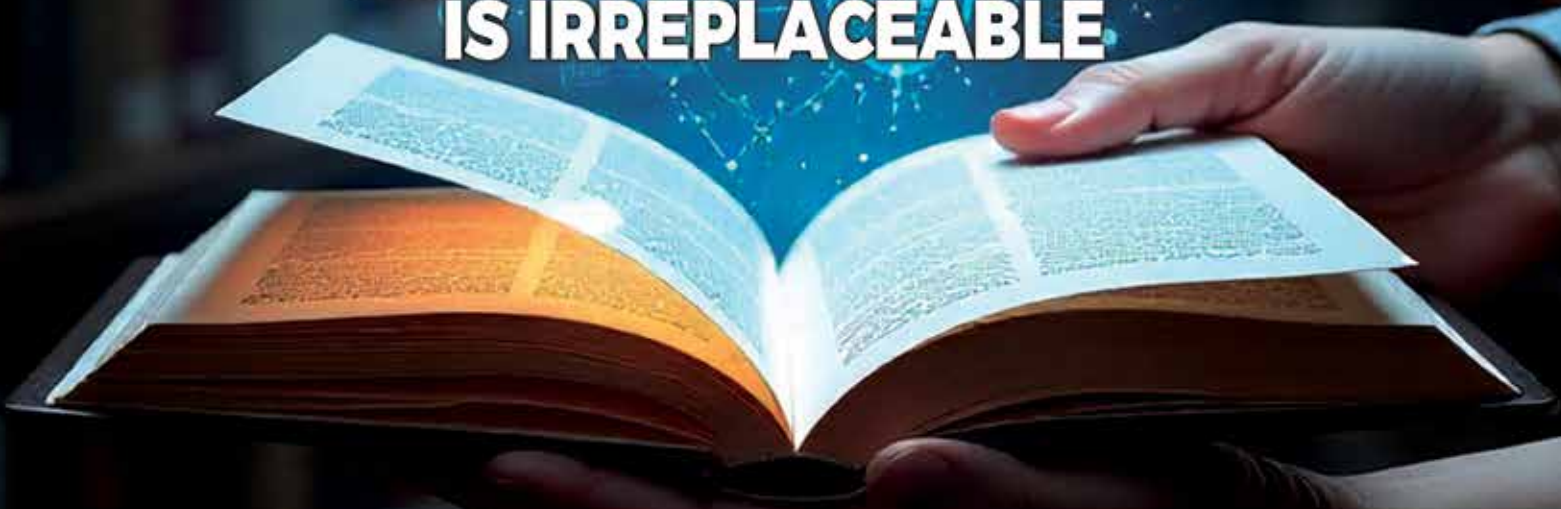


ALL ABOUT **Book Publishing**

AUTHENTIC VOICE ON PUBLISHING IN INDIA



AI IS REWRITING PUBLISHING BUT THE HUMAN TOUCH IS IRREPLACEABLE



**REIMAGINING SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING
THROUGH AI, TECHNOLOGY, AND
GLOBAL COLLABORATION**

PAGE 10

**TRACING WORDS ACROSS CIVILISATIONS:
THE MAKING OF A COMPARATIVE
TAMIL-INDO-EUROPEAN ETYMOLOGICAL
DICTIONARY**

PAGE 18

**INTERNATIONAL BOOK
MARKET 2025 SHOWS INDIA
IS A HIGH-GROWTH MARKET**

PAGE 27

No.1 Printing & Packaging International Exhibition

Where Innovation Takes Flight



17th PRINTPACK INDIA[®]

30 SAT **31** SUN **01** MON **02** TUE **03** WED

JAN - FEB 2027

India Expo Centre, Greater Noida, Delhi-NCR

IPAMA Associated with

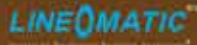


Sponsors

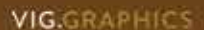
Silver Sponsor



Bronze Sponsor



Lanyard Sponsor



Organiser



Indian Printing Packaging & Allied Machinery Manufacturers' Association

Plot No. C-54, Sector-62, Institutional Area,

Noida (Delhi-NCR) 201307, INDIA, Ph: +91-120-4207076

Email: info@ipama.org, marketing@ipama.org, admin@ipama.org

Website: www.printpackipama.com, www.ipama.org

For exhibitor registration, please contact:

Vikram Sharma: +91 97171 99388

Meetika Srivastava: +91 97171 99385

Follow us:



- 03 EDITORIAL
AI is rewriting publishing but the human touch is irreplaceable
- 04 PUBLISHING NEWS
- 10 COVER STORY
Reimagining scholarly publishing through AI, technology, and global collaboration
- 13 Turning the tide on book piracy with technology
- 14 Artificial Intelligence: the new chapter in publishing
- 16 CHILDREN'S PUBLISHING
From print to digital: balancing technology with storytelling
- 18 FACE-TO-FACE
Tracing Words Across Civilisations: The Making of a Comparative Tamil-Indo-European Etymological Dictionary
- 20 BOOK FAIR IN FOCUS
Chennai International Book Fair 2026: A conversation between civilisations
- 23 New Delhi World Book Fair 2026 attract two million footfalls in nine days
- 24 OPINION
Why ancient Indian stories still matter for children today?
- 24 BOOK IN FOCUS
Between Tehran And Tel Aviv: Gaza's Story of Unending War
- 25 AWARDS IN FOCUS
Annual Bestseller Awards recognize bestselling authors
- 26 Women Book Awards 2026: A Spotlight on Publishing, Representation and Cultural Impact
- 27 RESEARCH & DATA
International Book Market 2025 shows India is a high-growth market
- 28 EVENT IN FOCUS
BolognaBookPlus 2026: a vibrant market place and think tank
- 30 Stories, cultures and connections @ Sharjah Festival of African Literature 2026

AI IS REWRITING PUBLISHING BUT THE HUMAN TOUCH IS IRREPLACEABLE



Publishing has always been shaped by technology but Artificial Intelligence has made inroads into our workflow as well. It doesn't just change how books move, it changes how they are made. From the first draft to the final recommendation engine, AI is now embedded in every stage of the chain. The question before us is no longer whether AI will transform this industry, the question is whether we will shape it or be shaped by it.

As Sahil Gupta, Director-Founder of V&S Publishers, puts it in his perspective this issue: "This one is not solely about speed or distribution; it is about intelligence itself entering our workflows, offering both tremendous promise and serious responsibility."

In scholarly publishing, CACTUS Communications CEO Akhilesh Ayer offers a model for responsible AI deployment, where machine intelligence shoulders repetitive tasks while human experts retain final authority. Their AI-powered screening has cut desk rejections by nearly 70% and earned the company the ISO/IEC 42001:2023 certification for AI governance.

Meanwhile, publishing consultant Fatimah Abbas has turned AI toward piracy detection, building a book-first monitoring tool that gives publishers early visibility over unauthorised sharing, including in regional languages that global platforms routinely miss. "Technology becomes a threat only when we treat it as an enemy. When we approach it as a collaborator, it actually strengthens our work," she says.

Even as algorithms reshape discovery, readers are still showing up in extraordinary numbers at various book events held across the country. This year, New Delhi World Book Fair 2026 at Bharat Mandapam drew over two million visitors, with Qatar as Guest of Honour and more than 1,000 publishers from 35 countries. Chennai International Book Fair 2026 in Chennai attracted publishers from 102 countries, generating over 3,000 MoUs and cementing India's place as a global rights hub. Another stellar event was the Jaipur Literature Festival 2026 which brought the literary world to Jaipur across five electric January days, with voices spanning literature, geopolitics, digital futures, and culture while the Jaipur BookMark conclave kept the publishing trade firmly in conversation.

Across the Arabian Sea, the Sharjah Festival of African Literature 2026 drew 11,108 visitors under its "The African Way" theme, weaving together 20 African writers, 9 Emirati authors, poetry, culinary sessions, and the Lifetime Achievement Award for Tsitsi Dangarembga. While London Book Fair 2026 at Olympia London put AI and copyright squarely on the main stage, with India among the strongest international delegations. The next literary destination is the upcoming BolognaBookPlus and the 63rd Bologna Children Book Fair, which is set to bring together 1,500 exhibitors from 90 countries, with Norway as Guest of Honour, reminding us that children's literature is also thriving in this digital age.

AI will continue to write faster, translate wider, screen smarter, and market sharper. But, the human touch is irreplaceable. The onus is on the publishing industry to use every tool at our disposal to put more books in the right hands.

Shweta

shweta@allaboutbookpublishing.com



ALL ABOUT Book Publishing

Authentic voices on publishing in India

Vol 17 Issue 01 March / April 2026 RNI : DELENG/2010/34106

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Rs. 500/- for one year (6 issues)

Editorial & Publishers Office: 406, Sant Nagar, East of Kailash, New Delhi-110065, INDIA, Ph: (91) 011-26232482, 35620043, 9313480469
www.allaboutbookpublishing.com

Managing Editor : Shweta Khurana
Associate Editor : Varsha Verma

MARKETING & SALES

Sonal Khurana (09810297693)
VN Kutty (09313480469)
Karan Kumar (07217727052)



Published & Printed by SK Khurana on behalf of S-Media Group, Printed at Pearl Printers, C-105, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-1, New Delhi - 110020. Published at 406, Sant Nagar, East of Kailash, New Delhi - 110065. Editor: SK Khurana

We stand indemnified against any claims arising directly or indirectly from the publication or non-publication of an advertisement. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the prior permission of the publisher. All trademarks and trade names mentioned in this magazine belong to their respective owners.

AABP does not take the responsibility for returning unsolicited publication material. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent courts and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Opinions expressed in the articles are of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or publishers. While the editors do their utmost to verify information published, they do not accept responsibility for its absolute accuracy.

WORRIED FOR A BOOK PUBLISHING DEADLINE?



10 Hard-Bound books of 20 Titles
to be delivered within next 24 Hours to the client.

WE HAVE THE SOLUTION

We specialise in Print on Demand through
PUR Hard-Bound books with Jackets, printed on latest and
India's first Océ VarioPrint 6160 Digital Press
with accurate front and back precision printing.

Security of Intellectual Property

Safe Guard Against Duplication / Piracy

Guaranteed Delivery on Time

We can start even from one copy in fact.
Our Technology is the Differentiator



Delivered on Time



avontika
PRINTERS PRIVATE LIMITED

Shed No. 38, DSIDC, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-I, New Delhi-110020
www.avontika.in, www.mnpandey.com

M N Pandey: +91 98110 89829
Himanshu Pandey: +91 98739 34560 | Krishan Pandey: +91 99102 59659

PUBLISHER PARTNERS WITH EDITRIX FOR AI-POWERED EDITORIAL EDUCATION

PublisHer has announced a strategic partnership with Editrix, an AI-powered editorial platform that uniquely blends advanced artificial intelligence with professional editorial practice to support developmental editing, structural guidance, and manuscript refinement for authors, publishers, and content creators.



The partnership will deliver direct, practical benefits to PublisHer members, expanding access to high-quality educational resources, expert-led training and preferential tools that support smart, efficient editorial workflows. The collaboration will bring members exclusive learning opportunities focused on how AI can be applied responsibly to enhance editorial quality, strengthen decision-making and protect authorial voice.

Under the partnership, Editrix will provide a suite of members-only educational resources, including pre-recorded webinars, live training sessions, and curated learning materials hosted on PublisHer's digital platforms.

"We created this partnership because we're committed to equipping our members with knowledge and tools they need to shape the future of publishing," said PublisHer Founder Bodour Al Qasimi. "By partnering with Editrix, we're enabling publishers to engage critically and constructively with AI as a tool to strengthen their editorial expertise."

Meru Gokhale, Founder and CEO of Editrix, said, "Partnering with PublisHer allows us to share our expertise with a global community that is committed to education, dialogue, and responsible innovation."

THE 2026 ILLUSTRATORS EXHIBITION @ BCBF



A total of 20,840 illustrations have been submitted by 4,168 illustrators from 96 countries and regions around the world for the 2026 edition of the Illustrators Exhibition, the most celebrated initiative at the Bologna Children's Book Fair (BCBF), which this year celebrates its 60th anniversary.

After meeting online to select the 317 finalists, the jury met in person in Bologna to choose 75 sets of illustrations by 75 artists from 31 countries and regions around the world. Among the most represented countries, feature: 9 illustrators from South Korea, 7 from Japan, 6 from Italy, 6 from Taipei, 5 from France and from China, and 4 from Brazil.

There are also numerous opportunities to support younger participants: the Bologna Children's Book Fair – Fundación SM International Illustration Award and the ARS IN FABULA – Grant Award, organised by Ars in Fabula - School of Illustration, are specifically for illustrators aged under 35 and under 30 respectively.

Finally, there will be further opportunities for the finalists: during the fair, they will enjoy priority access and a guaranteed place for a portfolio review as part of the Illustrators Survival Corner activities, while one of them will be selected to create the 2027 visual identity of the Bologna Children's Book Fair, under the guidance of the Chialab design studio.

PUBLISHER AND THE IFFRO ANNOUNCE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

On International Women's Day 2026, PublisHer announced a strategic partnership with the International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organizations (IFRRO) to strengthen knowledge, rights awareness and professional development opportunities for women in publishing worldwide.

Bodour Al Qasimi, Founder of PublisHer, said, "Our partnership with IFRRO, aptly formalized on International Women's Day, is our renewed commitment to ensuring women publishers around the world have access to the expertise, mentorship and practical tools they need to flourish in the rights-based global marketplace."

Anita Huss-Ekerhult, CEO and Secretary General of IFRRO said, "Together, we can help ensure that women in publishing have the support, recognition, and space they need to thrive."

The partnership affords PublisHer members access to IFRRO's expertise in reproduction rights, collective management and copyright frameworks. The agreement includes a series of in-kind services and high-level engagements to build practical skills and strategic acumen.

In addition, IFRRO leadership will enjoy VIP access to select PublisHer events, fostering closer collaboration and sustained exchange between rights organizations and female publishing leaders.

