



2022 Chair's Report by Michael Bhaskar - All Change

Dear Members,

It's been another unusually eventful year at The Book Society.

For a start we had all the ongoing problems of the pandemic. There was a cancelled summer party as large scale events were kept on hold, and then several cancelled dinners in the Autumn as things flared up again. Covid, at least, is now less of a pressing question, even if it has not gone away. Events are back. The summer party is on; that 100th birthday party is coming only a year late. We are getting back into the swing of things, and as anyone who has attended a dinner will I'm sure agree, it is utterly fantastic to see people again and to enjoy the sheer conviviality of a Book Society event. So far this year we have had two speakers, David Shelley from Hachette and Polly Powell from Batsford, and can hopefully (once again) look forward to many more

Then there was the change in venue. This was not something any of us considered lightly, and it does represent a major change for the Society. The vote was clear. Moving was by far the preferred option for members, even with all the caveats about the difficulties of finding a perfect home. We have now had two events at the Conduit Club and are settling in nicely. There are still snags to address, but the club have been very receptive and keen to ensure everything works smoothly. It isn't necessarily the end point for the Book Society either, and we are always open to ideas about venues and indeed formats for events. At the November dinner when the vote was held, we heard a number of speakers talk about the unique place of the Book Society in our industry. It really is a special organisation that spans every part of the book trade, from retailers to printers to agents to publishers and beyond. As those speeches made clear, it is something to be proud of, something to relish, and something to nurture further for the future.

As James' report makes clear, despite ticket prices going up the Society actually has less wiggle room than ever. Nonetheless, we are in an excellent position overall. There is a buzz around what the Society can be, and an excitement at the events themselves. We have a gleaming new website to go with a change of venue courtesy of new member Simon Appleby. We also think there is huge interest in joining a Society like ours, and with the increased capacity at the Conduit think the Society could support more members: this would reduce costs and help support charitable activities as well as allowing us to play a fuller role in the book world. There is also the prospect and excitement of the Presidential election...

I'd like to thank the Committee for everything they do keeping the Society in good health: Treasurer James Long, Secretary Emma Lowe and Committee members Tim Dare, Meryl Halls, Justine Solomons and Cathryn Summerhayes. Particular thanks to Jacqui Graham and David Taylor who are stepping down from the Committee and a warm welcome to Georgina Moore and Emma Shercliffe who are joining it. A huge best of luck to Jamie Hodder-Williams who is coming in as Chair, he's been fantastically supportive and will be the perfect person to take us forward. Warm thanks also to our outgoing President, Richard Charkin. Our wonderful and indispensable administrator Jo Dawson is at the absolute heart of everything at the Book Society, and huge thanks are the least we can offer for her support and brilliance, not least through the move.

So, another eventful year in Book Society terms. Hopefully there is still a huge amount to come. I look forward to seeing you all soon, and would lastly like to thank you for your ongoing support and engagement.

Michael Bhaskar

Chair, The Book Society