resonance, supported by technology, policy reform, and international collaboration. Books will remain central to education, democracy, creativity, and cultural exchange and India will play a decisive role in shaping this future.

Ramesh K. Mittal runs his nearly 6 decades old family business of export of books namely, D.K. Agencies. In 2012 he started LiFi Publications to publish literature/fiction books. He has been Chairman, Books, Publications & Printing Panel of CAPEXIL since Oct. 2011 and Chairperson for the second term till December 2025. As President of Federation of Indian Publishers, again for the second term, he has taken up a lot of new initiatives. He is also the Member of Membership Committee of International Publishers' Association, Geneva, Executive Committee Member of the Indian Reprographic Rights Organisation and Secretary General of Afro-Asian Book Council.

SAVE THE DATE!

PARIS BOOK market

4 & 5 June 2026

A unique networking opportunity
for publishing professionals!

Since 2022, the Paris Book Market
has been bringing together international
acquisition editors with rights managers
from French-language publishing houses.

In 2026, the Paris Book Market is organizing
a special focus on a foreign country:
the Netherlands. Rights managers
from a selection of Dutch publishing houses
will have the opportunity to schedule
meetings with French and international
acquisition editors in attendance.



FRANCE
LIVRE
The French
Publishing Network

FOR THE
FIFTH YEAR,
PARIS IS HOSTING
ITS INTERNATIONAL
PROFESSIONAL
PUBLISHING MARKET

FREE
ENTRY
— FOR —
FOREIGN
PUBLISHERS



A magnificent
new venue
in the very heart
of Paris

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

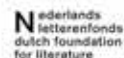
Registration will be open online at
www.francelivre.fr starting in January 2026.
For more information and updates, please contact
Claire Mauguière c.mauguiere@francelivre.fr

PARIS BOOK MARKET IS A FRANCE LIVRE INITIATIVE

With the support of



In partnership with





**RÉPUBLIQUE
FRANÇAISE**

*Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité*

TRANSLATION AND PUBLISHING

GRANTS



CNL CENTRE
NATIONAL
DU LIVRE



SCAN HERE
TO KNOW MORE

**INSTITUT
FRANÇAIS**

CHAMPIONING GLOBAL VOICES AT ÉDITIONS ZULMA

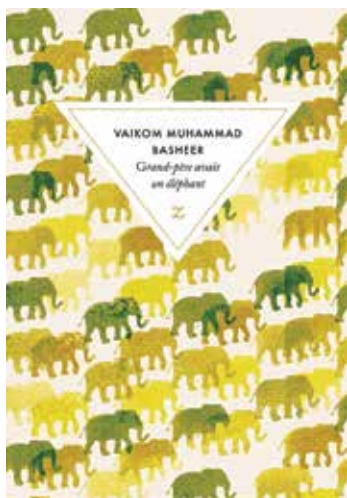
Since its inception, Éditions Zulma has earned a remarkable place in world literature by bringing bold, original voices from diverse cultures to French readers. In this conversation, Laure Leroy, Publisher and Co-Founder of Éditions Zulma, reflects on her editorial vision, the challenges of promoting translated fiction, and the role independent publishers play in reshaping the global literary backdrop.

What shaped your vision when building a catalogue focused on international literature?

In France, as in most parts of the world, literature publishing is largely dominated on one hand by national authors, and on the other by Anglo-American writers. In this context, it seemed essential to me to highlight the world's diversity. Our societies are inward-looking, increasingly closed off from others. Our need for otherness is all the more vital.

How do you decide which international voices to champion? What makes a manuscript or author stand out to you?

We publish only twelve new literary titles per year. Once we take into account our existing authors, there is fairly little room left for new ones. We are therefore extremely selective. The criteria would be the following:



- A good story rooted in a context and a culture, yet at the same time universal;
- Poetry, metaphors, and an original narrative voice that steps away from the highly standardized paths of Anglo-Saxon storytelling shaped by creative writing programs;
- A sense of humanity and sensitivity;

- A commitment to the world.

Ultimately, it's a very personal choice: a work that moves me, enchants me, makes me laugh and think, one that I feel enriches and expands my world and my imaginative space; a voice so original that, once discovered, I can no longer imagine it not existing.



Laure Leroy © Patrice Normand

“Our societies are inward-looking, increasingly closed off from others. Our need for otherness is all the more vital.”

Marketing translated fiction is tough in a native-language dominated market. How do you position international authors for French readers?

We translate exclusively from the original language, without relying on indirect translations, except on very rare occasions. Our relationship with translators is therefore essential. And they are great ambassadors!

Over time, readers have come to understand that they will find at Zulma original voices that unsettle them a little and carry them into other worlds.

The originality of our editorial approach is clearly expressed through the originality of our covers. In a way, our cover design emphasizes the brand more than the author. The message could be this: you've never

heard of this author, but they're published by Zulma, you can trust us, go for it!

How do literary prizes, media, and word-of-mouth boost visibility for translated books, and how do digital platforms, book clubs and literary festivals help you reach younger readers?

In France, major literary prizes have a colossal impact on sales. But it is very rare to receive one, even more so for foreign literatures from minority languages or cultures. Another difficulty we face is very concrete: the authors live hundreds or thousands of kilometres away, and while they can spend a few days meeting with the media, they are not available for bookstore events throughout the year. Their appearances in the media are also limited by the cost of interpretation and by the media's reluctance to broadcast languages other than French or English. In the end it is the booksellers who carry our books and recommend them, sustaining word-of-mouth that becomes our strongest driver of influence and success.

Can you share a foreign author or title that exceeded expectations in France and how independent publishers like Zulma are reshaping the global literary map?

Our greatest success in foreign literature is an Icelandic author, Auður Ava Ólafsdóttir. Her first book translated into French, *Rosa candida*, has sold more than 400,000 copies across all editions. But this is the exception, whose formula borders on the miraculous. Typically, a foreign literature title at Zulma sells between 8,000 and 12,000 copies for its initial standard edition.

We have also had very lovely successes with authors from Malaysia, Indonesia, or Iran. As for India, we have mostly published 20th-century classics, such as Tagore, Basheer or Bhibhuti Bhushan Banerji. *Grandfather Had an Elephant* by Vaikom Muhammad Basheer reached a little over 12,000 copies, mostly sold in paperback, probably thanks to the lovely title! We have also published Indian authors translated from Bengali, Malayalam and Tamil, including Sri Lankan author Antonythasan Jesuthasan (aka Shobaskhti). We have also published two essays by Pankaj Mishra, translated from English.

We choose to take risks, more so than larger publishing houses. Sometimes, success follows. When we published Auður Ava Ólafsdóttir, Icelandic literature was virtually unknown in France, apart from crime novels. Fifteen years later, after her phenomenal success, there are now dozens of literary publishers with at least one Icelandic author in their list. Since



we published the Sudanese author Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin, who drew a great deal of attention, two or three other Sudanese authors have appeared on the French market. We show that...it's possible!

“ In foreign literature, readers crave discovery - a fresh narrative style and characters, who may seem distant at first but gradually feel intimately relatable.

What advice would you give to publishers and editors, especially in markets like India, who are working to build and market catalogues of world literature?

Perhaps a bit naively, it seems to me that one of the keys to success is to ask ourselves very sincerely what a book can offer our readers. Publishers too often rely on the success a book has had in its own country, and that is rarely a good indicator. Readers look for authentic reading experiences and compelling stories. In foreign literature, readers crave discovery - a fresh narrative style and characters, who may seem distant at first but gradually feel intimately relatable. It seems to me that readers' curiosity for foreign literature is part of their search for an engagement with the world, for shared human values.

Laure Leroy co-founded Zulma in 1991 at just 23, after studying English linguistics. In 2006, she decided to completely rethink its catalogue, publishing only twelve new titles a year and placing foreign literature at the heart of its list. She also introduced Zulma's iconic unified cover style, designed by British graphic artist David Pearson. In 2019, Zulma added essays to its renowned fiction catalogue, continuing its commitment to global voices and ideas.

BRINGING INDIAN LITERATURE TO FRANCE: A JOURNEY OF VISION AND EXCHANGE

Bringing Indian literature to French readers requires far more than translation. It demands cultural understanding, editorial conviction, and a commitment to plurality. Rajesh Sharma, Director of Lettres Indiennes at Actes Sud, has played a pivotal role in bringing the diversity of Indian literature to French readers over the past 27 years. In this interview, he discusses his editorial vision, the challenges of translation and cultural exchange, and how Lettres Indiennes continues to introduce both celebrated and emerging Indian voices to an international audience.

How did your initial vision for 'Lettres Indiennes' evolve, and what drives your choice of authors representing India's many literatures?

When I moved to France in 1997, no French Publisher was publishing contemporary Indian writing in a systematic manner. This led me to launch the Series Lettres Indiennes with Actes Sud Publishers. My main objective was to make French readers discover the diversity of contemporary Indian writing, in English, but also specifically in the Indian languages. "When we speak of Indian literature, we never use the singular," was often my opening remark in my talks across France.

The first titles that appeared in my series from 2000 onwards were Nirmal Verma from Hindi, Mahasweta Devi from Bengali and Mukundan from Malayalam. My guiding principle when selecting titles or writers has always been to opt for subjects with universal appeal but with a distinctively Indian or South Asian flavour.

How did leading the French Book Office deepen your insight into Indo-French publishing and guide the evolution of 'Lettres Indiennes'?

My work at the French Book Office was a fascinating discovery of the world of books, writers and publishing.

I was teaching at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), when I was recruited to create a French Book Office in 1980, conceive a book policy and oversee its implementation across India and later across South Asia. I quickly realized that for any policy to be successful in the long term, it has to be open, inclusive, and reciprocal.

As the only non-French Director of Books in the French government's program covering five countries (at that time), I understood the Indian point of view instinctively. During Book Fairs, in

Calcutta, Delhi or even Guwahati, I often heard the refrain. - it is all very well to publish French writers in India, but what about my/our books, our writers in France.

A memory of precisely this kind of reciprocity from that time has stayed with me. On her very first visit to India, I had introduced the renowned French writer Marguerite Yourcenar to the Punjabi and Hindi writer, Amrita Pritam. They hit it off instantly and she decided to translate some of Amrita Pritam's poems with my help, for the prestigious literary journal the Nouvelle Revue Française. The poems were published and attracted a lot of attention. As a result, Amrita Pritam's novels were soon picked up by publishers for translation into French.



Rajesh Sharma

“My guiding principle when selecting titles or writers has always been to opt for subjects with universal appeal but with a distinctively Indian or South Asian flavour.”

What challenges do you see in taking Indian literature abroad, and how can collaborative efforts help close these gaps?

The role of French literature and contemporary French writing is crucial to French Cultural Policy. Writers and philosophers are visible in the media and given a voice. It is not at all unusual to invite a

French philosopher to comment on a domestic or international event in the 8 pm news bulletin on TV. Something unthinkable in India.

France is the only country I know where an eminent and fascinating lexicographer and linguist like Alain Rey (now deceased) became a renowned public figure.

Unfortunately, literature and books do not get the importance they deserve in Indian Cultural Policy abroad. Officials in France often asked me what our Ministry of Culture had planned for books that particular year and I struggled for an answer. The Minister of Culture in France is a prized and prestigious portfolio, with André Malraux having served in this capacity.

I sincerely believe that Indian Books and Literature should have a more major and visible role in our Cultural Policy abroad.

Which themes, narratives, or literary styles from India resonate most strongly with French readers today?

French readers (the large majority of which are women) are by and large very discerning and France publishes and reads extensively, including literature in translation from other countries and cultures.

In my 27 years of publishing in France, I have found that the French reader expects to read good, well-translated literature though the themes can vary. I have always followed my own convictions when selecting titles and readers have responded positively.

Since every book I publish carries my name, I get a phenomenal amount of feedback on social media, on the books that I have published or intend to. This kind of real time feedback makes my work very exciting and rewarding.

I must add that translation remains a problem. For example, I have never been able to publish U.R. Ananthamurthy because of the paucity of Kannada translators.

How do you envision the future of Lettres Indiennes, and which literary traditions from India are you eager to introduce to French readers?

The Lettres Indiennes Collection, that I launched in 1998 met with success and interest from readers across France and francophone countries but also made me realize that the readers wanted more than fiction.

So my first step to give a new boost to the series was to publish non-fiction. Pavan Varma's "Being

Indian" that appeared in 2005, was amongst my initial forays into this new field and met with frankly unexpected success. Sonia Faleiro, Nalini Jameela are others who come to mind. I even published Alice Albinia's much appreciated "Empires of the Indus".

“ I sincerely believe that Indian books and literature should have a more major and visible role in our cultural policy abroad.

The next logical step was to extend the scope of my series to South Asia. In 2007, Kunzang Choden from Bhutan was amongst my prized titles; so were Tahmima Anam from Bangladesh and Jamil Ahmad from Pakistan.

The series is now in its 27th year of sustained publishing with a faithful readership. While remaining devoted to my established authors such as Amitav Ghosh and Anuradha Roy, this faithful readership has allowed me to publish young new voices. Aravind Jayan (*Teen Couple have fun outdoors*) in 2024, was a step in this direction that earned him invitations to two Book Festivals and got him sizable press coverage. French readers have been wonderfully loyal, and I owe them enormous gratitude.



Rajesh Sharma did his Master's in French literature from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi where he taught for two years before working for the French Embassy as Director of the French Book Office from 1980 to 1997. In 1998, he launched the literary collection "Lettres Indiennes" (Indian Literature), in France with Actes Sud Publishers and continues as its director till today. From 1998 to 2015, he taught various courses on India at Sciences Po, Paris. He has been decorated twice by the French Government - Chevalier (1992), and Officer (2003) de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

FROM TAMIL NADU TO GALLIMARD: THE NEW MOMENTUM OF INDIAN LANGUAGE LITERATURES

Perumal Murugan's arrival on Gallimard's prestigious *Du Monde Entier* list marks a turning point for Tamil writing. Kannan Sundaram, Managing Director and Publisher of Kalachuvadu Publication Pvt Ltd, reflects on the significance of this moment and what it means for Indian languages on the world stage.



