

Oxygen Books

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Malcolm Burgess,
Publisher

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Essex County Council

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Oxygen Books

great writings about great cities

Oxygen Books, which describes itself as a publisher of “surprising books” about all kinds of journeys, has become an immediate success with its “city-pick” series and is pursuing an ambitious publishing programme for the years ahead. The company, which is run by Malcolm Burgess and Heather Reyes from Hutton near Brentwood in Essex, finds that the county has strong advantages for a publisher with international interests.

Malcolm Burgess realised that there was a possible gap in the market when he was looking for good travel books during a visit to Athens. “Although we found good traditional guides, there was nothing about the literature of the city. That’s surprising when you think of the great writers associated with cities around the world.”

Further research confirmed that most European city guides had the same missing element, so Oxygen Books was set up to focus on “city-pick”. Each book in the series describes a city through the writings of past and contemporary authors, artists and musicians. The result is a literary insight that complements the more practical content of a traditional guide book.

Compiling books is something that comes naturally to Malcolm Burgess and Heather Reyes. Malcolm has over twenty years’ experience as a book publisher, writer and literature promoter. Heather, the series editor, is a highly-respected editor, novelist and finalist for the Prince Maurice Prize. Running a business, however, proved a completely different challenge. “We received a great deal of help from the Essex Innovation Programme and Business Link,” says Malcolm Burgess. “Our mentor showed us how to become operational as a business and see the bigger picture. We found courses that were very well targeted towards companies of our size.”

Location in Essex has also been important, according to Malcolm Burgess.

“We need to be close to London because we’re regularly attending book fairs and conferences to promote Oxygen Books. The train services into London are excellent. Convenient international travel is also essential. We need to visit the cities covered in our books to carry out research and meet the collaborators and translators who are part of our team”.

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This approach to publishing and collaboration has already proved successful in the company’s short life. So far, the company has published books on Paris, Berlin, Dublin and London with good sales results. During 2010, the series will grow with new books on Amsterdam and Venice, followed later by Istanbul, Mumbai, and St Petersburg.



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