

17171 Bothell Way NE  
Lake Forest Park, WA  
98155  
Fax 206 366-3338  
www.thirdplacebooks.com



Robert Sindelar  
Managing Partner  
rsindelar@thirdplacebooks.com  
Ph. 206 366-3309

May 19, 2017

UNESCO  
City of Literature Program

Dear UNESCO Selection Committee,

I am writing to you to give my most enthusiastic endorsement for the application of Seattle, WA to become a designated UNESCO City of Literature.

I currently serve as the president of the American Booksellers Association and that role has afforded me the opportunity to experience and witness many of the great literary cities in the United States. As amazing as some of these book communities are, I always return to Seattle with a renewed appreciation of the unique depth and diversity that the life of the written word holds in this city, along with a stronger awareness of how much the rest of the book community in this country looks toward Seattle as a leader. There were two events just this last year that displayed these traits beautifully.

The most recent visible demonstration of our city's literary liveliness was a few weeks ago on Independent Bookstore Day. While on the third anniversary of this national annual event many interesting and exciting events happened at bookstores around the country, what occurred in Seattle was truly extraordinary. Nineteen bookstores (representing 23 locations) in the greater Seattle area got together to co-promote the day. The challenge to customers was to visit all 19 locations in one day to become an indie-bookstore champion (receive 25% off all purchases at all stores for an entire year). Over 300 customers completed the challenge, which included at least one ferry ride and covered stores spread across a 30 mile radius. Another 600 plus customers visited at least 3 stores that day.

As I spent a few hours in each of my three stores that Saturday I saw at each one of them all the other players in the Seattle book world. I ran into local librarians, authors, writing instructors, heads of most of the major Seattle non-profit literary associations and a whole host of other people connected to the Seattle literary world. It was a day that reminded me what an extremely cooperative and

supportive arts community Seattle is. When I tell the story of Seattle's Independent Bookstore Day to booksellers from other cities, they can never understand how a group of competitors can work so well together. That natural cooperation is part of the fabric of our city and allows our literary community to stand apart from the rest of the country.

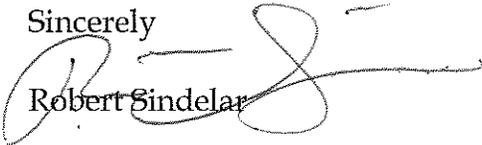
The other event that demonstrates Seattle's unique role as a leader in the national book world began last summer. The non-profit group, Seattle City of Literature hosted a 3 day workshop on *Racial Equity in the Literary Arts*. As diversity and equity are two topics that have come up over and over again at almost every book related conference I have attended over the past couple years, and usually were brought up out of frustration without clear ideas of practical next steps, I decided to attend the workshop to see what I could learn and possibly bring to these other groups.

The workshop itself clearly had a profound impact on all the attendees, myself included. More importantly, it was clear to me that this kind of workshop, training and discussion was exactly what was missing from these other conferences. The American Booksellers Association hired the same firm, Cultures Connecting LLC, to deliver the keynote address at their annual Children's book conference this past spring. That event went so well and received such enthusiastic support, that the ABA is having Cultures Connecting do day-long workshops at a couple regional book tradeshow in other parts of the country this fall.

Both these recent experiences have reinforced for me what a distinctive place Seattle holds in greater literary world – exactly the kind of city that UNESCO seeks out in this program. I feel lucky and grateful to be a part of it.

If I can answer any other questions you may have about Seattle and its literary scene, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely

  
Robert Sindelar