



## S2E6: Cheryl – The Little Bookshop in Chapel Allerton

### Transcript

00:00:14 Molly

Hello and welcome to Tales from the Leeds Library. The Leeds Library's Podcast series in which we talk to members of our extended community about their lives, their work and their relationship to books, libraries and literature. Founded in 1768, the Leeds Library is the oldest surviving subscription library in the UK and throughout this series will also be diving periodically into the library's rich history to find out what makes us and our members one of the most interesting and unique cultural institutions in Leeds and the UK. I'm Molly Magrath, the Projects Assistant at the Leeds Library and today our guest is Cheryl from the Little Book Shop in Chapel Allerton. Cheryl graduated many years ago with a degree in English and History and then went into an admin job. She had been doing the same job for 20 years when she decided to leave and spend more time with her children. When all her children were in school, she decided she needed to do something else and had a flash of inspiration, deciding she wanted to open a book shop. It then probably took around a year and a half to make that reality.

00:01:20 Molly

OK so hello Cheryl. Thank you very much for chatting to me today and so I guess to start with: can you tell me a little bit about the little bookshop and how you started out as an independent bookseller? So just kind of the story of how it came to be?

00:01:36 Cheryl

Yes hello. So, I was working for myself for a couple of years, which was something that was really new to me and I really loved it. I loved the independence. I loved being able to do what I wanted to do, being my own boss. I was a childminder and I wanted to do something different. So I just sort of started to think about it and I kind of hit on this idea of having a book shop. So that's really crazy and a lot of people assume it's been something I've wanted to do for my whole life. And I feel a bit disappointed well, I feel like I'm disappointing people by saying actually it wasn't that. However, I'm sure I must have had other ideas as well, but I think the book shop thing kind of was really, you know, a really powerful thought, and I kept pursuing it. And even though I kind of thought of lots of reasons not to do it, I kept kind of persevering. And then I contacted someone I knew through children, Hannah, who's now one of my business partners. And because she and Lou, my other business partner, have their own business. And a lot of what they do is sort of visual. So, I contacted them and said oh, would you maybe help me because I know what I want to do. I want to make this bookshop, but I'm not really good with aesthetics, and we talked, and they actually wanted to get involved, so we then sort of as the three of us, set about finding some premises. I had in my mind I wanted it to be in Chapel Allerton. And we found somewhere and yeah, we made it happen.

**00:03:38 Molly**

**Wonderful, it's so interesting actually that I think a lot of people -I know you mentioned that you talked to Amanda from Truman Books. She also, uhm, kind of she was in travel. I think working in travel and then during the pandemic kind of thought 'You know what, I really want to open a book shop' So I think a lot of people kind of decide at some point in their life that they want to try and make that happen and then do. It's kind of not necessarily a career that you work towards from when you're younger. I think it is interesting.**

00:04:11 Cheryl

Yeah yeah, and it is a very romantic idea and obviously the reality isn't the same, however, I love it.

**00:04:20 Molly**

**Yeah, well, that's what I want to kind of, that's what I'm interested in actually, the kind of the nitty gritty of how you run a book shop and. And yeah, one of the questions I'm quite interested to ask people who run book shops is how you kind of balance this idea of curating a collection of books that you really want people to read, and that you personally think are amazing. And then obviously you know commerciality, like books that are going to sell and make a profit, and so I don't know if you have any kind of thoughts on that.**

00:04:54 Cheryl

Yeah, kind of, quite low-level thoughts really, I suppose. When I first started with the book shop, I think they were the kind of thoughts that kind of gave me sleepless nights. How do I choose the right books? How can I be well read enough to recommend books and you know, and I think I realised that I can't really. So, there's a bit of bluff. But there's lots of information as well out there, and you know, we have obviously publishers who want to sell their books, so they produce magazines and leaflets, and they send sales reps around and you know you only have to sort of open the guardian and there's like books and lists to look at. So, it is just a bit of looking around. I also have two people work for me and they also do book buying. And customers might come and order a book, and I think all that looks great, so I'll order it and so actually it's not as difficult as I thought it would. I thought that would be quite hard. But actually, it does take a bit of time, but it's not actually that difficult.

