

Bookselling as Resistance (BRN 2025)

Reporte der Beiträge

Beitrag ID: 3

Typ: 20-minute paper

J.B. Miller and Co: Pirate Publishing, Free Thought, and the Circulation of Ideas in 19th-Century Rural Nova Scotia

Donnerstag, 11. September 2025 09:00 (20 Minuten)

James Barry (1819 –1906) was a miller, fiddler, and printer in the tiny settlement of Six Mile Brook, Nova Scotia. Barry read widely, and in 1874, at the age of 55, he built a printing press, bought some type, and began printing. His extant library of 350 volumes at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia contains at least ten books that he typeset and printed –all of them illegally. The books ranged from a self-help guide for young Christian men to collections of free-thought essays and an edition of Thomas Paine’s *The Age of Reason*. Avoiding official copyright scrutiny –books published by “J.B. Miller, New York”–he then sold these locally, both at his mill and through an agent he employed who traipsed through the backroads of Pictou, Colchester and Antigonish Counties.

Most of these books were related to Barry’s mid-life reorientation from Free-Church Presbyterianism to secular Free Thought. Those books, combined with details gleaned from his diary, point to a rich sub-culture of print in rural Nova Scotia. The diary offers numerous clues as to a heretofore unexplored intellectual world of farmer and craft free thinkers in the area. Barry’s associates and book customers were “Infidels”: a small world of Free Thought advocates, secularists, and liberals, embracing critical enquiry, modern thinking, and sometimes even feminism and free love.

Provincial book buyers typically obtained books shipped from New York, Philadelphia or Edinburgh, but via Barry’s press we find a literary world that was shaped locally, and illegally, providing a vital counter-current to dominant local tastes. In the conservative Presbyterian world of rural Pictou County, his anti-state-church, anti-state publications offered local readers entry into a major trans-Atlantic current of radical thought.

Hauptautor: SAMSON, Daniel (Brock University)

Vortragende(r): SAMSON, Daniel (Brock University)

Sitzung Einordnung: Panel

Beitrag ID: 7

Typ: 20-minute paper

Books and popular politics: communist bookshops in Interwar Britain

Donnerstag, 11. September 2025 10:40 (20 Minuten)

In the interwar period, the book-minded Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), believed that political change could only happen if workers read the right books. State-performed censorship was limited in peacetime and an increasing number of left-leaning books and were published, thanks to innovators such as Victor Gollancz, Ernest Wishart or Allen Lane. However, politically and economically conservative booksellers and librarians often prevented them from reaching their intended audience.

Creating a distribution network that would make communist ideas widely available thus became a priority. This paper mainly focuses on the Communist and Workers' Bookshops set up across Britain from the 1920s and on Collet's Bookshops, successful "Popular front" shops run and funded by Eva Reckitt from the 1930s. More temporary bookshops and the bookmobiles that were used to reach rural readers are also mentioned.

The bookshops connected to the CPGB catered for activists and were primarily committed to their political education. However, communist booksellers also tried to reach a wider audience and to alter the perception of bookshops as austere and exclusive places. Reading rooms were opened, meetings were organised, as well as more informal social events such as dances. At times, communist bookshops became places where a specific brand of popular politics came to life.

But they also faced multiple difficulties and remained somewhat marginal. Did communist booksellers manage to combine their political role to the practical and financial necessities of shop-keeping? How were they affected by the CPGB's shifting political line and by the Conservative indictment of communist literature, manifested in the passing of the Incitement to Disaffection Act? What were the gender and class dynamics in these bookshops?

This paper draws on a range of primary sources, including the Communist Party Archive, the British Library's "Book Trade Lives" series, publishers' archives, contemporary trade papers and MI5 Files at the National Archives.

