

Pricey tomes

Publishers have come up with special and limited editions of books with a hefty price tag

Cheryl Faith Wee

Would you pay \$1,675 for a novel? Presumably four buyers here have done just that.

When Japanese author Haruki Murakami's latest novel *1Q84* hit bookstores here last month, most fans were content to crack open the \$38.96 hardcover copies.

But some forked out \$1,675 for a fancy, limited-edition set of the novel in three volumes. Signed by the author, four sets were on sale at Books Kinokuniya. By last week, all had been sold.

Only 111 of the handmade books are available worldwide. Produced by British publishing and production company The Curved House, each set has book covers with a letter-pressed design of coloured twin moons, and hand-coloured edges. The books are placed in slipcases, numbered and wrapped and sewn into a cloth cover. No two sets are the same, say the makers.

Signed limited editions and other rare book items are still in demand, in spite – or precisely because – of the ubiquity of e-book readers. And like the *1Q84* limited edition, these carry hefty price tags.

German publisher Taschen's 738-page coffee table tome Valentino Garavani *Una Grande Storia Italiana* (2007), featuring the life and work of Italian fashion designer Valentino, is selling here at more than \$2,000 at Page One and Kinokuniya bookstores. Only 2,000 copies are available worldwide, and are signed and numbered by the designer himself.

And British art publisher Phaidon's limited-edition Steve McCurry: *The Iconic Photographs*, can be bought for \$583.15 at Page One. The 264-page collection of the famed American photojournalist's works comes with an exclusive print signed by him.

Kinokuniya's store director Kenny Chan, 59, says that such volumes are difficult to acquire, and go on sale "as and when" the store gets hold of them.

He adds: "There is a demand from our customers who are committed book lovers. Unique books like these add to the glamour and love of books."

Indeed, fresh graduate Liao Youqing, 23, is not put off by the steep prices for these exclusive versions. While the communications student is willing to shell out \$2,000 for a limited-edition book, she says she will "spend a long time considering it".

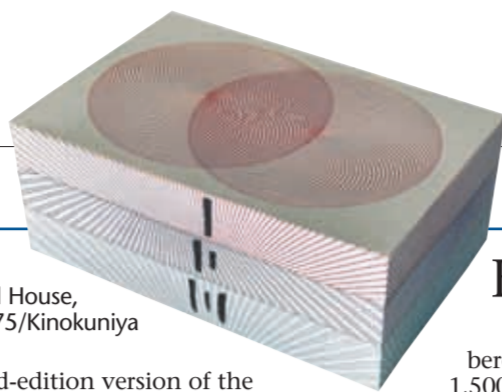
Local publishers, too, are coming up with limited editions. Late last month, Epigram Books released *Singapore Classics*, a box set of five republished iconic novels by Singaporean writers, including *The Scholar And The Dragon* by Stella Kon and *Glass Cathedral* by Andrew Koh.

Ms Kon, 67, is flattered to be one of the authors included in the series, and feels that it is high time a local publisher came up with such a box set.

She says: "Singapore has a canon or list of books that are important. And that's the significance of a set, establishing an overview or broad sweep of what is happening in Singapore literature."

Demand for such box sets here is limited, says Epigram's managing and creative director Edmund Wee, 59. That said, around 70 sets were sold within a month of their launch. The publisher intends to produce another box set of Singapore novels next year, and is in the midst of negotiating rights to the books.

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1Q84

The Curved House, 2011/\$1,675/Kinokuniya (sold out)

The limited-edition version of the novel, about a love story within an alternate universe, is a collaboration between Simon Rhodes, Kristen Harrison and designer Stefanie Posavec, and produced by The Curved House publishing and production company. Each box set – only 111 were made – is signed by author Haruki Murakami and comes with a numbered certificate of authenticity.

ANDY SUMMERS – I'LL BE WATCHING YOU: INSIDE THE POLICE

Taschen/2007/\$1,164.45/Kinokuniya
More than 600 photographs from the personal archive of Andy Summers, the guitarist for rock band The Police, are featured in this book. For the collector's edition, the hardcover book is packaged in a black clamshell box, num-

Here, rare, not everywhere

bered and signed. Limited to 1,500 copies.