**00:06:18 Molly**

**I suppose it's just, uh, kind of. Once you've been doing it for long enough you kind of get a sense of what will sell what your customers will like and you will have built a relationship with booksellers and a relationship with customers as well, I imagine.**

00:06:26 Cheryl

Yes, and we will have. Yes, and the book industry is so lovely. Yeah, you know we have a sales Rep who comes around, you know, for different publishers and they will say 'don't bother that one. Get that one you know so they are salespeople, but they are generally wanting us to sell the book. So that helps as well.

**00:06:52 Molly**

**That's really nice to hear.**

00:06:53 Cheryl

The commerciality isn't such a big thing for me, 'cause I'm a small shop. And on the whole, I tend to have one copy of each book, so I'm not buying 50 copies. You know, I'm not putting myself in a risk category. So, if a book doesn't sell you have an allowance. You can send some books back and. Or you know I can give it to a friend, or we have maybe occasional sale or whatever.

**00:07:26 Molly**

**And I think you, I mean I don't know if you would say you were specialist, but you sell a lot of children and young adult fiction. And I wanted to ask you, I think people always have this anxiety that children don't read anymore, that everyone is kind of on their iPads or watching TV or something. But I don't know if you kind of have that same fear or you feel more positive.**

00:07:49 Cheryl

And so, actually, yeah, I've been thinking a bit about this. In the shop, I don't. Not children anyway, because children who come into the shop are so enthusiastic. And yeah, you can see that you know some children are just massive readers and I sort of think 'I want you to come and work here'. There are a lot less young adults who come into the shop, and personally speaking, I have three children, two are teenagers, and they stopped reading when they got to 13. So, I think, that's what happens. I think children do read, although I only see those who do read. I think a lot of children read, and I think once children have phones and other gadgets they start reading less and less. And then, now I'm particularly seeing it with my two teenagers, they suddenly don't have the focus to sit and read a whole book. I mean they find it hard to watch a whole film now because everything is so instant.

**00:09:11 Molly**

**Yeah, that's really interesting actually. I was going to. I mean you, you kind of hinted at it, but I was going to ask you what you think the the biggest barriers for kids starting to read are, but I suppose it is that it's not so much little children who struggle with it, it's when you become a teenager and you, you know, have all these screens and all of this instant gratification. It becomes harder.**

00:09:31 Cheryl

Yeah, yeah, I think there's probably a couple of things there. Probably some children who never get into reading at all. Which I think it's sort of slightly different. There are lots of children who get into reading and then kind of fall out. I kind of hope that at some point when they get older they will pick that back up again because they've got that background of reading and I think it's a skill, maybe like riding a bike, you can come back to. Those who never get into reading is more of an issue I think and just by having a shop obviously doesn't solve that. There are some initiatives which help: World Book Day which, the idea is that children come into the shop and they can use a voucher to get a book, exchange it for a one pound book. That's a great thing because it introduces them to the shop, even if it's just once a year. You know, that's nice. And schools you know have their part in it by making sure they've got lots of books to read. And I know that some schools we work with really prioritise that. But yes, it is something that still needs more attention.

**00:10:58 Molly**

**What do you think can be done to encourage or break down those barriers for kids in starting, I guess not just learning to read, but learning to love reading.**

