

July 2021 Bulletin

Welcome to summer. We hope to see you at our picnic at Lantern Brewing on July 11, 1:30-3:30pm, to taste our 8000Km Collab sister city beer, catch up on what SNSCA has been doing in the last few months for the 40th anniversary here and in Nantes, and enjoy our new freedom to socialize “en présentiel”. For your reading pleasure this month, we are taking a look back at the history of our French book sale.

Seattle-Nantes Book Sale History

When you visit the Seattle-Nantes booth at FrenchFest, the “real” one hopefully coming back next year, you see tables full of used French books for sale. Because this sale, which has now become a tradition, started as part of a celebration of Le 14 Juillet, this is a good time to recount how it started.

In 2004 Seattle-Nantes participated in the first Bastille Day celebration at the Seattle Center. The two-day affair organized by the French-American Chamber of Commerce under the leadership of Jack Cowan had booths, exhibits, French food and vintage cars set on the lawn, in the food court, and the Fisher Pavilion. When Tom Bennett, then Seattle-Nantes VP, asked Jack if he had any ideas on how our Association could raise funds for our scholarships during this event in years to come, Jack suggested that we sell used French books like the “bouquinistes” do along the Seine River in Paris.

Enthused by the idea, Tom built a re-creation of a bouquiniste stand, dark green painting included. Soon, donations exceeded the capacity of the stand and books were displayed also on overflow tables. In 2009, three tables were filled with French books, travel books, recipe books, etc. Hundreds of attendees browsed and some bought books like they would do in Paris.

In 2013, Bastille Day was replaced by FrenchFest and moved totally indoors in the Armory. In 2014 we settled into our permanent spot on the Mezzanine. By that time, the bouquiniste stand had seen better days and it was retired. Thanks to generous donations from our members and their friends, from the overfilled shelves of the Alliance Française, from several Franco-American schools, and many individual sources we have had every year a wonderfully diverse collection of books at unbeatable prices.





Children's books are the most popular and among those "Le Petit Prince" is the one most sought after. You can find wonderful bargains in coffee table art books or pricy editions. For example. books from La Pléiade collection worth \$60 on the Internet have been sold at one fifth that price. We are often asked "Where is your store? I don't have time to look at everything today!" One of the most telling anecdotes is when in 2010 several members of the delegation from Nantes who had come for the 30th Anniversary celebration visited our booth and bought many paperbacks. They said that they might not be able to find them in Nantes and that it was so "bon marché"!

With the 2-year FrenchFest pause, our inventory is exploding. We have over one thousand regular books, mostly novels from the 19th to the 21st Century, and several boxes of children books. We cannot wait to display them. If you are looking for a particular novel (these are the only books partially sorted) for your summer reading, we might have it. Just e-mail seattlenantessca@gmail.com and we will investigate!

