UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) helped World of Books Wholesale fund its attendance at the Beijing International Book Fair and set up meetings with potential new customers. The company now expects to secure £100,000 worth of new business from contacts it met at the trade show.

There are around 9,000 charity shops in the UK, selling second hand goods ranging from clothes to games, furniture to books. They offer an affordable and arguably ‘green’ alternative to buying new, whilst at the same time providing a crucial source of funding to support the activities of charities, be it Oxfam, British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research UK or the Red Cross.

Relying on donations from the public, charity shops often find themselves with a surplus that they can’t sell. When it comes to shifting books that have sat too long on the shop shelves, World of Books on the South Coast of England has the answer. Sourcing books from local charity shops World of Books Ltd was launched in August 2008, with the aim of becoming the largest used bookseller in the UK. They have since surpassed this goal to become the largest used bookseller in Europe, selling to over 4 million customers in 90 countries worldwide last year. In December 2012, the company was listed at number 22 on the Sunday Times Fast Track 100 and currently has a turnover in excess of £20 million.

“Since we started out five years ago, our stock has grown from 10,000 books to over 1 million,” says Stephen Boobyer, Managing Director of World of Books. “We now have a nationwide logistics operation to deal with collecting and shipping books, and we are currently selling on 18 different platforms including Amazon, ebay and our own website www.worldofbooks.com. We buy books by the tonne from over 2,000 charity shops across the UK and we’re proud that our activities have generated over £4 million in payments for charities along with significant savings in waste disposal costs. We quality check all our books, and have developed software that scans the barcode to assess whether it will sell. Those that will are stocked online. The rest are recycled into cardboard, or sold by the container load through our wholesale business, World of Books Wholesale, to developing countries, mainly in the Far East.”

Checking out China

World of Books Wholesale sells its high quality reject books in four categories: children’s; coffee table; mass market paperback and premium mass market where customers specify which authors they are looking for. The company’s key markets are currently India, Malaysia, Indonesia and Zimbabwe. In May 2012, it decided to explore the potential for its business in China. Stephen was referred to UKTI and commissioned an Overseas Market Introduction Service (OMIS) from the team in Beijing to research potential partners and customers.

Fast facts

Company: World of Books Wholesale
Industry: Creative Industries
Target Market: China
UKTI Services: Tradeshion Access Programme, Overseas Market Introduction Service

www.usedwholesalebooks.co.uk
“Anyone looking to establish routes to markets outside the
UK should use UKTI. They have the advice and support
that you will need”

Stephen Boobyer, Managing Director of World of Books

Through its Tradeshow Access Programme, UKTI provided a grant to
World of Books Wholesale towards the costs of exhibiting on its stand at
the Beijing International Book Fair in August 2012. The company participated
in the event with the support of The Publishers Association, the UK’s main
trade association for UK publishers and an accredited UKTI trade partner
with vast experience of organising UK
group participation at major international
publishing events.

The local UKTI team set up
appointments for World of Books
Wholesale with the nine Chinese
candidates it had identified in the OMIS
and one has since become a repeat
customer. UKTI also helped to drive
traffic through to the display stand. The
company had meetings with a number of
passing visitors, two of which (not from
China) are now customers as well.

“When targeting a new market, there’s
no substitute for going out there to
meet people in person,” says Stephen.
“But, when you’re taking a week out
of your usual business, you want to
make sure it’s worth your while. UKTI’s
support while we were in China was
fantastic and ensured we made the
best use of our time. The contacts
that they came up with for us were
extremely useful, and we saw a lot of
interest at the appointments that they
had arranged. The fact that we have
already had a repeat order from a new
client in China shows that we are able to
meet their requirements. I can’t speak
highly enough of UKTI and their team
on-the-ground in Beijing. Their support
was absolutely essential - if we hadn’t
had the OMIS, it would have been a
worthless trip.”

New business
World of Books Wholesale estimates that
the value of the new business it secured
at the Beijing International Book Fair
could be as much as £100,000 so far.
Having been so pleased with the results
of the support it received in China, the
company has since worked with UKTI
to get a foothold in Australia and is
currently working with the India team to
open a market there.

“UKTI’s knowledge and understanding
of local market conditions helped us to
make the most of attending the Beijing
International Book Fair,” says Stephen.
“They took our OMIS brief seriously and
really understood what we were looking
for. Anyone looking to establish routes to
markets outside the UK should use UKTI.
They have the advice and support that
you will need.”

The UK and China
The Chinese economy has grown at
almost 10 per cent a year for the last 30
years, effectively doubling in size every
eight years

In 2009, China overtook Germany to
become the world’s largest exporter;
in 2010, it overtook Japan to become the
world’s second largest economy, and,
in 2012, it overtook the US to become
the world’s biggest trading nation (total
imports and exports). China is also
expected to become the world largest
goods importer by 2014.

In 2012, the UK’s goods exports to China
increased by 12.8 per cent to £9.9 billion,
making this the UK’s largest goods
export market outside the US and EU.
Imports from China to the UK also grew
by 0.4 per cent to £32.9 billion. Total
bilateral trade in goods and services in
2012 was £46.5 billion (US$73.8 billion),
and the two countries have agreed a
target to increase this to US$100 billion
by 2015.

The China-Britain Business Council
(CBBC), UKTI’s official trade service
delivery partner for mainland China,
provides advice and UKTI services to
UK businesses via its network of offices
across the UK and China.

For more information visit
www.cbcc.org

Helping you attend tradeshows
Taking part in overseas exhibitions
is an effective way for you to test
markets, attract customers, appoint
agents or distributors and make
sales. UK Trade & Investment’s
Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP)
provides grant support for eligible
SME firms to attend trade shows
overseas.

Participation is usually as part of
a group, a great advantage for
inexperienced businesses, and is
usually led by one of our Accredited
Trade Organisations (ATOs). ATOs
work with UK Trade & Investment to
raise the profile of UK groups and
sectors at key exhibitions.

For further information please
visit www.ukti.gov.uk

UKTI was delighted to support
World of Books Wholesale in its
business overseas.

To find an adviser in your
chosen market and begin
your own success story
now, scan this code with
your smart phone, visit
www.ukti.gov.uk/trade,
or email
enquiries@ukti.gsi.gov.uk

UK Trade & Investment is the
Government Department that helps
UK-based companies succeed in
the global economy. We also help
overseas companies bring their
high-quality investment to the UK’s
dynamic economy. We provide
governments with the tools they
require to be competitive on the
world stage.