



ANA ULUCEANU  
CĂRTUREȘTI

## HOW CĂRTUREȘTI ATTRACTS PEOPLE TO ITS BOOKSTORES

Ana Uluceanu represents Cărturești, Romania's leading independent bookstore chain, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. What started as a small bookshop, still open today in Bucharest, has grown into a network of over 50 stores across Romania and The Republic of Moldova. In her talk, Ana will explore Cărturești's evolution within Romania's changing cultural and economic landscape, highlighting how the company has adapted to shifting reader preferences and market trends. She will also discuss how the bookstore's ability to blend books with a diverse selection of cultural and non-book products has been a key ingredient in keeping Cărturești fresh and innovative in an ever-changing market.

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## INDIVIDUAL AND INVITING STORE CONCEPTS



### The Power of Place

American author Rebecca Solnit once said that places give us continuity. They offer us something to return to, a familiarity that keeps a part of our lives connected and coherent.

Bookshops, at their best, serve this purpose as well. They are more than retail spaces; they are cultural landmarks that foster curiosity, discovery, and human connection.

### From Clutter to Captivation

A cluttered bookshop is a familiar sight to anyone in the industry. However, when designed with intention, bookstores can offer much more—a sense of spectacle in everyday life. They create environments that invite us in, engage our imagination, and captivate our attention.

### Competing for Attention

In today's world, attention is a scarce resource. We are constantly competing against digital distractions and the fast pace of modern life. While broader societal solutions—public policies, better funding for education and culture—are necessary, the question remains: what can we do in our day-to-day business to make bookstores more inviting spaces?

### The Challenge: Bringing People In

Romania faces significant challenges when it comes to reading habits. Studies show that only a quarter of the population engages with books regularly. Given this reality, bookstores must do more than just sell books—they must entice people to enter, even those who may not initially see themselves as readers. Sometimes, a reader is formed simply by stepping into a bookstore for the first time.

## CĂRTUREȘTI: A STORY OF SPACE AND PURPOSE



### In November 2000 the journey began

Our most famous store, Cărturești Carusel in Downtown Bucharest, recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary. However, the journey began much earlier. The first Cărturești bookstore opened in November 2000, originally named Cărtărești—a play on the Romanian words for "book" and "scholar." Fun fact: due to the similarity to the name of renowned Romanian author Mircea Cărtărescu, many assumed it was his bookstore.

### The power of spatial beauty

This second location was deeply influenced by architect Șerban Sturdza, a former director of the Romanian Order of Architects, who donated the building. His belief in the power of spatial beauty shaped the store's design and helped solidify Cărturești's approach—creating bookstores that encourage lingering, reflection, and discovery. This vision became a legacy, influencing every new Cărturești location.



### Founded by Nicoleta Iordan & Șerban Radu

Cărturești was founded by Nicoleta Iordan and Șerban Radu, two young entrepreneurs with a bold mission: to open a bookstore in a market where literary pursuits were not a priority.

In the chaos of post-communist Romania, they established a bookstore near University Square in Central Bucharest. Two years later, Cărturești Verona followed.

### The design of each store was a priority

Over time, Cărturești expanded beyond Bucharest, opening stores in Timișoara, Iași, and Constanța, eventually reaching 55 bookstores in 28 cities across Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Regardless of location, the design of each store was a priority. Every new space was an opportunity to draw people in, offering an experience beyond the simple act of buying a book.