

Frankfurt Book Fair 2016: why people come

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/frankfurt-book-fair-2016-why-people-come/>

This entry is part 1 of 2 in the series [Frankfurt Book Fair 2016](#)

[Frankfurt Book Fair 2016](#)

- Frankfurt Book Fair 2016: why people come
- [A Talk with Red Door Publishing: what I discovered 2016 Buchmesse](#)

I've just experienced the [Frankfurter Buchmesse](#) 2016 (a.k.a. the Frankfurt Book Fair) for what marks my fourth year going as a writer (over a span of maybe 12 years or so). This year was amazing, as it always is – but it was also different from previous years. I'd like to share these observations and impressions with you, in this first of many articles about the 2016 book fair.

What you can expect from the largest international book fair in the world is a ton of books, a ton of people and an overall buzz that will blow your mind.

One section of the Frankfurt Book Fair, where antiquarian books are showcased.

As ever, the energy at the Frankfurt Buchmesse is palpable. This is a serious business event, make no mistake.

The book fair in Frankfurt comprises of four massive (read: airport terminal sized) buildings, which are divided into “Halls,” or floors of buildings. These buildings surround an expansive courtyard called the Agora, which has a couple of stages and many food and drink stands.

What You'll Get Here:

- Frankfurt Book Fair Stats
- Run-down of what you'll find where at the fair
- Why people come to the Frankfurt Book Fair

So who comes to this shindig? Here are the Stats.

Over 7,100 publishers have stands at the fair. Over 800 agents come to the fair, to sell manuscripts. Over

170,000 [UPDATE: Just got official word that the number this year was 277,000.] people from 132 countries come to experience this and be part of it. And for myself? I'm one of the 12,400 accredited journalists and bloggers (1,400) who gets to cover the Frankfurter Buchmesse. Happily!

But why do all these people come? It's a question I asked in every interview. You may be surprised at the answer.

It's like Disney World because...

It isn't really possible to experience the entire fair, not in the three days that are closed to the general public (what publishers call "the serious days," I've noticed). That's just Wednesday through Friday, a real hammer-heavy three days. Then on Saturday and Sunday the fair is open to the public - and that's when it's a real madhouse.

(Most agents leave for home on Friday, as do The Bosses of the larger publishing houses.)

So Many Events

There are always events that are scheduled not just back-to-back, but in various locations – so there are always at least 3 events you'll have to miss by attending your first pick. *Over the full 5-day event, about 150 speakers from 16 countries have presentations.*

I wasn't able to see all the Halls this year. I had to prioritize, so I missed some good stuff. You might be able to quickly cruise through all the buildings, just to say you saw it all, but you'll miss a lot of great things if you go that route.

It's really best to take your time. Have a Plan A, and go from there. Be prepared to be somewhat flexible, though. You never know who you'll bump into.

To give you an idea of what this book fair is like, here's a quick rundown of what is happening where.

Hall 3.Via

This isn't really a formal Hall, so much as a special gallery branching off the foyer that leads to a main Hall. It's the **Calendar Gallery**, and it's in the same spot every year. Just fun.

Hall 3.0 (the ground floor of Building #3)

All about self publishing. This is where several self published authors present their work – sometimes in booths or at the open mic stage, where self published authors are invited to read a chapter from their book.

This is also where various POD companies show how their services best serve the self published author.

The Illustrators Corner. This is where illustrators can show their portfolios to publishers. Anyone can show. If you're a German illustrator, you can also get a helpful review and consultation of your art portfolio, to help focus your career.

This is where you find a massive section for **Comics**. Graphic novels are here too, but not exclusively.

The Children's Book Centre is actually a café with a small stage. It's where (primarily German-language) publishers chat more casually and where you can meet authors. This isn't the only place for Children's books – definitely not!

Halls 6.0, 6.1 and 6.2 are all holding children's books and art books – keep reading.

Hall 3.1

Primarily German book publishers and booksellers, though there's enough of a mix so that it's interesting to everyone. Very busy place with lots of happy energy.

This isn't just about books, though. It's about all the stuff that goes with books, too. Games, fancy paper gifts – all the lovely and funny gift items you generally find in a bookshop. They're presented here for booksellers to consider and sample.

The Gourmet Gallery.

Oh yes. This is where a ton of cookbooks are sold, and at several stands you'll be treated to a live cooking demonstration – and you get to sample the goods. It's a lot of fun, though honestly I didn't have time to sample anything. I really don't know how many kitchens there were, each one with a cooking show. Food was everywhere.

You'll also find **Religion** and **Tourism** showcased as genre-specific sections of the fair (on this floor). Typically, publishers of Cooking, Religion and Tourism books are highly specialized to those topics, so it makes sense to provide a genre-specific space for each of them.

Hall 4.0

This hall is all about the international publishing and printing market. This is where publishers go to get the latest news on new markets to explore and new business models to try.

