

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **Shortlists revealed for the 2021 Independent Publishing Awards**

The Independent Publishers Guild is delighted to announce the 12 shortlists for the 2021 Independent Publishing Awards. They are:

**Paperback Shop Trade Publisher of the Year**

Atlantic Books, Bloomsbury Publishing, Faber & Faber, Hardie Grant

**Clays Children's Publisher of the Year**

Nosy Crow, Sweet Cherry Publishing, Usborne Publishing

**PLS Academic and Professional Publisher of the Year**

Bloomsbury Publishing, Bristol University Press, Class Publishing, Edward Elgar Publishing

**Westchester Education Services Education Publisher of the Year**

Bloomsbury Publishing, Brilliant Publications, Jolly Learning

**IPG Specialist Consumer Publisher of the Year**

David & Charles, How2Become, Unbound, Vertebrate Publishing

**Nick Robinson Newcomer Award**

Chelsea Green Publishing UK, Magic Cat Publishing, Swift Press

**Deanta International Award**

Jolly Learning, Nosy Crow, Sweet Cherry Publishing

**IPG Marketing Award**

Kogan Page, Nosy Crow, Pluto Press

**Alison Morrison Diversity Award**

Emerald Publishing, Oneworld, Princeton University Press, SAGE Publishing, Unbound

**IPG Sustainability Award**

Cambridge University Press, Hawthorn Press

**The Bookseller Young Independent Publisher of the Year**

Nia Beynon, Boldwood Books; Shanon Rademacher, Class Professional Publishing; Michael Watson, Watkins Publishing

**GBS Services to Independent Publishers Award**

The Book Publicist, Bookswarm, Edelweiss, Glassboxx, Inpress, Suzanne Collier

The shortlists feature a total of 43 nominations and celebrate 32 different companies and four individuals. They range widely across UK publishing spectrum, and recognise the remarkable achievements of the independent publishing sector in a tumultuous 2020.

Two businesses, Bloomsbury Publishing and Nosy Crow, have three places apiece on the shortlists, while three more, Jolly Learning, Sweet Cherry Publishing and Unbound, have two. More than a third of the nominated companies—13 in total—appear on the Independent Publishing Awards shortlists for the first time.

One more Award, for the prestigious title of IPG Independent Publisher of the Year, will be chosen from a shortlist made up of the winners of the five Publisher of the Year categories. That winner will follow Jessica Kingsley Publishers, Templar Publishing, Alastair Sawday Publishing, Earthscan, Continuum, Constable & Robinson, Bloomsbury Publishing's Academic and Professional Division, Usborne Publishing, Search Press, Nosy Crow, Edward Elgar Publishing, Maths – No Problem!, Faber & Faber and Emerald Publishing—as the 15<sup>th</sup> champion independent publisher.

The winners of all the Awards will be revealed at a very special lunch on Tuesday 21 September 2021 at the OXO Tower Brasserie in London. Tickets for the event are available now.

IPG chief executive Bridget Shine says: “2020 was an exceptionally challenging year for us all, so we are thrilled to be celebrating the outstanding success of so many superb independent publishers and people. They have all performed brilliantly during the pandemic, showing all the extraordinary resilience, flexibility and commercial success of our sector. After more than a year and a half of remote working and virtual events, it will be even more exciting than usual to celebrate IPG members’ successes in person in September.”

The IPG would like to thank the sponsors of the 2021 Independent Publishing Awards: Clays, Deanta, GBS, Publishers’ Licensing Services, The Bookseller, Paperback Shop and Westchester Education Services.

The IPG is also grateful to all the judges of the Awards: Huw Alexander, textBOX; Graham Bell, EDItEUR; Tim Davies, Westchester Publishing Services; Elise Dillsworth, Elise Dillsworth Agency; Eela Devani, Copyright Licensing Agency; Vicky Ellis, Clays; Ruth Jones, Ingram Content Group; Hazel Kenyon, Nielsen Book; Stephen Lustig, SJ Music Publications; Steve Potter, World of Books; Miles Poynton, consultant; Ken Rhodes; Kieron Smith, Blackwell’s; Caroline Summers, The Paperback Shop; and George Walkley, consultant.