Hauptautor: COCAIGN, Elen (Université Paris 8)

Vortragende(r): COCAIGN, Elen (Université Paris 8)

Sitzung Einordnung: Panel

Beitrag ID: 9

Typ: 20-minute paper

Sharir ki Jankari: Feminist Embodied Knowledge and Collective Bookselling

Donnerstag, 11. September 2025 14:30 (20 Minuten)

Abstract

This paper will analyse the circumstances and implications of the 1989 publication of *Sharir ki Jankari* (The Knowledge of the Body) by the feminist publishing house Kali for Women and a group of 75 women from villages in Rajasthan, India, who served collectively as authors, distributors, and sellers for the title. These author-booksellers visualized *Sharir ki Jankari* as a guidebook around women's sexuality that shed light on taboo topics of women's reproductive health, the female body, and sex education. This impulse led to a unique instance of bookselling, and this paper will examine the several kinds of resistance that this publication posed in its focus on community-led knowledge production. Through interviews with the publishers, an analysis of the text, and an overview of its reception through the documentary *The Books We Made* (dir. Chopra and Tanaku), this paper will reflect on how the collaboration of seventy-five women who each identified as the author of the text and were listed as such led to an instance of collaborative knowledge production which destabilized traditional, Western notions of copyright and individual intellectual ownership. These authors were also, significantly, the sellers of the book, raising money for production through crowdsourcing, distributing it in the villages, and getting it printed despite difficulties. Thus, they collapsed boundaries between authorship and bookselling, resisting patriarchal censorship of the circulation of this material, and devising alternative methods of bookselling. For example, when printers refused to print copies of the book, citing that male printing apprentices were "getting excited" by the sight of a female nude body, they collaborated with female printing press owners (Chopra et al). The author-booksellers also circumvented censorship of the book's material by creating lift-up flaps painted with clothes that revealed the diagrams of the body when lifted. Thus, this paper will discuss how these booksellers successfully sold 70,000 copies of these books, enabling community formation, and resisting traditional market norms and censorship. The paper will explore how this bookselling process was made possible by the inherently radical nature of the book—these women were unlettered, and the book is entirely graphic, depending on a politics of feminist embodiment and pedagogy. While in the 1980s in India, feminist publishing was a nascent, countercultural enterprise, the publication of *Sharir ki Jankari* provides a model of bookselling that resists market laws and mobilizes community resources to create and sell books that are collectively conceptualized, produced, and valuable.

Hauptautor: MOHANTY, Anushmita (University of Wisconsin Milwaukee)

Vortragende(r): MOHANTY, Anushmita (University of Wisconsin Milwaukee)

Sitzung Einordnung: Panel

Beitrag ID: 10

Typ: 20-minute paper

Resist, Remember, Repeat: Bookselling Under Siege in Old Delhi's Sunday Book Bazaar

Donnerstag, 11. September 2025 14:00 (20 Minuten)

For decades, Old Delhi's Daryaganj Sunday Book Bazaar was a vibrant marketplace for second-hand and pirated books, deeply embedded in the city's cultural and economic fabric. In July 2019, however, the bazaar was declared an 'encroachment' and removed from its historic location, sparking a legal and regulatory battle. Civic authorities relocated the bazaar to a new, 'sanitised' site, raising broader concerns about the erasure of public spaces, the constraints on independent booksellers, and the enforcement of censorship under the guise of regulation.

This paper examines the intersection of bookselling and legal suppression, focusing on how oral memory became a tool of resistance. The removal of the bazaar led to a broader movement, as booksellers, activists, and trade unions mobilised both digitally and physically to preserve the market's legacy. Drawing on ethnographic interviews, I explore the personal narratives of attachment (*lagaav*) shared by the booksellers and buyers, highlighting how their stories of resilience helped shape a collective memory that resisted legal suppression.

The paper argues that oral memory serves as a critical counterbalance to formal legal frameworks and censorship, offering an alternative archive of resistance. As both an ethnographer and participant in this struggle, I reflect on how these oral histories not only document the community's fight but also act as a vital tool in resisting state-led efforts to reshape cultural spaces. Daryaganj's story underscores how communities can harness memory and lived experience to resist, remember, and repeat their acts of defiance in an increasingly regulated and bureaucratic world.