Kannan Sundaram with Perumal Murugan © Basso Canarsa

A Milestone Moment for Tamil Writing

Perumal Murugan is the first Tamil author to have made it to Gallimard's *Du Monde Entier* list. I am intensely aware of the historic nature of this break. It is a proud moment for modern Tamil writing.

I think the genuine nature of Perumal Murugan's voice and the credibility of the experience he portrays in the work is why his writings have an international appeal. In all his works the author dissolves himself in the world he creates. The reader can immerse herself into the text without the protruding presence of the writer.

Indian Languages Reclaim the Global Stage After Nearly a Century

After Rabindranath Tagore won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1914, Indian language writings have barely made an impact on the world stage for a hundred years. While Indian English writing received

“ It is exciting that the richness of our writings is now spreading on the global stage.

international attention, it is only in the last decade that other Indian languages have made an impact on the global stage. In the span of three years, two works written in Indian languages have won the International Booker Prize! We have always known through translations that there are amazing writings in the Indian languages. It is exciting that the richness of our writings is now spreading on the global stage.

The Need for Greater Global Reach

However there is a need for an exponential growth in the number of languages, the number of books and the number of authors traveling into the world from the Indian languages. I am confident that Gallimard will continue to publish Murugan and that their interest in Indian literature will expand. When you get to add Gallimard to your list, there is always the tail wind effect that brings more global attention to the book, the author, the publications and the language.



S.R. Sundaram (aka Kannan Sundaram) is the Publisher of Kalachuvadu Publication. He is the editor of the eponymous magazine, a monthly journal for culture and politics. He has written extensively in Tamil and English and his writings have appeared in The Hindu, The Indian Express, Scroll.in, Economic and Political Weekly. His catalogue includes many French titles and he has participated several times in Livre Paris. The French government honoured him with the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres in 2024.

LATITUDES OF LONGING: AN INDIAN NOVEL FINDS A GLOBAL VOICE

Author Shubhangi Swarup's *Latitudes of Longing* (HarperCollins India, 2018) challenges the belief that English is the only gateway to global recognition. Translated into 17 languages, the novel has earned prestigious awards in France and Taiwan, resonating with readers across diverse cultures.

Challenging Language Norms

As Indian writers, we are made to believe that the English language is the gate to global recognition. My experience with 'Latitudes of Longing' strongly challenges this notion. It is the first Indian work to win the Emile Guimet prize, and also the prestigious Openbook award in Taiwan, both, in its translated avatar. It is currently translated in 17 international languages but more importantly, has a unique relationship and reception with each culture.



Shubhangi Swarup

A Genre of Its Own

The French jury of the Emile Guimet Prize gifted me with a genre of my own, they called it 'fiction of nature'. It's more apt than magical realism, ecological fiction, post-colonial etc. that others have used to describe it as. It just goes to show that books, like the ideas and beliefs they represent, transcend cultures and provide a genuine chance for solidarity in ways that identity politics would love to destroy.

“It is a compliment when another culture accepts the work on its own terms and vision, and this has been my experience with publishing in France.”

Learning from Global Literary Circles

I am grateful that my novel piqued the interest of a few French publishers, and I couldn't have dreamt of a better editor and publisher than Métailié. The interest of my editor Lise Belperron, lay in the universality of the text rather than any Indophile preoccupation. She used the word "telluric" to describe it, and once I looked it up, I realised how apt it was. It means "of the planet", and my book attempts to reorient stories by using the forces of nature, rather than political borders, as narrative threads.

So it is a compliment when another culture accepts the work on its own terms and vision, and this has been my experience with publishing in France. I was also invited to share a panel with Annie Ernaux in Jaipur, for the Night of Ideas, and I learned so much by just observing the French writers I shared the panel with. The humility, honesty and depth they brought was refreshing.



Shubhangi Swarup is an Indian author, journalist, and educator, best known for her award-winning novel Latitudes of Longing, a bestseller in India and Sweden. A former journalist with Open and Mint, she also led India's first VR journalism platform, ElseVR, where she created the acclaimed documentary When Borders Move. Her work spans fiction, reportage, and immersive storytelling.

RECEPTION OF FOREIGN LITERATURE IN INDIA ON INDIAN READERS EMBRACING GLOBAL STORIES

Foreign literature has always found a foothold in India, but its resonance today is deeper and more diverse than ever before. Arpita Das, Founder–Publisher of Yoda Press, reflects on why genre fiction, narrative non-fiction and graphic books are gaining ground, how translations are striking a powerful chord with young Indian readers, and what publishers must do to ensure that emerging international voices find a meaningful place in India’s reading landscape.

Is there demand for foreign literature in India today and which genres work and why?

There has always been a space for foreign literature as we always had avid, discerning readers. But now even more so because our younger readers, millennials and Gen Z readers are more eclectic, nationality-agnostic readers. They are very aware of the English-hegemony in foreign literature that we, Gen X readers, grew up with. Popular Culture has moved in other directions in recent times. The immense interest in K-Drama, Manga and Anime are evidence of this. And this also reflects the younger generation’s interest in accessing foreign literature. The fact that translations are currently booming as a sector is also evidence of this same fact.

The interest currently is more in genre fiction. But for me, what is really exciting is the interest in these confounding times in narrative non-fiction across the board. The other genre I would mention is comics and graphic books.

How receptive are Indian readers to translations?

Translations are winning international awards and being recognised like never before. Recently, at Yoda Press’s annual winter book sale, we found the title that evinced tremendous interest among our readers, was a translation of French-Iranian author Chowra Makaremi, *Woman Life Freedom: Echoes of a Revolutionary Uprising in Iran*. These were mostly young readers and they all resonated with the women’s movement in Iran. For the first time, I feel people are beginning to become interested in translated non-fiction as well.



Arpita Das

What are the challenges that foreign literature faces in India and how can they be overcome?

Indian editions need to be promoted more aggressively and for this, we need support to bring the authors to India. We have to locate these books more robustly among our own lists, so that the rationale is clearer to readers as to why they have been published in India. Now this is never a problem with the A-list Booker and Pulitzer winning authors whose works are translated and made available in India. But, I am more interested in mid-list authors, younger voices, those who are still emerging and experimenting with cutting-edge work. And for this, we as publishers must be more discerning about which titles we are bringing to our lists. We cannot opt for it just because there is a generous translation grant available alongside.

What is the future of foreign literature in India?

Younger readers are adept at accessing the material online and even use an AI software to have it translated, if it is in a foreign language. What can we do to curate and present this material as book-length works with care and distinction? If we can honestly answer this question, the future is bright for foreign translations in India,” concludes Arpita.

“ We have to locate these books more robustly among our own lists, so that the rationale is clearer to readers as to why they have been published in India.

Arpita Das is Founder-Publisher of the independent publishing house Yoda Press and Editor of the South Asia list at Melbourne University Publishing. She is also Associate Professor of Writing at Ashoka University. Das writes a regular column on Indian publishing for the New York-based Publishing Perspectives.

RECEPTION OF FOREIGN LITERATURE IN INDIA ON SELECTIVE GLOBALISM AND CULTURAL RESONANCE

As Indian readers, especially the young, negotiate between global exposure and a renewed pull towards local voices, foreign books succeed only when they offer strong emotional resonance, accessible formats and clear relevance. Pranav Johri, Partner at Rajpal & Sons outlines the structural and cultural challenges foreign literature faces in India, and explains how thoughtful acquisition, smart formats and community-led discovery could define its future.

Is there demand for foreign literature in India today and which genres work and why?

There is a niche demand for foreign literature in India. In terms of specific genres, the following do well: Manga and graphic illustration books, powered by fast-paced visual narratives, affordable paperback prices and as box sets; Fantasy & sci-fi with immersive worlds do well with young readers; Literary fiction with a strong sense of place and Self Development non-fiction: Psychology, creativity, productivity, emotional development, climate, and business storytelling (narrative-driven, not textbookish). Short chapters and clear takeaways lead to high adoption in young professional readers.



Pranav Johri

How receptive are Indian readers to translations?

The centre of gravity is moving home—from imported ideas and contexts to Indian cultural memory. There's a shift from foreign translations to rediscovered Indian originals—classics, Bhakti/Sufi poets, Partition and Freedom-movement narratives, and similar themes.

We are seeing a curriculum and cultural pull toward local content—schools, libraries, and literary festivals giving increasing space to regional and national classics. Younger readers increasingly ask for storytelling that sounds like their own streets and idioms. Imported sensibilities and contexts can feel distant, even when well translated.

What are the challenges foreign literature faces in India and how can they be overcome?

Discoverability vs. Algorithmic Online Retail: Online marketplaces (which account for more than 50% of the sales) reward speed and familiar names, and little known translations don't do well. Strong metadata/keywords, author-led content and influencer micro-video could help online discovery, paired with launches with campus and bookstore events could help create offline demand.

Price Sensitivity & Cost of Translations: Translation costs, rights, and printing costs push the price beyond affordable range. Multiple formats (affordable paperback + premium HB/box set) and smaller first prints with fast reprints could help. Keeping eBooks and audiobooks at a price-parity could also help to encourage sampling without cannibalizing print.

Cultural Resonance: Great books can feel distant in a very different context. Commissioning context notes, maps, and adding an India-specific foreword could be ways to overcome this. One should market the emotions like friendship, work, love, identity and not the book's origin as the selling pitch.

Rights Lengths & Marketing Windows: Late Indian editions miss global buzz. Negotiating simultaneous or near-simultaneous India releases and insisting on longer backlist availability so that demand compounds over time are some ways to generate excitement.

What is the future of foreign literature in India?

The future of foreign literature in India is selective. It will grow, but not as a monolith. There will be demand for content that feels emotionally relatable, price-accessible, and easy to sample. Digital formats like ebooks and audiobooks will drive sampling; print remains the primary format for keepers, box sets, and gifts. Book clubs, campuses, indie stores, and creator-led reels – marketing content that develops communities will matter more than ads and paid promos.

“The future of foreign literature in India is selective. It will grow, but not as a monolith. There will be demand for content that feels emotionally relatable, price-accessible, and easy to sample.”

Pranav Johri is Partner, Rajpal & Sons, which is one of the oldest independent literary publishing houses in India. Its French list includes authors like Patrick Modiano, David Foenkinos, and Amelie Nothomb. The publishing house won the inaugural Romain Rolland Prize in 2018 for its Hindi edition of Patrick Modiano's "Rues des Boutiques Obscures."

WHY FRANCE STILL BELIEVES IN BOOKSTORES

Guillaume Husson, Director of the French Bookselling Association (Syndicat de la Librairie Française- SLF), maps the contemporary bookselling landscape in France, examining how bookstores weathered the Covid crisis, adapted to digital realities, and continue to play a vital cultural role amid changing reading habits, sustainability concerns, and the growing influence of artificial intelligence.



Guillaume Husson © Ambre Husson

What is the landscape of bookstores in France?

There are 3,200 bookstores in France, including 3,000 independent stores and 200 chain stores, spread across the country. This figure has remained relatively stable since the beginning of the century. These bookstores account for 40% of total book sales, including translated literature, the humanities, poetry, theatre, art, etc.

There are two types of chain stores in France: those specializing in book sales, such as Gibert, Nosoli (Furet du Nord, Decitre) and La Procure, which are classified as bookstores, and the cultural hypermarket chains (Fnac, Cultura, Espacesculturels Leclerc), which not only sell books but also many other cultural and technical products. Cultural hypermarkets are comparable to bookstores in terms of economic importance.

How did French bookstores adapt to the COVID shutdown and how have they evolved after that?

Bookstores were forced to close during the first two lockdowns, before being recognized as “essential businesses” and allowed to remain open. The public aid they received during this period to cover their operating losses prevented them from going out of business.

The closure of bookshops was the subject of a national debate in France during the Covid epidemic. The extensive media coverage raised public awareness on the importance of independent bookstores.

There have been two developments as a result of this crisis. Firstly, it led to a sharp increase in the number of bookstores equipped with websites offering in-store pickup or home delivery of books. Secondly, it led to a boom in bookstore openings: 500 new bookstores opened in France between 2019 and 2024, with many people deciding to change professions to pursue a career in this field.

What is the share of online retail as opposed to physical retail in France?

The share of e-commerce is the only market segment that has been growing continuously for many years. Nevertheless, thanks to a wide network of retail outlets across the country, in-store sales continue to account for more than 80% of the market. And while Amazon and Fnac.com largely dominate the e-commerce segment, almost all bookstores also have their own websites for online reservations and sales, which enable them to meet their customers’ demands.

“ 500 new bookstores opened in France between 2019 and 2024, with many people deciding to change professions to pursue a career in this field.”

The network of bookstores in France is one of the densest. What are the government policies that made it possible and have supported this growth?

The high density of bookstores, both in Paris and across the rest of France, is facilitated by the fact that

books are sold at a fixed price, which allows bookshops to avoid price competition from chains or online retailers who are able to offer significant discounts owing to their financial clout and the wide range of products they sell other than books.

Added to this is a reduced VAT rate on books (5.5%) and financial assistance in the form of interest-free loans for investments (creation, relocation, renovations, etc.) or subsidies, for example for literary events.

“ The high density of bookstores, both in Paris and across the rest of France, is facilitated by the fact that books are sold at a fixed price, which allows bookshops to avoid price competition from chains or online retailers.



“A Book Has the Same Price Everywhere” campaign.

Has the fixed law price implemented in other countries and what are its shortfalls?

Most European countries have fixed prices for books, as do Mexico and, in Asia, Japan and South Korea. The two main hurdles faced by this legislation today are, on the one hand, competition from major online retailers and, on the other hand, the economic woes faced by bookstores, which cannot pass on the increase

in their operating costs to the public through higher retail prices.