BEAT TECHNOLOGY PARTNERS WITH LEYA

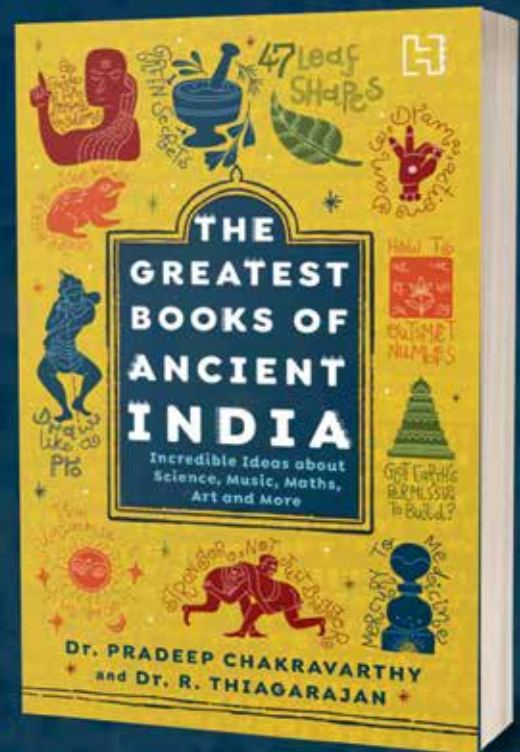
Beat Technology has partnered with LeYa, the leading Portuguese publishing house behind authors such as António Lobo Antunes, Lídia Jorge and Mia Couto. The cooperation will see Beat design, build and power a reading app for titles purchased from Lyvros, LeYa's new ecommerce site meaning LeYa readers can remain in the publisher's own ecosystem and receive communications and recommendations directly from the publishers.

"LeYa is the most respected and successful publishing house in Portugal with such a rich literary history," says Nathan Hull, Chief Strategy Officer at Beat Technology. "To be operational in Portugal with the fantastic LeYa team is a privilege. It has been in the works for while and we are thrilled to compliment their new lyvros.com platform."

"Lyvros was born from the desire to bring together all LeYa books and all readers," explains Ana Rita Bessa, CEO of the company, about a process that took a year to implement. "We believe that every reader will find a book made for them within LeYa's catalogue, which they can purchase here in print, ebook or audiobook format. Lyvros is therefore the digital showcase of our commitment to reading."



A one-of-a-kind book exploring India's greatest Sanskrit texts by healers, architects, and thinkers whose discoveries still matter.



SHORTLIST FOR THE PUBLISHER EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2026 RELEASED

PublisHer has unveiled the shortlisted candidates for the PublisHer Excellence Awards 2026, which drew 102 nominations spanning 34 nationalities, reflecting the diversity and international influence of women shaping the publishing ecosystem today.

Shortlist for Lifetime Achievement Award include Ana María Cabanellas, President and Publisher, Grupo Claridad(Argentina); Orietta Fatucci, Publisher and CEO, Edizioni EL (Italy); and María Esperanza Espinosa Barragán

(Peggy Espinosa), Director and Publisher, Petra Ediciones (Mexico). While, shortlist for Innovation Award include Monique Leite, Founder and Director, PlenaVoz(Brazil); Adibah Binti Omar CEO, Perbadanan Kota Buku Malaysia (Malaysia); and Kinga Jentetics, CEO and Co-founder, PublishDrive (USA).

Shortlist for Emerging Leader Award include Ana María Bermúdez, Penguin Random House (Mexico); Tara Khandelwal, Founder and Managing Director, Bound (India) and Ovueroghene Shalom Shaba, Managing Editor, Krafted (Nigeria).

The winners of the PublisHer Excellence Awards 2026 will be officially announced in April 2026 at the Bologna Children’s Book Fair.

PublisHer Founder, Sheikha Bodour Al Oasimi, said, “This year’s shortlist reflects the staggering breadth of women’s leadership in publishing, from infrastructure reform and technological innovation to cultural preservation and emerging entrepreneurial vision.”

THIEME LAUNCHES NEW OPEN ACCESS JOURNAL THERAPEUTICS NOW

Thieme is expanding its open access portfolio to promote evidence-based therapeutic development. *Therapeutics NOW* will publish significant work in fields such as gene therapy, immunotherapy, drug discovery, targeted delivery systems, and personalized medicine. The journal connects experts from academia, industry, and clinical practice worldwide, aiming to rapidly incorporate evidence-based research findings into patient care. Authors benefit from fast, professional and efficient peer review processes to publish and disseminate their research open access.

Therapeutics NOW brings together researchers from chemistry, biology, engineering, clinical science, and policy. This interdisciplinary scope reflects the complexity of modern healthcare and supports a systems-level understanding of therapeutic innovation. Each published article features a Research Significance Highlight, which enables readers to quickly assess its translational relevance.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Ana María Cabanellas

Orietta Fatucci

María Esperanza Espinosa Barragán

EMERGING LEADER AWARD



Ana María Bermúdez

Tara Khandelwal

Ovueroghene Shalom Shaba

INNOVATION AWARD



Monique Leite

Adibah Binti Omar

Kinga Jentetics

ROMANIA TO BE GUEST OF HONOUR AT FRANKFURTER BUCHMESSE 2028

Romania will present its literature and culture as the guest country of the 80th Frankfurter Buchmesse 2028 (11-15 October 2028). Romania’s Minister of Culture András Demeter and Frankfurter Buchmesse’s Director Juergen Boos signed the official Guest of Honour agreement in Bucharest.

Juergen Boos, Director of Frankfurter Buchmesse, said, “Romanian literature has long been present in Europe thanks to its strong contemporary literary voices. Authors such as Mircea Cărtărescu and Gabriela Adameşteanu are being read worldwide and their works have been translated into numerous languages. Their books tell of a country that has undergone political upheaval, censorship and new beginnings. We are looking forward to seeing the diversity of the country’s multilingual literary landscape in Frankfurt.”

András Demeter, Romania’s Minister of Culture, said, “We intend to approach this participation with care, professionalism and long-term vision, revealing the depth and vitality of Romania’s cultural landscape today.”

In addition to presenting Romanian literature in Frankfurt, it is being planned that further cultural sectors, such as film for instance, will be highlighted as part of the Guest of Honour presentation in 2028.

US HISTORIAN JILL LEPORE TO SPEAK AT THE OPENING PRESS CONFERENCE

US historian and author Jill Lepore will speak at the Opening Press Conference of Frankfurter Buchmesse (October 7–11, 2026). Lepore is one of the most influential voices in American historiography. In her books and essays, she examines the history of American democracy – its promises as well as its failures.



The year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the American Declaration of Independence. To mark the occasion, Lepore has published her latest book “*We the People: A History of the U.S. Constitution*”, which is due to be published in German on 2 April. In it, she traces the origins and development of the American constitutional idea: from the early debates on freedom and equality to today’s debates on democracy and civil rights.

Frankfurter Buchmesse’s Opening Press Conference will take place on Tuesday, 6 October 2026 in Frankfurt.

SHORTLIST FOR THE 2026 IPA INNOVATION IN PUBLISHING AWARD ANNOUNCED

The 2026 IPA Innovation in Publishing Award shortlist nominees are: Abecedario Inclusivo, Ailaysa Technologies, APA: Australia Reads, Shimmr and Supadu Smart Buy Buttons. The five-strong shortlist includes innovations in reading promotion, discovery, marketing and literacy with the winner to be announced at the 35th International Publishers Congress in July 2026.

IPA President, Gvantsa Jobava said, “There were many great nominations for this 3rd IPA Innovation in Publishing Prize. Innovation is happening at so many different levels in publishing and it is great to be able to celebrate some of them through this short list”.

BRITISH ACADEMY BOOK PRIZE CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS



The British Academy Book Prize opens for submissions as the British Academy — the UK's national academy for the humanities and social sciences — announces plans to align the prize more closely with its mission to promote public understanding of our complex world. This year will see the introduction of a First Readers Panel whose knowledge and experience of engaging the public in the humanities and social sciences complements the existing judging panel.

The £25,000 Prize recognises outstanding books in the fields of the humanities and social sciences that combine original thinking, high-quality research and exceptional storytelling. As the British Academy looks ahead to its 125th anniversary in 2027, the Prize will place renewed emphasis on engaging wider audiences with subjects that are essential to understanding humanity and can change how we see today's world.

The winner in 2025 was Sunil Amrith for *The Burning Earth: An Environmental History of the Last 500 Years*.

The winner of British Academy Book Prize will next be awarded in March 2027 and a shortlist of up to six books will be announced in January. Submissions are open from 18 March. The deadline for submissions is 30 April 2026.

YILIN PRESS AND MLBD ANNOUNCE HINDI EDITION OF 'JADE IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY'

At the 2026 London Book Fair, a significant cultural bridge was built between two of the world's oldest civilizations. Yilin Press, a subsidiary of the Phoenix Publishing & Media Group (PPMG) and a leading Chinese publisher, officially signed a rights agreement with India's legendary Motilal Banarsidass (MLBD) for the Hindi language edition of the acclaimed work, *Jade in the Forbidden City: Chinese Jade in National Treasures*.

The work explores the 5,000-year history of Chinese jade, from the Neolithic Age to the Qing Dynasty. This aligns with MLBD's century-long expertise in Indology and cultural heritage.

Zhang Li, Director of the New Knowledge and Culture Publishing Center at Yilin Press, noted, "We hope this book serves as a bond, allowing the jade culture of the Forbidden City to resonate with the rich cultural heritage of India, exemplified by the Taj Mahal. It is about letting readers in both nations feel the beauty of civilization through mutual learning."

Varun Jain, Publisher at MLBD, expressed high regard for the collaboration, "MLBD has spent over a century disseminating the wisdom of ancient civilizations. The craftsmanship and spirit of research in *Jade in the Forbidden City* resonate deeply with our publishing philosophy. We believe the Hindi edition will become a wonderful link for Indian readers to understand the profound heritage of Chinese culture."



JOACHIM KAUFMANN TO SUCCEED JUERGEN BOOS @ FRANKFURTER BUCHMESSE



Internationally experienced publishing executive Joachim Kaufmann will become President and CEO of Frankfurter Buchmesse in autumn 2026. He will succeed Juergen Boos, who has led the organisation successfully for more than 20 years and has played a decisive role in shaping the fair as the world's meeting place for the global book and media industry. Following the conclusion of this year's Frankfurter Buchmesse in October, Juergen Boos will retire. As long-standing CEO of Carlsen Verlag (Bonnier Group), Kaufmann was responsible, among other things, for Bonnier's expansion into new markets and for establishing the book business in Poland and China.

Commenting on his forthcoming role, Joachim Kaufmann said, "After 20 amazing years at Carlsen and the Bonnier Group, I am very much looking forward to starting an entirely new chapter in my professional life and continuing the extremely successful work of Juergen Boos. I can hardly wait to work with a great team to further develop the world's most important book fair. In its role as the leading international event for the global book industry, it must remain the central venue for both rights trading and personal exchanges for the entire book world, and constantly adapt to the needs of its customers."

While, Juergen Boos added, "I am very pleased that Joachim Kaufmann has been chosen as my successor. I have known and valued Joachim for many years of working together for the international book industry and for freedom of expression. Few leaders in our world of books are as capable as he is of inspiring people with his ideas and convictions. He and the strong culture of collaboration within the Frankfurter Buchmesse team are an ideal match."

PRAKASH BOOKS

JOIN OUR TEAM

We're looking for designers, marketers, editors & creators.

Open Positions

1. Graphic Designer (2)
2. Marketing Assistant (1)
3. SEO Content Writer (2)
4. Amazon PPC Manager (1)
5. Editorial Assistant (1)
6. Associate Editor (1)

FOR MORE DETAILS WRITE TO US AT

hr@prakashbooks.com

Wonder House

FINGERPRINT PUBLISHING

WHITE ARROW BOOKS

YATRA BOOKS @ NDWBF



At the New Delhi World Book Fair (NDWBF), Yatra Books (the English division of Vani Prakashan) organized three events. The first event was a reflective book discussion and author interaction on the book *'She the King'* authored by Dr. Aditi Narayani Paswan. Published by Yatra Books, the book revisits the life and legacy of Devi Ahilyabai Holkar, one of the most distinguished rulers in Indian history, through a sociological and gender-sensitive lens. The panel featured the author Dr. Aditi Narayani Paswan, Dr. Jayaprakash Singh and Dr. Phimi Bodo, and was moderated by Dr. Swati Mishra, Professor of Sociology at Banaras Hindu University.

The second event was another book discussion on *Katihar to Kennedy: The Road Less Travelled*, authored by Sanjay Kumar and published by Vani Prakashan. The book is an autobiographical account that traces the author's journey from Katihar, a small district in Bihar, to the Harvard Kennedy School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The discussion brought together Sanjay Kumar, author and a leader in the education and social impact space; Rajat Sethi, public policy practitioner and writer; and Soumya Bajaj, economist with the World Bank, who moderated the session.

The third and the last event was the fourth open mic conducted by Yatra Books. It garnered great participation from poetry lovers among the New Delhi World Book Fair attendees. From young students to retired professionals, the event witnessed a diverse cohort of performers and poets.

JLF AND JBM 2026 HELD SUCCESSFULLY

The Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) 2026, presented by Vedanta, was held from January 15-19, 2026, with a powerful series of conversations that spanned graphic and manga novels, poetry, mythology, mathematics, reinterpreting historical narratives, and contemporary fiction, reaffirming the Festival's role as a global forum where stories and perspectives intersect.



While publishers, editors, festival directors, and cultural leaders took the centre stage at Jaipur BookMark (JBM), presented by BluOne Ink, South Asia's leading publishing conclave, held alongside the Jaipur Literature Festival.

The conclave culminated with the Festival Directors' Roundtable, which brought together Anjani Raiapat, Biswadip Chakraborty, Chandni Chowdhary, Janet DeNeefe, Govind Deecee, Hannah Curtis, Jesús Ruiz Mantilla, Mastura Muhamad, Julie Finch, Laura Mannering, Lavinia Frey and Shubha Sanjay Urs in conversation with Sanjoy K. Roy to examine the complex realities of organising literature festivals today. The discussion explored how festivals operate at the intersection of culture, politics and public discourse, and the challenges of balancing artistic freedom with sponsorships, government relationships and local, national and international sensitivities.

DELHI LITERATURE FESTIVAL 2026 HELD SUCCESSFULLY



The 14th edition of the Delhi Literature Festival was held at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Janpath, from February 6-8, 2026. Anchored in the theme "Sahitya, Sanskriti aur Samridhhi", the festival explored the role of literature and culture in shaping a deeper and more inclusive idea of prosperity.

The three-day event featured a series of author conversations, panel discussions, poetry readings and book launches. Among the prominent speakers were Acharya Prashant, Nilotpal Mrinal, Kevin Missal, Seema Anand and Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri, along with writers, scholars and cultural commentators from across disciplines. Sessions ranged from reflections on mythology, culture and education to discussions on contemporary concerns, including digital safety and emerging social challenges. Interactive formats such as poetry recitations, author interactions and literary discussions encouraged active engagement between writers and readers throughout the festival.

