

**International Declaration
of Independent Publishers,
for the protection and promotion
of bibliodiversity**

A large, thick red brushstroke graphic that starts on the left side of the page and curves downwards and then upwards towards the right, resembling a stylized 'V' or a wing.

Alliance
of independent publishers
for another globalization

A thick red brushstroke graphic running horizontally across the bottom of the page.

The Independent publisher

The current financial orientation within the world of book publishing — in which large corporations with no ties to publishing are buying up publishing firms and enforcing high levels of productivity — is leading to a loss of editorial independence.

In contrast, an independent publisher sets its editorial policy freely and independently; it is not the voice of a political party, official institution or private company. The structure of such a publisher's financing, and the identities of its shareholders also give an indication of the degree of independence it enjoys. There may be numerous additional criteria for judging a publisher's level of independence, relating both to quality and quantity: what is the ownership structure? How much does profit-making impact the editorial line? How is the catalogue put together? Is it coherent? How do the publishers reach out to their readers?

As defenders of the freedom of expression, independent publishers are major contributors to bibliodiversity.

Bibliodiversity

"Bibliodiversity" describes cultural diversity applied to the world of publishing; as an echo of the term biodiversity, it refers to the necessary diversity of the editorial output made available to readers. While major publishing groups contribute, by way of their massive output of books, to a certain degree of variety in the publishing arena offer, bibliodiversity is nevertheless closely linked to the output of independent publishers. Given the freedom of expression they exercise, independent publishers guarantee the multiplicity and circulation of ideas, and as such are the real players and defenders of this cultural diversity within publishing. Today, bibliodiversity appears threatened by an editorial glut, and by financial concentration in the world of publishing, which paves the way for the dominance of a handful of major publishing groups. The coining of the term bibliodiversity may be attributed to a group of Chilean publishers, who set up the Editores independientes de Chile umbrella organisation in the late 1990s. The Alliance of Independent Publishers has greatly contributed to the use and promotion of this term in several languages, for example in the declarations made in Dakar (2003), Guadalajara (2005) and Paris (2007).

75 independent publishers from 45 countries

gathered together in the International Assembly on Independent Publishing

This assembly, sponsored by UNESCO, was organised by the Alliance of Independent Publishers. Held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the event met with a resonant response from publishing, writing and reading professionals.

During this truly intercultural, deliberately international four-day meeting, independent publishers were given an opportunity to make their voices heard and to observe that their role as key players in the circulation of ideas and the forging of human identity seems today to be seriously compromised throughout the world. "*Bibliodiversity — cultural diversity in publishing — is in danger*".

The participants in *the International Assembly on Independent Publishing* nevertheless refused to bow to fatalism, drawing up a programme of concrete initiatives spanning the next three years, rooted in their commitment and solidarity: "*We are fully aware of being the primary movers for our projects and thinking*". Projects including co-publishing, translation, international meetings, advocacy work and setting up tools to be shared are already in progress.

However, the participants also wished to conclude their work with a hard-hitting statement to be made public, in the shape of an International Declaration. In this key document, they have stated their determination to act together, the necessity of joining forces to increase their impact. They also demonstrate how states, sponsors, reading and writing professionals — as well as readers and citizens — can play a proactive part in protecting and promoting bibliodiversity.

This *International Declaration of Independent Publishers in favour of the protection and the promotion of bibliodiversity* was put together in the course of the four days of discussion, with observations and proposals being added every day. On Wednesday 4 July 2007, after a four-hour debate in English, Spanish and French with the 75 publishers present, the Declaration was jointly approved. This text, to be found in the following pages, is based on the result of an in-depth intercultural debate. It is also a strong, inspiring message of commitment, a statement which will go down in the history of independent media. It exists today in several languages: French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Italian, Persian...

We therefore encourage you to participate in its circulation; taking this statement everywhere possible is of course a contribution to the protection and promotion of independent publishing and bibliodiversity — and one that is within the reach of us all.

The Alliance of Independent Publishers is an international network comprising 80 publishers from over 40 countries. As a non-profit-making organisation, the Alliance organises international meetings and carries out advocacy work to foster independence. It also backs international publishing projects — in the form of assistance with translation or co-publishing. The Alliance thus contributes to enhancing the accessibility of works and ideas, to defending and promoting bibliodiversity.

www.alliance-editeurs.org

Preamble

The role of independent publishers in the diffusion of ideas, and thus in the shaping of human beings, is gravely compromised throughout the world. **Bibliodiversity** — the cultural diversity of books — **is in danger**.

Independent publishers have been hit head-on by economic globalization, which favors the commercialization of their industry, an industry now dominated by large conglomerates possessing a combination of financial, communications, and distribution resources. **The resulting uniformity of content moves forward unabated.**

A single-minded search for profit alone in book publishing is incompatible with the creation and diffusion of cultural goods. **And yet books must be viewed as a public good.**

Faced with these threats, 75 independent publishers from more than 45 countries — including members of associations representing over 380 publishing houses — gathered in Paris in the French National Library from July 1-4, 2007 for an international conference organized by the Alliance of Independent Publishers. Together, we member-publishers of the Alliance **reaffirm our intention to resist these trends and to act with a common purpose.**

We subscribe openly to the principles of the UNESCO Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression, which was put into force on March 18, 2007. We aim to contribute concretely to the realization of these principles in our own industry. We consider our Alliance **as the legitimate body for the defense of bibliodiversity and independent publishing** — particularly with respect to international bodies and states involved in the application of the UNESCO Convention and in the application of national policies for books and for reading.

