

## Print isn't Dead: Your Guests will Love this Short Story Machine

by Amanda Baltazar | Apr 9, 2018 4:13pm



Image: Short Edition. Image below: Kalman N. Muller

Patrons at the bar of [Cafe Zoetrope](#) in San Francisco have a diversion to help pass the minutes: They can read a story. It's not a story on their phone or Kindle, or even an honest-to-goodness book, but a story they have printed out from a [dedicated machine that stands in the bar](#).

[Short Edition](#) is a French company which, having had success in its native country across 150 venues, turned its attention to U.S. shores. But before Short Edition got off the ground, [Francis Ford Coppola](#) came across one of their [Short Story Dispenser machines](#) in France and loved the idea so much that he bought one and installed it right by the entrance in Cafe Zoetrope, which he owns.

"It was the first short story machine here in America," says general manager [Lidia Valledor](#). "We got it more than two years ago. We have it in the dining room, so everyone who enters is free to press a button and have a one-, three-, or five-minute story printed.



The cost to the consumer is...nothing. The stories are all intended for adults and are classified in more than 20 categories, from thrillers to romance, humor to poems, with comics coming soon. At this point, they're all translations from the original French, but the company says it's starting to sign up American writers.

"We are ultimately aiming to build an English platform as grand as the one we have in French (7,600 authors, 100,000 works)," says spokesperson [Kristan LeRoy](#). In fact, the company's running a [short story writing contest at Penn State](#) this year in a bid to add more American voices.

This fitted in with Francis Ford Coppola's company, Valledor says, since the company already publishes a short story magazine, [Zoetrope: All-Story](#), and has done for the past 20 years. "We have an owner who really believes in art and he has this idea that everything can be so much nicer if people aren't on the phone all day," she says. "If they are waiting for another person they can print a story to read to share or read instead of being on the phone."

And while there's no tangible way (yet) to verify if Short Editions has affected business, Valledor feels it has. Some people will come to the restaurant to just print a story since they've heard about the dispenser. Almost everyone who uses the machine stays for at least a drink, according to Valledor.

As an operator, you can select from Short Edition's catalog to customize the content your audience reads. Your logo is illuminated on the backlit panel and printed on the eco-friendly paper. Should you desire a message such as a call to action be included on the story printout, the footer can be customized. And operation really couldn't be much easier for a device that will attract customers and mitigate their impatience: you just plug it in and change paper rolls when needed. Another plus? The machine gets photographed a lot so [Café Zoetrope](#), for example, has gotten a lot of [social media attention](#)—as well as media attention in general.

The [Short Story Dispenser](#) is popular with just about everyone. "You have people on their own, you have groups of people printing and reading the stories. Some people read the stories out loud at the table."

Coppola has two more of the machines—at [Francis Ford Coppola Winery](#) in Geyserville, Calif., and at [Inglénook](#) winery in Saint Helena, California—and there are another 22 machines scattered across the country.

One of the next could be a microbrewery in Oregon, sponsored by the local library, "the idea being to drive more traffic into the library and communicate the latest collections at the footer of each story," LeRoy says. "We cannot wait to get the photo of all the beer-drinking hipsters reading short stories."