Judges’ comments about each of the 12 shortlists for the 2021 IPG Independent Publishing Awards follow.

## Paperback Shop Trade Publisher of the Year

**Atlantic Books** is the current holder of this Award, and it had another strong year of sales in 2020. Its backlist and ebooks were particularly successful, and it got a couple of titles into the *Sunday Times* bestseller lists. Judges also liked Atlantic's care of staff in a difficult year, and its commitment to improvements on sustainability and diversity. "Everything Atlantic is doing as a publisher and as an employer at the moment is great," said the judges.

**Bloomsbury Publishing** had a string of bestsellers last year and responded very nimbly to lockdowns, keeping publishing schedules on track, shifting sales, marketing and events online and actively supporting independent bookshops. Judges said the business managed to retain an entrepreneurial spirit despite its size. "Bloomsbury does things well right across the board... it serves its authors and reading communities brilliantly."

**Faber & Faber** has won this Award four times since 2007, and had one of its best ever years in 2020. Its highlights included several big book prizes, strong backlist and audio sales growth and an overhaul of its branding and content strategy, while the Faber Academy and Members projects thrived. "Faber gets people engaging with its books in so many different ways," said the judges. "It's been around forever but feels as relevant as it has ever been."

**Hardie Grant** is shortlisted at the Independent Publishing Awards for the first time this year. The judges liked the way it identified sales opportunities in the pandemic for books on its backlist, as well as its efforts on diversity and sustainability. "Hardie Grant forged ahead with its publishing while others put in on hold last year," judges said. "It's got a clear business strategy and knows its strengths."

## Clays Children's Publisher of the Year

**Nosy Crow** has won this Award five times in the last ten years and had another stellar year of growth. Judges particularly admired the way it had sustained international sales, set up its own field sales force in the UK and published a free digital book about coronavirus for children. "There's so much to like about Nosy Crow. It made some brave decisions in a difficult year, and the Covid book was an important piece of publishing."

**Sweet Cherry Publishing** is shortlisted here for the third year in a row. It generated record sales in 2020, with exports and digital turnover particularly strong. Judges also liked its commitment to promoting literacy and diversity from its base in Leicester. "Sweet Cherry keeps evolving and had another good year. It's great to see a children's independent thriving outside of the usual publishing centres."

**Usborne Publishing** increased domestic and international turnover yet again in 2020, with huge growth in direct sales more than making up for revenue lost through shops. It launched a new website and improved its technology infrastructure, and formed new partnerships on diversity projects. “Usborne never seems to rest on its laurels—it’s always finding new markets and new ways to get books into children’s hands,” said the judges.

### **PLS Academic & Professional Publisher of the Year**

**Bloomsbury Publishing’s** Academic and Professional division won this and the overall Independent Publisher of the Year Award back in 2013. It has grown massively since then, organically as well as through acquisitions of independents including Zed and Oberon. Judges liked its support of academic communities during Covid and the mass market reach of many of its titles. “It’s got the advantage of big resources, but it uses them in all the right ways.”

**Bristol University Press** is the only university press on this shortlist for the second year in a row. Judges liked its sense of purpose, coupled with very professional commissioning and digital marketing, as well as a thoughtful approach to open access models. “Bristol University Press’ publishing really means something. They’re clear on what they want to achieve, and determined that not even a pandemic will get in their way.”

**Class Publishing** responded to the many challenges of the pandemic very well. Its apps for emergency workers came into their own, and lots of other activity moved online overnight. Judges also liked the care it had shown to staff, authors and customers. “Class quietly did some really important work in 2020,” they said. “They make clever use of their content and understand exactly what people want from them.”

**Edward Elgar Publishing**, the winner of this Award in 2014 and 2017, is shortlisted again for more strong digital growth. Judges admired its polished digital platforms, ongoing product innovation, growing direct sales and excellent relationships with authors and customers. “Edward Elgar didn’t take a step back when the pandemic hit, but quickly worked out what it should do and where the opportunities lay,” they said.