Hauptautor: DHINGRA, Kanupriya (School of Liberal Studies, BML Munjal University, Delhi NCR)

Vortragende(r): DHINGRA, Kanupriya (School of Liberal Studies, BML Munjal University, Delhi NCR)

Sitzung Einordnung: Panel

Beitrag ID: 12

Typ: 20-minute paper

Better Books, Bomb Culture, and Beyond: Two Radical Bookshops in the 1960s

Donnerstag, 11. September 2025 11:30 (20 Minuten)

This paper examines two London bookshops of the 1960s, Indica and Better Books, and examines how they operated as what Kimberley Kinder describes as 'counterspace(s) for social movements' (Kinder, *The Radical Bookstore*, 2021). Both functioned as key venues for the radical counterculture of the 1960s, which resisted the Cold War agenda and supported various political causes such as the anti-nuclear movement and resistance to the Vietnam War. Both demonstrate the overlap between radical politics and avant-garde aesthetics that is such a marker of this kind of bookshop.

Better Books had been founded in 1947 by Tony Godwin but it was only after he visited City Lights bookshop in San Francisco in 1964 that the London bookshop established itself as a location for radical ideas, with a redesigned interior, meeting rooms, and spaces for events. In addition to selling books Indica and Better Books staged readings, film screenings, exhibitions, and 'happenings', operating as key countercultural spaces for experimental writers and artists whose cultural politics offered a challenge to the political establishment of the time. One key figure linked to Better Books was Jeff Nuttall, a peace activist and author of the anti-war memoir, *Bomb Culture*, who described the 'happenings' at the bookshop as having a 'curious mixed atmosphere. Part Quaker, part Anarchist, part decadent.' A series of events associated with Gustav Metzger's 'auto-destructive art' symposium were held in the bookshop, using an aesthetics of destruction to highlight the negative effects of capitalism and militarism in the postwar world.

Indica was also linked to an art gallery, displaying the work of the Fluxus group, including an exhibition by Yoko Ono. As well as stocking many of the works of the American beats, concrete poetry, and mimeo-magazines, the influential underground newspaper *International Times* (IT, 1966-73) had its offices in the basement of Indica books, and were subjected to several raids by the police. As Barry Miles, one of the owners of Indica, later stated, 'the function of a bookshop was the propagation of ideas' (Miles, *London Calling*, 2010), and this paper will explore how these two bookshops were crucial 'counterspaces' in the promotion of radical ideas in London in the mid to late 60s.

Hauptautor: THACKER, Andrew (Nottingham Trent University)

Vortragende(r): THACKER, Andrew (Nottingham Trent University)

Sitzung Einordnung: Panel

Beitrag ID: 13

Typ: 20-minute paper

Beyond Big House Publishers: A New Map of Bookselling in 19th-Century New York City

Donnerstag, 11. September 2025 09:30 (20 Minuten)

Critical narratives of the 19th-century American book trade traditionally focus on the rise of the urban big-house publisher and emphasize a clustered network of large book firms fueled by the camaraderie and ambition of exceptional white men. And while it is true that the rise of the American publishing house was a pivotal moment in bookselling, these narratives elide the hundreds of smaller urban bookstores that conducted business around and with these firms. These bookstores resist the dominant critical narrative, instead offering alternative perspectives on the 19th-century book market, the contours of local book cultures, and the character of an emerging urban metropolis. These bookstores are listening-posts for the voices of muted booksellers who can tell new stories about the entrepreneurial efforts and rich contributions of women and men of color to the antebellum New York City book trade.

Using GIS mapping and historical 3D reconstruction, this presentation traces a diverse bookselling landscape. While mapping can be fairly critiqued as abstracting and dehumanizing, each point on a newly-constituted map plots an individual left out of the dominant critical narrative and whose story and voice may be further discerned in the historical record. By toggling between the aggregate map and the particulars of specific booksellers, including David Ruggles, the first African-American bookstore owner, and the Rush sisters, who operated a small store on the fringes of the city in 1860, this presentation attends to the multiple scales and layers of antebellum New York City bookselling. This repopulated history expands the critical narrative of 19th-century American bookselling, enriches our understanding of the diverse individuals and stores that shaped the book market, and offers methods for attending to these “lost voices” more intentionally.

