



Joint press release of the Atlantic Publishers Marketing Association, Nova Scotia Health Innovation Hub, and the University of King's College.

University of King's College launches testing phase of Books by Heart, a communal bibliotherapy digital book program for use in hospital healthcare

Halifax, NS - Could books save lives? A new partnership project between Atlantic Publishers Marketing Association, Nova Scotia Health Innovation Hub, and the University of King's College seeks to find out.

The Books by Heart initiative seeks to use story as a means for healing and for fostering connection between people experiencing a health crisis. The project will see a curated collection of local Atlantic Canadian eBooks and audiobooks in accessible formats available with unlimited access to patients, their families, and staff members on a Nova Scotia Health acute care ward in 2024, in an interdisciplinary medical trial bringing together the expertise of specialist physicians and allied health care professionals, as well as qualitative and humanistic researchers who will evaluate the impact of program on medical outcomes and patient experience.

Books by Heart is a complex project involving the cooperation and intersection of three partners—the Atlantic Publishers Marketing Association (APMA), Nova Scotia Health (NSH), and the University of King's College. For each partner, the project represents and enables innovation. For NSH, this is an innovation in patient care.

"During this pandemic, I became painfully aware of the importance of connection and community for our inpatients navigating illness," Dr. Gabrielle Horne, the cardiologist who initiated the project, explains. "It's not that I didn't know before, but taking care of inpatients who were not able to see and touch their loved ones was a shocking and distressing experience for all of us in the hospital. As a lover of books and stories, I am keen to find out whether books can help patients, families and those who work in hospitals to connect more deeply. I also wonder whether stories can improve our patients' resilience during illness by reframing and recontextualizing difficult experiences. And if we can bolster our patients' wellbeing and resilience, perhaps they will live better and longer."

For the APMA, the project is an opportunity to innovate and improve the accessibility of digital books. "This exciting project means we can deliver outstanding local books by local authors, reach new markets, and provide fair payments for authors and publishers for books" says APMA Executive Director Karen Cole. "It will help publishers improve the accessibility of their digital books to ensure all patients can access the texts."

"Reading can transport us to another world, providing escape from life's everyday stresses, at least temporarily," says Dr. Gail Tomblin Murphy, Nova Scotia Health's Vice President of Research Innovation &

Discovery and Chief Nurse Executive. “We test and try a number of innovations that can enhance the health and wellbeing of Nova Scotians. Books by Heart is a great initiative that will have a big impact on the wellbeing of patients. Findings from this work will inform opportunities to scale learnings across the province.”

For King’s, this is a work-integrated learning opportunity for liberal arts students, who have been involved in the operations and marketing of the tool and will contribute research assistance to the medical trial in an acute care ward. This partnership represents a highly unusual opportunity for King’s students to build experience and networks in a non-traditional area for arts graduates. Equally unusual is the genuine interdisciplinarity of the research project, which involves humanistic themes and humanities researchers at its very foundations.

“That books have the capacity to change lives is central to our whole ethos at King’s, but it is a different thing entirely to have the opportunity to carry that conviction into a context where a public humanities program can be scientifically evaluated and the findings brought to bear on improving healthcare offerings for Nova Scotia,” says William Lahey, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of King’s College.

The current phase of the project is a pre-pilot beta test, trialing Books by Heart in the King’s community to ensure that the project can launch seamlessly in a hospital setting. All members of the King’s community, including students, alumni, faculty, and staff, have unlimited access to 50 Atlantic Canadian eBooks and audiobooks this semester, which has been extended through to August for summer reading, a collection selected by a student team that ranges from new fiction to poetry to biographies and local history to non-fiction focused on social justice. The King’s community will be able to enjoy access to these great local books along with author events and book clubs, while also testing e-reading applications and identifying technological issues that may arise.

Quick facts:

- APMA is a not-for-profit organization representing 35 Atlantic Canadian publishers working towards growing and maintaining a strong Canadian-owned book publishing industry in the region.
- This project is made possible, in part, as a result of APMA funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage’s Accessible Digital Books Initiative and Nova Scotia’s Cultural Innovation Fund.
- Established in 1789, King’s College is Canada’s oldest chartered university and is associated with Dalhousie University.
- King’s is known nationally and internationally for its highly acclaimed interdisciplinary programs in the humanities, including its renowned Foundation Year Program, its professional programs in journalism, and its fine arts programs in creative writing.
- A first of its kind centre of excellence for health research and innovation in Atlantic Canada, the Nova Scotia Health Innovation Hub is leading healthcare thinking to deliver better solutions for patients and providers.

For more information, or to sign up, visit BooksByHeartKings.ca or contact:



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