

PUBLISHING PERSPECTIVES

SPRING 2020

A magazine for the international book publishing business



London Book Fair 2019 (Image: Hannah Johnson)

PUBLISHING IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Coronavirus has forced the cancellation of book fairs, events, and travel. But rather than asking “What will happen next?” the question should be, “What can publishing offer right now?” — [Page 4](#) »



By the Numbers

Sales figures and statistics from a selection of global book markets.

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Chinese Comics

Meet the publishers behind China's young-but-growing comic book market.

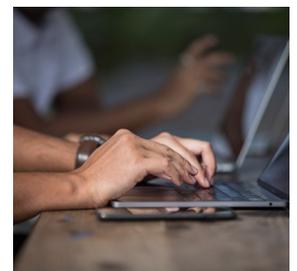
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1 Year of PubliHer

This international network for women in publishing finds strong traction.

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Copyright Updates

A tour of important copyright issues and updates in the world.

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News Briefs from the Publishing World



Bertelsmann Aims for Climate Neutrality by 2030

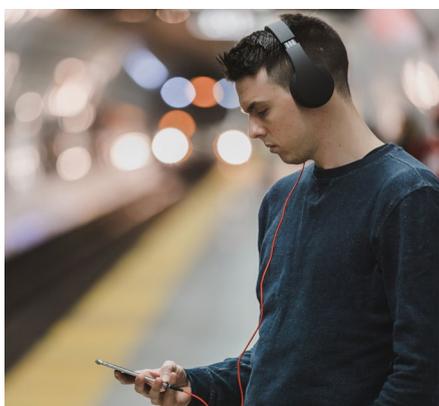
Thomas Rabe, chairman and CEO of Bertelsmann, laid out an aggressive goal for the multinational corporation to be climate-neutral by 2030. The plan, announced in February, includes a 50-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions; offsetting remaining emissions through climate protection projects and carbon credits; and a switch to 100-percent green electricity.

Penguin Random House, part of Bertelsmann, had made commitments back in 2016 to become more sustainable, according to CEO

Markus Dohle. And in a letter to Penguin Random House employees earlier this year, Dohle wrote that the company would reach those earlier goals by the end of this year.

In addition, Dohle outlined a plan for PRH “to have fully transitioned to green energy” and to “reduce CO2 emissions across the supply chain” by 2022.

“It is more important than ever to take active, science-based steps to protect our environment for the next generation of readers, and for this one,” wrote Dohle. [Read more »](#)



US Publishers Succeed in 'Audible Captions' Case

In a resolution announced on February 6 and finalized by the court on March 6, the Association of American Publishers (AAP) has succeeded in stopping Audible from generating its “Captions” feature on publishers’ audiobooks without those publishers’ express permission.

Publishers asserted that Audible Captions amounts to an edition of the author’s book not licensed to Audible.

AAP president and CEO Maria A. Pallante issued a statement on the resolution, saying, “Audible has agreed that it will obtain permis-

sion from any AAP members that are in good standing with AAP before moving forward with Audible Captions for their works. We will be advising our members as to the application of the resolution.

What the AAP’s new permanent injunction certifies is that capabilities generally referred to as instances of artificial intelligence, or AI, cannot be applied to the intellectual property of the American book publishing industry without prior and transparent agreement of rights holders. [Read more »](#)



Kristenn Einarsson
(Image: Porter Anderson)

IPA Announces 2020 Prix Voltaire Shortlist of Four Publishers

The International Publishers Association announced in March the shortlist of publishers for its 2020 Prix Voltaire.

Led by Norwegian publisher Kristenn Einarsson, the Prix Voltaire is the IPA Freedom to Publish committee’s recognition of—and advocacy for—publishing’s honorees who rarely are able to be at their prize ceremonies.

They’re selected for showing valor in the face of threats and often retaliation for exercising their freedom of expression.

Of the shortlist, Einarsson says, “The 2020

IPA Prix Voltaire shortlist is made up of 4 remarkable publishers who put themselves at great risk to bring books they deem valuable to readers.”

The four shortlisted publishers are: Avesta Yayinlari (Turkey), Mr. Chong Ton Sin (Malaysia), Liberal Publishing House (Vietnam), and Maktaba-e-Daniyal (Pakistan)

This year’s winner will be named at the IPA’s International Publishers Congress, which takes place May 28–30 in Lillehammer, Norway. [Read more »](#)



Women Hold 55 Percent of Top Publishing Roles in UK

The third consecutive annual study from the UK Publishers Association may have a surprise for some who are concerned that women in the business don’t have enough representation in leadership positions.

Released in January, the 2019 survey’s responses from a total 12,702 employees indicate that 55 percent of the British industry’s senior leadership and executive-level roles were held by women. In dividing up those two categories, women held 53 percent of the executive roles and 55 percent of senior leadership roles.

There were slight adjustments between 2018 and 2019, with women in executive positions having moved up from 48 to 53 percent in 2019. Senior management position percentages actually fell slightly, from 56 percent in 2018 to 55 percent in 2019.

In one area of industry diversity in which more work is needed, 13 percent of respondents identified as BAME—black, Asian, and minority-ethnic—which is higher than last year (11.6 percent) but has not yet reached the PA’s 15-percent target. [Read more »](#)

Buzz on Books: What People Are Saying

Selma Hellal on Bringing Arab Literature to Readers in France

“In Algeria, literature is doing well. In Tunisia and Morocco, amazing books in the social sciences are being produced that deserve to be known in France. We exist—you can get in touch with us and we can put you in touch with other publishers. We’re learning to work collectively.”

Selma Hellal is the founder of director Editions Barzakh in Algeria. She spoke at the Maghreb Orient des Livres, Paris-based festival of literature focusing on writers the Maghreb and wider Middle East.



Selma Hellal
(Image: Olivia Snaije)

Roger Casas-Alatriste on Multi-Platform Stories

“I think the Mexican and Colombian markets are now prepared for more creative and challenging content. They’re the most mature markets in Latin America in that sense.

“We have a diversified business model with audiovisual production, an agency for branded content, and a creative studio for transmedia. That allows us to focus on different sectors.”

Roger Casas-Alatriste is the founding director of Madrid-based El Cañonazo Transmedia, and he was a speaker at the 2020 CONTEC Mexico conference in February.



Roger Casas-Alatriste
(Image: Adam Critchley)

Simon de Jocas on Publishing in French-Canada

“We have a very strong-knitted book chain, right from authorship all the way to the library, I’d say. Including the publishers, the distributors, the bookstores, the libraries, and the school systems, we stick together, through thick and thin.

“We don’t always agree with everything, and that’s fine. But on the major elements, we stick together. So we have great authors, who are published in France under Grasset or Actes Sud. But they remain published in French in Québec with their Québec publisher.”

Simon de Jocas is the president of Les 400 Coups, a Montreal-based children’s book publishing house.



Simon de Jocas
(Image: ANEL)



How Healthy Is Your Metadata?

Many publishers struggle to create a healthy metadata strategy. When data is out of shape, it can leave publishers and users feeling fatigued. CCC’s expert consultants specialize in helping publishers adopt the healthiest possible metadata strategy to:

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PUBLISHING PERSPECTIVES

Publishing Perspectives is a leading source of information about the global book publishing business. Since 2009, we have been publishing daily email editions with news and features from across the book world.

Our mission is to help build and contribute to the international publishing community by offering information that publishing and media professionals need to connect, cooperate, and work together year-round and across borders.

In addition to our daily online coverage, we also offer an online monthly rights edition, as well as special issues and magazines at events including the London Book Fair and the Frankfurt Book Fair.

Founded by the German Book Office New York and now a project of the Frankfurt Book Fair New York, Publishing Perspectives works with our colleagues in Frankfurt and the fair's international offices to share with you the latest publishing trends and opportunities, people to know, companies to watch, and more.

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From the Editor: What Publishing Has To Offer in Times of Crisis

'What Could Possibly Go Wrong?'

The line "What could possibly go wrong?" may never be so funny again.

When we started working on this magazine, we planned to release it during the London Book Fair. And now, as we launch it, the Bologna Children's Book Fair has had to cancel, as LBF did. Between the loss of the UK's major trade show with its 20,000 attendees and Italy's world-leading 30,000-person industry summit for young people's literature and illustration, the international publishing industry already has suffered a couple of body blows from the outbreak of the coronavirus COVID-19.

And as we make our daily updates at PublishingPerspectives.com, we're seeing conferences, festivals, and book fairs go the same way. An industry that always has conducted its business with a special fondness for personal contact is resorting to phone calls and virtual conferencing—for all the right reasons.

