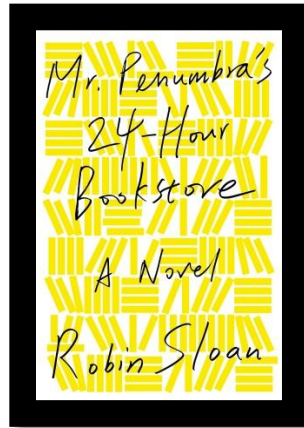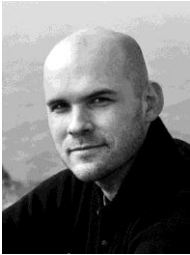# Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore
Reading Map

Author

Robin Sloan

Helena Price/Farrar, Straus & Giroux

Biography

I grew up near Detroit and went to school at Michigan State, where I studied economics and co-founded a literary magazine called *Oats*. Between 2002 and 2012, I worked at Poynter, Current TV, and Twitter, and at all those places, my job had something to do with figuring out the future of media.

I'm the author of Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore, which started as a short story right here and is now a full-length novel from Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

I believe that stories told primarily (but not exclusively) with words are among the most durable things a person can produce, and I'm trying my best to write a few that might make it through to the year 2112. If you read one and pass it along to someone else, you're participating in that project—so, thank you!

Author Website

http://www.robinsloan.com/

Author Twitter

https://twitter.com/robinsloan

Interview on NPR

http://www.npr.org/2012/10/09/162233599/mr-penumbra-bridges-the-digital-divide

About the Book

Summary (from Novelist)

The Great Recession has shuffled Clay Jannon out of his life as a San Francisco web-design drone and landed him a new gig working the night shift at **Mr.Penumbra's 24-Hour** Bookstore. But after just a few days on the job, Clay begins to realize that this store is even more curious than the name suggests. There are only a few customers, but they come in repeatedly and never seem to actually buy anything. Soon he embarks on a complex analysis of the customers' behaviour and ropes his friends into helping him figure out just what's going on.

Website

http://www.robinsloan.com/penumbra/

Reading Guide

http://media.us.macmillan.com/rggguides/9780374214913RGG.pdf

Book Launch Video

http://bcove.me/b4xtwx9t

Reviews (from Novelist)

BookList:
When Clay Jannon, a jobless website designer, applies to work the night shift at Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore, he must promise not to open any of the volumes shelved in the dimly lit, way-back stacks that stretch to the ceiling. These titles are only

for members of a book club, who arrive periodically in the wee, small hours to trade one obscure manuscript for another. But it doesn't take long before boredom—and curiosity—gets the better of Clay. Between occasional customers, he designs a 3-D virtual replica of the store on his laptop and discovers a pattern to the borrowing and more questions than answers when he finally cracks one of the dusty tomes. Sloan has crafted a delightful modern-day fantasy adventure, replacing warriors, wizards, and rogues with a Silicon Valley entrepreneur, a Googler, and a book clerk. Even nongeeks will appreciate the technological wizardry used by Clay and his sidekicks as they jet from San Francisco to New York in an attempt to unlock the secret message encrypted in a mysterious pattern of codes. -- Holcomb, Diane (Reviewed 09-01-2012) (*Booklist*, vol 109, number 1, p43)

Publishers Weekly:
/* Starred Review */ For those who fear that the Internet/e-readers/whatever-form-of-technological-upheaval-is-coming has killed or will kill paper and ink, Sloan's debut novel will come as good news. A denizen of the tech world and self-described "media inventor" (formerly he was part of the media partnerships team at Twitter), Sloan envisions a San Francisco where piracy and paper are equally useful, and massive data-visualization–processing abilities coexist with so-called "old knowledge." Really old: as in one of the first typefaces, as in alchemy and the search for immortality. Google has replaced the Medici family as the major patron of art and knowledge, and Clay Jannon, downsized graphic designer and once-and-future nerd now working the night shift for bookstore owner Mr. Penumbra, finds that mysteries and codes are everywhere, not just in the fantasy books and games he loved as a kid. With help from his friends, Clay learns the bookstore's idiosyncrasies, earns his employer's trust, and uses media new, old, and old-old to crack a variety of codes. Like all questing heroes, Clay takes on more than he bargained for and learns more than he expected, not least about himself. His story is an old-fashioned tale likably reconceived for the digital age, with the happy message that ingenuity and friendship translate across centuries and data platforms. Agent: Sarah Burnes, the Gernert Company. (Oct.) --Staff (Reviewed August 6, 2012) (*Publishers Weekly*, vol 259, issue 32, p)

