

# At Two Owls Independent Bookshop Timișoara, Romania

London Bookfair 2018 - EIBF LONDON CONFERENCE

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10-12 APRIL 2018  
OLYMPIA, LONDON

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Opened in December 2016



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**Q: How do we increase customer footfall in our bookshop?**



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## *Short introduction to Romania's Book Market: **GENERALITIES***

- Population of 19.76 mln residents (1<sup>st</sup> January 2016), Average wage of 467 euro (July 2016)
- no recent book market statistics
- VAT for books 5%
- No fixed price law
- online sellers often give bigger discounts than the publishing houses

(info from Book Market overview by Mihai Mitrică, Executive Director of Romanian Publishers Association: [http://www.aldusnet.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/AER -Romanian Book Market Overview.pdf](http://www.aldusnet.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/AER-Romanian_Book_Market_Overview.pdf))



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*Short introduction to Romania's Book Market: **DISTRIBUTION***

- The publishing houses manage their own distribution
- **Before 1989:** Regional Book Distribution Centre, under National Book Distribution Centre in Bucharest
- **After 1989:** the regional centre disappeared – with few notable exceptions
- In Romania, the bookshops work directly with the publishers and they get the books on consignment

(info from Book Market overview by Mihai Mitrică, Executive Director of Romanian Publishers Association: <http://www.aldusnet.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/AER-Romanian-Book-Market-Overview.pdf>)



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## *Bookshops in Romania*

- The numbers of Romania's book market: 60 mln euro/year
- less than 260 bookshops all over the country
- Timisoara: 5 bookshops





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**Q: How do we increase customer footfall in our bookshop?**

**A: By creating communities**



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Our bookshop it's in Timisoara, Romania, located in the old city centre  
<https://www.facebook.com/ladouabufnite/videos/1191061744324263/>

We wanted to *create a place* where people can find:

- our own selection of books
- our kind of events
- a bit of Timisoara's spirit: local authors, local musicians, local artists, local artisans

We also wanted for our bookshop to be:

- a meeting point between cultural managers, artists, events and festivals curators

So we designed from the beginning the bookshop with a small café and lots of reading spots





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Our focus is on:

- children books
  - literary fiction books
  - humanities books
  - poetry and theatre
  - used books
  - coffee table books and artists books
- 
- how do we keep our customers interested when the buzz is over
  - how do we attract new costumers



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Our strategy is based:

→ On creating small communities

while

→ bringing new and interesting books and publishing houses

and

→ curating more and diverse events.





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**SUPPLIERS**

- we constantly add new publishing houses and new products
  - we have a total of 150 suppliers
  - 20000 products, from which 90% are books
- we work with all major publishing houses, but we also searched for the smaller ones, that can't get a contract signed with the bookshop chains
- we gathered the local artisans and illustrators and asked them to create souvenirs from Timisoara and bookish products
- For English and French books, we work with a distributor from Romania, Prior Books



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## CURATING SHELVES

→ every person who enter our door are saying that we have books they didn't see in other bookshops, but the difference is that we just curate them differently

- The bookshop is curated like this:
  - children's room
  - entrance with new books, local authors and local artisans
  - café / events space with Romanian authors, Literary fiction books, memoirs and social science
  - poetry, theater corner
  - used books & literary criticism
  - art room





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CURATING EVENTS

- min 3 events per week, targeted on different groups: children, literature lovers, music lovers, art & theatre lovers
- Free events
- Summer school with a fee
- Workshops with a fee
- Public or closed events





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PSIHLOGIE



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**CURATING EVENTS: free**

- Storytime Sunday at the Owls – every Sunday, at 12  
→ one hour story reading that takes place every week, with a different story and a different story reader with free entrance.
- Music Season at the Owls – every 2 Sundays, at 17.00  
→ one hour with classical music with pupils from the local music high school, coordinated by their piano teacher
- Book launches & signing sessions with Romanian or foreign writers  
→ proposed by us from what we like to read or proposed by the publishing houses
- Workshops > music, theater, literature  
→ proposed by local NGO's or local institutions
- Book club  
→ once a month, event proposed by the local Book Club



