



UNESCO Cities of Literature

Press Pack

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The UNESCO Cities of Literature network of 39 cities, representing 6 continents and 30 countries

The UNESCO Cities of Literature network boasts a combined population of over 26 million, 1250 libraries, 130 literary festivals, over 1200 bookshops, the world's oldest book, the world's tallest monument to a writer, the world's first Master of Fine Arts Creative Writing programme, the oldest university in central Europe, and the only train station named after a book.

The range of activity is impressive, from the world's largest book festival to the most unusual literary hotels. Individual authors from the cities are commemorated in public celebrations such as Bloomsday and Robert Louis Stevenson Day. Poetry is celebrated in the Young Poet Laureate scheme, poetry entryphones, live literature

performances, and several poetry festivals in different cities. Celebrations of heritage – from paved walkways to statues and bridges named after writers – work alongside citywide programmes to nurture new readers.

The range of activity is impressive, from the world's largest book festival to the most unusual literary hotels.

Emerging writers' festivals and programmes are championed by the cities, as well as several children's literature festivals, reading initiatives, and library campaigns.

Numerous prizes, writing residencies, and scholarships play a large part in advancing the creative output of the cities, celebrating works of translation, poetry, fiction, design, illustration, and much more. A Book-Flood Before Christmas, book fairs, curated tours, A Writer's Studio, and the Children's Culture House - these are just a few of the activities and projects that recognise the importance of books, publishing, reading, and writing, in each of our cities of literature.

We are a global network of 39 cities that specialise in literature

The UNESCO designation 'City of Literature' recognises excellence and places an obligation on cities to nurture and support their artform. We collaborate internationally by sharing best practice, supporting freedom of speech and running projects which ensure literature reaches as wide and diverse an audience as possible, locally and internationally.

The 39 Cities of Literature are part of a wider UNESCO Creative Cities Network currently made up of 246 UNESCO Creative Cities globally. Members from over 70 countries covering 7 creative fields – Crafts & Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Music, and Media Arts – have all received UNESCO designations, which recognise past, present

and future: a strong cultural heritage, a vibrant and diverse contemporary cultural scene, and aspirations to extend culture to the next generation at home and to other cities in a global partnership.

The designations are monitored and reviewed every 4 years by UNESCO. To meet the criteria, each city makes a commitment to develop a shared network strategy, foster the exchange of information, encourage global partnerships, and promote creativity and culture.

“Reading for pleasure is the single most important thing that will make a child successful in life.”

UNESCO



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Our shared activities

The UNESCO Cities of Literature network is home to a collection of diverse personalities and languages

We are active in making the literary and creative sectors of our cities thrive through the development and implementation of a shared global strategy. We have collaborated internationally through projects which promote the network, share good practice, and ensure that literature reaches diverse audiences. **Please take a look at the next few pages, which contain information to help find 'hooks' for press features.**

Network-wide collaboration - World Poetry Day

2020 saw a global outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19), including in many UNESCO Cities of Literature across the world. Our thoughts and admiration go out to all those who are working every day to protect the safety and wellbeing of their fellow citizens around the world. During this evolving situation we have seen UNESCO Cities of Literature make the unprecedented, but essential move to re-design World Poetry Day on March 21 2020 so that the network can continue to celebrate as far as possible in a digital space. 13 UNESCO Cities of Literature Edinburgh, Heidelberg, Kraków, Kuhmo, Ljubljana, Manchester, Melbourne, Montevideo, Nottingham, Óbidos, Reykjavik, Tartu and Ulyanovsk, took their World Poetry Day events online with poetry readings, flash-mobs, videos and publishing on digital platforms. The activities honoured poets and celebrated one of humanity's most treasured forms of cultural and linguistic expression. Cities of Literature hope to bring moments of joy and solace to the world and leverage the power of creativity in offering unity and strength to cities and communities during these difficult times.

