

# The Frankfurt Book Fair, October 2017



By Birgit Bauer, Bauer Business Research, Austria

**A**lthough I live in the neighborhood of Germany, I'd never considered attending the **Frankfurt Book Fair**. "It's just for publishers," I thought. Invited to give a presentation at one of the events this past October, I afterwards had another full day to just enjoy the fair. And I was impressed.

## Largest trade fair for books in the world

The figures:

- 7,300 exhibitors from more than 100 countries.
- 172,000 trade visitors at the first three days.
- In total 286,000 visitors from 150 countries.
- 4,000 events like workshops, presentations, interviews, panel discussions, readings, signing sessions, award ceremonies, meet & greets with authors, writing celebrities or experts.
- More than 10,000 accredited journalists, including 2,400 bloggers.

The first three days of the fair are designed for professionals—publishers, agents, librarians, scientists, booksellers, authors, illustrators, translators, multimedia providers, asso-

ciations, and many more. They meet to show their offers, to do business, and to negotiate publishing rights and license fees. The last two days are for the reading public.

## Books, digital products, workshops, learning

To get an overview, I started by walking through most of the halls and levels. Books, books, books everywhere—paradise both for experts and passionate readers. Hall 4.2, pleasantly quiet then, hosted content providers, like Genios, ProQuest, and Springer. The "Hot Spots" program put digital solutions and products in the spotlight. It concentrated exhibitors and presentations in the areas of specialist information, services for libraries, teaching and learning solutions, and products and services for digital publishing.

Then I turned to the busy self-publishing area introduced in 2013 and attended free workshops like "Storytelling & Marketing in Self-Publishing" and "Fight Against E-book Piracy". A question that popped up in several discussions was: Does writing blogs as a self-marketing tool makes sense? The answer (as expected): Only if you do it regularly and with passion—better no blog than a bad one. Another question:

What helps to sell your book? In brief: To know your audience (“Who sells to everyone, does not sell to anyone”), have a good cover design, and be available on Amazon and achieve an Amazon ranking.

Most of the workshops, learning sessions, and interviews happen in small casual seating arrangements distributed over the four exhibition buildings. So, although the fair is overwhelmingly huge, it feels pleasant and there is plenty of opportunity to interact, to ask questions, and to speak with participants, authors and exhibitors. The sessions of half-an-hour or one-hour’s length covered a wide variety of topics. Examples include: the book market, who e-book readers are, tips on book marketing, what makes a good book cover, content protection strategies, tools for academic publishers, publishing 4.0, digital publishing trends, eLibraries, Internet Archive, how to Google, crowdfunding for open source, science slam, cooking, French baking, professional soccer, herbalism and many more.

### TV, famous authors, and celebrities

TV teams were everywhere, often just an arm’s length away. I passed by author Salman Rushdie who was giving a public interview to ZDF, one of the main German broadcasting stations. It is surprising how close to famous authors you can get at the fair. Margaret Atwood, Dan Brown, Ken Follett, Cecelia Ahern, Reinhold Messner, and Robert Menasse are just some of the big names of the many hundreds of well-known authors and writing celebrities who were reading, signing, and giving interviews.



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### Is it worth attending?

The book fair is definitely of interest for the publishers, editors, librarians, translators, authors, and self-publishers among us. Although the main language is German, more than 1,000 English-language publishers (mainly from the U.S. and U.K.) exhibited and roughly 600 events were in English. The fair offers all kinds of free or fee-based events, a preconference called The Markets focusing on the publishing market, and even a networking opportunity for info pros that included about 150 participants. Being in Germany or Europe, it is easy to get there. The venue is located in the center of the city, just a ten-minute walk from Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof, the main railway station (with direct trains from Frankfurt Airport and from many European cities). And, it is also fun!



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