00:11:09 Cheryl

Yeah, yes, I think that's it, isn't it is. Children learn to read, at school, but they don't necessarily learn to love to read at school. They have the phonics books, and all those things you have to do, but it's kind of then saying right, you've got that skill now you can use that for pleasurable activity. I mean I think obviously there's a lot more diversity in books and children's books, so that helps. It reaches more people. I think you know people like Marcus Rashford who's you know done his book recently reaches a different audience and sort of, you know kids who like more sports who maybe see that as being different. Those things really help. And then we have schools who bring in groups of children for story time or just to choose some books for the school, that's really good. It brings them in and we and other book shops take authors into schools so they can, you know, do an assembly and that's really powerful and I think it's just lots of things like that. On the issue of learning to love to read, I think that's a, it's a bit more tricky. I see a lot of parents and teachers who are keen for their children to learn to read and to learn to read well, and they sort of see it as a kind of you know, you start with the book with a few words and then you have more words and it increasingly gets harder. Which is right when you're learning a skill you know that's what you do. So, the difficulty is you then want them to be able to love to read. So, if they then they finish their schoolwork and then you say right go and choose a book to read, we'll read you a story or you go read a book in bed. That we have this locked in idea that because you read 100 page book last week, you now want at least that if not harder. But a child might pick up a picture book and a lot of people would say that's too young for you, you can't read that. And then I think that puts people off to enough reading because, well, 1. you've kind of said that their choices aren't good enough, yeah? And 2, you've kind of put a judgement on it, sometimes you want to just read something that's really easy or frivolous.

**00:13:59 Molly**

**Yeah, that's so right. And I think that carries through into adulthood as well, because I find that the reading I do for pleasure and the reading I do for, uh, my guess you know throughout my education have been two separate things, and there are things that I'm interested in academically, that I'll read and you know, maybe I'll go and read like a New York Times article or something because I'm interested, but it's in a different way than, uh, you know, a book that I'd pick out to read lying on a beach on holiday. You know there are different books for different places. I think that's really right.**

00:14:30 Cheryl

Yeah, yes, and I think it's just sort of allowing that and recognising that and then letting children choose what book it is and not putting them off.

**00:14:43 Molly**

**Yeah, and like you were saying, I mean you mentioned that you have a large collection of diverse and inclusive books and I suppose it's about kind of investing in authors and publishers who are producing those books so that kids have, you know, they can see themselves in these books. They have something that they really want to read. So, can you tell me a little bit about that collection and kind of why you think it's important to build that and focus on that?**

00:15:11 Cheryl

Yeah, and so I think really right from the start off that was something that's really been important to us. Like, I say that everybody is represented in our books and the the books available to us have just got better, the the volume has got bigger so we can be maybe more selective even in what we're choosing. And initially, I think probably we were looking at sort of cultural diversity and then more

recently I am more aware of inclusiveness around sort of neurodiversity as that area of literature is growing and unseen disabilities and making sure that we've got everybody, as much as we can, as much as the literature that's available allows us to have that covered, because it's good for us as a book shop and the community to see that. I think now my sort of biggest challenge is sort of deciding how to have that displayed in the shop, yeah. So I'll let you know when I've got the definitive answer.

**00:16:54 Molly**

**I think there's kind of a misconception that those topics aren't necessarily appropriate for kids quite often, but that's it's not the case at all, is it really? and actually there's a really long tradition of kids books that deal with - I mean, all kids' books are about kind of dealing with these bigger themes - kids books about kind of death and things that are really difficult are really important for kids. If because you know kids aren't going to ... it's not guaranteed that they won't ever have to deal with these things, so the fact that there is more literature for them being produced that deal with these topics is there's really wonderful and great that independent book shops can kind of you know, really champion that.**

00:17:42 Cheryl

Yes, yeah yeah. I agree books have always dealt with difficult issues and I suppose one of the things is as parents we might not really been aware of that. We just go there's a book for you. Because when we remember what we read, you know Roald Dahl books were a bit scary, aren't they?

**00:18:06 Molly**

**Well even fairy tales, they're really dark and they deal with these kind of weird, complex morality kind of things, yeah.**

00:18:14 Cheryl

And yeah, for sure they just shrug it off and it's 'cause it's a safe place to explore all those ideas.