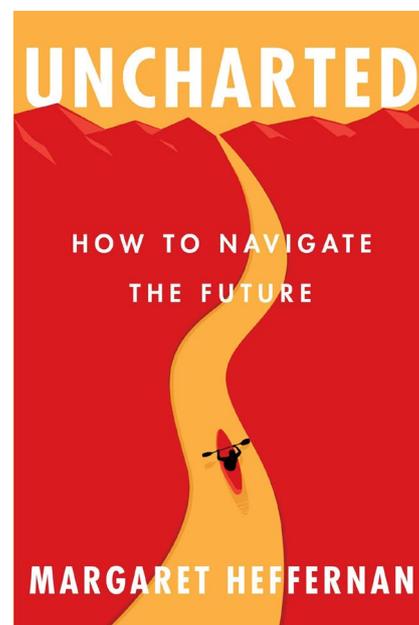
We spoke with Rakuten Kobo's CEO Michael Tamblin about his company's compassionate partnership with Gruppo Mondadori and the Italian innovation ministry. They've been working to offer Italians under COVID-19 lockdowns a free ebook from Mondadori's huge catalogue. And as we finished up the interview, Tamblin added that he was working from home. The Toronto offices of Kobo voluntarily did a test run, requiring everyone to work from home for a day, just to find out "on our own terms," he said... what could possibly go wrong.

Likewise, in publishing houses' offices in many parts of the world, executives are weighing whether it's time for them to send their staffers home to telecommute. Publishing is fortunate. It's a field in which a lot of its work can be done in such a format.

But our events are a particular challenge. And what can happen when an event goes ahead during the spread of the coronavirus may lead to a result fully as counterproductive as a cancellation may seem to be.

When Soldiering On Isn't the Answer

The Association of Writers and Writing Programs' conference—called AWP—is normally North America's largest annual writing conference. It's based in the undergraduate university creative writing programs of the USA and Canada, but it's so attractive to MFA and PhD programs that for a couple of years, its lead sponsor was England's Bath Spa University—which sent



a team over to recruit students for its programming. A few years ago in Boston, AWP drew 18,000 people.

This year, AWP was set to run March 4 to 7 in San Antonio, Texas—less than 100 miles from Austin, the city that forced the cancellation of its huge South by Southwest media festival, which can draw 400,000 or more. And AWP's venue of San Antonio is where a patient quarantined for the coronavirus had been accidentally released into the city. Still, AWP would go forward.

By the time it opened, organizers were ordering it "handshake-free" and "hug-free," and trying to put a brave face on what looked like a slow-motion blunder. As companies like the independent Canadian literary press Wolsak & Wynn from Ontario announced their regretful withdrawal, writers were responding with appreciation for a decision, as one wrote, "not to put yourselves, your writers, and vulnerable seniors and disabled folks at any further risk."

And as Jim Milliot would report at *Publishers Weekly*, predictions of a 7,000-person turnout "seemed to predict a best-case scenario. When the event opened, approximately half the vendor tables at the book fair were unoccupied, traffic at the registration and book fair was light, and attendees complained that the online scheduling tool lagged behind in noting the numerous event cancellations."

Worst of all, perhaps, AWP lost its co-executive director, Diane Zinna, who resigned over the decision.

What Are We Learning?

Just before press time, *Publishing Perspectives* had a chance to interview Margaret Heffernan, the Texas-born, BBC-bred producer and TED Talker on contemporary contexts. Her new book *Uncharted: How to Map the Future* is just out from Simon & Schuster UK, and is scheduled to release on September 8 in the States, also from S&S. Why they're holding it until September in New York is a mystery, because Heffernan has an amazingly timely chapter on epidemics and the rigors of developing vaccines. (Look at Chapter Ten if you can grab a copy of the book.)

What she's getting at in *Uncharted*—we'll have a full interview at PublishingPerspectives.com—is that being “in a bubble” doesn't just apply to how we selectively acknowledge and deny political positions. It also applies to a peculiar modern mentality in which we convince ourselves that we've evolved beyond ancient terrors and nature's grimmest disruptions.

Quite the contrary, we're undergoing what the World Health Organization finally has credentialed as a pandemic of frightening dimensions. A plague of sorts walks among us. And as Camus would want us to remember, we, of all people, the storytellers, should be the ones

best suited to grasp the gravity of so awful a moment. We all should work—as Kobo and Mondadori are doing—to put our best creativity into the hands of a world that needs it.

After all, Stefano Mauri, an icon among Italian publishers, told us from the now red-zoned Milan that a publishing event's rights-trading center is “an epidemiologist's nightmare.”

So it's a time to listen—to Heffernan, to Mauri, to Tamblyn, and to our better natures. World publishing would do well to look the virus full in the face, unpack our suitcases for the duration, and ask what it is we have to offer those who are suffering most in the uncertainty and dread of a threat that our governments really may not be able to handle.

Our drinks receptions, our panel discussions, our awards ceremonies in which we hand each other prizes—these will all be waiting afterward. Right now, the world needs us to look up, to look out, and to ask how we can pitch in and help.

To insert a quick personal note that helps me look past my own little worries, when the United Nations posted me to Rome, I lived near the Trevi Fountain. And neither in the brightest daylight nor the deepest darkness was there anything less than a churning throng of tourists and locals there. Now? One man's

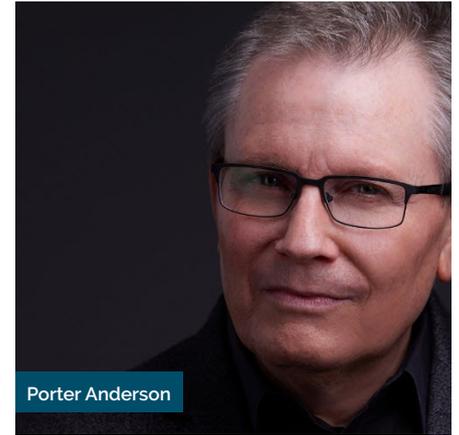
footfalls echo in an empty piazza under a lockdown that a friend there tells me “feels so surreal, it's like living in a Stephen King novel.”

What could possibly go wrong? ... is happening now. •

Porter Anderson

Editor-in-Chief

Publishing Perspectives



At the Trevi Fountain, March 10, 2020 (Image - iStockphoto Em Campos)

Developing the Comics Market in China

Several Chinese publishers are working to grow the country's relatively young comic market and find local talent to complement the foreign books they buy.



From left: Chen Peng, Ningqun Huang, Chen Chloe of Thinkkingdom (Image: Olivia Snaije)



From left: Meng Rui and Shang Ke of Post Wave (Image: Olivia Snaije)



Yan Dong of Dargaud (Image: Olivia Snaije)

By Olivia Snaije

When a Beijing publisher writes in an email about the sense of panic and isolation that the coronavirus outbreak has created, it sounds eerily similar to certain post-apocalyptic comic books that address global pandemics.

Another Chinese publisher writes about COVID-19, “There’s much concern about the situation, and most people don’t want to leave the house. In this age of the Internet, panic is transmitted much faster than disease.”

Once the coronavirus situation has stabilized and life goes back to normal, we hope that independent houses will have weathered the crisis. The publishers are waiting to hear from authorities about whether certain subsidies will be distributed to businesses, hoping they’ll be able to return to what they were doing before. For some, that will mean working on developing the country’s comics market—which Chinese publishers said in meetings with *Publishing Perspectives* late last year is a relatively young one.

Meng Rui heads the comics department at China’s leading comics publisher, Beijing’s independent house Post Wave. She said she buys 80 percent of her comics and the rest is original production, a percentage she’d like to increase.

On the other hand, the French comics publisher Dargaud, which is part of the Média Participations group, established a division in Shanghai in 2014. A portion of its activities includes developing comics created in China for an external market via the Paris-based Urban China imprint.

The Dargaud group in China is run by Dong Yan. It licenses its various brands, engages in joint ventures, and operates as an agency, combing through comics catalogues from Paris to select titles to present to Chinese publishers. Those include Post Wave and the government-owned Thinkkingdom, which has started a comics imprint.

Nevertheless, “Comics are still a small market,” Dong said.

Located in a former factory, Post Wave publishes between 50 and 60 comics per year, the definitive figure always uncertain because of China’s complicated system of ISBNs. Those ISBNs must be approved by government-run partner publishers.

An initial print run, Meng says, is between 4,000 and 5,000 copies. She considers a comic to be a bestseller when it exceeds sales of 25,000 units.

Post Wave’s founder Wu Xingyuan is described by his staff as being passionate about French-language comics, which he discovered at Frankfurter Buchmesse and in Paris. Post Wave began publishing comics in 2014. Twelve members of its staff of more than 300 work in the comics department. They publish a wide-ranging variety of top-notch comics authors including Enki Bilal, Joann Sfar, Christophe Chabouté, and Craig Thompson.

Two thirds of the company’s comics come from France, Belgium, and other parts of Europe, and one-third comes from the States.

Some of Post Wave’s most successful publications include the *Blacksad* series, which originally was published by Dargaud. *Blacksad* is by the Spanish duo Juan Diaz Canales and Juanjo Guarnido. More successes are Marc-Antoine Mathieu’s *3 Secondes* and an adaptation of Marcel Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*) by Stéphane Heuet.