AITBS Publishers, INDIA

Books available on following subjects:

- ❖ Medical
- ❖ Dental
- ❖ Nursing
- ❖ Pharmacy
- ❖ Mathematics
- ❖ Management and Commerce
- ❖ Economics
- ❖ General and Literature
- ❖ Engineering

For Detailed Catalogue Visit Our Website or Write to us:

www.aitbspublishersindia.com

Email: aitbsindia@gmail.com & aitbsindia@hotmail.com

J-5/6, Krishan Nagar, Delhi-110 051 (INDIA)

Phone: 011-40167052, 49067602; Fax: 011-22009074

40

Years in Publishing

IHC SAMANVAY 2026 REFLECTS ON ECOLOGY, CULTURE AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY



The latest edition of IHC Samanvay Celebrating Ideas and Indian Languages, held at the India Habitat Centre, brought together writers, scholars, artists and environmental thinkers for three days of conversations and performances exploring the deep relationship between nature, culture and language.

The festival opened with a keynote by noted environmentalist Sunita Narain, who spoke on Walking Lightly on the Planet Learning from Ecological Traditions to Build a Sustainable Future. Drawing from India's long traditions of ecological wisdom, she highlighted the importance of revisiting indigenous knowledge systems, particularly in addressing pressing concerns such as water conservation and sustainable development.

Over the course of the festival, sessions featured prominent voices including William Dalrymple, Namita Gokhale, Navtej Sarna, Mamang Dai, Vivek Menon and Stephen Alter, along with scholars and practitioners working on ecology, traditional knowledge systems and cultural heritage.

The programme was further enriched by performances from Madan Gopal Singh, Jayaprabha Menon, Mayukh Hazarika and the Barmer Boys, alongside the vibrant Pulikali folk ensemble from Kerala.

A special highlight of this year's edition was the celebration of 50 years of environmental filmmaker Mike Pandey's remarkable journey, marked by a conversation and an audio visual tribute recognising his pioneering contribution to conservation filmmaking.

Through its blend of literature, dialogue and performance, IHC Samanvay 2026 once again underscored the importance of cultural memory and ecological awareness in shaping a sustainable future.

BOOK ON MANIPUR'S GEOPOLITICAL HISTORY LAUNCHED

Former Union Minister of State Dr. R.K. Ranjan Singh's latest book, *Geopolitical Relation of the Princely State Manipur with Neighbouring Regions*, was formally launched at the New Delhi World Book Fair held at Bharat Mandapam. The launch was accompanied by a panel discussion in the presence of Chairman of the National Book Trust (NBT), Prof. Milind Sudhakar Marathe, and NBT Director Shri Yuvraj Malik.



The panel discussion was moderated by Dachhbanta Samom, Director (Interpretation) of Lok Sabha. Dr. Ibomcha Sharma Aribam, Chief of Media and Communication, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, participated as a panelist and critically reviewed the book, highlighting its academic significance and contemporary relevance.

SIKKIM ARTS AND LITERATURE FESTIVAL 2026: AN UPDATE



Building on its vision of celebrating culture, creativity, and dialogue in the Eastern Himalayas, the Sikkim Arts and Literature Festival 2026 (SALF 2026, April 26-28, 2026, The Ridge Park, Gangtok, Sikkim), an initiative of the Hon'ble Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang (Golay), presented by the Students' Welfare Board, Education Department, Government of Sikkim, and producers of the iconic Jaipur Literature Festival, Teamwork Arts, unveiled a dynamic line-up of acclaimed writers, thinkers, and artists, in a thoughtfully curated programme.

Prominent speakers include Sahitya Akademi Award-winning author Mamang Dai; author, co-founder and co-director of the Jaipur Literature Festival, Namita Gokhale; poet and cultural voice Shankar Deo Dhakal, acclaimed poet and literary critic Ranjit Hoskote, Indian Nepali-language writer Chuden Kabimo, eminent poet Robin S. Ngangom, and renowned historian, author, co-founder and co-director of the Jaipur Literature Festival, William Dalrymple.

Through these sessions, The Sikkim Arts and Literature Festival 2026 will spotlight themes ranging from literature and poetry to climate change, ecology, identity, mental health, and cultural memory, offering audiences an immersive and thought-provoking experience.



KW PUBLISHERS
www.kwpub.in

 <p>9788199350229 ₹ 1480</p>	 <p>9788199376328 ₹ 1580</p>
 <p>9788198885746 ₹ 1580</p>	 <p>9788199705708 ₹ 1480</p>

4676/21, First Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002
E-mail: kalpana@kwpub.in

REIMAGINING SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING THROUGH AI, TECHNOLOGY, AND GLOBAL COLLABORATION

Over the past two decades, Cactus Communications has evolved from an academic author-services provider into a global technology company supporting the entire scholarly publishing ecosystem. Here's more.

Akhilesh Ayer, CEO of Cactus Communications (CACTUS), discusses the company's journey, the growing role of human-AI collaboration in scholarly publishing, and how technology is reshaping research communication and accessibility on a global scale. Excerpts.

AABP: Tell us about the journey of Cactus Communications and the transformation from the first academic servicing company to a multinational technology company.

Akhilesh: Cactus Communications (CACTUS) was founded in 2002 with a clear purpose: to ensure that valuable research and innovation can find expression, credibility, and global reach through publication and dissemination. At the time, many researchers were producing strong science but struggled to communicate it effectively or navigate the publishing process. CACTUS was created to reduce this friction by bringing together deep domain experts across disciplines to work closely with researchers, helping their work become publication-ready and reach reputable journals and the wider scientific community.

As we worked with researchers globally, it became clear that to serve a rapidly growing and increasingly complex research ecosystem, it was important to make early and sustained investments in technology. We set out on this path by building large-scale workflow systems, AI-augmented expert network management platforms, and tools that ensured quality, consistency, and speed across millions of research interactions.

We also recognized that strengthening research communication meant supporting the entire scholarly publishing value chain. CACTUS began working closely with publishers, institutions, and societies to address editorial efficiency, peer review workflows, research integrity, accessibility, and dissemination. Along this journey, we invested heavily in developing our own AI platform and selectively acquired companies that strengthened our AI and technological capabilities.



Akhilesh Ayer

Although founded in India, our early growth in Japan shaped our global perspective and sensitivity to local research cultures, guiding our expansion across Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Today, CACTUS is a multinational technology company that combines human expertise and advanced AI to support every stage of the research lifecycle, helping science move from idea to impact at global scale.

AABP: What are the different solutions you offer, and how do you elevate the publishing ecosystem with technology and expertise?

Akhilesh: At CACTUS, we combine human expertise with advanced AI to empower every stakeholder in the research ecosystem including researchers, institutions, publishers, and societies. Using insights from a rich data lake built over two decades, we have developed AI-driven solutions that leverage Natural Language Processing, Applied Machine Learning, and Big Data to streamline research workflows and strengthen the publishing process.

For researchers and institutions, our solutions provide personalized support

across discovery, writing, literature surveillance, funding and dissemination. Paperpal, our comprehensive AI writing and research assistant, supports students, researchers, and academic institutions with real-time writing and editing, translation, grammar correction, and submission readiness checks, all while preserving author's original voice and intent. R Discovery accelerates literature search with personalized feeds and access to over 250 million articles, while Mind the Graph enables creation of high-quality scientific visuals effortlessly.

CACTUS also offers a comprehensive suite of technology-led solutions tailored to the needs of publishers across the entire publishing value chain. Through products such as Paperpal Preflight for Editorial Desk, we provide hybrid AI plus human screening of manuscripts for language quality, technical compliance, and potential research integrity issues before or during peer review. We also support publishers with high-quality human peer review services, journal matching, and cascading solutions to help manage growing submission volumes.

Beyond screening and review, we help publishers attract quality submissions, strengthen integrity checks, and improve research publication and dissemination through capabilities such as alt text generation, audio generation, rejection analysis, generative AI search, and data analysis. By embedding AI directly into editorial workflows, our solutions improve throughput, uphold quality standards, and reduce friction across the publication process, enabling faster and more reliable publication outcomes.

AABP: What is the biggest change or evolution you have witnessed that has contributed to your growth?

Akhilesh: One of the most significant shifts has been the ongoing evolution of scholarly publishing into a more collaborative, and transparent ecosystem. Authors, editors, institutions, and publishers are increasingly working together to make research more accessible, ethical, and

inclusive. This continued transformation has played a pivotal role in shaping our growth and priorities.

Another major shift has been the sharp rise in global research submissions and the rapid adoption of AI tools across the publishing workflow. As authors increasingly depend on AI-powered writing and editing support, and publishers integrate AI for screening, research integrity checks, and workflow automation, CACTUS' role at the intersection of authors and publishers has become even more critical.

Our AI and expertise driven solutions significantly enhance manuscript quality by improving language, structure, technical compliance, and research integrity checks. This results in reduced rework, fewer rejections, better AI detection and integrity screening, and ultimately higher acceptance rates. For publishers, this leads to smoother editorial workflows and faster decision-making and for authors, it reduces friction and increases their chance of publication success.

AABP: What are your views on human-AI collaboration, and in which areas has Cactus Communications leveraged this synergy?

Akhilesh: At CACTUS, we see AI as a critical enabler for researchers, editors, and publishers working under increasing pressure. The true value of AI lies in strengthening human expertise, not replacing it, and in enabling people to focus on higher order thinking, judgment, and decision making.

The scholarly publishing ecosystem is stretched thin by volume and complexity. At CACTUS, our approach is to use AI practically, to shoulder the repetitive, high-volume tasks such as initial integrity scans or assistive completeness checks in peer review, so that human experts can focus on what they do best. This means that our AI might flag a potential issue or streamline a workflow, but it is always a human expert who takes the final call, providing a deep contextual understanding, and upholding the ethical standards.

This human-in-the-loop partnership is built into everything we do. For instance, AI assists with initial quality screening and providing data points, but editors and reviewers retain full authority over substantive evaluation and decisions. The result not only showcases efficiency; but it also highlights trust and integrity at scale, ensuring that technology truly serves the researchers who are taking science ahead.

By combining AI-driven efficiency with human expertise and accountability, we improve quality, speed, and cost efficiency across the value chain, helping more high-quality research to move... forward with confidence and integrity. This approach recently earned CACTUS the ISO/IEC 42001:2023 certification for its AI Management System, validating our commitment to responsible, well-governed AI aligned with global best practices.

AABP: What are your views on accelerating India's research and innovation?

Akhilesh: India has been steadily strengthening its research and innovation ecosystem over the past decade. The country's growing emphasis on R&D, coupled with government-led initiatives such as One Nation One Subscription (ONOS), Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) reflect a commitment to advancing scientific progress and enhancing global competitiveness.

India's next leap in research excellence will be driven by technology, collaboration, and greater accessibility. AI-powered tools can play a transformative role in improving access to global research, simplifying writing and publishing workflows, and supporting more transparent peer review. This will allow researchers to focus on innovation rather than administrative processes.

CACTUS remains committed to strengthening India's research landscape through collaborations with institutions and investing in capacity-building initiatives that promote greater equity, impact, and visibility for Indian research. Our AI-powered solutions and ecosystem expertise help improve research productivity, minimize inaccuracies, and preserve the integrity of author's voice. We also support the funding lifecycle through AI-enabled grant management systems that offer intelligent screening, reviewer matching, and analytics, contributing to a more efficient and equitable research ecosystem.

AABP: How is AI revolutionizing accessibility?

Akhilesh: AI is redefining accessibility in ways that were unimaginable a decade ago. Accessibility today is no longer limited to improving readability; it encompasses making research understandable, usable, and inclusive for diverse audiences. This shift is enabling true inclusivity in global

knowledge sharing by ensuring that research can be understood, and accessed by everyone regardless of educational, linguistic or technological barriers.

In India, the launch of the One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) scheme marks an important step towards equitable access to knowledge. However, ONOS is only the beginning of the journey toward true accessibility. Achieving meaningful accessibility requires expanding availability through plain-language summaries, visual abstracts, multilingual outputs, and alternative formats that extend the reach of scientific knowledge to policymakers, educators, industry, and the broader public.

At the same time, governments, universities, and funders must ensure that ONOS itself is easy to navigate and benefits disadvantaged communities. Solutions such as AI-powered literature discovery tools built on top of ONOS, or automated alt-text, audio, and multimodal outputs can significantly enhance usability and remove barriers for students, researchers, and individuals with disabilities. Across Europe and Asia, CACTUS has been working with academic institutions and research ecosystems to improve how researchers discover, access, and use subscribed research content. Our AI-powered literature search tool, RDiscovery, makes research easier to find and use, helping institutions create more inclusive and effective knowledge platforms.

AABP: What trends in AI do you see that will disrupt the publishing ecosystem?

Akhilesh: The publishing ecosystem has entered a phase of AI-enabled transformation, with technology starting to influence every stage of the research lifecycle. Key trends include the use of AI-assisted peer review to identify ethical risks and methodological inconsistencies earlier in the evaluation process. Integrity-checking tools are also becoming more sophisticated, helping publishers to identify image manipulation, citation anomalies, plagiarism, papermill activities, and other red flags with far greater accuracy.

Another emerging trend is the pace of innovation itself. With each publisher attempting to build their own proprietary systems, the result is slower progress, higher costs, and uneven outcomes across the industry. The ecosystem will benefit if publishers collaborate with industry-leading partners instead of creating more technical debt by developing isolated solutions.

However, the most significant disruption is likely to be cultural rather than technical. As AI accelerates the speed and scale of content creation, the sector will face increasing pressure to safeguard research integrity and maintain trust. The long-term impact of AI will depend on how effectively the ecosystem balances technological advancement with the foundational principles of transparency, ethics, and credibility in scholarly communication.

AABP: In today's time, what do you think is the role of publishers in making research more accessible?

Akhilesh: The role of publishers has evolved significantly from being custodians of knowledge to enablers of transparency, discoverability, and reproducibility. Accessibility is often equated with open access, but its scope is much broader and deeply connected to inclusion. Publishers are uniquely positioned to advance this by supporting multilingual outputs, enabling diverse formats, and creating workflows that strengthen the discoverability of research.

Another critical role of publishers is establishing standards and frameworks that ensure research can be accessed, understood, and validated by a wider global audience. The future of publishing will depend on how effectively the ecosystem empowers every credible voice to participate in scholarly communication,

regardless of language, geography, or institutional affiliation.

AABP: Would you like to highlight any specific examples of your work across scholarly publishing?

Akhilesh: Our work with a national research body in West Asia evolved into a large-scale service to strengthen research communication at a systematic level from an initial request for publication support. We developed a framework that combined author training, institutional capability building, and technology-enabled workflows, helping accelerate national scientific visibility.

Across Asia, we run multi-year programs with universities to enhance their global research presence. These initiatives include support in research planning, submission strategy, citation improvement, and faculty training. By blending editorial expertise with AI-driven manuscript assessment, we help institutions improve research quality in a structured and scalable way.