What is the main role and missions of the French Bookselling Association?

The SLF’s main mission is to represent and defend the bookselling profession. Its actions are therefore directed at national and local public authorities and other book-related professions, such as publishers, sales agents, and distributors, as well as authors and librarians, and also at the general public through campaigns promoting bookstores.

The primary objective is to preserve the legal and regulatory framework that enables bookstores to develop their business. This mainly concerns fixed book prices, VAT, public procurement rules, and payment terms. Secondly, the SLF plays an economic role by encouraging the main suppliers to bookstores, starting with the major publishing groups, to implement commercial and financial measures in favour of independent bookstores. And finally, the SLF strives to improve the productivity and qualifications of booksellers through “economic intelligence” tools that it makes available to booksellers (Bookstore Observatory) and a professional training policy.

The French Bookselling Association works with various partners. How do these collaborations work?

The SLF collaborates effectively with a large number of public and private partners. In the public sector, our main contacts are the Ministry of Culture, which oversees public policy on books, and the National Book Centre, which is its operator for support to book professionals. Currently, for example, we are working with them on defending the fixed book price and regulating delivery costs for books ordered online, on maintaining the Culture Pass, a scheme aimed at youth, as well as on European regulations (regulations on deforestation and payment terms) and adapting CNL aid to the challenges facing bookstores over the next ten years.

We also have a number of ongoing discussions with publishers, sales agents, and distributors on topics such as the application of a minimum trade discount for small bookstores, the management of book transport, price marking on books, the impact of artificial intelligence, and actions to promote greater consideration of environmental issues within our sector.

What are the biggest opportunities and challenges for independent bookstores in France today?

The major challenge is the decline in readership, not only is the number of readers gradually decreasing overall, but so too is the proportion of “avid” readers, i.e., those who read more than twenty books a year and are the primary customers of independent bookstores. In response to this trend, booksellers must continue to promote what makes them unique and attractive: the relevance of their selection, their welcoming atmosphere, the beauty of their premises, and, last but not least, their efforts to bring reading to life beyond the book itself by inviting authors to bookstores, organizing festivals and workshops with children and teenagers, and collaborating with other cultural establishments (libraries, theatres, movie theatres, universities, etc.).



Literary discussion at La Régulière bookstore in Paris (18e)

“Booksellers must continue to promote what makes them unique and attractive: the relevance of their selection, their welcoming atmosphere, the beauty of their premises, and, last but not least, their efforts to bring reading to life beyond the book.”

How is the French bookselling ecosystem looking at sustainability?

Booksellers are sensitive to environmental issues because of the responsibility they feel towards society. Many initiatives are being taken within the profession to reduce the environmental footprint of bookstores, but also to provide the public with a relevant selection of books on this topic.

However, studies show that within the book sector, it is the upstream part of the chain, i.e., book manufacturing, that accounts for 80% of the environmental footprint, with book transportation being the second largest factor. As a result, booksellers are calling for environmental issues to be taken into account across the entire chain. They are also



Bookstore in Trouville-sur-Mer, Normandy.

campaigning for a reduction in the “overproduction” of books in favour of greater attention and more time being given to each title.

What innovations do you think will define book selling in coming years?

There is no doubt that artificial intelligence will have an impact on the book industry and publishing. It will make it possible to optimize many processes in terms of logistics, distribution, and databases, and to better understand the behaviour and expectations of bookstore customers. However, when it comes to creation, these developments must be carried out in a way that is respectful of both copyright and the human dimension of producing creative works. No matter how advanced AI becomes, it will never be able to truly “create” anything, but only reproduce it in a disembodied manner.

Artificial intelligence also raises the issue of the ability to produce “books” in an almost infinite manner, with the risk that the internet giants will flood the web with an unlimited amount of content, at the risk of stifling human creativity. We can see that a player such as Amazon is already engaged in such a strategy. Faced with such a risk, booksellers will have a role to play as trusted third parties that can distinguish between books that are the result of creative work from books who are not.

For the past fifteen years, Guillaume Husson has served as the Director of the Syndicat de la Librairie Française (SLF), the union representing France’s independent booksellers—the country’s primary network for book sales. Under his leadership, the SLF has brought together 750 members, ranging from small independent bookshops to bookstore chains, collectively accounting for over 80% of employment and turnover in the sector. He also serves as a key public voice for independent booksellers, maintaining strong relationships with stakeholders across the book ecosystem—publishers, authors, librarians, and public authorities—both in France and at the European level.



EVERY BOOKSHELF WANTS MORE FRENCH LITERATURE.

We want to make sure you get it.

The Pardon My French! Program by the French Institute in India brings french literature in English and regional languages to readers and bookstores across India. Supporting bookstores with special discounts, events, digital marketing, and community we're bringing a personally curated list of contemporary French titles to you.

Join the programme now.
Email us at: frenchbookoffice@institutfrancaisindia.in



A BRIGHT HORIZON FOR INDIA'S BOOKSHOPS

Leonard Fernandes shares that by shifting the attitude from competition to collaboration, the publishing industry can further enhance the position of the physical bookstore as the ultimate engine for book discovery, especially for the diverse, multi-lingual voices that define modern India.

The rise of e-commerce giants in India, especially Amazon with its large discounts and almost immediate delivery, and the digital pivot that accelerated prior to the pandemic led many to predict the end of the shelf. However, as we move towards 2026, a different story is emerging. It is one of profound resilience, a rediscovered joy of the analogue, and a reimagined third space. Today, one can comfortably say that India's bookshops are not just surviving – they are evolving into the most vital nodes of our cultural ecosystem.

The Post-Pandemic Physical Renaissance

The pandemic was an unexpected catalyst for a print revival. After years of digital saturation, Indian readers experienced a profound return to the physical book as people thought their physical isolation could be ameliorated with a book in hand. In September 2022, after the worst of the pandemic had passed, the India Book Market Report 2022 released jointly by Nielsen BookData and The Federation of Indian Publishers (FIP) had predicted that “the Indian print book market [would] reach just shy of INR 1 lakh crore (\$11.6 billion) by the end of 2024”.

Globally, hard-copy books held a dominant 78.19% revenue share in the global books industry in 2024, as they offered readers an opportunity to disconnect from screens and escape the constant interruptions of texts, emails, and notifications. Print books dominate India's publishing market, with the market indeed having reached earlier projections of sales worth ₹1 lakh crore (over \$11.6 billion USD) in 2024-2025. These sales were driven by high literacy, educational demand, and strong regional language consumption, despite digital growth, making India a major global book market.

We have entered an era where the bookshop is viewed as more than just a place where books are sold. They have transitioned from retail points to community hubs. While researching for this article, I came across a statistic that surprised me which

stated that as of late 2025, there are over 50,225 bookstores in India (a figure includes every textbook depot and stationery shop in the country), a 3.74% increase from 2023, with single-owner operations making up over 98% of this landscape. A list that Peter Griffin compiled during the pandemic, and one which admittedly needs to be revised, focused on literary bookshops alone i.e., those that did not primarily sell stationery or textbooks, nor were they publisher-owned outlets selling only their own titles. This list of real bookshops, the kind this article focuses on, has a much smaller count.

During the lockdown, independent stores stepped up to ensure that customers were not left without the books they wanted and came up with novel ways to do so:

The Bookshop (Delhi): During the lockdowns, this store (which has since moved locations and is now called The Bookshop Inc.) pivoted to personal curation via Instagram and handwritten notes, proving that intimacy scales better than code-driven recommendations.

Pagdandi (Pune): By launching innovative gift voucher campaigns and fostering an emotional bond with patrons, they demonstrated that community loyalty can withstand even the steepest economic downturns.

“When a publisher, a bookseller, and a reader cooperate, they do more than just complete a transaction; they sustain a civilization.”



Leonard Fernandes

During this time, online portals were subjected to heavy strain, providing an opportunity for bookshops to fill the gaps and address the needs of their communities. This paved the way for a sustained period of growth during which the role of the bookshop as a reliable source of well curated books was recognised – a recognition that has since endured.

In an infinite digital scroll, the reader is often paralyzed by choice. This is where the bookseller plays a vital role. The curation economy is the bookstore's greatest competitive advantage. While e-commerce platforms prioritize paid placements and recent trends, a passionate bookseller prioritizes the right fit.

Online shopping is fundamentally search-based (you buy what you already know), whereas physical bookshops are discovery-based (you find what you didn't know you needed). This distinction is a lifeline for backlist and mid-list titles, as well as debut authors who lack the massive marketing budgets required to trend on digital algorithms.

A Launchpad for Indian Languages

Perhaps the most optimistic trend in Indian bookselling is the democratization of the shelf. India's linguistic diversity is its greatest strength, and physical bookstores are best suited to promote this *bibliodiversity*.

Recent industry findings show that Indian language publishing is experiencing a massive revival. While Hindi and English dominate, languages like Gujarati, Punjabi, Malayalam, and Telugu also have large readerships. According to a report by CAPEXIL, 45% of trade books sold are in regional languages, highlighting the breadth of the market beyond English.

The Translation Bridge: The global success of Indian translations has created a hunger for more. Physical bookstores are uniquely positioned to place the original language version alongside its English translation, fostering a bilingual reading culture.

Localized Discoverability: While online algorithms often bury vernacular titles under global bestsellers, stores like Atta Galatta (Bengaluru) specifically house Indian writing and regional-language books, creating a symbiotic relationship with their readers.

The Cooperative Ecosystem: A New Blueprint

I believe that the future of bookselling lies in a Cooperative Ecosystem – a synergy between publishers, distributors, and retailers.



Pagdandi Bookstore in Pune

“ I believe that the future of bookselling lies in a cooperative ecosystem, a synergy between publishers, distributors, and retailers.

The Omnichannel Strategy

The most successful Indian bookstores today are Phygital. They use WhatsApp and Instagram to build communities, but the final fulfillment usually happens in-store. Many Indian bookstores now maintain active Facebook and Instagram profiles, using these tools to communicate directly with book buyers and in turn drive physical footfall. Here too, there is an opportunity for publishers and booksellers to work together so that books can be brought to the reader's attention early and often.

This digital layer offers a massive, untapped opportunity for publisher-retailer synergy. Rather than acting as separate entities, publishers can empower booksellers by providing, for instance:

Early-Access Digital Kits: Including high-quality social media assets like book trailers, author soundbites, and behind-the-scenes snippets, weeks before a launch.

Direct-to-Bookseller Newsletters: Ensuring that local stores are the first to know about upcoming releases, allowing them to build pre-order buzz within their local WhatsApp groups.

Collaborative Virality: When a publisher and an independent store co-host an Instagram Live or a signed-copy reveal, such as during the high-octane September 2025 launch of Arundhati Roy's memoir, *Mother Mary Comes to Me*, they bypass the impersonal search algorithm and speak directly to a curated, high-intent audience.

By treating the local bookstore as a primary marketing partner rather than just a distribution point, publishers can ensure that new books are brought to the notice of readers early, often, and



The Dogears Bookshop in Goa

with the human seal of approval that only a trusted bookseller can provide.

In return, the bookstore provides a high-conversion touch and feel experience and essentially doubles as a showroom for the publisher's titles. This is especially vital for India's children's book industry, which possesses immense untapped potential and is poised to maintain double-digit growth over the next decade as parents seek physical alternatives to screen time.

Shared Innovation

The FICCI PubliCon 2025 conference, held on August 5, 2025, marked a significant shift in how the Indian publishing industry views its role in the nation's socio-economic landscape. By positioning publishers as equal stakeholders rather than just content suppliers, the industry is committing to a model where books serve as primary drivers of the knowledge economy. By cooperating with local bookshops on shared logistics and national Shop Local campaigns, the industry can reach deeper into Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, thereby expanding the readership for its books. Such initiatives help bring Indian language books into regions with previously limited access. While digital catalogues provide visibility, it is the shared logistics of this cooperative ecosystem that finally provides actual accessibility.

Focusing on the Backlist

Publishers derive the vast majority of their profit from their backlist – books published more than six months ago that continue to sell. These titles often serve as the economic engine that sustains new, more speculative publishing projects. By partnering with booksellers to ensure these core titles remain physically visible, publishers can keep their most reliable assets in front of the reader at all times, turning the bookshelf into a perpetual discovery machine. When publishers and booksellers collaborate on Backlist Spotlights (like a Modern

Classics table, for example), there is an opportunity to help the author build a brand rather than just sell a single product.

The Economic and Social Dividend

The Indian publishing industry is not just a cultural asset, it is a powerhouse for employment and industry. It supports over a million jobs and plays a pivotal role in disseminating knowledge. A vibrant bookselling infrastructure like that which bookshops can provide is essential to making sure that books reach their intended readership and provide and sustain a cultural soft power.

Beyond economics, bookshops are where ideas are debated and where a child's imagination can be first ignited. Further, as mentioned earlier, bookshops are being reimagined not as retail outlets, but as third spaces – neutral ground between home and work. Research shows consumers find bookshops inspiring and soothing, comparable to a walk in nature.

“ Beyond economics, bookshops are where ideas are debated and where a child's imagination can be first ignited.

The Horizon is Bright

The Death of the Book was indeed a premature diagnosis. Instead, what we are witnessing is a Rebirth of the Bookshop. By focusing on the unique strengths of the physical space – curation, community, and the celebration of Indian languages – the ecosystem is building a sustainable future.

When a publisher, a bookseller, and a reader cooperate, they do more than just complete a transaction; they sustain a civilization. The Indian bookshop is no longer just a place to buy a product; it is where the soul of the nation finds its voice, one shelf at a time.

Leonard Fernandes moved from enterprise software into the world of books in 2006, beginning with DogearsEtc, an early peer-to-peer bookselling platform. He soon co-founded CinnamonTeal Publishing, bringing retail self-publishing to India and earning the British Council Creative Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 2010. He later co-created Publishing Next and its Industry Awards, now key fixtures in India's publishing landscape. His passion for bookselling led to The Dogears Bookshop (2016) in Goa and, more recently, the Goa Book Fair (2023). A founding member of the Independent Bookshops Association of India, he also mentors new publishing professionals through various teaching roles.

