



SheLibrary saw many customers on the first day. One reader who bought a dozen books declined the store's 'reopen discount.'



Indie bookstore SheLibrary reopened on Monday.

Bookstores mull ways to woo readers back after lockdown



Duoyun Bookstore on the 52nd floor of Shanghai Tower, the city's tallest building, reopened during the Dragon Boat Festival last week. — All photos by Ti Gong

Yao Minji

Let's make our first post-pandemic date at a bookstore!"

That is the message Dayin Bookmall sent out to its readers' group chat.

It is still not fully post-pandemic, but practically all bookstores, big and small, chain and independent, are reopening and looking for ways to make up for the losses.

"It was fairly easy to acquire permission to reopen, and today is our first day. However, everything is a little hazy," Wang Xia, owner of SheLibrary, or Xin Chao Books in Chinese, told Shanghai Daily.

"One of my employees may be forced to work from home. We just heard that her neighborhood might be locked again. We are not yet leasing space, and it is difficult to make a decision."

The former banker defied critics by opening an indie bookshop concentrating on women's needs in downtown

Shanghai in late 2020. In an age when the printed page is widely considered dead, the bookshop heavily relies on offline social events to attract new readers, consolidate fans, and make extra revenue.

"Our social spaces were fully booked in March, but we can't seem to figure out when we'll be able to resume these offline events or lease out space again. The collaborators are also waiting for clarity. Fortunately, more people are waiting rather than canceling them entirely," she said.

"It's fantastic to be back with books, and readers who came to support on our first day. That's really heartwarming."

Yancey Lu was one of the first people to go to a bookshop after the lockdown on June 1. The 29-year-old 3D artist went to a Zhongshuge bookstore.

"One of the reasons I love this city is because of beautiful bookstores like these, and the fact that there are so