

Book fair to tackle challenges of digital age storytelling

October 9 2011, by Kate Millar



Director of the Frankfurt Book Fair, Juergen Boos, poses in his office in Frankfurt in 2006. Organisers of the Frankfurt Book Fair, which opens on Wednesday, said the challenges thrown up by the upheaval in the book world would be a central theme at the world's biggest gathering of industry movers and shakers.

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Buying and selling of rights to works has soared by 30 percent in the last seven years, Frankfurt [Book Fair](#) Director Juergen Boos said.

"Rights trading has become broader and has become a trade with companies, with people, agents who we did not (even) know in recent years," he told reporters.

"Suddenly there are lots of people with whom one has to talk."

He highlighted Cornelia Funke, one of Germany's best-known children's authors, whose book "Reckless" was written with a scriptwriter alongside from the start.

"A book contract for us is 10 pages at the most. In the [film industry](#) they are thousands of pages because everything must be covered," Boos said of the practical challenges.

Gadgets such as the "enhanced ebook", a mixture of the book, audio, video and game, and other multimedia products have taken the fair by storm in the last few years.

Now, organisers say, authors and publishers need to formulate [business strategies](#) with multimedia interest in mind.

"We talked a lot in recent years about the devices, the ebooks (electronic books), tablet PCs (tablet personal computers) and the Kindle ([electronic book reader](#)) ...," Boos said.

"I think this theme is slowly becoming old news... what is on these devices is really the focus."



The Amazon Kindle Fire tablet is displayed in New York in September 2011. Authors once just had to deal with a publisher but are now being forced to embrace the digital age and negotiate the rights to their works for TV, films and ebooks.

In response, an exhibition hall will be dedicated to representatives from different creative industries to help them meet and generate business during the five-day fair.

More than half of the events at the fair in the western German city will address digitisation. Some 7,500 exhibitors from more than 110 countries are expected to attend, including from debt-ridden Greece and Portugal.

Literature from Iceland, which experienced its own dramatic economic collapse in 2008 and is now on the path to recovery, will be in the limelight as guest of honour.

A new translation into German of the Icelandic Sagas, perhaps the country's best-known literary accomplishment, describing 10th and early 11th century events in Iceland, will be presented in Frankfurt.

Halldor Gudmundsson, head of the Icelandic delegation, highlighted the

rich literary tradition of the country, whose population numbers about 318,000 and where its inhabitants buy an average of eight books a year.

"That interests us (to be guest of honour) especially because the German book market is important for us and because it is also important in other countries and is taken note of," he told reporters.

"The Germans are very industrious translators," he added.

"Harry Potter" producer David Heyman and "The King's Speech" producer Paul Brett, as well as Hollywood actor Rupert Everett will take part in a two-day forum on the future of the media industry.

And Hollywood director Roland Emmerich presents his new film "Anonymous" about whether William Shakespeare actually wrote the works that made him famous, and takes part in a discussion on the authorship debate.

"Content and stories are no longer bound to a specific format. Instead they expand to form an entire universe," Britta Friedrich, the forum's director, said in a written statement.

Organisers say exhibitors' attendance for 2011 is at around the same level as last year, with 56 percent again coming from abroad.

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