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Special Report For 2024 Frankfurt Book Fair



**China's Publishing Industry :
Recovery and Challenge**

China's Publishing Industry Seeks New Growth Amid Recovery

By Zhao Bing

From 2023 to 2024, China's publishing industry is displaying entirely new characteristics and trends. The opportunities and challenges it faces are unprecedented, and the traditional development methods and logic that Chinese publishing institutions once followed have undergone significant changes. These shifts are driven by changes in the external environment, including the economic landscape and technological advancements.

The economic environment has led to a decline in profit margins for many publishing institutions. Additionally, the continued decrease in birth rates has negatively impacted the children's book sector, which previously held the largest market share and experienced rapid growth but is now seeing a slowdown. Technological advancements, particularly in AI, may also have implications for the publishing industry. While technological progress can enhance efficiency, the fundamental changes it could bring will likely be a gradual and possibly cyclical process, requiring the industry to adapt.

The Primary Topic: Restoring Growth

According to data from OpenBook, the total list price sales of China's book retail market in 2023 shifted from a negative growth rate in 2022 to a positive year-on-year (YoY) increase of 4.72%, reaching a market value of 91.2 billion yuan. The total number of active book titles in the overall retail market also increased by 1.55% YoY, with the number of new active book titles rising by 7.3% YoY.

Reviewing the overall development of China's book retail market over the past few years, the market has experienced fluctuations since 2020. In 2023, as the first year after the pandemic, recovery and growth became the main themes of China's publishing industry. Although the overall book retail market in China still showed negative growth in the first three quarters of 2023, the year-on-year decline narrowed compared to the end of the second quarter. This improvement was mainly driven by online retail channels, including platform e-commerce and

short-video e-commerce, which returned to positive growth after the second quarter. Under the influence of major promotional activities, the growth rate of online channels further expanded in the fourth quarter, leading to growth in the overall book retail market.

In the first half of 2024, China's book retail market continued to experience negative growth, with the total market value declining by 6.20% year-on-year. However, compared to the first quarter, the decline narrowed in the second quarter as the market entered the period of significant promotions in online channels.

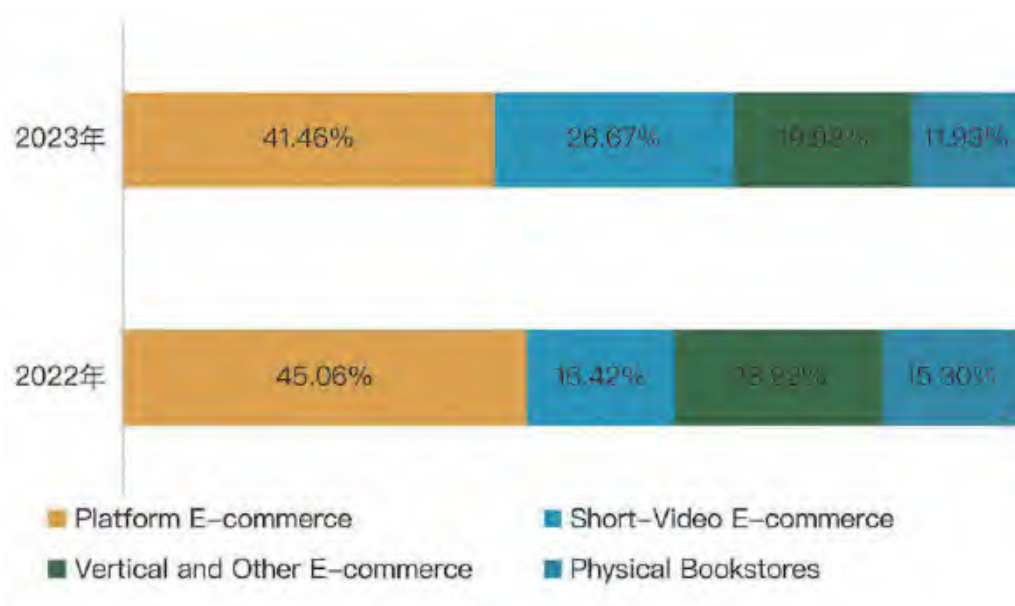
Main Growth Driver: Short-Video Channels

The role of different channels in China's book sales has been continuously evolving, and this has been a hot topic in the publishing industry in recent years. The focus has shifted from physical bookstores, which were once the main battleground, to online stores as the primary sales channels. In the early stages, online channels were dominated by e-commerce

platforms like JD.com, Dangdang, and Tmall. However, the landscape has now evolved, with short-video e-commerce platforms like Douyin becoming the primary source of traffic.

In 2023, short-video e-commerce continued its rapid growth, with a year-over-year increase of 70.1%, becoming the main driver of overall retail market growth. In contrast, physical bookstores experienced a year-over-year decline of 18.24%. Platform e-commerce and vertical and other e-commerce saw declines of 3.68% and 10.08%, respectively.

In terms of the total list price sales share by channel in China's book market, platform e-commerce remained the largest channel, accounting for 41.46% of the total market value. Short-video e-commerce followed with a 26.67% share, surpassing vertical and other e-commerce (which held a 19.93% share in 2023) to become the second-largest sales channel. Physical bookstores held an 11.93% share of the market value. Compared to 2022, the market share of short-video e-commerce in-



Market Value Structure by Channel Over the Past Two Years

creased, while all other channels saw varying degrees of decline in market share.

Short-video platforms increased the market value of top-selling books. The market share of books with sales exceeding 100,000 copies significantly rose through short-video channels, while sales of these top books in other channels declined.

In the first half of 2024, short-video e-commerce channels continued to grow, with a year-over-year increase of 18.34%. However, this growth rate has noticeably slowed compared to the past two years. According to data released by the China Internet Network Information Center, by December 2023, the number of short-video users had nearly matched the number of mobile internet users, indicating that the potential for significant user growth in short-video platforms is limited. Consequently, the growth rate of short-

video e-commerce is expected to gradually slow down.

Significant Differences in Performance Across Book Categories

The recovery and growth of China's book retail market are closely linked to changes in various book categories. In 2022, apart from general books, only biography and literature categories achieved growth. However, in 2023—a year focused on recovery—the overall growth of China's book retail market shifted from negative to positive, with 13 secondary sub-categories showing gains.

