



14th December 2024

Submission from The Coalition for Books to Amplify Draft Strategy to the Arts

The Coalition for Books is a membership organisation that facilitates significantly increased collaboration and opportunities around a core kaupapa of improved visibility for books and writers. Created for the book sector, by the book sector, its membership has grown rapidly from a small base, to now representing almost every significant organisation. Writers; publishers; booksellers; book awards; festivals; and most of the agencies that intersect with these, are for the first time collectively represented.

Harnessing the power of many has delivered strong results. The Coalition has developed a leading digital presence through KETE BOOKS and has created several high profile seasonal campaigns promoting the rich diversity of pukapuka created in Aotearoa. Gap-filling and by resource-sharing, its strong commitment to finding new readers and engaging with the many diverse communities of New Zealand has paid dividends.

It makes this submission to the *Amplify Draft Strategy to the Arts* of behalf of its members, many of whom have contributed to the creation of a Book Sector Plan, fit for the next five years, that will be published early in 2025. Whilst the Plan is still in draft, the key take-outs have been included in this submission.

The Coalition for Books welcomes the development of an over-arching strategy for the Arts in Aotearoa New Zealand and recognises that within it are many opportunities for the book sector.

Background to the Aotearoa Book Sector Plan

The last decade has seen unprecedented changes that have impacted every part of the book sector. Technological advancements, changes in how narrative content is consumed, COVID 19 and subsequent global economic pressures, and the focus on sustainability and diversity have changed how books are created, published and consumed.

The book market of New Zealand is predominantly an English language one and the books written and published here must compete with those produced out of the UK and US markets especially. The most recent Market Size Report (2023) published by the Publishers Association of New Zealand estimates 78% of books sold in New Zealand originated overseas. Exporting within these same conditions is more challenging still.

The Coalition for Books – with its collaboration and resource sharing - was created through the pressure brought about by key transformational changes which include:

Economic Challenges

- **Impact of the Pandemic:** The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected sales and the costs of distribution, prompting a greater shift toward online sales which Nielsen book data measurements have shown to consistently favour internationally published titles. This trend continues post pandemic.
- **Financial Pressures:** Rising production costs; shorter print runs and competition from digital media have put pressure on traditional publishing and business models.

Digital Transformation

- **E-books and Audiobooks:** The rise of e-books and audiobooks has transformed how people access and consume narrative content. Platforms like Kindle, Spotify and Audible have made reading and listening more convenient, and enabled access to wider audiences here and overseas.
- **Self-Publishing:** The growth of self-publishing platforms has enabled authors to publish their work and reach audiences directly. While this has led to an increase in the diversity of voices and genres, it is also having an impact on book sector business models.

Changing Consumer Behavior

- **Purchasing Behaviours:**
 - **Online shopping:** The rise of online retail has disrupted traditional publishing models, leading to a focus on bestsellers and commercial viability over new, diverse or experimental works. Independent bookstores, traditionally the home of such new titles face stronger online competition where discoverability by the reader is often compromised.
 - **The decline of chain and independent bookstores,** which often promote local authors and create community around literature has been impacted with the move to online shopping.
 - **Platform's like Amazon** dominate the book market and therefore impose significant control over pricing, visibility, and distribution. When algorithms dictate what consumers see it can be difficult for new or niche authors to compete.
- **Social Media Influence:** Platforms like Instagram and TikTok have become vital for book promotion, with "Bookstagram" and "BookTok" communities driving trends and influencing readers' choices. The role of the author in marketing and creating 'brand' is more vital than it ever has been before.
- **A sharp decline in the media space** given over to book review and book content generally. Book discoverability for local books versus international titles has never been more stark.

Increased Focus on Diversity and Inclusion

- Representation: Globally and here in Aotearoa New Zealand there has been a growing emphasis on diversity within literature. More attention is being given to Māori authors and content, and those that have traditionally been under represented. This is important as our nation becomes home to an increasingly diverse population.

Evolving Educational Practices

- Integration of Digital Content: Schools and universities have begun incorporating digital books and resources into curricula, changing how literature is taught and accessed. However, at the same time there has been a reduction in the number of libraries found in our schools.
- Focus on Literacy: The need for improved literacy levels in our countries has been the focus of successive governments, with the current government prioritizing literacy (and numeracy) highly. However, more can be done, as trends in literacy and traditional reading mediums have been on the decline.

Technological Integration

- Interactive and Multimedia Content: The emergence of interactive e-books and multimedia storytelling has expanded the possibilities for authors and publishers, engaging readers in new ways. Alongside this is the opportunity created through the rise of streaming services like Netflix, where new unique narrative with globally relatable story lines has increased significantly, opening opportunities for authors and their stories.
- Data Analytics: Publishers are increasingly using data analytics to understand reader preferences and tailor marketing strategies, helping to drive sales and engagement.

Vision of the Aotearoa Book Sector Plan

To foster a thriving book sector in Aotearoa New Zealand, characterized by a deep love of reading, increased access to diverse stories, and a sustainable, interconnected ecosystem that values and supports all contributors.