### **Westchester Education Services Education Publisher of the Year**

**Bloomsbury Publishing’s** Education division has won this Award for the last two years, and it grew sales in a very tough schools and libraries market in 2020. Judges liked its provision of free resources for children and parents during months of home schooling, and admired its design and marketing in particular. “Bloomsbury demonstrates a lot of innovation and entrepreneurialism for a big business,” they said.

**Brilliant Publications** joins the Independent Publishing Awards shortlists for the first time this year. It responded quickly and constructively to the closure of schools, providing teachers and parents with digital resources, and the goodwill paid off in a sharp increase in direct sales over the year. “Brilliant has a very good understanding of what teachers need... it really stepped up to the plate in 2020,” said the judges.

**Jolly Learning** also proved its worth during the short-notice switch to home learning around the world. Direct sales and marketing replaced usual routes to market, and the training side of the business moved online. Judges also liked Jolly Learning’s 2020 rebrand, and its philanthropic work in poor countries. “It wasn’t easy for anyone in education in 2021 but the Jolly Learning team rolled up their sleeves and got on with it,” they said.

### **IPG Specialist Consumer Publisher of the Year**

**David & Charles** makes a first appearance on the Independent Publishing Awards shortlists. The arts and crafts specialist has flourished since a management buyout in 2019, with strengths including beautiful design and production, smart data-led marketing, outstanding customer service and good brand partnerships. “They know their audience inside out and have very clear strategies for reaching them,” judges said.

**How2Become** is a two-time winner of this Award. Despite a widespread freeze in recruitment in 2020, its specialist careers content achieved best-ever sales, and frontlist publishing, website traffic and YouTube video views all set new records too. “How2Become is a truly multi-media business... it shows how independent publishing is about so much more than just books now,” said the judges.

**Unbound** is shortlisted here for the first time. A reorganisation of the business and a decision to publish fewer books better left it well placed to adjust to the pandemic, its direct to consumer platform bypassing bookshop closures. Judges liked Unbound’s continued innovation, its close connections to customers, new partnerships and international ambitions. “The crowdfunding model has been a real innovation in consumer publishing,” judges said.

**Vertebrate Publishing** is also shortlisted here for the first time. The outdoor adventure specialist achieved a huge increase in direct website sales during lockdowns, then benefited from people’s desire to get outside afterwards. It also secured fresh investment as part of a strategic growth plan. “The pause on travel and events could have been disastrous for Vertebrate, but it responded brilliantly... it’s a classic example of the agility of independents.”

### **Nick Robinson Newcomer Award**

**Chelsea Green Publishing UK** has made a timely arrival into the UK market with books on sustainable living. While it has been backed by Chelsea Green in the US, judges said it had quickly created a distinct personality in the UK, with original and diverse commissioning, good digital marketing and events and an audiobook programme. “Chelsea Green’s got a very clear vision for the UK and has hit the ground running here,” said the judges.

**Magic Cat Publishing** has made a huge impression in young children’s publishing since launching its first 11 books last year. Judges liked the way it has thought well beyond UK publishing, generating international interest and looking for spin-off products like games and jigsaws. “Magic Cat is already a very serious publishing house. For such a new business and small list and team, the sales numbers are extraordinary,” they said.

**Swift Press** had a handful of commercial and critical successes in just six months of publishing in 2020. Judges liked the ambition of its two founders, its author care and its global outlook. “They’ve made every book count so far: all of them are acquired with clear markets in mind, and the marketing is so slick. The team have set out to become a good-sized publisher in just a few years, and you wouldn’t bet against them.”

### **Deanta International Achievement Award**

**Jolly Learning** was the first winner back of this Award back in 2007, and continues to find new markets for its phonics books around the world. Its sales held up remarkably well considering the challenges of 2020, and judges admired its support of teachers and literacy in developing countries. “Jolly Learning is a truly global business, and year after year it finds new ways to grow sales and stay relevant,” they said.

