

Customer Love: Unity Books, Wellington

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A love letter to Unity Books Wellington

The second-worst location of a Wellington job I ever had was in the building next to Unity Books on Willis Street. The worst location was on the other side of town to Unity.

I have a bad book-buying habit, and Unity Books is my enabler. It's really hard for me to walk past on my way elsewhere ("I'll just pop in for a quick look to see what's new"). I'm sure I'm not the only person who has missed buses, because the bus stop is right outside, but there's a new book in the window and the cover looks really interesting and you decide to pop in and read the blurb, and then something else catches your eye ...

For me, there are several things that make Unity stand out from the chain bookstores.

The staff are great; they're knowledgeable and helpful and they've always gone the extra mile for me, whether it's tracking down a book that's not shelved where I thought it would be, or making an order for something that's a bit obscure.



I love the layout of the store. It's spacious, and yet jam-packed. Everything is laid out clearly by subject or genre, so it's easy to find your area of interest, but it's just as easy to get drawn into another zone (the proximity of biography and cookery being almost fatal to my bank balance on a number of occasions). The displays are interesting and eye-catching; my first port of call is always the new arrivals display near the front entrance, and I usually end up carrying one or two books with me while I wander around the rest of the store. There are little recommendations and reviews by staff dotted around, which have often helped me to decide which book needs to go back, and which will come home.

It's great that the only thing you can buy at Unity is a book. That's not quite true – they sell a range of gorgeous greeting cards, a little bit of gift wrap, and in spring they carry a small but great range of calendars and diaries. That's it. No stationery, no lotto, no DVDs, no Woman's Day. ***You're in Unity because you're a reader; and in my opinion, being a reader is a wonderful thing to be.***





But the thing that is most wonderful about Unity Books is the quality of the stock. It's outstanding. Unity is to bookstores what Logan Brown or Martin Bosley's are to restaurants – you're getting superior product. Unity Books is not the place you head when you want to buy a handful of those books that some other stores offer at 4 for \$12; it's the place you head when you want to read something challenging, funny, thought provoking or just plain good. If you're someone who believes that life is too short to read bad books, Unity is your place.

It is possible to imagine Wellington without Unity Books, but why would you want to do that? Wellington would be a poorer place. Without Unity I would probably miss fewer buses, and would definitely have more money in the bank; but I would know less, laugh less, and escape less. And there's always another bus.



What was the last book you bought from Unity Books?

Ha! If only I could stop at one book. I last bought *Mother Tongue* by Bill Bryson, Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*, and *The Food of Spain* by Claudia Roden.

How often do you visit Unity Books on average?

A couple of times a month.

What is irreplaceable about bookstores?

For me, the ability to handle the merchandise, to flick through the pages, have the weight of the book in your hand, to compare and contrast, to decide if you like the quality of the paper or the feel of the cover ... it's the tactile nature of book buying

that I love. That, and good staff who really love books and are happy to talk to you about them.

By customer, Rachel Moore.



Also - Congratulations to Unity Wellington who have been on Willis Street for 45 years this week. We can't imagine Wellington without Unity either. Celebrate by treating yourself to a new book from Unity this week...

Unity Books Wellington, 57 Willis Street, 04 499 4245, wellington@unitybooks.co.nz

Do you love bookstores too?



Get in touch with your bookstore review and share the love!

So far we have only heard from Wellington customers...

email: info@booksellers.co.nz

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