Hauptautor: HIGHLAND, Kristen (American University of Sharjah)

Vortragende(r): HIGHLAND, Kristen (American University of Sharjah)

Sitzung Einordnung: Panel

Beitrag ID: 23

Typ: nicht angegeben

The Romance Shop Around the Corner: How Women Readers Created a New Kind of Independent Bookstore

Freitag, 12. September 2025 14:00 (20 Minuten)

There has perhaps been no bigger recent innovation in independent bookselling than the proliferation of romance-only bookstores that have sprung up in Anglophone locations, from Los Angeles to Edinburgh. Other bookstores, sometimes begrudgingly, as in the case of New York City's Strand Book Store, have had to expand and make more prominent romance shelving. The big chains, purveyors of the romance genre long before these books were considered something to be spotlighted for mainstream book buyers, have brought their new and expanded romance offerings to the front of their stores, often creating special displays advertised "as seen on TikTok."

Are these romance-only bookstores "third spaces," in the words of several of the owners, where women are plotting resistance against patriarchy? Why are readers seeking out this genre with such passion and readiness to spend money? How has romance fandom made the jump from social media to physical spaces, i.e. from Instagram and TikTok to bookstores and libraries? Are we observing a resurgence of codex reading that goes along with visits to romance-only bookstores? Is this trend going strong in parallel to ebook or audio reading because of the unmatched affordances of physical books as photo props for social media? What does it mean for booksellers to respond so strongly to a genre's online hype? How can intentionally curated displays counteract the pervasive whiteness of the most popular romance novels? Given the emergence of reader-made adjacent subgenres such as Romantasy and Dark Academia, does a bookseller's nearness to "real" readers mean they are the new experts on the operations of genre? Is romance the escape and site of connection readers need during uncertain political times? What does this feminized genre's economic and popular mainstream presence mean for feminist reading practices online and offline?

My ethnographic research with bookstore owners and book sellers attempts to answer such questions. After the romantic comedy movie "You've Got Mail" influentially enacted the end of the small indie bookstore and given Amazon's serious ongoing attempts to destroy all brick-and-mortar bookstores, what new chapter in the life of bookselling and literary culture announces itself with the emotional and economic boom of romance-focused bookish spaces for women?

Hauptautor: EIMANNSBERGER, Angelina (University of Pennsylvania)

Vortragende(r): EIMANNSBERGER, Angelina (University of Pennsylvania)

Sitzung Einordnung: Panel

Beitrag ID: 24

Typ: nicht angegeben

Exploring audiobook piracy as an act of commercial resistance

Freitag, 12. September 2025 09:00 (1 Stunde)

Twenty-first century bookselling is overshadowed by the market dominance of platform behemoths, and this is nowhere clearer than in the case of digital audiobooks, where Amazon's Audible alone is estimated to hold nearly two-thirds of the US market share (Allen, 2023). As a result, such platforms exert significant commercial and intellectual control over audiobooks' circulation, often to the significant detriment of both the commercial benefits of producers and the broader accessibility of content (Giblin & Doctorow, 2022: 154-9).

In this paper we report on a collaborative research project investigating audiobook piracy within the context of digital audiobooks' circulation structures. Book piracy more generally has been understood as an act of resistance, contravening inequitable economic and geographic restrictions to access and playing a 'clear political role as a counterweight to the centralized control of information—whether by states or private interests' (Balázs, 2011: 400). Contemporary audiobooks are both books and digital media, and their circulation has a number of distinctive features in comparison to print and even ebooks. At the same time as major platforms exert extreme control over the market, digital audiobooks are also often available for free through legitimate avenues such as libraries. As digital media, there is no secondhand market to either counterbalance or undercut the commercial interests of new sales. Geopolitics also plays a significant role in audiobooks' circulation, with territorial licensing restricting availability.