**Nosy Crow** has won this Award four times in the last eight years, and it achieved yet more international growth in 2020. Judges particularly liked the way it responded to the cancellation of book fairs and travel with animated catalogues and virtual meetings. “Nosy Crow have amazing people who go the extra mile. They listen to their customers, understand their markets and respond brilliantly... it’s a textbook international operation.”

**Sweet Cherry Publishing** is shortlisted after doubling its export sales in 2020. Good distribution partnerships helped to increase turnover in China and the US, and there were new deals in South Africa and South East Asia. Judges said: “This is a great publishing team that have a passion for what they do and go about it with gusto. Growing so fast internationally in these circumstances is very impressive.”

### **IPG Marketing Award**

**Kogan Page** is shortlisted for its efforts to grow sales through its website, in a year when so many routes to market were closed or restricted. With minimal advertising spend it substantially increased sales conversion rates, with smart use of ebook offers, digital events and social media. Judges said: “It researched its strategy thoroughly and executed it very well. Kogan Page has a great instinct for what its customers want and how they want to get it.”

**Nosy Crow** is shortlisted for its interactive Frankfurt rights guide, an innovative response to the cancellation of book fairs. Featuring videos introducing books, animations of novelty titles, turn-the-page features, the guides went down well with customers and helped to achieve hundreds of rights or coedition deals. “This was a quick and clever reaction to Covid—it looked great and obviously played a big part in sustaining sales,” judges said.

**Pluto Press** is shortlisted for the marketing of ‘Outspoken by Pluto’, a four-book series of books for young adults. Its campaign used proof copies, YouTube events, Instagram and podcasts to spread the word, and generated very good direct sales from the Pluto website. “The campaign defined its target market well, set clear objectives and went after them hard... it’s a classic intertwining of great editorial and great marketing,” said the judges.

### **Alison Morrison Diversity Award**

This category of the Independent Publishing Awards received a record number of submissions, reflecting independent publishers’ extensive work on diversity, inclusivity and accessibility in 2020.

**Emerald Publishing** is shortlisted for a diversification of its publishing and books on important topics including disability and mental health in the black community. Judges also liked Emerald’s efforts to cut its gender pay gap, many progressive working policies and measures to reduce unconscious bias in recruitment. “Emerald’s really embraced diversity and accessibility as a company, from the top down,” they said.

**Oneworld** won this Award in 2017, and extended its track record of richly diverse publishing in 2020, backed up with excellent marketing, publicity and community outreach work. It continued partnerships with Spread the Word and Creative Access and audited its publishing and employment strategy. “Diversity’s in the DNA there... its publishing is truly global and you can see it’s thinking hard about the culture of the company as well,” judges said.

**Princeton University Press** appears on the Independent Publishing Awards shortlists for the first time this year. Its work has included equity and inclusion committees and resource groups, fellowships and grants for publishers and authors from under-represented communities, and audits of its commissioning. “It’s got a really comprehensive, root and branch approach to diversity—a lot of thought and effort has gone into it,” said the judges.

**SAGE Publishing** is shortlisted here for the first time. Its journals and books have championed under-represented groups and challenged inequalities, and it stepped up its own work with a new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Taskforce. SAGE is also a leader on accessibility, striving to open up content to more people. Judges said: “SAGE has been working hard on this for a long time, and it runs right through the structure and philosophy of the business.”

**Unbound** is shortlisted for championing diversity via its unique crowdfunded model that brings in authors from beyond the mainstream. In 2020 it published anthologies of autistic writers, authors with learning disabilities and a variety of non-cisgender writers. “Unbound has had diversity at its heart since it started, and the publishing is impressively broad... it’s also shown great allyship to others in the industry.”

### **IPG Sustainability Award**

**Cambridge University Press** won this Award when it was presented for the first time last year. It had another 12 months of influential publishing in the sustainability field in 2020, and set itself ambitious targets on reducing carbon emissions and plastic use, driven by its Environment Action Group. “CUP’s publishing does important work to highlight the climate emergency, and its people are following that lead with changes too,” judges said.

