

[aelaq]



# 2024–2025

ANNUAL  
REPORT

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# President's Report



First and foremost, I want to thank our outgoing president Kathleen Fraser, who held the reins for the past four years. Let me tell you that I have big shoes to fill.

In a chaotic world that seems to get darker by the day, I feel like the world needs independent publishers more than ever. In this era, when divisive narratives seem to dominate public discourse, it is important that we unite and organize ourselves to have a stronger association. We have to stand up and make sure more of our books go out in the hands of readers. A lot has happened this year to make sure that we're aiming to achieve these goals.

On that note, I want to send a big thank you to our devoted staff. We are very fortunate to count on Rebecca West and Alexandra Sweny, who are getting more comfortable in their roles and coming up with great initiatives. The Professional Development days is one of them and it's a valuable addition to our current activities. Hopefully, this will become a recurring yearly event so that we can build stronger bonds through those days. If you didn't have the chance, I invite you to come see for yourself the richness of the proposed subjects.

On Rebecca's recommendation, our most noticeable endeavour was to start working on a strategic plan. I can't thank our board members enough, who have put in many hours throughout the process. A special thank you to Ryan Van Huijstee for his devotion. With the help of our selected consultants, Thomas Ledwell and Julie Kon Kam King, we came up with a plan that will help us focus on our mission for the next five years. A plan that was built with your feedback, our precious members. A huge thank you goes out to you.

Hopefully, you'll be as excited as I am with this proposed plan. A plan that I'm sure will help us face the challenges that our publishing industry faces.

Let's make books great again!

Luc Bossé  
May 22, 2025

# Executive Director's Report

In my fourth turn around the sun at AEFAQ, just as it felt like things were beginning to normalize post-pandemic, the world had other plans. In early 2025, uncertainty around American tariffs and possible counter-tariffs threw a wrench into independent publishers' export strategies, and has created ripple effects on book buying and travel habits.



This turn of events added stress to an industry, in many ways, already struggling to stay afloat. A member survey in September 2024 led by the Association of Canadian Publishers and the Literary Press Group revealed that just under 50% of respondents characterized the health of their companies as “worrying” or “dire.” Flatlined, falling, or inaccessible federal funding was the most frequently mentioned factor; other issues include copyright law, inflation, returns, and HR issues.

We cannot extrapolate from this national survey that the situation for our members in Quebec is identical, but many of the root factors are similar. While we benefit from Quebec's comprehensive book law, which has created more favourable conditions for publishers, booksellers and distributors than in the rest of Canada, we are also faced with Quebec-specific legislation, such as Bill 35 on the status of the artist. We work alongside our French-language publisher counterparts, benefitting from and contributing to Quebec's vibrant book culture, yet our market realities are starkly different. Canadian-owned publishers represent 52% of the French-language market, yet only 5.3% of the English-language market (Sources: BookNet, BTLF).

In the face of these realities, in 2024–2025, I am proud to have continued to advance the interests of our members through our advocacy work, our flagship marketing and visibility projects, such as the *Montreal Review of Books* and the Read Quebec Book Fair, and our member support initiatives. Highlights from this year include programming an inaugural and second edition of our professional development conference Open Books, Open Minds, repositioning our collective kiosk at Salon du livre de Montréal, hosting the book fair in a new, more versatile venue, the Casa d'Italia, and getting media coverage for our anti-tariff campaign this past spring.

Looking ahead to the next five years, we have put gears in motion to make AEFAQ better equipped to handle a quickly evolving industry, and more financially resilient in the face of stagnant grant funding. In 2024, we participated in the Canada Council for the Arts sponsored online course Thriving Non-Profits. Working alongside a cohort of similar arts not-for-profits, in addition to extensive course work, we benefited from personalized coaching sessions, which helped us develop a plan to generate new sources of revenue for the association. Big thanks to our board member Ryan Van Huistee for supporting us throughout the course. Our chosen strategy relies on one of our strengths: partnerships. AEFAQ has a strong existing base of partners, primarily within the literary sector. Our goal is to leverage this network to move beyond



our alliance and in-kind partners, to develop more cash-based partners and sponsors. We realize that there is a lot of legwork ahead of us to make this a reality.

