

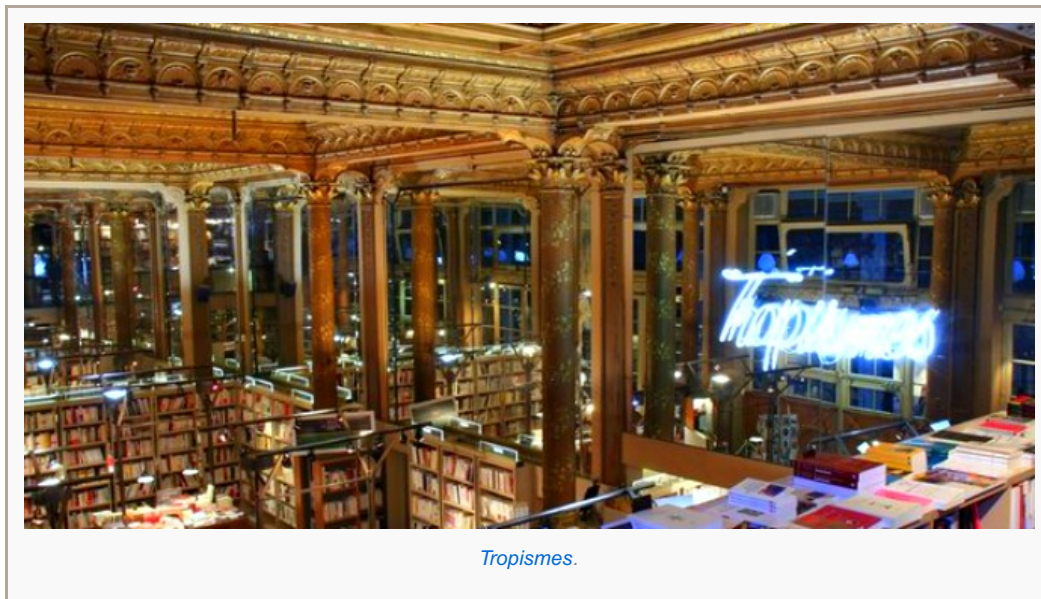
The best bookshops in Brussels

blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2014/08/03/academics-must-visit-these-bookshops-in-brussels/

2014-8-3

Laura Gómez-Mera is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Miami. In this post she talks us through the best bookshops in **Brussels**. If there's a bookshop that you think other students and academics should visit when they're undertaking research or visiting a city for a conference, find more information about contributing below.

"I always imagined that paradise would be a kind of library," Jorge Luis Borges wrote. Or a bookshop – I thought the first time I walked into [Tropismes](#). This real gem is located in an unusually quiet part of Galeries Royales Saint-Hubert, the majestic shopping arcade built in 1847 by architect Jean-Pierre Cluysenaar. The site now occupied by Tropismes was once home to a ballroom and today the building retains an air of sophistication and elegance. Its high ornamented ceilings and mirrored walls have a magnifying effect; they seem to multiply infinitely the carefully organized rows of books. The view from the mezzanine, where art books are located, is particularly stunning. An obligatory stop for academics and book enthusiasts visiting Brussels.



[Tropismes](#).

Just around the corner from Tropismes, also in the Galeries Royales, is Librairie Saint Hubert (formerly Librairie des Galeries). This smaller but equally charming bookstore specializes in art, photography, and design books, offering a large and varied selection that includes an impressive assortment of volumes on art nouveau and art deco architecture in Brussels. An air of understated elegance characterizes this former pharmacy, with its wooden shelves and ceiling, beautiful iron railings, and sumptuous chandeliers. In addition, the bookshop occasionally hosts exhibitions by contemporary artists and photographers in a gallery upstairs. Information on ongoing and upcoming events can be obtained via the store's facebook page or from the friendly, English-speaking staff.



Galeries Royales Saint-Hubert. Credit: [Emmanuel Parent](#) CC BY-NC 2.0

Not far from the Galeries Royales, in Rue de la Madeleine, we find Galerie Bortier, another beautiful shopping arcade designed by architect Cluysenaer. Since its opening in 1848, Bortier has housed sellers of art, books, and music. Today, it is home to several art galleries and second-hand bookshops. Some of these, like [Libraire Pierre Coumans](#), specialize in first editions, old and rare manuscripts, and antique prints and drawings. Libraire Van der Elst, located next to the entrance, also offers a good selection of fine arts and history books. Despite its architectural beauty, Bortier is much less popular with tourists, thus offering a quiet environment for bibliophiles to browse its many literary and artistic treasures.



Brussels Galerie Bortier. Credit: [Rory Hyde](#) CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

If you like buying or simply browsing second-hand books, another shop worth visiting is Nijinski, near Place du Châtelain. Named by its former owner after the Russian dancer Vaslav Nijinski, the store is on the ground floor of a beautiful old mansion. It offers a cozy setting where book lovers can explore a great selection that includes classics, foreign literature, humanities, and fine arts. Unlike other second hand and antiquarian bookshops in Brussels, Nijinski contains a sizable selection of volumes in foreign languages, not only in English but also in German, Russian and Italian. Worth mentioning are the tastefully and carefully arranged window displays on both sides of the entrance.



Chocolate shop, Brussels. Credit: [flavijus](#) CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Laura Gómez-Mera is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Miami (FL, USA). She holds a doctorate in International Relations from Oxford University and an MSc. in International Political Economy from the London School of Economics. Her current research focuses on the political economy of international cooperation against human trafficking and forced labor.

Do you have a favourite bookshop? If there's a bookshop that you think other students and academics should visit when they're undertaking research or visiting a city for a conference, then now's your chance to tell us all about it.

As part of a new weekly feature on LSE Review of Books, we're asking academics and students to recommend their favourite two or three bookshops in a particular city, with the aim of building an exciting online series for our book-loving community of readers the world over.

Bookshops could be academic, alternative, foreign language, hobby-based, secret or underground institutions, second hand outlets, or connected to a university. We'd like to cover all world regions too.

If something comes to mind, we're looking for around 100 words per bookshop, detailing why this place is a must-see. Our editorial team can then find suitable photos and links to accompany the piece, though you're welcome to supply these too. We only ask that you focus on just one city or region, and two or three bookshops within it.

Email us now if you'd like to contribute: lsereviewofbooks@lse.ac.uk

- Copyright 2013 LSE Review of Books