**00:18:22 Molly**

**Yeah, exactly. Going back to the idea, just briefly, what makes kids love reading? Do you remember what books made you love reading as a kid?**

00:18:33 Cheryl

Well, I didn't really like any Blyton books and then when I think I was a bit older and must have been going into teen years. I remember really liking Judy Blume books because they were very informative. I just remember when I was just a bit older and I didn't have my parents check on me at 9:00 o'clock and I discovered I could carry on reading, and I used to sort of read into the night.

**00:19:12 Molly**

**Yeah, it's so good that feeling, I feel like I only get it, maybe like once a year now.**

00:19:19 Cheryl

Yes, and you can't put a book down. Yeah it's just the best. And then when you finish the book you kind of feel a little bit...

**00:19:28 Molly**

**Like you've got this void in your life.**

00:19:31 Cheryl

Sometimes I just cry a bit after I've finished a book.

**00:19:32 Molly**

**After yeah, I bet it's so nice to see that with kids in the shop, if they come in and can't put things down, really rewarding. I want to talk a little bit about your events, 'cause I know you've got an event programme and so I guess what kind of events are you doing? Are they aimed at kids or they aimed at the general community more broadly and how long is that been going on for?**

00:19:55 Cheryl

Yeah, so when we first started we started off with quite a big programme of events and of course, COVID kind of stopped everything, so we've been going for about four and a half years, so we sort of were getting into it for swing of things, and then it all stopped, and we were not doing it for longer than we were. So we've really only just sort of managed to start getting that going. But that is something we're now really kind of investing in. So pre COVID we had regular story times. A lot of the events we had were aimed at children. Just going back briefly, we were a children's book shop pre COVID. Over COVID while we were sort of doing orders online, a lot more people are asking for grown up books and then after when we managed to open up, we decided to set a few bookshelves for books for adults and that's expanded. So we do say now we are specialists in children's books, but we have an ever-increasing supply of books for Grown Ups.

**00:21:28 Molly**

**That's really nice that that came from the kind of you know, a kind of community need for and you could kind of listen to that and were able to respond. And you have a book subscription service as well, which is really cool. Is that another something that came out of the pandemic, or was that before that?**

00:21:43 Cheryl

Well, we probably had been thinking about it for a little while, but we launched it in November and we've just really trailing doing it with three different age groups, a picture book, junior fiction and adult selection. And it's been, you know, it's been a great thing for Christmas presents and people can buy three, six month, 12-month subscriptions for someone in their lives who they know loves books. And they get a book every month. So, so that's going really well. And we're hoping that we can carry on growing. Just on back on the events. So now we have great books for Grown Ups and children we are developing our events, so we cater for both. So we have coming up some authors coming into the shops and children's authors. And we're looking at having a little course of some sort looking at menopause and different aspects of that. Maybe sort of running it weekly for four weeks, so that's in the pipeline. And we've carried on doing events in schools, and we're going to sort of have some more of those coming up. So yeah, we're sort of contacting publishers now and asking for people to come along. We've also worked with the Chapel Allerton Library, which is across the road from us. We had Rob Bidoff just before Christmas, I think we couldn't fit everyone in. So the library hosted for us. So that was really good, it worked really well. It's nice to have that partnership.

**00:23:45 Molly**

**Yeah, and you've been a bookseller for our children and literature festival, I think you mentioned like, yeah, so it's nice to have these partnerships with the local community I think and be able to be really flexible in the work that you do. I think one of the great things about Indies is that they can really do that, and they can really listen and become embedded in in the kind of communities that they that they serve. So, I guess I'm kind of interested in what you find about your local area, so Chapel Allerton and Leeds in general, that people are kind of like, I guess, what makes it stand out or unique? Or what do you find people, are you surprised ever at people's interest in in top certain topics or?**