As a first step, in the fall of 2024, we put out a call for proposals for a consultant to help us develop a strategic plan, a first at AELAQ, from what I understand. We received a surprising number of candidates, and are thrilled to have chosen to work with Thom Ledwell of Ledwell Strategies and his associate Julie Kon Kam King. Over the past four months, they have led us through a comprehensive process, including member and community surveys, in-depth interviews with representatives from member publishers, and a full-day working session with AELAQ's Board. I am proud to share the resulting plan with you at the AGM. It lays a solid framework in terms of pathways to new funders and partners, yet also has a flexible approach, allowing us to adapt as the publishing ecosystem and membership needs evolve over the coming years. I am grateful to Thom and Julie, and to our strategic planning steering committee, Luc Bossé, Ryan Van Huijstee, and Alexandra Sweny, for their tireless work in seeing this plan come to fruition.

I wish to express thanks to the AELAQ Board of Directors for their continued dedication this year. Our president Luc Bossé has been a constant support, going above and beyond in ensuring that our presence at Salon du livre de Montréal was a success. I'd like to extend special thanks to Kathleen Fraser, who served as AELAQ's "pandemic" president from 2020 to 2024, as past president last year, and will be stepping down this year. Kathleen's guidance through an unusual few years has been invaluable. I'd also like to extend many thanks to Carmine Starnino, who has served on the Board of Directors since 2022 and will be stepping down this year.

AELAQ's projects and daily smooth operations would not be possible without our hardworking staff and many longtime collaborators. Special thanks go to our production coordinator Alexandra Sweny, whose optimism and energy seem to know no bounds, to our talented mRb editor Malcolm Fraser and graphic designer David LeBlanc, and our dedicated book fair coordinator Elise Moser. We were deeply saddened at the loss of the mRb's national advertising manager Michael Wile in January, and miss his cheerful calls to the office.

Finally, I wish to thank our member publishers for their solidarity and participation in our many initiatives throughout the year. I am inspired not only by your books, but by your sense of collaboration and determination. I look forward to another year of working together towards building a resilient English-language literary community in Quebec.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca West  
Executive Director  
May 21, 2025

# 2024 – 2025 Year in Review

## Administration

Rebecca West served as Executive Director and Alexandra Sweny as Production Coordinator throughout 2024–2025. At the *mRb*, Malcolm Fraser served as Editor, and in the fall of 2024, Associate Editor Nived Dharmaraj left us to pursue full-time editorial work. We brought Emma Dollery on board as Interim Associate Editor, and are in the final stages of the hiring process for this role. Elise Moser completed her 9th edition as our book fair coordinator, and we brought on a new logistics coordinator to assist in producing last year's fair, along with contract staff to manage our presence at the Salon du livre de Montréal.

