

## Rethinking 'Diversity' in Publishing: British and German Perspectives

The 'Rethinking "Diversity" in Publishing' report published in 2020, exposed the ways that authors from particular racial and ethnic backgrounds continue to be marginalised and disadvantaged in UK publishing industries. This is despite all the various initiatives that publishing houses have implemented in the name of 'diversity'.

In this conference, the authors of that report want to build dialogue between the UK and Germany publishing industries on how best to deal with racial/ethnic exclusions. It brings into conversation publishing professionals and activist from the UK and Germany who are working on these issues. The conference will be based around two panels, one that explores questions of diversity on the production side of the industry, the other one focussing on audiences. The aim is to explore the similarities and differences between the British and German contexts, and together formulate strategies that can tackle inequalities in the publishing sector.

### Panel 1: Racial and social inequalities in the publishing industry

In this panel the invited speakers will engage with the question of diversity within the context of the publishing industries. It will consider where publishing houses have failed to engage people from underrepresented communities, the obstacles that authors of colour face in particular, and what spaces are needed to allow authors and publishing professionals from marginalised backgrounds to truly flourish in publishing.

### Panel 2: Reaching wider audiences

In this panel speakers will explore how publishers have engaged - or failed to engage - marginalised audiences. It will consider how publishers value different types of audiences, explanations for why publishers and cultural intermediaries appear to be so disinclined to reach wider audiences, and what strategies/interventions are needed to bring certain communities from the margins into the core of publishing.

## Preliminary Programme

10:00 **Welcome**, Prof. Gesa Stedman,  
Centre for British Studies, Humboldt-University Berlin

**Research Presentation Rethinking 'Diversity' in Publishing (UK)**, some observations about the situation in Germany, and Q&A about the research, Dr Anamik Saha and Dr Sandra van Lente

*short break*

10:45 **PANEL 1: Industry Focus**

- Aimée Felone, Knights Of and Round Table Books
- Saskia Bewley, Hachette UK
- Nikola Richter, mikrotext
- Ferda Ataman, Neue deutsche Medienmacher\*innen

*15min break*

12:00 **Breakout Sessions 1**  
20min; topics to be announced soon

*lunch break (with an option to meet in smaller rooms and have lunch together)*

13:30 **Breakout Sessions 2**  
20min; topics to be announced soon

*10min break*

14:00 **PANEL 2: Engaging Audiences**

- Crystal Mahey-Morgan, OWN IT!
- Maryam Aras, Bonn University
- Shantel Edwards, Birmingham Literature Festival
- Karla Kutzner/Stefanie Hirsbrunner, InterKontinental

15:00 **Concluding Remarks** (10-15min)

until 16:00 **Networking** over drinks and nibbles on [wonder.me](https://wonder.me)

## The Speakers

### **Maryam Aras, Bonn University, 54books**

Maryam Aras is an academic and online critic. She is currently completing her PhD in Iranian/ Cultural Studies and writes literary criticism for the 54books magazine and West German Broadcasting (WDR).

<https://www.54books.de/author/maryam-aras/>

### **Ferda Ataman, Neue deutsche Medienmacher\*innen**

Ferda Ataman is a journalist, co-founder of the initiative Neue deutsche Medienmacher\*innen and spokesperson of the neue deutsche organisationen, an association of more than 130 initiatives, organisations and projects that fight against racism and for a more inclusive society. She wrote is the author of the book *Ich bin von hier. Hört auf zu fragen! (I'm from here. Stop asking! S. Fischer, 2019).*

<https://neuedeutsche.org/> and <https://neuedeutsche.org/>

### **Saskia Bewley, Hachette UK**

Saskia Bewley is Head of Diversity & Inclusion at Hachette UK, where she is advising on D&I strategy. Her role includes to progress the 'Changing the Story' agenda in respect to employees, authors, publishing content and the wider community.

<https://www.hachette.co.uk/>

### **Shantel Edwards, Birmingham Literature Festival**

Shantel Edwards is the Director of the Birmingham Literature Festival and Creative Producer at Writing West Midlands, the literature development agency for the West Midlands. She holds a doctorate in English Literature from the University of Birmingham.

<https://www.birminghamliteraturefestival.org/>

### **Aimée Felone, Knights Of and Round Table Books**

Aimée Felone is the co-founder of the inclusive publisher Knights Of and the inclusive bookshop Round Table Books in Brixton.

<https://www.roundtablebooks.co.uk/> and <http://knightsof.media/>

### **Karla Kutzner/Stefanie Hirsbrunner, InterKontinental**

Karla Kutzner and Stefanie Hirsbrunner founded the literary agency InterKontinental, opened the InterKontinental bookshop and run the African Book Festival Berlin

<https://www.interkontinental.org/>

### **Crystal Mahey-Morgan, OWN IT!**

Crystal Mahey-Morgan is a Publisher and Agent at OWN IT!, which she founded in 2015 and now co-owns and runs with Creative Director, Jason Morgan. OWN IT! is a storytelling lifestyle brand working across books, music, art and film.

<https://ownit.london/>

### **Nikola Richter, mikrotex**

Nikola Richter is the founder of the independent publishing house mikrotex in Berlin. She was awarded with a German Publishing Award in 2019 and 2020. In 2020 she introduced the pioneering idea of an "open publishing year" to the publishing world and invited guest publishers and their communities to create the programme.

<https://mikrotex.de/>