



OXFORD
WORLD BOOK
CAPITAL BID
2014

OXFORD WORLD BOOK CAPITAL 2014

Imagination
Unbound



Summary Document

I am delighted to give the Government's backing to Oxford's bid to become UNESCO World Book Capital 2014. It is entirely appropriate that a city with such long-standing connections with books, literacy and learning should be viewed as a world benchmark through institutions such as its premier University and the Oxford English Dictionary. The bid, if successful, would recognise the weight of the contribution to the world and especially English-speaking culture that the city of Oxford has made over many centuries.'

Ed Vaizey MP, Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries

The city of Oxford in the United Kingdom is bidding for the title of UNESCO World Book Capital 2014 under the unifying theme Imagination Unbound. The year is carefully chosen as 2014 will see the completion of three major literary capital building projects in Oxford, the British Government is making the improvement of literacy a priority, the Google book settlement is predicted to conclude and we celebrate the anniversaries of William Shakespeare and The Great War.

UNESCO World Book Capital in Oxford will celebrate the wonder of books to inspire and unlock our imaginations and to generate a love of reading which everyone can share. The nomination has never previously been held by an English-speaking city. In 2014 Oxford will demonstrate how the book is essential in the global communication of ideas and knowledge and in the city's own links worldwide. Oxford's name is closely associated with the global use of English as a constantly evolving universal language of business, science and education. With a centuries-old tradition of learning and publishing, Oxford remains a hub for curious and creative people from all over the world.

Oxford is not a museum, however: it is a living, working city, facing the same problems of social and economic inequality as cities all over the world. In particular, its children have recently been identified as among the least developed readers in Britain.

As World Book Capital in 2014, Oxford will set imaginations free through books and reading and unlock the creativity within and beyond our community.

Oxford World Book Capital 2014 will be brought to life through a strongly connected partnership of many organizations locally and further afield, including universities, local government organizations, publishers, booksellers, libraries and cultural organizations. Oxford World Book Capital 2014 will aim to unite everyone in the year, by way of a number of carefully chosen and widely relevant themes:

1. Read me: children and literacy - Oxford World Book Capital 2014's top priority will be to promote literacy in the city and county and to ensure that a generation of confident readers is encouraged and developed;
2. The joy of reading - Oxford World Book Capital 2014 provides the perfect opportunity to unite the whole city in shared reading experiences to inspire a love of reading in everyone, especially reluctant teenagers, adults and minority groups;
3. From reading to writing - In an age of instant multimedia communication, how can we encourage readers to take the next step and become writers?
4. Off the page - Oxford will seize the opportunity to create crossovers between books and other art forms, to delight, amaze and inspire the imagination;
5. The future of the book – What effect is the new digital age having on authors, publishers and booksellers?
6. Sharing knowledge with the world – An ancient University opens its treasures before a vast and eager local and international audience;
7. Free to read, free to think – Oxford World Book Capital 2014 will raise awareness of the many Oxford and UK organizations which champion freedom of expression and international development;
8. The world in the city – Oxford will celebrate the multiplicity of cultures within the city, and use its international profile to encourage an appreciation of the work of non-anglophone authors through translation;
9. The city in the world – Oxford will use its network of global contacts, its globally-recognized name, and inventive use of new media to reach out and touch people all around the planet.

Oxford has recruited a wide range of local and national organizations in support of this bid, many of which will themselves participate in the programme. The unprecedented range of collaborations will leave a legacy of shared experience and new partnerships that will endure long after our programme reaches its finale.

Why Oxford and why UK?

Imagination Unbound

Books release the imagination and open windows onto new worlds. Oxford's programme will use literature in all its forms to delight, inspire and motivate diverse communities in and beyond our city. We will celebrate the book as an object of beauty and mystery; remove the covers and explore its digital reinvention; and honour its role as a vehicle for freedom of expression. In 2014, the World Book Capital will be a place where imagination has no boundaries.