### AELAQ by the Numbers

**26**

members

**17**

events

**839**

books sold

**3,843**

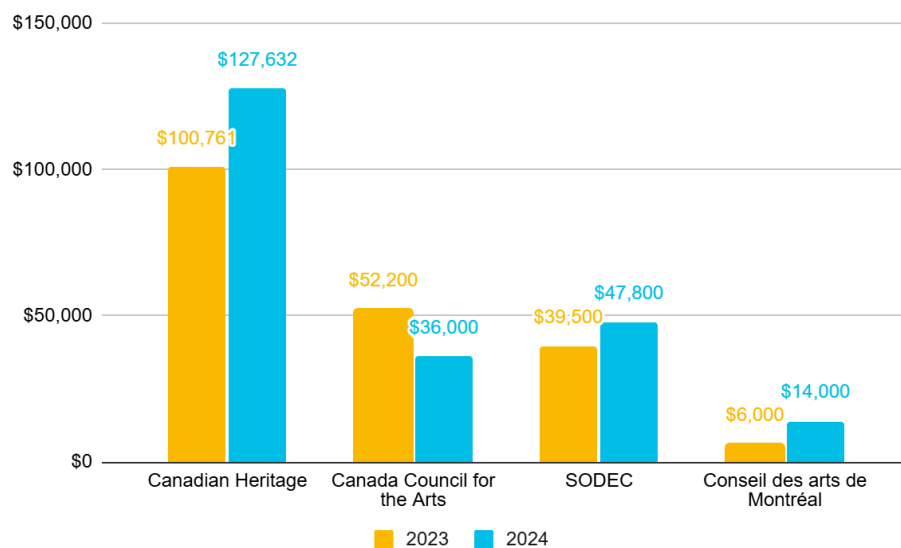
guests at events



# Grants and Finances

AELAQ received operational funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage's (PCH) Canada Book Fund, SODEC, and the Canada Council for the Arts, as well as project funding from the Conseil des arts de Montréal.

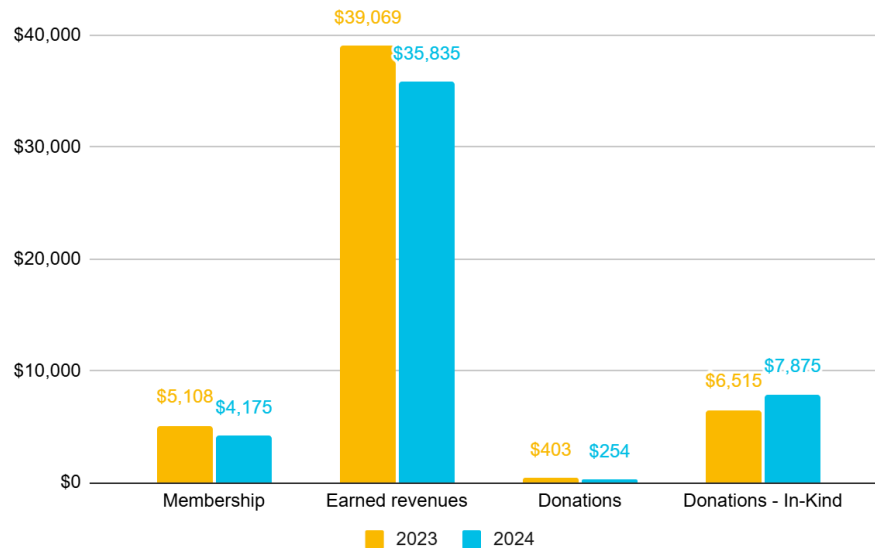
From 2023 to 2024, our grant revenues increased by 14%, due a supplement from PCH, and increased support from the Conseil des Arts de Montréal, who funded all three issues of the *Montreal Review of Books* in 2024. Our self-generated income decreased by 6%, due primarily to a slight decrease in *mRb* ad sales and donations.



Grant Revenue: 2023 vs. 2024

We continue to supplement our grant revenue with earned income, primarily through:

- *mRb* advertising sales;
- *mRb* subscriptions and donations;
- membership fees;
- exhibitor fees at our annual book fair and Salon du livre de Montréal;
- new tiered-pricing ticketing for professional development.

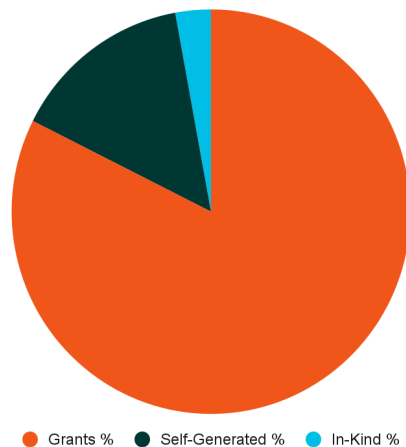


### Earned Income: 2023 vs. 2024

Year over year, our revenues were up 10%, while our expenses increased by 19%, leading to a deficit of \$18,049. The deficit is due to several factors:

- A smaller PCH supplement than expected, only confirmed belatedly in January;
- Increased book fair costs in a new venue;
- Staff fall overtime hours.

