

THURSDAY 8 MARCH 2011**UNITING WRITERS ACROSS THE GLOBE
AT THE EDINBURGH WORLD WRITERS' CONFERENCE 2012-2013**

The Edinburgh International Book Festival and the British Council today announced a major new collaborative venture. The Edinburgh World Writers' Conference 2012-2013 will launch at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in August and will bring together leading Scottish and international writers for a series of discussions framed around keynote opening statements which will be simultaneously broadcast online.

Nick Barley, Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, said "Half a century ago Edinburgh hosted a Writers' Conference that was so influential it helped bring about the explosion of literary festivals as we know them today. Norman Mailer, Rosamond Lehmann and William S Burroughs were among the international authors who locked horns with celebrated Scottish writers in 1962, when over a five day period fifty authors met to discuss how writing can help make sense of the world. In this exciting new programming partnership with the British Council, we will be inviting fifty writers from across the globe to return to the themes of 1962 and to set them in a modern context."

Susie Nicklin, British Council Director Literature, said "The British Council, working with our global team and our offices worldwide, is ideally placed to harness the power of international literature for cultural relations between nations. We are therefore delighted to be launching this ambitious project with the Edinburgh International Book Festival. From August 2012 to August 2013, from the Caribbean to Cairo to Kuala Lumpur, we will maximise digital technologies and the reach of social media to enable a truly inclusive and wide-ranging discussion to take place about literature now and its relevance to our lives - a thread common to us all, across the globe."

In August, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the seminal 1962 conference, The Edinburgh International Book Festival and the British Council will host the 2012 Writers' Conference which will reach out to authors across the planet, thanks to support from The Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund, Creative Scotland, EventScotland and the City of Edinburgh Council.

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Conference delegates will debate in front of a public audience the same topics that almost brought writers to blows back in 1962. The questions remain the same but new technology will enable the conference to become a genuinely worldwide discussion, with live on-line broadcasts and ongoing conference meetings across the planet in countries including India, Germany, Australia, Canada, Egypt and China over the next twelve months. As further countries join the discussion, the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference will assemble highlights of the global discussion into a landmark book about writing today, which will be published after the final conference session in the autumn of 2013.

The Edinburgh World Writers' Conference will build the most complete picture of writing and its relationship to modern life ever attempted. The organisers hope that, more than ever before, leading writers from diverse languages and cultures will be given a powerful international voice to debate what matters most at this point in time in the global literature firmament.

Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs Fiona Hyslop said: "Scotland is a creative nation and the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference will be a fantastic celebration of our rich cultural heritage and our nation's significant contribution to world literature. I am delighted that the Scottish Government, through our Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund, is supporting an event of this scale and ambition in 2012, the Year of Creative Scotland."

Andrew Dixon, Chief Executive, Creative Scotland, said "The exchange of ideas, lively debate and thoughtful discussion are at the heart of our culture. Technology now enables us to make those conversations global, inviting new perspectives and expanding our understanding of words, writing and Scotland's continuing role as a literary powerhouse. It's an excellent project for this Year of Creative Scotland."

Paul Bush OBE, Chief Operating Officer for EventScotland said: "Scotland is the perfect stage for events, and the Edinburgh International Book Festival will undoubtedly exploit the opportunity that London 2012 and the Year of Creative Scotland presents by bringing together the best writers from Scotland and around the world. The Edinburgh World Writers' Conference is an ambitious project that will provide a fantastic platform for a global literary discussion, while supporting the key values of the festival."

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Councillor Steve Cardownie, Festivals and Events Champion for the City of Edinburgh Council, said: "As the world's first UNESCO City of Literature, Scotland's Capital city is a genuine global hub for all things book-related and the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference will reinforce the city's literary clout and significance still further. Edinburgh has an enviable international reputation as a festival city and supporting the cultural ambitions of the Festivals in this unique year makes perfect sense given the proven positive impact they have on the people and economy of the city. The Scottish Government should also be commended for initiating the Expo Fund around which the other partners have worked to supplement."

The 2012 Edinburgh World Writers' Conference will take place as part of the Edinburgh International Book Festival and full details of participants and sessions will be announced in June. The Edinburgh International Book Festival takes place from 11 to 27 August 2012 and the full programme will be announced on Thursday 21 June 2012. Further details can be found at www.edbookfest.co.uk.

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Notes to editors:

The Edinburgh International Book Festival is the world's largest public celebration of the written word. For 17 days every August, the Book Festival brings writers, poets, politicians, journalists, thinkers and decision makers from around the world to debate and discuss the things that shape our lives. With around 750 authors from 40 countries, and a comprehensive programme of events for children from toddler to teenager, cafes, bars and independent Book Shops, the Book Festival welcomes over 200,000 visitors every year to the beautiful Charlotte Square Gardens in the heart of historic Edinburgh, the world's first UNESCO City of Literature.

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide. The literature programme and the arts form a major part of The British Council's work in over 100 countries in addition to education and English. In 2010/11 the British Council engaged face to face with 30 million people and reached 578 million. There are 6,800 staff worldwide. The total turnover in 2010/11 was £693 million, of which grant-in-aid from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was £190 million. The remainder was generated through trading activities such as English language teaching. For every £1 of taxpayer money invested the British Council earns £2.65 in additional income. For more information, please visit: www.britishcouncil.org

The Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund is available to all 12 Edinburgh Festivals to support the costs of new productions, events or exhibitions which involve Scottish-based participants and are premiered at any of the Edinburgh Festivals. The fund can also be used to support touring of events or performances after their premiere at the festival and allow successful work to reach new audiences.

EventScotland is the national events agency. EventScotland is working to make Scotland one of the world's leading event destinations. By developing an exciting portfolio of sporting and cultural events EventScotland is helping to raise Scotland's international profile and boost the economy by attracting more visitors. For further information about EventScotland, its funding programmes and latest event news visit www.EventScotland.org.

The Year of Creative Scotland began on January 1, 2012 and will spotlight and celebrate Scotland's cultural and creative strengths on a world stage. Through a dynamic and exciting year-long programme of activity celebrating our world-class events, festivals, culture and heritage, the year puts Scotland's culture and creativity in the international spotlight with a focus on cultural tourism and developing the events industry and creative sector in Scotland. More information about the programme can be found at: www.visitscotland.com/creative

The Year of Creative Scotland is a Scottish Government initiative led in partnership by EventScotland, VisitScotland, Creative Scotland and VOCAL. More information and resources to help businesses and organisations engage with Year of Creative Scotland are available at www.visitscotland.org/yearofcreativescotland-toolkit

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