Our shared activities

DÍA MUNDIAL DE LA POESÍA GRANADA

WORLD POETRY DAY 2020

MARCH 21

EL INICIO DE LA PRIMAVERA
POÉTICA EN GRANADA
PRÓXIMAMENTE TODA LA PROGRAMACIÓN

Network-wide collaboration - International Literacy Day 2020

UNESCO Cities of Literature were excited to be celebrate **International Literacy Day** collectively for the first time, on Tuesday 8 September 2020, via an international social media campaign led by Bucheon UNESCO City of Literature. UNESCO Cities of Literature strive to improve literacy every day, in order to improve life outcomes and wellbeing for their communities. As the world continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, some cities reconfigured their plans for International Literacy Day 2020 so that the network can continue its simultaneous celebrations either face-to-face or in a digital space.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

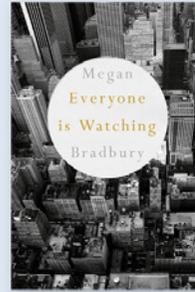
Our shared activities



Network-wide collaboration -
 Cities of Literature recommend

Enjoy hand-selected literature from each of our cities

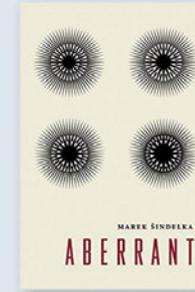
In 2015, the network started a 'Cities of Literature Recommend' summer (winter for Dunedin and Melbourne) reading list. All cities selected one book and one author to promote from their city. The books selected were shared widely and promoted through the network's social media and website channels.



Norwich



Nottingham



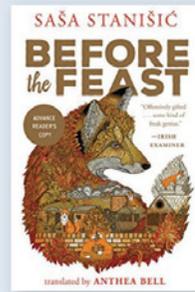
Prague



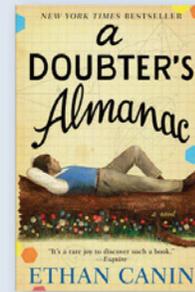
Reykjavik



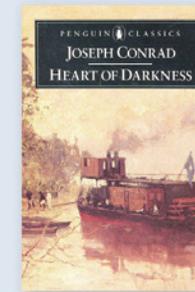
Tartu



Heidelberg



Iowa City



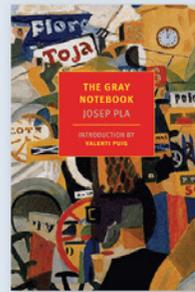
Krakow



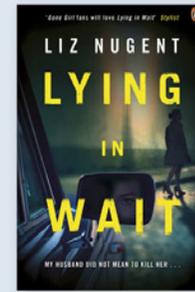
Ljubljana



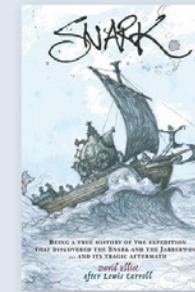
Melbourne



Barcelona



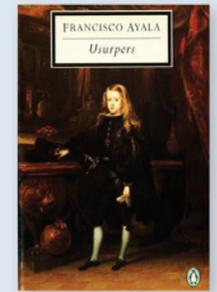
Dublin



Dunedin



Edinburgh



Granada

Network-wide collaboration -
Annual Network Meeting

The network comes together in Notwich, May 2019

The UNESCO Cities of Literature network comes together every year for a 5-day conference to showcase activity in their literary cities and to discuss projects and potential collaborations for the future.

In 2019, Norwich and Nottingham welcomed 48 network delegates to their city. The conference received strong media attention and articles in print as well as references on social media channels.

IMAGE Cities of Literature group,
Enghien-les-bains, June 2017



Shared Projects

LitTransformer

Lviv UNESCO City of Literature conceived the annual International Translation Workshop, [LitTransformer](#), to foster collaboration among translators representing various UNESCO Cities of Literature. The workshop sets out to create an engaging cross-cultural environment where participants are asked to interact creatively by translating works by the poets. As well as lectures and group sessions, the participants are given time and space to work in pairs and across three languages: their two native languages, and English, the bridge language between them. Each participant will enact two roles at once – the capable guide in their native language and the novice traveller into their partner's language.

