

Uganda book market launched

A Ugandan book market has been launched by writers, poets, media, book stores and other interested parties, to promote the industry and encourage a reading culture.



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The Uganda Society, FEMRITE - Uganda Women Writers Association, and the African Studies Book Store, in collaboration with Akira Digital, Lantern Meet of Poets and Writivism, have launched the literary initiative, calling it the Uganda Book Market.

The Uganda Book Market aims to showcase Ugandan and African literature in all its genres: novels, drama, written poetry, performance poetry, short stories, oral literature, literary criticism, biographies and conversations on the reading and writing culture in the region .

Works from the African continent, most especially in Uganda, continue to lag behind in terms of marketing.

This has created a myth concerning the volume of work published in Africa, with some people saying that the life of a newly launched book in Kampala is short-lived, save for a few sales made to relatives and work mates. This has a very negative impact on the publishing sector and it de-motivates and kills the morale of emerging writers who wish to venture into publishing and authorship.

Research

In 2016, FEMRITE, in partnership with Centre for Culture and Development (CKU), carried out research on the market for Ugandan literature in Uganda. Some of its conclusions concerned Uganda's poor book market, its poor reading culture, the few and sometimes inaccessible bookshops and lack of creative book selling initiatives.

The book market idea came into mind when Wartson Atukwatse of the Uganda Society was in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, attending the SHAPE Africa conference in September 2017 . Wartson, while visiting some of the bookstores, noticed that books by African writers were not on display and a few which had been displayed were hidden on invisible shelves. On inquiring why they were not more prominently displayed, he was told that African books do not normally sell . Wartson had met a similar excuse from some of the bookshops in Kampala who preferred to put display books from western countries on their front shelves.

Atukwatse comments: “As a book seller, I promised myself to do something about it and change this narrative. This was mainly as a result of attending the British Council workshop on creative enterprise that was organised in May 2018 at the Uganda Museum during the DOADOA (East Africa Performing Arts Market).

“In May, the Uganda Book Market was born, starting with the Kampala Book Market edition. Since then, the book market has been growing bigger and better with hundreds of readers, book lovers and publishers flocking to the Uganda Museum.”

The book market takes place every last Saturday of the month at the Uganda Museum from 10am to 6pm in the evening.

“It is open to all literary initiatives, publishers, writers and the public as long as they are interested in contributing to strengthening of Uganda’s literary culture and publishing industry by increasing its visibility and accessibility. We invite the press, print, electronic and social media, to support the initiative so that together we are able to nurture and grow Africa's book and literary sector,” urged Atukwatse.

“And whereas we have started in Kampala, it is our plan to take the concept to other parts of the country and different regions. The aim is to make it as least demanding space as possible so that books can reach readers. The space is also designed to employ open dialogue in order to strengthen confidence and trust among stakeholders in the industry.”

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