



## Press Release

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# The Booker Prize celebrates Dotti Irving's 30 years of exceptional service

Dotti Irving, who will step down from her role as Chief Executive of Four Culture at the end of June, first worked on the Booker Prize in 1993, the year Roddy Doyle won the prize for *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*.

She was then CEO of Colman Getty, the PR firm she founded in 1987, and which became part of Four Communications in 2012. Along with her gifted team, she has promoted and steered the Booker Prize for well over half its lifetime, forging links all over the world and earning the long-standing respect of all its stakeholders - be they prize judges, publishers, agents, authors, journalists, or academics. The world of culture, and of books in particular, is filled with members of the Dotti Irving diaspora, who count working at her side as a key element in their CV.

As further Booker Prizes have evolved - the International Booker Prize being the most significant - virtually every operational element of the Booker Prize Foundation's work has been added to her agency's roster. The Booker of Bookers, the Golden Man Booker festival at the Southbank, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary party at Buckingham Palace, the 2020 'ceremony without walls' broadcast by the BBC: these are highlights in a dynamic contribution which has ensured that the renown of the Booker Prizes has continued to grow.

It is no exaggeration to say that the present-day Booker Prizes would not exist without Dotti. In 2002, when Booker plc decided to end its responsibility for the Booker Prize, she was instrumental both in setting up the Booker Prize Foundation to ensure the prize's survival, and in securing funding from the Man Group, which sponsored the prizes from 2002 to 2019. The Foundation is the charity that now lies behind everything from the awarding of the Booker Prizes themselves to work with the RNIB, reading projects in prisons and a creative writing scholarship at the University of East Anglia.

Though Dotti leaves Four Culture she will remain a part of the Booker family, and the plan is for her association with the prizes to continue in a different form. Meanwhile, Four Culture's work on this

year's prizes will be led by Truda Spruyt, who will be building on her close involvement with the International Booker Prize.

Dotti's influence has been immeasurable and there is no better moment to express the Booker Prize Foundation's debt to her, with affection and gratitude from its trustees and executive team.

**Mark Damazer, Chair of the Booker Prize Foundation Board, remarks:**

'Dotti Irving has been central to the life of the Booker Prizes for over three decades. She was a driving force behind the setting up of the Booker Prize Foundation - which has given the prizes deeper roots and more security. Her work with Four Culture for the Booker has given the Booker Prize Foundation the benefit of her creativity, passion and know-how and the Board would like to express its very great thanks. We expect to continue to benefit from her wisdom and palpable commitment to the Booker's purposes and activities.'

**Dotti Irving comments:**

'Founders are just people who have found something they love. I've been exceptionally lucky in that I founded a company I love and, early on, found The Booker Prize - which I also love - as a client. Work doesn't feel like work when it's as fun and rewarding as that!'

**Gaby Wood, Director of the Booker Prize Foundation, adds:**

'It is hugely to Dotti's credit that the Booker Prizes have acquired the global prestige they enjoy today, and it's a privilege to build on that with her blessing. Every judging panel gratefully acknowledges the vital role Dotti and her team play with their efficient, professional and always cheerful support. Though Dotti will step aside from those day-to-day operations, we're glad of the chance to draw on her expertise in future as well as celebrating her achievement. Congratulations to Truda, who we know will ably fill Dotti's shoes.'

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- The Booker Prize for Fiction was first awarded in 1969 and was called The Man Booker Prize for Fiction when sponsored by Man Group from 2002 - 2018. The winner receives £50,000. The 2021 winner was Damon Galgut with *The Promise*. The morning after the announcement, the book was number one on Amazon's bestseller chart. Two weeks after the win, Chatto & Windus announced that it had reprinted 153,000 copies of *The Promise*, having sold 23,878 copies in hardback, 14,622 of which sold in the two weeks following the news, a 1,925% jump in volume compared with the two weeks before.
- The International Booker Prize is awarded annually for the best single work of fiction translated into English and published in the UK. It was known until 2019 as the Man Booker International Prize when sponsored by Man Group. The £50,000 prize is divided equally between the author and the translator. From 2022, each shortlisted author and translator receives £2,500. The announcement of the 2021 winner, *At Night All Blood Is Black*, written by David Diop and translated by Anna Moschovakis, was met with both public and critical

acclaim. The book's publisher, Pushkin Press, ordered a five-figure reprint the day after the winner announcement. The week following the winner announcement, sales of *At Night All Blood Is Black* saw a 477% sale increase on the week before. President Barack Obama, a keen follower of both of The Booker Prizes, listed *At Night All Blood Is Black* at the top of his summer reading list.