Looking at the market share of various book categories in 2023, children's books had the largest share, with 27.21%. In the first half of 2024, this share increased to 29.17%, though it also saw the largest slowdown in growth rate among all categories.

The next largest categories

were educational aids and literature, each with a market share of over 10%. The academic/cultural and economics/management categories had market shares ranging between 4% and 10%.

When analyzing the categories across different sales channels, the category structure varied, particularly within short-video e-commerce channels, where changes were more pronounced. In the first half of 2024, the market share of educational aids in short-video e-commerce channels increased the most, now accounting for 28.55% of the market value in this channel. Meanwhile, the children's category continued to shrink, with a market share of 40.15%. Additionally, the academic/cultural category saw a significant decline in market share, primarily due to the fading popularity of books related to "The Art of War" that had been driven by a TV series last year.

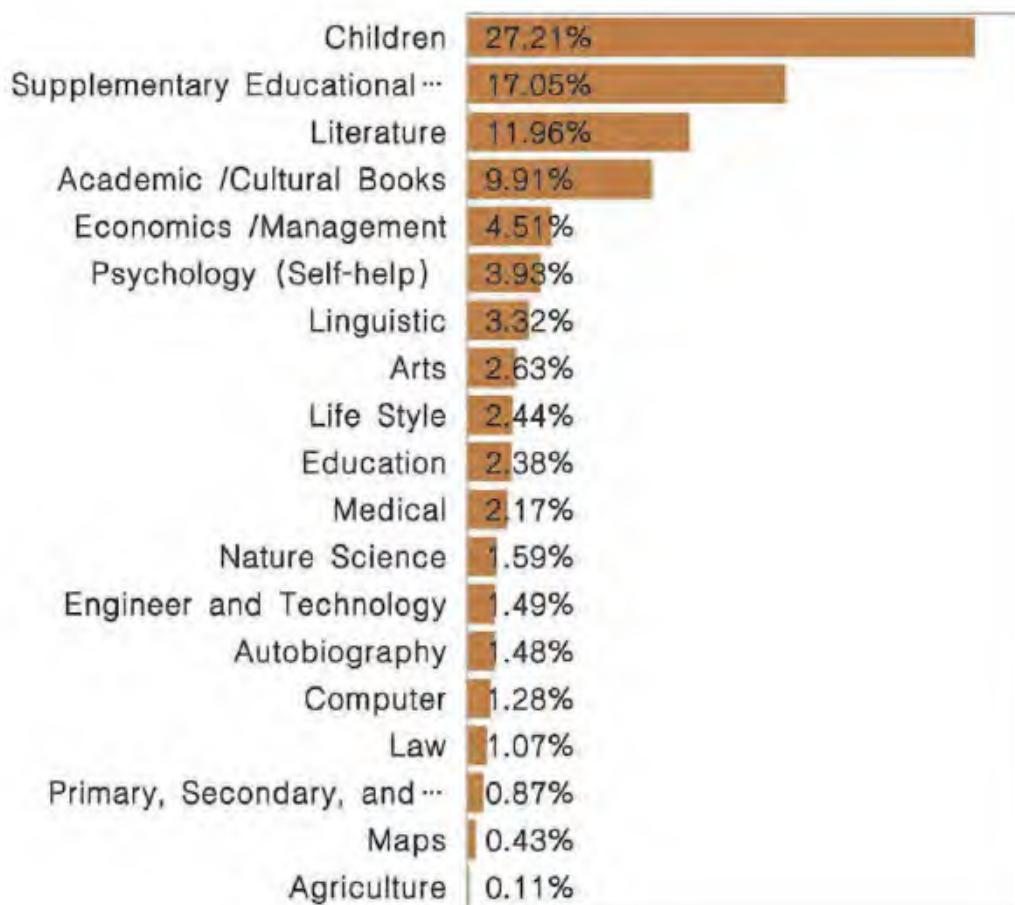
In the book retail market, the top 1% of best-selling titles contribute nearly 60% of the market's total sales revenue, and the top 5% of titles contribute over 80%. Changes in top-selling books directly influence the overall growth and fluctuations of the book retail market.

Regarding Golden Titles (top performing titles that collectively contribute 60% of the actual sales revenue in the overall retail market), the number of books entering this category increased in 2023, and their contribution to the market's total sales revenue also grew. Additionally, there was a noticeable increase in the proportion of Golden Titles sold through short-video platforms. This trend is also observed in new books in Golden Titles sales tier.

However, new books sold through short-video e-commerce channels have a shorter sales duration. Among the new books sold via short-video platforms, 16.4% are sold for only one month, and more than 60% of the titles cease to be actively sold six months after their initial release. In contrast, new books sold through other channels sustain a longer sales lifecycle.

Trending Topics and Titles: Strong Performance of Comics and Traditional Culture Works

From 2023 to 2024, trends in China's book market have largely followed previous sales hotspots, with best-selling series, "Comics+" books (a publishing approach that combines



Market Value Share and YoY Changes Across Different Subcategories in 2023

comics with various other content types, such as science, history, psychology, and traditional culture), web novel paperbacks, and works by famous authors continuing to stand out. New titles in best-selling series or reprints of older series quickly sell quickly and boost sales of other books in the series.

“Comics+” has become an important form in the book market, with many new books presented in comic form appearing in both adult and children’s reading categories. These books cover a wide range of topics, including science, psychology, history, lifestyle, and traditional

culture, and they perform prominently on the overall top three bestseller lists as well as the new book bestseller lists.

The novel “The Last Quarter of the Moon” ranked first on the fiction list and topped the overall annual bestseller list. The non-fiction work “I and the Temple of Earth” (Commemorative Edition) topped the non-fiction list. The children’s book “Comic Elementary School Psychology” led the children’s book list.

As for the new books on the bestseller lists, the novels “The Knockout” and “Su Shu” (Volumes 1 & 2), and the non-fiction work “Believe” by Cai

Lei, former vice president of JD.com, ranked first in their respective categories, with “Believe” becoming the top new book of the year.