From May to October 2024, we completed the Canada Council for the Arts' Thriving Non-Profits program, a six-month online course to help guide arts organizations to financial stability. Using strategies learned in this course, we were able for the first time to secure sponsors for our professional development conference, Friesens Press and Hebdo-Litho. A big thank you to board member Ryan Van Huijstee, who participated in the course with us, and our coach Susan Climie. These funding diversification ideas will no doubt come into play as we roll out our new strategic plan over the coming years.



### Breakdown of Total Revenue in 2024

# Membership

AELAQ is composed of 26 member publishers working across scholarly, trade and children's literature. Located primarily in Montreal, our membership presents an exciting snapshot of Quebec's rich and ever-developing English-language literary history.

We welcomed children's book publisher Milky Way Picture Books as a new member this year. Paper Dog Press also joined briefly as a member in 2024 before temporarily winding down their publishing practice. Following our 2024 annual general meeting, Studio Georgeville left the association, while Smiling Eyes Press opted not to renew their membership.

**Current members include** Baraka Books / QC Fiction, Bunim & Bannigan, Concordia University Press, Corner Studio, Daraja Press, DC Books, Drawn & Quarterly, Guernica Editions, InfiniPRESS, Kersplebedeb, Linda Leith Publishing, Livres Agapé Books, Longbridge Books, McGill-Queen's University Press, Metatron, Metonymy Press, Milky Way Picture Books, Noon Books, PAPP International, Phoenicia Publishing, Pow Pow Press, Prince Chameleon Press, Renaissance Press, The Secret Mountain, Universitas Press, and Véhicule Press.

Learn more about our members at [aelaq.org/members](https://aelaq.org/members).

## Milestones and Bragging Rights

Here's just a sample of some of the awards and nominations our member publishers took home this year:

- ❑ Kate Beaton, *Ducks*, **Drawn & Quarterly**, winner of the 2024 Jan Michalski Prize for Literature;
- ❑ Derek Webster, *National Animal*, **Véhicule Press**, winner of the Quebec Writers' Federation's 2024 A. M. Klein Prize for Poetry;
- ❑ Stephanie Rutherford, *Villain*, *Vermin*, *Icon*, *Kin: Wolves and the Making of Canada*, **McGill-Queen's University Press**, winner of the 2024 Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences Prize;
- ❑ Boum, *The Jellyfish*, **Pow Pow Press**, winner of the Prix des libraires du Québec 2024;
- ❑ Dimitri Nasrallah, *Hotline*, **Véhicule Press**, selected for the 2024 One eRead Canada campaign;
- ❑ Valérie Bah, *The Rage Letters*, (translated by Kama La Mackerel), **Metonymy Press**, finalist for 2024 Lambda Literary Award in Transgender Fiction;
- ❑ Maxime Raymond Bock, *Morel* (translated by Mélissa Bull), **QC Fiction**, finalist for the 2024 Governor Generals' Literary Awards for Translation;



- ❑ Mirion Malle, *So Long Sad Love* (translated by Aleshia Jensen), **Drawn & Quarterly**, finalist for the 2024 Governor Generals' Literary Awards for Translation;
- ❑ Julie Delporte, *Portrait of a Body* (translated by Helge Dascher and Karen Houle), **Drawn & Quarterly**, finalist for the 2024 Ignatz Award for Outstanding Artist.

This year also marked **10 years in business** for Metatron Press, Metonymy Press and Universitas Press, and **50 years** for DC Books.

*From top clockwise: Attendees at our Fall 2024 edition of Open Books, Open Minds; Pow Pow Press' François Vigneault at the Read Quebec Book Fair; publisher Ashley Obscura (black dress, center) at Metatron Press' 10th anniversary party.*



# Advocacy, Partnerships and Community Involvement

## Advocacy



*AELAQ executive director Rebecca West (left) and president Luc Bossé met with Sarah Mayes, head of the Canadian Book Fund, at our Salon du livre de Montréal kiosk.*

We are committed to advocating on behalf of English-language Quebec publishers to build a resilient English-language literary ecosystem in Quebec. Working alongside the ACP and our affiliates across the country, areas of advocacy this year included:

- Increasing the annual budget of the Canada Book Fund;
- Enhancing Canada Council for the Arts funding to support new and emerging publishers;
- Amending the Copyright Act to ensure fair compensation for creators;
- Advocating for AI regulations that protect the rights of authors and publishers;
- Advocating for English-language minority rights and visibility in Quebec.

