

PUBLISHING PERSPECTIVES

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SHOW DAILY

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When Will We Have E-book Bestseller Lists?

Op-Ed Tim Coronel



For all the data we are collecting about the book industry, there is one crucial piece of the puzzle we don't yet have: robust sales figures for e-books.

A key topic of many of the seminars and discussions at Frankfurt this year has been the impact growing e-book sales are having on the landscape still dominated by print, with the key question being "are e-book sales cannibalizing the existing market, or growing it?"

While individual retailers and publishers, and groups such as Association of American Publishers, Book Industry Study Group and Nielsen BookScan are reporting some sales stats, no-one can yet provide comprehensive figures for how many e-books are being sold, to whom and for how much.

It won't be an easy task: for one thing, e-book sales stats will need to be international in scope: I'm Australian but at the moment the best places for me to buy ebooks from are Kobo (via its partnerships with Australia's largest bookselling chain Angus & Robertson and with Borders Asia-Pacific) or Kindle. And Australia is only one of very many e-book markets: in his presentation at Frankfurt Tools of Change on Tuesday, Kobo's Michael Tamblyn said that Kobo sells to as many as 174 different countries in a day.

Any attempt to track e-book sales will need to get global feeds from sources including Kobo, Apple's iBookstore, and presumably Google (once Editions comes to fruition), and to be really useful those global sources will need to break down their sales country by country and then be combined with local ebook sales data in each market. Given Kindle's current dominance of the e-book market (estimated at perhaps 70% in the US), input from Amazon is crucial; but as we know, that is unlikely to happen.

Maybe the solution doesn't lie with trying to collect figures from retailers (or resellers or "agents" or whatever they may be calling themselves in future) but from publishers. Is there sufficient will among the global publisher community to pool all their e-book sales figures for everyone's sake? •

Think Australia (and New Zealand)

By Erin L. Cox

Tim Coronel, the publisher of Book-seller + Publisher, hosted a panel yesterday on the Australian and New Zealand market, its successes and challenges, and some of the brilliant endeavors they have undertaken to tap into their highly literary population. This year at the fair, more than 60 Australian publishers and over 20 New Zealand publishers are in Frankfurt, representing markets of A\$1.29 million and NZ \$41.5 million, according to Nielsen BookScan.

"One out of every two people belongs to a public library, yet there is a low level of government sponsorship," said Patricia Genat, the owner of Adelaide Library Services. Both countries have a highly literate consumer base and an industry that supports local writers. But there are challenges: not enough interest from other English-speaking markets, a lack of government support, considerably fewer e-books available in either country, and the discrepancy between actual publisher sales and those reported due to Nielsen BookScan's slow rollout there.

Rod Martin, founder and owner of Era Publications, has been publishing educational books for 39 years. He shared his innovative approach to the digital market. Instead of going the

easy route and starting with e-books, he jumped right into the digital deep-end by creating interactive books. "We tried the 'ready, fire, aim' approach," said Martin. There were some bumps in the road concerning rights and royalties, and Martin shared the steps they took to solve them.

Genat was pleased to announce that Australia would be hosting a "National Year of Reading" in 2012. Though the government has put very little money behind it, libraries, booksellers, retailers, and other literary-minded companies and organizations will be banding together to support literacy in Australia.

Though Australia and New Zealand are neighbors, their markets are a bit different. The lone New Zealander on the panel was Peter Dowling, the director of Oratia Media, a company that creates publishing solutions as well as titles of its own. This year is Dowling's first time at the Frankfurt Book Fair; he came primarily to expand into other markets.

In 2010, the robust sales of 2009 have not yet emerged, but that is partly why there are so many publishers in attendance at the fair from both countries; diversifying business, supporting local authors, and sharing information about a robust market ready for the world. •



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