



Covering Books From Cover to Cover

Recorded at BookExpo 2018

with

- **Andrew Albanese, Publishers Weekly**
- **Porter Anderson, Publishing Perspectives**
 - **Javier Celaya, dosdoce.com**
 - **Fabrice Piault, Livres Hebdo**
- **Dana Beth Weinberg, Queens College-CUNY**

KENNEALLY: Good morning. Well, appreciate your joining us. My name is Chris Kenneally with Copyright Clearance Center. Today, we have a very special and I think very intriguing discussion ahead. A panel of journalists and authors – or analysts, rather – who cover national and international book markets will share with us their insights from their local beats, and we’ll explore together the room for common ground in book publishing.

Book markets in the United States, the United Kingdom, and across Europe have much in common, from the challenges of online commerce to bestseller lists dominated by authors with internationally recognized brands. Now, of course, national differences remain despite globalization. Apart from cultural preferences and languages, price discounting – which is a feature of US and UK markets – is forbidden by law in France, Germany, and elsewhere, and obviously that has a great impact on the book business.

To take us through this discussion, I want to introduce our panel, and I’ll start on the far end. Javier Celaya – Javier, hola and buenos dias. Javier Celaya comes to us from Madrid where he is the CEO and founder of Dosdoce.com, as well as vice president of the Spanish Digital Magazines Association and a member of the executive board of the Digital Economy Association of Spain.

Now Dosdoce, and I had to wait a number of years to find out what Dosdoce means, but maybe everybody else in the room is on the joke. But Dosdoce, of course, is 212. Javier among his many exploits was a student at Columbia University, and so kind of decided to keep his foot here in Manhattan through his web domain. He launched Dosdoce in March 2004 for the purpose of analyzing the use of new technologies in the cultural sector, and he also publishes annual studies around the creative industries.



To his right is Dana Beth Weinberg. Dana welcome.

WEINBERG: Thank you.

KENNEALLY: Dana doesn't come from terribly far away. She is professor of sociology at Queens College-CUNY. She's a graduate of Harvard University's doctoral program in sociology. And she is a co-author of *Comparing Gender Discrimination in Traditional and Indie Publishing*, a report that you may have seen plenty of coverage about recently. We'll get into that shortly. Dana is also an indie author herself. She writes fiction under the pseudonym D.B. Shuster and is author of the Russian mafia crime series *Kings of Brighton Beach* and the forthcoming Cold War spy novel *To Catch a Traitor*.

Then to her right is Fabrice Piault. Fabrice, salut and welcome. Fabrice Piault comes from Paris, and he is editor-in chief of *Livres Hebdo*. He became the editor there in 2015. Earlier this year, he became executive director at Electre, a bibliographic database of French media and publishing. Fabrice Piault joined the Paris-based *Livres Hebdo*, which reports on the French publishing industry as well as booksellers, in 1987 as a reporter. He is also the president of the Association of Critics and Journalists covering graphic novels and comic books in France. We look forward to talking with him about that particular line of publishing.

Also joining us today is Porter Anderson. Porter, welcome. Porter Anderson is a journalist, speaker, and consultant specializing in book publishing. He is the editor-in-chief of *Publishing Perspectives*, which is based here in New York and funded and operated by the Frankfurt Book Fair. Porter Anderson has reported for CNN, CNN International, as well as the Village Voice and many other publications.

And then finally my companion every Friday on Beyond the Book podcast is Andrew Albanese. Andrew, good to see you. Andrew Albanese is senior writer and features editor at *Publishers Weekly* and the author of the e-book, *The Battle of \$9.99: How Apple, Amazon and the Big Six Publishers Changed the E-Book Business Overnight*. He's been covering the publishing and information technology field for over a decade.

I want to get right into the discussion here, because I think for our audience at BookExpo, they're probably most keen to learn about what's happening outside of the US and perhaps what your views are of what's happened inside the US, as well. So Javier, I'd like to start with you. What we know about Spain is that it went through a very dire economic crisis – the whole world did, but it really



particularly hit Spain very hard and hit the book business very hard. You have the numbers on that, and it was tremendous impact. Tell us about it.