Library Journal:
Sloan's first novel features many weighty themes, including immortality and the concept of the singularity, while asking what happens when technological growth becomes exponential and computers self-aware. Protagonist Clay Jannon is a dotcom-bust survivor who finds a job in a mysterious San Francisco bookstore run by Ajax Penumbra. The bookstore is the haunt of a secret society that exists to decode an ancient codex by the famous Venetian printer Aldus Manutius. With the help of Penumbra, childhood friend Neel, and new girlfriend, Kat, who works at Google, our feckless hero tries to solve the puzzle. Things don't turn out as planned, even when all the processing power of Google is applied to decoding Manutius's codex. Our hero saves the day by digging deeper and finding the true code. The answer isn't all that everyone thought it would be, but it is an answer. VERDICT Though the depiction of Google as a utopian

meritocracy seems rather farcical, Sloan has created an arch tale knitting the analog past with the digital future that is compelling and readable. [See Prepub Alert, 4/9/12.]— Henry Bankhead, Los Gatos Lib., CA --Henry Bankhead (Reviewed September 1, 2012) (*Library Journal*, vol 137, issue 14, p95)

Kirkus:

(The following is a combined review for MR. PENUMBRA&#39 and S 24-HOUR BOOKSTORE)All the best secrets are hidden in plain sight. The trick is to notice the secret in front of you. Sloan's debut novel takes the reader on a dazzling and flat-out fun adventure, winding through the interstices between the literary and the digital realms. Art school graduate and former NewBagel web designer Clay needs a job. One day, he stumbles into Mr. Penumbra's store and, seemingly on the basis of his love for The Dragon-Song Chronicles, lands himself a job as the night clerk. Narrow and tall, the bookstore is an odd place, with its severely limited selection of books to sell. Yet, just behind the commercial section, the shelves reach high toward the shadowy ceiling, crammed with a staggeringly large collection of books: a lending library for a small, peculiar group of people. Clay is forbidden to open the books yet required to describe the borrowers in great detail. Late-night boredom catalyzes curiosity, and soon Clay discovers that the books are part of a vast code, a code the book borrowers have been trying to crack for centuries. Could computers solve the paper puzzle? To assist him on his heroic quest, Clay collects a motley band of assistants. Among the crew is Kat, a Google employee and digital wizard, commanding code as well as a legion of distant computers. Neel, former sixth-grade Dungeon Master, is the financial warrior with his empire balanced on digital boob simulation. Book borrowers, cryptographers and digital pirates all lend a hand, but the gray-suited Corvina opposes them with all the power of a secret society. From the shadows of Penumbra's bookshelves to the brightly lit constellation of cyberspace to the depths of a subterranean library, Sloan deftly wields the magicks (definitely with a "k") of the electronic and the literary in this intricate mystery.(*Kirkus Reviews,* September 15, 2012)

New York Times:

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/16/books/review/mr-penumbras-24-hour-bookstore-by-robin-sloan.html

Boston Globe:

http://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/books/2012/10/19/book-review-penumbra-hour-bookstore-robin-sloan/3sRylq6YetaN7hOgIobUJL/story.html

Wired

http://www.wired.com/geekdad/2012/10/mr-penumbras-24-hour-bookstore/

Read-Alikes

Ready Player One **by Ernest Cline**

https://pikp.ent.sirsi.net/client/PPLD/search/results?qu=&qu=TITLE%3Dready+player+one+&qu=AUTHOR%3Dcline+

The Secret of Lost Things **by Sheridan Hay**

https://pikp.ent.sirsi.net/client/PPLD/search/results?qu=the+secret+of+lost+things+hay&te=&lm=PPLD

The Bookseller **by Mark Pryor**

https://pikp.ent.sirsi.net/client/PPLD/search/results?qu=the+bookseller+pryor&te=&lm=PPLD

The Shadow of the Wind **by Carlos Ruiz Zafon**

https://pikp.ent.sirsi.net/client/PPLD/search/results?qu=%22the+shadow+of+the+wind%22&te=&lm=PPLD

The Magicians **by Lev Grossman**

https://pikp.ent.sirsi.net/client/PPLD/search/results?qu=the+magicians+grossman&te=&lm=PPLD

Themes

Bookstores

Books

Fiction
https://pikp.ent.sirsi.net/client/PPLD/search/results?qu=bookstore&qf=LOCATION%09Shelf+Location%091%3AFICTION%09Fiction+||+1%3AMYSTERY%09Mystery+||+1%3APAPER%09Paperback+||+1%3ATEENFIC%09Teen+Fiction&lm=PPLD&rt=SUBJECT|||Subject|||false

Nonfiction
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Films
https://pikp.ent.sirsi.net/client/PPLD/search/results?qu=bookstore&qf=LOCATION%09Shelf+Location%091%3ADVD%09DVD&lm=PPLD&rt=SUBJECT|||Subject|||false

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http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/PersonFullListPage/PersonFullListPortletWindow?failOverType=&resetBreadCrumb=&query=POC%20bookseller&prodId=BIC1&windowstate=normal&contentModules=&display-query=POC%20bookseller&mode=view&limiter=&displayGroupName=NONE&displayGroups=&action=e&activityType=BasicSearch&userGroupName=pike&jsid=2b8b260471262f8b2c0d1d6626c7198f

Business Source Premier
http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&bquery=bookstore&cli0=FT&clv0=Y&type=0&site=ehost-live

Career Guidance Center – Bookseller
http://www.fofweb.com/activelink2.asp?ItemID=WE34&SID=5&iPin=COPUB084&SingleRecord=True.