In China, fiction classics are often considered to be likely successes, but with comics, “It’s not easy to predict,” Meng said. She says that Jacques Ferrandez’ adaptation of Albert Camus’ *L’Étranger* (*The Stranger*) and the iconic Corto Maltese books didn’t sell as well as they’d expected them to.

For three years, Post Wave has partnered with the French Institute in China on its comics festival, *Fête des Bulles*. At that annual event in Beijing, Meng says, an important factor for sales is the presence of international authors, although this year’s festival has yet to be confirmed.

Comic book publishers increasingly have to contend with censorship of images, a fact usually involving depictions of nudity and vi-

olence. But more attention, publishers say, is being paid, as well, to texts. Religious matters, dystopia, and homosexuality can prove to be problematic.

Publishers also need to negotiate with comics artists, they say, some of whom feel strongly that their works need to be published in their entirety, while others are open to amendments or other changes.

Most publishers who spoke for this article on condition of anonymity agreed that comics books that were published in 2017 wouldn’t be cleared by China’s censors today.

Ningqun Huang, the head of adult fiction and nonfiction at the Beijing-based Thinkkingdom, said that the company’s success in selling fiction and children’s titles allowed it to acquire more nonfiction and to begin a comics imprint.

“We’re looking at three categories for our comics: mangas, European comics, and local creations,” Ningqun said.

At Dargaud, Dong said her office works with the French Institute as well as with the cultural institute of the Walloon—French-speaking Belgium—for events and exchanges with comics artists.

For their Urban China imprint, which so far has 30 titles, the company identifies Chinese talent, Dong said, helping illustrators find a market in France and sometimes pairing artists with scriptwriters.

“The subject always has to be about China,” Dong said.

Comics readers are mostly found in cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, Dong said, but she and other publishers are working on developing fan bases and encouraging influencers on WeChat. •



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(Arab Scientific Publishers, 2017)

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by Hayder Qasim
Iraq

(Al Rawafed Culture and Nadim
Edition, 2018)

DIALOGUE IN ABU HAYYAN AL-TAWHIDI LITERATURE

by Dr. Manal Saleh M.
Al-Mohimeed
Saudi Arabia

(Dar Kunouz Al Ma'rafa
Publishers, 2019)

LITERATURE

SHELTER OF ABSENCE

by Mansoura Ezzedine
Egypt

(Mamdouh Adwan Publishing
and Distribution House / Sard for
Publishing, 2018)

SOULS OF HONEY ROCKS

by Mamdouh Azzam
Syria

(Mamdouh Adwan Publishing
and Distribution House / Sard for
Publishing, 2018)

THE PENULTIMATE CUP

by Moncef Al-Wahaibi
Tunisia

(Meskeliani Publishing and
Distribution, 2019)

CHILDREN'S

THE WATER PROVIDER

by Maryam Saqer Al Qasimi
United Arab Emirates

(Al Hudhud Publishing and
Distribution, 2019)

MY WONDROUS PICNIC WITH UNCLE SALEM

by Nadia AlNajjar
United Arab Emirates

(Dar Al Saqi Publishing, 2019)

THE LILAC GIRL

by Ibtisam Barakat — Palestine/
USA

(Tamer Institute for Community
Education, 2019)

The Publishing Industry's Own Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Richard Charkin—former IPA president and Bloomsbury executive director—takes the temperature of the book industry, examining what ails us and what keeps us healthy.



“What strange logic has granted the open-access movement proposal that paying to be published is morally superior to paying to read?”

Richard Charkin

By Richard Charkin

Chronic fatigue syndrome is a long-term illness with a wide range of symptoms including extreme tiredness, difficulty with thinking and memory, muscle and joint pain, and various other unpleasant effects. It can be very debilitating.

In the past it was frequently overlooked or dismissed as “psychosomatic.” I suspect most of us know, or have known, people suffering with it. While diagnosis is not a cure and there’s little agreement on the best treatment, there’s a certain relief that at least the illness has a name and can be addressed.

I’m beginning to wonder whether publishing is suffering from a mild—I hope—form of industrial chronic fatigue syndrome.

I’m an optimist by nature and am optimistic about the future of our industry. But I can’t help detect some symptoms of chronic fatigue. I can only hope the symptoms are more about my hypochondria than reality.

Here are a few of those symptoms.

Growth

We have reason to be thankful that overall book sales in most markets seem to be steady or growing slightly. Association of American Publishers data suggests that overall sales in 2019 rose by less than 1 percent, the only growth area being downloadable audio (dented slightly by a steep decline in physical audio).

There’s no or slow growth in most sectors

including hardbacks, mass-market paperbacks, and ebooks. Not exactly a positively healthy situation.

Profitability

The sky has not fallen in. Publishers in general continue to post pretty decent sets of figures. Better logistical systems and better technology have allowed publishers to reduce distribution and production costs.

On the other hand, average discounts to retailers have continued their seemingly inexorable upward trend.

And what doesn’t immediately show in publishers’ profit-and-loss accounts is the impact of unearned authors’ advances. The impact can be, and is, delayed while the cost is held in the balance sheet. Every now and then, there’s a reckoning, usually when a new CEO is appointed and undertakes a cleansing kitchen-sink operation.

Complexity

While technology has enhanced productivity in the operations end of the business, it certainly hasn’t simplified the publishing end.

Where we used to survive on one or two ISBNs per title, we now need to handle three times as many with multiple formats and multiple retailer requirements. And royalty accounting has never been more complicated—just ask any author or agent—or indeed publisher—whether they really understand a royalty statement with its varying royalty rates

for home, export, price relationship, retentions for returns, escalators, rights splits, agency and wholesale ebook terms, remainders, and so on.

Organizational Structure

As the industry has globalized, corporate structures have had to evolve. This has resulted inevitably in complex matrix structures.

There might be a group marketing director based in head offices with global responsibility for national marketing directors around the world. But there might also be a national managing director.

Who calls the shots? Who takes responsibility? This is even more difficult when it comes to publishing decisions.

Disruptors

Disruption can be good, and we looked forward to the CD-ROM revolution, the Kindle, the enhanced ebook. We welcomed Amazon, we fell in love with Apple and Audible and subscription models for books. Our editorial decisions would be less risky, we said, now that we have excellent market data.

But none of these has come to our rescue. We still rely on sales of printed books for the bulk of our income.

Routes to Market

Apart from the escalating costs of traditional bookshop retailing, the industry is facing the challenges of quasi-monopolistic

(continued from previous page)

platforms for the promotion and sale of books in all formats. And this is exacerbated by the proliferation of self-publishing models and hyperinflation of new book titles and ISBNs, allowing the platforms to determine through their algorithms what should or should not be presented to the reader.

It's great to see a resurgence of independent brick-and-mortar bookshops, but is it material? Are we whistling in the dark?

And we've lost book clubs and are progressively losing public libraries. University library book purchasing budgets have been hugely undermined by the superabundance and costs of scientific research acquisition. Even if open access becomes the norm for the publication of primary research—with unknown consequences for the profitability and viability of some of the biggest and best publishers in the world—it's unlikely that book budgets could be restored.

Legal

While sales are growing a snail's pace, the size of corporate legal departments is leaping ahead as we face ever more complex legal issues: copyright, libel, human resources, environmental, ethical, and commercial. All industries are facing the same sorts of problems, but

the world of creative writers, researchers, and educators is more prone to legal challenge than some.

Societal Shifts

Immersive reading appears to be on the wane. Books are perceived to be less central to an education as the likes of Wikipedia replace reference works, as students build learning materials from multiple sources, as Instagram replaces libraries. Literacy organizations are doing a great job holding back these powerful forces but Canute comes to mind.

Arguably, as a friend pointed out, our enthusiasm for audiobooks comes at a price. We're providing the marketplace with an alternative to reading books which reinforces the waning.

And I can't help feeling that the "information should be free" bandwagon continually gains ground. What strange logic has granted the open-access movement proposal that paying to be published is morally superior to paying to read?

And Yet...

In spite of all these symptoms, none of which may be the killer, I remain optimistic.

It's not just me (at my advanced age)



Richard Charkin (Image: Mensch Publishing)

that finds the industry chronically fatiguing. There's a general sense that publishing successfully is getting harder (although I imagine and hope that readers might want to challenge this assertion).

On the other hand—and back to the medical metaphor—publishing does have an absurdly excellent immune system which has served it well for more than a century.

That immunity is based around copyright. It's the vaccine, the lymphatic system, the bacteriophage, the protective barrier which allows us, in Churchill's words, to keep buggering on. Whatever else we may have to address, please let us never drop our guard against the enemies of copyright. •

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Michael Healy's World Tour of Copyright

Traveling across the globe on behalf of Copyright Clearance Center, Michael Healy offers his view of top copyright issues and legislation in various regions.

By Porter Anderson

A quarter of the way into 2020, Michael Healy—executive director of Copyright Clearance Center's international relations—is one of the most astute observers of travel circumstances in the publishing world.