00:24:35 Cheryl

But I think what's great about Chapel Allerton and why I wanted my shop to be there apart from living in Chapel Allerton, it's very convenient, is that it's a community with lots of independent shops and people like the independent shops. So, people come to, you know, go to the butchers or the cheese mongers or the the grocery shop, or you know to buy their food, or you know all the other independent shops to buy their cards and gifts and you know the toy shop and the shoe shop. It's a lovely community that's already there and set up so it felt like the book shop would be a nice addition to that. And I think there has been a book shop previously in Chapel Allerton, but it had been closed for a few years, so I think there'd already been a sort of a tried and trusted market there. And I think people really want to be able to browse and just spend time without having to go far away just sort of browsing in shops, and you know, meandering and you know, having a look and seeing what's available. And I think what we've tried to create in the book shop is a nice, welcoming, safe space that people can come in and browse and not feel rushed and you know, look at every single book if they like to find the right book or to ask for advice and get some recommendations. In terms of am I surprised by what people choose? I don't think so. I think people are very open minded and we you know we don't shy away from any you know books. So I think you know people appreciate the the variety, particularly the books for grownups. It's very difficult. I keep saying books for going ups because I'm aware adult books isn't so.... Yeah, yeah we have we do try and open up and diversify also, with the grown-up books and I think you know that that that goes down well in Chapel Allerton. I think it's really about keeping the window fresh to sort of show what kind of books we might have in there to draw people in or for people to see that maybe what they like can be represented in the shop. But I think people are, on the whole quite open minded. I've never had any negative reaction. And you know, a lot of people do come in and order books, and you know, feel able to order whatever they would like to.

**00:28:03 Molly**

**I read an article about the the London Review Bookshop, I think about the way that they kind of curate their collection and put unusual books next to each other and the ah I don't know the art of doing that I guess, of putting something you might not expect next to something else and seeing the way that people kind of make connections and navigate the actual space of a book shop must be quite fun, actually. Must be quite an enjoyable part of the job I would imagine, kind of setting up a nice space that people want to come and hang out in. I think book shops as a kid must be really exciting 'cause there's so much stuff and all these exciting kinds of stories. I guess in the same way that people who love books come in here and I'm like, whoa, there's so many cool things, I just want to go and randomly take books off the shelves.**

00:28:59 Cheryl

Yes, and it's very tactile, isn't it? And the the look and the smell. We have, I mean, I don't notice it anymore, but people come in and say like 'oh, you can smell the bookshelves that we've had made'

**00:29:16 Molly**

**Nice. I want to ask you a bit about the kind of the day to day, which I mean for you, it might be a bit boring, but I'm really interested in how it works. So how often do you get new stock in?**

00:29:29 Cheryl

So we probably put in when it's not Christmas, we'll probably put in about 3 or 4 orders a week. So we order books, they're coming next day it's amazing. So, if someone comes in the shop and they want a book we haven't got as long as our suppliers have got it we can get it to them within a couple of days. We put in an order every few days. How it works is someone buys a book, it goes through our till, and then we have a list on our till of all the books we've sold with some information on it, when it was last sold, how many we've sold that year, how many we sold that month. So we can go through every single book and we can decide whether we want to reorder the book. Then we might have big customer orders, so that will go on the order. And then we might think, like yesterday I was in the shop, and somebody wanted a Dr Seuss book and I realised we only had two different titles and what's happened to all those? So I just went through and ordered another three or four. But also, you know sometimes, you know, the bookselling magazine might come through, and you just leaf through and go now what am I going to have? It all goes on and then it gets delivered the next day and it's like Christmas. It is lovely, you get three or four boxes sort of four or five times a week. We get to open it.

**00:31:14 Molly**

**So I was going to say how many do you order each time, but yeah 3 or 4 boxes I guess?**

00:31:19 Cheryl

Yeah, I, I mean, it really does vary.

**00:31:22 Molly**

**I suppose so. I guess Christmas is the primary time you see a huge rise?**

00:31:25 Cheryl

At Christmas we order every single day. I remember one time we had someone, Allison one of my colleagues, phoned me up and said 'It's so busy and 9 boxes of books have just arrived. I don't know what to do.' I said it's OK, it's OK, they're just books. Serve the customers. Put the books out afterwards. So yeah, we. We have a kind of minimum order where we don't have to pay the delivery and it's like 500 pound OK. And yeah, so we have that many books at least coming, but you know, quite often there's eight or 900 pound at Christmas. Yeah, there's a lot of books that come along.