Melbourne's 10th Anniversary Parliament

2018 marked Melbourne's first ten years as a UNESCO City of Literature. A tenth anniversary felt like a good opportunity for David Ryding, Director, Melbourne UNESCO City of Literature Office, 'to take a look back at where we've come from, consider where we are now, and plan to do our best with the years that are still ahead of us. We gathered together some of the best people in the industry and community, leaders of today and tomorrow, and held a series of events to sort it all out.' Cities of Literature travelled to Melbourne and the goal was both to celebrate being a City of Literature, and also to challenge, through the '[Parliament](#)', what it means to be a Creative City.

Re:Vision, Writing the Contemporary

In 2018, Nottingham, Ljubljana, Tartu, Dublin and one other Creative City (Katowice City of Music) organised special writing workshops. [Dr Daniel Cordle](#), from Nottingham Trent University, delivered research-led creative-[critical writing workshops](#) in the cities. The workshops reached a variety of writers, aged from 18 to 55, and used an innovative approach, combining the reading and discussion of short works of literature, philosophy and critical texts, the consideration of art and other objects, and creative writing exercises to explore what it means to live in the twenty-first century. The project also included an intensive online writing course.

Shared Projects

Poetic Encounters

Heidelberg UNESCO City of Literature, with Fabriano UNESCO City of Crafts and Folk Art, marked the XII UNESCO Creative Cities Network Meeting with the project '[Poetic Encounters](#)'. The Cities of Literature contributed to this specially bound and printed anthology. Fifty-one poets came together in the volume to celebrate the collaborative spirit which lies at the core of the Network. The texts were transcribed on handcrafted, folio-sized paper sent from Fabriano via Heidelberg to all UNESCO Cities of Literature worldwide and then back to Fabriano where the unique book was bound. The book was gifted to the host Mayors of Kraków and Katowice by the Mayors of Heidelberg and Fabriano. Contributors to the book were filmed as they wrote and [the film](#) was edited by Tel Aviv, UNESCO City of Media Arts, with music provided by Mannheim, UNESCO City of Music.

World Poetry Day

Granada UNESCO City of Literature leads the Cities of Literature World Poetry Day campaign each year on 21 March, with support from the Communications & Promotions Working Group. In 2020 we saw UNESCO Cities of Literature make the unprecedented, but essential, move to re-design [World Poetry Day](#) so that the Network could continue to celebrate as far as possible in a digital space. Twelve Cities of Literature, Edinburgh, Kraków, Kuhmo, Ljubljana, Manchester, Melbourne, Montevideo, Nottingham, Óbidos, Reykjavik, Tartu and Ulyanovsk, took their World Poetry Day events online with poetry readings, flash-mobs, videos and publishing on digital platforms. The activities honoured poets and celebrated one of humanity's most treasured forms of cultural and linguistic expression, and were shared across the Cities' social media channels to bring moments of joy and solace to the world.

#17Booksfor17SDGs campaign

In a twist on the traditional end-of-the-year 'best of' lists that usually arrive in December, the UNESCO Cities of Literature, led by [Iowa City](#), issued a list of '17 Books for the 17 SDGs' in December 2019. Each day, Cities of Literature posted book suggestions from their cities to social media, using the hashtag [#17Booksfor17SDGs](#). Each day, a different [2030 Sustainable Development Goal](#) was highlighted, with books relevant to those topics showcased. These were non-fiction titles that specifically addressed that day's SDG, or works of fiction that somehow tied into the theme. Several of the 39 UNESCO Cities of Literature took part directly, while others retweeted the selections to broaden the reach of the message.

Our shared activities - Flagship collaboration between cities



Barcelona | Norwich | Krakow

Engage

Engage is a development programme for young producers to work together to create a literature and freedom-of-expression festival with UNESCO Cities of Literature and ICORN Cities.