Our AI powered screening checks for authors, which assess language readiness and compliance with journal requirements, have reduced desk rejection by nearly 70 percent and helped institutions improve acceptance rate significantly. These checks ensure that manuscripts meet basic quality and compliance standards before submission, leading to smoother peer review and stronger outcomes.

We also support publishers through AI integrity checks that flag 5-15 percent of incoming manuscripts for serious ethical or scientific concerns. Identifying these issues early helps publishers manage risks, prevent potential retractions, and maintain trust in the research they publish.

As a result of our end-to-end support, around 71 percent of authors we work with achieve publication in Q1 and Q2 journals, reflecting how early guidance, integrity safeguards, and submission readiness together improve author outcomes and confidence.

AABP: How have you worked with global collaborations for innovation, growth and excellence?

Akhilesh: Global collaborations have been integral to CACTUS' growth. We actively partner with all key stakeholders in the scholarly publishing ecosystem including leading publishers, universities, research institutions, and industry bodies to advance the entire research and publishing journey.

In Japan, our longstanding presence

has earned us a trusted role in policy-related discussions with government bodies inviting us to share insights that shape national research and science communication initiatives. At CACTUS, we help streamline the research value chain by engaging with policymakers, improving submission quality through AI tools, supporting funding compliance and collaborating with industry bodies such as STM.

We also collaborate with universities as innovation partners, allowing us to pilot new approaches, test emerging technologies in real academic environments, and address institutional needs holistically. In India, we have established strong partnerships with institutions such as the IIMs, NITs, IISERs, and several major universities and government bodies to help enhance research output and global visibility.

Our cross-border approach ensures that AI capabilities developed in our R&D hub are tested with editorial and delivery teams globally, ensuring that our solutions address diverse research contexts.

AABP: Your message to the publishing industry.

Akhilesh: Technology must be viewed as a strategic enabler, not merely a cost lever. The future of publishing will be shaped by how effectively the industry integrates AI and automation with deep human expertise. At CACTUS, our value comes from decades of understanding researchers, authors, and editorial workflows.

Author expectations are shifting rapidly, and rising manuscript volumes have created significant pressure on peer reviewers and editorial teams. With our global footprint and infrastructure, CACTUS is well positioned to help publishers strengthen capacity while maintaining consistency, and quality across workflows.

As the ecosystem evolves, publishing must become more global, interoperable, and aligned with the needs of authors, institutions, and funders. Shared infrastructure, data, and standards will be critical. CACTUS is committed to partnering with publishers to build this foundation through AI-powered peer review support, reviewer discovery, author services, and efforts to elevate research from underrepresented markets.

The opportunity ahead lies in shaping a collaborative, technology-enabled ecosystem that amplifies trust, accelerates discovery, and makes scholarly communication more inclusive worldwide. ■

FORM IV (RULE 8)

Statement about ownership and other particulars about magazine entitled "All About Book Publishing."

- 1) Place of Publication : New Delhi
- 2) Periodicity of publication : Bi-monthly
- 3) Printer's Name : S. K. Khurana
Whether citizen of India : Yes
- 4) Publisher's Name : S. K. Khurana
Whether citizen of India : Yes
Address : 406, Sant Nagar, East of Kailash, New Delhi
- 5) Editor's Name : S. K. Khurana
Whether citizen of India : Yes
If foreigner, state the country of origin : Does not apply
Address : B/15-C, Sidhartha Extn., New Delhi - 110 014

- 6) Names and addresses of directors and shareholders holding more than one percent of total capital : S. K. Khurana, 406, Sant Nagar, East of Kailash, New Delhi-65

I, S. K. Khurana, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated: Sd/-
1st March, 2026 S. K. Khurana, Publisher

TURNING THE TIDE ON BOOK PIRACY WITH TECHNOLOGY

Book piracy has been one of the publishing industry's most persistent challenges, however, emerging technologies are beginning to offer new ways to address the problem proactively. Fatimah Abbas, an international publishing consultant and AI strategist, shares more.

Piracy is part of today's publishing reality, whether we like it or not. "But that doesn't mean publishers are powerless, or that technology is something to be afraid of," shares Fatimah Abbas, who has developed a monitoring tool for anti-piracy in book publishing.

"In publishing, we are the ones responsible for shaping how these tools are used. If we build them thoughtfully, they don't take our place; they support better decisions, protect creative labor, and allow us to focus on what humans do best. That balance — between experience, ethics, and technology — is what will keep publishing sustainable in the years to come," she adds.

On anti-piracy project for book publishing...

"Honestly, this project came out of lived experience more than planning. I've worked in rights and international publishing for years, and I kept running into the same situation — book launches, things look promising, and then suddenly someone sends you a link saying, "By the way, this is already online." At the same time, I've also spent several years working closely with AI and technology, so I naturally started looking at the problem differently — not just emotionally as a publisher, but analytically as well. That combination really shaped the project," shares Fatimah.

"The result is a monitoring tool built specifically for books. It helps publishers see where their titles are being shared illegally, instead of discovering it randomly or far too late. It's not about policing the internet; it's about giving publishers basic visibility over their own content," she shares.

The tool...

"In simple terms, it scans the web for book-related signals — titles, authors, formats, keywords, ISBNs — and flags anything that looks like unauthorized sharing. When something comes up,



Fatimah Abbas

the publisher gets a short, clear alert explaining what was found and where," she shares. "Because I come from both publishing and AI, I was very intentional about keeping the tool understandable. You don't need a technical background to use it. If you work in publishing, you'll immediately know what you're looking at."

The beneficiaries...

"It can benefit large publishers, independent houses, educational publishers, agents, and even authors who manage their own rights," shares Fatimah.

The USP...

"There are tools in the market, but many of them were built for music or film, or they focus heavily on legal enforcement after the damage has already been done. What makes this project different is that it's publishing-first, but tech-aware. It understands editions, translations, territorial rights, and how books move across borders and languages. Instead of overwhelming publishers with data, it focuses on what actually matters," she shares.

On Indian publishing market...

"India is a fascinating and incredibly important publishing market — large, multilingual, and fast-moving. That same richness also makes it vulnerable

to piracy, especially in education and regional publishing. This kind of tool helps Indian publishers track piracy beyond the obvious platforms, including in regional languages that global tools often miss. It also supports international rights and export sales, because piracy often quietly affects negotiations long before anyone talks about it openly. For many publishers, just having visibility is already a major step forward," opines Fatimah.

Role of government in anti-piracy measures...

"Technology can support the process, but governments play a key role. Faster takedown procedures, clearer enforcement, and better cooperation with platforms are essential. There also needs to be more awareness that piracy isn't just a legal issue, it's an economic and cultural one. It affects authors, translators, educators, and local publishing ecosystems, not just big companies," says Fatimah.

On a concluding note...

"Early detection is probably the most important one. If publishers can see a problem early, they still have choices. Projects like this one are an example of how new technologies can work with us, not against us. I strongly believe that technology becomes a threat only when we treat it as an enemy or leave it to develop without human guidance. When we approach it as a collaborator — as a tool that assists rather than replaces — it actually strengthens our work," concludes Fatimah.

Fatimah Abbas is a distinguished international publishing consultant & AI Strategist. She was also the Head of External Relations and Translation Department for one of Cairo, Egypt's most esteemed publishing and distribution houses. In addition to her accomplished translation work, which encompasses 34 literary works translated both from English into Arabic and vice versa, Fatimah now oversees her agency, known as FALA (first & only of its kind in the region). She serves as an international publishing consultant. ■

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: THE NEW CHAPTER IN PUBLISHING

The publishing industry today stands at the threshold of another defining shift: the rise of Artificial Intelligence. Far beyond improving speed or efficiency, AI is reshaping the very processes through which books are written, edited, marketed, and discovered. In this thought-provoking perspective, Sahil Gupta, Director-Founder, V&S Publishers, reflects on how AI is transforming publishing while reminding us that the soul of storytelling will always remain profoundly human.

Publishing has always been about connecting stories with readers, knowledge with seekers, and imagination with reality. But all of this in 2025 is being rewritten by one of the most transformative forces of our time: Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Aligning with technology...

The publishing industry has always thrived on change. From Gutenberg's press in the fifteenth century to the rise of e-books at the turn of the millennium, each innovation has reshaped how stories travel from author to reader. Today, we stand at another pivotal moment – the age of Artificial Intelligence. Unlike earlier revolutions, this one is not solely about speed or distribution; it is about intelligence itself entering our workflows, offering both tremendous promise and serious responsibility.

Let us begin with the scale of this change. According to PwC's analysis, the global book publishing industry is expected to reach nearly \$150 billion by 2030, with AI driving much of the efficiency and personalisation on which this growth will be founded. And McKinsey projects that AI's potential could add up to \$4.4 trillion annually to the global economy, some of which is certain to trickle down into innovative businesses like ours.

Authors using AI...

In practice, this evolution is already underway. Writers are increasingly incorporating AI-powered writing assistants, such as ChatGPT, Jasper, and Sudowrite, to generate ideas, edit stories, and experiment with style. This doesn't eliminate the author's distinct voice – it



Sahil Gupta

augments it, allowing writers to focus on creativity while outsourcing mundane or technical tasks. A study by *The Bookseller* found that nearly 30% of UK authors have used AI tools in the past year to support their writing process.

AI in editorial process...

The editorial is also transformed similarly. Programs such as Grammarly, ProWritingAid, and Hemingway Editor enable faster, more polished editing

cycles. Certain publishers are also piloting AI-based plagiarism screening and sensitivity readers to ensure that manuscripts are both unique and culturally sensitive. This has reduced average editorial time by nearly 20%, according to Deloitte's report, allowing faster release schedules.

AI in marketing...

Distribution and marketing are perhaps the most obviously impacted. AI algorithms like Amazon's and Goodreads' are already making decisions about what we read. Personalised recommendation engines are standard, with Statista research indicating that over 56% of online book sales in 2024 were influenced by AI-based recommendations. Publishers are using platforms such as BookBub, Meta's Advantage+ AI ads, and StoryChief to segment audiences, monitor behaviour, and run highly targeted campaigns that were previously impossible just a decade ago.

AI in translations...

The worldwide reach of publishing is also being extended through AI translation technologies. Programs such as DeepL, Google Translate, and Papercup enable rapid, accurate translations of manuscripts into numerous languages. UNESCO estimates that just 5–7% of published material is ever translated internationally, but AI has the capacity to expand this exponentially, projecting an author's voice far beyond their linguistic limitations.

New formats...

Let us also not forget accessibility, AI's most valuable contribution. The audiobook sector, which the Audio Publishers



Association estimated was nearing \$2 billion in 2023, is expanding at double-digit growth rates. Voice AI platforms such as Speechify, ElevenLabs, and Amazon Polly are making audiobook creation faster, cheaper, and more inclusive, particularly for visually impaired readers and in markets where audio is becoming the primary mode of consumption.

Beyond content, publication processes are also automated using AI. Metadata optimisation, royalty tracking, and rights management are also becoming automated. For instance, KNK Publishing Software and Firebrand Technologies are utilising AI to enhance metadata, making books more discoverable amidst digital competition. This makes business operations more efficient while also reducing human error in time-consuming financial and legal processes.

Challenges with AI...

However, these new opportunities bring challenges in meeting them.

One area is intellectual property. The Authors Guild in the United States has raised serious questions about what copyright would entail in an AI future and about the value of clear rules to protect human creators. Just as highbrow critics maintain all the machine's word-crafting powers amount to nothing next to a deficiency in lived experience, or genuine empathy, or the imperishable human something that makes writing last over time.

AI is a supplement...

So, what do all of these leave us with? It leaves us with a responsibility—to use AI as a supplement to human imagination, but never a substitute. To keep our writers empowered, never marginalised; to make publishing quicker, more diverse, and more international, but never forget the human touch that defines storytelling.

Distinguished personalities, history has shown us time and again that every significant step forward in publishing technology—from the printing press to digital—has been accompanied by equal

measures of doubt and promise. AI is just the next chapter in the book. The choice before us is not whether it should revolutionise our business—it already has—but how we, as publishers, choose to characterise its impact.

Let us meet this moment with vision, not fear. Let us imagine a future in which 'tales' move more quickly, go further, and touch more minds and hearts than ever before – fuelled by AI, but guided ever onward by human imagination and morality.

As much as machines may help us write, edit, translate, and post, it remains human beings who put soul into words.

Sahil Gupta is an entrepreneur & accomplished core Book Publishing Professional with over 15 years' experience as Director-Founder at V&S Publishers. He is also a Functional Domain Consultant in the Educational and Publishing Space. A B. Tech & MBA, he possesses demonstrated experience in content management, book publishing, ebooks, digital marketing, and business development.



FROM PRINT TO DIGITAL: BALANCING TECHNOLOGY WITH STORYTELLING

In a world increasingly shaped by algorithms and screens, children's publishing is choosing to introspect and respond with care. As artificial intelligence, augmented reality and immersive technologies steadily enter publishing conversations, children's books occupy a particularly sensitive space. These are not just products, but formative experiences, shaping imagination, empathy and a lifelong relationship with reading. Smita Dwivedi explores how AR, VR and AI are being approached across children's publishing today.

Drawing on conversations with Neeraj Jain – Managing Director, Scholastic India; Himanshu Giri – CEO, Pratham Books; Vinatha Viswanathan & Shailaja Srinivasan – Eklavya Team; Natasha Shah Bammi – Publishing Director, Woodpecker Books, and Author Priyanka Agarwal Mehta, Founder & CEO of Sam & Mi who are deeply invested in literature, education and equity, here are excerpts.

A story-first view on technology in children's publishing

Neeraj Jain, Managing Director at Scholastic India, brings a measured and deeply considered perspective to the conversation on technology in children's publishing.



Neeraj Jain

At the heart of Scholastic's approach lies a clear conviction: Story must always come first.

While Scholastic has experimented selectively with interactive and digital enhancements over the years, Neeraj is clear that the company does not use AI in the creation, development, or editorial shaping of its children's books. For him, children's literature must remain anchored in "Human Imagination, Authorial Voice, and Creative Intent." As per him, these elements cannot be automated without losing their emotional depth.

He acknowledges that technology, when used thoughtfully, can play a supportive role. Light interactive elements may help spark curiosity, particularly among reluctant or dormant readers.



However, he cautions against allowing digital features to become intrusive, as they risk diluting the emotional connection and imaginative engagement that are central to children's reading experiences.

He also highlights practical concerns that publishers must constantly navigate, screen time, age appropriateness, accessibility, and the need to maintain a clear boundary between creative expression and automation. These considerations, he believes, are especially critical when publishing for young readers.