CELAYA: Yes, it's true. The good news is it's over. We had fortunately small rebounds last year – a small growth of 2%. It's small, but it's growth. During seven years we had, as you mentioned, a huge financial crisis. Spanish market used to be a \$3.6 billion USD industry, and nowadays it's a \$2.6 billion. So a loss –

KENNEALLY: We have to underscore that. A billion dollars went away.

CELAYA: A billion dollars disappeared, and unfortunately, although some publishers have wishful thinking, we don't think it's going to come back. They've gone to Netflix.

KENNEALLY: We'll get into the impact of the digital, but let's just again further document this morbid story beyond the numbers – a dollar figure. The bookstores that populated Madrid and elsewhere throughout Spain, they vanished as well.

CELAYA: Yeah, we've seen that in this five-year period, basically we lost two bookstores a day. During the worst year, which was 2015, 700 bookstores closed during that year. The good news again is that this year we had again a reemergence of bookstores, but they're different type of bookstores. They're smaller. They only have on average of 200 titles available. And they're coffee shops or galleries with books, which is a new type of lifestyle entertainment concept. But they're back, fortunately.

KENNEALLY: That is good to hear. But you mentioned – you brought up Netflix, you talk about lifestyle and so forth. And the entertainment – the distraction possibilities for all of us have grown in that same period that the business in Spain went under such dire circumstances. Where does it emerge today as far as the book is concerned? Is it considered a commonplace object? Is it a luxury good? How would you say people view the book in Spain?

CELAYA: Well, during the financial crisis, it actually became a luxury good, because publishers even increased their price of their print and e-books during the crisis. My parents paid my education here in this country at Columbia University. And it goes against any economic principles. During an economic crisis, you reduce the price of any good in order to foster demand. They increased the prices, and I think the ideology of the publishing sector is that we're going to have less readers anyway, and those readers are going to buy this good, because they want to continue reading, and we keep the same margin. So the publishing houses have



had the same financial margin during the crisis with less revenues. The bad side of it is that there has been a reduction of the number of readers, tremendously.

KENNEALLY: Tell us the numbers there. Because again, what's really interesting is how – this is not just gut. We have a business that is relying a lot on gut. You've got the data. We'll talk about more data in a moment as well from the other panelists. But you have the data on the numbers of readers. Define for us, at least in the Spanish context, who is a reader.

CELAYA: The National Association of Publishers published at the beginning of this year a report that had not been published in the last five years, because they had no subsidies from the government to conduct the survey. But finally, they came out with a new survey. And during this period, basically we lost close to 40% of the readers. Today in Spain you're considered a reader if you read at least three books a year. Only three books a year, you're considered a reader. And then if you read more than 10% you're considered a frequent reader, an avid reader. And that's only 10% of the population. We're 45 million.

So the scope of readership have basically reduced a lot. The good news is digital has grown quite a lot during this period, because a lot of people during the financial crisis, they were not able to afford a \$20 book, and they'd rather pay for that content \$10 on an e-book version. In other countries, e-books are not growing, on a plateau. In Spain, it represents close to 10% of total sales and growing.

KENNEALLY: All right. Well, Fabrice Piault, I want to bring you in to the discussion here. Contrast what you've just been hearing from Spain with the situation in France. And we'll remind people that you cover not only the book publishing industry, but the bookselling industry. One of the charms of Paris is all the wonderful bookstores. It does seem if you walk through the city that the business looks strong, but how would you assess it yourself?

PIAULT: The book market is stable, I would say, on the long term. It has been shrinking a little, and after the 2008 crisis there has been five years with a decrease of the sales. Not a very big decrease, but maybe 1%, 2%, or something like this. Now it's growing again, but it's growing just a little. The traditional bookstores represent about 20% – a little more, maybe 19%, 20% of the book sales in France. Of course, it's much stronger than here than in England, for example, where it's less than 3%, I think. So yes, bookstores remain strong in France, and it's related to the fact that we have a fixed price law. It's the same in Germany.



A Copyright Clearance Center Podcast

KENNEALLY: We should explain for our audience that may not be familiar – excuse me, but that’s known as the Lang Law. It goes back some 20 years or more. So it predates the web and Amazon. It’s not a response necessarily.