And even as he and others who fly for work are watching developments in various coronavirus hotspots, he has to keep an eye on the copyright challenges that form a loose archipelago of controversies across the world.

What he calls his "tour of the horizon" is a selective look at where issues are in play this year and what contexts may be affected.

Australia's Copyright Agency

At any time over a period of almost eight years, Healy points out, there's been one or more stakeholders at odds with Copyright Agency, which manages Australia's copyright revenue collection and oversight in the island nation. "The new South Wales government is Number One," Healy lists them. "The university sector nationally is Number Two; the school sector is Number Three, and a number of the major media were all, individually and separately, in disputes with that reproduction rights organization.

"If we'd had this talk, say, a few months ago, all four of those disputes would be still active. The good news is that the schools dispute has been settled, and the long-running dispute with the New South Wales government has also been settled. That's great. There are rumors that they're close to a deal on the media marketing organizations, too."

Similar progress may not be as close to hand, Healy says, on the dispute over content-reproduction rights with the university sector. "But I'm sure we're all delighted to see the end of a number of these disputes and are looking forward to seeing a formal end to the universities' disputes," hopefully within a few months' time.

South Africa: Pending Legislation

South Africa created a Copyright Amendment Bill that, as late as December 2018, appeared to be moving out of committee and toward a vote.

What has been worrisome about the South African bill is its similarity to the Canadian "Copyright Modernization Act" of 2012, which so deeply loosened "fair use" exceptions—by which educational use of copyrighted materials is permitted under certain privileged conditions—that enormous losses in



Michael Healy (Image: Sven Serkis)

copyright revenues have been suffered by authors and publishers in Canada for years.

What's peculiar about the South African situation is that after being passed by both houses of the country's parliament, Healy says, the bill "remains unsigned by the president, Cyril Ramaphosa. Nobody knows but him and his closest aides why.

"To my knowledge, he's gone on-record only once about it, saying that he has concerns about the legislation. But what that translates into—whether it means referring it to the constitutional court, which he's entitled to do, or send it back to parliament for further scrutiny—he hasn't done any of those practical things just yet."

Japan: 'Remunerated Exception'

A brighter and far clearer resolution is coming shortly in Japan where, Healy says, "You'll remember that the new copyright legislation was passed in May 2018. One of the provisions of that piece of legislation was the introduction of a remunerated exception to copyright for specific classroom usage. And the way the legislation was framed was that it was a legal requirement to introduce the remuneration exception within three years of the passage of the act.

"What that meant was that by April 30, 2021, this remunerated exception to copyright—for specific digital classroom uses—had to be in place. And I was there 10 days ago, and they were all working diligently to get the thing done ...

"I think they'll launch within the deadline," Healy says.

What may be most valuable here, he says, is the creation of the association called SARTRAS which—according to its own self-descriptive content—"supports the copyright holders of copyrighted materials used in education."

Healy's main point here is that exceptions to copyright sometimes do have to be introduced—and as publishers know, this is most common in educational settings, in which ed-

ucators seek to reproduce content for students. "But it's better these exceptions be paid exceptions," Healy says, "than free exceptions."

These exceptions, in other words, do carry remunerated value for rights holders.

Europe's Digital Single Market Copyright Directive

Healy's Copyright Clearance Center colleague Roy Kaufman points out that the European Union's Digital Single Market copyright directive has what Kaufman sees as a unique quality.

"For the first time in copyright law anywhere in my opinion," Kaufman says, the new directive "articulated a clear and explicit formulation of the legal status of the act of copying materials for the purposes of use to instruct artificial intelligence, of information extraction, and of other types of text and data mining."

And Healy points out that we're in the two-year transitional phase when "The member-states of the EU are considering when and how they'll implement the copyright directive.

In France, he says, "It's not completed yet, but aspects of the copyright directive have already been introduced into French law, and there seems to be a legislative plan do the rest of it over the course of the next period.

In the UK, Healy points out, the government did not elect to implement the copyright directive prior to Britain's departure from the EU. That means that a major lobbying effort likely is ahead by the UK publishing community and associated creative industries.

The Canadian Modernization Act

Before concluding, Healy touches on the loudly contested Canadian Copyright Act of 2012, which is blamed for what Canadian publishers say are losses of more than \$50 million annually in copyright revenue as a result of perceived "fair dealing" allowances.

After triggering lawsuits and deep rifts between various parts of Canadian culture and education outside of Québec, the mandated five-year review produced two parliamentary reports—from the Heritage Committee in May and the Industry Committee in June. These were accompanied by volumes of debate, discussion, and eloquent demonstrations of the importance of copyright protection ... only to glide to a standstill with the late-2019 elections.

We, like Michael Healy, hope soon to get a sense from Canadian experts on when we can expect to see movement on that widely watched copyright story. •



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 **Frankfurt Conference**

Global Book Markets: By the Numbers

Canada

In French-speaking Canada, 2019 books sales through independent bookstores were steady compared to 2018, with 0.4 percent growth. The top-performing categories were comics and fiction.

Source: BTLF

In Canada's English-language market in 2019, the bestselling fiction title by a Canadian author was *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood. The top nonfiction Canadian title was *Talking to Strangers* by Malcolm Gladwell.

Source: BookNet Canada

United States

The 2019 US book market was stable, posting 0.9 percent growth "across all categories for January to November" with US\$13.5 billion in revenue.

Source: Association of American Publishers

The US publishing industry is 76 percent white and 74 percent female—showing little or no significant progress toward increased diversity since 2015.

Source: Lee and Low

Brazil

Book sales in Brazil were down in 2019 by 6.35 percent in volume, though sales of nonfiction trade books was up for the year by 1.65 percent. In part, this downturn is the result of Brazil's top bookselling chains, Saraiva and Livraria Cultura, closing stores and facing bankruptcy in late 2018.

However, book sales volume in January 2020 grew by nearly 10 percent over to January 2019, and revenue was up by 8 percent.

Source: PublishNews / Nielsen

Latin America

Ebook prices are rising across Latin America. The average price for an ebook sold by a Latin American publisher rose to €7.07 in 2018, compared with €6.92 in 2017.

Source: Bookwire / Dosdoce

Finland

In 2019, Russian was the top language into which Finnish books were translated, with 33 titles. Second was German, with 25 titles; and Estonian was third at 24 titles.

Source: FILI - Finnish Literature Exchange

France

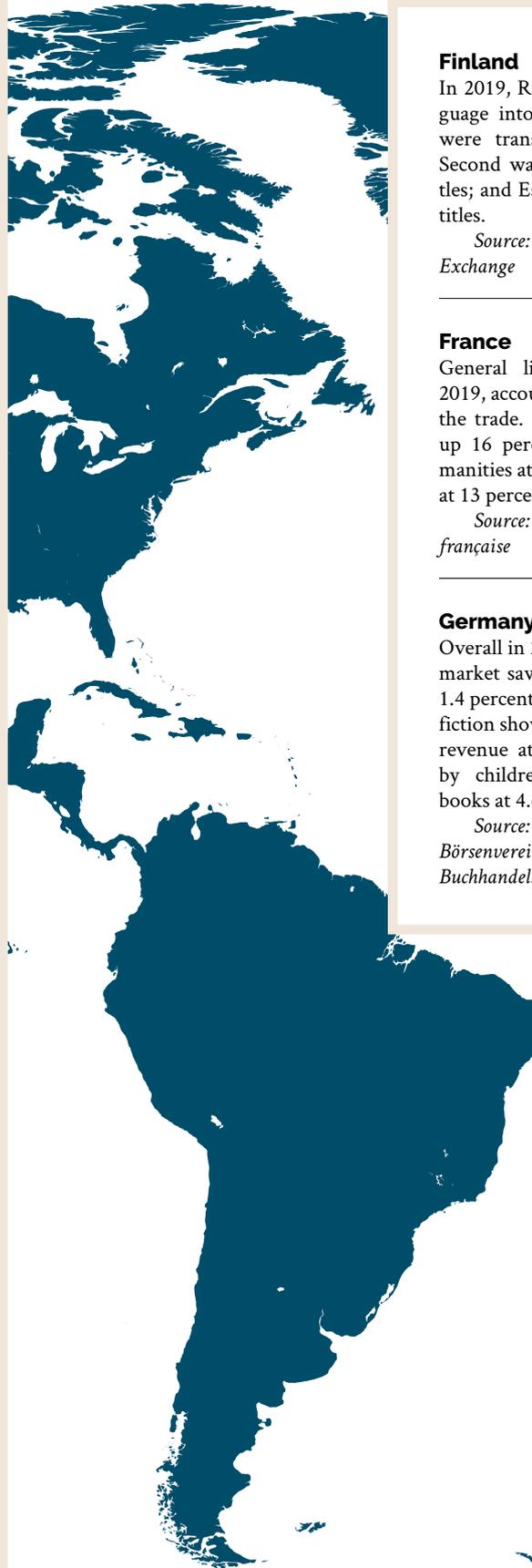
General literature led sales in 2019, accounting for 20 percent of the trade. Children's books made up 16 percent, sciences and humanities at 14 percent, and comics at 13 percent.