KUNZUM BOOKS: RETHINKING BOOKSTORES AS CULTURAL DESTINATIONS!

Ajay Jain, Kunzum Books shares how bookstores can reinvent themselves as immersive cultural destinations that draw communities in.

A Cultural Hub

Bookstores can thrive two ways. One, they are located in retail areas with high footfall like malls and markets like Khan Market. People then just walk in, browse, and buy. Space permitting, the addition of a café boosts revenues and offsets all or more of the operating costs. But these options are limited, considering high rentals – unless you are a legacy store owning the property.



Ajay Jain

Alternately, you focus on the experience so you become a destination in itself, like we do at Kunzum. We are positioning Kunzum as a cultural hub, and not just a literary one. While other bookstores offer toys, stationery and food and beverages, we offer events. To attract guests from all walks of life, and to catalyse the promotion of art and culture. And build communities around things that bring joy. Like books, all such events are also forms of storytelling and thus complement each other.

Curation plays a key role too. We want customers to discover upcoming authors and unexpected titles besides the usual bestsellers. By not just stocking a wide range, but also making the browsing experience a delight through store design. There is an ocean of quality books that can only be discovered through patient browsing of shelves. Over a cup of coffee or tea.

Collaborations and Partnerships

Partnerships with schools and corporates – where we set up book fairs, gifting programs, libraries etc. can be a service online markets cannot offer. And you cannot meet authors, editors and designers online – only bookstores with event spaces can work here.



Sanctuaries for People

I can feel a certain level of digital fatigue setting in people. This may be the beginning of a shift to real world experiences and in-person interactions. That is when bookstores will once again become sanctuaries for people.

“ There is an ocean of quality books that can only be discovered through patient browsing of shelves, over a cup of coffee or tea.



Ajay Jain is a writer and a photographer. Kunzum Travel Cafe came up in 2010 in Hauz Khas Village as a gallery for his photography and books and a gathering place for travelers. Close towards the end of the pandemic, Ajay decided to pivot and turn Kunzum into a boutique chain of bookstores, retaining the unique vibe and community feel of the original Kunzum Travel Cafe. The flagship store in GK2 started with one floor, but soon expanded to four. It hosts between 70-100 events a month around books, music, theatre, art, films, and more.

RACHNA BOOKS: CURATION, COMMUNITY, AND CULTURE THREE PILLARS FOR SUCCESS

Raman Shresta, Rachna Books reflects on how thoughtful curation, a deeply rooted community, and an uncompromising philosophy have shaped his bookshop into a cultural landmark.

An Integral Part of the City's Culture

Curation is the most important. In times when books are being churned out thoughtlessly by the book industry like machine guns spitting out bullets, selection of books become important. How a bookshop is curated, which book stands next to which reflects the worldview and the politics of the bookseller.



Raman Shresta

While, community is one intangible element that builds over the years. We have been lucky to have a very strong community built around the bookshop over the years. By working as a caretaker of the place, opening the doors every morning, we have become that space, which our regulars have owned up as theirs.

As a bookshop, we have become an integral part of the city's contemporary culture and an important cultural landmark in the mountains. Events helped build that for sure, but what people sense is the philosophy that the bookshop runs on, the causes it supports and stands for.

Engaged Community

A bookshop is only as good as the engaged community it attracts. The regulars then convinced me to open what would become Café Fiction. Then, travellers started to hear about our bookshop, hung out among books for hours and would tell us that it was a place they could live in forever. That's when I decided to start the Bookman's Bed and Breakfast. Besides hosting discerning travellers, writers, musicians and artists, we now also run a writer's residency.

Events at the bookshop have been another way to engage the community. When I restarted the bookshop in 2001, I saw scope in trying new things to offer youngsters. One small event led to

another and our community grew. Regulars became volunteers, supporters and torchbearers. Over the last two decades, we have curated music, art, theatre and shadow puppet shows, conversations and workshops, performances, exhibitions, screenings and our own film festival besides the obvious book-launches and readings. Our open mics have been a launchpad for many new writers from the region, which led to the most natural evolution—publishing. This is how we started Rachna Books and Publications in 2019.

“An engaged bookseller's biggest tool is the algorithms of the head, ears and heart.”



Artwork by Methela Rai



Simon Lamouret and Pema Wangchuk at an event in Rachna Books

“ Everything seems to be geared towards making the running of a bookshop a defeated task. But booksellers are eternal optimists.

Bookshop and Technology

As a bookshop, the use of technology is important for operations, discovery and outreach. Social media is a crucial platform for promoting writers, events, and books. Yet, an engaged bookseller’s biggest tool is the algorithms of the head, ears and heart. One must engage with the readers and patrons. One must keep one’s ears open to what the customers are looking for. And one must respect the new readers’ choices, and help them find the right book. My bookshop has become a place that youngsters visit to pose with books for their social media. The challenge lies in converting them to readers! I would say bookshops are important to social media, as much as the other way around.

Booksellers are Eternal Optimists

Everything seems to be geared towards making the running of a bookshop a defeated task. But booksellers are eternal optimists. From unethical practices, deep discounting to broken distribution infrastructure, we face them all. But our biggest fight is not about dwindling customers or losing readers to other technological distractions. Our biggest fight is against the publishing industry itself. Against its apathetic attitude to address issues, its lazy approach to selling

books just over online portals and bookshops within arm’s reach from their office chairs. The day the industry sincerely admits that the system is broken will be the day we will start believing that a solution can be found.



Rachna Books in Gangtok

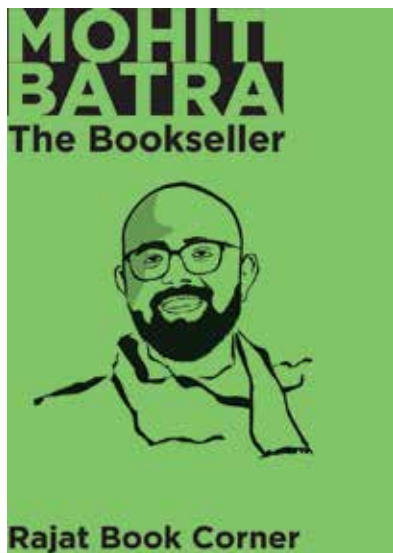
Raman Shresta is a bookseller, publisher, inn-keeper and events curator at Rachna Books, Gangtok. Started by his family in 1979, he grew Rachna Books into a space for creativity and literary culture that has been an integral part of modern Sikkim’s cultural identity particularly for the youth. In addition to the Rachna bookstore, Raman runs the Café Fiction and the Bookman’s Bed and Breakfast in the same building. In 2019, he started Rachna Books and Publications. In 2023, he started a writer’s residency whose first resident was French graphic novelist Simon Lamouret.

RAJAT BOOK CORNER: TAKING BOOKS BEYOND THE BOOKSTORE

By removing the bookstore from the spotlight and placing books, authors, and readers at the centre, Mohit Batra, Rajat Book Corner shares how to build citywide reading culture through collaboration, empowerment, and shared celebration.

A Book is the Smartest Hand-Held Device

The one thing that has worked magically for us was when we took away the bookstore logo from an initiative we began in Jaipur. It is called – A Book is the Smartest Hand-Held Device. It was done to position a book vis-à-vis a digital gadget in the hands of children. Apparently, books are still one of the only tangible things that a child can hold and experience while gaining something meaningful out of it. Under this initiative, we have begun curating author discussions not only inside the bookstore but all over the city. We collaborated with the government, local tourist spots, schools, colleges, institutions and various organizations.



Connecting the Reader to the Author!

We feel bookstores have two beautiful powerful associations that can be used for a collective good – Access to good content in terms of books (obviously!), and access to patrons. Bookstores' primary role is to connect the reader to a book. We are taking it a step ahead and connecting the reader to the author!

We did a book talk at Albert Hall with Harinder Sikka, the celebrated author of *Calling Sehmat*. We gathered about 300 people and sold a lot of books post the event. We had to make a lot of collaborations to make it happen, and we strongly believe collaborations empower the bookstores like nothing else.

We also initiated a professionally run book club called 2-Pages (www.2pages.in), that has become

a sort of talk of the town. We have done various collaborations within the city with organizations, cafes, even hospitals to host these book club meetings. The members are empowered to run the club holistically. We aren't focusing on promoting the bookstore, but diligently working towards promoting books, and the reading habit. It not only brings a lot of flavour but empowerment.

Consistency of events like author visits, book readings, etc., is the key. With the book-club meetings happening alternate Saturdays, we have initiated a magical discipline amidst our readers. They not only look forward to meeting regularly, but also help if there is an author event happening in between.

Creating a Brand Image

Rather than focusing on social media we are playing on our strengths and creating a brand image where the reader feels all the books that the bookstore promotes are genuine. We are trying not to ride the tide but also not going against it. Author visits are not confined only to book-signings at the bookstore but a more engaging activity and occasion for the entire city. We are doing workshops and events in schools, colleges and various organizations, institutions, etc., to make it an inclusive process. We got a social media influencer – Ankur Warikoo to visit Jaipur a couple of weeks ago, and simply asked a few schools to purchase his books to curate a session. His popularity got them to readily agree! However, having a good rapport with the author as traditional and dedicated booksellers also plays a role.

In July, we organized a Mental Wellness Conclave with the book-club members, where we curated five panels with eminent



personalities who are also authors such as the former editor-in-chief of *National Geographic*, the former captain of the Indian Polo team and a popular folk singer. All the panels were designed around books. And we also kept a corner of curated books that the book-club has collectively read thus far. The members talked about those books to the people who came for the event for the first time. We raised the money locally with institution partnerships, book-club members, food brands, etc. This was entirely designed, produced, and executed by the book-club members as their own. All the above initiatives are done with the branding of the bookstore; however, the book club is bringing in the discipline and the regularity of doing such awareness activities at a larger scale.

“Bookstores are not struggling as much with economics or change of reading habits as we are struggling because of the dearth of booksellers. It requires a huge amount of training and empathy to become a bookseller.”

Empathy to Become a Bookseller

Bookstores are not struggling as much with economics or change of reading habits as we are struggling because of the dearth of booksellers. It requires a huge amount of training and empathy to become a bookseller. Let alone the patience. With the initiative of the book-club, we are trying to garner sensitivity amongst our book-club members and patrons to also double up as booksellers if and when required.

Mohit Batra is a third generation bookseller, and also the man behind the initiative: A Book is the Smartest Hand-Held Device. The idea for the initiative generated from positioning a book as a meaningful gadget in a child's hands. His aim to achieve this is by creating more booklovers. He has curated sessions with the likes of Sudha Murty, Vishwanathan Anand, Malcolm Gladwell, Robin Sharma, Indira Nooyi, Harsh Mariwala, Jeffrey Archer and over 100 more renowned and established authors. A gold medalist from XLRI, Jamshedpur, he is also spearheading a literary agency, deftly named Paper Sparrows, under which he aims to introduce new—and some old—voices in publishing.

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE EN INDE
 Institut Français
 IFI'S PICKS
 POETRY...

There's a lot more to emerging French literature than meets the eye.
 Come, join us in its discovery.

GRAND PRIX DU ROMAN DE L'ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE
 L'ÉDON À L'AUBE
 LA MAISON VIDE
 PRIX GONCOURT
 Comme une reine
 PRIX VOIX D'AFRIQUES
 Patricia Loison
 Je cherche encore ton nom
 PRIX FEMINA 2025
 Le Bel Oiseau
 Le Petit Prince

IFI'S PICKS

A curation of the finest contemporary Francophone literature for Indian publishers, editors, translators, and Francophiles.

Current themes | Translation & Publishing info | English extracts

To subscribe to this newsletter, write to us at frenchbookoffice@institutfrancaisindia.in

MÉDIA - PARTICIPATIONS: TURNING STORIES INTO GLOBAL IPS

Vincent Montagne, Chairman & CEO of Média-Participations and President of the French Publishers Association, reflects on the group's cross-media philosophy, the global power of intellectual property, and the enduring relevance of books in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

Brief us about Média-Participations and how it has transformed with time?

Média-Participations is a leading European publishing and entertainment group for over 40 years, building bridges across comics, books, animation, gaming, and theme parks. Cross-media exchanges have always been part of our strategy. Today, digital transformation is accelerating this journey and driving our international expansion, while we stay true to our mission of creating stories for families, stories that reflect their interests and passions.



Vincent Montagne

Under your leadership, the group has expanded into publishing, audio-visual, animation, and digital production. How would you qualify the relationship between these domains?

They all share one foundation: storytelling. Publishing is our starting point, but each format enriches the others and reaches new audiences. Rebooting content as IPs gives stories a second life and yes, cross-media interactions are growing every day.

What, in your view, is the secret to creating characters and story universes that are relevant across countries and generations?

Marsupilami is a great example of what we aim to do. It's a French best-seller IP and a cultural icon that speaks to everyone. For over 10 years, we've been reinventing this beloved character and pushing it internationally. Our goal is simple: respect its heritage while evolving it for new generations through fresh narratives, technology, and platforms and having an animal as the hero is a powerful way to connect with audiences everywhere.

India has almost no IPs that have made it to the international stage. What would be your advice to India content creators?

India has everything it takes to create global IPs: rich stories, diverse cultures, and a new generation of creators and audiences. IPs may not yet be a full trend, but the potential is real and growing, especially via animation. My advice is to give new generations the chance to reimagine stories across publishing, animation, gaming, and digital. And we at Média-Participations would also love to be part of that journey.

Média Participations owns several comics publishers making it the first European group for comics. Are French-Belgian comics doing well in India?

Tintin and Asterix have been loved in India for decades, and we're now seeing a renewed interest in comics overall. At Média-Participations, we've already taken our first steps into the market, and we believe this is just the beginning. Our goal is to accompany creators and readers: listening, understanding local trends, and introducing titles that truly resonate.