PIAULT: Yeah. In France the law has been passed in 1981.

KENNEALLY: Long time.

PIAULT: So it’s a long time. That means that the prices are fixed by the publisher, and retailer can only do some discount – or not only discount, they can also higher the price for 5%, but no more than 5%.

KENNEALLY: What does that mean to the attempts that Amazon must be making to come into the market?

PIAULT: It’s not enough to explain. I mean, fixed price is not the only condition to have strong bookstores, but it helps. That means that the competition is not only on prices. It’s not a competition in prices. It’s a competition on other things.

I think when the law was passed in 1981, the impact was that bookstores had then time to fight against the competition – to fight against superstores, big chains, like we have FNAC. You have Barnes & Noble, we have FNAC in France, and we have others. So they had some years to invest and to grow, and there are now in many towns very big independent bookstores that are able to compete with these big chains. But the bad effect of the law is that some bookstores tend to just wait. They were protected by the law and didn’t do anything.

I think this has been changing radically recently, specifically with the arrival of Amazon, as now the competition is not so much on the prices – in France it’s not so much on the prices, because Amazon have to respect the fixed price. But it’s a competition on delay, on services. Now, bookstores are developing many new services. They are investing more, and they try to be more committed to their customers’ demands.

KENNEALLY: Tell us about some of the creative ways that they are approaching that. Javier mentioned the bookstores becoming a cafe or a gallery, that kind of thing.

PIAULT: We have the same trend. We have the same trend. Many bookstores try new concepts. Especially small bookstores in small towns – they try to be more a sort of community center, cultural center. Actually, you have this in the States, too, but it was not so usual in France. Also, the square meters are more expensive usually in France – not like in New York, but in the States, it’s not so expensive. You



A Copyright Clearance Center Podcast

have a lot of space. We don't have so much space in Europe.

But now many bookstores are opening cafe or other things – galleries. I don't know – even I've seen a hair salon like this. You can bring your children to the specialized hair salon for children, and you have also children's books. Well, this is quite specific, but it's an example.

KENNEALLY: It is. We will talk about the impact of digital. One area that digital's making a big impact worldwide, certainly in this marketplace and growing elsewhere, are audiobooks. Tell us about the audiobook market in France. And there, Amazon is being successful.

PIAULT: Yes. First, the digital books itself – the digital book market is still small. Also, because of the prices, it's not possible to do huge discounts – publisher fixed the price for the digital like for the print books.

KENNEALLY: The same as for print?

PIAULT: Yeah. So they fixed it lower than the print, but not so low. Usually for trade books, usually 5% or 6% of the books are sold digital in volumes. But the whole turnover of the digital books is I think less than 3%, so it's not so important. But the new thing is downloading audio, because we had audio with CD. It was very small. You always had in the United States a huge audiobook market. We didn't have. It was a very small market, mainly for blind people. It was not an important market. And now with the downloads, it's starting really to increase.

Of course, Amazon plays an important role, but this year there are now new players with Kobo – especially Kobo and FNAC – and they are developing a lot this market. So publishers which were not so numerous to invest in this sector are now investing more. You have new actors. Usually you had Hachette and Gallimard and a few small publishers. And now Editis which belongs to Planeta, this Spanish group Planeta, is investing a lot on audiobooks. You have all the other companies trying to develop it. But it's still less than 1%. It's interesting, because it's new, and also because it's probably the only part of the digital market which is really growing – very small.

KENNEALLY: Right. We're seeing the same here. I want to bring Dana Beth Weinberg in here, because one of the things we're talking about when we talk about the digital and the book business, the way it's been changing, Dana, is the rise of independent publishing. This is an area you know well. You're an independent author yourself. But you've done some interesting and sometimes surprising studies in that marketplace to try to understand it better, and of course



incorporating data, which we've said before is now the really important piece of the business. We know much more about what goes on once the book is published.

Your report that came out about a month ago, which was called again *Comparing Gender Discrimination in Traditional and Independent Publishing* – it made quite an impact in the media, not only in the United States, but across Europe as well. I want you to summarize your findings there for the audience. Then we can talk about what this means for the American market, but also for the rest of the world.

