

Extract THE CHINESE BOOK MARKET (2015)

Part 1: Publishing landscape

Merger of regulatory authorities

The highest institution in the Chinese publishing sector is the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of China (SAPPRFT) in Beijing, which answers to the State Council. In March 2013, the state administration for press and publication (GAPP) and the state administration for radio, film and television (SARFT) were merged to form a single media regulatory body. This is one element of the institutional reform and change of role of the State Council that is meant to deepen the reform of cultural institutions and optimise their resources. Some experts are of the opinion that merger was completed in order to offer incentives for the formation of larger, more powerful crossmedia groups.

On provincial and prefectural levels, the SAPPRFT is represented by local branches that all follow the same internal structure. The main tasks of the SAPPRFT in the field of publishing include, for example, developing a general plan for the national publishing sector, enacting ordinances, supervising and assisting the implementation of these regulations, consideration and authorisation of applications for founding new publishing houses and printing and distribution companies, as well as surveillance of imports and exports. Like other media sectors, the publishing industry is also under the direct control of the the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China.

Segmented publishing landscape

The Chinese book market has seen great changes over the last 20 years. Compared to the 1980s and 1990s, the Chinese book market is much more open today. Nevertheless, the publishing industry remains one of the most state-controlled industries in China. The publishing landscape consists of two types of publishing houses: state-run and so-called privately run publishers.

China is currently home to 582 official publishers, all of which are state-run. The number of official publishers has basically remained consistent, as the founding of new publishing houses is bound to an extremely strict application procedure with the relevant head office, SAPPRFT (State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of China). The centre of publishing is Beijing. More than 40% of Chinese publishers are located in the capital, with Shanghai ranking second – falling far behind Beijing with only around 7%.

Content THE CHINESE BOOK MARKET (2015)

Part 1: Publishing landscape

Merger of regulatory authorities
Segmented publishing landscape
Transformation process
Publisher ranking 2014
Categories

Part 2: Book trade and digitisation

Book trade
Online bookstores
Digital Reading: E-Books and Online-Literature

Part 3: Book fairs, licensing trade, import & export

Licensing between Germany and China
Problems with Chinese business partners
Copyright
Import & Export

The goal of this report is to offer an overview of Mainland China's book market with German-speaking readers in mind. Our report is based on information available to the public, our own research, observations and in-depth exchange with industry representatives.

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