Source: Syndicat de la librairie française

Germany

Overall in 2019, the German book market saw a revenue increase of 1.4 percent over 2018. Trade non-fiction showed the most growth in revenue at 4.9 percent, followed by children's and young adult books at 4.6 percent growth.

Source: Börsenblatt / Börsenverein des deutschen Buchhandels





Italy

Italian publishers reported an 8.7-percent rise in foreign rights sales in 2019, compared to 2018. Nearly half—49.5 percent—of the rights purchased are being bought by small- and medium-sized publishers, who account for 23.8 percent of the rights sold overseas.

Online retail in 2019 accounted for some 26.7 percent of book sales in Italy, up 2.7 percent from 2018. Libraries continued to lose share at 66.3 percent, down 2.8 percent—almost exactly the amount that online sales rose.

Source: Associazione Italiana Editori

Spain

A new study in Spain finds that just 3 percent of Spaniards listen to audiobooks, and 29 percent read ebooks. Piracy continues to be an issue, with more than half of ebook readers saying their most common method of obtaining ebooks was a free download. 49 percent of teens aged 15 to 18 report reading books frequently.

Source: Federación de Gremios de Editores de España

Russia

Publishers are seeing a slight drop in the number of titles published, as well as the size of print runs. However, book prices increased by an average of 6.9 percent in the last year.

Source: Russian Book Chamber

China

Online retailers captured some 70 percent of book sales in China, and 2019 saw a downturn of almost 7 percent in the number of new titles published. However, China's book market continues to grow, with 2019 reaching 14.4-percent growth over 2018, totaling US\$14.9 billion in sales revenue.

Source: OpenBook

Japan

The value of the Japanese publishing market grew, albeit by just 0.2 percent, in 2019—the first increase since 2014. Print sales were down 4.3 percent, and the biggest print categories were business books and new titles, as well as children's books.

Digital sales increased in 2019 by 23.9 percent, with both digital comics and ebooks posting gains. The rise in digital comic sales is due, in part, to the closure of manga piracy website Mangamura.

Source: All Japan Magazine and Book Publisher's and Editor's Association

Brussels' New European Rights Market

In Brussels, a new venue for rights meetings brought publishers together to discover francophone literature and independent publishers from across the globe.

By Olivia Snaije

French literary agents Pierre Astier and Laure Pécher—who run the Astier-Pécher Literary and Film Agency—began working last year with the Brussels Book Fair to extend a professional program for French-language independent publishers called *Talentueux Indés*, in which publishers pitch titles to counterparts taking part in an international fellowship.

This year, the fourth edition of *Talentueux Indés* was coupled with the fair's first edition of its new European Rights Market, which had 50 tables and approximately 150 people signed up for a day of meetings. Organizers had hoped for 400 meetings, but with several cancellations, they report that a total 325 actually took place.

"The idea," Laure Pécher told *Publishing Perspectives*, "is to bring together francophones from the entire territory and European publishers. Publishers in Europe always think of Paris—or go to Frankfurt or London [book fairs]—where they see Parisian publishers. They don't get a chance to meet Belgian or Swiss publishers, for example."

Spyros Yannaras, a member of this year's fellowship program, is an author, translator, and editor of a classic and contemporary literature imprint at Potamos Publishers in Athens. He said he was happy to find small, independent publishers alive and well, successfully producing quality titles.

Yannaras, who was in Brussels to acquire, had previously been in contact with the French *Éditions Verdier*, to inquire about the Russian-Polish Sigismund Krzyzanowski, one of Verdier's backlist authors. He found that Mathilde Azzopardi, foreign rights manager for Verdier, was part of the *Talentueux Indés* group.

In 2013, Laurence Gudin rescued the Swiss *Éditions La Baconnière*, founded in 1927, which had been dormant for about twenty years. She discovered a precious backlist which Maria Afonso of Antígona in Portugal said was very compatible with her catalogue.

Afonso said she only goes to small book fairs because she finds independent publishers better represented at these events. This year's trip was her first to the Brussels fair. There, she had meetings at the European Rights Market with six publishers, including the Moroccan *En Toutes Lettres*, which publishes social science books in French.

Although the rights market was dubbed "European," the French-language territory extends beyond Europe's borders and includes former French colonies and protectorates.

Kenza Sefrioui, one of the co-founders of

En Toutes Lettres, shuttled between the fair's Moroccan stand—Morocco was this year's guest of honor—and the rights program. She said, "For a publisher like ETL—coming from a country that suffers from the lack of a true publishing industry—it's important for me to meet other francophone publishers."

Publishers from Tahiti, Côte d'Ivoire, and Haiti had been scheduled to come to Brussels, but they withdrew because they had also wanted to attend the *Salon du Livre de Paris*—set for March 20 to 23 but canceled when the French government banned public gatherings of 5,000 or more people amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Editors Anna Kokko, of Finland's Gummerus and Natasha Medved of Croatia's OceanMore were in the fellowship program and interested in acquiring titles.

Kokko said she found the program inspiring. "I met a lot of people I wouldn't have otherwise," she said. Despite the fact that Gummerus publishes the Québécois author Kim Thúy, she said, "Belgian and Swiss authors aren't well known in Finland."

Kokko said that she only booked meetings with francophone publishers and was interested in a few Canadian titles, but would also be curious in finding out about French-language literature from Africa.

Medved said that the francophone market is very attractive to her—particularly literature not yet familiar in Croatia, such as work from Haiti. But she and Kokko agreed that in their small markets, it's a challenge to publish an author who isn't already successful.

Madrid-based Ricardo López founded his publishing house *Armaenia* four years ago. He publishes 8 to 10 books per year only in translation. Half of them are translated from European languages. Some 25 to 30 percent come from English. And it was López's first trip to the Brussels show.

"The rights fair was very friendly and in-

teresting," López said, "because I got to know smaller houses like mine that I didn't know about."

López said he met with Belgian publishers, both francophone and Flemish, with Slovenians, Austrians, and Croatians. At each meeting, he said, he found one or two books attractive.

In assessing Brussels' first rights event he said, "It's an easy place to travel to and could become a hub for small publishers. You can only have these kinds of relaxed, informal meetings in a place like this."

All of those interested in the French-language Belgian market weren't necessarily from across a border. Harold Polis, whose eponymous house publishes in Flemish, traveled from nearby Antwerp.

"The Brussels fair has changed over the years," he said, "and has a window open onto the world now. It's an extraordinary opportunity for Flemish publishers. Even though [the Flemish-language book fair] *Boekenbeurs* is bigger, it's not a professional fair. And besides cultural ties, there are other ties we can develop. In the 1920s and '30s, both language markets collaborated much more." •



European Rights Market
(Image: Brussels Book Fair /
Timote Meessen)



European Rights Market (Image: Brussels Book Fair / Timote Meessen)

View from the Top: Eksmo CEO on Russia's Book Market Highlights

Leading one of Russia's largest publishing groups, Evgeny Kapyev predicts sales of ebooks and audiobooks to continue on an upward trajectory.



“Over the past 10 years, the Russian market for digital reading—for electronic and audiobooks—has grown by 108 times.”

Evgeny Kapyev
CEO, Eksmo

By Eugene Gerden

According to the CEO of Eksmo, one of Russia's largest publishing companies, 2019 was a year of “good dynamics” for his country's book market. Evgeny Kapyev is bullish on the coming year, he says, in Russian publishing.

Speaking to *Publishing Perspectives*, Kapyev confirms that he has no doubt the market will continue to grow this year, building on growth of 8 percent last year.

Ebooks and Audiobooks are Up

Kapyev says the main drivers in 2019 were the 30-percent growth in market share of digital products—including ebooks and audiobooks—and a 20-percent increase in non-fiction sales across multiple retail channels.

Kapyev now looks, he says, for both ebooks and audiobooks to move forward in 2020 as Russia's leading growth sector.

“Over the past 10 years,” he says, “the Russian market for digital reading—for electronic and audiobooks—has grown by 108 times.

“In value terms, last year's market in audio and other digital products reached 6.5 billion rubles (US\$87.3 million), while its share in the overall Russian book publishing market—outside of educational literature—surpassed 10 percent.

“According to our forecasts, in the next four years, the ebook segment will grow by as much as 30 percent per year, while in the case of audiobooks, we think we'll see as much as

40-percent growth in value terms. This should result in a combined increase between ebooks and audio of some 12.5 percent.”

Issues That Weigh on the Market

Despite the ongoing market growth he predicts, Kapyev says he also sees serious problems that weigh on the potential for Russia's publishing industry.

One impediment, for example, he says, is a high tax burden.

Kapyev says that lobbying for the reduction of VAT on ebooks has become a top priority for the Russian industry. Currently, ebooks are taxed at roughly 20 percent, almost twice the rate levied on print.