WEINBERG: My collaborator, Adam Kapelner, and I from Queens College looked at the pricing of books. So this isn't book sales, it's just the piece rate for the books themselves. In the traditional publishing market we found that there was a 45% gap between the prices for books that were published by male authors and those that were published by female authors. And for this, just to be clear, what we looked at was the author names. So someone like J.K. Rowling, for example, would have shown up in our data as someone who was unknown gender or androgynous, whereas when she wrote as Robert Galbraith, she would have come across in our data as male, even though we know these things otherwise. Because of the type of study it was, we went just by the gender of the names. So just based on those gender differences, we found this 45% difference.

So we started to dig into it, and we looked at the various pathways of discrimination that you see in all kinds of industries. We looked at how people were sorted into the different genres that they were writing in terms of, for example, romance is highly female, and science and technology textbooks are highly male. Then we also looked at the differences in the way that genres themselves were valued based on the predominance of one gender or another. So science and technology textbooks, just to harp on that same example, are priced much more highly than romance novels are.

Then we looked at when you take all of those things into consideration and all of the aspects of the way that books are produced and distributed for their unique markets – when you look inside those and compare apples to apples, are there any differences in pricing? Again, in the traditional market, we found that there was a 9% difference even when all of those other things were considered.

We then turned and looked at indie publishing, because we thought, well, in indie, you've taken the big publishers out, and now the authors are much more autonomous and they can decide for themselves how they're going to price their books or what kind of subject heading they want to put it under. And we found that many of the – all of the patterns were actually replicated in the indie market



compared to the traditional market. As Chris had said, I do write thrillers, and in this particular case, there was no smoking gun.

So we're looking at these questions of why is it that when we look at how people are sorted, in indie it's still more women writing romance and fewer writing science and technology? Why is it that when we look at pricing, the female-predominant genres are priced a lot lower than the male ones? And then we looked within, we found a 4% difference. So the inequality was much less.

I should say that overall in indie, male to female comparisons was only a 7% difference compared to a 45% difference. But it wasn't as we had originally thought, because indie was so much more democratic or egalitarian. It was really because of the price points, because they're so compressed in indie down to these lower numbers. So there's not a lot of room for variation.

KENNEALLY: Well, it's fascinating. I'll harp on this – that you really went to the data. I'm curious as to your reflections beyond the actual findings themselves to think about the industry and how it relies or doesn't rely upon data. And maybe tell us some of the responses that you've had to the finding.

WEINBERG: I'll start with the responses to the findings, and then I'll move on to the more general question about data. Socially and publicly, there's been an amazing response to the study. We've had a lot of coverage not just in the US at news outlets, but also in Great Britain and then in Russia, in France, in Spain, and in South America, and in India, I just found out today. So that was very surprising and amazing for an academic paper like this one to get that kind of press. It's unusual unless you've found a cure for cancer or something like that. So we were very pleased about that kind of thing. But we've had no real response from publishers to our findings. Nobody's reached out to us to find out more or think about how things could change or what does this all mean.

In terms of data, the publishing industry is really incredibly difficult to study. Porter and I were talking about this earlier before we got started. One of the biggest problems is that there's no general overview of what the market looks like in the US. One of the biggest reasons for this is that all of the pieces of data that you might have access to are owned by proprietorships that you have to pay to get into. Even if you do, they have their one segment of the market, and then Amazon has their black box hold over a huge portion of the market, and we don't really know what's going on there. People have tried to kind of look into the Amazon black box, but it's a lot of supposition that goes into those kinds of analyses. We don't actually know what their algorithms are. We don't know how often they're changing. We don't know what goes into it. We don't know how many books



they're selling. They have opted out of the ISBN system in a lot of places, just giving product numbers to things. They're not tracked in that way.

So I had used, for example, data from R.R. Bowker, which is the largest catalog of books – I used their North American catalog, so that covered Canada, the US, and Mexico when I did my study. That was only things that had ISBN numbers. So anything that was published on Amazon that didn't have an ISBN number because the authors, for whatever reason, had foregone that, we didn't see.