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**CURATING EVENTS: with a FEE**

- Music workshops  
→ one month long, on Saturdays, prepared for 2 age groups, proposed by a local NGO
- Summer school for children  
→ during the summer, we organize, in collaboration with a local NGO for kids, one week of activities for children about local history, architecture, stories, music and crafts
- Different workshops proposed by artists  
→ kaleidoscopes or crafts by local artisans



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**CURATING EVENTS: PARTNERSHIPS**

We started our partnerships before opening the bookstore, actually it was the beginning of our marketing and communication plan

- 1<sup>st</sup> partnership: University's Sociology Department and Bookfest Timisoara – questionnaire about the cultural needs and book habits of locals
- 2<sup>nd</sup> partnership: a contest at Bookfest Bucharest, in June, with our pop-up logo
- 3<sup>rd</sup> partnership: at the local annual cycling event, Readers on bicycles, that took place in September
- 4<sup>th</sup> and our last partnership before the opening was at the International Literary Festival from Timisoara, where we had publicity materials





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## CURATING EVENTS: OPENING

We opened the bookshop with a campaign called 'The Week of the Owls', where we had 7 days of events, sometimes even two events per day.

<https://web.facebook.com/ladouabufnite/videos/1240385406058563/>

After the opening, because of the media outreach, we had local institutions, local event and festival curators and local musicians coming towards us for partnership proposals

- we had a corner at a local music festival
- we received invitations at festivals and events to curate contests for the public in the bookstore
- at the beginning of last year, even embassy's and cultural centres from Bucharest came to see the bookshop for future events in partnership

Professionals from the book industry fields gave statements about believing in our bookshop: Publishing Houses Association Executive Director, Publishing Houses coordinators, writers, cultural managers from all over the country



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## CURATING EVENTS: PARTNERSHIPS

- Author of the month / Book of the month / Publishing House of the Month campaign
  - we choose, every month, a book or an author or a publishing house we want to promote more
  - we create 2 or 3 events about this campaign, in partnerships with institutions, NGOs or media outlets
- We attracted the local BookClub communities
  - for monthly meetings
- We have local partnerships with student organizations, universities or cultural institutions
  - for curating their events
  - for volunteering or internships
- We have partnerships with the local theatres
  - play reading for the public in the bookshop
  - tickets giveaways



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INTERNS and opportunities for volunteering

- INTERNSHIPS

- signed agreement with West University of Timisoara for internships that are mandatory for students
- 60hours of internship, with initial test and interview and final test and final report
- 2017: 10 students
- 2018: 12 students (the call is still open)

- VOLUNTEERING

- we were actually helped by volunteers before opening the bookshop, at the events we early mentioned
- we asked them for help before the opening and without them, we wouldn't respect the deadline
- as a bookshop, we coordinate the volunteers for Timisoara's bookfair, Bookfest.
- pupils under 18 ask for a volunteering programme during their summer vacation





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**MEDIA**

[https://www.facebook.com/Digi24Timisoara/videos/1319462934821535/?hc\\_ref=ARSWEVle03qevDsCFG0Qt5qo3kIWBYMDBq\\_8WR8Ga-2juV0jBqO4JbHqUXLdhXo2oJM](https://www.facebook.com/Digi24Timisoara/videos/1319462934821535/?hc_ref=ARSWEVle03qevDsCFG0Qt5qo3kIWBYMDBq_8WR8Ga-2juV0jBqO4JbHqUXLdhXo2oJM)

For events:

- press release for every event we hold in the bookshop
- social media (especially Facebook and Instagram)
- we have the local TV news reporters that are making interviews in our bookshop
- we gather the local media for organized interview sessions with authors
- Weekly recorded report of major events for the local radio (on Mondays)

Major events of the bookshop, like important celebrations, with a little push towards media:

- going at the local national TV in live shows
- Answering interviews



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Focus on creating communities: RESULTS

- a minimum of 50 people daily entering the bookshop
- during events, over 150 people enter the bookshop
- most of the customers come at the end of the week, especially on Saturdays and Sundays – days in which we have more the 200 clients per day



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# THANK YOU 😊

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