To conclude he reinforces a simple yet powerful truth: "It is strong storytelling that holds a child's attention", regardless of format. Technology can support this journey and may help develop hybrid formats that broaden reach, but it can never replace the pull of a well-told story.

Technology to expand reading and build bridges to stories

For Himanshu Giri, CEO of Pratham Books, technology's true value in children's publishing lies not in spectacle, but in Access, Reach, and Discovery. Rather than layering digital effects



Himanshu Giri

onto books, Pratham Books has focused on using technology as infrastructure; most notably through 'StoryWeaver', its open digital platform that hosts, distributes, and enables the remixing of children's stories across languages and geographies.

While AR and VR have not yet been integrated into Pratham's publishing programme, the organisation is cautiously exploring how AI can support content discovery, reader segmentation, language recommendations, and the understanding of reading preferences at scale. This exploration remains purpose-led, with a clear emphasis on strengthening the reading experience rather than distracting from it.



Himanshu identifies several challenges that accompany the introduction of technology in children's publishing. Chief among them is ensuring that digital tools do not overshadow the fundamental goals of storytelling, which are deep engagement with language, imagination, and narrative. Access remains a critical concern, particularly as many of Pratham's readers come from low-resource settings with uneven access to devices, connectivity, and digital fluency. Moreover, key aspects of children's publishing, such as high-quality translation, cultural adaptation, illustration nuance, and age-appropriate storytelling continue to depend on human judgment and creativity, areas where AI has clear limitations.

From Pratham Books' experience, technology can enhance discoverability and help personalise reading journeys by matching children with stories aligned to their language, reading level, and interests. However, sustained engagement still rests on strong stories, relatable characters, and human mediation by teachers, librarians, and caregivers.

At its best, he believes, technology should function as a quiet enabler in the background, supporting access and choice while allowing stories to remain firmly at the centre.

Innovation beyond tools: Eklavya's education-first approach

Vinatha Viswanathan and Shailaja Srinivasan, Team Eklavya share, "Eklavya is a non-profit, non-government organisation that has spent over four decades developing and field-testing innovative educational programmes across India."



Shailaja Srinivasan

At the core of Eklavya's philosophy is a learner-centred approach that encourages children to ask questions, develop problem-solving skills, and engage critically with their natural and social environments. Within this broader pedagogical framework, Eklavya's engagement with emerging technologies such as AR, VR and AI has been exploratory rather than adoption-drive. In 2024, the organisation hosted an 'Exposure workshop on Augmented Reality' with Aurélien Jeanny of Maison Tangible. During the session, Jeanny demonstrated the AR application used in 'Les Voyages Extraordinaires d'Axel'—a scientific children's literature project by Aurélien Jeanny, co-published by Amaterra (the print book) and Maison Tangible (the augmented reality application). The project integrates a traditional print book with a digital AR experience, allowing children to see illustrations come alive by scanning pages through an app.

While the demonstration offered valuable insights into the creative possibilities of AR, Eklavya notes that the costs involved are currently prohibitive, making even pilot projects difficult to pursue.

We maintain clear boundaries around the use of AI in its publishing work. Team members do not use AI in the preparation of books. For *Chakmak*, the organisation's monthly science magazine, AI translation was used on two occasions during particularly tight deadlines, purely as a time-saving measure. However, subsequent human editing revealed frequent errors and omissions, leading the team to discontinue the practice.

Although some authors may be using AI tools independently, this is not always evident to the publisher. Some illustrators are also likely to use AI, but this is not considered problematic, as all final outputs are carefully vetted and finalised by the design team, led by Kanak and Ishita. Importantly, Eklavya does not ask for or

accept completely AI-generated material, reinforcing its commitment to human judgement and editorial responsibility.

On a concluding note, they shared that for their organisation, innovation remains meaningful only when it aligns with pedagogy, equity, and the long-term development of thoughtful, questioning learners.

The quiet strength of print-first publishing

As per Natasha Shah Bammī, Publishing Director, Woodpecker Books, an imprint of Wilco Books, children's publishing remains firmly rooted in traditional, print-first formats. The publisher is currently not using AR, VR, or AI in its children's list, guided by the belief that young readers, particularly in their early years, benefit most from tactile books, strong narratives, and illustrations that spark imagination without digital overlays.



Natasha Shah

As Woodpecker Books has not integrated these technologies, it has not encountered direct implementation challenges. However, from a wider industry perspective, she points to several ongoing concerns, which include ensuring accessibility for all children, preventing technology from overshadowing the story itself, and keeping production costs affordable for parents and schools.

From the publisher's experience, children connect most deeply with stories that leave room for imagination and emotional engagement. While digital elements can introduce novelty, traditional books continue to hold enduring value.



Parents and educators, Natasha observes, often prefer formats that encourage focus, independent thinking, and a calmer, more immersive reading experience.

Experimenting with technology with caution

Author Priyanka Agarwal Mehta, Founder & CEO of Sam & Mi shares that her publishing house has been experimenting with technologies such as AR, VR and AI to see whether they



Priyanka Agarwal

can increase the appeal of children's books and create stronger bonding experiences between children and adults during reading.

At the same time, she notes that integrating such elements comes with a key challenge: the experience should not become centred on the device used to access the technology. The focus, she emphasises, must remain on the book and the purpose of the story.

From their early experiments, Priyanka observes that the results have sometimes been counterproductive. Instead of engaging more deeply with the story, children often become more interested in exploring the features of the device itself. A similar pattern is visible in toys that incorporate AR or VR.



For this reason, she believes innovation must continue carefully, ensuring that technology supports storytelling without disrupting the reading experience or the bond created through shared reading.

On a concluding note...

As these diverse perspectives show, technology in children's publishing is being approached with curiosity as well as caution. While AR, VR and AI offer new possibilities, publishers agree that their real value lies in supporting, not overshadowing stories. Ultimately, it is imagination, human creativity and meaningful reading experiences that continue to anchor children's literature. ■

TRACING WORDS ACROSS CIVILISATIONS: THE MAKING OF A COMPARATIVE TAMIL-INDO-EUROPEAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY

Dr. G. Arasentiran—renowned Tamil etymologist and Chief Editor of the ambitious multi-volume *A Comparative Etymological Dictionary of Tamil and Indo-European Languages*, reflects on the significance of etymology in understanding cultural memory, the research behind tracing links between Tamil and Indo-European languages, and the scholarly journey of compiling a dictionary that seeks to bridge linguistic histories across continents.

Dr. G. Arasentiran is Chief Editor of *A Comparative Etymological Dictionary of Tamil and Indo-European Languages*. Launched in March, 2022, this project is duly supervised by the Tamil Development and Information Department, under the aegis of the Tamil Nadu Textbook and Educational Services Corporation. The volumes of this dictionary project are being published by the Oxford University Press in collaboration with Tamil Nadu Textbook and Educational Services Corporation. 12 volumes along with the General Introduction are planned to be released, of which, General Introduction and Volume 1 were released last year. The other volumes are in the pipeline.

Here, he shares more about the project.

AABP: How would you define etymology, and why does it matter in understanding civilisation and cultural memory?

Dr. G. Arasentiran: Human society being a knowledge society chiefly receives all knowledge through language. And words in language have two meanings viz., dictionary meaning and etymological meaning, of which people mostly are aware of the former. Learning becomes complete only when dictionary meaning is understood along with etymological meaning.

Thus, to know the semantic root (etymological meaning) is to know the history of the root. That is, how the root has undergone an evolutionary development in different contexts, producing many



Dr. G. Arasentiran

words that retain the same meaning. This etymological study of relating a word to a group of words where it belongs is very fundamental to decipher the usage of a word in any context and decode deeply the message it actually carries or an author truly intends. Or, it can even shed light on ideas and memories not recorded but passed across through generation. Thus, the etymological study has the potential to penetrate the past.

In my viewpoint, the sites preserving the cultural memory are many; however, language is a spacious medium accommodating an explicit account of the memory when others are much narrowed, despite some containing concrete evidence, like monuments. In case of the language, the field etymology, on its path of defining words historically, sheds the original meaning behind the blurry memory of the culture more concretely than has been imagined with randomness. Similar is the case of civilization, which is more multi-dimensional and multi-faceted.

I would like to give an example: wisdom

meaning the 'pinnacle of knowledge', has emerged from the Tamil *viji* for 'eye' as follows: *viji* > *viji* > **weid*- 'to see' > wisdom. Here, etymological study has helped ascertain the real history of the West Indo-European word wisdom through Tamil. Hence, etymological research remains indispensable.

AABP: What led you to explore connections between Tamil and Indo-European languages?

Dr. G. Arasentiran: My interest in exploring the relationship between Tamil and the Indo-European languages arose from observing numerous phonetic and semantic similarities between them. I was particularly struck by instances in which Tamil words closely resembled cognates in Indo-European languages and those Tamil words are themselves derived from well-established and conceptually grounded proto-Tamil roots.

These recurring parallels prompted me to investigate the possibility of deeper historical and linguistic connections. In doing so, I found myself engaging with lines of inquiry previously advanced by distinguished scholars such as Robert Caldwell and Stephan Hillyer Levitt, whose work has significantly contributed to comparative linguistic studies in this area.

AABP: What inspired you to undertake *A Comparative Etymological Dictionary of Tamil and Indo-European Languages*?

Dr. G. Arasentiran: There are two things that inspired me to take this endeavour: More than 300 hypothetical roots out of 461 identified by English etymologist Skeat have similarities with Tamil source words and can be traced back to Tamil parent roots.

The second thing that inspired me is the Dravidian Ascent Theory postulated by distinguished etymologist like Pavanar and Gnanaprakasam which foregrounds that Tamil belonging to the Dravidian





family of languages was the language spoken all over the Indian sub-continent about 4000 years ago and there are enough research findings and data to show that in its north-western journey it had evolved into Indo-European.

AABP: How long did the research take, and what were the most demanding aspects of compiling such a dictionary?

Dr. G. Arasentiran: I have been deeply involved in this domain of etymology since my graduation in Tamil in 1972 and the Tamil and Indo-European Dictionary research work presently engaged has started from March 2022.

Finding out the etymological connection between Indo-European cognates and their hypothetical roots and their corresponding Tamil source words is the most demanding part of our work. The second part is tracing the lexical development of derivatives of the East and the West to their corresponding Tamil source words.

Besides, making of a dictionary of this scale is nevertheless a Herculean task, and our team is up for it.

AABP: Who is the primary audience for this book—linguists, historians, serious scholars, or informed general readers?

Dr. G. Arasentiran: This dictionary project explains in detail the history of the evolution of language in human society how language is indispensable and of great assistance to mankind. Thus, more than being a linguistic study, it goes on explaining the history of art, literature, culture, philosophy, science, and technology through the thousands of words, the history of which has been detailed in this dictionary. Therefore, readers across diverse fields interested in unravelling the historical depth and evolution of the words could be the primary audience.

AABP: Were there any discoveries during your research that you found particularly striking?

Dr. G. Arasentiran: We can cite the history of hundreds of words in substantiation. Take for example the word science which means studying the physical world and the materials by separating and segregating each from the other. According to English etymological dictionaries, the word science

had risen from the hypothetical root *skei- meaning 'to cut, to split'. But the fact remains that it had evolved from the Tamil root word ceku 'separate/parting'. The word ceku has been widely employed in Caṅkama literary poetic compositions and in Tirukkural couplets to denote 'to separate'.

The Tamil word vekku, meaning 'heat', under va>pa sound change has mutated into bhakshaṇa (vekku>bekku>bhakshaṇa) in the East Indo-European and Proto-Germanic *bakan 'to bake' (vekku>bekku>*bakan>bake) in the West Indo-European. Without realising this, the West Indo-European etymological dictionaries have identified *pekwh-, a hypothetical root assigning the meaning 'to cook, ripen'. English etymological dictionaries have related a host of words like bake, cook, kitchen, cuisine, (terra)-cotta and (bis)-cuit as being related to and derived from this *pekwh-.

AABP: How receptive was the publishing ecosystem to a specialised linguistic reference work of this scale?

Dr. G. Arasentiran: Publishing houses in general are mostly commercial entities. The dictionary series in the Comparative Etymological Dictionary of Tamil and Indo-European Languages is a product of highly nuanced and in-depth intellectual engagement, greatly contributing to enhancing understanding of the academic domain. It is indeed a struggle to make the world understand this fact. Only after two years, we signed an agreement with the Oxford University Press, that we consider the turning point in our journey, as OUP readily accepted our hypothesis.

AABP: How can comparative etymology foster dialogue rather than division?

Dr. G. Arasentiran: Comparative etymology mainly studies words and cognates between languages. The Dictionary project postulates that these similarities suggest a shared common origin between the languages, thereby helping foster unity among peoples of different races.

AABP: What role do you see digital tools and AI playing in the future of etymological research?

Dr. G. Arasentiran: More than books, knowledge acquisition in today's world happens through digital media. When it

comes to the etymological research, what we need is multilingual data. Though internet helps us with the data, advanced AI systems trained on comprehensive lexical and philological datasets can help synthesize information. But, evaluating the data and inferences of AI is essential, which reiterates the fact that the expertise of humans in verifying the authenticity of the data is indispensable. However, the comprehensive inputs of AI could certainly benefit anyone looking for cross-linguistic traces. In this way, AI has the potential to accelerate research and promote the depth of etymological study.

For instance, if the Dictionary series is fed into AI, anyone across the world searching for the origin of a word, may see its traces in Tamil roots, which he/she would have never thought of. In such a context, the world will witness the depth and extent of etymological research.

AABP: What would you like readers to ultimately take away from your book?

Dr. G. Arasentiran: The basic needs of mankind are food, clothing, and shelter. Most of them are being met through educational, scientific, and technological advancement. Apart from these mundane things, it is necessary for human society to blossom. This dictionary series reveal to the world the deeper truths about language. As such, this project will serve the purpose of enriching every individual with deep and clear insights on the origin and development of the words, ensuring holistic development in domains such as education, science, technology, and philosophy.

Dr. G. Arasentiran (a) Rajendran is a renowned Tamil etymologist and a Nostratic Scholar. A retired professor and HOD of Tamil department at the reputed Madras Christian College, Chennai, Dr. G. Arasentiran is currently the Chief Editor for the project titled 'A Comparative Etymological Dictionary of Tamil and Indo-European Languages'. For the past 40 years, he has studied Tamil-Indo-European etymological relationships analysing the works of Caldwell, Pōvōṇar, āṇappirākācar, and the East and the West Indo-European etymological dictionaries. He was honoured with the Tēvanēyap Pōvōṇar award by the Tamil Nadu Government in 2021. He has written and published books such as Ulakam Paraviya Tamiḷiṇ Vēr-Kal (The Worldwide Spread of the Tamil Root: Kal), TamiḷumIntō-Airōppiya Molikaḷum: Molī Uṇavu Āyvu (Tamil and Indo-European Languages: Study of Language Relations), and Tamiḷkappal (The Tamil Ship). ■

CHENNAI INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR 2026: A CONVERSATION BETWEEN CIVILISATIONS

The 4th edition of Chennai International Book Fair was successfully held from 16th-18th January 2026 at Kalaivanar Arangam, Chennai. Arya Karthikeyan shares highlights of this book fair.