We represented English-language publishing in Quebec at many events throughout the year as well as in the media. Meetings and consultations included:

- June 2024, Association of Canadian Publishers' Annual General Meeting in Toronto, ON;



- August 2024, *Le 12 août, j'achète un livre québécois* digital campaign;
- November 2024, Meeting with Sarah Mayes, Director, Book Publishing Policy and Programs at the Canada Book Fund;
- January 2025, Association of Canadian Publishers' Mid-Winter Meeting;
- March 2025, AELAQ co-signed a letter with the ACP and affiliates, lobbying the Canadian government not to impose a unilateral tariff on books manufactured in the US and appeared on [CTV Evening News](#) to advocate against tariffs being leveraged in the US-Canada trade war;
- Ongoing: Participation in the Association of Canadian Publishers' "Buy Canadian" marketing strategy, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and Social Change Committee.

New in 2024, our executive director Rebecca West was invited to join Quebec's **Conseil Consultatif de la Lecture et du Livre**, as well as the **Literature Evaluation Committee** at the Conseil des arts de Montréal, both for mandates of three years.

## Partnerships

We're grateful to be connected to a strong community of like-minded organizations, both here in Montreal and across the country.

This year, we have had the pleasure of working with the Quebec Writers' Federation, the Salon du livre de Montréal, Les Libraires, the Atwater Library and Computer Centre, Café Osmo x Marusan, P'tit Ours, Paragraphe Bookstore, Librairie Saint-Henri Books, Casa d'Italia, the Blue Metropolis Literary Festival, Violet Hour, and the Association of Canadian Publishers. As of June 2024, Linda Leith Publishing's Shakiya Williams holds the publishing seat on the ELAN board.

We are grateful to the sponsors who supported our 2024 events: Friesens Press, Hebdo-Litho, Babar Books, the *Montreal Gazette*, Penguin Random House Canada, the English-language Arts Network and the Writers' Union of Canada.

## In the Media

We are proud to highlight Quebec's English-language publishers, authors and their works onscreen and on the air with local media.

In September, AEFAQ was the focus of the *Publishers' Weekly* article "[Canadian Publishing 2024: Publishing in Lingua Franca](#)."

Other appearances include CTV Evening News, The Concordian, CJAD 800, I Heart Radio, CBC Radio (Radio Noon with Shawn Apel, All in a Weekend with Sonali Karnick, and Let's Go with Sabrina Marandola), Frequency News, CKUT, Cult MTL, K103.7FM and Westmount Magazine.



*Rebecca West speaks with CTV News at the 2024 Quebec Writers' Federation Awards Gala.*

### Canadian Publishing 2024: Publishing in Lingua Franca

English-language publishers face unique challenges, and enjoy distinct advantages, in Francophone Quebec

By Claire Kirsch | Sep 27, 2024



*AELAQ publishers featured in Publishers Weekly.*



*First-time author Coltrane Seesequasis speaks with CTV Evening News onsite at the Read Quebec Book Fair on December 7th.*

# Marketing and Visibility

## Montreal Review of Books

It was another successful year for the *Montreal Review of Books* as we continue to carve out a dedicated audience in the heart of the literary community. We published three issues, each with an average print run of 37,000 copies, as well as 8 additional online reviews throughout the year. We continue to work with Malcolm Fraser as editor, David LeBlanc as graphic designer, Alexandra Sweny as associate publisher, and Rebecca West as publisher. We are currently in the process of hiring an associate editor who will join our team for the fall 2025 issue.