The Aotearoa Book Sector Plan has been developed through a series of linked phases. The first was a workshop with key stakeholders from the sector that drafted a strategy document.

A wider stakeholder hui was then held in October 2024 to obtain overall input into the vision, and a SWOT analysis, and feedback on the objectives outlined in the first draft strategy.

Following this hui several online hui were held to obtain the voices of those that had not yet contributed, and ensure diverse voices were heard.

The outcomes of this sector engagement will be tested with sector in the coming months; however time constraints and usefulness to *Amplify* cannot be overlooked. Therefore, the draft Goals and Objectives are summarised below, followed by connectivity to, and shortcomings of the proposed *Amplify* strategy.

Goals/ Objectives

- 1. Strengthen the Book Sector and its Ecosystem**
Foster strong connections among writers, publishers, booksellers, and readers to create a collaborative environment, while also strengthening ties with key stakeholders like government and the broader creative sector nationally and internationally.
- 2. Promote Local Content and Voices**
Encourage creating, distributing, and consuming New Zealand stories across various mediums, ensuring representation from diverse communities.
- 3. Improve Access and Equity**
Ensure equitable access to books and reading materials, careers and opportunities for all New Zealanders, regardless of background or location.
- 4. Support Sustainable Careers**
Develop career pathways and vocational training opportunities within the book sector to foster talent and job growth.

Strategies

1. Value of Reading (Goals: 1, 2, 3, 4)

- Cultural and Economic Advocacy: Collaborate with government and education sectors to highlight the cultural and economic value of reading New Zealand stories.

2. Education and Opportunity

- Curriculum Integration: Advocate for including New Zealand literature in school curricula and establishing libraries in every school. (Goal, 1, 2,3)
- Career Pathways: Develop vocational training and support systems for those interested in the book sector. (Goal 4)

3. Equity and Access

- Equity: Promote underrepresented voices in all aspects of the book sector. (Goal 3, 4)
- Accessibility: Advocate for policies that promote equitable access to literature, (such as funding for school libraries and literacy programs.) (Goal 1, 3)

4. Collaboration and Cohesion

- Collective Initiatives: Create platforms for collaboration among writers, publishers, and other creative sectors. (Goal 1, 2, 4)
- Unified Advocacy: Establish a cohesive voice to advocate for the book sector's interests to government and society. (Goal 1)

5. Visibility and Promotion (Goal 1, 2, 3, 4)

- Buy Local Campaigns: Launch sustained campaigns to encourage the purchase of local books.
- Diverse Formats: Promote books in various formats (print, digital, audio) to cater to different reading preferences.

6. Data and Research (Goal 1, 2, 3, 4)

- Data Collection: Gather data on literacy rates and access to books in different communities to identify gaps and inform targeted interventions.
- Impact Measurement: Collect and disseminate data on the impact of reading and the book sector to demonstrate its value culturally, economically and educationally.

7. Diversity Funding and Revenue Streams

- International Opportunities (Goal 1, 2, 3, 4)
 - Export Promotion: Continue to support New Zealand authors and publishers in accessing international markets.
 - Participation in Global Events: Engage in international book fairs, international collaborations, and cultural exchanges to elevate New Zealand's presence.
- Expand Non-Governmental Funding
 - Prioritize efforts to secure alternative funding from private sponsors, philanthropic organizations, and community fundraising campaigns.
 - Encourage literary organizations to build relationships with local businesses and global platforms (e.g., crowdfunding for specific projects or initiatives).

8. Technology and Innovation (Goal 1, 2, 3)

- Digital Adaptation: Embrace technology to enhance reading experiences and reach new audiences.
- Interactive Platforms: Explore digital platforms for storytelling that engage younger and diverse audiences.

9. Support for Indigenous and Diverse Stories (Goal 2, 3, 4)

- Cultural Representation: Prioritize the publication and promotion of Māori and Pasifika authors and stories.
- Community Inclusion: Ensure that all community voices are included in the narrative of Aotearoa.
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How do these Goals and Strategies fit with *Amplify*?

Strategic Pillars of the draft *Amplify* Strategy that can and should support the Book Sector:

Investing for Maximum Impact is a critical pillar for the book sector.

- Simplified funding structures and revising regulatory frameworks, such as the Public Lending Right (PLR) for New Zealand Authors Act, to better support authors' incomes.

The strategy proposes modernizing copyright legislation to ensure fair compensation for intellectual property in an evolving digital landscape.

- We ask that the Public Lending Right is extended to educational settings, and for all formats – audio books and ebooks especially – to be included.
- *Amplify* notes that the Government proposes to *leverage its investment in the creative and cultural sectors to attract other funding for cultural activity, particularly private investment*. A significant number of the Coalition for Books’ membership already invest significant time and resource to secure additional funding outside of Creative New Zealand, most often without success. We are sceptical of the availability of private funding for the book sector.
- Investment in *Buy Local* campaigns and legislative change. For example, we ask that all library procurement – New Zealand and international titles - be made through New Zealand based retailers and wholesalers.