In response, Kapyev says, Rospechat, the federal agency on press and mass communications, has worked with the Russian Book Union to develop proposals for a reduction of 10 percent in VAT on ebooks. This, he says, will have a positive effect on the Russian ebook market, lowering the pricing on the format that consumers are demonstrating is attractive to them.

What's more, he says, a VAT reduction could stimulate more digital publishing, not only in the trade but also in the country's nascent self-publishing community.

Kapyev says he also looks to good returns from efforts on the part of Eksmo-AST and the book union in popularizing reading.

The says that the effort is a wide-ranging campaign that has developed cultural outreach projects in 36 areas of Russia. The leading goal in these programs is promoting the attractions

of reading to the citizenry. This year, Eksmo and the union plan to create reading promotion campaigns in 10 regions, with a potential combined reach of more than 5 million consumers.

In the meantime, Kapyev says, another promising direction for the company's work in the domestic market is the development of new digital libraries. Implementation of these programs has been propelled by a collaboration between Eksmo and its partner LitRes, which is estimated to control between 60 and 70 percent of the ebook market. This year, the plan is to launch at least 30 new libraries in 10 regions.

The value there, Kapyev says, is in bolstering an interest to reading, and that it's incumbent on private capital to help develop incentives. In addition, he says, library work can help cultivate more interaction between publishers and the state.

According to Kapyev, it's also important this year to develop new physical bookshop sales in small cities of 40,000 or so inhabitants, population centers that tend to be suffering shortages in points of sale. And this has to happen, he says, while electronic distribution channels need to expand to serve the larger urban hubs, in part by spurring development of the National Electronic Library project.

Finally, Kapyev says, there's a need to accelerate talks between book publishers and tech platforms about ongoing issues of piracy—with luck arriving at understandings that can incentivize both publishing and the platforms to work together. •

Frankfurt Audio Returns to the Fair in 2020

Audiobooks continue to impress with increasing sales in many global publishing markets such as the US, UK, Germany, Nordic and Spanish-speaking countries—in particular because of the increased options for consumers to download and stream audiobooks and podcasts.

Supporting this growing segment of the publishing industry, Frankfurter Buchmesse (14-18 October 2020) plans to continue its successful Frankfurt Audio area and program, which debuted in 2019.

Frankfurt Audio is a specially designated area of the fair focused on audio content, technologies, and business models. Located in Hall 1.2 this year, it includes exhibition space, stage, cafe, and business lounge. Plans for 2020 also include dedicated audio programming on the Frankfurt Audio Stage and in a conference format.

Among the international participants last year were Penguin Random House, Spotify, Audible, Storytel, Bookwire, Swann Studio, Wonderly, and others.

Frankfurt Audio Stage

Located in the Frankfurt Audio area, the stage offers five days of presentations, discus-

sions, and programming. Publishers can present their latest audio projects and speakers on the stage, while technology providers and audio companies can book slots to present their products and get involved in discussions.

Last year's well-attended sessions addressed topics such as audiobook production and global distribution, and events for public visitors featured authors and podcasters.

Audio Conference

With more than 260 attendees, last year's Frankfurt Audio Summit was a great success. Expert speakers included Michael Krause from Spotify, Michele Cobb from the Audio Publishers Association, Javier Celaya from Dosdoce.com and Valérie Lévy-Soussan from Audiolib.

In 2020 the Frankfurt Audio Summit will take place again, this time in the form of the audio track at the new Frankfurt Conference format on 15 October 2020.

Business Lounge

The Frankfurt Audio area includes a business lounge which offers companies a personalized working space at the fair where they can



Image © Frankfurter Buchmesse / Marc Jacquemin

hold meetings and discussions. The business lounge provides dedicated meeting tables in a quiet environment as well as services including wi-fi and charging stations. •

More information:
www.buchmesse.de/audio



Image © Frankfurter Buchmesse / Marc Jacquemin

Save the Date: Frankfurt Conference on Thursday, October 15, 2020

Mark your calendar: In 2020, Frankfurter Buchmesse plans to host a new conference format for the global publishing industry: Frankfurt Conference.

Taking place on the Thursday of the fair—October 15—this multi-track conference will address issues and trends relevant to various segments of the publishing industry, including trade and academic publishing, as well as audio

and rights and licensing.

Tickets will go on sale in June. For program updates, tickets, and speaker information, check back at the Frankfurter Buchmesse website in the coming months. •

More information:
www.buchmesse.de/conference



Image © Frankfurter Buchmesse / Bernd Hartung



One of the many BOOKFEST 2019 events in Frankfurt (Image © Frankfurter Buchmesse / Christoph Seubert)

BOOKFEST Frankfurt: Call for Participation

This year's festival will take place under the motto "Brave Voices for a New Decade."

Frankfurter Buchmesse has opened its application period for BOOKFEST events during the 2020 fair (October 14 to 18). Now entering its third year, BOOKFEST is the fair's five-day literary and cultural festival that aims to engage the public in a wide range of author and literary events during the week of the Frankfurter Buchmesse.

It takes place in venues across the city of Frankfurt and features authors, thinkers, and cultural personalities.

In 2019, BOOKFEST events drew a reported 25,000 people, with about 5,000 of them at the 60 events which took place in various venues across the city of Frankfurt. Event formats ranged from readings and performances to concerts and parties.

Publishers and other organizations are invited to submit their proposals for events by April 30. Topics aren't limited, meaning that fiction, nonfiction, entertainment, art, music, and more are fair game for proposals.

The motto for this year's program is "Brave Voices for a New Decade," and those submitting ideas for BOOKFEST are invited to consider this context when putting together their event ideas and submission material.

Evaluation of proposals for BOOKFEST 2020 programming will be handled by the fair's programming team, with an eye to curating a strongly internationalized program that has an emphasis on diversity and inclusion. •



BOOKFEST 2019 (Image © Frankfurter Buchmesse / Christoph Seubert)

Key Facts About BOOKFEST

BOOKFEST, Frankfurter Buchmesse's literary festival, takes place parallel to the fair at various locations across the city of Frankfurt.

In 2019, BOOKFEST featured events with internationally recognized authors including Margaret Atwood, Jo Nesbø, Colson Whitehead, Peter Wohlleben, and others.

- 25,000 attendees
- 55 participating publishers
- 60 events
- 55 locations in Frankfurt
- Submission deadline: **April 30**

More information:
www.bookfest.de

Norway Hails 2019 as Its 'Unique Year'

Announcing that Norwegian literature is in “an incredibly strong position” on the international stage, NORLA celebrates 1,150 rights sales made during its Guest-of-Honor year at Frankfurt.



Norway Guest of Honor team at the 2019 Frankfurter Buchmesse (Image: Sabine Felber)

By Porter Anderson

NORLA—Norwegian Literature Abroad—is admired in world publishing for its steadfast, international promotion of Norwegian literature, and now for its successful organization of Norway’s Guest of Honor program at the 2019 Frankfurter Buchmesse.

It’s all the more impressive when you remember that Norwegian market serves a national population of just 5.3 million people. The kind of international reach NORLA is achieving for its country’s authors is all the more remarkable.

“Thanks to the Guest of Honor initiative,” NORLA’s new report reads, “the number of books that were published in German reached a record high in 2019: 510 titles from or about Norway.”

A point of particular pride: in 2019, six books from Norway made it into Germany’s bestseller lists: Maja Lunde’s *The History of Bees* (paperback and audiobook) and *The End of the Ocean*; Jo Nesbø’s *Knife* (hardcover and audiobook); and *The Wonder Down Under* by Ellen Støkken Dahl and Nina Brochmann.

The NORLA staff, led by director Margit Walsø, lists several metrics that lead NORLA to declare, “Internationally, literature from Norway is in an incredibly strong position.”

Walsø says that she and her team are confident that the more-than 500 titles going into

German translation mean that “Norwegian literature has a bigger window on other languages, too. With targeted efforts in the future toward other markets, we’ll be able to see the long-term ripple effects of the work behind the guest-country initiative.”

She’s right. Norwegian works were sold into 47 languages in 2019, NORLA reports, including Danish, English, Polish, Spanish, French, Russian, Dutch, Bulgarian, and Swedish. For the first time, a Norwegian book was granted translation funding, through NORLA’s grant program, into Maltese.

Overall, grants supported 572 translations into those 47 languages. This was actually a lower number than in the 2018 record year (639 translations into 45 languages). But the reason for the bigger number of grants in 2018, NORLA reports, is that grants were being made in preparation for the 2019 Guest of Honor program. In 2018, 80 of those translations were into German, for example, and 50 into English.