Our 2024–2025 launches took place in hybrid format, in-person and live-streamed to YouTube. Here are some highlights:



### Summer 2024

- 26 books
- 30 authors
- 12 English-language minority authors
- 24 publishers
- 15 AELAQ member titles
- \$512 in launch sales



### Fall 2024

- 25 books
- 30 authors
- 13 English-language minority authors
- 22 publishers
- 14 AELAQ member titles
- \$962 in launch sales



### Spring 2025

- 29 books
- 32 authors
- 11 English-language minority authors
- 20 publishers
- 16 AELAQ member titles
- \$500 in launch sales

All of the reviews from our print issues are featured online, alongside web exclusive content and original monthly illustrations. In 2024, the mRb website attracted approximately 36,000 visitors—check out what they were reading in [“The Top mRb Reviews of 2024”](#)!



## Read Quebec Book Fair 2024



*Photo of the 2024 Read Quebec Book Fair by Julian Haber.*

The 2024 Read Quebec Book Fair took place for the first time at Casa d'Italia. It was a pleasure to gather in Little Italy on December 7 and 8 for a snowy weekend of book buying and festivities.

With Elise Moser at the helm as our seasoned book fair coordinator, we worked with Danny Payne from Raison D'Etre Media to manage our public relations and appearances, and hired Amélie Lehoux to create beautiful and lively branding for this year's fair. To ensure a seamless experience for exhibitors and attendees, we worked with Kay Pettigrew to iron out logistics at this new venue.

### Events

1. *A Duck in New York City* — Musical Performance for Kids of All Ages
2. Katsi'tsakwas Ellen Gabriel in Conversation with Dr. Samir Shaheen-Hussain
3. Create Your Own Comic Strip! A workshop with Vasilios Billy Mavreas
4. The Violet Hour Book Club Reads *Subterrane* by Valérie Bah
5. Archives Out Loud: A Panel Discussion on Italian-Canadian Writing in English in Quebec
6. How I Got Published: Fiction Edition
7. Postcards to the Future! A workshop with Vasilios Billy Mavreas
8. Comic Book Confessions: Montreal Cartoonists Tell All

9. Cards for Peace: A workshop with Vasilios Billy Mavreas
10. Ian Ferrier Spoken Word Prize Showcase

Year after year, the Read Quebec Book Fair continues to unite, promote and enrich Quebec's English-language publishing industry and literary community. Sales this year reached **\$13,416** (representing **594 books sold**), our second-highest amount to date, with average member sales totalling \$716. These numbers reinforce the Fair's original mandate to boost member sales and promote their works.

Across both days of the fair, we welcomed **700 attendees**, which is fewer than the 1,279 in 2023, although all of these attendees were expressly at the fair, as opposed to wandering through the Concordia atrium as in past years. **Average sales per attendee increased by 90%**, at \$19, up from \$10 in 2023. We hosted **75 authors**, with books from **42 publishers**. Of these, we were proud to put a spotlight on 4 Indigenous authors, 15 BIPOC authors, and 50 authors from language-minority communities.



*Our 2024 Read Quebec Book Fair team, L-R: Vasilios Billy Mavreas, Elise Moser, Liana Cusmano, Rebecca West, Kay Pettigrew, Alexandra Sweny, and Gianluca Grazioli.*

## Read Quebec Digital Platform



*Illustration for Metonymy Press' 10th anniversary by Keet Geniza.*

*Read Quebec* is the online hub for our annual book fair, and throughout the year features recent releases and news from Quebec's English-language publishing scene.

In 2024, we published and distributed spring and fall digital catalogues featuring **85 member titles**. In order to drive interest and traffic to the site, we also regularly publish articles about the latest literary happenings, including Metonymy Press' tenth anniversary, World Read Aloud Day, and seasonal event round-ups. In August, we partnered with Les Libraires to present a selection of English-language works for Quebec's growing book-buying campaign, *Le 12 août, j'achète un livre québécois*.



## Salon du Livre de Montréal 2024



*Our kiosk at the 2024 Salon du livre de Montréal.*

This year, AELAQ had the honour of representing English-language publishers at the Salon du livre de Montréal, the city's largest book fair. With over 92,000 visitors across five days, it was an excellent opportunity to spotlight our members' work and showcase the diverse stories being published in English from here. It was AELAQ's first time managing book sales at the Salon directly, without a bookseller partner. This allowed us to feature member titles exclusively and have greater control over the presentation of the booth.