STAR WARS: THE BLUEPRINTS

Epic Ink Books/2011/\$796.36/Kinokuniya (unsigned)

Sci-fi geeks can pore over these pages of vivid illustrations and detailed plans of the Star Wars universe. Only 5,000 copies are available, and each comes with a certificate of authenticity. The first 125 copies are signed and numbered by the films' art directors. The numbered but unsigned ones cost roughly half as much.



VALENTINO GARAVANI: UNA GRANDE STORIA ITALIANA

Taschen/2007/\$2328.89 at Kinokuniya, \$2054.40 at Page One

An homage to Italian fashion designer Valentino's illustrious career, this tome comes in a silk-covered clamshell box tinted Valentino red. Each of the 2,000 copies is signed by Valentino.

SINGAPORE CLASSICS

Epigram/2011/\$85.49/major bookstores

This limited-edition box set includes five previously out-of-print titles: *Glass Cathedral* by Andrew Koh, *Scorpion Orchid* by Lloyd Fernando, *The Adventures Of Holden Heng* by Robert Yeo, *The Immolation* by Goh Poh Seng, and *The Scholar And The Dragon* by Stella

Kon. The books are also sold individually at \$19.15 each. Limited to 200 sets.



STEVE MCCURRY – THE ICONIC PHOTOGRAPHS

Phaidon/2011/\$583.15/Page One

Each of these large-format books is signed by American photojournalist Steve McCurry, best known for his photograph of a green-eyed Afghan girl on a 1985 cover of National Geographic magazine. The limited edition comprises 3,300 copies. Each comes with an exclusive print signed by McCurry.

PHOTOS: JUSTIN KNOPP, DESMOND FOO, CHEW SENG KIM

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For retail locations, visit www.xbox.com.sg/storelocator.

bestsellers

Fiction

- (1) *1Q84* by Haruki Murakami
- (2) *One Day* by David Nicholls
- (6) *The Gods Of Atlantis* by David Gibbins
- (3) *The Litigators* by John Grisham
- (5) *The Sense Of An Ending* by Julian Barnes
- (4) *Aleph* by Paulo Coelho
- (7) *The Best Of Me* by Nicholas Sparks
- (8) *The Time Of My Life* by Cecelia Ahern
- (9) *Power Of Six* by Pittacus Lore and (-) *Sing You Home* by Jodi Picoult
- (10) *Empire Of Silver* by Conn Igguldin

Non-fiction

- (1) *Steve Jobs* by Walter Isaacson
- (2) *The 3rd Alternative* by Stephen R. Covey
- (6) *Midas Touch* by Donald Trump and Robert Kiyosaki
- (4) *Lee Kuan Yew – Hard Truths To Keep Singapore Going* by Han Fook Kwang, Zuralidah Ibrahim, Chua Mui Hoong, Lydia Lim, Ignatius Low, Rachel Lin and Robin Chan
- (5) *How To Get What You Want* by Richard Templar
- (3) *Great By Choice* by Jim Collins and Morten Hansen
- (7) *The Puppy Diaries* by Jill Abramson
- (-) *Five Levels Of Leadership* by John Maxwell
- (-) *Delivering Happiness* by Tony Hsieh
- (9) *The Steve Jobs Way* by Jay Elliot

Children's

- (-) *Diary Of A Wimpy Kid #6: Cabin Fever* by Jeff Kinney
- (-) *Inheritance* by Christopher Paolini
- (1) *The Amazing Voyage: The Third Adventure In The Kingdom Of Fantasy* by Geronimo Stilton
- (2) *Run For The Hills, Geronimo!* by Geronimo Stilton
- (3) *The Heroes Of Olympus #2: The Son Of Neptune* by Rick Riordan
- (4) *Thea Stilton: Big Trouble In The Big Apple* by Thea Stilton
- (5) *Creepella Von Cackelfur #2: Meet Me In Horrorwood* by Geronimo Stilton
- (6) *Creepella Von Cackelfur #1: The Thirteen Ghosts* by Geronimo Stilton
- (-) *Dork Diaries 3: Tales From A Not-So-Talented Pop Star* by Rachel Renee Russell
- (-) *Quest For Paradise: Return To The Kingdom Of Fantasy* by Geronimo Stilton

This is LifeStyle's compilation of the bestseller lists from Books Kinokuniya, Page One VivoCity, MPH, Popular and Times bookstores. The numbers in brackets are the previous week's positions.