Besides comics, what kind of collaborations does Média Participation have in India?

We've had collaborations in India in many different areas like publishing, animation and gaming. Thanks to Abrams Books, Média-Participations' subsidiary based in New York, we collaborate with major partners such as Penguin for one of our best seller *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. We have been working with animation studios, and today, we also have a growing digital presence with webtoon series and the diffusion of cartoons and animations, while actively exploring new opportunities across the creative industry.

“ India has everything it takes to create global IPs: rich stories, diverse cultures, and a new generation of creators and audiences.



CGI Animated Series 'The Marsupilamis'

How do you see France's approach to intellectual property evolving, especially compared with other European markets?

Respect for intellectual property is, and will continue to be, a crucial issue — it's fundamental to maintaining a vibrant publishing ecosystem. This is especially true in the age of generative AI: copyright must be respected, and the unauthorized exploitation of protected works simply has to stop.

At the same time, it's important to support authors as they explore ways to expand their creations beyond their initial medium. Today, an intellectual property can't be restricted to just one format if we want it to reach new heights. This also means that authors need to recognize that their characters can outgrow them, and be open to others adapting and developing their work across new media.

You are also the president of the French Publishers Association since 2012. What are the major challenges French publishers are facing?

We are experiencing a time of both economic and cultural vulnerability, brought on by several factors. First, there's a decline in reading in favour of screen time - a trend that doesn't only affect young people, but is actually widespread across all generations. Second, there's a troubling surge in the second-hand book market, propelled by economic pressures, which is happening at the expense of creative output and editorial diversity. And finally, there's the advent of artificial intelligence, which encapsulates both the hopes and the dangers of our era. The darker side of AI is already apparent in the proliferation of fake books - content with no editorial value, mass-produced in a few prompts by AI systems fuelled by the unauthorized use of copyrighted works. We cannot stand by and

do nothing in the face of these abuses; that's why we have taken legal action against Meta in the French courts. That being said, I also see AI as an opportunity - provided it is properly regulated, transparent, and remains respectful of copyright. Above all, I believe in the resilience of books: throughout all the technological revolutions of the past centuries, books have never disappeared. More broadly, the written word will always be at the very heart of every creative process.

“ One medium never eliminates another, it adds to the experience. ”

What does the future of storytelling look like to you?

Looking ahead, storytelling will keep evolving with technology, but the book will remain at its core. Digital formats and audio will continue to grow, yet nothing can replace the depth and freedom that reading offers. When television and radio arrived, many predicted the end of books. But one medium never eliminates another, it adds to the experience. Each new format enriches the way we tell stories, but there's no need to fear the end of books. They endure because they offer something timeless.

Vincent Montagne is the Chairman of Média-Participations, one of the leading French-language publishing groups (the third largest in France and leader in Belgium). The company is a major European player in comic books, featuring well-known brands like Dargaud, Dupuis, Le Lombard, and Kana (manga). In addition to comics, Média-Participations also publish literature and illustrated books through renowned imprints such as Le Seuil, La Martinière, Fleurus, Mame, and L'Olivier. He has also been President of the French Publishers association (SNE) since June 2012.



Maïlis Vauterin and Delphine Clot © Alexandre Moulard

THE MATRIOCHKAS ON CHANNELING **THE MARKET FOR AUDIOVISUAL ADAPTATION**

As global demand for compelling IP continues to surge, the journey from book to screen has become more dynamic. Maïlis Vauterin (MV) and Delphine Clot (DC), Co-Founders of Matriochkas, discuss what makes a work truly adaptable and the rise of “glocal” storytelling.

What gap in the ecosystem were you hoping to bridge when you started Matriochkas?

Before joining forces in 2022, we both had realised that placing audio-visual rights was a field in need of structure and elevation. It demanded a broad and varied skillset; one we were able to build by combining our backgrounds in publishing and audio-visual production. Since then, we’ve been able to cover the full spectrum of work: from market-driven assessments and strategic outreach to producers, negotiating highly specialised contracts grounded in production business models, all guided by a genuine love of storytelling. Essentially, we are there at every step to ensure the author’s work is treated with care while helping it reach its fullest potential on screen.

By calling ourselves Matriochkas, after those small Russian dolls nested one inside the other,

we aim to take part in this process of successive transformations, a process that will extend far beyond current formats.

“ By calling ourselves Matriochkas, after those small Russian dolls nested one inside the other, we aim to take part in this process of successive transformations, a process that will extend far beyond current formats.

What makes a literary work truly adaptable for screen?

The criteria for adaptability are varied and combine both objective and subjective elements:

- Feasibility (for example, a contained budget for a single-setting work)

- Strong dramatic stakes (for instance, driven by the time-lock structure of a thriller)
- The modernity of the themes
- Or the originality of the arena / the universe

There are also far more subjective criteria, such as the almost magical encounter between a director and a work that resonates with him or her on a deeply personal level.

How do you decide which themes or narratives have the potential to resonate across borders and languages?

When we think of stories such as Romeo and Juliet, we are reminded that certain narratives possess a universality and timeless quality that transcend cultural boundaries. We may not always know why, yet some themes (like love) are inherently enduring, while others, though contemporary, resonate just as strongly because they speak to the defining issues of our era.

How do you view the boom in the book-to-screen market?

DC: Streaming platforms have intensified IP competition and produced a certain convergence in development priorities. Within specific genres (dark romance, for example), market pressure means only one project is likely to move forward, overshadowing

the others. Yet these same platforms have also paved the way for ambitious projects that might never have been made through traditional financing. In that sense, they have expanded the field of possibilities.

When it comes to the projects that platforms are looking for, many are deeply anchored in a specific territory. Who, for instance, is seeking a distinctly French erotic thriller or a lavish Indian Bollywood drama? Sometimes the setting itself is the selling point (take for instance *Emily in Paris*), while in other cases the subject matter is culturally inherent to its country (an example of this could be *Tokyo Vice*). Yet even these strongly local stories often carry themes that transcend borders: universal emotions, moral dilemmas, or questions that resonate widely. That's the essence of the 'glocal' approach.

Another great example of what 'glocal' entails would be *Squid Game*. Its premise is rooted in issues specific to Korean society, yet it also tackles deeply contemporary, universal questions, such as how far individuals are willing to go for money in a hyper-competitive world.

Despite being a Paris-based bureau, how do you adapt for different nations and cultures?


MV: One way to gauge the audio-visual market for an adaptation is to look at where the book has found success. Depending on this, we may choose to develop

Adaptations dealt by us (a snapshot)


Under option

- *Diary of A Void*
- *I Who Have Never Known Men*
- *Lakestone* - in development with Amazon Studios France.

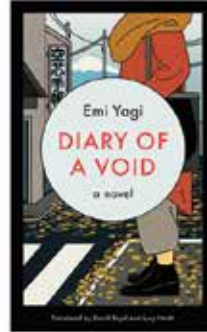
First adaptations released in 2025




LAKESTONE
SARAH RIVENS




I Who Have Never Known Men
Jacqueline Harpman




Emi Yagi
DIARY OF A VOID
a novel



EMILY BLAINE
DEAR YOU
TOME 1
LE ROMAN PRÉCÉDENT À L'ORIGINE DE LA SÉRIE



EMILY BLAINE
DEAR YOU
TOME 2
LE ROMAN PRÉCÉDENT À L'ORIGINE DE LA SÉRIE



EMILY BLAINE
DEAR YOU
TOME 3
LE ROMAN PRÉCÉDENT À L'ORIGINE DE LA SÉRIE

a project across several territories. For instance, we sought partners for a Japanese project that had been translated worldwide, exploring European territories and the United States simultaneously. There was strong interest everywhere, but ultimately it was an American streamer that secured the project.

We are also very aware of contexts where co-production can naturally emerge from a project: for example, a book whose action takes place between two cultures, or a bicultural cast that can attract production companies capable of working across borders, which in turn makes it possible to combine multiple sources of financing.

How open are publishers today to thinking of books as audio-visual properties from the start?

MV: Publishers, for the most part, continue to focus on the book in its material form, with adaptations remaining at the tail end of the commercial process.

DC: By contrast, some authors have fully embraced audio-visual codes. There is, among other things, a permeability between serialised screenwriting and serialised literature. Authors are also viewers, and it happens that their writing can be shaped, sometimes unconsciously, by their own viewing habits and the way audio-visual codes evolve. On the non-fiction side, some investigative journalists work with the audio-visual project in mind from the outset, the book serving as a springboard towards the audio-visual format.

Can you share an example of a book-to-screen project that particularly inspired you?

MV: I find the trajectory of a novel like Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* particularly inspiring. The author already had a strong reputation, yet it had been lying in the backlist of her publishers when the series sent sales soaring.

DC: *Presumed Innocent*, Scott Turow's novel, gave rise to a film adaptation by Alan J. Pakula starring Harrison Ford in 1990, a completely iconic work in its own right. Last year, the story was fully reimaged as an eight-episode series for Apple TV+ with Jake Gyllenhaal, even daring to change the ending. It shows how some stories never grow old, how a remarkably effective concept can transcend time, even forty years later.

Adaptation often brings up the question of fidelity? How do you navigate this balance?

DC: France is the country of moral rights, the right for an author to have his or her work respected as intended. At the same time, an adaptation is, by

definition, a new creation: a new author draws on a novel or pre-existing literary work to transform it into something different, going from page to screen. They also need the freedom to leave their own mark.

MV: As a viewer, the most stimulating adaptations have been complete reinventions. How could one not applaud the baroque western that is *Brokeback Mountain*, even though it was inspired by Annie Proulx's razor-sharp short story?

Do you see the future of adaptation expanding beyond traditional screens?

Adaptation formats will always reflect the evolving ways audiences consume visual content. The format adapts to the target audience. For younger viewers, short-form programmes that can be watched on a phone in just a few minutes are emerging.

What keeps you motivated?

To us, no story is ever too old. We're drawn to forgotten backlist novels and enduring long-sellers that continue to resonate with readers. Good stories also transcend borders: *Pride and Prejudice* has travelled across time and cultures, inspiring works like *Bride and Prejudice*, where its themes remain just as compelling. At Matriochkas, we strive to help French, American and why not Indian stories travel in new forms and be adapted for wider audiences. In our opinion, stories from anywhere in the world can give rise to adaptations that resonate internationally.

“ At Matriochkas, we strive to help French, American and why not Indian stories travel in new forms and be adapted for wider audiences.

*Matriochkas is dedicated to initiating and supporting book-to-screen adaptations of literary works, founded in January 2022 by Majlis Vauterin and Delphine Clot. Among the forty or so option & purchase agreements, they have successfully negotiated, they have placed the film rights of the following novels *Diary of A Void* by Emi Yagi, *I Who Have Never Known Men* by Jacqueline Harpman, and *Lakestone* by Sarah Rivers. Their first adaptations released include *Dear You* by Emily Blaine on Prime Video.*

WEBTOONS: A GLOBAL CREATIVE BRIDGE BETWEEN INDIA AND FRANCE

As reading habits rapidly evolve, India and France are witnessing an unprecedented interest in manga, anime and webtoons. Josselin Azorin-Lara, founder of Akogée Studio, shares that it is more than a trend: it's a cultural shift shaped by a new generation hungry for immersive, visual-first narratives.

What is driving the current boom in webtoons in India and France?

Over the last decade, both India and France have seen an acceleration of new reading habits. In my opinion, three factors explain the boom: mobile-first consumption, globalized storytelling, and the arrival of structured creative ecosystems. In India, the rise of affordable smartphones and cheaper data plans, have profoundly changed reading behaviours, for digital content like webtoons. Digital-native readers now discover stories on their phones long before they pick up a printed book. Webtoons perfectly fit this shift: short episodes, vertical scrolling, and strong emotional hooks.

In France, the boom comes from a different origin: a strong comic-book culture and a very demanding audience. French readers are curious, open to international narratives and new formats. Korean and Japanese IPs have opened the path, and French creators are now taking the lead with ambitious original content.

Both countries are driven by the same underlying force: a new generation seeking immersive, accessible, visually powerful storytelling.

What differentiates the comic & webtoon ecosystems in India and France? How do you think the two countries can collaborate?

France has a long history of structured creative industries, even for comic books: public funding, dedicated festivals, specialized publishers, organized distribution, and an ecosystem of authors protected by strong IP frameworks. Regarding the webtoons, it is still the "Far West", by which I mean a place with no rules. As of today, the webtoon is not recognized as a sole industry. The *Centre National du Livre* (French National Book Centre) tells us that "it's not a book" and the *Centre National du Cinéma* (French National



Josselin Azorin-Lara

Cinema Centre) tells us that "it's not an animated content". In the meantime, the Korean, Japanese and Chinese content are becoming huge hits.

India, on the other hand, is an emerging powerhouse with extraordinary talent, high-speed digital adoption, and a massive youth population entering creative fields. Somehow, we may face the same challenges regarding the webtoons. I remember my friends and colleagues in India who were dreaming of making a career in the comic book industry, telling me that it was quite a struggle to even get paid for their work. There is still much to do on both sides, and we can certainly collaborate in many ways. I loved working with Indian artists, as we could work as teams which is not that common in France. The boom of webtoon could be a wonderful opportunity for creative and industrial cooperation.



© Josswala, Erwan Lelièvre, Nemerle, Akogée Studio



© Josswala, Boky, Akogée Studio – All rights reserved



© Josswala, Boky, Akogée Studio – All rights reserved

How do new readers get attracted to this genre and what is their preference?

Today’s readers discover stories through algorithms, not bookstores. Social platforms—Instagram, YouTube Shorts, Webtoon, Wattpad—have become the entry points. France and India seem to share the same challenge: audiences are not ready to pay for digital content. They prefer subscriptions.

For Indian and French markets, I believe that the webtoon economy should be considered as a social network economy, just like YouTube, TikTok or Instagram, which can be interesting for advertisers.

