

Japan book seller buys 90 percent of new Murakami release

September 10 2015, by Elaine Kurtenbach



A salesclerk advertises Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami's new Japanese-language book, "Novelist as a Vocation," at Kinokuniya Bookstore in Tokyo Thursday, Sept. 10, 2015. For best-selling Japanese novelist Murakami, finding a market for his books seems an unlikely problem. His latest work, released Thursday was 90 percent spoken for weeks ago, when major book seller Kinokuniya ordered 90,000 out of the 100,000 copies of the first printing. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Best-selling Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami's latest book has gone

on sale, with 90 percent of the release claimed by a single buyer.

Major bookstore Kinokuniya says it ordered 90,000 of the 100,000 copies of the first print run of Murakami's "Novelist as a Vocation" to shake up the local publishing industry.

Kinokuniya says it is supplying 50,000 of those copies to other bookstores to ensure online booksellers don't shut them out of the sales of the collection of essays, which began Thursday.

Japan's book market remains resilient, with tens of thousands of titles each year and many small bookstores, despite the rising popularity of e-[books](#) and online buying. But Kinokuniya says that's thanks largely to a distribution system that results in huge waste and unnecessarily high costs.

"The publishers, the wholesalers who connect publishers and bookstores, and the actual bookstores, each face a form of systemic fatigue, that's why we did this," said Toru Nishine, managing of Kinokuniya's main bookstore in downtown Tokyo's Shinjuku shopping district.

Japanese bookstores generally sell books on consignment, and are able to return unsold volumes to the publisher and eventually get refunds. But they have to pay the costs for shipping and packing up the books. The return rate averages 40 percent, Nishine said, and that adds up to big extra costs.

There was no sign the Murakami's book was in particularly short supply, since it was available on Amazon and in many other stores. Nishine said his Kinokuniya outlet was stocking only 2,450 of the books, but hoped that they would lure customers in to buy other Murakami works.



Customers look at Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami's new Japanese-language book, "Novelist as a Vocation," on sale at Kinokuniya Bookstore in Tokyo Thursday, Sept. 10, 2015. For best-selling Japanese novelist Murakami, finding a market for his books seems an unlikely problem. His latest work, released Thursday was 90 percent spoken for weeks ago, when major book seller Kinokuniya ordered 90,000 out of the 100,000 copies of the first printing. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Amazon Japan said in a statement that it had worked with its partners to ensure it had enough copies to meet demand.

By early afternoon, Nishine said his store had sold 103 of the books. There was no big line out the door in the morning waiting to buy it, but then the author was not there and it was raining hard, with many train lines suspended due to flooding.

Shoki Kawai, a 20-year-old student, said he was happy Kinokuniya had

bought the books and publicized its move.

"Nowadays I usually just buy books from Amazon, so I don't really go to bookstores. This was good because it got me to actually make a trip to the store," Kawai said.

Kyoto, Japan-born Murakami, perennially rumored to be under consideration for a Nobel Prize in literature, is one of Japan's best-loved authors.

Now 66, he began writing while running a jazz bar in Tokyo after finishing university. "Norwegian Wood," a romance published in 1987, established him as a young literary star. Other fiction best-sellers include "1Q84" and "Kafka on the Shore."



A salesclerk advertises Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami's new Japanese-language book, "Novelist as a Vocation," at Kinokuniya Bookstore in Tokyo Thursday, Sept. 10, 2015. For best-selling Japanese novelist Murakami, finding a

market for his books seems an unlikely problem. His latest work, released Thursday was 90 percent spoken for weeks ago, when major book seller Kinokuniya ordered 90,000 out of the 100,000 copies of the first printing. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

In "Novelist as a Vocation," which is only in Japanese, Murakami muses on his work and life as a novelist.

"It's not all that hard to write just one novel. But to keep writing novels, that is difficult," he says.

He says he's grateful to the readers who are loyal to him, even when they complain they don't like one of his books.



A salesclerk arranges Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami's new Japanese-language book, "Novelist as a Vocation," for sale at Kinokuniya Bookstore in

Tokyo Thursday, Sept. 10, 2015. For best-selling Japanese novelist Murakami, finding a market for his books seems an unlikely problem. His latest work, released Thursday was 90 percent spoken for weeks ago, when major book seller Kinokuniya ordered 90,000 out of the 100,000 copies of the first printing. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Whatever "pipeline" the author uses to reach his readers, the crucial thing remains a sense of trust, Murakami wrote.

"Many readers seem to say to themselves that if Murakami has a new book then I'll buy it and see. It can't hurt," he says.



Toru Nishine, shop manager of Kinokuniya Bookstore, speaks to journalists in front of Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami's new Japanese-language book, "Novelist as a Vocation," on sale in Tokyo Thursday, Sept. 10, 2015. For best-selling Japanese novelist Murakami, finding a market for his books seems an

unlikely problem. His latest work, released Thursday was 90 percent spoken for weeks ago, when major book seller Kinokuniya ordered 90,000 out of the 100,000 copies of the first printing. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

© 2015 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Japan book seller buys 90 percent of new Murakami release (2015, September 10)
retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-09-japan-seller-percent-murakami.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.