

A century-long art project will keep 100 unpublished books secret until 2114



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Until 1,000 newly planted trees have grown in Norway, you won't get to read the newest book from David Mitchell, the author of *Cloud Atlas*. Same goes for Margaret Atwood's recent manuscript *Scribbler Moon*.

Both authors were commissioned to write works for [Future Library](#), a 100-year-long art project created by Scottish artist Katie Paterson. Paterson plans to add one new manuscript to the collection from a different author every year until 2114, at which point all 100 texts will be published at the same time.

As part of the project, she planted 1,000 trees in the Nordmarka forest, located outside of Oslo. In 2114, once the trees are big enough to cut down, the wood will be used to make the paper on which the manuscripts will be printed.

The purpose of the project is part optimistic, part technophobic: Paterson wants to show that, though media and publishing are increasingly digital, readers in 2114 will still want to read physical books. She'll build her case by compiling manuscripts to over the next 98 years.

The increasing popularity of ebooks suggests Paterson's concerns are well-founded. According to a [Pew Research Center report](#), the percentage of 18 to 29-year-olds who have read at least one e-book in the previous year rose from 25% in 2011 to 47% in 2014. And that trend is not limited to millennials — ebook retailer Kobo reported in April that 75% of its most active readers are female and over 45. But the same Pew study also indicated that 69% of people have read at least one physical book in the last year.

Paterson's project will ensure that at least 100 texts will be printed on paper a century from now. Atwood's book, *Scribbler Moon* was submitted last year as the initiative's first manuscript. David Mitchell's, which was added to the collection on May 28, is the second. Other participating authors have not yet been announced.



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Courtesy Future Library

"At first I thought, 'That's mad, you write something and no one gets to read it,'" Mitchell says in a video interview published on Future Library's website. "Then some weeks went by and I started to think about it more. I thought, 'Yes it is kind mad, there's good bad and bad mad, and I think this was good mad.'"

The manuscripts will be held in a specially designed room in Oslo's New Deichmanske Public Library, which is slated to open in 2019. The space will be lined with wood from the forest where the 1,000 trees were planted.

"The project is a vote of confidence that, despite the catastrophist shadows under which we live, the future will still be a brightish place willing and able to complete an artistic endeavour begun by long-dead people a century ago," Mitchell says in the video.

After all, digital technology can't replace the satisfying feeling of turning a page — at least not yet.

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