And if you look at something like BookScan, some of these things are surveys of booksellers, and they exclude other sellers. If you look at the PubTrack Consumer, which used to be owned by Bowker and then moved to Nielsen, and is now currently owned by NP – it's hard enough to follow these different pathways – those are surveys of consumers. It's a wonderful survey. They do 6,000 surveys of respondents who bought books every month. They've started in 2009, and it's still going on. But again, it gives you a snapshot without getting the entire picture of what's happening or how it's all working out.

So when I did a survey with Digital Book World and Writers Digest of authors, we had just a voluntary survey, because again nobody knows how many authors are out there. We don't know how many people are trying to get published or publishing themselves. So we took a shot in the dark. We got a bunch of volunteer responses, which coming out of an academic world is not highly scientific. You might consider it like an interview, but it's not the kind of thing like when Pew Research or the Gallup polls do their kind of things with a random sample where you can say, OK, this is actually representative. So we don't know how representative the samples were.

But it came back that the majority of indie authors weren't actually making money. And there was a huge hullabaloo around these findings, because people didn't want to believe them. And more and more data have come out supporting what we had said at the time just in terms of market triangulation and other things. This unfortunately is the story.

But when you're not used to working in an environment where you're using information to make decisions, or you're looking at the strongness of the fit of the information or thinking about how to use it, it's very easy to say, well, that's not what my instinct says, so I don't want to believe it. And in this country, of course, that's even more poignant now when we talk about alternative facts and – (laughter) I could go on.



KENNEALLY: Porter Anderson, we're lucky to have you, because otherwise we have to trap you at an airport because you do a lot of traveling. Your perspective is as an US-based journalist, but you, as I say, get around a great deal in your role as editor-in-chief at *Publishing Perspectives*. To this point about data and what we should rely on, so many markets outside the US look at what goes on here and believe that the US is the telltale and they should behave similarly. One of the points there is that we are hearing in spite of this digital revolution that, well, digital is on the wane, that print is back, these kinds of things. Yet you raised a red flag around that, that probably ought to be looked at a little more closely.

ANDERSON: There are a couple of trends that we're seeing, and one of the most disturbing is the confusion that very naturally, very logically, is occurring when the rest of the world, we'll say, looks at the major markets – the US, the UK, Germany as a very powerful market – looks at these markets and tries to make assumptions based on their digital experience. We are more advanced just in terms of the fact we got there first. We had the first big e-book wave, and the UK was right with us, very close behind by about one year.

Of course, our experience of e-books has been – from what we can see of e-books, going back to what Dana was just telling you about how many of the e-books we cannot count, we saw a great sharp uptake at the beginning, as we're seeing with audiobooks right now. Makes you a little nervous. We saw e-books go way up, and then they started plateauing a little bit. And now they're kind of gently gliding downward. There's no precipitous fall off from the e-books that we can see, but we call it a decline because the growth is declining. They're no longer going up and up and up.

The rest of the world interprets this and interprets the joy of many in our community that print is OK and that print is not going away and that the two can exist. They interpret that rather quickly – and I would, too, if I were them, as well – let's not worry about digital.

KENNEALLY: You don't have to get there too fast.

ANDERSON: We just don't need to worry about those e-books and everything. We can skip that. We were right not to go there too fast. But of course, their people are walking around with these, too. They need to worry about digital. And in another comment I'll make later that Chris and I were talking about, I'll explain the factor that we're now trying to communicate to them is that digital is not just about e-books, and it's not just about audiobooks. But that is the natural, immediate format-driven concept you have of it.



The reason that we're only able to show them this what looks like a gentle decline is because we cannot see what Amazon is doing. They are the purveyor of most of the e-books. In the UK, 90% of the e-books are going right out of Amazon. So you're blind to so much of it. One of our colleagues at the bookseller says we're trying to assess this market by candlelight. We just can't see what's out there. That is confusing other markets that are trying to develop in the right way and do digitally competently and responsibly. They just can't tell based on our experience.

KENNEALLY: Javier, I want to bring you back in, because you're about data and about getting some numbers that are hard numbers for your industry there in Spain. Talk about the challenge in getting those numbers and the challenge in getting people to actually believe what the numbers say.