“Translation is time-consuming work,” Walsø is quoted saying, “and a book’s route out into the world is a lengthy process. And we therefore anticipated that the number of grants would be somewhat lower in 2019 than in 2018, a record year. In order for a wide range of Norwegian books to be released in German and other languages in time for the guest-country initiative, work on translations had to start the previous year.” •

Norway’s 2019 Literary Outreach

NORLA’s report on its international activities in 2019 includes several key highlights:

- 100,000 visitors came to Norway’s Guest of Honor Norway pavilion at the Frankfurt Book Fair
- 100 Norwegian authors attended the 2019 Frankfurt Book Fair
- 200 Norwegian authors participated in events in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland
- 1,150 rights deals for Norwegian titles were made in 2019

Top Norwegian Authors in Translation

NORLA awarded these authors’ works were awarded the largest number of translation grants:

- Hedvig Montgomery—16 nonfiction translations
- Karl Ove Knausgård—14 translations: 12 fiction, 2 nonfiction
- Jon Fosse—13 fiction translations
- Jo Nesbø—13 fiction translations for both adults and children

Authors in Translation by Genre

Children’s and YA:

- Anna Fiske—11 translations
- Maja Lunde—11 translations (one illustrated by Lisa Aisato)
- Kristin Roskifte—8 translations

Fiction:

- Jon Fosse—13 translations
- Jo Nesbø—13 literary translations
- Julie Andem—10 translations

Nonfiction:

- Hedvig Montgomery—16 translations
- Anne Sverdrup-Thygeson—7 translations
- Bjørn Berge—6 translations
- Marta Breen and Jenny Jordahl—6 translations
- Erika Fatland—6 translations
- Are Kalvø—6 translations
- Katharina Vestre—6 translations



Norway Guest of Honor pavilion at the 2019 Frankfurter Buchmesse (Image: Sabine Felber)

Bodour Al Qasimi Reflects on PublisHer's 'Remarkable First Year'

PublisHer, an international network for women in publishing, celebrates its one-year anniversary bringing women together and advocating for gender equality.

By Porter Anderson

It was during last year's London Book Fair that Bodour Al Qasimi, vice-president of the International Publishers Association (IPA), hosted the first of what would become several organizational dinners in the development of the PublisHer network of women in international publishing.

That event was co-hosted by Maria A. Palante, president and CEO of the Association of American Publishers, and drew some 30 women leaders in publishing to the discussion.

As *Publishing Perspectives'* Hannah Johnson wrote about that first event, "One outcome of the dinner was an affirmation that there's a strong community of women influencing the future of book publishing, and bringing some of those women together made this community more tangible. Another result: consensus that the book industry needs more women in leadership roles."

Since that first event, PublisHer events have been held at many international publishing gatherings, including the IPA's regional conferences in Nairobi and in Amman, and in association with various book fairs.

'Solid Foundations for the Growing Movement'

We begin our anniversary interview with Bodour by asking whether she—like many others—is surprised at the speed with which the initiative has taken off in its first year.

Bodour Al Qasimi: Yes, PublisHer has grown bigger and faster than I anticipated, which is really fantastic. It tells me this was a good idea and that the timing was right, so I'm thrilled to see the big steps forwards we have taken in the first year.

So in 2019 we had dinners, panels, and discussions in London, Nairobi, Amman, Frankfurt and Sharjah, reaching hundreds of senior bookwomen from a wide range of regions and countries. We developed the brand, launched the PublisHer site, opened profiles on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn profiles, started a quarterly newsletter, formed a PublisHer executive board, and put into place solid foundations for the growing movement.

It was with this in mind that we launched the PublisHer Community Survey, which asks about the working lives and career experiences of woman in publishing.

Lack of access to female mentors has been consistently identified as a problem among women in publishing, and it's always been



Tracey Armstrong, Copyright Clearance Center, and Bodour Al Qasimi at the 2019 PublisHer dinner during the Frankfurter Buchmesse (Image: PublisHer / Nabs Ahmedi)

clear to me that PublisHer could add value as a matchmaker between mentors and mentees. We also want to find ways to develop and share gender diversity and empowerment, good practices, help publishers to improve recruitment policies, facilities, and professional support for women.

Influencing Men, Supporting Women

PP: It's great to see the group opened to men who would like to participate, because they, too, share responsibility for the experiences of women in the industry. What's your thinking behind this move?

BAQ: The PublisHer board members agree that our longer-term success will depend on our ability to influence men and women alike, and to demonstrate that what we're seeking to achieve is in the interests of the publishing industry as a whole.

We have to influence men as well as continue to win the support of women. This will ultimately lead us toward better results and enhance PublisHer's credibility as a positive, practical project for real-world change.

'The Gender Pay Gap Is Real'

PP: With so many gatherings in such far-flung settings last year, what discoveries have you made in terms of women in publishing?

BAQ: It's well known that publishing employs many more women than men overall—I think it's something like two thirds of people in publishing businesses in the West are women. However, there's a concentration of men in the highest-paid quartile, and men are given a disproportionate share of the most senior,

best-rewarded roles.

In addition, the gender pay gap is real—as much as 30 percent in some companies. These disparities are wrong, and all the more galling when there's a vast pool of talented women from which to choose and promote.

At the same time, I've been encouraged to see that the most recent diversity report from the UK Publishers Association found that for the first time women outnumbered men in senior leadership and executive level roles. This kind of progress is great, but sadly remains exceptional in the overall global picture.

'Listening to Women'

PP: So this year, the group will focus on some of these common challenges and barriers, as they're manifested by the PublisHer membership.

BAQ: It's something we hope to achieve through listening to the women who speak at our events, whether on the stage or during the open-mic sessions we often have during the evenings.

We also expect to collect some valuable insights through the PublisHer Community Survey.

If we can identify the big barriers that are making women's careers falter, then we can begin to look at ways to overcome them and create conditions where everyone in publishing has a fair chance to progress because the only metric that matters is ability. •

More information:
womeninpublishing.org

Charisma.ai Puts Consumers in Control of the Story Using Artificial Intelligence

UK startup Charisma.ai adapts graphic novels into interactive stories, using its AI platform to generate multiple endings and outcomes.



Rianna Dearden (Image: Mark Piesing)

By Mark Piesing

Being introduced this month, a tool called “Charisma: The Interactive Storytelling App” uses the charisma.ai tech platform to adapt graphic novels into interactive stories. Charisma.ai also announced in December the launch of a second series of its interactive television show with Sky called *Bullet Proof*.

Think not so much of the Choose Your Own Adventure books of a previous generation but of Netflix’s *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*.

Initially, Charisma.ai is launching five or six of these immersive, interactive stories, based on graphic novels and targeted at the UK and US markets. The titles chosen are in the sci-fi and crime drama genres, and are nearly all based on the first graphic novel in a series, which was a deliberate choice. The startup has commissioned original stories as well.

Rianna Dearden—who is the interactive story lead at Charisma.ai and co-artistic director of the theater company called Lost Watch—adapted two of the stories herself, *Centaurus* and *Sherlock Holmes: The Vampires of London*. She spoke about the challenges of adapting graphic novels for this new platform at the Confluence London conference in February, and *Publishing Perspectives* spoke with her there.

“We want to honor graphic novels,” Dearden said, “because they’ve mastered how to tell stories through image. But we want to take what they have learned and turn it into something new.

“AI is not a marketing tool. The platform



uses natural language processing and a curated data set to make an interpretation engine, which then means that the writer doesn’t have to write an infinite number of options. The artificial intelligence will fill in the gaps when needed.”

Charisma.ai is an Oxford-based startup founded by Guy Gadney, who has 20 years of experience in digital publishing, including stints at Penguin Random House UK and BBC Worldwide.

Charisma.ai’s technology platform was developed by the games studio To Play For, which Gadney also founded. There’s an impressive list of partners as well, including the BBC, PlayStation, King’s College London, and Brunel University London. The BBC Writers Room has run events on how to use the platform to tell stories.

“One of the challenges of adapting graphic novels,” said Dearden, “is how graphic novels tell their stories. And the beauty of a graphic novel is its simple storytelling. It’s clean storytelling without much context, dialogue, and certainly no subtext. It often relies a lot on the imagery.

“We’re demanding a much higher level of understanding of the story from the reader” in interactive work, “because we’re asking them to make choices or express how they feel about what has just happened. Part of the challenge of adapting graphic novels is getting that information in there—allowing the imagery to do the work but also working to make sure that the dialogue is quick and witty, and doesn’t sound like it’s been crowbarred in.”

Simple yes-or-no questions have been

“banned,” she says, in favor of questions that open up narrative possibilities.

Her team then has to adapt the original images from the novel. “It may be a facial expression or using a character from one panel and putting it on a different background. We even create brand new panels internally when we need to. It is a real skill to be able to take on someone else’s style, recreate that as your own, and make it fit into the narrative.”

“The ‘replay-ability’ of the stories is crucial,” she says. “We want to create a much, much bigger world than was possible in a Choose Your Own Adventure book. You can play this again and again and have a completely different experience. People want to find out everything about the characters and the world, and this sort of thing gives them the chance to do that.”

There’s a limit to this choice, she admits, however. “The book does need to end, and certain things need to happen before it does, especially when you then add a sequel to it. And everyone needs to start at the same point.”

