

State of the Young Stationers 2015

An update on the state of the Young Stationers from its chairman, at the Young Stationers' Annual Dinner, 20th July in Stationers' Hall.

Master, Liverymen, and you lovely Young Stationers all!

All 88 of you! Last year we were but 73. No more, clamoured William, our beloved Clerk, as he laid in plans for an emergency bunker in the Clerk's office, to hide.

We have been extremely lucky with numbers. We have 500 now on our Young and Stationery e-mail list, the most antique communications really we use.

But we have over 1,000 members in our extremely active Young Stationers Facebook group, and even as we speak, at this our second Annual Dinner, in the Hall of the Stationers and Newspaper Makers Company of which we are so delighted, proud, and frankly honoured to be an outgrowth, we have over 8,000 followers on Twitter.

I probably shouldn't admit this but that is double that of the Lord Mayor. He follows us. We followed him back.

I think this says a great deal about how we, the first livery company to sprout a Young section, have with all of your kind help, done I think our bit to bring the livery movement and the City of London into the cusp of the moment.

In a way, it is right that the younger Stationers, from the communications and media livery, should be the pioneers within livery and the City to bridge the gap between the lasting beauty of letterpress, woven paper, and traditional bookbinding, and the indisputed power of Facebook, Twitter, and still uninvited tools of the internet, to reach forward to more audiences and exposure than this Company, the livery movement, or the City ever before have had.

It is all because of you, all beautiful 88 of you, that we have been able to go out to the world, the world of press, publishing, printing, paper, paperclips and pencils, and all the rest, and say that livery is not only flummery for the eminent, great, and retired; but that the livery movement is here also for the young, intelligent, active, and engaged, at the early stages of their lives and right the way through, too.

It is to the extraordinary credit of this Company that, showing the genius for reinvention that Masters, Wardens, Courts, and Clerks of this Company have shown over and again in its venerable past, it has encouraged youth, engagement with new technologies, an already quite prestigious Prize for younger journeymen, and yes, for the second year in a row, journeywomen, in its professions--not content to roll over into moribund irrelevance, but stoutly resolved to play its role here and now.

This is our third year, together, as Young Stationers. We launched on 6th March, 2012, with my own proposer into the Company, Past Master Christopher McKane, he of the Times, there to represent especially the Newspaper Makers.

And Master, I think on behalf of all of us, your Young Stationers all spread out before you, I can tell you as we turn three, the State of the Young Stationers is strong.

Enticed by the chance to talk to the clever, engaged, and youthful in our fields, we have attracted a fearsome list of speakers—Culture Minister Ed Vaizey, Lord Inglewood, Baroness Wheatcroft,

Culture Secretary John Whittingdale—which I daren't say too loudly as a BBC reporter, Doug Wills, managing editor of the Independent and Evening Standard, libel silk Desmond Brown, and Lord Black who liked us so much he's become a Stationer.

We have now already our traditions – as in previous years, we have already had dinners in Oxford, where I annually visit my unfinished doctorate, and the House of Lords, where Black Rod has yet to lock us up in the Tower.

We had this year our first Burns Night, with Stationer Michael Binyon telling tales of Cold War derring-do from his years as Times Moscow correspondent, and addressing the haggis in Russian. He did not wear a skirt. So can come again.

Spring having sprung and the Clerk's emergency bunker showing no signs of imminent completion, the Young Stationers continued running at life, and the Company, at a headlong pace.

Many of us gathered on St Patrick's Day in the Garrick for a charity dinner, where, combined with one we did at Christmas in Boodle's, people here helped to raise in excess of £4,000 for the Alzheimer's Society.

In the tradition of the livery movement's commitment to charity, Young Stationers were indispensable in raising a further £1,700 towards the London Air Ambulance, with Dr Sophie Defrance, here to my left, helping one of our members find digs in Paris after a painful shambolic charity cycle ride from London. It was possibly me. My friends, if you ever leave the safe protective mist of the British Isles, bring sunscreen.

Then the Young Stationers did as everyone wished, and left the country—to Dublin, for the weekend before St Patrick's Day, where we went to see every bit of printed matter in a city known for the written word.

Sadly for all concerned, we then came back.

