



Players in the local book industry are upbeat about the future and anticipate an expansion in the sector.

Publishing Director of the Book Industry Association of Jamaica (BIAJ), Kelly Magnus, said the sector is on the cusp of growth, fostered by changes in printing technology.

“I think that now we are going to see the next big wave because of digital publishing, which allows a broader range of publishers and even authors to publish their work themselves and the kind of diversity that this will generate will stimulate reading even more,” she stated.

Ms. Magnus was speaking to JIS News at the second annual Kingston Book Fair held recently at Devon House, St. Andrew.

She noted that after Independence and during the 1970s and 1980s, the industry experienced a spike, which saw a number of local companies beginning to publish books. This, she said, saw a “shift in the tide from the European publishers, who were dominating the market”.

Now, she told JIS News, the industry is poised for a another phase of growth, with the BIAJ taking a lead role in promoting reading, literacy and increasing awareness of local offerings, through creative and engaging means.

The organisation, which represents writers, publishers, booksellers and related entities in Jamaica’s book industry, has also begun a thrust through which members supply books to hospitals, children’s homes and places of safety.

The book fair, which received good support from the public, saw scores of book lovers

strolling the south lawns of Devon House, to view and purchase the latest literary works displayed by more than 20 exhibitors and merchants.

Patrons were treated to readings, launches and signing of books, spot prizes, craft making demonstrations, cultural performances and activities for children.

Underscoring the importance of books in the retention of culture,

Ms. Magnus, who was the chairperson for the event, noted that they allow persons to capture, preserve and promote different aspects of our way of life the potential of which, can be leveraged. The festival, she noted, “gives us an opportunity to showcase the power of books” through the expression of the arts.

The Book Fair was the penultimate of 24 events in the Kingston Book Festival held from March 2 to 10 under the theme: ‘Celebrating the Arts’.

This year’s package featured a partnership with agencies including the Jamaican Association of Dramatic Artists, National Library of Jamaica, Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, and the National Gallery, and featured readings from a number of local writers.

Exhibitors included the Jamaica Information Service, Jamaica Library Service, Jamaica Reading Association, Jamcopy, Kingston Bookshop, Carlong Publishers, LMH Publishers, Novelty Traders, University of the West Indies (UWI) Press, UWI Bookshop, Bookophilia among others.

By Andrine Davidson, JIS Reporter