Against this backdrop, we use online ethnography and observation to investigate how the specific characteristics of the audiobook market affect attitudes towards and participation in audiobook piracy. Violations of copyright and other moral rights in relation to audiobook circulation are diverse, ranging from shadow libraries and dedicated audiobook pirate sites, to the digitisation of out-of-print material and the activities of sites such as the internet archive, to the repackaging for sale of public domain content, or the encroachments against author rights by platforms such as Findaway Voices and Taylor & Francis. A number of publishers also oppose the distribution of audiobooks and ebooks through public libraries, portraying this as akin to privacy.

Our provisional hypothesis is that audiobooks' differing industry structures result in differing attitudes and perceptions with regards to ownership and the morality of different modes of access and consumption, and ultimately that an understanding of audiobook piracy hinges on the core concepts of power, control and resistance.

Hauptautoren: WEBER, Millicent (Australian National University); PARNELL, Claire (University of Melbourne); DANE, Alexandra (University of Melbourne)

Vortragende: WEBER, Millicent (Australian National University); PARNELL, Claire (University of Melbourne); DANE, Alexandra (University of Melbourne)

Sitzung Einordnung: Roundtable

Beitrag ID: 26

Typ: 20-minute paper

Selling books with Charlie's bedroom: Heartstopper and its commercial contexts

Freitag, 12. September 2025 13:30 (20 Minuten)

Books serve as conduits for anxieties about a wide range of social issues. In recent years we have seen this particularly in relation to titles which contain –or are perceived to contain –LGBTQ+ subject matter for younger audiences. Paradoxically, at a time when representation for young queer people in literature has never been stronger, access to it is under sustained attack. In this paper I explain two ways in which bookselling has resisted angry calls for the censorship of such material from school and public libraries in particular, by exploring Alice Oseman's *Heartstopper* (2016-present). A phenomenon of note for its broad queer representation, global audience, and –no less importantly –commercial success, the books have sold over 8 million copies in dozens of languages, propelled to an astonishing reach after Netflix adaptation (2022-present). Firstly, I will consider these books themselves as sites of resistance. From self-published crowdfunded number, mass-market paperbacks, collectible seller-specific hardbacks, and subscription-box Fairyloot editions, the materiality of these titles matters deeply to customers young and old., and exists explicitly within particular commercial contexts. Secondly, the replica of protagonist Charlie Spring's bedroom which was setup in Waterstones in Piccadilly in 2022 to mark the release of the first season of the Netflix adaptation saw a significant amount of flagship retail space e given over to celebrating young, queer joy, before subsequent resurrection at Barnes and Noble in New York in July 2023, Indigo in Toronto in January 2024, and most recently at Barnes and Noble in Los Angeles in September 2024. I consider how this celebration of queer joy is no less defiant for its undoubted commercialism, and what it tells us about the importance of books to queer people.

Hauptautor: NOBLE, Malcolm (Leicester Vaughan College)

Vortragende(r): NOBLE, Malcolm (Leicester Vaughan College)

Sitzung Einordnung: Panel

Beitrag ID: 28

Typ: 20-minute paper

Edinburgh's Radical Book Fair –history and future

Freitag, 12. September 2025 10:45 (20 Minuten)

The radical book fair, with prominent examples run in Atlanta, Leipzig, Derry and London, is a space where trade publishing meets politics. It provides opportunities for connection and organising, learning and discussion, while also being a retail space. This paper presents a history and future outlook of Edinburgh's radical book fair.

First organised in 1996 by Word Power Books, the fair started as the Edinburgh Independent and Radical Book Fair, also dubbed by its organiser as “the alternative international book festival” (‘Word Power Books | Edinburgh Independent Radical Book Fair 2015’2016). When Word Power's owner Elaine Henry retired in 2017, the shop was sold to Mairi Oliver and became Lighthouse Bookshop, who continue the tradition of organising what is now called Edinburgh's Radical Book Fair.

While some research exists on feminist and radical bookshops (Hogan 2016, Kinder 2021, Thomas 2024) and book, zine and art fairs (Preston 2022), this paper adds a vital dimension to discussions on radical publishing and bookselling, building on a history of radical fairs such as London's International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books (1982-1995) (Enisuoh 2002).