From 2023 to 2024, the performance of specific subcategories highlighted some emerging trends. Health is one of the most popular categories with Chinese readers, driven by a post-pandemic interest in traditional Chinese medicine. Notable titles include “The Illustrated Series of Classical Chinese Works: The Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Medicine” and “Chinese Medicine on the Dining Table”. Books on per-

sonal growth and self-help are also popular. Leading titles include “Good Responses: Being Articulate Is an Advantage, But Being Responsive Is a Skill”, and “Chinese-Style Communication Wisdom”.

Popular economics and management books include “Emotional Intelligence for Sales Success: The Sales Psychology You Must Understand” and “The Underlying Logic of Business”. Entertainment and pop culture were also leading categories, as were academic and cultural books focusing on women’s themes like “Letters Between Chizuko Ueno and Ryomi Suzuki” and various versions of “The Art of War”, which became popular due to a hit TV series.

In the literature category, the novel “The Right Bank of the Argun River” gained traction through livestreams, while the non-fiction work “I and the Temple of Earth” (Commemorative Edition) was boosted by the popularity of the author Yu Hua. Educational aids and textbooks, considered a necessity, have also performed well in terms of sales, with the support of short-video e-commerce.

Market Competition

In 2023, the top three publishing groups in terms of market share by actual sales revenue were China Publishing Group, Central South Publishing & Media Group Co., Ltd., and Phoenix Publishing & Media Group Co., Ltd. At the publisher level, the top three were Citic

Press Group, People's Publishing House, and Beijing United Publishing Co., Ltd. At the publishing company level, the top three were Beijing Motie Culture Media Co., Ltd., New Classic Media Co., Ltd., and Central South Boji Tianjuan Culture Media Co., Ltd.

When considering dominant channels, 90% of publishers had book sales across all four major channels. Among the top 10 leading publishers, 7 saw more than 10% of their monitored sales revenue coming from short-video e-commerce channels, while 129 out of the top 200 publishers saw over 10% of their monitored sales revenue from these channels.

Top Authors of 2023:

The top three best-selling authors of 2023 were Liu Cixin, Shi Tiesheng, and Christian Jolibois.

Liu Cixin: In 2015, Liu won the Hugo Award for Best Novel at the 73rd World Science Fiction Convention for his work *The Three-Body Problem*, marking the first time an Asian author received this honor. His "Three-Body" series has consistently appeared on the OpenBook fiction bestseller list. In 2023, with the release of the TV adaptation of *The Three-Body Problem*, the original novels saw a renewed sales peak. *The Three-Body Problem*, *The Dark Forest*, and *Death's End* ranked 4th, 5th, and 7th, respectively, on the 2023 OpenBook annual fiction bestseller list.

Shi Tiesheng: His represen-

tative works, *I and the Temple of Earth* (Commemorative Edition) and *Fragments from a Sickbed* (Commemorative Edition 2021), saw significant sales increases in 2023, primarily due to the influence of the author Yu Hua. *I and the Temple of Earth* (Commemorative Edition) ranked 1st on the non-fiction bestseller list.

Christian Jolibois: Best known for the "Les P'tites Poules" series, his works have reached a wide range of young readers through various editions, including hand-drawn, pop-up, animated, phonetic, English, talking pen, toddler, and commemorative editions.

New Authors of 2023:

Among the top three new authors were Li Chao, Cai Lei, and Meng Yan. Li Chao's book "The Underlying Logic of Business" had over 99% of its sales concentrated in short-video e-commerce channels. Cai Lei's book "Believe" ranked 1st on the non-fiction new book bestseller list and 7th on the overall non-fiction bestseller list. Meng Yan's "30 Days to Become a Learning Expert" had over 85% of its sales concentrated in short-video e-commerce channels.

Future Trends in China's Publishing Industry

The Chinese publishing industry is witnessing several significant trends. Firstly, resources are increasingly concentrated among leading publishing houses. These top enterprises are developing formidable advantages in terms of resources, capital,

market share, and talent, making it difficult for smaller players to compete. The market is favoring major book brands, which may marginalize other publishers. As technology advances and the industry becomes more capitalized and market-driven, this polarization is expected to deepen further. Some publishers have already begun proactively reducing their publishing scale and cutting low-profit ventures. In the future, publishers lacking competitiveness and distinct features may gradually be edged out by the market.

Secondly, the competition for high-quality copyrights is fierce, while efforts to export domestic copyrights are also intensifying. In recent years, the growing popularity of traditional Chinese culture and increased reader appreciation for domestic original works have prompted the industry, from government to independent publishers, to focus on high-quality development. Consequently, the ability to create compelling original content will be the critical task for all publishers. The share of foreign-imported works may continue to fluctuate or even decline, while publishers will demand higher quality in terms of content, illustration, design, and production. Conversely, as the quality of domestic original works improves, Chinese publishers will increasingly seek to promote their global dissemination through copyright exports and international collaborations.

Thirdly, technology is transforming the publishing

industry. From 2023 to 2024, Chinese publishers have been exploring ways to integrate traditional and digital publishing. The rise of AI-generated content (AIGC), exemplified by ChatGPT, has also begun to significantly influence the industry. In 2023, major Chinese publishing groups incorporated AI into their strategic planning, and by 2024, they started implementing AI technology in practical applications, such as topic evaluation, translation, and content generation, to improve efficiency and reduce costs. For example, Citic Press Group began using AI technology in areas such as topic evaluation and translation. Guomai Culture invested in several technology companies and is developing AI projects in areas like proofreading, comics, and reading avatars. Chinese Media Corporation (CMC) acquired a 58% stake in Longwise Media, China's leading AI marketing company. Longwise Media has developed applications for AI content generation and avatars.

Fourthly, the contribution of short-video platforms to book retail is gradually diminishing. In the first half of 2024, the growth rate of short-video e-commerce platforms, which had previously experienced rapid expansion, continued to slow down. The promotions and low prices offered by these platforms have put unprecedented profit pressure on Chinese publishers. More and more people are realizing that a book market driven by low-price competition is unsustainable. ■

Confidence Survey on the Development of China's Publishing Industry

✍ By Zhang Aining, Huang Huang

In 2023, China's publishing industry began to resume normal operations, with activity levels gradually increasing. Data from the Chinese book retail market indicates a positive trend; however, the recovery has been relatively slow. By the end of 2023, the overall Chinese book retail market had not yet reached the levels anticipated at the year's start, and many publishing companies were working hard to maintain operational stability.