**00:32:22 Molly**

**Where do you buy these books from? Is it from wholesalers or publishers or a mix of both? Where are you kind of buying them from? You mentioned a kind of bookseller's magazine?**

00:32:33 Cheryl

Yeah, so most of our books that are to sell in the shop we get from the wholesalers, there's only one wholesalers now, Gardners, and they are the ones that come the next day. So they've got two



massive warehouses and they have most books available and if they haven't got it in there, they can normally get the book within a few days. So our day-to-day buying is through Gardeners. If there is, if I'm doing an event for a particular author, I might buy those through the publisher because our discount will be a little bit better, but they might take a few days longer to come. Or if I'm buying two books for schools and they want 10 copies of each book and they don't need them for a few weeks, I would buy them through different publishers. It just means I'm having to buy them from different places and they will come at different times. And so it's worth it for multiple copies but for individual ones the ease of sending it all in one order, getting them the next day, you know it's worth it and they're great. You know the publishers are great and Gardeners are really good, really responsive.

**00:33:53 Molly**

**And how do you decide how to price books? This issue of big books and chains kind of cutting prices and that really undermines indie book shops or publishers or, you know everyone else involved in the kind of bookselling chain basically has come up before, and so yeah, what's that process like?**

00:34:18 Cheryl

So we don't discount books basically and I think what we offer is a little bit different than what you would get if you were buying a book online. You know someone wants to come along and they want to say 'what can I read next?' and we spend that time with the customer, give them recommendations and that experience of being in the shop. We don't discount the books because that allows us to do those things. It also means that of course, the author and everyone in the process have all got their money, what they deserve. I also think if you reduce the cost of books you devalue them. I know that sometimes you know I've bought a book from a discount shop, I've got in my mind that it's not the same value as another book. Yeah, I don't know why I but I don't think it helps you value a book if it's less money. Having said that, obviously you know people want to be able to buy books and you know having reduced price books allows more people to buy books.

**00:35:50 Molly**

**Yeah, well, I suppose that's where schemes like the kind of World Book Day and you know libraries come in.**

00:35:57 Cheryl

Libraries, yeah, yeah. And you know people do use online books and if you know you know what you want and it means that you get the book as opposed to not getting the book that's fair enough. I think there's still room for us where people thin 'well, actually I don't know what book, I want I want to browse, or I want some help'.

**00:36:16 Molly**

**Yeah no, of course.**

00:36:19 Cheryl

So I think there's probably enough space. It is a shame that some books do get discounted so much, because obviously it makes us maybe seem more expensive. Occasionally people will say 'How much are the books?' And I'll say prices on the back. Yeah, we occasionally do. At the moment we have some picture books which we have buy one, get one half price because we had a really good

discount with the publisher for some of those and being Easter we thought it was a nice little promotion and we have in the past run a few discounts on certain books, but it's normally where we've got extra discount. We try and pass that on to the to the customer.

**00:37:10 Molly**

**OK, yeah, that's really interesting. And I guess then the kind of the question from that is what happens when a book doesn't sell? How long does it have to be sitting on a shelf before you decide if you return them, what happens? you mentioned kind of giving them away or?**

00:37:27 Cheryl

Yeah, well we have a uh, a 5% returns allowance. I mean there is a cost to returning books, you have to pay to return them. If I was a bit more organised, probably every few months I'd go through the whole stock system and see what's been there for so long, but I'm not. And sometimes you just leave a bit long enough it will be someone perfect book. We do obviously you know every book is taking up shelf space so every book, every space is precious. But I probably need to be a bit more on it than I am However, we do now and then have a clear-out of books and they might go back. We do have a sales shelf. Actually, very few books get sold from that shelf. I think maybe again, people sort of see it and think, Oh they're the books no one wants. We don't really have much of a problem with it.