What are the challenges the industry faces and what is the future growth potential?

The challenges are real and global:

- **Author remuneration:** Many creators struggle financially, despite huge audience numbers. Sustainable models must be invented.
- **Discoverability:** With thousands of series released every year, standing out is increasingly difficult.
- **Piracy:** especially in Asia, piracy drains revenue from both creators and publishers.
- **Industrial scaling:** Producing a weekly digital comic requires a structured pipeline, trained artists, and predictable funding.
- **Cross-cultural adaptation:** Stories must now travel, but not everything translates easily. And some content can be considered as offensive, from one culture to another.

Despite this, the growth potential is exceptional. Digital comics are still at the beginning of their

expansion. Markets like India, Indonesia, and Brazil may surpass Western audiences in the next 5–10 years. IP-based ecosystems—print, animation, licensing, mobile games—represent enormous opportunities for both countries.

“IP-based ecosystems — print, animation, licensing, mobile games—represent enormous opportunities for both countries.”

What are the current intellectual property frameworks for the industry?

In France, creators benefit from one of the strongest IP frameworks in the world: moral rights, collective rights, clear author–publisher contracts and growing recognition of digital formats.

India is strengthening its own copyright laws, but enforcement seems to remain inconsistent, from one state to another. I understand the struggle, because the Indian market is so big that it’s challenging to apply the same regulation everywhere.

The major challenge for both countries is new formats:

- Webtoon rights differ from print rights.
- AI-assisted creation complicates authorship and originality.
- Streaming platforms negotiate global licenses that sometimes bypass traditional author protections.

We need modernized legal frameworks that protect creators and ensure long-term revenue sharing. Comics and webtoons are cultural content, therefore it’s vital to secure the creators and authors.

Certain people believe that we don't need artists anymore to produce content like comics, since AI can replace them easily. But fans will lose interest in content that is not created through emotion and shared experiences. Business schools should teach our future leaders the rise and fall of entertainment industries, so they can understand why our creator needs to always be at the center of our strategies, especially in an era where the fans can connect directly and relate to their favorite creators.

How can publishers protect their IPs as new formats are adapted?

Protection must be proactive, not reactive. Today IP is not just a legal matter, it is an asset strategy:

- **Integrated contracts:** covering print, digital, webtoon, motion comic, animation, videogame, licensing, and emerging formats.
- **Clear chain of title:** ensuring every contributor signs a proper rights' transfer agreement.
- **Digital fingerprinting and watermarking** to fight piracy on mobile platforms. A European company called LICCIUM has been working on this topic for many years, and is looking for partners to develop solutions. Such potential partners will be very important in the future.
- **International licensing strategies**—working with trusted partners, not selling global rights all at once.
- **Community engagement:** we are in the social network era, where communities and fandoms have the power of life and death over content creators, publishers and producers.

What drives you about the evolving ecosystem of comics, graphic novels & webtoons?

What excites me most is the shift from publishing to world-building. Stories are no longer limited to a single medium. A universe can begin as a webtoon, expand into a novel, transform into an animated series, inspire a video game, and live through its community. This transmedia approach—something I work on with Akogée Studio—is a renaissance for creators.

We are entering a new era where: readers become participants, stories live across formats, and international collaborations create new narrative voices.

France and India share something precious: a profound love for stories. If we manage to build



© Josswala, Erwan Lelièvre, Nemerle, Akogée Studio – All rights reserved

bridges between our creators, publishers, funding bodies and industries, we can create IPs that travel the world.

“ France and India share something precious: a profound love for stories. If we manage to build bridges between our creators, publishers, funding bodies and industries, we can create IPs that travel the world.

Author, screenwriter and webtoon producer, Josselin began in 1996 in the comic fanzine scene as co-founder of Nekomix, then moved into entrepreneurship with the Neko Wearbrand (Naruto, Nana, GTO). From 2013 to 2020, he lived in India, where he co-founded MINTE, a comic studio employing local artists and producing successes such as the Frigiel series. In 2020, he became one of the first French webtoon authors on Naver France with Samourawii. After joining the ADAGP comic book commission, and Ankama Editions to develop webtoon production, he founded Akogée Studio in 2025.

TRAMES LITERARY AGENCY: FROM SHARED JOURNEYS TO A COLLECTIVE VISION

Trames literary agency emerged from a common desire to innovate, collaborate, and rethink how literary careers are supported. Violaine Faucon, who co-founded Trames with Sylvie Pereira, Camille Paulian, & Kinga Wyrzykowska shares how they have positioned themselves as a vital connector within the evolving French-speaking publishing ecosystem.

Can you trace the genesis of Trames literary agency?

Our paths first crossed in the publishing world more than twenty years ago. Since then, each of us has followed our own trajectory, working within major publishing groups as well as small independent houses. Through the various roles we were entrusted with—across press, bookselling, communications, rights management, and editorial departments—we developed both a critical eye and solid expertise in the French market.

Our desire to share a collective adventure gradually merged with our ambition to innovate, to build, and to become a key player in the publishing ecosystem. Eight years ago, this vision led us to found the literary agency Trames. From the outset, our combined expertise has been dedicated to serving stakeholders across the French-speaking market. We created this agency together, driven by momentum and inspiration, and enriched by countless stimulating exchanges with book professionals from around the world.

What is the status of literary agents in the French publishing market ?

Traditionally, the French publishing market has long operated without literary agents representing authors. This specific and distinctive situation, which does not exist in other countries, can be explained by the fact that French publishers owned their authors' rights for up to 70 years after their death and had dedicated departments to handle secondary rights (foreign, audiovisual, paperback, adaptation rights, etc.).

Another reason may be that the relationship between editor and author in France has not only been professional but also affective, and some editors were reluctant to deal with what they referred to as "intermediaries." The literary agent profession was not well known and was often caricatured as being solely focused on making money.



Violaine Faucon © Marie Pacifique

Fortunately, this negative reputation, which stemmed from a lack of familiarity with the profession, has changed. Today, most French publishers maintain strong relationships with agents. Of course, a few publishers remain reluctant to work with agents, but they are becoming the minority. The new generation of editors is accustomed to working with agents on foreign fiction and feels comfortable

“ More and more authors are now represented by agents due to changes in the French market, including the acquisition of publishing houses and shifts in ownership.

collaborating with them. More and more authors are now represented by agents due to changes in the French market, including the acquisition of publishing houses and shifts in ownership.

What makes Trames stand out?

Founded in 2018, Trames is a literary agency bringing together four publishing professionals with complementary backgrounds. Our multidisciplinary approach and expertise are our greatest strengths.

Our mission is to support contemporary literary creation through cross-disciplinary activities with a strong international focus. We represent French authors, French publishers, several Quebec publishers, and collaborate with publishers, agents, and French cultural institutions around the world. We take an active part in major industry events, including international book fairs, professional audiovisual gatherings, international programs (fellowships, trips to discover foreign publishing markets), as well as festivals and French book fairs.

Our combined experience in publishing houses and our networks provides us with expertise valued by both publishers and authors. Our work as agents is to support authors in their careers, negotiate their contracts, and play an active role in the French and international success of their books, both forthcoming and already published.

As we regularly collaborate with the major players in the French book market across various sectors, we have become indispensable. We are convinced that it is through exchange and dialogue that we will shape the future of books worldwide. We offer a flexible, collaborative framework built with our partners.

“ We are convinced that it is through exchange and dialogue that we will shape the future of books worldwide.

You have been in publishing for many years. What are the lasting trends you have observed and how do you see the future of books?

The market has changed significantly since we launched the agency eight years ago. Today, more than ever, in the world around us, we believe that cultures must intersect.

New shareholders have appeared in the major French publishing groups, reshuffling the editorial landscape. There is also significant personnel movement at the moment. Our authors must navigate the changes this brings, and we are here to support them and provide stability.



Cécile Coulon

In bookstores, new trends are emerging, and we have notably supported the creation of a romance-focused section within the Gibert-Joseph bookstore.

At festivals and other book-related venues, we are witnessing the rise of new forms of musical and illustrated readings designed to attract new audiences and maintain attendance. We actively support some of these innovations.



95,000 copies sold

Publishing remains a vibrant reflection of our time, shaped by major societal issues. We continuously strive to offer a collective perspective on the profound transformations at work—through fiction, narrative nonfiction, essays, and emerging forms of communication.

Violaine Faucon was born in Brazil and later moved to France, where she has worked in publishing since 2006. She began her career in editorial before specializing in the development of French and foreign fiction rights at Éditions de l'Olivier. In 2018, she founded the literary agency Trames with three associates.

REDEFINING FEMINIST PUBLISHING WITH DALVA!

Éditions Dalva has emerged as a bold response to gender disparities in publishing. For Co-founders Juliette Ponce and Marie-Anne Lacoma, the imprint is not merely a feminist project but a literary commitment to amplifying women's perspectives across fiction and nonfiction. In January, they are publishing *Chimères tropicales*, a novel written by French author Corinne Morel Darleux during her residency in Vagamon with DC Books.



Juliette Ponce



Marie-Anne Lacoma

What inspired you to start Éditions Dalva?

Dalva was born in France in 2021 after the MeToo movement. In 2020, while we were developing this project, Vanessa Springora's novel, *Consent*, became the focal point of a societal debate and had such an impact that the law was changed. Several feminist publishing houses emerged, particularly in the field of nonfiction, and we wanted to participate in this collective movement for women. We observed that women were less published, less translated, and less promoted in the media. They received fewer literary prizes... except when readers voted. We felt that the French publishing world was not treating women writers as it should. Dalva was born to challenge this reality.

Our projects also echo a question we both asked ourselves since working in publishing: we are convinced that women's language is not essentially different from men's. Nevertheless, the role they embody in

our society and in life in general is quite different from men's, hence a distinct point of view. How can we render such diversity in the narratives we publish? The idea is to discover, through their eyes, another vision of the world and to ensure their side of the story is heard.

“ We felt that the French publishing world was not treating women writers as it should. Dalva was born to challenge this reality. ”

Would you call yourself a “feminist publisher”? What challenges did you face?

The Dalva project is resolutely feminist, but it's essential for us that our authors don't feel they have to write about feminism to be published by Dalva. In fact, for some of them, feminism isn't a central theme in their literary work, and that suits us perfectly. Our feminist goal is to promote women! There were critics

of course: for some, our position is too feminist and for others, it's not feminist enough!

You publish 10 titles a year: what is the criterion of selection?

Each year, we publish four novels by French authors, four translated novels, and two essays. That's very few, so the main criterion is absolute enthusiasm for the book, its language and its story. We are drawn to certain topics, such as the relationship with nature, intergenerational relationships, etc.

How has this selection promoted a cross cultural exchange?

One of Dalva's goals is to remove the obstacles faced by women writers. These obstacles may be related to the topics they choose and which are not considered as a "woman topic" in our country: we, for instance, publish novels which deal with sports, science, the relationship with nature, etc. But there may be linguistic obstacles as well: we therefore try to translate for as many regions as possible. Our authors come from Asia, Oceania, South America, the US, and European countries. The origin of the novel is not a criterion for us, but the promotion of a literature as diverse as possible remains a goal.

“ Every country faces its own battle for equality, and publishing can become a powerful vehicle for questioning and disseminating ideas.

Have you published any work by an Indian author? Also share about Corinne Morel-Darleux's book that you will be publishing in January.

We haven't published any work from an Indian writer yet, but we had the opportunity to work on a novel

by Indian-origin writer Chetna Maroo, *Western lane* which explores grief within an immigrated Indian family in England.

Corinne Morel Darleux, a French writer, benefited from a writing residency in Kerala organized by the French Institute in India, where she began working on her new novel. During her stay, the book undertook a radical transformation and became a novel about the power of fiction, inspired by the story of people lost in the heart of the jungle. The rainforest that Corinne had the chance to discover, entered the narration and became a metaphor for dreams and nightmares, an image of what our minds can create.

What role do you see with feminist publishing narratives on a global scale?

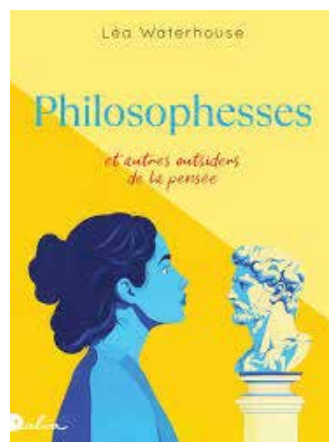
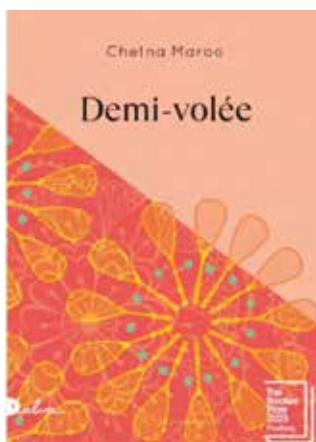
To discuss the number of women published, the books they are allowed to write, the prizes they can win, and their presence in the media. We work for equality.

Every country faces its own battle for equality, and publishing can become a powerful vehicle for questioning and disseminating ideas. We firmly believe in the importance of listening to women's voices.

What do you feel the future of feminist publishing will be?

We dream of a world where feminist publishing gains influence and becomes so mainstream that it can finally completely disappear, where women writers no longer need defending. It's a utopia, certainly, but we're working towards it.

Juliette Ponce is a French publisher and translator. She studied social anthropology and philosophy, before starting to work in publishing nearly 25 years ago. From the early 2000 on, she worked for the foreign fiction lists of various French publishing houses - and lived in London for several years. In 2021, she came back to France to launch Les Éditions Dalva, a publishing house dedicated to women writers in fiction and non-fiction. She was joined by Marie-Anne Lacombe who had been working for Editions Gallmeister and for La Manufacture des Livres for many years and combined many skills, from relations with booksellers to marketing to partnerships and publication strategy. Together, they work together to promote contemporary women authors.