CELAYA: I thought it was a Spanish issue, but traveling as much as Porter, I have realized that it's not only Spain. It happens the same in Mexico, in Brazil, and even in some other countries, like France or Italy and even the UK, that you have like these different point of views or school of thoughts, and each one of the parties in the market provides numbers, but they're not mistaken. They're not erroneous. They're just not complete. They just focus on one part as you were saying – on one part of the sector.

And you basically have to do like I do in Spain every year when we produce the report about the Spanish market, that we take three different sources. We take the National Federation of Publishers and we take their data. Actually, their data is not based on sales. It's based on a questionnaire that they send to the 700 publishers, and only one-third of them respond. So the data is not very complete.

And then you take the two leading distribution platforms, Librandia and Bookwire, that produce their own reports, and those reports are based on sales – actual sales through their platforms. And you have to do this mathematic exercise in order to come with a clear understanding of the market. As you've been describing, print, as I said before, has come back, and we have a 2% growth. Digital, because of this pricing issue and at the same time this consumption issue, has had a steady growth. 5% of total sales in trade is digital. And if you add self-publishing and academics, it could go up to 12% of total sales.

And then as you've been describing, audiobooks – again 20 years ago (inaudible), now Penguin Random House, tried to create this market, and they were ahead of the times. It was Sony Walkman at that time. There were no smart telephony. But now audiobooks is also the talk of the town, and everyone has a lot of expectations because all these missing readers that have gone away to Netflix



within the last five years, maybe there's a way to recover them to come back to storytelling, to come back to books, but in audio, because basically (inaudible) in Spain we have 59 million smartphones. We are only 45 million Spaniards. So there's a lot of millions who have a double anxiety. They go around with double telephony. We love these telephones. So if they spend most of their time here – actually, after the UK, we are the highest country in Europe with telephony – I agree with Porter that they really have to think about digital, because this is the door to entry to many people and what they consume. If you're not here, you're not for them.

KENNEALLY: Andrew Albanese, I want to bring you in, because if anyone does listen to the Beyond the Book podcast, they know you've been talking about this challenge, this problem for a number of years. Because to Javier's point, we may be able to get a book on the phone or the iPad, but we can also get a movie, a YouTube video, everything else, as well as be distracted by messages and email. What in your view has been the response so far to that challenge from the book industry here in the US?

ALBANESE: I think they're aware that it's a challenge they're going to have to deal with. But I think their first order of business has just been to stabilize the environment that they're in. The digital era in the US has been marked by litigation. You had Google scanning. You had Apple and price fixing. It's been a rocky introduction to the digital market. What's interesting about audio is if you look at where e-books are today, revenue for e-books is actually down a bit. But audio has brought that up into positive territory.

For example, we saw Simon & Schuster's data that was released last month. Their digital department has positive sales numbers because audio has brought it into that territory. E-books did not do it. If you had told me during the heyday of the Kindle when it first started that digital audio was going to be where you were going to make your money for publishers, I don't think anyone would have believed it. But that's true. I think digital is now largely being driven into positive territory by audio.

I think John Sargent from the stage yesterday, if you were at the CEO panel, referenced changing consumer buying patterns. I think that the major publishers are aware that future generations that are growing up with the smartphone, reading content that could only be read in the digital environment, that they're going to have to adapt to that. I think they're happy to see stabilization in the print market and in the retail channels, but I think they know that there's a new wave of competition that's coming.



KENNEALLY: Right. Fabrice Piauxt at Electre, which is a database, a kind of union of booksellers and book publishers, what kind of data are you looking for? What kinds of challenges in data collection the French industry may have? Is it a story similar to what you're hearing?

PIAULT: No. Electre is just – they collect the information about books, and they deliver information about books in print, books to be printed, to booksellers and librarians, publishers, too. The challenge is mainly that now it's possible to get information about books everywhere, especially on Amazon. So it's difficult –

KENNEALLY: The bestseller list there and so forth.

PIAULT: It's difficult to – Electre is database which is sold to its customers. So the database itself is much better than what can provide Amazon – I mean, the deepness of the information is much more important, and especially for librarians it wouldn't be enough to get the Amazon information. But the price is of course different. When you can get information for free, there is an impact. Even if the information is not so good, people prefer to pay less.

