



Pile of Books

# Turning up the volumes

Few booksellers merely sell books these days. Alongside the shelves, Switzerland's best literary stores are bringing bookworms together with events, recommendations, food and drink and other sociable goings-on, says *Katharina Sand*



Kosmos Buchsalon



Orell Füssli

**NOW THAT WE CONSUME** so much of our culture digitally, real, beautifully designed books made of actual paper have become badges of authenticity that bring people together. Reading may be a solitary activity, but a copy of 'A Confederacy of Dunces' or the latest Paul Auster tucked under an arm can be a real conversation starter. Which is why so many

Swiss bookshops are fighting back against the internet retailers not just with coffee, cookies and phone chargers, but also with workshops, readings, debates and other events. Literature has never been so sociable.

**GENEVA**  
**Librairie de l'île**  
Formerly art and architecture bookstore Archigraphy, this

shop on an island in the middle of the River Rhône opened in March with the aim of becoming a community haven. Chat with the friendly new owner, Vincent Bidoyet, to find out about upcoming art exhibitions, writing workshops, lectures and other literary events with local writers.  
→ Place de l'île 1, Geneva (022 547 58 18, <http://librairiedelleile.ch>). Tue-Thur 10am-noon, 1-6pm; Fri 1-6pm; Sat 10am-noon, 1-5pm.

**Oraibi + Beckbooks**  
The kind of bookshop you might expect to see in Berlin, this unusual space founded by three young women sits snugly next to Geneva's Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art. The books are a mix of old and new and the trio's goal is to promote critical thinking and radical artists, thinkers and editors. Hang out on the little couch and you might

just get roped in to their next demonstration.  
→ Rue des Vieux-Grenadiers 10, Geneva (022 800 16 46, [www.beckbooks.ch](http://www.beckbooks.ch)). Tue-Sat noon-6pm (also open first Sun of each month).

**ZÜRICH**  
**Kosmos Buchsalon**  
Fancy books, dinner and a movie? The Kosmos cultural centre's Buchsalon is housed above the cinema and, thankfully, it's

'Kosmos Buchsalon can be a hard place to leave'

open until 10pm most nights because it can be a hard place to leave. Order food and drink at the counter, choose a few books, then settle in at the café tables or between the cushions on the large plywood seating area. It's almost more comfortable than your own home – and someone else even does the dishes! Meet fellow bookworms at the regular lively readings and events.

→ Lagerstrasse 104, Zurich (044 299 3044, [www.kosmos.ch](http://www.kosmos.ch)). Mon-Sat 10am-10pm; Sun 10am-8pm.

## Orell Füssli

They've thought of everything: all the latest Man Booker nominees, a Starbucks next to the mouthwatering cookbook section, multilingual staff, WiFi, and comfy chairs everywhere... The English-language Bookshop on the third floor of the flagship Füsslistrasse store in Zurich even stocks Marmite and other British and US foodstuffs next to the huge kids area. With 32 locations across Switzerland – and regular events in all of them – this chain certainly raises the bar for books.  
→ Füsslistrasse 4, Zurich (0848 849 848, [www.orellfuessli.ch](http://www.orellfuessli.ch)). Mon-Fri 9am-8pm; Sat 9am-6pm.

## Pile of Books

Don't you wish that every time you read an interesting book review, somebody would note down the title and pick up a copy for you to look at? Pile of Books owner Daniel Nufer may just have read your mind. Next to thank-you notes from illustrious authors (including Paul Auster), his English-language bookstore has an expertly edited selection of the best books on the market. There are also comfy chairs and a pay-what-ever-you-think coffee machine, plus some blue tables out front for reading in the sunshine. Watch the website for singer-songwriter performances and readings.  
→ Zentralstrasse 16, Zurich (043 333 29 45, [www.pileofbooks.ch](http://www.pileofbooks.ch)). Tue-Fri 10am-1pm, 3-7pm; Sat 10am-5pm.

## TRIN

### Ringel Refugium

This refuge/antique bookshop in the mountains is the brainchild of Romansh singer-songwriter Walter Lietha, a kind of Swiss Bob Dylan with a touch of Timothy Leary and the proud owner of over 100,000 vintage books. He recently moved his secondhand treasures out here close to the spectacular blue Caumasee near Flims where you can rent a simple room, share the kitchen and get lost in literature. Groups are welcome. Call to find out about cultural events.  
→ Via Principala 44, Trin (081 252 10 81, [www.ringel-refugium.ch/www.narrenschiiff.ch](http://www.ringel-refugium.ch/www.narrenschiiff.ch)). Bookshop open by appointment.