



LONDON  
LIBRARY

14 St. James's Square S.W.1

THE LONDON LIBRARY

THE NEXT CHAPTER...

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, 1840, the eminent Scottish writer and thinker Thomas Carlyle proclaimed at a meeting in Covent Garden that London needed a new lending library. What Carlyle wanted was a library whose members would be free to roam the shelves and take the books home, and he got it. Today, having just celebrated its 175th birthday, The London Library stands in the north-west corner of St James's Square, the largest independent lending library in the world, home to over a million books on nineteen miles of shelves spread over several inter-connected buildings, and serving thousands of members many of whom, now as ever, are well-known authors adding to the collection with their own works.

Unlike other great libraries – the British Library or the New York Public Library – The London Library lends these books to its members, and does so no matter where in the world they may be, offering a mailing service whereby users as close as central London or as far away as California can order books to be delivered to their home.

But The London Library is more than an ornament of the nation's literary culture, it is one of its driving forces. The current president Sir Tom Stoppard has said “Most of my plays have been written, whether in Chelsea, Dorset, France or Florida, with a pile of London Library books at my elbow, and I can't imagine how I would have managed without them. Whenever I find myself in the Issue Hall in St. James's Square, I'm liable to run into friends and acquaintances like Simon Schama, Ian McEwen, Edna O'Brien, Antonia Fraser, Julian Barnes, Kazuo Ishiguro, Salman Rushdie, Max Hastings, Antony Beevor or Susan Hill on similar errands, and it was a memorable day for Susan when she realized an elderly man encountered in the stacks was E.M. Forster.” For all these years, the Library has been a home, a work-space and a resource for novelists, biographers, historians, economists, philosophers, journalists, poets, playwrights, artists and writers on every subject in the celebrated section known as “Science and Miscellaneous”. A roster of past members would include Charles Dickens, Charles Darwin, George Eliot, Henry James, Arthur Conan Doyle, Bram Stoker, Virginia Woolf, George Bernard Shaw, Winston Churchill, Isaiah Berlin, Agatha Christie and Harold Pinter, not to mention former presidents as distinguished as Lord Tennyson and T.S.Eliot.

Even so, it is for the culture of reading, whether reading for pleasure or for instruction, that The London Library exists. The enjoyment and circulation of the printed book might be said to have found its ideal in the stacks and quiet spaces of The London Library, whose Reading Room is the focal point of the institution and of the Appeal now announced.



## The Tom Stoppard Reading Room

It was in this Reading Room, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 1952, that TS Eliot spoke about his love for The London Library, as he took on the role of its presidency. However, he warned that night, “the maintenance of an institution cannot be defended on the ground of its usefulness in the past: only on the ground of its value for the present and the future”.

That future is complex. Though these are clearly challenging times for libraries, there remains a vital need for places of serendipitous discovery that nourish both those who write and those who read. For The London Library ambition and innovation are the way forward. To remain the most remarkable lending library in the world, it needs to reimagine its buildings to better house an expanding book collection; it needs to establish a world class digital offering, available globally through a new virtual Reading Room; and it must develop greater access to those who could not otherwise explore its resources. Achieving these and other goals will ensure that the Library continues to be the place where the great literatures of the world come together to inform and inspire future generations.

The Library, which receives no public funding, needs help to do this.

Sir Tom’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, in July 2017, will see his retirement from the presidency. To celebrate and acknowledge the enormous impact that Sir Tom



has had on the Library as its President the Library is creating a £10million Innovation Fund that will play a crucial role in helping it to explore and deliver its future.

To mark the creation of this fund, the Library intends to rename the Reading Room after Sir Tom, as it is through him and this fund that the Library will be able to make good Eliot's eloquent remarks about the importance of the future. "The Tom Stoppard Reading Room" would refer not just to the Library's historic space in the heart of its building but also to its virtual Reading Room which will enable the Library to reach out across the world.

These proposals are in tribute to Sir Tom's achievements as one of our most admired writers, and equally to his leading role in fitting the Library for the next generation and beyond while drawing on the values which have inspired the Library from its beginning.

“I could not be more proud of the compliment paid me by my beloved London Library. I have sat in the Reading Room turning pages and making my notes countless times. There is nowhere on earth I would rather have my name (discreetly) emblazoned, and to all those who have responded to this Appeal I offer my heartfelt gratitude.”

Sir Tom Stoppard





## Donations

The Library has always been able to rely on the generosity of individuals, trusts and businesses to adapt and grow; to reflect Carlyle’s belief that a “collection of good books contains all the nobleness and wisdom of the world before us.”

Those who care about literature, care about the future of libraries and, above all, those who care about and wish to celebrate the work of Sir Tom on the occasion of his 80th birthday, are invited to consider supporting the Innovation Fund to ensure that The London Library can remain the place where books are born.

Support for The London Library can be given tax-efficiently in both the USA and Europe. The Library is a registered charity in the UK (no 312175), and the International Friends of The London Library, based in New York, has 501 (c)(3) status.

All supporters will be acknowledged in The Tom Stoppard Reading Room, with significant supporters named on the special dedication board.

In recognition of exceptional support, The London Library is happy to discuss naming other key elements of the Library, including rooms, or the creation of specific endowment funds focused on particular areas of activity such as the collection of American or other literature.

If you would like to talk to the Library about this proposal or wish to make a donation please contact:

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