**00:38:44 Molly**

Yeah yeah, that's nice. And I guess what's the most difficult aspects of the work you do, so I mean, is there anything that you wish the the sector did differently as a whole whether that's publishers or wholesalers or customers or other Indies? How do you think the the industry could be a bit better?

00:39:10 Cheryl

I suppose the biggest annoyance is probably books that are discounted in supermarkets or online because I think it does devalue our books, or books generally, and what we do. However, we are still going, you know, and I think there are enough people who enjoy come into book shops and enjoy this space. Yeah, and I think there's a lot of support and for booksellers, there's the booksellers association which is a great organisation. The publishers I think are great at getting behind indie book shops and recognising that you know they need us to help push those books. So yeah, I think on the whole it is a really nice industry to be in. It's, you know, really friendly, really supportive.

**00:40:15 Molly**

**I've not met anyone who has sold books that's been a horrible person, but so you know, there's still time.**

00:40:21 Cheryl

Same thing with their customers, people who buy books or want to buy books, they've all got you know, a similar kind of mindset.

**00:40:29 Molly**

**But I think it comes back to what you were saying about, you know, books as objects are so nice to have and you know, I think that's why that so many people buy them at Christmas 'cause it's so lovely to be able to give a really beautiful book to someone. Whether that's like a kid or a grown up or whatever. Not that my brother will ever listen to this podcast, but I remember one**

**Christmas he got a book and he was like 'oh not another book I sate books!' which we teach them mercilessly about to this day. But I mean it is so nice and like sitting in this room with all of these old books that are really amazing and beautiful, you really do appreciate that, so I wanted to ask you how important are books as objects to you? And I mean, what do you think of a really beautiful book whether that's kind of, you know, the the physical volume. Or maybe it's kind of, you know it's valued 'cause it's rare or it's really old. And what do you think that adds to the experience of reading. And do you kind of see indie book shops as a bit of a pushback against digital culture? Or do you think the two can exist simultaneously?**

00:41:50 Cheryl

Uhm, well on the the first element. I mean books as being a beautiful sort of statement or piece of art. Or you know something that you would want to have in your house because it looks good as much as wanting to read it is definitely an important factor. They look great in the shop, and they translate well onto social media and translate well into people houses. I think it's all quite sensory, isn't it? When you pick up say an old book here, and the first thing you do is open it and smell the book. It's that tactile thing and obviously don't get that so much with a new book. But with a beautiful hardback and you just sort of stroke the cover of it.

**00:42:50 Molly**

**Well for kids as well, I mean, especially if you're specialising in children's books. I remember going back to my parents' house and my mum has this collection of our kids' books and you'll open one and I all of these sudden memories. You know, these illustrations that really you'd forgotten you remembered.**

00:42:53 Cheryl

Yeah, amazing.

**00:43:07 Molly**

**It's really incredible.**

00:43:08 Cheryl

But they're lodged in your memory, and the colours that sort of remind you of that time and know what was in and popular there. Then it sort of takes you back, doesn't it? and I think that's really important, and I think I think probably since you know a lot of E books have been around, I think there's been a lot more emphasis on how a book looks, because that's the uniqueness. My neighbour popped into the shop a little while ago because she really liked the edition we have of Pride and Prejudice. We had lovely hardback book and she said that she collects different editions so she has the same book in yeah 10 or 20 formats because she enjoys having them. And I think that's really nice and I think a lot of the nonfiction books we have for the children look amazing. There's a great one we've got which is about fungus, that makes you want to eat it. Which I think is pretty impressive, isn't it?

**00:44:30 Molly**

**It's no mean feat, yeah**

00:44:32 Cheryl

But so yeah, definitely, that's really important. On your second bit, you were saying..