A tale of two Oxfords

Outside London, no British city has a name as widely recognized as Oxford's. As the home of the oldest university in the English-speaking world, it has held a prominent place on the international map of learning for over eight centuries. For more than 500 years, books printed and published in Oxford have carried the written word to the four corners of the earth. For people in every continent, the English language itself has come with an Oxford brand, in the form of dictionaries and English-language teaching materials.

The name evokes a fantasy city of sleepy spires, an image that has been vividly perpetuated by the fertile minds of writers. Yet although the streets of gracious buildings in golden stone may fully live up to this fantasy, there is another Oxford that is harder to see at first glance.

Oxford is a small city, with 154,000 inhabitants. Set on the River Thames, 60 miles northwest of London, its modest boundaries enclose a cultural, social and economic variety more often associated with a major metropolis. A high proportion of its citizens are young, mobile and diverse in origin: almost 20 per cent were born overseas. A fortunate few live in the some of the most expensive houses in Britain: others occupy some of the most deprived neighbourhoods. While Oxford's residents are almost twice as likely to have a university degree as the average Briton, almost 30 per cent have no qualifications. Oxford has some of the country's leading schools, yet the below-average reading ability of children in state primary schools is a particular cause for concern.¹

As the UK's bidder for the title of World Book Capital, Oxford is uniquely placed to exploit its cultural heritage and global interactions in the search for lasting and nationally relevant solutions to the challenges that face its diverse communities.

OXFORD AT WORK

Oxford and the county of Oxfordshire, host a vibrant economy that encompasses large-scale motor manufacture (the BMW Mini), high-tech enterprises such as computer software, pharmaceuticals and scientific instruments, and traditional trades such as farming and brewing.

Businesses and services linked to education make up a large part of the mix. Oxford is home to two large and successful universities, each with a global student intake. The University of Oxford has a centuries-old tradition of scholarship in the humanities, and of the education of political figures; today it also leads the world in biomedical science.² Oxford Brookes University has built on its strengths in professional education: its Oxford International Centre for Publishing Studies is the leading centre for publishing education in Europe. There is a dense concentration of state-funded and private schools, while young people flock to the city's language schools to learn English.

OXFORD AND BOOKS

Well-loved writers including Lewis Carroll, JRR Tolkien and Philip Pullman have made Oxford their home and taken inspiration from the city. Oxfordshire hosts the UK headquarters of international publishers Oxford University Press, Wiley-Blackwell, Elsevier and Taylor & Francis, as well as a host of other small and medium-sized imprints. In total around 430 companies provide 7,500 jobs in publishing, while many people work as freelance copy-editors, proofreaders and designers. Oxford's historic Bodleian Library is one of six legal deposit libraries in the British Isles, receiving a copy of every book published there. The County's Public Library Service has its largest and main building in the centre of Oxford and provides a network of public libraries across the County. Blackwell's and Waterstones are only the largest of many bookshops, including independent and antiquarian retailers, that serve the city's readers.

¹ Oxford Profile 2012, Oxfordshire City Council, www.oxford.gov.uk/Direct/OCCKeyfacts2012web.pdf

² Times Higher Education rankings 2011-2012.



Why 2014?

2014 in Oxford

Three major **new public buildings** will open, and remain as enduring testaments to Oxford's commitment to books and reading. One will welcome children at the start of their reading adventure; another those who wish to think about the book through the ages; and the third will provide home for scholarship on the thought and culture of Islam.

- **The Story Museum:** A new, national museum to celebrate and promote children's literature and reading is scheduled to open in Oxford in August 2014;
- **The Weston Library:** Formerly known as the New Bodleian, the Weston Library will re-open in March 2015 after a three-year transformation, offering direct engagement with the Bodleian Libraries' special collections in a public exhibition space and world-class humanities research centre;
- **The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies:** In 2014 the new library will be open in the Centre's newly constructed home in Oxford. With space for up to 60,000 volumes, the library will be a valuable resource for all those with research and academic interests in Muslim societies and civilization.