Radical book fairs assume the same shape as any trade fair, but their title selection and programming is distinctive in its revolutionary aim. Through this case study, including auto-ethnographic observations as one of Lighthouse Bookshop's booksellers, interviews with organisers, and analysis of 5 years of programming, this paper not only records a piece of radical history, it also aims to inform and inspire future booksellers, writers, readers, and publishers. The paper concludes with an exploration on what ‘radical’ has come to mean in the context of this book fair, over its 28-year history.

Hauptautor: NEUWIRTH, Christina

Vortragende(r): NEUWIRTH, Christina

Sitzung Einordnung: Panel

Beitrag ID: 30

Typ: 20-minute paper

The 'Problem' of Piracy in India's Informal Book Markets: Hearing from the Booksellers

Donnerstag, 11. September 2025 13:30 (20 Minuten)

Print book piracy is widespread in India and, according to a recent Nielsen Bookscan survey, is worth an estimated US\$39.90 million. *This value is a quarter of the recorded sales of trade books in the country (US\$159.60 million).* Pirated books are sold and bought through a variety of formal channels including e-retailers like Amazon and Flipkart, brick-and-mortar stores, and informal channels comprising booksellers from makeshift stalls on pavements and road intersections, and itinerant vendors on buses and trains.

Producing, distributing, and selling pirated books are all illegal in India and can lead to prosecution and imprisonment. Despite this, pirated books continue to be openly bought and sold, particularly in India's informal book bazaars. While publishers' and authors' outrage against the sales of pirated editions of their books in India is recorded in the public domain, the effect of this supply of pirated books on bookselling practices in the country has not been explored. This paper draws upon informal interviews conducted with booksellers in India to address this gap and discusses how the ready availability of pirated books in India's book markets are an expression of the precarity faced by booksellers, especially those in the informal sector, in the country. The paper will also highlight how the sales of pirated books are enabled and encouraged by a lack of policy regulations and government intervention in the book market.

Hauptautor: MUKHERJEE, Pritha (University of Reading)

Vortragende(r): MUKHERJEE, Pritha (University of Reading)

Sitzung Einordnung: Panel

Beitrag ID: 31

Typ: 20-minute paper

Irene Babbidge: the “quintessential personal bookseller”

Donnerstag, 11. September 2025 10:15 (20 Minuten)

Few people have heard of Irene Babbidge today, but her achievements for booksellers were nothing short of extraordinary. In the Restrictive Practices Court’s examination of the Net Book Agreement in 1962 she was called as a witness and has been described as “brilliantly lucid” and “the most forceful and telling” representative for the Publishers Association and the Booksellers Association at that watershed event. This paper explores her part in this legal battle more fully, as well as her wider influence and impact on the booksellers of the mid-twentieth century, via her roles in the Booksellers Association as Chairman of the Education Board and Vice President. She wrote a widely praised handbook of bookshop practice, *Beginning in Bookselling* (1965), which was revised in 1972, and her work within her own community, running the Pelham Bookshop, was also celebrated, with Ian Norrie calling her one of the “formidable” women booksellers of the time. This paper seeks to demonstrate the impact one provincial bookseller can have, not just in their own local context, but nationally, and on issues where resistance to issues of huge cultural importance, such as the Net Book Agreement, mattered culturally to the reading public.

Hauptautor: RAYNER, Samantha (Professor of Publishing and Book Cultures, Dept of Information Studies, UCL)

Vortragende(r): RAYNER, Samantha (Professor of Publishing and Book Cultures, Dept of Information Studies, UCL)

Sitzung Einordnung: Panel

Beitrag ID: 32

Typ: 20-minute paper

Siopau Llyfrau Cymraeg: Minority bookselling and minority culture

Freitag, 12. September 2025 10:15 (20 Minuten)