To gauge industry sentiment, China Publishers Magazine conducted a survey of 100 senior executives from Chinese publishing companies. The survey aimed to capture their perspectives on the industry's development, their companies, and their expectations for the future. Among the executives surveyed, 8% were from ministry-level publishers, 5% from university presses, 53% from regional publishers, and 24% from book companies.

More Confidence in Companies' Future Than in the Overall Industry

The survey results reveal that the 100 publishing execu-

tives—taking into account factors such as industry potential, company growth, product quality, talent development, market conditions, and profit margins—assigned an average confidence score of 6.17 out of 10. Executives from ministry-level publishers expressed the highest confidence, scoring an average of 6.80, followed closely by founders and professional managers from book companies, who scored 6.74. In contrast, executives from regional and university presses reported lower confidence scores of 5.86 and 5.55, respectively.

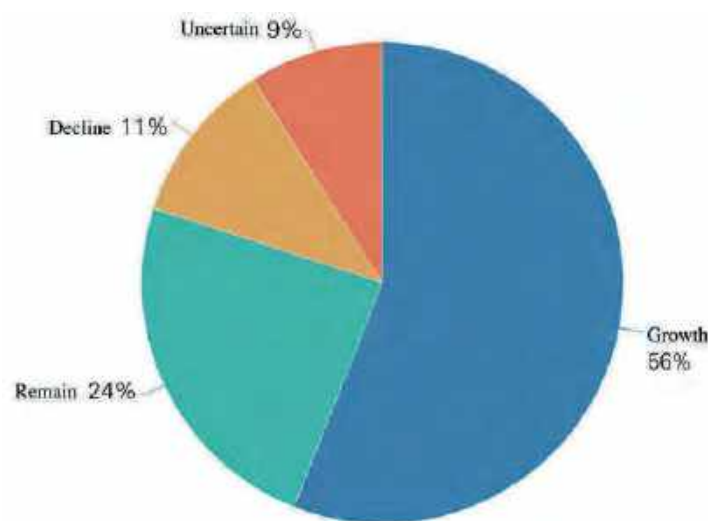


Figure 1: Executives' Expectations for the Overall Business Performance of Publishing Companies in 2024

Among the surveyed senior executives, 56% believe their companies will see continued growth in overall business performance in 2024. Meanwhile, 24% expect performance to remain stable, 11% anticipate a decline, and 9% are uncertain about the future.

From the perspective of

Looking at different publishing sectors, the fields of literature and art, as well as comprehensive publishing, had the highest percentage of executives optimistic about growth in 2024, at 69.7% and 68%, respectively.

Conversely, among those expecting declines, executives in children's publishing and the textbook and supplementary teaching materials sector represented the largest proportions, at 15.38% and 13.79%, respectively.

These findings align with market trends observed in various publishing sectors over recent years. According to OpenBook data, both general books and literary works have shown positive growth over the past two years, leading executives in these areas to remain hopeful for 2024. However, the children's book category experienced the most significant drop in book list prices in 2023, resulting in a more pessimistic outlook among its executives for the upcoming year. Similarly, those in the textbook and supplementary materials publishing sector face considerable challenges. The declining birthrate in China, which directly affects student enrollment, suggests potential contraction in this sector's scale in the future. Additionally, increasingly stringent regulatory policies indicate that the educational publishing market may undergo

another major reshuffle.

Highest Confidence in Book Product Quality

The survey's confidence index was divided into eight key indicators: industry potential, company development, cost control, revenue-generating capability, book product quality, talent cultivation, market environment, and profit margins. Publishing executives rated these individual indicators accordingly.

Survey

The survey results reveal that publishing executives have the highest confidence in the quality of book products, scoring an impressive 8.21 on the confidence index. Following closely is their confidence in talent cultivation within the industry, which received a score of 7.08. Confidence in company development (6.63), revenue-generating capability (6.48), and cost control (6.4) also received moderate ratings. However, confidence in the industry's potential was notably lower at 5.74, while profit margins and the market environment were rated even lower, at 4.45 and 4.4, respectively.

Overall, publishing executives express strong confidence in their products, along with moderate confidence in internal factors such as company development, cost control, and revenue-generating capability, all scoring around 6. In contrast, their confidence in industry potential, profit margins, and the market environment is sig-

nificantly diminished. The low profit margins and the increasingly fierce, unresolved price competition within China's publishing market pose substantial challenges.

Economic Factors as Key Influencers

Among the external factors impacting the development of publishing companies, a striking 91% of executives identified "changes in the economic environment" as the most significant influence. This was followed by "tax policy adjustments" (63%), and both "population changes" and "market competition from non-traditional publishing companies," which were cited by 55% of respondents. "Technological updates" ranked fifth, mentioned by 51% of those surveyed. Additionally, "regulatory

quality requirements" and "public opinion pressure" were noted by 40% and 33%, respectively.

In the "other" category, two executives pointed to "piracy" and "weak copyright protection policies" as significant concerns for their businesses. Furthermore, a senior executive from a leading private company emphasized that, "The structure of China's publishing industry has undergone drastic changes, and traditional approaches are no longer effective. Both our concepts and business models require reform."

Internal Factors Impacting the Chinese Book Market

Among the internal challenges anticipated to impact business development in the future, 87% of publishing executives identified "low discounts

on books." While discounts are within the decision-making purview of these companies, many find themselves constrained by powerful external market forces. This situation often forces them to reduce discounts passively in order to remain competitive within distribution channels.

Additionally, 62% of executives cited "a lack of internal innovation and growth potential" as another internal barrier to business development. Several factors contribute to this issue.

First, the rise of digitization and the internet has significantly altered readers' habits and purchasing behaviors. However, some publishing companies remain tied to outdated thinking and business models, making it difficult for



Figure 2: Distribution of Confidence Index Scores in Specific Sectors for Publishing Executives in 2024

them to adapt to new technologies and market dynamics, ultimately leading to a loss of market share.

Second, despite rapid advancements in digital technologies, many publishing firms struggle to adopt these innovations due to wage cap restrictions, which hinder their ability to attract technical talent and implement new solutions.

