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CHINA – TRADITION & INNOVATION  
Ehrengast 2009 · Frankfurter Buchmesse  
Guest of Honour 2009 · Frankfurt Book Fair

Hu Dawei

## The Chinese publishing industry

*(The spoken word applies)*

Ladies and gentlemen, Friends,  
Hello, everybody!

It is a great honour to be with you from all over the world. I am Hu Dawei from China and I'd like to brief you on the basic situation of China's publishing industry.

China, a country with a long reading and publishing tradition, attaches great importance to cultural traditions and values. Chinese characters are one of the world's oldest writing systems, which is still in use today. The arts of paper making and printing, which have close relations with publishing, have been China's two major contributions to world civilizations. China invented the art of paper making as early as in the Han Dynasty more than 1,900 years ago, and later developed markets for trading hand-written books. The country invented the art of block printing in the Tang Dynasty over 1,200 years ago, and later developed commercial book publishing institutions. China was one of the origins of the world's publishing industry.

Today, publishing as an important economic sector has become an important component of China's cultural industry. In terms of industrial scale, China had 544 book publishing houses in 2007, turning out 248,000 varieties of books, of which 136,000 varieties being published for the first time. The impression totalled 6.293 million volumes, worth Yuan RMB 67.672 million. China has become the largest publisher in the world in terms of published book varieties. Also in the year, China sold 6.313 million volumes of books, worth Yuan RMB 51.262 million. Compared with 1998, the varieties of new books published now are 82.1% higher and their combined turnover is 47% higher.

Since China joined the WTO in 2002, it has intensified the reform and opening up of its publishing industry. The basic principle is to turn the publishing and distribution entities from public institutions into enterprises and to introduce modern corporate systems into the publishing industry through grouping, listing and ownership diversification. As a result of efforts over the past few years, China has established 23 publishing groups and turned more than 100 book publishing houses into enterprises. The Xinhua Bookstores in various provinces have completed corporate transformation, with some of them becoming joint-stock enterprises. Nationwide, the publishing industry has three listed companies and over 10 more publishing and distribution enterprises preparing for public listing.

### Press contact

Frank Wöllstein - WBCO Public Relations & Business Communications  
Krögerstraße 2 · 60313 Frankfurt am Main  
Tel: +49 (0)69 13388035 · Fax: +49 (0)69 13388033 · Email: f.woellstein@wbco.de

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China has also pushed forward the opening up of its publishing industry. On the one hand, the country has opened its market for publications distribution, which means both, domestic private enterprises and foreign enterprises, can invest in bookstore operation in China. On the other hand, the country has encouraged Chinese publishing houses to enter into deeper cooperation with their foreign counterparts in the fields of copyrights and investments, by importing best foreign publications and exporting best Chinese ones.

The opening up has brought tremendous changes to China's book distribution channels. The Chinese market for publications distribution is no longer monopolized by state-owned enterprises. Instead, it has become a sector, in which state, private and foreign operators coexist. In particular, China now has more than 100,000 private distribution enterprises, which account for half of the turnover of the book retail market. Foreign enterprises have also gradually entered China. Of the 45 enterprises that have been approved by the government, 29 are joint ventures and 16 wholly owned. While 13 of them are engaged in wholesale, 30 are engaged in retail and two specialize in online marketing. The *amazon.com* bookstore in the United States has become one of China's two major online bookstores by acquiring China's online retailer *joyo.com*. China's import of publications has also been on the rise. Statistics indicate that in 2007, China imported 3.66 million volumes of books, worth 78.12 million dollars.

In the publishing sector, many big foreign names have established their presence in China for copyright cooperation or marketing. Now the country has 51 varieties of newspapers and magazines being published through Sino-foreign copyright cooperation, with nearly 10,000 book varieties being imported each year.

China's book market has also undergone tremendous changes over the past decade. While the market was mainly selling textbooks 10 years ago, it mainly sells general books now, with the proportion of textbooks dropping and that of general books rising. In terms of market structure, novels and books about life and entertainment have become popular. At the same time, imported foreign best-sellers are occupying an important role in China. *Harry Porter*, *The Da Vinci Code*, *You: The Owner's Manual*, and *The Kite Runner* are also the super-bestsellers in China.

In specialized books, science books and especially science databases are very popular in China. The academic databases of the publishing houses such as Springer, Reed Elsevier and John Wiley & Sons, have claimed a considerable chunk of the Chinese market.

We may say that China's publishing industry has posted a fast growth in step with China's rapid economic development. It has become one of the most thriving markets for the publishing industry around the world. This is why China has been chosen as the State of Honour for the Moscow Book Fair in 2007, the Seoul Book Fair in 2008 and as the Guest of Honour for the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2009.

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A review of the rapid development of China's publishing industry indicates that the key factor is the deepening reform and opening up. Through opening up, China opens its door to the world for closer cooperation and mutual benefit. We welcome all of you to cooperate with us in further flourishing the publishing industry.

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