We inaugurated for the first time a Young Stationers' Committee, with Ije Okoli, here on the far left, our Prize judge Emma Hartley, Mahmoud Warriah, Dominic Montrose, Dr Mark Bland, and Minna Miller—now deputy clerk in the Chamberlain's Court, reinforcing our ties with the City—all here tonight, have all kindly agreed to serve.

We've held cheaper and dirtier events, such as our recession-busting Intellectual Property speakeasy at Inner Temple with two Lord justices of Appeal and –what is the proper collective noun—smattering of High Court Judges and silks. A bore of barristers? A sentence of judges?

And now, thanks to your kindness, Master, for our second year, we are gathered in this, our Hall, our home. And the home since 1403 for all those who work in our important professions, some writing—and tweeting—what many read, and others providing the means for them to do so.

It's a time for taking stock. One of the points of the Young Stationers is to be a recruiting channel into the membership, for those who work in the press, publishing, printing, paper, office products, and other things that involve the letter p.

We last month had two prospectives' meals within a fortnight, attracting the lead global analyst from Google, the head of the department of library and information sciences at UCL and a rare books specialist from the Cambridge University Library, all of whom have now sent back completed applications, and some of them are here today.

In 2012, the year we Young Stationers were born, only 18% of members were under 50. Since then, fully half of new members have been under 50, which in City of London terms makes you practically a baby.

More on babies later.

When the Young Stationers were launched, only 15% of this Company were women. Now, look around you, at this Hall, this Master, and yes for a second year this Prizewinner, and things look a bit different.

And to add balance to all this Company's charming old Compositors, with tales at dinner of a Fleet Street that is no longer, but which through them we can experience and know, 53% of new members came from the publishing and new media sectors.

But what ho, you ask, are we getting the *right* members?

I point over, in front of me, to the most recent Young Stationers to come into the Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers.

I see here Jaani Riordan, highly regarded intellectual property barrister at 8 New Square—his doctorate was at Oxford.

I see Mark Bland, editing the OUP Johnson, whose scholarship has included histories of this Company—his doctorate, too, was at Oxford.

I see Emma Hartley, formerly at the Telegraph, now at the Guardian, an author and also successful app inventor, whose work includes a book called *Did David Hassellhoff end the Cold War?* The answer can be expressed in one word. Though you should read it.

I see Ije Okoli, a columnist, author, lawyer, and Cornell graduate.

I see Dominic Graham who does data analytics at Deloitte, and our ever energetic Mahmoud Warriah, whom we're so lucky to have, who has worked as a finance professional for Sky and the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport.

Including recent applicants, I see Minna Miller and Dr Sophie Defrance, book and library specialists, both Cambridge graduates—showing we're tolerant.

This is the Young Stationers. And I am extremely proud of you all. And if anyone ever asks are we getting the right sort of people, I think the answer's a quietly confident you betcha.

Master, we congratulate you on becoming, this month, the 613th Master Stationer. As you said in your remarks after, 'this one looks a little different.' We are so grateful to have a publisher of your esteem at our helm, we are your foot soldiers, and we are so very grateful that your first formal event of your year is here, tonight, with us.

And in a night when we have dispensed shining silverware to an author the judges rightly called 'a one-woman powerhouse', we now can turn to another person eminent at newspaper making, who has been recognised with the Orwell Prize, and whose high-minded and committed service to free expression and the constant vigilance required to maintain it has included his work now as chairman of the Index of Censorship.

Our speaker tonight, David Aaronovitch, is now columnist at the Times but has had every job going in journalism. He began as producer for ITV's Weekend World, moved to the BBC as founding editor of On the Record, sloped over to print journalism and the Independent as chief leader writer, parliamentary sketch writer, columnist, and television critic—it's amazing you missed out restaurant reviews, too. He then added the Guardian and Observer, the New Statesman and Jewish Chronicle to pages where his words regularly appear, including too stints on Have I Got News For You, a book on conspiracy theory in shaping modern history, and documentaries looking at the Blair Years, the influence of religion on politics, and regime change in 1066.

And so we very warmly welcome David Aaronovitch, newspaper maker, home to Stationers' Hall, we will always be honoured to have you grace our Hall, and David, this floor, the floor of many Newspaper Makers, is now very much yours.

Pádraig Belton
Young Stationers Chairman