Third, the absence of effective innovation incentive mechanisms in some companies diminishes employees' motivation and willingness to innovate, resulting in significant product homogenization and a lack of uniqueness and competitiveness in their offerings. Consequently, launching books with substantial market impact becomes increasingly challenging.

To enhance innovation and growth potential, publishing companies must embrace new technologies and market changes, invest in talent and technical training, and establish effective incentive mechanisms for innovation to explore new business models and expand market opportunities.

Other internal factors affecting company development, ranked by their significance, include insufficient integration of digital publishing, a lack of leadership talent, salary cap limitations, loss of key personnel, and tight cash flow. In the "other" category, two executives mentioned "distribution channels" and "marketing capabilities" as critical internal factors influencing company growth.

Business Expansion Plans Among Publishing Executives

Among the surveyed executives, 51% plan to expand their businesses. Specifically, 2% intend to make significant expansions in the coming year, while 49% plan minor expansions. Additionally, 28% will maintain their current operations, 15% are uncertain about potential expansion in 2024, and 6% plan to slightly reduce their business activities.

Among the publishing

For those executives intending to expand, 90.2% believe that "developing new channels and exploring new business areas" will be the most crucial strategy for growth in

2024. Since 2020, short-video e-commerce—spearheaded by platforms like Douyin—has emerged as a key sales channel for the book industry. By 2023, this channel had become the second-largest in the industry, accounting for 26.67% of the market share based on list prices. For publishing executives, the notion of "developing new channels" has evolved from an optional strategy to a necessity. In 2024, many executives will focus on leveraging these new channels for business expansion, though they must navigate the challenges of generating profits amid intense competition.

In terms of strategies for business expansion in 2024, 68.63% of executives plan to "develop new product lines,"

64.71% aim to "enter the integrated publishing sector and explore new growth opportunities," 54.9% will "bring in new talent," and 43.14% will "increase competition for top-tier copyrights." Notably, despite the growing prominence of artificial intelligence across various sectors, only 35.29% of executives plan to "increase the application of AI technology" in their businesses in 2024.

Among the 6% of executives planning to downsize slightly, all have opted to do so by "reducing operating costs and cutting fixed expenses." Other strategies include "reducing the number of product varieties" and "narrowing product lines," while "layoffs and salary reductions" are the least preferred options for downsizing. Remarkably, none of the executives indicated a desire to reduce scale by "abandoning business areas such as integrated publishing."

When executives' confidence in future operations wanes, the strategies of reducing fixed expenses and lowering staff numbers become interconnected. In the survey, most publishing executives indicated they do not plan to increase their workforce in the coming year. Only 39% feel that their total number of employees may grow, while 61% chose "remain unchanged," "decrease," or "unsure." Given that the publishing industry is talent-driven, diminished confidence will likely lead to more cautious investments in human resources. ■

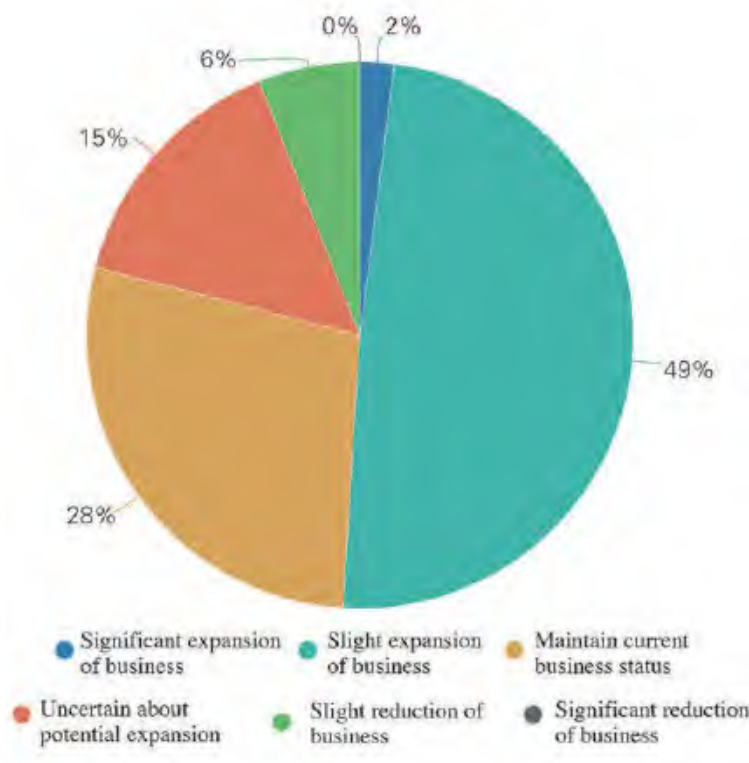


Figure 3: Business Expansion or Contraction Status of Publishing Executives in 2024

Establishing the “Hunan Model” for Globalizing Chinese Culture

“Those pepper lovers in Hunan Province create bestsellers.” This universal praise is often associated with the Hunan-based China South Publishing & Media Group (CNS). CNS is the first publishing and media company in China to have its entire industrial chain publicly listed. With oversight of 30 branches and subsidiaries, it ranks among the top listed publishers in China. Frequently featured on the Top 50: The Ranking of the Publishing Industry, CNS secured the 17th position in 2023, coming in 2nd among Chinese publishers, thereby solidifying its status as one of the world’s leading publishing enterprises.

Bringing Great Books to the World

Despite being an inland region, Hunan’s publishing sector has emerged as a new “highland” for China’s rights exports. In recent years, CNS has been actively engaged in rights trading, averaging over 600 titles traded

annually. The company has translated and sold more than 2,100 rights for books, e-books, animations, and audio-visual content to 95 countries and regions in 44 languages, marking a top performance among Chinese publishers.

In its efforts to globalize its books, CNS has developed unique advantages in exporting China-themed titles, traditional Chinese culture books, and literary works. As part of its ongoing globalization initiatives, China-themed books account for nearly one-third of its exported titles, reaching established markets such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, as well as emerging markets like Kazakhstan, Vietnam, Egypt, and Sri Lanka. Notable titles in this category include “A New Look of Villages in China” “A Community With a Shared Future for Humanity”, “40 Years of China’s Private Sector”, “The People’s Livelihood in China over the Past 70 Years (1949-2019)”

“China’s Intangible Cultural Heritage”, and “The Analects of Confucius”. These China-themed books, distributed overseas in response to global interest, document China’s growth trajectory, reflect Chinese values, promote traditional Chinese culture, and provide international readers with a more authentic understanding of China.