Interestingly, I found that digital publishing and traditional print publishing are becoming more reliant and intertwined. They're not creating a chasm, as so many have imagined would happen. Just the opposite. (I'll be writing more about this in the coming weeks.)

There's also a **Production in Publication** stage and **Business Club** stage, for presentations and interviews.

Business Club is exclusive and requires an additional €500 ticket along with your application. I was

actually allowed access for one presentation in particular, one I was especially keen to hear. (I'll be writing all about that in the next couple of weeks.)

Hall 4.1

This particular Hall is a mishmash of bookish interests. It's a wild mixture, and very interesting.

The Reading Zone is a stage where indie publishers can showcase their most important publications. Both newcomers and famous writers read from their books here, followed sometimes by a Q&A.

Various printing companies from around the world present in gallery-fashion their abilities. These aren't POD printers, but traditional printers. (POD Printers are in Hall 3.0.)

In interviewing several printing companies this year, I discovered an interesting new trend. The minimum print run used to be 5,000. It's now down to 1,000. That's a huge change. (I'll be writing more about this in the next weeks.)

Antiquarian Books are actually here as well, and it's amazing. These are the hand-painted, hand-bound ancient books. It's unbelievable that these aren't in a museum. You go and just drool.

Hall 4.2

Hall 4.2 is primarily for library and information sciences, and from German-speaking countries. This isn't for everyone, but for students and professionals in the field, this is a key meeting place.

The Hall also houses academic publishers. It's very important for networking and establishing business relationships in the academic field.

Hall 5.0

On this floor you'll find publishers of fiction and nonfiction from these countries:

- Africa
- Belgium (Flanders)
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Turkey
- Northern Europe

Hall 5.1

Here you'll find publishers of fiction and nonfiction, *with a focus on Children's Books*, from these countries:

- Arabian World
- France
- Greece
- Canada
- Latin America
- Portugal
- Spain
- Switzerland

Hall 6.0, 6.1 and 6.2

Focus: Children's Books and Art Books

The books are in English, and represented by countries like England, America, India, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and Israel. These three floors are my primary home during the fair, though I do make an effort to experience more.

I've got a ton of great stuff to share about this place.

Hall 6.3

This is the top-secret floor where all the Literary Agents and Arts Agents hide behind a tall wall guarded by big men. In front of that is **The Agent's Café**, where you can hang out and eavesdrop.

I warn you though: the agents don't talk about interesting stuff in the café. They're mostly editing, reading or online chatting - or doing something else really quiet.

It's actually the most boring spot in the whole fair, actually – because it's the one place where no one will chat with you during their break. The Buchmesse is an incredibly demanding and stressful event for agents.

Forum 0

Where televised interviews and panels are held.

Forum 1

Forum 1 is where the guest country has special presentations and interviews. This year's (2016) guest of honor is Flanders and the Netherlands.

Agora

The fair's outside courtyard is enormous. There is a water fountain big enough to have two pedestrian bridges, so you can cross over it. I really love that, because you exit the hectic bustle of the inside fair to

come out and be greeted by water and fresh air and trees. It's very calming and refreshing.

After having talked to many publishers this year, it's clear to me that *many* of the people working booths don't ever get to see the courtyard. They're just too busy! So I feel really lucky that I am able to take my long lunch break outside in the cold Autumn air.

As it happens, I was never alone out there for very long. There was always someone I could talk to about their book fair experience, which was always interesting. In fact, this is where I learned that many *publishers* attend the fair without a booth – that like me, they move around from place to place.

Over All

In all of these locations, including the Agora courtyard, there are many interviews, Q&A panels and special presentations. There are even a couple of music concerts every day. I don't exaggerate a bit here when I say it's amazing.

The sheer scale of this book fair is astounding to me. That it's so well organized is just very impressive.

Why So Many Come

In asking many people what they love most about the fair, I always got the same answer, incredibly. I spoke with printers, editors, hostesses, salesmen, accountants, art directors and publishers - which are all drastically different types of people.

They all said something like this: "I love being able to reconnect with old friends and being able to meet newcomers."

That says a lot to me. The purpose of the Frankfurt Book Fair, no matter what your role in the publishing world, is to connect with people. I'll be writing up all sorts of great stuff for you about the Buchmesse and what I learned there – just check here for the latest.

What about you?

Did you go to the book fair this year? What was your impression? Write below, let me know –or, as ever, send me an email. You know I love getting those.

Keep creating, no matter what.

This entry is part of the series

[Frankfurt Book Fair 2016](#)

Be sure to check out the other posts:

[A Talk with Red Door Publishing: what I discovered 2016 Buchmesse >>](#)

Frankfurt Book Fair 2016: why people come

by Chazda Albright - GreatStorybook.com - <http://greatstorybook.com>