[FIND OUT MORE →](#)



Dublin

Finnegan's Wake

To mark the 75th anniversary of the publication of James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, 7 UNESCO Cities of Literature each took one of the short stories from the book and filmed them. The short films are available individually and also as one film.

[FIND OUT MORE →](#)



Edinburgh

Let's Get Lyrical

This was the first cross-artform collaboration between UNESCO Creative Cities. Initiated and co-ordinated by Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust in collaboration with Glasgow UNESCO City of Music, Let's Get Lyrical dedicated the month of February 2011 to celebrating the power of song lyrics. It brought together 69 partners to deliver a programme of 86 events in 28 days across Glasgow and Edinburgh.

[FIND OUT MORE →](#)



Krakow | Heidelberg | Reykjavik | Tartu

Drop the Mic

Drop the Mic was a networking programme for slam poets which enhanced knowledge, talent-exchange, international connections, and mentorship. The project included 5 meetings in the participating cities, which brought together slam poets from each of the Cities of Literature and offered them an opportunity to exchange experiences and perform together.

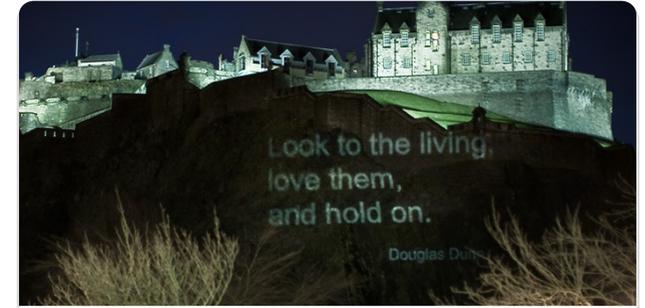
[FIND OUT MORE →](#)



Granada | Heidelberg

Osip Mandelstam

On the occasion of the 125th birthday of Russian-Jewish poet Osip Mandelstam, UNESCO Cities of Literature Heidelberg and Granada presented the exhibition 'Osip Mandelstam: Word and Destiny' together with the State Literary Museum in Moscow in 2017.



Lviv

Letter of the Day

Letter of the Day is an education and promotional project which explores the literary traditions of other UNESCO Cities of Literature.



Melbourne | Reykjavik

Sleipnir Travels

Sleipnir Travels is an online digital publishing tool for children aged between 8 and 14. It hosts a micro-publishing postcard interface which allows children to send postcards from Sleipnir to their friends via email. Sleipnir travels from one city to another, stopping up to 10 times during his trip, thus allowing the young writers with a character (Sleipnir) as inspiration and allocation.

[FIND OUT MORE →](#)



Prague

Residency Programme

Since 2015, Prague City of Literature has offered six residential stays for writers and translators from the UNESCO Cities of Literature network.

[FIND OUT MORE →](#)



Annual event

Ulyanovsk Cultural Forum

Now in its 7th year, the international forum has become a platform for discussing key issues between cultural professionals from the regions of Russia and other countries of the world. The forum provides an excellent opportunity to make contacts with partners and to get acquainted with Russian culture.

[FIND OUT MORE →](#)

Who are the Cities of Literature?

Discover more about our Cities of Literature, and read more fast facts, with the links below