In 2022, the Lao edition of “Ten Villages: A Road to Targeted Poverty Alleviation—Sail from Shibadong Village” was published by Hunan Education Publishing House, an imprint of CNS. The book’s donation ceremony was jointly organized by the Chinese Embassy in Laos, the Lao Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, and the Lao Writers’ Association, drawing significant attention and acclaim.

In its efforts to globalize traditional Chinese culture, CNS has targeted regions with high concentrations of Chinese communities, such as South Korea,

Japan, and Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia and Singapore, focusing on younger, Gen Z readers. Some titles from CNS are available in foreign languages or bilingual formats, covering themes of traditional Chinese

culture and children’s literature. These include “Chinese Ethnic Festivals and Customs Stories”, “China’s Intangible Cultural Heritage”, and “Chinese Traditional Culture”

Globalizing Chinese Literature

Thanks to the efforts of China South Publishing & Media Group (CNS) to globalize literature, works by renowned authors such as Can Xue, Zhang Wei, Yu Qiuyu, Cao Wenxuan, and Tang Sulan have gained international recognition and rights agreements. Popular Chinese writers like Zijin Chen, Ma Boyong, and Zhang Jiajia have also sparked reading trends overseas. At the 2024 London Book Fair, “I Deliver Parcels in Beijing” drew the attention of international publishing houses, with Penguin Random House acquiring the rights to its English edition for a substantial price. Additionally, the English edition of “The Bad Kids” was shortlisted for the 2023 CWA Dagger Award for Best Translated Crime Novel, marking the first time a Chinese work has made it to the finals of this prestigious award.

According to the 2023 Annual Research Report on the Influence of Chinese Books on Overseas Library Collections,



seven imprints of CNS were listed among the “Top 100 Chinese Publishing Houses in Overseas Collections.” Over 300 of their titles have been integrated into global library collection systems, serving as powerful evidence of CNS’s growing international influence.

Today, Hunan’s publishing industry has elevated the “going global” initiative from a mere mindset to a key strategic focus. CNS and its parent company, Hunan Publishing Investment Holding Group (HPI), provide robust support for rights trading, empowering the bold and proactive international business teams across their various imprints. Hunan’s high-quality books are becoming not only symbols of Hunan culture but also representatives of Chinese culture, making their way into the global market.

Providing a “Chinese Solution” for Global Education

As one of the first printing companies in China to explore overseas markets, Hunan Tianwen Xinhua Printing Co., Ltd., a subsidiary of CNS, has achieved nearly \$11 million in foreign trade sales since 2020, exporting over 13 million books. The company’s overseas business encompasses textbooks, journals, children’s literature, picture books, and craft books, covering diverse areas such as education, children’s literature, humanities, and the arts. These products have been exported to more than 20 countries and regions across six continents.

Notably, over 8 million general textbooks for students in Afghanistan, Ghana, Cameroon, Greece, and Singapore account for more than 60% of the total export volume. Tianwen Printing’s successful delivery of the Afghan textbook project has also earned the company a spot in UNICEF’s supplier directory.

The South Sudan Education Technical Assistance Project, executed by CNS, is China’s first comprehensive educational technical assistance project abroad. CNS established a teaching system, compiled and printed textbooks, trained teachers, and built ICT centers for the recipient country. This project successfully expanded China’s foreign aid from infrastructure and medical services to cultural and educational sectors. It created a mainstream cultural exchange channel between governments and between enterprises and governments, exemplifying China’s efforts to strengthen Sino-African friendship, enhance mutual understanding and trust, and build a community with a shared future for humanity.

“Now, many South Sudanese people know that there is a province called Hunan in China, and that Hunan people have made significant contributions to South Sudan’s education sector. Therefore, Hunan people are special to us, and we have deep feelings for Hunan Province,” said former South Sudan Ambassador John Andruga Duku during the textbook delivery and

project completion ceremony for the South Sudan Education Project. Following the successful completion of the South Sudan project, CNS won the bid for the “Cambodia Education Technical Assistance Project,” which has already been finalized.

CNS plans to leverage its accumulated resources in educational publishing and its extensive experience in foreign assistance projects to offer educational solutions for more partners in “Belt and Road Initiative” countries in the future, aiming to establish long-term platforms for cultural exchange and collaboration.

Building a Network of Friends with Global Publishers

To globalize Chinese culture and enhance the international influence of its titles, CNS actively seeks opportunities for international cultural exchanges and trade, participates in major international book fairs, and hosts cultural events.

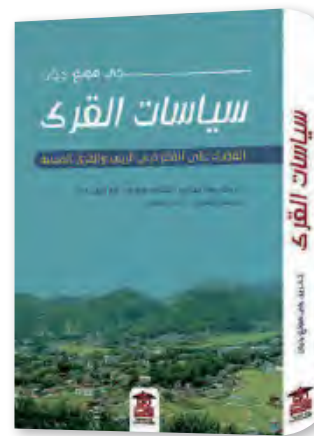
In June 2024, on the second day of the 30th Beijing International Book Fair, Claudia Kaiser, Vice President of the Frankfurt Book Fair, received a warm welcome at the HPI stand. The Frankfurt Book Fair is an “old friend” of HPI and CNS. During the 2023 Frankfurt Book Fair,

CNS attracted global publishers and readers with its beautifully designed Hunan-themed stand and thousands of high-quality Hunan books.

In 2023, CNS partnered with the Bologna Children’s Book Fair to bring the “Eccellenze Italiane”—the world’s

most prestigious and influential competition and exhibition project for original illustrations and picture books—to China, promoting outstanding Chinese creators and works in the international mainstream publishing market. On the first day of the Bologna Children’s Book Fair in April 2024, the two parties jointly hosted the award ceremony for the inaugural edition of Chinese Excellence in Children’s Illustration in the fair’s most prominent main event area. An exhibition showcasing the outstanding works of the award winners and finalists was also held in conjunction with the ceremony.