France and India share a deep attachment to literature, poetry, and philosophy. A land of stories, India draws on a millennia-old literary tradition that is both oral and written, multilingual and abundant. In France, literature has long been a space of experimentation, translation, and circulation, where writing continually engages with the world beyond its borders.

Villa Swagatam, an initiative of the French Institute in India, builds on this shared ground by offering cross-cultural residencies across France and South Asia.

Since its launch in March 2023, Villa Swagatam has brought together a network of thirty residency partners across these two regions, with a special focus on literature and arts and crafts.

VILLA SWAGATAM

*A network of literary and artistic
residencies across South Asia and France*



Corinne Morel Darleux © Lucie Sassiati

Journey as a writer

My first book was published in 2019. *Rather sink with elegance than float without grace* was an essay about social and environmental issues. It was written as an attempt to bring together radicality and amenity, politics and poetry, as well as ethics in a collapsing world. It happened to be an unexpected and long-lasting success (60,000 copies), and this really gave me an astonishing impetus as a writer.

Residency with Villa Swagatam

This residency with Villa Swagatam was an incredible opportunity. I feel truly grateful that my book could raise in the incredible nature setting that is Kerala. Before applying to this residency, I already knew that my next novel was to take place in a tropical forest, and I had millions of notes and ideas, but no narrative structure, no story. I desperately needed to bring order to the chaos of ideas that animated me. To find myself immersed alone in a completely unfamiliar environment for three months was not always comfortable, but it was exactly what I needed to start this novel. Because beyond the characters and their story, deep inside, *Chimères tropicales* is all about creating and living in one's own world, stepping out of what is usually referred to as "normality", and in fine questioning the very notion of reality - somehow what I experienced during my unordinary stay in Kerala!

WRITING AT THE CROSSROADS OF ECOLOGY, IMAGINATION, AND ACTIVISM

French writer, essayist, and eco-socialist activist Corinne Morel Darleux has built a body of work that blends politics, poetry, and environmental consciousness with remarkable grace. Before venturing into fiction-writing, she has published several essays received with great critical acclaim. Her second adult novel, *Chimères tropicales*, just got published by Dalva. It was partly written during the Vagamon Writers Residency.

“ To find myself immersed alone in a completely unfamiliar environment for three months was not always comfortable, but it was exactly what I needed to start this novel.



Climate fiction and the need for new narratives

Prominent authors such as Barbara Kingsolver, Ursula K Le Guin or Amitav Ghosh have paved the way for climate fiction. In my readings, I observe that when climate issues are addressed in a novel, they are less and less artificially inserted into the narrative. There is also a growing willingness to offer

alternative futures - and not only horrific dystopias. But beyond the narrative, I believe we need to experiment with the strangeness, the unknown, even the disorder in literature; we need to invent new narrative formats, because we live in an era marked by uncertainty. Literature could echo that and help us face it.

Corinne Morel Darleux is a columnist, essayist and novelist. Engaged in many environmental, libertarian and peasant networks, she is dedicated to activism and writing that questions our relationship to the world. She is the author of several essays and children's books. La Sauvagière, her first adult novel, was published in 2022 by Dalva.

THE QUIET POWER BEHIND LITERARY RECOGNITION

From literary prizes to bookstores and media platforms, Jean-Paul Hirsch, Commercial Director & Press-Attaché of P.O.L., part of the Gallimard publishing group offers a behind-the-scene view of how books find readers in France and why some stories change everything.

As commercial director and press attaché of P.O.L., how do you assess the importance of literary prizes in shaping the journey of a book and an author?

It's always a great pleasure when an author receives an award. Simply being shortlisted is very important, it brings the book and the author into the spotlight, attracting the attention of journalists and booksellers. The author is happy to be selected, it's a source of satisfaction. Winning the award is a great joy. But there are all kinds of awards: some have no impact on sales, some bring money to the author, and some change a book's destiny. At P.O.L., we don't publish books to win an award, but we do everything we can to make sure it happens.

Do you see literary prizes having a direct impact on sales or translations? Please give us some numbers.

Of the many literary prizes awarded in France, only a few have a direct impact on sales, primarily the major autumn prizes—Goncourt, Renaudot, Femina, Médicis, and Goncourt des Lycéens—and the spring prizes—Prix du Livre Inter, Prix France Télévision, and Prix des Lectrices de Elle. A shortlisted book attracts the attention of foreign publishers. And increased sales inevitably lead to an increase in translations.

The number of literary prizes has grown exponentially. Do you think it is a good thing?

There are a great many literary prizes in France (perhaps 2,000!). I wouldn't say there are too many, even if some literary prizes exist solely to advertise their sponsors. For example, the trend in France, after prizes awarded by cafés and brasseries, is to award prizes by hotels: these prizes have no impact on sales, but they come with a cash prize, so we send out 15 copies each time in the hope that an author will win.

How would you describe the current media ecosystem in France for books, and how has it changed over the years, particularly in relation to literary prizes?

Books still occupy a significant space in newspapers. We're fortunate in France to have that. In the major dailies (Le Monde, Libération, Le Figaro, La Croix), in the weekly magazines (NouvelObs, Le Point, Elle, Match), and also on public radio stations like France Inter and France Culture.

What's changing is probably a decline in curiosity, a shift in the focus from literature to themed books. Television is particularly challenging. There's far too little airtime for literature on television.



Jean-Paul Hirsch

“Books still occupy a significant space in newspapers. In the major dailies, in the weekly magazines, and also on public radio stations.

France is seen as a country with a strong literary tradition and a robust reading culture. What role does the media play in sustaining France's reading culture?

Yes, you still see a lot of people reading paper books on the Paris metro. Book advertising on the metro is also growing because newspaper circulation has declined, without a corresponding decrease in the price of advertising space. Lower circulation means a decrease in influence on sales. So this fall, for the first time, we ran a metro advertising campaign for *Kolkhoze*, Emmanuel Carrère's new book.



Literary campaign at the Paris Metro

“Bookstores play a vital role in literary success; in France, we are fortunate to have a vast network of excellent bookstores: advice, reviews, window displays, and special features.

How crucial are bookstores in shaping a book's success—independently or in synergy with the media?

Bookstores play a vital role in literary success; in France, we are fortunate to have—thanks in particular to the fixed book price—a vast network of excellent bookstores: advice, reviews, window displays, and special features. Booksellers' enthusiasm sometimes coincides with that of literary critics and literary prizes, as was the case this year with *La Maison vide* by Laurent Mauvignier (Prix Goncourt), *Kolkhoze* by Emmanuel Carrère (Prix Médicis), and *La Nuit au cœur* by Nathacha Appanah (Prix Femina). Booksellers also bring to light books that have gone unnoticed and create or amplify successes.

Do physical encounters with the authors at bookstores and festivals constitute an important part of the sales? What about online e-commerce?

At P.O.L. Publishing, we encourage author meet-and-greets in bookstores, as well as their presence at festivals. This isn't so much about book sales—although it does contribute—but rather about the authors' exposure, the connections they forge, the image of the publishing house, and this close relationship that extends the reach of the books. For example, this fall, Emmanuel Carrère held nearly 30 events in bookstores—both small and large—and



Book section in France's leading newspaper © Pénélope Bagieu

at festivals to promote the release of *Kolkhoze*. E-commerce represents 6% of our revenue. It's a bonus. Nothing more.

As on date what do you think are the most important platforms for a publisher to position the book in order to get visibility and discoverability?

Everything is important. You need it all: print media, radio, television if possible, social media, and bookstores. Add to that good word-of-mouth, because the success of a book remains a mystery. And that's a good thing!

Your publishing house is known for having many bestselling authors. Recently, Neige Sinno's novel took France by storm and became a global literary phenomenon. What is your secret recipe for success?

The only secret was recognizing, upon reading the manuscript, that it was a great book, a book that would contribute to advancing literature and changing society. We received the manuscript by email. Frédéric Boyer, the publisher and director of Éditions P.O.L., clicked on the email, was blown away, and decided to publish it. What's incredible is that the book had previously been rejected by 30 publishers. After that, we simply did our job, which was to try to get people to read the book, sharing our enthusiasm and our amazement.

Jean-Paul Hirsch has been the Sales Director and Press Officer at Éditions P.O.L. for over 34 years. He often describes himself as the house's "principle of reality." A former bookseller, he was also involved in the launch of Electre, France's key bibliographic and order-processing database.

SINNO SAD TIGER

"[T]he most powerful, profound book I've ever read about the devastation of one person's childhood by an adult."

—ANNIE ERNAUX, *The New York Times Book Review*



SAD TIGER

NEIGE SINNO

TRANSLATED BY NATASHA LEHRER



LITERARY PRIZES, VISIBILITY AND THE LIFE OF BOOKS

Triste Tigre (Sad Tiger) by Neige Sinno won the Prix Littéraire du Monde, the Prix Les Inrockuptibles, the Prix Femina, the Prix Blù Jean-Marc Roberts, and the Prix Goncourt des Lycéens in 2023. It went on to win 21 Goncourt Choices worldwide: in Canada, Turkey, Slovakia, South Korea, Croatia, Ireland, the United States, India, the Netherlands, Austria, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Middle East. Released in English by Seven Stories Press in May 2025, the Indian edition has just come out.

From a writer's viewpoint, what is your take on the importance and the evolution of literary prizes in the ecosystem today?

Literary prizes are a wonderful way to celebrate books and try to make them central in the cultural scene and the cultural conversation. There are so many prizes that each prize has to create its own personality.

The ecosystem of prizes is like a living organism. Some prizes represent some very strong and dominant species while others are more interested in less known genres or more demanding books. And all the species need each other to survive in a healthy environment. Bolaño compared literature to a forest where the masterpieces were some big trees in the middle, with the rest of the smaller trees that make up the forest. I think that is quite accurate.

In what way you feel the awards have strengthened your bond with the reader, publisher and increased the discoverability of your book?

The prizes definitely give books a lot of visibility. In the particular case of *Sad Tiger*, which is a memoir about child sexual abuse – a genre that lots of people are afraid of reading – the prizes gave the book some sort of aura which made it less scary. The prizes gave the book an image of respectability. Especially the Goncourt des lycéens prize, which is awarded

by a jury of hundreds of high school students (17-18 years old), gave the book a different image. I suppose lots of people thought: if an eighteen year old can read that book it should not be that shocking.

But there were other factors that made the book a success, especially the good press it got and the work of booksellers who supported the book. Lots of readers reported to me that they were not sure of reading the book and were convinced to do so by a bookseller who had read it.



Neige Sinno © Jerome Domine

“Literary prizes are a wonderful way to celebrate books and try to make them central in the cultural scene and the cultural conversation.”

*Neige Sinno is a French writer born in 1977 in the Hautes-Alpes region of France and currently based in the French Basque country, after spending several years in Mexico. Trained in contemporary North American literature, she is the author of *La vie des rats* (2007) and *Le Camion* (2018). Her acclaimed book *Triste Tigre* (Sad Tiger), published in 2023, has won multiple major literary awards including the Prix Femina 2023, the Le Monde Literary Prize 2023, the 2024 Strega European Prize, the Prix Goncourt des lycéens 2023, and the Choix Goncourt Prize India 2023. *Sad Tiger* (Seven Stories Press, 2025), translated by Natasha Lehrer, was shortlisted for US National Book Award 2025.*



Sleepless



A Memoir
of Insomnia

Marie Darrieussecq

Translated by Penny Hueston

TRANSLATING THE BREATH OF LITERATURE

Marie Darrieussecq is the author of fifteen novels, a number of short stories, a biography, two essays and several plays. She has translated nine books, in this conversation, she reflects on the craft of translation, the balance between fidelity and freedom, and why the human ear remains irreplaceable.

What kind of creativity does a translator need?

A translator needs to recreate the original text in her or his language. It's a lot of fidelity and a little bit of creativity. Like a marriage with a touch of spices.

How many books have you translated?

Nine books, I am translating the 10th. I'm very privileged because I'm always offered to re-translate masterpieces such as Baldwin's *Notes of a native son*, Woolf's *A Room of one's own* or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* - one of the first novels I had a crush for. My favourite book to translate was *Alice in Wonderland*. The play on words was a great playground and offered much necessary freedom in French.



Marie Darrieussecq © Charles Freger-POL

“ Translation is a lot of fidelity and a bit of creativity. Like a marriage with a touch of spices.

What is your view on the AI translation tools?

Als can save time compared with searching through online dictionaries, but their translations remain clumsy and inevitably lacking in personality. Als are objects, after all, even if they try to imitate subjects. Als don't "hear" the sound of language. The music of the words. The breathing of writing. For the moment.

What do you feel about the recognition a translator gets?

I'm very lucky, because publishers offer me translation work precisely because I'm a well-known writer in France. My signature is a kind of added value to the translated book.

Translators are generally not given enough recognition, and they are very poorly paid. As a member of the Prix Médicis jury, I also worked to obtain, from our patron, the Grow Foundation, a grant for the translators of the winning novel each year. The first grant was awarded to John Lambert, translator of Emmanuel Carrère's *Kolkhoze*, Prix Médicis 2025.

What do you enjoy more: being an author or a translator?

For me, writing is breathing. Translating is like knitting: it's not a matter of life or death, and it relaxes me enormously. The text is already there — I don't have to wrench it painfully out of myself; I simply have to knit this ball of yarn, peacefully, into the wool of the French language.

“ For me, writing is breathing. Translating is like knitting

Marie Darrieussecq (born 1969, Basque Country, France) is a writer, translator, and psychoanalyst, and a graduate of the *École Normale Supérieure*. The author of fifteen novels, along with short stories, essays, plays, and a biography, her work has been translated worldwide. Her debut novel *'Pig Tales'* (1996) was published in 45 countries. A recipient of the Prix Médicis and the Prix des Prix (2013), she is also a regular contributor to art magazines in London and Paris. Her memoir *'Sleepless'* appeared in 2024 with Fitzcarraldo (UK), Semiotext(e) (USA), and New Press (Australia). Her new novel *Fabriquer une femme* will be translated in English this coming year.