**Hawthorn Press** launched a new Quickthorn imprint dedicated to books about sustainability and creativity in 2020, including titles on reducing waste and sustainable crafts. It has worked hard to cut its own environmental impacts, in packaging in particular, and worked with local charities and organisations on community projects. “It’s backing up the sustainability messages of its books with meaningful actions of its own,” judges said.

### **The Bookseller Young Independent Publisher of the Year**

**Nia Beynon at Boldwood Books** has managed to combine sales and marketing leadership with publishing responsibilities too. She has been at the heart of rapid growth for Boldwood Books, which won last year’s Nick Robinson Newcomer Award. “She’s integral to everything at her business. It can’t be easy juggling so many roles, but Nia’s clearly got bags of energy and has delivered some really impressive results,” said the judges.

**Shanon Rademacher at Class Professional Publishing** has turned her hand to countless jobs since joining as an editorial assistant in 2016. Now senior digital editor, she has steered Class’ apps for the ambulance service, which significantly helped Covid-19 responses in 2020. Judges said: “Shanon’s made an extraordinary difference, not just at Class but beyond—you can sense her passion for what she does.”



**Michael Watson at Watkins Publishing** delivered some exceptional publicity campaigns for the Repeater Books imprint in 2020, nimbly pivoting work online after Covid hit. As well as securing high profile media coverage for some topical books, his work helped to dramatically increase direct sales when bookshops were closed. “There’s so much drive to his work—he’s indefatigable,” judges said. “Watkins and its authors are lucky to have him.”

### **GBS Services to Independent Publishers Award**

This shortlist has a record six nominations, reflecting the extensive efforts of publishing suppliers and service providers to support independent publishers in 2020.

**The Book Publicist**, the PR agency for non-fiction books, generated substantial media coverage for IPG members in 2020, and took the challenges of Covid in its stride. Publishers like its author-focused and collaborative approach and ability to generate publicity in unexpected places. “They feel like an extension of our company. Their experienced, organised and professional approach makes them a joy to work with,” said one.

**Bookswarm** has been behind the success of many independent publishers’ websites, which became a crucial discovery and sales tool in 2020. Founder Simon Appleby and his team are widely admired for their knowledge of publishers’ needs and responsive, can-do approach. One said: “They build excellent, robust, commercial and easy to manage websites, completely on brief... fantastic ongoing support and brilliant value for money.”

**Edelweiss**, the digital platform for publishers’ catalogues, review copies and other marketing activities, was a more useful discoverability tool than ever during the lockdowns of 2020. “Edelweiss has revolutionised our processes,” said one IPG member. “They deliver huge efficiencies for both publishers and booksellers, and has a great team who develop ways to make the book sales experience as efficient and effective as possible.”

**Glassboxx**, the ebook and digital audiobook delivery solution from Firsty, has helped to power direct to consumer sales for many IPG members. They like the control it gives them over sales, and the security, marketing features and analytics that come with it. “Glassboxx has helped us to expand our direct to reader offering with ease. I can’t commend enough how proactive and available their team has been,” said one.

**Inpress** is shortlisted here for the fourth year in a row, after providing a crucial lifeline for sales to dozens of small literary fiction, non-fiction and poetry publishers. One said: “In a year that presented so many challenges, Inpress’ support was like a steady ship in stormy waters. Their knowledge and advice on everything from distribution during lockdown to sales taxes have made them an indispensable partner for our business.”

**Suzanne Collier** is shortlisted for the third time in four years, and the value of Bookcareers' careers guidance, coaching, redundancy support and job club services was apparent in a challenging year for everyone working in publishing. "Suzanne helped me climb a difficult ladder, and it was her advice that turned the tide for me," said one person. "The knowledge and confidence I gained from my job club meetings were invaluable," said another.

**For any further information about the 2021 IPG Independent Publishing Awards, please contact Bridget Shine, IPG chief executive  
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