2004

[Edinburgh \(UK\)](#) →

2008

[Iowa City \(USA\)](#) →

[Melbourne \(Australia\)](#) →

2010

[Dublin \(Ireland\)](#) →

2011

[Reykjavik \(Iceland\)](#) →

2012

[Norwich \(UK\)](#) →

2013

[Krakow \(Poland\)](#) →

2014

[Dunedin \(New Zealand\)](#) →

[Prague \(Czech Republic\)](#) →

[Granada \(Spain\)](#) →

[Heidelberg \(Germany\)](#) →

2015

[Baghdad \(Iraq\)](#) →

[Barcelona \(Spain\)](#) →

[Ljubljana \(Slovenia\)](#) →

[Lviv \(Ukraine\)](#) →

[Montevideo \(Uruguay\)](#) →

[Nottingham \(UK\)](#) →

[Óbidos \(Portugal\)](#) →

[Tartu \(Estonia\)](#) →

[Ulyanovsk \(Russia\)](#) →

2017

[Bucheon \(South Korea\)](#) →

[Durban \(South Africa\)](#) →

[Lillehammer \(Norway\)](#) →

[Manchester \(UK\)](#) →

[Milan \(Italy\)](#) →

[Québec City \(Canada\)](#) →

[Seattle \(USA\)](#) →

[Utrecht \(Netherlands\)](#) →

Latest news from the network



Edinburgh-based novelist **Kirsty Logan** selected for Granada's Writers in Residence Programme

[READ →](#)



Dublin announces **The Long Gaze Back**, An Anthology of Irish Women Writers, edited by Sinéad Gleeson, as the Dublin: One City, One Book choice for 2018

[READ →](#)



The Third **New Zealand Young Writers Festival** to be Held in Dunedin

[READ →](#)



Iowa City Book Festival celebrates International Connections

[READ →](#)



The 83rd PEN International Congress, hosted by Ukraine PEN in Partnership with Lviv UNESCO City of Literature Office

[READ →](#)



Monem Mahjoub, Libyan poet, philosopher, historian and political critic, becomes the seventh beneficiary of ICORN's scholarship programme in Krakow

[READ →](#)



Nottingham announces its First Young Poet Laureate, **Georgina Wilding**

[READ →](#)

Testimonials

What does it mean to be in the network?

"When the idea for a 'City of Literature' designation first came into being, we imagined it as something permanent with Edinburgh as the first in an international network of cities, a partnership of literary cities around the world. Looking at the network today, we are proud to be part of something so vibrant and diverse. We learn from, and are constantly inspired by, our sister cities of literature."

Jenny Brown, Founding Trustee,
Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature

"The designation of Iowa City as a UNESCO City of Literature gave an already vibrant literary city a new dimension of growth. From locally to internationally, the profile of the city has been raised, attracting new visitors and opportunities. The literary ecosystem is growing from all angles, and our organization, the Iowa Writers' House, is a shining example of that growth!"

Andrea Wilson, Founder and Executive Director,
Iowa Writers' House, Iowa City of Literature

"Literature is universal, taking us to different times, different places, different lives. The City of Literature network is a great way to share experiences and project ideas with each other. By tapping into the diversity of each city, the network enriches the projects which are happening in each individual city."

Rebecca Moynihan, Deputy Mayor,
Dublin City of Literature

"Since Heidelberg has been named a City of Literature, a lot has changed for me as an author. I have come into closer contact with literatures of the other cities: on the one hand through my literary salon, where the literature of Dublin and Barcelona were presented; on the other hand via a translation project involving 6 authors through the Expedition Poetry to Prague. I have experienced enrichment through the preoccupation with literature from other cities and most notably the direct co-operation with authors, immediate exchange of texts, thoughts, and ideas as an initiative of creativity and friendship."

Frank Barsch, literary scholar and author
Heidelberg City of Literature

"The Cities of Literature Network provides the Villa Decius Association with the unique possibility to host even more talented and young writers from all over the world. The Krakow UNESCO City of Literature Residency Program that we are running together with the Krakow Festival Office, is a great opportunity for us to develop interconnections, support mobility and promote excellent literature in the City. I'm keeping my fingers crossed for its further development!"

Małgorzata Róžańska, Villa Decius
Association, Krakow City of Literature

"As a young poet starting a young press in Iceland, I found the Reykjavík UNESCO City of Literature office to be instrumentally helpful in the early stages of my career. They are hands-down the only organisation in Iceland providing financial support to grassroots and/or avant-garde literature, and my press and my practice would not be what it is today had it not been for their support at the crucial early stages."

Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir, poet and publisher
of Partus Press, Reykjavík City of Literature



Our photo library

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to support your
stories and features?

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