

National Central Library

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Spotlights

■ Exploring and Reading France at NCL

National Central Library has long been a promoter of reading and international cultural exchanges. Each year the Library participates at the Taipei International Book Exhibition (TiBE), organizes a thematic exhibition to share with the public. Thanks to reading promotion as bridges that the Guest of Honor country would donate the exhibited books to the NCL. This year France was the Guest of Honor at the 2022 TiBE. With the support of the French Office in Taipei, NCL worked with the French Publishers Association to select 800 out of the 2,000 new books that were to be on display at the 2022 TiBE, and arranged an exhibition “Exploring and Reading France @NCL: Books and Special Collections Exhibition” in NCL. The exhibition lasted from May 30 to June 30, and series of lectures were held to compliment the exhibition.

The opening ceremony for this year’s book exhibition and series of lectures was held on the afternoon of May 30. Invited to participate were French Office in Taipei Deputy Director Guillaume Delvallee, Alliance Française de Taïwan Director Laurent Vergain, Ministry of Education’s Lifelong Education Department Head Yu-chuan Lee, Taipei Book Fair Foundation Director Shin-min Lin, and officials from representative offices of other countries in Taiwan, as well as dignitaries from libraries, publishers, and cultural and educational circles. The exhibition and the lectures were held over the course of the ensuing month. The content of both the exhibition and lectures were diverse and multifaceted, which attracted attendees from many different walks of life to come and admire the unique charm of French life.



A group photo of dignitaries at the opening ceremony for the Exploring and Reading France @NCL: Books and Special Collections Exhibition.

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Themed Book Exhibition and Ancient Western Exhibition

In addition to books donated by the French Office in Taipei and the French Publishers Association, for the exhibition 13 classical works of French literature were selected from NCL's collection, mainly ancient French works published between the 18th and 19th centuries in NCL's rare books collection, including manuscripts and rare first edition works by French literary giants in the *Cheng-ding-tang* collection. Subject matter of the exhibition included humanities, history, society, the art, travel, life, literature, comics, encyclopedias, and children's books. Famous authors on display included Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hugo, Damas, Proust, Chantal Thomas, Éric Faye, Alain Corbin, Pierre Lemaitre, and many more.

1. The French Pavilion

2022 TiBE French Pavilion's slogan was "Je lis, donc je suis" (I read, therefore I am). In response, NCL organized the book exhibition entitled Exploring and Reading France @NCL: Books and Special Collections Exhibition, tried to transform NCL's reading space into a reading palace that approaches life and is full of artistic aesthetics.

The exhibition was divided into eight sections: the arts, life, comics, children's books, infant and children's illustrated books, fiction, humanities and social sciences, and authors in the limelight. The exhibit was designed like a French market, with the hope that attendees could feel like they were encountering books on a street in Paris.



The book section at Exploring and Reading France @NCL: Books and Special Collections Exhibition.

It is notable that the exhibited works selected from NCL's collection include books by famous French authors, including Marcel Proust (1871-1922, this year is the 100 anniversary of his death); Prix Goncourt, recipient of Pierre Lemaitre; Alain Corbin, former member of Académie des sciences and expert in the history of sensibilities; Chantal Thomas, the 10th female academician in French history; and Eric Faye, a novelist that spans both the humanities and social sciences. Each author highlighted in the exhibition is an iconic figure, and their works caught the attention of many visitors to take an admiring close look.



The authors in the limelight section at Exploring and Reading France @NCL: Books and Special Collections Exhibition.

2. Ancient Western Book Exhibition

NCL selected a total of 23 ancient French books from its collection, mostly published in 18th and 19th centuries, as well as the manuscripts and rare first edition works by French literary giants within the *Cheng-ding-tang* collection which including letters, textbooks, travel magazines, accounts of wars, historical anecdotes, encyclopedias, literary works, and manuscripts of famous persons.

The ancient books on display were stunning. In addition to famous books from France that most people are familiar with, such as Rousseau's works published in 1762 including *Du contrat social; ou, principes du droit politique*; Descartes' works published in 1637 including *Discours de la methode*, and Montesquieu's works published in 1721 *Lettres persanes*, as well as the manuscripts of French literary giants Victor Hugo,

Alexandre Dumas, and George Sand. In addition, other invaluable rare books, such as *Mémoires complets et authentiques du duc de Saint-Simon sur le siècle de Louis XIV et la régence*, which is a collection of historical anecdotes. The Duke of Saint-Simon secretly observed people and affairs in the French palace then described them in the most vivid manner with his unique literary language. The book contains portraits, anecdotes, genealogy, chronicles, dialogs, and discussions.



The Ancient Western Book Section at Exploring and Reading France @NCL: Books and Special Collections Exhibition.

Exploring and Reading France @NCL: Lecture Series

In conjunction with the French-themed book exhibition, there were three lectures held:

The first lecture was on June 11 and was given by L'Express de Bénarès founder Jonathan Chiche, who spoke on "Exploring French Culture through Rare Books and Manuscripts." The second lecture was on June 18 and was given by Prof. Chun-wei Lai from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at National Ilan University. He spoke on "The Beauty and Sorrow Called Forth by Literature: On Proust's "In Search of Lost Time." The third lecture was held on June 26 and was given by Prof. Hui-yu Huang from the Graduate Institute of European Cultures and Tourism at National Taiwan Normal University. She spoke on "The Roaring 1920s in Paris: Imagination after the Pandemic."

■ "National Central Library–Your Pilot: Reading Anytime, Anywhere": NCL's Booth at the 2022 TiBE

The Taipei International Book Exhibition (TiBE) was cancelled for the last two years due to the pandemic. This year was the first year it was held in summer, specifically from June 2-7 at the World Trade Center. France was the Guest of Honor, with a total of 31 countries and 364 publishers from Taiwan and abroad joining this book feast. 2022 also marks the 30th year of TiBE. The theme set for the 2022 TiBE by the Taipei Book Fair Foundation was "Let's Find Interest in Reading Together." It also had 10 special pavilions, including a display called "Hello 30! Thirty Special Exhibitions for 2022 TiBE," "In and Out of the Forest Children's Pavilion," and a digital pavilion with the first AR theater in Taiwan. The Dragon Boat Festival fell during the six days of the exhibition, and a total of 250,000 people visited the exhibition.

National Central Library and TiBE have a deep relationship, not only was NCL the host for the first exhibition, but also the only library in Taiwan that has involved in all thirty exhibitions. As a result, NCL designed a display on the 30 years of the exhibition, which happened to reflect NCL's progress in responding to societal changes and information evolution. It was one of the most historically potent displays at TiBE.

For this year's book exhibition, NCL decided on the theme "National Central Library–Your Pilot: Reading Anytime, Anywhere" for its booth. On display were the many reading events NCL offers, important scholarly resources, replicas of ancient Chinese books that make them come to life, digital reading services, and cultural and creative products made by using NCL's collection to create an aesthetic life. Even more special was the collected historic pictures and reports from the early years of international book exhibitions, which were displayed in both physical and digital form. Through these selected materials, NCL put on display its efforts in promoting reading in Taiwan, in engaging in international scholarly exchange services, and its move on to the international stage. It is our hope that it can guide people from Taiwan and other countries to understand the fact that NCL is both a repository of books and other materials, as well as a