Declaration

First and foremost, we strongly denounce **all forms of censorship**, whether direct, indirect, or whether in the form of self-censorship. We openly declare our solidarity with all of our publishing colleagues, with authors, and with all other book professionals who today still suffer forms of intimidation, psychological or physical violence, or the threat of imprisonment — all of which endangers their work, if not their lives. We note as well the development of less direct forms of censorship, whether they result from bureaucracy (customs blockages, arbitrary taxation), legal, or financial causes, or as they arise from a mechanism of self-censorship. The phenomenon of concentration and of commercialization in the book publishing sector, in media, and in communications also contributes directly or indirectly to reinforcing or reviving forms of censorship.

We assert that antiterrorist and security laws have for several years narrowed freedom of **expression throughout the world**. It is our intention to struggle against this degradation.

We are particularly alarmed by the lack of circulation of works and ideas among different cultures, notably with respect to books. We must remark, for example, that very few books are translated into English and into Arabic, whereas the bulk of translations issue from works produced in the Anglophone world. We especially fear the resurgence of a blinkered nationalism and the institution of a single, dominant way of thinking. We urgently demand, unanimously and solemnly, **the establishment of support and funds for translation**, destined above all for independent publishers. We demand that all national governments, all public authorities, and all private donors mobilize resources urgently for the translation of written work — to assist in the rebuilding and reinforcing of ties between human communities.

We remain convinced that **co-publications** represent a useful instrument for intercultural dialogue — principally when they are the fruit of mutually-supportive endeavors characterized by solidarity-driven commercial agreements. We are engaged in an ongoing reflection — enriched by our day-to-day work — on the idea of an “equitable book”.

We declare ourselves to be in favor of national **sovereignty in the matter of cultural politics**, yet cultural politics must not negate the freedom of expression nor human rights. The sovereign right to enact policies and laws favoring books and protecting independent cultural activities must be respected, defended, and enforced. Such a sovereign right could permit, for example, laws establishing a fixed price for books, the establishment of fiscal inducements, the development of libraries and public literacy, the protection and promotion of independent booksellers, government purchases of locally-produced books, and the establishment of preferential national tariffs on the transport of books.

Books and publishing are part of both **local and universal cultural heritage**. The distribution of books should be facilitated by solidarity-based co-publications and by the transfer of rights, especially when levels of development between partners are unequal. We also encourage publications in local or minority languages; we declare ourselves in solidarity with those publishers working towards this end.

We demand **the revision of the Florence Accords**. We are not, in principle, opposed to the free circulation of books; unfortunately, however, it functions more often to the detriment of local and national markets and industries. There must be compensation for unequal exchanges between the major book-exporting countries and the recipients of their products.

We call on associations or institutions involved in **book donations** to be vigilant, such that their activities do not penalize local publishers. We think that it is urgent to rethink book donations and their associated mechanisms, to give them a new, more modern meaning.

It is imperative that independent publishers have access to the book markets in their respective countries. Local independent publishers must be given priority in **scholarly publishing**, both for reasons of economic development in book publishing, and also because it is crucial that intellectual content be conceived and produced locally.

We think it is essential to create a **fiscal environment favorable to the book industry**. This means in particular reduced taxes on books, but also reducing the tax as much as possible on the importation of the materials necessary to manufacture books. We deplore that the Nairobi Protocol was not signed, ratified, or respected by all.

We wish to reaffirm our interdependence with those involved in the production of books: authors, translators, booksellers, and librarians. In particular, we share a common destiny with **independent booksellers**. We have not forgotten that independent booksellers are, like their publishing counterparts, fundamental cultural and social agents for informing and educating people. Publishers and booksellers must work together to make their independence, and its significance, more visible.

In certain countries, **book distribution** is completely deregulated on account of mergers, thus threatening all of book production. We call for the regulation of existing arrangements, and the establishment of alternative structures of diffusion and distribution.

Public libraries are a link in the book production chain. As part of their acquisitions process for new books, they must reflect cultural diversity and support local publishers, while filling their social role of educating readers.

Laws governing the **rights of authors** must be conceived and applied in a well-balanced way — simultaneously protecting creators' rights while also guaranteeing access to knowledge. This means above all preventing the monopoly of knowledge, and excessive private appropriation of knowledge. In addition, **free access to new technologies** is fundamental; they are essential to bibliodiversity.

We are aware that, even while we struggle for and insist on our rights, **we must also affirm our own duties and responsibilities** — whether they be cultural, social, or environmental.

At the end of four days of working together, we reassert that **our Alliance is a precious space** for human encounter, dialogues and cultural exchanges; for sharing experiences; for pooling our professional knowledge; for conceiving and implementing innovative editorial projects; and for developing useful pleas on behalf of independent publishing and bibliodiversity. We are fully conscious of being the driving force behind our projects and our ideas.

Finally, **we call upon independent publishers everywhere in the world to join forces** — whether at the national, regional, or international level — creating associations and other collective bodies which will permit us to better defend our rights, and to make our voices heard. Together, with the support of public authorities, of donors, and of international organizations, we intend to continue to defend and promote independent publishing and bibliodiversity.

Paris, Wednesday, July 4, 2007



List of signatories

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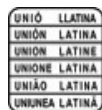
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