

Small Press Alliance launches to support indies in 'changing market'

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Tom Chalmers

Seven UK independent publishers have formed the Small Press Alliance (SPA) to offer mutual support amid a “quickly changing market”.

Canbury Press, Fairlight Books, Jacaranda Books, Legend Times, Muswell Press, Orenda Books and Wild Things Publishing have all joined forces to help each other with the challenges of publishing post-pandemic as supply costs spiral.

The collective launched “as a way for these small presses to share new ideas, grow their presence, and bolster one another within the publishing industry”, organisers said.

The SPA said: “Many independent publishers are facing the twin challenge of recovering from the pandemic along with current supply cost increases driven by inflation. With the largest 20 publishers accounting for 68% of sales in 2022 (The Bookseller, 27th Jan 2023), small

publishers are pushed into finding more innovative ways to reach readers, and the new co-operative is aimed at providing mutual support, sharing of ideas and partnerships to grow in a quickly changing market.”

The mission statement on the umbrella body’s new [website](#) reads: “We are the Small Press Alliance, a collection of independent publishers that specialise in high-quality trade fiction and non-fiction. Our mission is to amplify the voices of independent publishers within the alliance by fostering collaboration, sharing resources and supporting each other’s growth. As a collective, we believe in the power of diverse perspectives and strive to create a space where writers and readers can discover new stories and ideas.

“We are committed to promoting quality literature and advocating for the values of inclusivity, equity and social responsibility in the publishing industry. Our goal is to build a vibrant community that celebrates books and empowers independent publishers to thrive.”

Jazzmine Breary, chief operating officer of Jacaranda Books, told The Bookseller: "As a focused group of small indie publishers facing very similar challenges, the SPA is a support network and platform for targeted and strategic collaboration around specific shared goals. Our Alliance exists alongside and in tandem with outstanding organisations such as the IPG which we greatly admire. At Jacaranda we remain proud members of the IPG."

Tom Chalmers, m.d. of Legend Times, added: "Several of the publishers involved are members of the IPG. Alliances such as SPA, between similar-sized and like-minded presses, will allow for specific and proactive partnerships, to complement the overall work of the IPG, which covers the wider ranging independent sector."

Karen Sullivan, publisher of Orenda Books, commented: “In an increasingly challenging industry, it makes sense to join forces with like-minded small publishers, to amplify our voices, use our collective energy, insights and passion for mutual benefit, and to offer support to one another and this part of the industry as a whole. Small presses face difficult times, but together we can create a platform to help sustain this immensely important part of the publishing ecosystem."

Kate and Sarah Beal, joint m.ds of Muswell Press, said: “As a proudly independent publisher, Muswell Press is delighted to join our fellow SPA publishers to collaborate, share resources

and raise the profile of our books and authors. Life as a small publisher can be tough but there is strength in unity, and we are excited about working together on future projects.”

Louise Boland, founder of Fairlight Books, echoed this desire for mutual support. “Although small presses are a vital constituent of the industry, proving innovation and courageous publishing, it’s a tough space to occupy,” she said. “So, collaborative initiatives, such as the Small Press Alliance, are so helpful, providing them with an additional forum for peer-to-peer support as well as enhanced marketing reach.”

Martin Hickman, founder of Canbury Books, believes the member organisations “share the same challenges in getting our books into the hands of readers in an industry dominated by big publishers”. He added: “The SPA should help to level the playing field a little. I’m thrilled that Canbury is joining such a spirited, creative, and enterprising band of independent publishers.”

Daniel Start, founder of Wild Things Publishing, said: “It’s wonderful to be part of a vibrant community of nimble publishers, with big energy — all of whom punch well above their size.”

For more information, visit smallpressalliance.com.