2014 and literacy

'Literacy is vital to realizing the Government's aim of building the Big Society, improving social mobility, delivering an efficient and equitable welfare system and securing a highly competitive economy... The prize of a highly literate nation and all the rewards it brings is too big to ignore.'

(National Literacy Trust)³

The UK Government's Department for Education, Oxfordshire County Council (the local authority for state education), and Oxford City Council are themselves making **children's literacy** a priority in the years leading up to and beyond 2014. Oxford's publishers, booksellers, and organizations from Oxford United Football Club to local businesses, are motivated to back a literacy programme that will give Oxford's future workforce the skills they need for economic success and personal fulfilment.

2014 and digitization

The momentous impact of **digitization** on authors, readers, publishers and booksellers is likely to reach a climax in 2014 when the Google book settlement – the legal battle between Google and authors and publishers over copyright – is predicted to conclude. Oxford is a centre for intellectual property law and studies of the impact of the internet. With its attractions as a conference venue and its concentration of publishing interests, it will provide a forum for high-level debate that will influence the direction of print and digital publishing for years to come.

2014 and Shakespeare

World Book Day, 23 April 2014, is the 450th anniversary of the birth of **William Shakespeare**, the best-known writer in the English language or possibly in any language. Oxford is just one hour from the birthplace of Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon. We will foster existing links with the Royal Shakespeare Company to highlight his works in this special year and Creation Theatre Company plans to construct a mobile 'Globe Theatre' producing a repertoire of Shakespeare's plays to mark this special anniversary.

2014 and The Great War conflict

1914 saw the start of a conflict that killed 9 million people, changed the map of Europe and paved the way for major political, social and scientific revolutions in the nations involved. Oxford University's **First World War Poetry Digital Archive**⁴ is making available one of the most important collections of war poetry by authors including Wilfred Owen and Edward Thomas. As World Book Capital, Oxford will mark the centenary by using this resource to prompt reflections on war and peace through poignant reminders of the unimaginable.

Together with our partners in government, education, business, NGOs and the cultural sector, we will create a programme of events in 2014 that will address UNESCO's mission:

'To contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.'

³ www.literacytrust.org.uk/policy/nlt_policy/2400_literacy_in_the_spending_review

⁴ www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit

What are we going to do?

Act as a catalyst to encourage an exchange of ideas, networking and collaboration...



Drivers from the Oxford Bus Company, credit Kathelene Weiss

From 23 April 2014 to April 2015 we will:

- Present an imaginative and inspirational year-long **programme of events**, promoting books and reading, that are both excellent and inclusive, working with a range of local, national, and international partners from across the book world and beyond;
- Explore the best and widest range of **British and international literature**, through activities ranging from high-profile author events to fun and accessible 'Read Me' book give-aways, pub quizzes, and stories told through film, music, visual art, carnival and dance;
- Act as a catalyst to encourage an exchange of ideas, networking and collaboration among the promoters of international, national and local **literacy initiatives**; map the range of excellent storytelling and reading projects in schools across the county; work with our schools to deliver a well-developed programme to inspire and deliver improvements in literacy as a legacy;
- Celebrate the completion of **three major capital building projects** in Oxford, the Story Museum, the Weston Library, and the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies Library, raising the profile of cultural buildings dedicated to promoting books, reading and 'the story' in the UK;
- Stimulate more Oxford and UK citizens to explore their writers and their own **creative writing talent** in all genres: fiction, non-fiction, poetry, science, comic books and the digital universe;
- Celebrate the lives of Oxford's **famous authors** through an interactive mobile phone literary map, walking tours and treasure hunts;
- Highlight the UK's **publishers and booksellers** and what they contribute to a successful twenty-first-century economy; engage with the contemporary problems that face the book industry through international conferences and debates;
- Draw attention to the **significance of English as a global language**, and the role that Oxford has played in meeting the needs of the world for a common language of business and science;
- Explore and encourage more **translations of international works** for English-speaking readers;
- Champion the cause of books and literacy as tools of **freedom of expression** and **international development**.