The Chennai International Book Fair (CIBF) is rapidly becoming one of Asia's most attractive international book fairs. With three years of grand success and participation from more than 60 countries, CIBF in this 4th edition has attracted participation from 102 countries this year. This event has seen a record high in the number of Expressions of Interest signed, at around 3,000. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M.K.Stalin, remarked, "To spread the immense wealth that books are, for years we have been hosting such Book Fairs, and I am proud to say that our 4th CIBF has also been executed to perfection."

The inauguration ceremony...

The inauguration ceremony of CIBF 2026 was attended by dignitaries like Kanimozhi Karunanidhi, Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha; Madhu Bangarappa, Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Government of Karnataka; Claudia Kaiser, Vice President of Business Development, FBM; Etienne



Rolland, Consul General of France in Pondicherry and Chennai; and Dr. M.Aarti, IAS, Managing Director of Tamil Nadu Textbook and Educational Services Corporation.

During the ceremony, Dr. B. Chandramohan, the Additional Chief Secretary to the Government Department of School Education, expressed that CIBF was not just an event but a living idea.

"When we think of civilisations, we tend to picture monuments, statues, and maps. But these aren't eternal; they corrode, break and are redrawn. Language is the lifeblood of civilization, and it is this language and literature that are passed down, generation to generation, ensuring the civilization lives forever. Tamil is one of the greatest living civilizations of the world, staying rooted in its own soil while also stamping its presence in distant shores. Through translations, we can build bridges and relationships," he added.

Dr. Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi, Minister of School Education of Tamil Nadu, said, "Collaboration, not mere observation, was the goal of this distinguished event. A stage for Tamil voices to be heard, understood and appreciated, as well as an opportunity for all languages to participate in equal dialogue. We should show our acknowledgment to the rich substance that all international and regional languages bring to the discussion. Unity in diversity is the national language of India."

Claudia Kaiser, Vice President of business development of The Frankfurt Book Fair stated "We need to understand the world wherever we go, and we need the world to understand us. We achieve this through books. Through platforms like this, we can foster networks from which even our German publishers will benefit. So literary opportunities like this are very important to us."



Claudia Kaiser

TAMIL TO THE WORLD AND BRINGING THE WORLD TO TAMIL DELEGATES' VIEWPOINTS...



1. Adiela Akoo Quilled Ink Press, South Africa, shared: "Our demographic is international because the things we write about are universal. Some of our poetry does attach to some themes specific to South Africa but the unifying factor when it comes

to poetry is that we are all one." Primarily working with poetry, this press expanded into children's books as well. They publish poet laureates from across the world. The press has already signed several EOIs and hopes to take more soulful Indian poetry to the frontline.



2. Agnes Debiage, France: As the connector for the African publishers, she spoke about how advantageous it was for her that there was a focus on the literary agents from the African continent and that there were so many delegations invited. "This year, there are 19 publishers from 19 Francophone

countries. I can connect them and help them choose the right publisher for their work.", she stated.



3. Alyssa Bierzynski, Alybiz, Grenada:

As one of the founders of the Grenada Book Festival, which is the first of its kind in the country, she explained how she was passionate about creating a space for Grenadian authors to shift from self-publishing to traditional publishing with the help of the contacts she has obtained at CIBF.



4. Brooke O'Donnell, IPG, USA: "CIBF

has opened the door to publishers I might not have found on my own." She stated that countries having an English language component act as a sieve for her to determine which new ventures to take on. She also met with publishers she was already familiar with to see how their programmes had developed.



5. Christian Weiss, Draupadi Verlag, Germany: The publishing house mainly focuses on direct translations of important Indian works of literature from Hindi, Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil and Urdu into German. "Translating and printing costs a lot

of money, so I'm hoping to get some financial help by building strong connections at CIBF. It's great that the government offers such overwhelming support because we are hoping to earn grants to publish more beautiful Tamil literature in German," he said.



6. Dinesh Sinha, Ratna Books, India:

Typically working with Malayalam, Tamil and Odia translations, they secured more partnerships with the Indian writers and literary agents who were in attendance at the event.



7. Eric Kuna, University of Technology Press, Papua New Guinea:

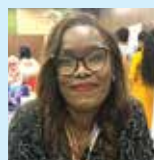
"India is a very diverse country with so many different regional languages. We hope to mainly focus on translating educational and academic material from Tamil to Tok Pisin and English.

Literacy doesn't reach every part of our country, and I'm hoping these books will help make a change to that," he commented.



8. GeumJoo Lin, Co Mint, South Korea:

This event had given her the chance to interact with many publishers from many regions of India. "The fair did a great job of facilitating cultural exchange. It is a good gateway to understand more about literary works in different languages."



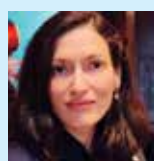
9. Joan Onyando, Ekitabu Publishers, Kenya:

"Tamil publishers know what they want and are enthusiastic," she commented. Seeing their spirit and clear objectives, she feels like Tamil is a very vibrant language and has a very good literary market.



10. Kannan Sundaram, Kalachuvadu Publications, India:

"In other venues, Tamil is one among several languages. In CIBF, it is the main focus of attention." Tamil is an international language and Sundaram expressed his intent to continue to print and distribute Tamil books all over the world.



11. Leticia Ibanez, France:

"CIBF evolves to foster conversation between Tamil Nadu, the rest of India and the rest of the world, not only about literature, but about novel ways of publishing and brings texts into the spotlight." Ibanez expressed her gratitude

towards the organizers for promoting Tamil literature to the global publishing market.



12. Mustafa Doğru, Yumurcak Publishing, Turkey:

This family-owned business works mainly with children's books and some educational material. He expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to interact with literary agents that he otherwise might

not have met.



13. Nour Arab, Nour Publishing, UAE:

Specializing in bilingual children's books, specifically Arabic and English (occasionally French), she has also signed many EOIs to work with Tamil authors to translate her work. "My books are based on real life incidents between me and my

children, so to be able to bring them to life is really special", she said.



14. Peter Dowling, Oratia Books, New Zealand: “The Indian market is very dynamic. There are many new opportunities available, and we are looking for potential new projects so we can translate them from Tamil to Māori.”



15. Stella Johannesdottir, Reykjavik Literary Agency, Iceland: “Passion for books unifies us. We are always trying to find ways to make stories travel,” she said. Being the only literary agency in Iceland, she was eager to be able to speak to agents from different publishing sectors to gain different perspectives on the market, so she can take home information on what various readers are interested in.



16. V.C. Thomas, Thomas Editions, India: Having been in the literary field for several years, Thomas expressed his sincere appreciation for CIBF, stating that it has been a dream to see an event of this magnitude, monumental success and reach take shape in India. The wide international participation also provides for him a chance to obtain direct translations from Malayalam to other languages, without English as an intermediary.



17. Dr. P. Vijaykumar, Babasaheb Ambedkar Art and Literature Society Publication, India: The organization mainly publishes books about the unsung heroes of Tamil literature. They work on bringing forth the forgotten work of several Tamil writers and have dabbled in translations from Arabic. CIBF will aid them in expanding their reach and further accentuating the importance of the literary work they revive.

Panel discussions...

The 3-day conference brought with it a series of 17 panel discussions such as *The Threshold: Prison or Launchpad?*; *Bridging the Gap : Passion vs Pocket*; *AI: Aladdin’s lamp or the Trojan Horse?* and more.

During one such discussion, Thomas Hitoshi Pruiksma said he tries to bring out both a synthetic and lyrical understanding of famous and compelling Tamil works of literature such as Thiruvalluvar’s *Tirukkural*.

Another discussion brought up the topic “*Passion vs Pocket*”, which was broached by Simon Trewin clearly stating that the two are inseparable. The former starts the work, and the latter provides the enabling ecosystem running well enough to let the work speak. Jacks Thomas shed light on the tragedy in young readers perusing books only in English and not in their native language.

When debating on The bestseller master piece merchandise or myth, Elena Pasoli remarked that bestsellers aren’t a genre, but a path, a trajectory. “It can be achieved over time.

While discussing the effect and power of translations and building literary partnerships between languages, Manushyaputhiran added that knowledge and literature have not yet been democratized in many places. It is the duty



of the writers, publishers, and other literary agents to make their work available to all sections of society. Each culture brings with it generous amounts of knowledge and it is important to have the opportunity to explore what all various cultures bring to the table. Books are a window into people’s worlds,” she said.

This event was concluded with a statement by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M.K. Stalin, “To spread the immense wealth that books are, for years we have been hosting such Book Fairs, and I am

proud to say that our 4th CIBF has also been executed to perfection.” By bringing Tamil to the world and bringing the world to Tamil, CIBF has accomplished an enormous feat in facilitating collaborations between so many esteemed international and Indian literary agents.

What ended was the event. What begins is the journey. The conversations that had started here will now travel the world across countries, through publishers and readers, gathering numbers, voices and strength as they go.



NEW DELHI WORLD BOOK FAIR 2026 ATTRACT TWO MILLION FOOTFALLS IN NINE DAYS

Organised by the National Book Trust, the New Delhi World Book Fair 2026 was a bustling hub of literature, culture, and ideas, bringing together publishers, authors, and readers from across India and around the world.

The New Delhi World Book Fair 2026 was successfully held from January 10-18, 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, with a massive turnout, as book lovers from all age groups thronged the venue on the final day to grab their favourite titles, take part in cultural programmes and soak in the vibrant literary atmosphere. Organised by the National Book Trust (NBT) under the Ministry of Education, this year's theme was "Indian Military History: Valour and Wisdom @75", with a special focus on the legacy of the Indian Armed Forces.

The event inaugurated by Union Minister for Education Dharmendra Pradhan, brought together over 50 countries, with Qatar participating as the Guest of Honour and Spain designated as the Focus Country, highlighting strong cross-cultural engagement. Spread across Halls 2 to 6, nearly 3,000 stalls were set up by more than 1,000 publishers from India and overseas. The fair celebrated linguistic diversity by presenting books in over 30 languages, including Hindi, English, and a wide range of Indian regional languages recognised under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Complementing the physical exhibition, the digital library initiative, Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya, expanded access to literature by offering more than 6,000 eBooks in over 23 languages, while international pavilions showcased works in languages such as Arabic, Spanish, Russian, French, and Japanese.

As soon as the entry started, halls buzzed with energy as families, students, young readers and senior citizens moved across stalls, making the most of heavy



discounts offered by publishers and booksellers. Exhibitors reported a sharp surge in sales on the concluding day, attributing it to attractive price cuts and the festive weekend mood.

"The sales suddenly went up on the last day. I am happy to share that most of our stock has been cleared. The enthusiasm of young readers proves that the habit of reading books is very much alive," an exhibitor said, expressing satisfaction over the response.

Visitors echoed similar sentiments. Saloni, a visitor, said she made it a point to attend the fair on its last day. "I didn't want to miss the opportunity. Since it was the final day, I had to come. Apart from buying my favourite books, I enjoyed the Kavi Sammelan and there was a lot to learn for children at the Bal Mandap. I have also captured many memories here. It's a fantastic event," she said.

Over two million footfalls in nine days

Yuvraj Malik, Director of National Book Trust, said, "It's so heartening to see thousands and thousands of people turning up here—around two million in footfall over the last nine days. I think we can proudly say that we have been able to bring people closer to books, literature, art, culture, and festivity around content. The way people are buying books is encouraging; it shows that the reading culture is being revived. It is a myth that the younger generation and Gen Z are stuck to their handsets. After seeing people buying books here, it is clear that they are not too attached to their gadgets. They have a very deep desire to read, and we need to present books to

them in a meaningful way and in the right perspective. People are willing to read."

"We would like to bring more platform for young authors. We are surprised to see hundreds of young authors, first-time authors, school children who are authors. So, we'll definitely create a children author platform for such upcoming young authors," added Yuvraj.

The final day witnessed overwhelming participation in various activities, including book launches, panel discussions and interactive sessions with authors. A special attraction was the Kavi Sammelan organised by the Rekhta Foundation, which drew large crowds and added a poetic flourish to the concluding celebrations.

Book launches and discussions continued

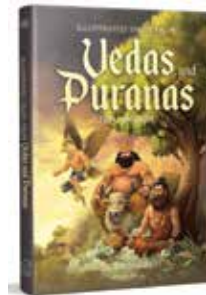
The series of book launches and discussions continued even on the concluding day with the launch of the book *The Human Edge in an AI-Driven Cyber World*, authored by Nitin Seth, co-founder and CEO of Incedo Inc., a payment platform.

"AI is not just a technological change but a significant evolution in the human journey. Some believe that AI may possibly be humanity's last major invention, but I am optimistic about the future. Undoubtedly, AI has significantly affected jobs, but I see it as a transformer that is opening new avenues for entrepreneurship. We should see it as an opportunity," said Nitin.

Children-centric activities at the Bal Mandap continued to engage young minds through storytelling sessions, creative workshops and learning-based programmes, making the fair a family-friendly destination even on its last day. ■



WHY ANCIENT INDIAN STORIES STILL MATTER FOR CHILDREN TODAY?



At a time when children are surrounded by digital distractions and fast-changing trends, the timeless wisdom of ancient Indian storytelling continues to offer values that remain deeply relevant. Dr. Shubha Vilas reflects on why ancient Indian stories still matter.

In a world saturated with digital noise, short-lived trends, and fleeting conversations, we often find ourselves searching for something grounded, a sense of direction for the next generation. Storytelling is as old as humanity itself and yet as young as a child's heart. While modern education provides the tools for professional success, there is a certain "digested wisdom" found in our ancient texts that addresses the deeper needs of self-growth and character.

What complicated philosophy cannot achieve in years, a well-told story can achieve in minutes. These narratives are not just relics of the past. They are resplendent gems of wisdom that inspire deep thinking and provide a moral compass for the youth of today.

The art of passing down culture...

Passing down culture is more than just reciting historical dates; it is about inviting the next generation to embark on an adventure that increases the depth and width of their lives. Ancient stories serve as a bridge, connecting the "bottomless ocean" of Vedic wisdom to the practical realities of modern day-to-day life.