Gale Virtual Library (eBooks)
http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?ty=bs&v=2.1&u=pike&it=search&s=RELEVANCE&p=GVRL&st=T003&dblist=GVRL&qt=OQE~bookstores&sw=w

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The 20 Most Beautiful Bookstores in the World
http://flavorwire.com/254434/the-20-most-beautiful-bookstores-in-the-world

Iconic Bookstores of the World (CNN)
http://edition.cnn.com/2008/BUSINESS/12/11/iconic.bookshops/

End of Days for Bookstores? Not if They Can Help It (NPR)
http://www.npr.org/2010/12/14/132026420/end-of-days-for-bookstores-not-if-they-can-help-it

Magical Bookstore Video
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKVcQnyEIT8&feature=player_detailpage

Codes and Cryptography

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"Code Breaking"
https://pikp.ent.sirsi.net/client/PPLD/search/results?qu=code+breaking&qf=LOCATION%09Shelf+Location%091%3ABIOGRAPHY%09Biography+%7C%7C+1%3ANONFIC%09Non-Fiction&lm=PPLD

Fiction
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The Secret Language
http://www.exploratorium.edu/ronh/secret/secret.html

Crytography (free online course from Coursera)
https://www.coursera.org/course/crypto

What is Cryptography (Khan Academy)
https://www.khanacademy.org/math/applied-math/cryptography/crypt/v/intro-to-cryptography

Code Breaking (BBC History)
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/code_breaking/

Cryptology: The Science of Secret Codes and Ciphers
http://www.unmuseum.org/cipher.htm

How to Create Secret Codes and Ciphers
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How Code Breakers Work
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query=BS%20google&mode=view&limiter=&totalSearchResultCount=9901&displayGroups=&action=e&catId=&activityType=BasicSearch&scanId=CSH&userGroupName=pike&jsid=9f9a5046f764c01a22e90ab0d14b6c7b

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http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/searchResults2/actionWin?failOverType=&resetBreadCrumb=&query=ACID%2014031510%20OR%2014031509&prodId=BIC1&windowstate=normal&contentModules=&display-query=ACID%20%22Brin%2C%20Sergey%22&mode=view&limiter=&totalSearchResultCount=84&displayGroups=&action=e&catId=&activityType=PersonSearch&scanId=CSH&userGroupName=pike&jsid=861e7988608d332906796398f2ccc831

Business Source Premier
http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&bquery=google%2c+AND+inc&cli0=FT&clv0=Y&type=0&site=ehost-live

MasterFile Premier
http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&bquery=google&cli0=FT&clv0=Y&type=0&site=ehost-live

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About Google

http://www.google.com/about/

Google History

http://www.google.com/about/company/history/

Life at Google

http://www.google.com/about/jobs/lifeatgoogle/

Life in the Googleplex (Time Life Photos)

http://www.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1947844,00.html

Life as a Googler (video)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R90Zs60HXms

The "Google" Life (CBS)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QgT38QRA84

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Typography

Books

Nonfiction
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http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?ty=bs&v=2.1&lm=DB~allElectronicResources~~DG~%22Bios%22+Or+%22LitCrit%22+Or+%22Multimedia%22+Or+%22PrimarySources%22+Or+%22ReviewsNotes%22+Or+%22TopicWorkOverviews%22&u=pike&it=search&s=RELEVANCE&p=LitRC&st=T001&dblist=LitRC&qt=KE_ST~typography&sw=w

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An Introduction to Type
http://graphicdesign.spokanefalls.edu/tutorials/process/type_basics/default.htm

Learn about Fonts & Typography
http://www.fonts.com/content/learning

Typographer's Glossary
http://www.fontshop.com/glossary/

Secret Societies

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https://pikp.ent.sirsi.net/client/PPLD/search/results?qu=secret+societies&qf=LOCATION%09Shelf+Location%091%3AFICTION%09Fiction+||+1%3AMYSTERY%09Mystery+||+1%3APAPER%09Paperback+||+1%3ASCIFI%09Science+Fiction+||+1%3ATEENFIC%09Teen+Fiction&lm=PPLD&av=0

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America Unearthed – A Secret Symbol Revealed (video)
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7/25/2013