**00:44:40 Molly**

**Yeah, do you see book shops, and I guess more so Indie book shops and kind of book culture as a pushback against digital culture. I mean, books have always been around. They probably always will be around, uh, do you think that it's you know this kind of culture war between like digital and analogue is overhyped?**

00:45:04 Cheryl

I think so. But then I mean definitely for children you can't really replicate a picture book in a digital format. You could do digital things for children, but it's a different thing, it's not a book and books are still really precious. Children like to turn the pages, they like to pick it up and take it to their grown up as a hint. Even little babies who can just toddle around and don't have the words for 'can you read me a book' can pick up a book and shove it in your lap. Yeah, you know, get that message across. You can't do that with a phone 'cause you're like, what? And I think there was a lot of worry wasn't there when E books came out. And I think that's all kind of calmed down because there's a space for ebooks, when you go on holiday, you don't want to take 20 books, perhaps, but people do like books, and I think probably people read a lot you use both yeah. Or you would read an ebook and you love it so much you have to have the book.

**00:46:09 Molly**

**Yeah, yeah, well it's the same, you know, to bring it back to the beginning of the conversation. We were saying you don't always want a book that's going to be like really intellectually challenging and like amazing and interesting and you learn a lot, sometimes you just want like a beach read, you know.**

00:46:27 Cheryl

Exactly, yes.

**00:46:28 Molly**

**So there's a space for all of these different types of books.**

00:46:31 Cheryl

Yeah, 'cause we have so much stuff in our house. We can't keep going, can we? So we kind of have to curate what we have. Yeah and like say so there might be some books you don't actually ever want to read again. You don't need that book, but you do want your bookshelves filled with books that you actually feel represent you that you might want to read again that look great.

**00:46:57 Molly**

**Yeah, no, definitely.**

00:46:59 Cheryl

I don't think there is an issue with sort of that kind of technology taking over. I think they are different things. My only slight worry is when I sort of talk about those teenage years where technology maybe is so fast and so immediate with its gratification that it kind of makes it difficult to sit down with the book. But I think that's a slightly different question.

**00:47:36 Molly**

**And then I guess my final question is you must have sold thousands and thousands of books over your career. Are there any that stand out to you and have been kind of some of your favourites or that you've got fond memories of?**

00:47:58 Cheryl

I wouldn't say fond memories, one of our bestselling books is funny because it's a Peppa Pig book. And it's a book, but it's got wheels on it so kids can push it along. And it makes me laugh because kids come in and they want the book. Yeah, and the parents are like you're not having a Peppa Pig book. They're like it's not a proper book, and not just little kids. Yeah, sort of 6,7,8 year olds want the book? Because it's a book and it's on wheels, yeah.

**00:48:42 Molly**

**That's so funny. We just the last podcast we recorded was with Aoife Larkin who is the collections librarian at the Arts Uni and we were talking about all of the different kind of ways that people have interpreted a book in the special collections she was talking about there's one that's like a bonsai tree with poems on the pages and all of these different books. So, you know, these kids might grow up to be artists one day.**

00:49:07 Cheryl

And you know I must admit I saw it and I was like oh that's really good. And I really, completely understand when parents are like oh not even more Peppa Pig, you know? They'll even say my child has never seen Peppa Pig. I don't know why. Yeah, but obviously the the marketing is so strong that they might not have seen Peppa Pig on telly or read a single book, but they recognise the character.

**00:49:32 Molly**

**That is a great answer.**

00:49:34 Cheryl

It is quite funny and you know we have to keep selling it because it sells really well.

**00:49:40 Molly**

**That is a really good answer. Thank you so much for chatting about the work you do, it's been really fascinating. I guess the last thing is can how can people find out about you? You've got a website?**

00:49:53 Cheryl

We do, yes. Yeah, [www.thelittlebookshopleeds.co.uk](http://www.thelittlebookshopleeds.co.uk). We're open seven days a week and we have the website we can order online and or you can e-mail us.

**00:50:12 Molly**

**And there's the book subscription service which is really cool.**

00:50:13 Cheryl

And there's book subscription service, which you can either join in the shop or online on our website. And yeah, and hopefully the event calendar is going to come out in the next few weeks.

00:50:31 Molly

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