



Questions for: David Prescott

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The chief executive of Blackwell's Bookshops contributes to our Q&A series



What is your job?

Chief executive of Blackwell's.

What was your first job in the book industry?

I joined Blackwell's as the goods in supervisor at a new shop opening at Nottingham Trent University. As I was the only one in the department, I presume the supervisory bit was looking after incoming boxes of books!

Who has been the most influential person in your career?

I couldn't choose one person. I've picked up things from everybody I've worked with, even if sometimes it's been how not to do something! In the most literal sense if I had to name just one person, it would have to be Toby Blackwell as the business wouldn't still be here without his ongoing support!

How has the industry changed since your first job?

Beyond recognition. The first shop I ran was still using stock-cards.

"I think publishers are increasingly recognising the importance of a strong, vibrant independent sector"

What's the biggest challenge in your job?

We have some brilliant people here and there are always masses of ideas and initiatives that we'd love to implement but don't have the resources to do everything; so keeping myself and the team focused on those things that will make a real positive contribution to the business.

What are the most interesting things you're seeing at the moment in the industry?

The UK book trade moving from being mainly independently or privately owned to being private equity backed is changing the dynamic of the industry. I think publishers are increasingly recognising the



importance of a strong, vibrant independent sector, within which we play a prominent part of course.

What do you think might be the next big thing?

After talking this morning to Sian, our rare books manager - for us, occult, rare and antiquarian books!

What do you most like doing when you're not working?

Playing guitar in a band locally. I'd say following Liverpool FC, but that always feels more like purgatory!

What is the best book you've read in the last year?

Petty by Warren Zanes, a biography of Tom Petty, unsurprisingly.

What are you reading now?

I've just started *They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us*, which is a collection of essays by Hanif Abdurraquib. I've also just promised Kieron Smith (our digital director) that I'll read the new Ted Chiang story collection *Exhalation* when it's published, as we have a special signed and numbered limited version coming.

How do you like to read: on screen, on paper, or do you listen to audiobooks?

Paper. I did have a Nook for a while, but much prefer the physical book experience. I don't listen to audiobooks. If I have the chance to listen to something it will be music.

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