

The Hybrid Shanghai Children's Book Fair Completes Run

By Teri Tan | Nov 16, 2020



Courtesy CCBF 2020

Exhibitors queueing up to enter the fair.

The eighth edition of the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair (CCBF), which ran from November 13 to 15, was a hybridized version that combined in-person attendance with live-streamed conferences and events.

While life has mostly returned to normal in China, allowing local publishers and companies to attend CCBF in-person, overseas exhibitors were unable to physically participate due to travel restrictions in their respective countries. So, the fair organizers, which include Ronbo BolognaFiere Shanghai,

launched an online matchmaking system (available until November 20) and the International Book Showcase to give overseas publishers and literary agencies opportunities to be a part of the event.

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contacted the interested parties through the online matchmaking system and carried the conversation forward.

In total, nearly 60,000 children's titles were exhibited, of which 20,000 come from 350 overseas publishers and content players. Around 18,983 visitors attended CCBF this year while its live-streamed events garnered more than 520,000 views.

One regular CCBF exhibitor who was unable to attend this year is Philippe Werck of Clavis, a Flemish publishing house. "However, we had a small booth that was managed by our local agent Hong Cuili. The traffic to our booth, according to her, was about 20% compared to previous years. But the reduced traffic and booth visitors means that our agent was able to spend more time on each meeting, which is crucial in enriching our understanding of the market needs and shifts," added Werck, whose company has exhibited at CCBF since its 2013 inaugural outing.

Over at the U.K. pavilion, usually the biggest overseas presence, there were only five exhibiting companies, namely BookLife Publishing, Hachette Children's Group, I Am a Bookworm, Nosy Crow, and The Rights Solution. In addition to the Publishers Association. Local staff organized by the fair manned the booths and took inquiries on the displayed titles. The exhibitors then



Courtesy CCBF 2020

Mask-wearing audience at one of the many CCBF seminars.

On-site, the pandemic era has ushered in a greater focus on content digitization and online marketing. Some 28 exhibitors specializing in digital content participated in nearly 100 meetings with potential collaborators during the three-day fair. As for online marketing, there was Book Live, a show aimed at helping Chinese publishers promote their books through live-streaming. Six top influencers from different social media platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, TikTok, and Red presented books by 80 publishing houses.

There were also two special exhibits this year: Children Plus: Toddler Books showcased 140 original board books and activity titles for children ages 0–3 while Illustrators for Gianni Rodari: Italian Excellence offered 63 illustrations to mark the centennial birthday of Rodari, the first Italian writer to receive the Hans Christian Andersen Award.

Two major events linked with CCBF — the Chen Bochui International Children’s Literature Award and the Golden Pinwheel Illustrators Competition — saw jury members from different parts of the globe collaborating online to pick the best works. Ricardo Henriques’s *1.º Direito*, Jiu-er’s *Mr Black and His Dog*, Xi Yuke’s *A Falling Whale*, Mei Zihan’s *The Snow Comes Around*, and Elina Ellis’s *The Truth About Old People* won the Best International Picture Book prizes at the Chen Bochui Award while picture book author-illustrator Ed Young was honored with the newly created Best Author of the Year award.

The 2020 Golden Pinwheel Grand Awards went to illustrators Ling Luo (China) and Veronica Neacsu (Romania) for their works *Three Friends* and *Mumuri’s Sleep*, respectively. There were also three Special Mentions, going to Jam Dong (China; for *The Secret Life of Caterpillars*), Francesco Giustozzi (Italy; *Let’s Play*), and Ida Hong (South Korea; *Carpenter*). The organizing committee received 11,190 submissions from 2,238 illustrators, marking a 12% increase in participation compared to 2019.

The Chinese children’s book market, according to OpenBook, a clearinghouse for publishing statistics in China, grew 0.64% in the first nine months of 2020 while other book segments had contracted during the same period. (The children’s book segment, which accounts for more than a quarter of the country’s total retail book market, expanded 21.2%, 13.7%, and 18.5% for 2017, 2018, and 2019, respectively.)

Next year’s CCBF will be held November 19–21, 2021.