

BOOKS

UNDERCOVER ANGELA BENNIE

A PARIS COMMUNE

Word has come through from Paris that this year's Shakespeare & Co literary festival, hosted by the famous anglophone bookstore and Left Bank literary institution, had crowds jostling for entry into the large marquee erected next door to the store and opposite Notre Dame. "The festival tent was often overflowing," reports Australian Edwina Johnson, one of the co-directors of the festival. Punters queued to hear, among others, Paul Auster, Siri Hustvedt, A. C. Grayling, Alain de Botton, Hermione Lee and Jeanette Winterson read and speak about their writing.

Richard Ford was spotted in the crowd, as was the poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Charlotte Rampling was a knockout reading extracts from Auster. But it was Luke Davies (pictured) who was the



man of the moment, Johnson says, when he stepped off the plane from Oz and onto the stage, filling in for Antonia Fraser (who had to cancel due to the illness of her husband, Harold Pinter). Other Australian writers at the festival were John Baxter and Carolyn Burke.

The festival is now the biggest literary festival in Paris, spread over four days and several venues in the centre of the city, including Paris's grand Hotel de Ville. The original Shakespeare & Co bookstore was a Paris institution, founded in 1919 by the American Sylvia Beach. The store was closed during World War II and reopened again in the early 1950s by another American, George Whitman. Today his daughter, Sylvia, runs the store – and the festival, which is now the biennial, must-attend event in the Parisian cultural calendar.

STILL WILD ABOUT HARRY

Figures in last month as the financial year drew to a close have the sales of J. K. Rowling (pictured) likely to hit 400 million worldwide, thanks to the power of a certain wizard on readers' imaginations. With the publication last year of the seventh in the series, *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows* – and, as with all the others in the series, its immediate bestseller status – pundits say Rowling might yet match Mao Zedong's *Little Red Book*, the sales of which are reported to be about 900 million. The seventh and last Harry Potter is about to be published in Japan and the paperback version released in Europe and the US in mid-July – all of which might just bring Rowling close to overtaking the Great Helmsman's reach.



IMAGINE ALL THE PEOPLE

The power of the imagination is also much on the mind of Susan Stewart (pictured), a Princeton University lecturer in English. How can it be both a source for good and yet also a devastating force for evil? Stewart will visit Sydney under the auspices of the University of Western Sydney's Writing & Society Research Group to explore the issue further at the Sydney Grammar School's Edmund Barton Room, College Street, Darlinghurst at 4pm on July 17. Further details are available from writing@uws.edu.au.

DIBS ON THE NIB

The value of Waverley Library's annual award for literature has been increased this year from \$15,000 to \$20,000, thanks to a new sponsor, the Copyright Agency. Nominations are now being sought for this year's competition, which is open to works of fiction and non-fiction published in this financial year. The judges are looking for "excellence in research in the creation of a literary work of merit". Affectionately dubbed "The Nib" (which alludes to the statuette the winner also receives), the award is now in its seventh year and fast becoming competitive: in its first year, in 2002, there were 50 entries; last year there were 140.

Download applications and guidelines from www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/library/award/ or visit the library. Phone 9386 7709.