In the end, “The biggest challenge for us,” Dearden said, “is making sure that the users know the nature of the experience they’re going on.”

Beta testers at first assumed they were playing a game rather than a reading experience, she said, which is closer to a graphic novel. To emphasize the reading nature of the experience, the command *Play Story* has turned into *Start Story* in the user interface, and the app has no mention of the word *player*.

“We don’t want to end up with something wishy-washy in the middle,” Darden said. •



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WePlot: Matching Publishers and Producers Across Latin America

In a region with fewer agents, two entrepreneurs are building a platform to facilitate more book-to-audiovisual adaptations and projects.



From left: Diana Narváez and Ana Luiza Beraba (Image: Adam Critchley)

By Adam Critchley

Founded by entrepreneurs from Brazil and Colombia and headquartered in Uruguay, WePlot is a pan-Americas platform established to act as a bridge between publishers and production houses. The intent of the company's creators is to facilitate rights transactions and audiovisual production.

Started by Ana Luiza Beraba of Brazil and Diana Narváez of Colombia, WePlot harnesses artificial intelligence and data analytics to create a catalogue of works available for adaptation to audio, film, and television producers. One way the company describes this is to say it's "an aggregator network of content in development."

The company has been selected for an incubation program by the Uruguayan National Agency for Research and Innovation, and plans to launch a series of investment rounds.

Beraba tells *Publishing Perspectives* that WePlot is operating in analog mode during its acceleration phase as the company works to define its marketplace.

'Adapting Books to Audiovisual'

"We hope to offer a service that could cure some of the headaches," Beraba says, referring to the often lengthy process of adapting books to audiovisual formats.

"Production companies can be over-

whelmed when searching for content," she says. "There's a large amount of editorial content, and it needs to be curated. Our crusade is to find the stories and the talent so we can speed up the audiovisual production process."

Beraba and Narváez gave a talk at Frankfurt Buchmesse's recent CONTEC conference in Mexico City, which focused on transmedia narratives and the use of AI. The conference, according to WePlot's founders, facilitated meetings with Mexican publishers, whose feedback has been positive.

"With the way the book-to-audiovisual process currently works," Beraba says, "books often encounter scriptwriting problems, and our job is to bring together all the players: authors, publishers, scriptwriters, and production companies in one place."

"Our idea is to create a marketplace so that publishers can make content available for production—either already published books or those in the process of being published—and then producers can see what is available. We don't sell ready-to-film projects. Instead, we're positioning ourselves in the production process, at the end of the publishing process, when an editor's work is done. From there, we take the book to production companies."

"We aggregate, index, curate, and catalogue stories in development," she says.

Bringing Key Players Together

"Our relationship with publishers and lit-

erary agents is key because they know the market and authors, and which books are in the process of being published, and which often sell better than those already published.

"Given that there isn't a strong tradition of literary agents in Latin America, we want to work with publishing professionals in the region. Most of the great Latin American writers have their agents in Barcelona."

The platform also is meant to work as a writers' room, allowing scriptwriters to sign up to its network and be notified when a producer is looking for someone to adapt a book for screens.

Beraba says WePlot can also help authors and publishers achieve more fruitful negotiations with audiovisual production companies, "because we know the terms and demands of the audiovisual market," she says.

"With the prior experience we bring, we can get around certain traps and make the negotiation more fair and balanced."

In 2010 in Brazil, Beraba founded Film2B, a company that licenses literary works for audiovisual adaptation, and whose clients, she says, have included 20th Century Fox and the media company Globo. Her WePlot partner Narváez has a background in television and film production.

"Our business model has been validated by players in the market who all are looking for their next hit," Beraba says, "as it can be difficult to find good content among so many countries in Latin America."

Curation is important to many producers, who complain that they waste a lot of time reading projects that aren't right for what they need. WePlot can aid in this process by offering a curated selection, Beraba says.

"Often projects that come in aren't ready to be presented to a producer. Maybe it's a good idea but not told well. So we work to make a piece more attractive and we design a commercial strategy."

And although focusing on the whole continent is complicated, she says, WePlot is designed to simplify the search.

"The Spanish-speaking market is even more complex than the Brazilian one," Beraba says, "because there are so many countries, and each one has its idiosyncrasies, its laws, its tax systems, bureaucracy. And yet the aggregator model has its advantages because it allows a publisher or producer to negotiate with just one interface, and find all they need in a one-stop shop."

"We are not so interested in big names or prize-winning works," Beraba says. "We're interested in powerful stories," Beraba says. •

Author Andrew Keen on 'How Creatives Can Fix the Future'

The iconoclastic author and critic of the digital era spoke at the Berlinale film festival on how we can 'distinguish ourselves from the smart machine' through creativity.

By Porter Anderson

During the Berlinale—the Berlin International Film Festival (February 20 to March 1)—the European Film Market's Horizon program included an address by author, documentary filmmaker, and technology critic Andrew Keen presented his latest thoughts on technology's impact in contemporary culture.

Of particular interest to those working in creative industries, like book publishing, the topic of Keen's address was "How Creatives Can Fix the Future."

His keynote was presented by Frankfurter Buchmesse's The Arts+ program in cooperation with DLD—the Digital Life Design event series and network owned by Hubert Burda Media.

The topic of Keen's address dovetails with his newest book, *Tomorrows versus Yesterdays: Conversations in Defense of the Future*, set for publication on March 5 this year with Atlantic Books. The book is a set of conversations that Keen has had with thought leaders about the impact—both positive and negative—of technology on our society, now and in the future.

In an interview from his home in California, Keen told *Publishing Perspectives* that he's "working aggressively across platforms to bring my messages and my ideas and conversations to a number of different media.

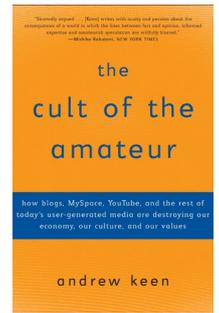
"That's what I've learned over the last few years, you can't rely on a single medium. It's unwise."

The Core Is Holding

Keen's publication of *The Cult of the Amateur* in 2007 established what he says now is still "my calling card." The core of his message then, as now, was that the vast enabling capacities of the digital dynamic would quickly erode fundamental social values as they fueled the user-generated spree that today chokes media channels with amateurs' productivity.

"The unfettered nature of user-generated media," he wrote, "is ... misinforming our young people, corroding our tradition of physical civic participation, endangering our individual rights to privacy, and corrupting our sense of personal responsibility and accountability."

Other titles for which you might know Keen are *Digital Vertigo*, *The Internet Is Not the Answer*, and *How To Fix the Future*, each pressing new alarm buttons as the adoration of



technology led to deeper digital penetration of daily life and fewer questions about what protections and principles were being violated along the way.

By the time he spoke to *The Bookseller's FutureBook* conference in London in 2016, Keen had caught his stride as "the antichrist of Silicon Valley," a descriptor given him by a French news outlet. You could hear the bravura in what he was telling the UK's trade book publishing industry at the conference: "My advice to you would be to be un-bookish and show off. The analog truthful response will resonate. What you have is enormously valuable."

And Keen has remained an advocate for the books business, mentioning in our conversation, "There are parts of the publishing industry that are incredibly innovative," having reminded London three years ago, "You have a long-lasting medium. You have the book."

In Berlin: Creativity and Human Agency

Where Frankfurter Buchmesse's The Arts+ ethos dovetails with Keen's conceptualization of the digital dynamic lies in the importance of the creative industries' mission.

"Creativity," he says, "and also the other theme I've really been focused on in my work—especially in *How To Fix The Future* (published by Grove Atlantic). That's the issue of human agency.

"It's what we can do, in juxtaposition with the algorithm, with smart cars, and smart bodies, smartphones, and smart homes.

"This is, I think, the issue of creativity, and it's central to the 21st century and to the fact that we have to distinguish ourselves from the smart machine. The smart machine can't be creative, it can only do when it's told.

We humans are very good at not doing what we're told," Keen says, the "antichrist" nickname showing up in the energy with which he speaks: "Not doing what I'm told is one thing I pride myself on.

Where Keen finds his own salvation—in this multi-tracked delivery of himself and his viewpoints through books, film, podcasting, and stage appearances—mirrors the wide-channeled infusion of human agency and creativity that he argued in Berlin is our best hope of handling the digitization of our era and our embrace of technology's force.

"This is a great time," he says "And, in essence, there's potentially a creative renaissance coming. It's a winner-take-all cultural economy, but you can't just be pumping a camera or pounding a keyboard. You've got to be innovative in terms of building platforms, real platforms, crossing boundaries, taking risks, and also figuring out the money side, asking, 'Who's going to pay for this? Why is it worth my time?'"

"You need synergies," Keen says. "If you just sit in a room and write a book, it's not enough. You can have 200 million followers on YouTube, but you still have to produce cultural content."

Andrew Keen listens to be sure he's made his point before signing off. "You have to be a generalist," he says it again. •

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