AI IN PUBLISHING: EFFICIENCY WITHOUT COMPROMISING EDITORIAL INTEGRITY

As artificial intelligence rapidly enters the creative industries, publishing finds itself at a crucial inflection point. Meru Gokhale, CEO, Editrix, explores how AI can streamline editorial workflows, expand access to high-quality editing, reshape translation and audio formats, and even train the next generation of editors, while underscoring the ethical guardrails needed to keep human judgment, cultural context and authorship firmly at the centre of the publishing ecosystem.

How can AI support writers, publishers and editors and what are the critical challenges one must keep in mind while working with AI?

AI should be seen not as a replacement for human creativity, but as a 'smart colleague' or a 'second brain' that is available 24/7.

For writers, AI can act as an early developmental partner—it is excellent for unblocking writer's block, brainstorming plot points, or testing the logic of a narrative arc. For editors, the technology handles the drudgery. Much of editing involves mechanical tasks—checking consistency, formatting, and basic hygiene. AI handles these with speed, freeing the editor to focus on taste, nuance, and emotional intelligence.

For publishers, the primary benefit is savings on costs, efficiency and 'time-to-market.' Traditionally, the editorial process is a major bottleneck in terms of time to market. By integrating AI, publishers can handle higher volumes of manuscripts and drastically reduce the time spent on the process of editing without compromising quality. I also feel that when you cut down on the time taken in the editorial process, authors have more time to handle revisions through subsequent drafts, leading to better books.

The critical challenge is over-reliance. AI lacks cultural context and the human soul; it cannot understand the emotional resonance of a scene in the way a person can. We must also guard against 'Shadow AI' usage—where professionals use generic tools covertly without training. We need to bring AI usage into the light to ensure it is used well, and that the final decision points always rest with a human editor.

Can you tell us about the application you have developed at Editrix?

Editrix was born out of a desire to make high-quality editing accessible to everyone. We have built a



Meru Gokhale

platform that combines the precision of professional editorial standards with the efficiency of LLMs. Our flagship features include a Prompt Library designed specifically for publishing workflows—from developmental editing to refining blurbs—and 'Inline Prompts,' which work at the sentence level.

“The critical challenge is over-reliance. AI lacks cultural context and the human soul; it cannot understand the emotional resonance of a scene in the way a person can.

We operate with a global mindset. While we have deep roots in the Indian publishing ecosystem, we work with writers and publishers across the US, UK, and India and beyond.

As for accomplishments, I would highlight:

- **Empowering Smaller Publishing Houses:** Independent publishers are using our tool to level the playing field. Smaller presses often have brilliant curation but operate with lean teams. We are seeing these publishers use Editrix to draft submission letters, refine pitches, and handle edits. This allows them to punch well above their weight and get their authors noticed in a crowded market, rivalling the output of much larger corporations.
- **Efficiency Gains:** We have seen freelance editors using Editrix increase their capacity from two books a month to six, effectively tripling their capacity without compromising quality.
- **Global Bridges:** We are also helping non-native English speakers polish their manuscripts to a global standard, ensuring their brilliant research or storytelling isn't overlooked simply due to language barriers.

How do you think the sanctity of literary content and creativity be upheld and how can intellectual property of authors and editors be protected?

The sanctity of literary content relies on the understanding that AI is a tool for refinement, not creation. The original spark, the voice, and the story comes from the human author.

Regarding Intellectual Property, my stance is: IP belongs to the creator. The fear that AI companies are harvesting content is valid. That is why at Editrix, we have taken a 'privacy-first' or 'walled garden' approach. We do not train our models on the manuscripts our users upload. When an author or publisher uploads a file to us, it remains theirs and is not fed back into a database. To protect IP, the industry needs trusted tools that respect creator rights by design.

What future do you see for literary translators and do you think they will be replaced by AI?

Translation is an art of cultural interpretation, not just linguistic swapping. AI struggles with idiom, humour, subtext, and the 'music' of the language.

However, the role of the translator will certainly evolve. AI is becoming very capable of producing a 'zero draft' or helping with glossary consistency, which speeds up the process significantly. This allows the human translator to move from being a 'drafter' to a 'curator' or 'polisher,' spending their

“ Translation is an art of cultural interpretation, not just linguistic swapping. AI struggles with idiom, humour, subtext, and the 'music' of the language.

time on the creative nuances rather than the basics. I also see a future where AI helps publishers assess the commercial viability of books in languages they don't speak, potentially leading to more books being acquired for translation.

What are the trends to watch out for in the future?

I see three major trends on the horizon:

- **The 'Podcast Book' and Hybrid Formats:** AI is making it possible to create high-quality audio experiences from text instantly. I see interactive audio as a potential format for the future. We may also see a future where readers can switch effortlessly between reading a chapter and listening to it, unlocking backlists that never had the budget for traditional audiobook production.
- **The Interactive 'Brand Chatbot':** We are moving toward a situation where a book is not just a static object but an interactive knowledge base. In the future, non-fiction authors and brands will create specialized chatbots based on their IP, like Ray Dalio has just done. Readers won't just read a book; they will be able to query it to solve specific problems, turning literature into an evolving, conversational advisory tool. I see huge potential here, particularly in self-help.
- **High Taste and the Next Generation:** As routine tasks become automated, human editors with 'high taste' and exceptional judgment will be in greater demand than ever before. AI also has a critical role to play in education. I believe AI has the potential to train the next generation of editors who may not have access to traditional mentorship. In a remote-first world where the old apprenticeship model is fading, AI can act as a rigorous coach, helping junior editors master the craft of structure and style.

Meru Gokhale is a seasoned publishing professional with two decades of experience in the literary world. Former Publisher of The Penguin Press Group in India, she has worked with writers such as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Ramachandra Guha, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Dr. Siddhartha Mukherjee, among many others. She is the CEO of Editrix.

A FRESH APPROACH TO A PLANET-FRIENDLY BOOK WORLD

As the book industry confronts urgent ecological challenges, Gaëlle Bohé, Founder of The Book Fresk, is helping professionals rethink how books are made. In this conversation, she explains why collective action, smarter design, and system-wide change are essential for building a sustainable publishing future.

What inspired you to focus on sustainability in publishing and develop The Book Fresk as a tool for change?

Before leading Fontaine O Livres, I worked as a journalist covering cultural, social, and environmental issues. So when, in 2022, we organized a workshop on ecological challenges in the book industry, I was struck by how unaware many professionals still were of these questions.

This encouraged me to design a training programme to help publishers integrate eco-responsibility into their practices. During this process, the consultant Charles Hedouin – himself a publisher with expertise in environmental studies – told me about the Climate Fresk and the various adaptations he had already developed. He said: “Why not create a Fresk for the book industry?” It was an excellent idea. Fontaine O Livres decided to carry the project, and Charles Hédouin engineered the tool. That’s how The Book Fresk was born.

Across sourcing, printing, distribution, and returns, which environmental issues pose the greatest challenge for today’s book industry?

The solution must be a collective one. Every person in the supply chain has a responsibility and can act at their individual level, but meaningful change will only occur when all professionals work together. Publishers and printers, for example, can jointly develop standards or environmental labels, while distributors can help reduce unsold returns and improve logistical efficiency.

The Book Fresk is not about identifying “good” or “bad” ones. Instead, it creates a space where professionals from across the industry can understand the system as a whole and work together to find solutions.



Gaëlle Bohé

What is The Book Fresk’s mission and how does it help the industry shift to greener models?

The Book Fresk is a collaborative card-based workshop played in groups of five, guided by a facilitator. Each group begins with a set of cards representing different stages of the book value chain. Their first task is to arrange the cards in chronological order — which initially seems simple: author, publisher, printer, bookseller, and so on.

But as additional branches of cards are introduced, the system quickly becomes more complex. On the back of each card, participants discover up-to-date social and environmental data that help reveal the true impacts of each stage.

Through this process, participants gain a clearer understanding of the complexity of the industry’s ecological and social challenges. The workshop then continues with a collective exercise where

participants identify concrete solutions, both individually and across the entire value chain, encouraging collaboration towards more sustainable publishing models.

What does eco-design mean for books, and which concrete choices have the strongest effect on lowering their environmental footprint?

Eco-designing a book means considering its environmental impact from the very beginning of the publishing process. This involves making responsible choices at every stage: selecting a format that avoids paper waste, choosing papers, inks, and glues with lower environmental impact, and ensuring that any labels or certifications are meaningful and transparent. It also means planning realistic print runs to limit overproduction and reduce the number of unsold books, which remain one of the major environmental issues in the sector.

What solutions can reduce overproduction and returns while keeping the publishing ecosystem diverse and thriving?

Overproduction and high return rates largely stem from the way the current distribution system is structured. Distributors are often the only professionals in the supply chain who do not bear financial risk: their business model depends on the volume of books transported, meaning they earn money whether books are sent out or returned. This partly explains why many distribution companies are owned by large publishing groups, and why the system tends to encourage overproduction.

To reduce waste, we need to rethink this system. Developing alternative distribution models, improving forecasting tools, reducing print runs, and strengthening collaboration between publishers, booksellers, and distributors can all help limit unnecessary production while maintaining a diverse and dynamic publishing ecosystem.

How do you envision each stakeholder contributing to a unified, eco-responsible book ecosystem?

Readers, public institutions, and legislation increasingly encourage the book industry to engage in ecological transition. Companies across the sector also understand that they need to act together: collaboration makes the process both more efficient and more affordable.

All these share common values — a belief in the importance of books for education, ideas, imagination, and democracy. By putting aside certain



French Publishers playing the Book Fresk

individual constraints and working collectively, they can strengthen cooperation across the entire value chain and build a more resilient and sustainable book ecosystem.

“ Developing alternative distribution models, improving forecasting tools, reducing print runs, and strengthening collaboration between publishers, booksellers, and distributors can all help limit unnecessary production while maintaining a diverse and dynamic publishing ecosystem.

How can the book industry strengthen and standardise life-cycle assessments to guide smarter environmental decisions?

In France, the book industry is currently developing a tool that will allow publishers to calculate the real environmental impact of each book, from the origin of the wood to paper manufacturing, to printing locations, and beyond. But life-cycle assessments also need to include later stages of the value chain, such as distribution, returns, pulping, and potential reuse. Once fully implemented, this tool will help publishers compare the impact of different books and set clear sustainability objectives for future productions.

How are readers embracing greener habits, and what can the book industry do to support these choices?

Yes, we are observing several encouraging shifts. Some readers are increasingly attentive to buying locally,

especially at neighbourhood bookshops, regional book fairs, or during meetings with local authors and publishers. However, the strongest trend in France today concerns second-hand books. In 2022, around 20% of all print books purchased were second-hand, a choice driven not only by ecological concerns, but also by financial ones.

“The strongest trend in France today concerns second-hand books. In 2022, around 20% of all print books purchased were second-hand — a choice driven not only by ecological concerns, but also by financial ones.

Most second-hand sales, however, occur through online platforms, with books shipped individually by mail. This generates transport-related environmental impacts which partly offset the ecological benefit. Another important side effect is that authors and publishers receive no revenue from these copies, which ultimately affects the financing of literary creation. There are currently legislative proposals aimed at taxing second-hand book sales to redistribute a share of this fast-growing market to authors and publishers.



PRESENTS



France has been encouraging ecological transition across cultural sectors. How do national policies and incentives support the goals of sustainable publishing?

France supports the ecological transition by funding part of the process, promoting dedicated

programmes, and increasingly making public subsidies conditional on measurable actions. In the film and music sectors, this approach is already well-established: cinema has integrated social and environmental commitments — for instance, stronger protection for women following the #MeToo movement, the reuse of sets, and reduced crew travel. The music industry is also reorganising touring schedules to limit air travel.

The book industry has begun its transition more recently, but it is now actively addressing its own specific environmental and social challenges.

Which innovations or new practices give you the most hope for a greener book industry, and how do you imagine a genuinely sustainable publishing ecosystem over the next decade?

We don't yet know exactly what the book supply chain will look like in the future, but I am optimistic, because I see a strong collective willingness to act. Across the sector — publishers, printers, booksellers, but also associations, unions, and the Ministry of Culture — there is real engagement and a shared desire to rethink the system. Many stakeholders have already taken part in The Book Fresk and want to go further. For example, we are currently training France Livre, which started with The Book Fresk, to design its own transition pathway. The energy and commitment are there. The transformation is underway!

“The book industry has begun its transition recently, but it is now actively addressing its own specific environmental and social challenges.

Gaëlle Bohé is the Director of Fontaine O Livres, a Paris-based organisation that strengthens the publishing sector through training programmes, an incubator, and a network dedicated to independent publishers. A former journalist focused on sustainability, she has also worked as a literary programmer for the Festival du Livre de Paris and La Nuit de la Lecture. She co-created La Fresque du Livre (The Book Post) with environmental expert Charles Hédouin and founded the Prix Hors Concours, a major literary award championing independent publishing, which marked its 10th anniversary this year and recently launched an international edition.

Where Narratives Take Shape

a confluence of literature, architecture, and ecology, the pavilion narrates a story of shared resilience, the timeless power of books, and the enduring connection between nations through design.



It stands as both homage and invitation—to read, reflect, and reimagine the world through a French-Indian lens of creativity and sustainability.



An architectural intervention by Archohm and The Design Village.
Creating a legacy for the publishing world.

An initiative by



THE FUTURE OF

BOOKS

An Indo-French exchange on the book industry

DELHI

14 - 15 January, 2026

CHENNAI

16 - 17 January, 2026

JAIPUR

18 January, 2026



Get the full schedule

In partnership with



Programme supported by the **French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs** and the **Institut français** as part of the strategy for the development of French **Cultural and Creative Industries** internationally.