Today, HPI stands as a flagship enterprise within China’s cultural industry, characterized by strong driving forces, a leading global publishing base with far-reaching influence, and a powerful platform for cultural export. In the future, HPI and CNS will continue to produce quality content, disseminate hope and culture, and further introduce the world to Hunan and China. ■



Expanding International Cultural Exchanges and Sharing a Bright Future for Publishing

✍ By Zhang Chaoyang

Phoenix Publishing & Media Group (PPMG) is a prominent publishing conglomerate with a comprehensive industry chain encompassing publishing, printing, book distribution, and retail. Over 10,000 employees contribute to PPMG's success. In 2023, the group's revenue reached 16.9 billion yuan, with a total profit of 4.8 billion yuan. Its listed publishing subsidiary, Phoenix Publishing & Media Inc. (PPM), achieved a revenue of 13.6 billion yuan and a net profit attributable to its parent company of 2.9 billion yuan, solidifying its position as the top state-owned listed publishing company in China. For sixteen consecutive years, PPMG has been ranked among the "Top 30 Cultural Enterprises in China" and has been listed in the top 10 of the "Global 50 Publishers" for three consecutive years, underscoring its continued industry leadership.

PPMG focuses on its core publishing business, continuously enhancing the innovation of its publishing products and boosting the influence of its brand. The group publishes over 13,000 titles annually (including new and reprinted books). In 2023, Phoenix ranked third in market share by actual sales volume according to the OpenBook database, with over 130 projects

receiving national awards, placing it among the top in China.

In terms of original content production, Phoenix is actively in four major areas: Literature, Academic, Popular Science, and Education. The company has successfully held events such as the Phoenix Authors' Annual Conference and prestigious awards like the Phoenix Literature Award, Phoenix Book Review Award, Cao Wenxuan Children's Literature Award, and the Oriental Kids Picture Book Award, which have significantly promoted the publication of high-quality works. In 2023, 42 original high-quality books each had sales exceeding 100,000 copies, including "Ten Key Concepts of Traditional Chinese Culture", "Fu Lei's Family Letter", "My Heart Belongs to Dunhuang: An Autobiography", and "The Cloud Collector's Handbook".

PPMG's publishing strength and social responsibility are also showcased through major series such as the Jiangsu Library series with a planned 3,000 volumes and 1,265 already published; the "History of Modern Jiangsu Literature" and its companion volume, "Historical Materials

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of Modern Jiangsu Literature", totaling 70 volumes; as well as the "Overseas Chinese Studies" series, the "Humanities and Society" series, the "Very Short Introductions" series, the "Phoenix Branch Literature" series, the "New Icon series, "Chronicles of Chinese Canals", and "Chronicles of the Great Wall of China".

PPMG's outstanding titles for general readers include the eleventh Mao Dun Literature Prize-winning work, "Bomba", with over 200,000 copies sold; Han Dong's poetry collection "Miracle", which enjoys a worldwide reputation; and literary works such as "Hope and Life", "Golden River", and cultural highlights like "My Heart Belongs to Dunhuang: An Autobiography", "Ten Key Concepts

of Traditional Chinese Culture", "Dunhuang Seasonal Festivals", and "Biography of The Grand Canal", each with sales exceeding 500,000 copies. Key products like "Up into the Sky: The Trilogy of China's Astronomy", which reflects the development of China's space industry, and the National Cultural Park series, which systematically showcases the grandeur and features of the Grand Canal, the Great Wall, the Long March, and the Yellow River from the perspectives of archaeology, science, and culture, further demonstrate PPMG's publishing excellence.

Brand strategy is one of the six key strategies of PPMG, aiming to build a world-class publishing media enterprise that aligns with technological

advancements and industry development, focusing on content production and creating a series of brands. This systematically injects new momentum into the overall brand value of Phoenix. During the 2024 Beijing International Book FAir, PPMG planned and organized the Phoenix Brands Day to launch 26 brands covering fields such as humanities, social sciences, world literature, popular science, children's books, and art. This event received a strong industry response and was widely covered by domestic and international media.

In educational publishing, the group has achieved high growth in scale and efficiency, with annual total sales (list price) reaching 6.6 billion yuan. Phoenix textbooks hold the second-largest market share in China, with over 50 million students across 29 provinces using Phoenix educational products. More than 500 education titles each sell over 100,000 copies. Educational support services are a growing part of PPMG's portfolio, with 1,686 titles featuring digital resources like audio, video, and mini-programs.

Platforms like Phoenix Digital Book Club, Phoenix Easy Learning, and Phoenix Vocational Education Cloud have seen enhanced operational capabilities, with over 20 million users and 48 million yuan in revenue. These products matrix boast over 20 million users. Phoenix digital textbooks, totaling 181 titles, generated over 50 million yuan in revenue. Online platform

zxxk.com has 40,000 school users, with a net profit of 83 million yuan. The Phoenix Vocational Education Cloud Platform has been selected as a model project in national publishing integration, and PPMG is listed for the fifth batch of national cultural and technological integration demonstration base. According to the National Bureau of Statistics' report "Statistical Classification of the Digital Economy and Its Core Industries", PPMG achieved a revenue of 16.9 billion yuan in 2023, including 1 billion yuan from digital publishing, 1.3 billion yuan from e-commerce, 270 million yuan from data services, 320 million yuan from digital devices, and 170 million yuan from digital information.

In global publishing, the group actively engages in international markets, collaborating with renowned publishers in over 60 countries and regions, exporting over 450 foreign language copyrights and translating over 400 overseas works. PPMG and its affiliated publishing units have created a series of well-known "Phoenix International Publishing" products based on high-quality original content from Phoenix editions. These books aim to serve global readers and build Phoenix's global brand recognition. Phoenix International Publications, Inc. in Chicago sells over 10 million children's books annually, solidifying its leading position in the interactive book market.

PPMG has made significant strides in global publishing branding. We have collaborated

with renowned overseas academic publishing institutions such as Taylor & Francis, Springer Nature, Cengage Learning, and Brill Academic Publishers to translate and present a selection of high-quality academic publications to global readers, including "A General History of Modern China", "Dictionary of Chinese Cultural Knowledge", "Biography of The Grand Canal", and "A Hope for Philosophy".