Take, for instance, the tale of Garuda. His journey to retrieve the celestial nectar was born out of a pure, selfless intent to free his mother from slavery. Through his actions, children learn that remarkable achievements often stem from acts of devotion and a focus on one's duty rather



Dr. Shubha Vilas

than personal gain. Similarly, the life of Ashtavakra serves as a powerful reminder that physical challenges do not define a person's worth. Despite his disabilities, he stood tall in the court of King Janaka, proving that true maturity is found in knowledge, austerity, and character rather than just age or appearance.

When children see these vivid characters, illustrated beautifully to capture their imagination, the values of resilience and integrity become tangible. They begin to understand that they belong to a lineage of thinkers and warriors who valued truth above all else.

Education through stories...

Ancient stories provide a unique form of moral education that feels like an invitation rather than a lecture. They allow children

to explore complex themes like honesty, forgiveness, and the consequences of one's choices through a lens of wonder.

Ultimately, these ancient tales teach children that there is "good in everyone" and that the universal goal is happiness and self-growth. By integrating scriptural wisdom into their early years, we aren't just telling them what happened thousands of years ago; we are showing them how to lead a magical life today.

The greatest gift we can offer our children is a foundation built on values that never expire. These stories are not just to be read, but to be lived, serving as a guiding light through the complexities of the modern world. I invite you to open the pages of "Illustrated Tales from Vedas and Puranas" book and embark on a transformative journey that will nurture the hearts and minds of the next generation. Step into a world where courage meets compassion and ancient wisdom meets modern curiosity.

Dr. Shubha Vilas is a lifestyle coach, storyteller, and author. Ramayana: The Game of Life is his bestselling series. His work focuses on applying scriptural wisdom in day-to-day life and addressing the needs of corporates and the youth. He has delivered more than 6,000 talks across twenty countries. He has also spoken at Google, Microsoft, Amazon, and Samsung offices. His latest book, Illustrated Tales from Vedas and Puranas for Children, is published by Wonder House India.

BOOK IN FOCUS

BETWEEN TEHRAN AND TEL AVIV: GAZA'S STORY OF UNENDING WAR

Author: Colonel Rajeev Agarwal
ISBN: 9788199772892

Publisher: Pentagon Press

West Asia sits at the crossroads of power, faith, and conflict. Rich in energy resources and commanding some of the world's most critical maritime routes, the region has been shaped by rivalries, shifting alliances, and unresolved historical disputes. At the centre of these tensions lies the Palestine question, a deep fault line that has defined the region's political and strategic landscape for decades.

The war took a dangerous turn when Iran entered the conflict in April 2024, leading to the first direct military confrontation between Tehran and Tel Aviv. What began in Gaza quickly evolved into a wider regional struggle involving proxy militias and global powers. The crisis



peaked during the '12 Day War' of June 2025, when the US struck Iran's nuclear facilities, pushing West Asia to the brink of a wider war.

Between Tehran and Tel Aviv: Gaza Story of an Unending War captures this dramatic and turbulent period. Through sharp analysis and vivid narration, the book examines how the Gaza war unfolded, why Iran and Israel entered direct conflict for the first time, and how the war reshaped the strategic landscape of West Asia. It relives moments of victory, defeat, death, anxiety and hope along the way.

A gripping account of war, power, and geopolitics, this is the story of a conflict that may have paused, but is far from over.

The author Colonel Rajeev Agarwal is a well-established researcher in international relations and security studies. His research specifically focuses on the West Asian region. He has written extensively on the Gaza War, the Iran Nuclear Issue, the Gulf Security Architecture, etc.

ANNUAL BESTSELLER AWARDS RECOGNIZE BESTSELLING AUTHORS

NielsenIQBookData, in partnership with BolognaBookPlus, celebrated the annual Bestseller Awards in central London with Ruth Jones, Davina McCall and David Nicholls among the stellar line-up of prize-winning authors.



The Bestseller Awards, which were presented by Rebecca Jones, former BBC arts correspondent and Chief News Presenter, are the only awards based on UK volume sales data, recognising all-time sales across print and e-book formats. The awards honour the authors whose books have sold more than 250,000 copies (Silver); more than 500,000 copies (Gold); and more than one million copies (Platinum).

The Awards celebrated 21 stand-out titles that have achieved Silver, Gold and Platinum status, together totalling sales of more than 7.3 million books. The UK bookmarket continues to demonstrate its resilience, with readers showing a strong appetite for a good story particularly in the crime thriller genre, with fiction sales rising in volume by 0.2%. In total, more than 191m print books were purchased in the UK in 2025, generating £1.814bn in value. On average, more than half a million books were bought each day last year.

The awards...

The journalist and author Bella Mackie received a Platinum award for her dark and satirical debut novel *How to Kill Your Family*.



The Series Platinum Award this year goes to author Jim Field and illustrator Kes Gray for achieving sales of more than two million copies of the laugh-out-loud children's book *Oi Frog*. This new award was introduced last year to recognise and

acknowledge a series that has gone on to achieve great success, not just in terms of sales but also for sustaining reader loyalty.

Children's book sales were further celebrated at the Bestseller Awards with author Fiona Watt receiving the Author Platinum Award in recognition of sales of more than five million copies of her bestselling baby and toddler book series *That's Not My...* Fiona Watt, who has been an in-house author and Editorial Director at Usborne for more than 30 years, has to date sold more than 20 million books.

Three authors received the Gold Award: thriller writers Claire Douglas for *The Wrong Sister*, T.M. Logan for *Lies*, and Asako Yuzuki for *Butter*.



Thirteen authors were presented with Silver awards. Davina McCall and Dr Naomi Potter achieved Silver status for their game-changing women's health title *Menopausal*, alongside Caroline Hirons for *Skincare*.

Gavin and Stacey star Ruth Jones picked up the most awards on the night, taking home three Silver awards for her three novels *Love Untold*, *Never Green* and *Us Three*. Also recognised in the Silver category were David Nicholls for *You Are Here*; psychological thriller writer B. A. Paris for *The Breakdown*; and Sarah Winman for *Still Life*. Silver awards went to four authors for their debut novels: Michelle Frances for *The Girlfriend*; Jennie Godfrey for *List of Suspicious Things*; Monica



Heisey for *Really Good, Actually*; and Janice Hallett for *The Appeal*. Meanwhile, Claire Douglas picked up her second award of the night for *The New Neighbours*, and *New York Times* best-selling author Coco Mellors received two silver awards for *Cleopatra and Frankenstein* and for *Blue Sisters*.

Commenting on behalf of NielsenIQBookData, Andre Breedt, Managing Director, said, "We're delighted to host The Bestseller Awards once again and to shine a spotlight on the incredible achievements of authors, illustrators, and the teams who champion their work."

Jacks Thomas, Guest Director, BolognaBookPlus, said, "In a fast-changing digital world, the recognition of the written word directly from the creative mind that 'pens' it, is something to be valued and celebrated more than ever before. The world of book publishing depends on, and recognises, the symbiotic relationship between fact, fiction and how they are presented illustratively to the consumer. BolognaBookPlus is, as ever, in awe of the creativity statistically recognised at the Bestseller Awards and delighted to bring them to a wider audience."

What next?

This year sees the expansion of the NielsenIQBookData Bestseller Awards into the Italian market. The inaugural Italian Bestseller Awards will be announced at BolognaBookPlus on 13 April and will feature three categories: Adult Fiction, Adult Non-Fiction and Children's.

The Bestseller Awards data is provided by NielsenIQBookData's BookScan service, which has been tracking UK book sales continuously for over 30 years. BolognaBookPlus, an advocate of authors, rights, and creativity, delivers the annual awards in partnership with NielsenIQBookData. ■

WOMEN BOOK AWARDS 2026: A SPOTLIGHT ON PUBLISHING, REPRESENTATION AND CULTURAL IMPACT

For Rwanda's publishing sector, the Women Book Awards 2026 was more than a celebration of authors—it was a statement about the evolving ecosystem of publishing, literacy, and cultural storytelling. Mutesi Gasana Chantal brings more.

Held in Kigali during Women's Month, Women Book Awards 2026 illuminated how women in publishing—from writers and editors to cultural advocates—are shaping the country's literary and educational landscape, while simultaneously reinforcing why representation and diverse voices are critical to the sustainability of the industry.

The awards brought together authors, publishers, educators, and international diplomats, highlighting the interdependent nature of publishing in Rwanda. As curator Gasana Mutesi reflected, the sector is not just about books on shelves; it is about how stories travel, whose perspectives are amplified, and how publishing can nurture identity. Gasana recalled her early experiences in the industry, noting that most books available to young readers featured foreign cultures. "Women are often the first storytellers to their children," she said. "By writing our own stories, we ensure that culture, language, and lived experience are preserved for future generations."

Keynote address...

The theme of representation resonated strongly throughout the ceremony. Madam Kazree Gogoi, spouse of the Ambassador of India to Rwanda, delivered a keynote addressing why diversity in publishing is essential. She emphasized that the stories circulating in society shape cultural understanding and influence who is seen, heard, and valued. "For literature to reflect society meaningfully," she noted, "it must include voices that have historically been underrepresented. Female voices in publishing are not just symbolic—they are transformative." Her remarks underscored the publishing sector's role as a gatekeeper of culture and identity, and highlighted the ongoing need to invest in platforms that elevate marginalized perspectives.

The awards...

International engagement reinforced this point. The Ambassador of Germany to Rwanda, Amb Heike Uter Dettmann personally awarded five women across five different categories, signaling recognition of Rwanda's growing literary



ecosystem and its potential as a hub for cultural diplomacy. This intersection between publishing, education, and international collaboration reflects a broader understanding that books are not just commercial products—they are instruments of knowledge, representation, and influence.

The awards themselves reflected the range of publishing roles that sustain Rwanda's literary ecosystem. Emerging voices such as Lise Nova Berwadushime, who received the Emerging Talent Award, demonstrate how writing and storytelling respond to lived experience, providing content that resonates with readers and strengthens local markets. Young author Denyse Umuhuza was recognized for her contributions to children's literacy through community library initiatives, illustrating the essential link between content creation, distribution, and readership.

Publishing leadership was also highlighted. Judence Kayitesi of Inzoki Publishers was recognized for her commitment to bridging the gap between writers and readers, demonstrating how publishers play a central role in ensuring that stories not only exist but circulate effectively. Initiatives like Betsy Dickey's Reading Riders program further underscore the role of distribution and outreach in building the reading market and strengthening the publishing sector.

Inclusivity and representation were emphasized across award categories. Credia Umuhire Ruzigana received the Inclusive Publishing Award for producing braille books and culturally contextualized

materials, expanding access to literature for marginalized readers. Similarly, Umuneza Denys was recognized for promoting Kinyarwanda and Rwandan culture through her work with Muraho Rwanda, demonstrating how cultural preservation is a key component of publishing strategy in local markets.

On the authorial front, award-winning author Mukagasana Yolande emphasized the strategic importance of nurturing young writers while preserving Kinyarwanda. "Young people are a key highlight in these awards," she said. "I want to encourage them to write in Kinyarwanda because Kinyarwanda is us. If our language dies, we die with it." Her remarks reminded attendees that publishing decisions—what gets printed, marketed, and circulated—have cultural consequences and directly affect the long-term vitality of local literary ecosystems.

Diverse voices...

The evening also included insights from international voices in literature. Ambassador Irene Vida Gala, the Brazilian envoy to Rwanda, encouraged women to assert themselves in creative and professional spaces. "Women sometimes need to be a little annoying to take up space," she said, emphasizing that visibility and persistence are integral to achieving influence within the publishing sector.

Keynote speaker Bianca Santana highlighted Rwanda's global leadership in gender representation, pointing out that women hold roughly 60 percent

Continued on page 27

INTERNATIONAL BOOK MARKET 2025 SHOWS INDIA IS A HIGH-GROWTH MARKET

Fiction continues to drive growth as non-fiction remains under pressure and price increases partially slow down.

NielsenIQBookData and GfK Entertainment have released their international data for 2025 at the London Book Fair. The representative data shows revenue growth in 12 of the nineteen territories analyzed, driven in particular by fiction. Average book prices rose in almost all markets, though in many places the rate of increase had slowed compared with the previous year.

The international book markets paint a mixed picture for 2025: While 12 of the nineteen territories surveyed – including high-growth markets such as India (+20.7%), Brazil (+11.2%), and Mexico (+7.0%) – reported revenue increases, sales continued to decline in major European markets such as Italy (-2.1%), France (-1.5%), and the United Kingdom (-0.5%). Oceania, on the other hand, showed a notable upswing: after experiencing losses the previous year, both Australia (+3.2%) and New Zealand (+6.9%) finished significantly in the positive range.

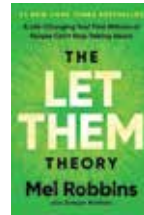
Strong demand for fiction, children's and young adult books

As in 2024, fiction stood out as the market's strongest growth driver. The representative annual data shows that 15 of the territories analyzed increased their revenues in this segment. Crime authors such as Freida McFadden and thriller specialists like Dan Brown were particularly popular: One or more of

McFadden's titles appear among the top 20 bestselling books of the year in nine territories, with *The Housemaid* the number one bestseller overall in France, Spain and Wallonia. Dan Brown's new novel *The Secret of Secrets* ranked among the three bestselling books of 2025 in five territories: Colombia, Flanders, Italy, the Netherlands, and Portugal. Science fiction and fantasy titles – including Rebecca Yarros' *Empyrean* series – also enjoyed worldwide success. Children's and young adult books mirrored this positive performance, recording revenue growth in three quarters of the markets analyzed.

The Let Them Theory performs strongly among non-fiction buyers

The non-fiction market remains under pressure, with only seven territories reporting revenue growth year on year in 2025. Bestsellers such as Mel Robbins' behavioral guide *The Let Them Theory* proved resilient, becoming the bestselling book of the year in Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and South Africa. Many readers also gravitated toward *Atomic Habits* (James Clear), *Ikigai* (Héctor García & Francesc Miralles), and *The Psychology of Money* (Morgan Housel).



Ten territories report growth in unit sales

When looking at unit sales – the total number of books sold – ten

territories managed to grow. Here, too, the differences were considerable: South Africa (+4.6%) sold more books compared to the previous year, as did Australia (+1.4%) and New Zealand (+9.6%). Mexico also recorded higher unit sales, though its growth rate slowed from +10.6% to +3.9%. Poland (-4.9%), Italy, and the Netherlands (each -3.0%) reported significant declines.