Nurturing Talent emphasizes building a robust pipeline of creative professionals through education and training.

- We believe it is crucial for the inclusion of New Zealand’s literary and cultural heritage in school curricula if we are to inspire future generations of writers and readers. Students that read New Zealand literature early in life are more likely to continue into adulthood. The *Amplify Strategy* does not note the connections between literacy, reading for pleasure, and the successful outcomes across a range of other school subjects, as well as other social and health outcomes. It does not address the need for all schools to provide library services (currently at the behest of school boards and the ability divert funding to other school needs).
- Initiatives to develop vocational qualifications and provide business training will empower authors and publishers to navigate the challenges of sustaining creative careers.
- The emphasis on closing skills and knowledge gaps for the governing boards is highly relevant for the book sector. Most of its organisations are supported by a high level of voluntary hours.
- There is a widening digital skills gap allowing local books to fall behind international titles, exacerbated by Covid conditions. New Zealand books are not doing well in the online space.

Reducing Barriers to Growth

We welcome the focus for creating an enabling environment for creatives and note especially:

- Clearer tax guidance for authors to manage complex income streams and support for digital transformation to improve audience access.
- The strategy underscores the need to address intellectual property (IP) risks, particularly in light of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, to protect authors’ rights and cultural heritage.
- Under current government settings there is no ‘natural home’ for books or literature. Organisations working in the sector navigate multiple agencies across multiple ministries, including Education, Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage, MBIE,

Department of Internal Affairs and the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs. Outcomes are hard-fought for and can be diluted as a result.

- The Coalition for Books welcomes the whole of Government approach that *Amplify* intends to take. Alongside this, it asks that Books and Literature be given equal recognition of other major art forms with funding surety outside of a contestable grants process.

Cultural and Economic Contributions

Amplify recognizes the book sector's integral role in shaping New Zealand's cultural identity and advancing soft power on the global stage. Literature, as part of the broader creative ecosystem, contributes to economic growth through cultural tourism and international trade.

Conditions that allow for more adaptations to screen of New Zealand writing (for example, *The Whale Rider* or *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*), and recognition these are a creative backbone for other creative industries, would be welcomed.

Emphasis on Māori and Pacific Heritage

We are supportive of the focus of *Amplify* celebrating New Zealand's rich Māori and Pacific heritage. For the book sector, this presents opportunities to support storytelling rooted in indigenous knowledge and perspectives. Partnerships with iwi and Pacific cultural groups will play a pivotal role in fostering inclusive narratives and promoting these works internationally.

As well as strong connections to child wellbeing and literacy rates, it is widely accepted that our diverse tamariki need to see themselves in what they're reading. Teachers and librarians lack confidence and resources to promote materials from Aoteroa, and the smaller market conditions hamper opportunities for booksellers and publishers.

Research and Evidence-Based Policy

The strategy highlights the importance of a robust research program to inform future initiatives. For the book sector, this includes gathering data on industry performance and exports to guide evidence-based policymaking. Strengthened insights will help shape strategies that maximize the sector's potential.

There is already a significant level of data available within various organisations across the book sector (for example, Nielsen Book Data; the Publishers Association Market Impact Report; library loans; Read New Zealand Te Pou Muramura's National Reading Survey). To pool this data to create wider evidence-based guidance requires resource and capacity that currently does not exist within the sector. We strongly believe that this could be an early 'win' for the *Amplify* strategy.

Opportunities for the Book Sector

The *Amplify* strategy presents significant opportunities for the book sector, including:

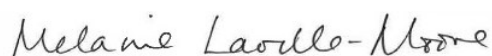
- Simplified and expanded access to funding and regulatory support.
- Recognition for the Coalition for Books and the sector oversight and representation it can provide.
- Enhanced promotion of books and literary events as cultural exports.
- Integration of literature into educational frameworks to build future audiences.
- Support for collaboration and innovation in publishing practices.
- Protection and fair monetization of intellectual property in the digital age.

Final Notes

The book sector in Aotearoa New Zealand stands at a critical juncture, shaped by digital disruption, evolving consumer behaviour, and growing recognition of its cultural value. By working in partnership with the government, implementing self-directed strategies, and advocating for targeted support, the sector can thrive as a cornerstone of New Zealand's creative and cultural ecosystem.

Through the drafting of the Aotearoa New Zealand Book Sector Plan the sector is poised to strengthen its impact, promote diverse voices, and ensure its sustainability in a rapidly changing world. It looks to the *Amplify* strategy to help it achieve this.

Ngā mihi nui



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Academy of New Zealand Literature | Te Whare Mātātūhi o Aotearoa

The Aotearoa New Zealand Review of Books

Allen & Unwin New Zealand Ltd

Auckland University Press

Auckland Writers Festival | Waitūhi o Tāmaki

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New Zealand Society of Authors | Te Puni Kaitūhi o Aotearoa (PEN NZ) Inc*

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