

## Conxita Guixà, director of the bookshop division at Laie

**‘People currently working in bookshops will have to find their place by employing new methods for book dissemination’**

**Conxita Guixà is a founding member of Laie, which was established in 1980, and is currently the director of the Bookshop Division. Her career has always been closely linked to Laie. This organisation has developed into three main areas: bookshops, museum shops and restaurant cafés. Bookshops are a symbol of Laie’s identity and have a base of 323 thousand titles (domestic and foreign), shaping an overall catalogue specialising in literature, art and humanities. At their establishments, cultural activities are also organised, such as book presentations, conferences, gatherings, art exhibitions, etc.**

### **What professional profiles are currently the most in demand in the sector?**

The most common profile sought in the world of bookshops is that of salespeople with specialised degrees in different bookshop sections, especially historians/philologists/philosophers/sociologists etc.

Furthermore, publishers will soon need new technological profiles as they must know how the electronic book industry functions, they will have to work together on the technical issues in order to organise and structure the information generated. They will also have to control the new communications channels that will arise with customers as a result of new media.

### **What are the core competences required for each of these profiles?**

A fundamental quality for bookshop employees is that they enjoy reading and are interested in the world of literature. They must have the ability to learn continuously as they are always required to be up to date with the developments in their field.

There are also very important managerial skills. A good bookseller should not only know about the books in their speciality, but also needs to know how to close a sale, guide a client and, if the opportunity arises, manage the bookshop.

### **What are the main skills required for each of these professional profiles?**

In a bookshop, a good salesperson is essential, as is the communication channel between the business and customers, so they must be people focused on the customer. It is an arduous task, because the budget is limited and, thus, great creativity is needed.

With the introduction of the e-book on the market, people’s buying and reading habits have changed. The salesperson’s role in recommending similar books or guiding the buyer will be replaced by the different options the Internet provides. Therefore, people now working in bookshops as sales personnel must find their place in new methods of book dissemination.

For example, there is a huge difference between the classification done by publishing houses and that done by bookshops. There should be a correlation so as to make it easier and more accessible to administer information, above all for users. This could be a good working basis where booksellers could apply their knowledge jointly with new technology.

**What staff profiles in the sector more the most significant shortages at this time?**

Communications people are needed who know what to do inside the business and who know how to promote this spirit. Namely, people need to have a broader knowledge base about the publishing world.

In the world of electronic books, you need to contact various electronic platforms that already exist and people are not yet prepared to cope with the change that is occurring. Bear in mind that on a book distribution website (whether electronic or paper), it is much more important that the content is clear and well organized than the design itself. Expertise must be employed from the publishing industry and the knowledge of technological possibilities.

The new professional profiles in the publishing industry will probably be for people in charge of filling in the contents on websites selling electronic books. Electronic platforms will have to work hand in hand with traditional bookshops to organise these electronic contents. The organisation of these pages is very important.

**How do you think these shortages should be resolved?**

A Vocational Programme Module could be created to focus on the publishing/bookshop world, from a management viewpoint. Or universities could offer courses specialising on the publishing industry and within these degrees the students would have the chance to choose a career before entering the job market.

Before there used to be a well-structured school for booksellers in Barcelona, which is missing at present. It's not enough to know only about literature, booksellers need to acquire a number of business and management skills, that today have to be learnt in practice.

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