So the challenge is to offer more services. It's a bit like for booksellers. The challenge is to offer more services and to get money from the services and not only from the information itself. It's also the challenge for the press, actually – so the challenge in many types of activities.

KENNEALLY: Let's just talk a little bit of what people read in France. You were telling me recently that you're seeing kind of a sea change in that certainly the international bestselling authors are present in the French marketplace, and yet you're now seeing some homegrown authors, and you think this is a real important change. Tell us about that.

PIAULT: Actually, the first thing is that there is a trend among the readership – a long-time trend, a long-term trend, which has been analyzed by the ministry of culture in France. They do – or they have been doing, because now they don't invest so much money in it – but they have been doing for years, they started at the early '70s, a study every eight years, about eight years, about the readership. The trend in this is that there is less and less how do we call, maybe heavy readers or something – people reading more than 20 books a year.

KENNEALLY: This is similar to what Javier was telling us about.

PIAULT: And more and more people reading only one book a year. This is not only a statistical question. As a whole, the market is the same. But inside, it's not. You



don't have the same readers. And then that means also they don't read the same books. Specifically for high-quality literary fiction – is read or was read by this part of the readership who reads a lot. And when you have people reading only one or two books a year, they don't read high-quality fiction. They read something else.

For years, we couldn't feel really the impact of this, but now, I think we feel it. People who were reading a lot, they are just dying. So for some part of the publishing industry, it has really important consequences – especially for literature, which has always been a strong part of the industry in France.

Our bestseller list in France – I don't know, two decades ago, our bestseller list in France was quite different from the bestseller list elsewhere in Europe. We had less American big sellers and more French literary authors. Now, it's not so different. We have about the same type of lists. And what is emerging now is a new French popular fiction. That's really the new trend. It started maybe two or three years ago. We, of course, always had some authors doing popular fiction, like we have Marc Levy, or Guillaume Musso, which are probably not well known here, or Katherine Pancol. They sell hundred-thousands copies of each of their books. But now there is really a new team of authors – young authors, usually women, writing any types of books. It can be feel-good books, it can be feel-good novels, romance. It can be also thrillers. It can be, well, many type of books, but really with the intention to do popular fiction.

And now actually, we are on Friday – yeah, today in our magazine, in *Livres Hebdo*, we're publishing a feature about the way this popular literature is now published even by the most literary publishing houses. Usually it was only some specific publishers doing this type of popular literature. Now, you have many publishing houses like, (inaudible), for example, or Stock, or – I mean, it's literary publishers. And they have integrated new publishers specialized on developing this popular literature.

KENNEALLY: Dana?

WEINBERG: Yeah, the trends are actually very similar in the United States. If you look at the Pew Research studies that have been looking at e-book consumption, I can't speak to what the frequent readers are doing, but there's been a rise in the number of people who read nothing. We've also seen that overall readership has gone down slightly. Print has gone down just slightly, not as much as everyone had thought. E-book consumption also is leveling off and going down slightly. And as we've been talking about, the audiobooks are coming up. But the average American reads 12 books a year, and the median number is five. So when you



BEYOND
the **BOOK**

A Copyright Clearance Center Podcast

think about all of the increase in what's available here, that is a real strain, because we're losing readers even as we're providing more and more content than ever before, and it's coming to people in different ways.

This issue about literature versus more pop-culture types of reads are also happening here. This trend goes back well into the 1980s. It used to be that publishing houses really saw themselves as the curators of culture. More and more, they've been driven, as many of our industries in the United States have been, by a profit motive. So that has taken into starting to think about how big is the audience? I can't just publish this particular thing because it's a literary work that will stand the test of time, but now I have to think about whether I'm going to make my margin or not and how many readers are there for it.

If you look at the trends and what's happened with publishing organizations, over the last 10 years, you've seen a growth of e-book first imprints. You've seen a growth of e-book only and print-on-demand. And a lot of it has been driven by what people think is going to sell commercially, rather than this sort of statement about we care about art and literature and culture. It's pop culture, so it's still part of culture, but it's a very different kind of approach to these issues of what we're going to produce and who's sort of in charge of it. The whole box has opened up.