In 2023, over sixty books were published in the Welsh Language: novels, memoirs, educational material, children's books, and poetry. They were distributed across Wales through a network of over 100 bookshops covering the 8000 square miles of the Welsh nation, serving its three million inhabitants. 26% can read Welsh and 27% can speak it. Over 26% of Welsh inhabitants read Welsh and 27% speak it as well. Siopau llyfrau Cymraeg (or Welsh language bookshops) –stores often recognizable by their Welsh names (Na-Nog, Awen Meirion, Cant a Mil) which primarily or solely sell books and other printed material in the Welsh Language –have played an important role in sustaining that linguistic culture. The growth of Welsh language bookshops since the 1950s has coincided with the establishment of legal recognition of and protections for Welsh, including the Welsh Language Acts of 1967 and 1993. They have provided not only access to the material published in the language, but a meeting place for radical cultural and political action by Welsh speakers. They played a substantial role in the Welsh devolution movement which culminated in devolved government in 1998 and in the modern independence movement, Yes Cymru. Using archival sources and interviews with Welsh language booksellers, this paper will examine the growth of these minority language bookshops and their role in sustaining both a strong sense of national identity and resistance to monolingual culture in Wales.

Hauptautor: MUSE, Eben**Vortragende(r):** MUSE, Eben**Sitzung Einordnung:** Panel

Beitrag ID: 33

Typ: 20-minute paper

Left-wing bookshops and infrastructure in Germany: platforms for a counter-public sphere from the 1970s to the present day

Donnerstag, 11. September 2025 12:00 (20 Minuten)

The left-wing movement in the Federal Republic of Germany from the late 1960s onwards was closely linked to the book trade and had a major influence on it, as well as on the publishing landscape and the dissemination of critical literature. The protest movement led to the proliferation of alternative and left-wing publishing houses. Classics of critical theory, Marxist writings and socially critical works were increasingly published. Many independent bookshops became meeting places for the left-wing scene. So-called 'left-wing bookshops' sprang up, which deliberately set themselves apart from established bookshops, stocking progressive literature that was not available there and thus promoting a counter-public. They sold writings critical of capitalism, feminism and anti-imperialism. Some activists in the student movement wanted critical writings to be available to more than just the academic elite. Therefore, pirate editions (illegal copies) of Marxist classics or hard-to-find critical theory writings were produced and distributed. In this context, alternative distribution structures developed. Left collectives organised book distribution themselves, and pamphlets, leaflets and small political magazines were distributed en masse at universities and demonstrations. In some cases, left-wing bookshops produced pirated copies only on demand, after receiving orders from universities. The '68 generation had a lasting effect on the German book trade. Some left-wing bookshops still exist today, although they face challenges such as the general crisis in the book market, rising costs and changes in buying behaviour. Smaller, alternative bookshops in particular are under pressure. Nevertheless, left-wing bookshops remain an important part of Germany's cultural diversity, offering space for critical discourse and alternative perspectives. One example of adapting to the current situation is the Berlin online bookshop Links Lesen, which has been offering left-wing literature online since 2018 as a self-managed collective organisation. The company uses its surpluses to support left-wing projects and initiatives and emphasises collective, self-determined and solidary working and living conditions. The lecture will analyse the influence of the left book trade from a diachronic perspective and situate it in the current discussion about the importance of books and reading for democratic processes. The question will be answered to what extent the (left) book trade can still be a platform for counter-publicity today.

Hauptautor: Dr. VOGEL, Anke (JGU Mainz)**Vortragende(r):** Dr. VOGEL, Anke (JGU Mainz)**Sitzung Einordnung:** Panel

Beitrag ID: 34

Typ: 20-minute paper

'Our little enterprise': Giovanni's Room, Gay's the Word, and transnational bookselling as resistance

Freitag, 12. September 2025 11:30 (20 Minuten)