Price increases slowing in many markets

Average book prices continued to rise in 2025 – except in New Zealand (-2.5% to 21.54 NZD) and South Africa (-1.2% to 363.41 ZAR). However, half of the markets surveyed posted smaller price increases than in the previous year, including India (+1.8% compared with +8.1% the year before) and Brazil (+0.5% compared with +9.0%). The UK book market saw prices rise by 2.0% to 9.52 GBP in 2025, while France recorded a 1.0% increase to 12.83 EUR.

About the study

The analysis is based on point-of-sale data on printed books for 2025 for the following territories: Australia, Belgium (Flanders/Wallonia), Brazil, Colombia, France, India, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Spain, South Africa, Switzerland (German-speaking and Romandy regions), and the UK. Market coverage and included genres may vary from country to country. ■

Continued from page 26 Women Book Awards 2026: A Spotlight on Publishing, Representation and Cultural Impact

of parliamentary seats, compared to 18 percent in Brazil. For her, publishing was not merely an art form but a responsibility. “Do not hold back,” she told the audience. “Work toward quality, and let your voices speak out.” Her remarks framed publishing as both a platform for excellence and a mechanism for social accountability, emphasizing the need for authors and publishers to maintain high standards while representing diverse experiences.

The 2026 awards illustrate several industry realities: publishing is not just a business; it is a cultural ecosystem



requiring investment in diverse voices, attention to language, and strategies that connect authors, readers, and communities. Representation—gendered, linguistic, and cultural—is not merely symbolic; it is central to sustaining readership, nurturing talent, and maintaining relevance in an increasingly globalized market.

By spotlighting authors, publishers, and literacy innovators, the Women Book Awards reaffirmed that publishing in Rwanda is at an inflection point. It is a sector where women are defining markets, setting standards for quality, and ensuring

that stories reflect the breadth of Rwandan experience. With support from local institutions and international partners, this ecosystem is poised to continue expanding, demonstrating how literature, publishing, and representation converge to shape both culture and society.

Mutesi Gasana Chantal is a Rwandan author, publisher, bookseller, and passionate literacy champion. As the founder of key initiatives in the local publishing and book distribution space, she has played a vital role in promoting a reading culture across Rwanda and beyond. Through her work, Chantal empowers writers, nurtures local storytelling, and advocates for accessible education and literacy. ■

BOLOGNABOOKPLUS 2026: A VIBRANT MARKET PLACE AND THINK TANK

As global publishing confronts technological disruption and shifting markets, BolognaBookPlus 2026 positions itself as both marketplace and think tank – a space where commerce, creativity and innovation meet under one roof in Bologna. Jacks Thomas, Guest Director, BolognaBookPlus, shares more.

From 13–16 April 2026, BolognaBookPlus returns for its sixth edition, consolidating its role as the general trade publishing arm of the Bologna Children's Book Fair. Launched in 2021 in collaboration with the Italian Publishers Association (AIE), the initiative was designed to expand the scope of the historic fair beyond children's books and into the wider international trade market. Six years on, it has become a key meeting point for publishers, agents, authors, designers and technology leaders navigating a rapidly evolving industry.

The highlights...

Alongside a busy exhibition floor — which includes the Italian Publishers Pavilion created with AIE — BolognaBookPlus offers a programme that mirrors the pressures and possibilities reshaping publishing today: rights and licensing expertise, audio innovation, artificial intelligence, design culture and author-focused professional development.

The programme begins even before the fair officially opens. On Sunday 12 April, the popular training event *How to Sell Rights and Understand Licensing in Children's Publishing* returns, offering a practical and comprehensive introduction to rights for newcomers and a valuable refresher for authors, editors and publishing professionals seeking to deepen their understanding of international licensing.

Among the most accessible exhibition opportunities is the *New Title Showcase*, managed by Combined Book Exhibit. Positioned at the heart of the BBPlus area, it provides publishers and authors with a cost-effective way to present print and digital titles to an international audience, reinforcing Bologna's reputation as a rights-driven marketplace.

Technology and new formats take centre stage during the week. The *Audio Forum*, scheduled for Wednesday 15 April at the BBPlus Theatre, will explore the booming audiobook and podcast sectors. Sponsored by ElevenLabs, Bookwire and Zebralution, the half-day conference



Jacks Thomas

brings together global experts to examine how innovation, artificial voice tools and shifting consumer habits are transforming the way stories are produced, distributed and monetised.

Artificial intelligence remains high on the agenda with the expanded AI Summit on 14 April, curated in partnership with Shimmr AI. Now in its second edition, the summit gathers speakers from across Europe, the UK, the US and India to discuss agentic systems across editorial workflows, data-driven decision-making, and the evolving implications of AI for rights, licensing and creative practice. As publishing grapples with automation and intelligent tools, the event positions BolognaBookPlus as a forum for forward-looking, international dialogue.

Creative leadership is also central to the 2026 edition. The Author Ambassador is Polish writer Rafał Kosik, while the Illustration Ambassador is Norwegian artist Mari Kanstad Johnsen, representing the Guest of Honour country, Norway. Johnsen will be closely involved in seminars and workshops throughout the fair, particularly within one of this year's major new initiatives: *The Designer Studio*.

The Designer Studio...

Developed by BolognaBookPlus and curated by Mimaster Illustrazione,



The Designer Studio is dedicated to art direction, editorial design and non-children's illustration. Its debut edition focuses on the book cover as both a cultural object and a marketing tool, offering masterclasses, workshops and portfolio reviews led by leading international figures. Among the invited guests are illustrators Pablo Amargo, Jon Gray and Lorenzo Mattotti, alongside art directors including DJ Stout of Pentagram.

The showcase...

Exhibitions further enrich the programme. The long-running *Jackets Off!* showcase this year pays tribute to Agatha Christie, marking fifty years since her death, with a special focus on illustrator Ferenc Pintér. Titled *50 PINTÉR X 50 CHRISTIE*, the exhibition is realised by Fondazione Arnaldo e Alberto Mondadori and traces more than three decades of Pintér's iconic cover work for Mondadori, accompanied by archival documents and correspondence that illuminate the editorial history behind the imagery.

The awards...

New awards and professional spaces round out the edition. The Indie Authors Book Jacket Award returns, celebrating innovative cover design, while the Italian Bestseller Awards debut in partnership with NielsenIQBookData. Meanwhile, *WritersLab* launches as a dedicated area for authors from both children's and general publishing, offering networking and professional development opportunities in recognition of writing as a profession in its own right. ■

THE BOLOGNA RIGHTS CENTRE

Open to agents and scouts from both adult and children's publishing.

Rights professionals from exhibiting companies across BCBF, BBPlus and BLTF are also welcome!

Get in touch!



BOLOGNA
13-16 APRIL 2026
ITALY

Design • chia1ab.it



BOLOGNA
CHILDREN'S
BOOK
FAIR



BOLOGNA
BOOK
PLUS

In partnership with
AIE Associazione
Italiana
Editori



Bologna
Licensing
Trade
Fair

Events by



With the support of



STORIES, CULTURES AND CONNECTIONS @ SHARJAH FESTIVAL OF AFRICAN LITERATURE 2026

Sharjah Festival of African Literature 2026 concluded with 11,108 visitors, carries forward countless cultural prospects. Authors, publishers, artists and community members built intercultural connections, sharing stories, knowledge and experiences between Africa and the Arab world.

The second edition of the Sharjah Festival of African Literature (SFAL 2026) concluded after enriching African-Arab cultural and literary exchange and welcoming 11,108 visitors, marking an increase from the 10,000-plus attendees last year. During the five days of SFAL 2026 from January 14 to 18, “The African Way” theme prevailed across all programmes, from colourful folk performances to hands-on workshops, insightful talks by prominent authors, a wealth of knowledge at bookstalls, and flavourful cuisines.

Creating a regional space for Africa's heritage and knowledge

Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan Al Qasimi, Chairperson of the Sharjah Book Authority in the presence of Mariam Mwinyi, First Lady of Zanzibar, Founder and Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Zanzibar Maisha Bora Foundation (ZMBF), inaugurated the second edition of the Sharjah Festival of African Literature (SFAL). Ahmed bin Rakkad Al Ameri, CEO of Sharjah Book Authority (SBA), said the rising popularity of the Sharjah Festival of African Literature reflects the increasingly growing appeal of cross-cultural exchanges, in all its forms, for communities from Africa and the Arab world. “SFAL has created a beloved space for members of the public, writers, intellectuals, artists and creative communities to experience and share the rich traditions of Africa. Culture defines us, inspires us and encourages us to learn from each other,” he added.

Al Ameri further noted, “Under the directives of Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan Al Qasimi, Chairperson of SBA, we remain committed to widening the scope and scale of the festival in future editions, in line with Sharjah’s global leadership in advancing the exchange of knowledge, creativity and culture between people from around the world.”

Confluence of cultures between Africa and the Arab world

On the closing day of the festival, a panel discussion, titled “Shared African–Arab Cultural Influence” featured H.E. Dr.



Abdulaziz Almusallam, Chairman of the Sharjah Institute for Heritage, Zanzibari writer Ally Baharoon; and Zimbabwean novelist Sipiwe Gloria Ndlovu, winner of the Best International Fiction prize of the 2025 Sharjah International Book Fair (SIBF) Awards.

Another session in which culture, identity and belonging were also explored, featured acclaimed poet and author Lemn Sissay. The in-conversation session, moderated by Layla Mohammed, was titled after his memoir, *My Name is Why*, which follows his journey from the UK care system to international literary recognition, highlighting how literature empowers people to rise against the odds.

The day’s cultural programme included a session on “Stories of What Lies Ahead in African Literature”, led by Ugandan writer and filmmaker Dilman Dila and moderated by Layla Mohammed. Dila said African writing styles today mix myth and futurism to cater to modern themes such as urbanisation and technology.

A poetry reading session titled “Breath, Rhythm, Belonging” concluded the programme, featuring MoAfrika wa Mokgathi, Afra Atiq, Bewketu Seyoum,

and Lebogang Mashile. The poets explored themes of home and longing through their recitals.

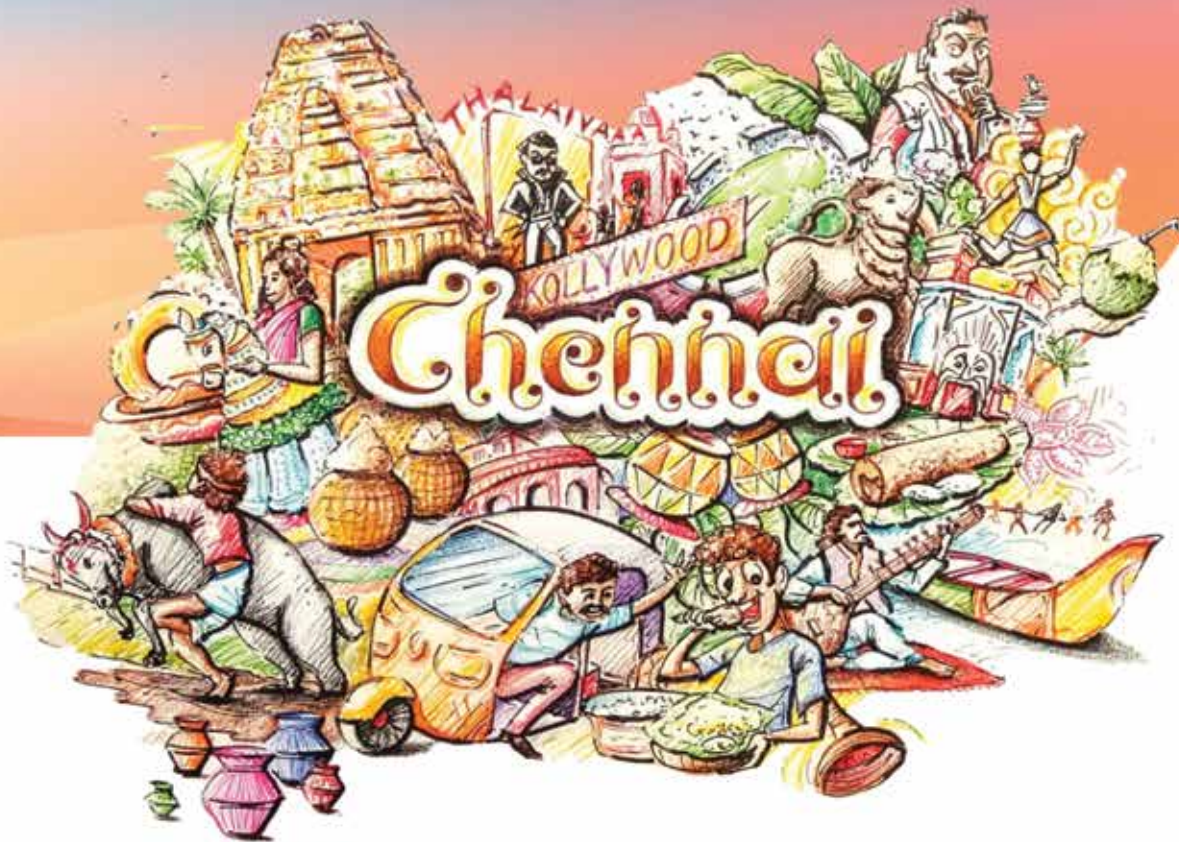
SFAL 2026 highlights and regional focus

This year, SFAL presented the Sharjah Lifetime Achievement in Literature Award to prominent Zimbabwean novelist and filmmaker Tsitsi Dangarembga, who has significantly contributed to African and world literature. At the festival, she praised SFAL as a vital platform for fostering dialogue and cultural interactions.

SFAL 2026, held at University City Hall Square, featured cultures and stories from various regions of Africa, with a special focus on literary experiences from Zanzibar, Ethiopia and South Africa.

The festival brought together 20 African writers and 9 Emirati authors who discussed traditional and contemporary African literature, while promoting cultural and intellectual exchange between Africa and the Arab world. The programme included poetry evenings, 20 workshops for children, 10 live culinary sessions, book signings, daily artistic and musical performances, art exhibitions and much more.

THE TOTAL PRINT & PACKAGE CONVERTING EXHIBITION



Organised By:
**ALL INDIA FEDERATION
 OF MASTER PRINTERS**

In Association With:
**REENVISION EVENTS
 PRIVATE LIMITED**

Scan to Register



Supported By:





A CHRONICLE OF LEARNING



Publishing
12000+
Titles

Educating
30 MN+
Students

Covering
45000+
Schools & Educational
Institutes

Renowned
2500+
Authors

Learning through
50 MN+
Books

Network of
4000+
Channel Partners

#SCHAND@86YEARS

PRINT CONTENT • DIGITAL SOLUTIONS • EARLY LEARNING • EDUCATION SERVICES

OUR GROUP COMPANIES, ASSOCIATES & BRANDS