KENNEALLY: Porter Anderson, this tees you up, because I think this is your message for 2018, which is that storytelling – at least book-centered storytelling – is under a great threat right now. Expand on that.

ANDERSON: It is. It's under attack. I've been going through some conversations with the English author Jeff Norton, who has found himself making a great deal of television, although he's a very fine writer. He first formulated what I think we're all now starting to develop pretty clearly for ourself, the idea that the primacy of storytelling is shifting. It may no longer lie with publishers. It used to be everything started with the book, and whether the film was good or bad, you came out wanting the book, right?

Now, we have such fine, high-quality television coming through from Amazon Studios, Netflix, Hulu, HBO, all of them, that you get a very satisfying experience from just seeing a piece that was developed originally for television, that stays on television. No longer do you come out saying I must have the book. I'm referring, for example, to *Marseille*, a fantastic series that was made by Netflix in France. They're working in other countries in original languages, and then they bring them into us, which I also think is fantastic.

However, that means that storytelling lead shifted to another medium. And what



in publishing we have to keep remembering now is that our readership is someone else's viewership and is someone else's listenership, someone else's rockers for music, someone else's gamers, someone else's video addict. All of these things are not only competing on the same device, but they are actually changing what publishing is going to have to do to remain with its hold on storytelling.

I'll give you one example. I can do this rather quickly. We just said a lot of things about Amazon, the retailer, that we wish were different. Amazon Publishing, the traditional – perhaps not so traditional, but the trade house with 15 imprints – is a very powerful force now. Its 15th imprint is called Toppie Books. Toppie is also the name of Toppie Productions, which is the filmmaker Jill Soloway's production company. What they've done is created a book imprint called Toppie to match her production company called Toppie. She was an executive producer of *Six Feet Under*. She's the one behind *Transparent*. She's winning many awards through Amazon Studios. She has eight series in development with them now and four features.

What they're going to do is develop projects together so that there is a publishing imprint working with the filmmaking imprint in tandem together to create projects that can go in many other directions. This, I think, is where storytelling is headed. And I think that publishers need to think about, how can we find liaisons? How can we find collaborative opportunities for ourselves with these other entertainment media? Because we may lose the storytelling mouth.

KENNEALLY: Right. Andrew Albanese, I want to bring you in, because when it comes to Amazon, they have a really important role in this global business of publishing in that they have taken a real lead in the translation marketplace. I think you should share some information about that.

ALBANESE: Yeah, that's true, and I thank you for letting me talk about Amazon. I'm always worried whenever I talk about Amazon that my phone's going to ring the next day, or there's going to be a van waiting for me outside, and I'm going to get tossed in the back of it.

KENNEALLY: But you can say something nice, then, I guess. Try.

ALBANESE: But yeah, for a long time, it was difficult – still is very difficult for foreign work to be translated into English and sold in the US. Amazon has jumped into that void. The number of translated books that Amazon through AmazonCrossing has published has grown exponentially.

But the one thing I'll say about this is it's a problem for me in this regard, because



A Copyright Clearance Center Podcast

we don't get data from Amazon. We don't see information from Amazon. And to me, it's great if a company like Amazon wants to step in and use its muscle to bring works to an underserved audience – to bring those works to a larger audience, that's great. But to have Amazon own that sect of the market and not share any information about it, not play well with others, not sell to libraries, is a problem. So while I'll praise Amazon for jumping into the translation market and other markets as well, I would caution, without the data, allowing them to lock up entire segments of the literature market is a dangerous game

KENNEALLY: I think we have established some important points for everyone here to take away with them back to their editorial offices and to really act upon. I want to thank a terrific panel – I'll go from the far end to Javier Celaya from Madrid at Dosdoce, Dana Beth Weinberg from Queens College-CUNY, Fabrice Piault from Paris at *Livres Hebdo*, Porter Anderson, editor-in-chief of *Publishing Perspectives*, and Andrew Albanese, *Publishers Weekly*. My name's Chris Kenneally. Thank you all for joining us.

(applause)

END OF FILE