The kiosk featured titles from eight members, including Baraka Books/QC Fiction, Concordia University Press, Drawn & Quarterly, Linda Leith Publishing, Livres Agapé Books, McGill-Queen's University Press, Metatron Press and Metonymy Press. Several member publishers volunteered time at the kiosk, along with coordinators Frances Grace Fyfe and Liana Cusmano.

In total, **169 member books were sold** for a total of **\$4,235 in sales**, 100% of which were transferred back to participating publishers. While overall sales were lower than when we combined the booth with non-member titles in previous years, sales in 2024 represented a 169% increase from the \$1,572 in member books sold at the Librairie Saga-managed single kiosk in 2023, and a 10% increase from \$3,845 in member sales from the Paragraphe-managed double kiosk in 2022.



We could not have pulled this off without the support of AELAQ President Luc Bossé and his team at Pow Pow Press, who championed the project and provided much needed hands-on support throughout the Salon.

## Professional Development

This year, we took a new approach to delivering professional development to our members. We're pleased to have presented two successful runs of **Open Books, Open Minds: A Conference for Publishers**.



2024 visual branding by Siamak Pourjabbar.

### Open Books, Open Minds 2024

October 1, 2024, marked the inaugural edition of *Open Books, Open Minds: A Conference for Publishers*! This full-day conference hosted on Zoom and in person at the Atwater Library's Adair Auditorium brought together book industry professionals from across the country to weigh in on the latest issues and trends facing publishers:

1. Opening Talk with **Alana Wilcox**, Coach House Books;
2. Community-Based Marketing, with **Mathieu Lauzon-Dicso**, **Cassandra Keating**, and **Sanna Wani**;
3. Cover to Cover: Best Practices in Book Design, with **Ryan Van Huijstee**, **Jazmin Welch**, **Kevin Yuen Kit Lo**, and **Sébastien Aubin**;
4. The Next Chapter: Succession Planning for the Future of Indie Publishing, with **Julien Lefort-Favreau**, **Caroline Fortin**, **Mélissa Labonté** and **Robin Philpot**;

5. É(x)changes with **Julien Lefort-Favreau, Alana Wilcox, Antoine Tanguay** and **Luc Bossé**;

Our final two panels were presented in partnership with l'ANEL to connect French and English-language publishers in support of a stronger industry for all. In total, we welcomed **38 participants**, including 13 AELAQ member publishers.



*2025 visual branding by Amélie Lehoux.*

## Open Books, Open Minds 2025

After a successful first iteration in October, we returned in April 2025 to present the conference's second edition at the Centre culturel Georges-Vanier. We moved the event to the spring to avoid overlap with producing the book fair and attending the Salon du livre de Montréal in the fall. Our 2025 discussions included:

1. Opening Talk with **Dan Wells**, Biblioasis;
2. Ethical Approaches to AI in Publishing with **Fenwick McKelvey, Crystal Chan** and **Valentine Goddard**;
3. Can Publishers Be Happy? With **Dr. Anna Sverdlik**;
4. Global Exports in Uncertain Times with **Lisa Quinn, Gabrielle Etcheverry, Dan Wells** and **Kathryn Willms**;
5. Building Collections, Building Connections with **Aeron MacHattie, Elise Marcoux, Daryan Sykes** and **Barbara Whiston**.

In total we welcomed **40 guests** (30 in person and 10 online), 16 of whom were AELAQ members.

## Information Sharing

AELAQ acts as a hub of information for the public, other associations, writers, English-language publishers from outside Quebec, and francophone publishers. We regularly update a calendar of member and industry events, which is open to the public on our [website](#).

To keep up with the latest from AELAQ and the *Montreal Review of Books*, sign up for our [newsletter](#) and member forum [listserv](#), and [subscribe](#) to the *mRb* to have all three issues delivered directly to your door.

## In Memoriam

This year, we lost cherished members of our community. We are grateful for the opportunity to cross paths and work together.

Michael Wile, *mRb* National Advertising Director, 2001–2025

Robyn Fadden, *mRb* contributor

David Gawley, Chief Financial Officer at Linda Leith Publishing