

Community Connections

Community Connections shines a light on people and organizations keeping Pittsburgh's literary community vibrant and growing.

Contributed by K.J. Bryant

An Interview with the Littsburgh Team

Pittsburgh hasn't always been known as a literary hub. That moniker materialized, like the proverbial phoenix, out of the smoke and flames of a city whose embers transform rather than die. And what fans the flames? Writers, creative writing programs like Carlow's MFA program, university presses, independent bookstores, and ingenious folks who meet the times with technology, knowhow, and commitment to the printed word. People with courage, like Nick and Rachel.

In 2015, Nick Courage and Rachel Ekstrom Courage founded [Littsburgh](#), an online destination for readers, writers, publishing professionals, bookstores, event organizers, and institutions. Littsburgh has become the go-to location to get the word out about all things literary in Pittsburgh. In addition to the calendar, resources abound with interviews, excerpts, literary news and more.

Littsburgh's commitment to making Pittsburgh one of the world's most literary cities benefits the Carlow MFA community. We at *The Triskelion* are pleased to spotlight this critical literary resource and give our readers a peek behind the digital screen.



We love the photo of the “three” of you. Tell us a bit more about who you are.

Rachel: I grew up in the East End and am a proud Ellis grad. Nick is from New Orleans, and we met when we both worked in publishing in New York (in the Flatiron Building). We moved to the ‘burgh in 2015 to go in a more entrepreneurial direction. Pittsburgh is a great city to be self-employed in the arts! Chaely is our puppy and mascot and joins us on work trips.



Continued next page

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In just 8 years, you've created a platform that helps put Pittsburgh on the literary map. How did you come to create Littsburgh?

Nick: Rachel has always passionately believed that Pittsburgh is one of the world's most literary cities. But when we moved to the 'burgh, it was hard to get involved and we kept hearing about literary events after they happened. My most recent work in publishing at that time was community building for publishers like Picador and Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Rachel's previous career was in book publicity at St. Martin's Press and Penguin Random House, so our first instinct was to say: "Hey, we could do that here - we can meet with all the movers and shakers, connect the dots, and never miss another book event." From there, it just grew!

Rachel: "Literary Pittsburgh" is such a specific focus, so when we came up with the idea for the site in 2015 after a poetry reading at Bloomfield Bridge Tavern, we thought we'd be publishing for a pretty niche audience.

Nick: We were both surprised by how quickly Littsburgh took off, and that it's still growing and finding a readership so many years later. We have subscribers in every state in the US (including Alaska and Hawaii) as well as internationally - and lots of readers who work at small presses and Big 5 publishing houses. That's why we feel a responsibility to keep celebrating and shining a light on literary Pittsburgh, even as we personally expand into other publishing projects.

In addition to Littsburgh, what's a day like in the lives of Nick and Rachel?

Nick: Littsburgh is really our passion project. During the day, we run [Courage Literary](#) (representing award-winning and bestselling authors). We're also both authors - I write children's books (for ages 8-12) and Rachel writes young adult and adult fiction. Her adult fiction projects are all top secret right now, but her debut Young Adult novel is called *Night Swimming*, to be published in 2025. And my next book, *The Infinite Hotel* (also 2025), is set in Pittsburgh! You can find out more about our agency and books at [courageliterary.com](#) and [nickcourage.com](#).

You both have created literary careers with diverse avenues (and multiple income streams). Can you provide some wisdom on how one can achieve that?

Rachel: There isn't a single path to building a life in books and for most authors, there's not one big book sale that changes everything. It's about all the little things you do along the way: the connections you make and the jobs you take to create a literary life for yourself. You hear "no" a lot in publishing - especially if you're a querying writer - so the trick is to believe in yourself, be open to possibilities, and get involved in a community that's going to help you along the way. A writing career is always going to have ups-and-downs, but it doesn't have to be lonely!

Thank you, Rachel and Nick (and Chaely) for all you do to support Pittsburgh as one of the world's most literary cities!

See Rachel and Nick up close on this [CBS Talk Pittsburgh video](#).





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We look forward to seeing everyone at the MFA
Pittsburgh Residency in January!
*Alums are welcome to all guest writer talks and readings,
as always!*

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