From the early 1980s, feminist and gay bookstore Giovanni's Room in Philadelphia, PA, sold books to London's Gay's The Word bookshop, enabling eagerly awaited US-published LGBTQ+ titles to enter the UK market. Ed Hermance, owner of Giovanni's Room, notes in a letter to Gay's The Word's managers on 12 September 1983, 'how important GTW is in our little enterprise'. But importing LGBTQ+ literature was not without risk. When Gay's The Word was raided by officers from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in April 1984, in what became known as 'Operation Tiger', its directors were charged with conspiracy to import 'indecent or obscene' material and Hermance named on the charge sheet. The scale of the assault came as a shock, but not entirely a surprise. For some years, both shops' staff had been wary of Customs' interference, and had developed strategies to mitigate the sporadic and seemingly inevitable loss of incoming stock. With a court case pending, both shops continued to resist this state-sponsored censorship. Despite receiving multiple 'seizure notices' from Customs, Gay's The Word re-ordered several confiscated titles from Giovanni's Room –among them *The Joy of Gay Sex* by Dr Charles Silverstein and Edmund White (1979) –leading to additional charges against two of Gay's The Word's directors.

Noting Laura J. Miller's observations on the politics of book consumption, this paper reads the relationship between Giovanni's Room and Gay's The Word as commercial and personal, but always political: an investment by both parties in a mutually beneficial business venture and in the building of transnational queer community and solidarity. I draw on archival material held at Bishopsgate Institute as well as research into the seized books carried out at Senate House Library to trace the connections between the two shops, before, during and after 'Operation Tiger' and the subsequent Defend Gay's The Word campaign. Attention to the professional and personal relationships established between Giovanni's Room and Gay's the Word positions queer bookselling as a form of resistance: a series of transgressive transactions which counter and challenge not only the policing of borders and of books, but state intervention into, and oppression of, queer bodies, cultures and lives.

Vortragende(r): PYKE, Sarah**Sitzung Einordnung:** Panel

Beitrag ID: 35

Typ: 20-minute paper

Importing Languages, Circulating Ideas. Political Dimensions of Foreign-Language Bookselling in Berlin

Freitag, 12. September 2025 12:00 (20 Minuten)

The city of Berlin boasts a great number and diversity of bookstores specializing in languages other than German. These booksellers carry texts across borders despite additional costs and logistical constraints and thus contribute to the cultural diversity of the city. What motivates them to go to great lengths to make books in their various languages available? Why do some booksellers even publish books in Berlin, far removed from where their languages are mainly read? While many define their activity primarily through their linguistic or regional focus, their presence is by no means apolitical. Drawing on qualitative interviews with Berlin booksellers and site visits conducted in 2024, this talk proposes an exploration of the political dimensions of foreign-language bookselling in Berlin. It will also investigate how their degree of politicization can change following global geopolitical events and the local repercussions thereof, and how these changes interact with a store's language policies.

Hauptautor: ORLOWSKI, Inge (University of Luxembourg)

Vortragende(r): ORLOWSKI, Inge (University of Luxembourg)

Sitzung Einordnung: Panel

Beitrag ID: 36

Typ: **nicht angegeben**

Words of Welcome

Mittwoch, 10. September 2025 17:30 (30 Minuten)

Vortragende: NORRICK-RÜHL, Corinna (English Department, Chair of Book Studies); MUSE, Eben (Bangor University); RAYNER, Samantha (UCL)

Sitzung Einordnung: Conference Inauguration

Beitrag ID: 37

Typ: **nicht angegeben**

Opening Keynote

Mittwoch, 10. September 2025 18:00 (1 Stunde)

Sitzung Einordnung: Conference Inauguration

Beitrag ID: 39

Typ: **nicht angegeben**

Concluding Remarks

Freitag, 12. September 2025 14:30 (30 Minuten)

Beitrag ID: 40

Typ: 20-minute paper

Bookshops, censorship and freedom of expression

Over the past decade, the international book community has watched with distress how increased political, ideological and religious polarisation has led to different types of book censorship being imposed around the world, as well as an increase in the cases of vandalism and aggressive and anti-social behaviour directed towards bookshops and booksellers. In response, the European and International Booksellers Federation (EIBF), through its EU co-funded project RISE Bookselling, published a research paper to raise awareness on the topic of bookshops, censorship and freedom of expression. Follow this presentation by Tora Åsling, Policy Officer at EIBF, to learn about the extent of book censorships currently imposed across Europe, America and Australia, as well as the extent of the violence that is directed against bookshops around the world.

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Sitzung Einordnung: Panel