- thebookerprizes.com, the home of The Booker Prizes past and present, was relaunched in 2021. It has a full history of the prize including previous winners, shortlisted authors and judges. It is a hub for year-round editorial content designed to engage readers with both prizes and to foster a lifelong love of reading.
- The 2022 Booker Prize judging panel is chaired by cultural historian, writer and broadcaster Neil MacGregor, and consists of: academic and broadcaster Shahidha Bari; historian Helen Castor; novelist and critic M John Harrison; and novelist, poet and professor Alain Mabanckou.
- The Booker Prize Foundation is a registered charity (no 1090049) established in 2002. It is responsible for the award of The Booker Prize for Fiction and for The International Booker Prize. The trustees of the Booker Prize Foundation are: Mark Damazer (chair) - freelance journalist and former broadcast executive; Tony Damer (treasurer) - member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants; Nick Barley - director, Edinburgh International Book Festival; Carol Lake - President of the JPMorgan Chase Foundation; Ben Okri - poet and author; MT Rainey - strategist, agency founder and social entrepreneur; Professor Louise Richardson - vice chancellor of the University of Oxford; Nicki Sheard - chief marketing officer, BBC Studios; The Rt Hon. Lord David Willetts - writer, ex-minister and advocate of fairness between the generations. The Secretary is Eve Smith.
- The Booker Prize Foundation Advisory Committee, which advises on any changes to the rules and on the selection of the judges, represents all aspects of the book world. Its members are: Nic Bottomley - co-founder, Mr B's Emporium of Reading Delights; Jamie Byng - publisher, Canongate Books; James Daunt - managing director of Waterstones; Jonathan Douglas CBE - director of the National Literacy Trust; Adam Freudenheim - publisher, Pushkin Press; Daniel Hahn OBE - writer and translator; Sharmaine Lovegrove - publisher, Dialogue Books; Emma Paterson - agent, Aitken Alexander Associates; Fiammetta Rocco - senior editor and culture correspondent, *The Economist* and The International Booker Prize Administrator; Eve Smith - Secretary, Booker Prize Foundation; Boyd Tonkin - writer and critic; Helen Williams - Legal Counsel of Booker Group plc. It is chaired by Gaby Wood - Director, Booker Prize Foundation.
- Crankstart, a charitable foundation, is the exclusive funder of The Booker Prize and The International Booker Prize.
- The Director of the Booker Prize Foundation is Gaby Wood. The Administrator of The International Booker Prize is Fiammetta Rocco - senior editor and culture correspondent, *The Economist*.
- Four Culture handles PR, comms and event management for the prizes and provides all events and administrative back-up.

- Booker Group is the UK's leading food & drink wholesaler with branches nationwide and a delivery network. It serves over 400,000 catering customers and 100,000 independent retailers.
- The Booker Prize Foundation has a longstanding partnership with RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People). The Foundation funds the production of The Booker Prize for Fiction shortlisted titles in braille, giant print and audio, which the RNIB produces by the date the winner is announced. It also funds the production of the winner of the International Booker Prize in these formats. The accessible versions are then made available to the tens of thousands of blind and partially sighted members of the RNIB Library. People with sight loss have a limited choice of books in accessible formats and often have to wait much longer than their sighted peers for titles to be made available to them - and there are many more books that they will never have the chance to read. The Foundation is working with RNIB to change this story. For further information contact the RNIB PR Team on 020 7391 2223 or [pressoffice@rnib.org.uk](mailto:pressoffice@rnib.org.uk)
- The Booker Prize Foundation has partnered with the National Literacy Trust since 2012 to deliver Books Unlocked. The Foundation funds the programme, which has transformed the lives of prisoners and young offenders in the UK by helping them develop a love of reading. Prisoners are able to engage with high-quality writing as copies of The Booker Prize for Fiction and International Booker Prize shortlisted titles are sent out to prison reading groups. These same titles are also serialised as audiobooks on National Prison Radio, which is broadcast into c.80,000 cells, enabling still more prisoners to experience these exceptional stories. Authors go into prisons to discuss their writing directly with reading groups and many also record interviews on National Prison Radio. The shared vision for Books Unlocked is to bring about positive change in prisoners' life chances. Since 1993, the National Literacy Trust has led the campaign to transform the future of the UK's most disadvantaged young people by improving their literacy levels: [literacytrust.org.uk/programmes/books-unlocked/](http://literacytrust.org.uk/programmes/books-unlocked/)
- The Booker Prize Archive was given on loan in 2003 to Oxford Brookes University, where it now resides.

Four Culture  
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