The "Readings from Jiangsu" project translates works by Jiangsu writers and scholars into foreign languages and has released 14 books in 22 overseas editions, covering seven languages including English, French, and Spanish. The project targets distribution in 12 countries, including the UK, the US, Canada, France, and Spain. In May 2024, the event "Reading China with Phoenix" was held in France and Hungary. Writers, scholars, and translators from China, France, and Hungary gathered to share their understandings and feelings about Chinese literature and cultural exchanges. The event received positive feedback from international cultural figures and readers and was extensively covered by domestic and international media.

PPMG has established a total of 18 Phoenix Bookshelves overseas. The Phoenix Bookshelf in Chile has been upgraded to a Phoenix Library this year. Positioning books as a medium and culture as a bridge, these initiatives showcase Phoenix's high-quality publications, host reading promotion events, highlight con-

temporary China's development achievements, and disseminate research findings on contemporary China.

PPMG also actively organizes international publishing projects. Bilingual editions of the "World Canal Series" are being published this year, with a book launch event planned during the World Canals Conference 2024 in Poland. The "Beautiful Childhood" project has published works like "The Journey of Fourteen" (Italy), "8 Péterfi Street" (Hungary), and "Māori Boy" (New Zealand), with copyrights being sold to countries like Vietnam, Malaysia, and India. PPMG plans to initiate translation projects for contemporary Italian and Chinese poetry collections and host the China-Italy International Poetry Festival.

PPMG will continue to advance such initiatives, including the "Jiangsu Masters and Masterpieces", "Phoenix Bookshelf", and "International Compilation" projects, aiming to spread Jiangsu stories and Chinese stories to the world on a deeper and broader scale.

PPMG's simplified Chinese editions of foreign titles cover a wide range of subjects, including humanities, social sciences, history, academia, popular science, literature, and children's books, creating significant brands such as the Overseas Chinese Studies series, the Humanities and Society series, Classic Yilin series, the Very Short Introductions series, Yilin SF&F series, Obelisk, and Skyline.

The Overseas Chinese

Studies series aims to help readers “discover China from the outside.” Over its 36-year history, this social sciences and humanities series has published 232 titles. Notable works include “Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China” by renowned American sinologist Dorothy Y. Ko; “Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times” by Philip A. Kuhn; and “The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China” by the distinguished British sinologist Mark Elvin. These works cover various research perspectives—such as women’s history, immigration history, and environmental history—and have received widespread acclaim from both academia and the market, with sales exceeding 20,000 copies for each title.

The Humanities and Society series is a representative collection in the field of humanities and social sciences by Yilin Press. It is considered one of the top ten imported social science series and features works by global academic masters such as Jürgen Habermas, Isaiah Berlin, John Rawls, and Martha Nussbaum. Over 150 titles have been released in this series.

The “Classic Yilin” has published over 140 titles, covering the most important and popular foreign literary classics. Books like “Jane Eyre and The Catcher in the Rye” have each sold over a million copies, making this series a pillar of the reading market.

The Very Short Introductions, imported from Oxford

University Press, covers a wide range of knowledge in social and natural sciences. Authored by renowned scholars from foreign universities or research institutions, the series has published 138 titles in China by Yilin, with each title selling around 20,000 copies, establishing it as a leading general education series.

The Yilin SF&F series focuses on global sci-fi and fantasy classics. Titles such as “The Martian” and “Story of Your Life and Others” have sold over 250,000 copies each, with many others exceeding 100,000 copies. The upcoming graphic novel of “The Three-Body Problem” has already garnered attention from both domestic and international media.

The Obelisk series is Yilin Press’ historical book brand, featuring selected works on regional, national, military, urban, and cultural history. Major works include “The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich and Paris: Biography of a City”. The series pioneered special edition books, with “The Persians: Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Iran” setting industry records in special edition sales.

The Skyline series focuses on natural science and popular science books. It includes classic and insightful new works across astronomy, geography, biology, and meteorology. The series has published 22 books, including the popular “The Cloud Collector’s Handbook”, which has sold over 500,000 copies and won multiple national and provincial awards.

The Little Sapling translated

series introduced by Phoenix Juvenile and Children’s Publishing House, selects outstanding picture books from children’s publishers around the world. Since 2016, the series has published 31 titles, with a cumulative print run of 1.3 million copies and a total retail value of 45.5 million yuan, sharing heartwarming stories with young readers in China.

During this year’s Frankfurt Book Fair, PPMG will host several events, the two most prominent of which are:

Strategic Framework Agreement of Cooperation for China-Germany Translation Program:

The Sino-German Bi-directional Translation Workshop, held in Nanjing last September, was a collaborative event organized by the Chinese Writers’ Association and the German Translation Foundation, with the support of Yilin Press and the co-sponsorship of the German Studies Center at Peking University. The workshop facilitated the exchange of translation practices between China and Germany. At the Frankfurt Book Fair, Yilin Press plans to revisit the German Translation Foundation. They intend to finalize the cooperation details of the “Sino-German Translation Program” for the next decade and to sign a strategic framework cooperation agreement.

Promotion of International Rights to the Graphic Novel of “The Three-Body Problem”:

The popular sci-fi book “The Three-Body Problem” by Liu Cixin is being adapted into a six-

volume graphic novel. This new work, in the style of “Chinese comics,” preserves the essence of the original work and offers a new way to experience the story, following its adaptation into film and television. As the international rights holder of the graphic novel, Yilin Press will hold an international rights promotion event during the Frankfurt Book Fair, primarily to introduce the background, progress, and other aspects of the project. The goal is to further expand the international awareness of the “The Three-Body Problem” brand and to support future multi-language copyright cooperation.

In addition, PPMG will host several other activities, including “The Taste of Chinese Plants” to recommend Chinese tea culture; and the launch event for the Arabic version of the “Bobo and Dot” series of picture books for 3-6 year-olds. Through a variety of on-site activities, as well as appointments with renowned overseas publishing groups and copyright agencies, PPMG is actively promoting copyright trade exchanges and mutual cultural understanding.

Overall, PPMG attaches great importance to this year’s Frankfurt Book Fair. We will leverage both domestic and international resources to deepen cooperation and exchange, explore new international communication pathways, and work hand in hand with international publishing peers to expand international cultural exchanges and create a bright future for publishing. ■