

Data from China Publishing and Media Journal: Book retail rebounded in the first half of 2020

商报·奥示数据显示:上半年图书零售市场回升降幅缩小

By Wen Dong

Data from China Publishing and Media Journal shows that under the impact of the coronavirus breakout, the number of books sold in Chinese book retail market dropped 17.01 percent in the first half of 2020, compared to the figure in the last year. The total revenue dropped 9.66 percent, but the figure was lower than the 11.4 percent decline in the total retail sales of consumer goods nationwide during the same period. Among them, the number of physical bookstore sales decreased by 30.28 percent year-on-year, and total revenue decreased by 32.4 percent. Sales of online bookstores decreased by 9.69 percent year-on-year, and total revenue decreased by 3.26 percent. The data, based on the retail and publishing companies, distributors, and online & offline retail stores (including JD and Dangdang), covers sales number of more than 3200 retail stores across China.

In the second quarter of this year, the overall book retail market grew month-on-month, with number of books sold up 29.74 percent and revenue up 47.42 percent. Among everything, the sales of science and tech books grew more than 90 percent due to the surge of demand in epidemic prevention and control books.

Both online and offline book sales show a stabilizing structure

Despite the extraordinary half year we have been through, the structure of book sales in brick

and mortar bookshops were relatively stable (see Figure 1), and was in fact very similar compared to the structure last year. Books of the educational and social science category ranked first and second respectively, and this has not changed since last year. The market share of educational books increased by 1.95 percent while the share of social science books increased 3.16 percent. Children's books and literature swapped their place and ranked third and fourth respectively. The market share of children's books increased by 1.17 percent while the share of literature decreased by 2.58 percent. Books on science and technology subjects ranked fifth, with market share decreased by 3.69 percent.

The market share of educational books is the biggest among the five categories, and showing a year on year expansion. This reflects the need of students who have to study at home during the epidemic. Even in this extraordinary period, students and parents still choose to purchase books in physical bookshops because the content is highly related to their study.

Compared with the offline market, the online market structure in the first half of the year was more stable (see Figure 2), with the market share of each segment in the same order as the same period last year. Children's book ranked first, with market share

expanding 4.05 percent, followed by educational books, whose market share shrink by 2.41 percent. The market share of social science books increased by 0.02 percent, the share of literature decreased by 1.83 percent and the share of science and tech books increased by 0.17 percent.

Children's books accounted for the largest share of the online market, and this has been the situation for many years. The share of children's books expanded even during the coronavirus outbreak, reflecting a very high degree of match between children's book and online retail. Parents who purchase books for their children at home need not compare between books too much before they place the order.

The number of frontlist titles reduced during the coronavirus outbreak

The market contribution of frontlist books remains low, and it will be some time for the market to fully recover from the outbreak. Due to the epidemic, the contribution of frontlist titles on online book retail market decreased and that on the offline market increased only slightly. Of the top 10 bestselling titles in all 5 categories, the number of frontlist titles is 9, accounting for only 18 percent. At the same time, the number of books which sold more than 50,000 copies decreased to a little more than 200.

(translated by Xiao Jianpeng)

Dangdang released its mid-year ranking: What were the top 30 best-selling books of the first half of the year?

当当公布年中榜:上半年最畅销的30种图书有哪些?

Dangdang's list of 30 titles in the sub-lists of fictions, non-fictions and children's books was released on June 22nd. The books were chosen based on the copies bought by online readers, overall sales figures and reviews.

The reason why *No Longer Human* by Osamu Dazai leaped to the first on the list and still impresses so many readers is the longing for life behind the sentimentalism of the author. Through the book, readers can feel the warmth still left on the heart of every human knocked down by life. The ups and downs of life are also reflected in *Sea of Life* by Mai Jia and *To Live* by Yu Hua. *What Kind of Life Do You Want to Live?*, a book that "Hayao Miyazaki read from the age of 10 to 70", is also the first choice of many readers. It conveys the belief that "no matter how difficult and cruel the times may be, live like a real person". These novels, which integrate into the book the things that are really important to life, making them the most popular books on the fiction list.

Big data from Dangdang shows that *Educated: A Memoir*, *Positive Discipline* and *Dan Sha Ri* are books that many readers would most likely to read on commute or after dinner. The books on the nonfiction list are very representative and the areas in which readers are most willing to take the time to improve themselves include lifestyle, intimate relationship, parent-child education, and personal development. Frontlist title *Half Hour Comic Series* has shifted the fashion of reading history to learning economics in the financial crisis. The author Chen Lei and the team has a large fan base that are loyal for every book they write. The history book, *Two Thousand Years of Terracotta Warriors*, published by literature and art book publisher White Horse Times, soon went to the top of the best-selling list of the genre.

In the list of top 10 children's books, *Magic School Bus* and books by "fairytale king" Zheng Yuanjie and Chen Weiping have long been popular with children, and in the first half of the year they are still the top three bestsellers. In terms of frontlist children's books, Chinese original works and imported ones have equally good results. Represented by *The Big Monsters in the Forbidden City* and *The Panoramic History of the World on the Map*, original children's books focus on the topics of Chinese history and culture, and win the heart of children and parents with a easy language. Children's literature *Pocket Detective* attracts many curious children with its adventurous story. The detective stories with a scientific twist, created by Uncle Kai, integrate many knowledge points of science class in primary schools, and therefore was loved by many parents and children.

(translated by Xiao Jianpeng)

Top 10 fictions

	TItle	Publisher
1	<i>No Longer Human</i>	Writers Publishing House
2	<i>The Three-bodied Problem</i>	Chongqing Publishing House
3	<i>A Small Shop By The Cloud</i>	Hunan Literature And Art Publishing House
4	<i>Life In A Ocean</i>	Beijing October Literature And Art Publishing House
5	<i>The Moon and Sixpence</i>	Zhejiang Literature And Art Publishing House
6	<i>To Live</i>	Writers Publishing House
7	<i>The Kite Runner</i>	Shanghai Peoples Publishing House
8	<i>The Eden of Fang Siqu's Virgin Love</i>	Beijing Union Publishing House
9	<i>What Kind Of Life Do You Want To Live</i>	Nanghai Publishing House
10	<i>Run Wild</i>	Beijing Union Publishing House

Top 10 non-fictions

	TItle	Publisher
1	<i>Educated: A Memoir</i>	Nan Hai Publishing Company
2	<i>Positive Discipline</i>	Beijing Union Publishing House
3	<i>Dan Sha Ri</i>	Hunan Literature And Art Publishing House
4	<i>Skin</i>	Tianjin People's Publishing House
5	<i>Relationship: Bridge To The Soul</i>	Hunan Literature And Art Publishing House
6	<i>Genius On The Left, Madman On The Right</i>	Beijing Union Publishing House
7	<i>Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life</i>	Hua Xia Publishing House
8	<i>The Go-to Mom's Parents' Guide To Emotion Coaching Young Children</i>	Southern Publishing House
9	<i>All Tastes Are Life, A Biography Of Feng Zikai</i>	Huazhong University of Science and Technology Press
10	<i>Blooming Everywhere</i>	Hainan Press

Top 10 children's books

	TItle	Publisher
1	<i>The Magic School Bus - Early Readers Edition</i>	Guizhou People's Publishing House
2	<i>Chinese History For Children</i>	New World Press
3	<i>Shuke and Beita, A Biography</i>	Zhejiang Children's Publishing House
4	<i>An ABC Guide to Mind Maps (Children's Picture Book)</i>	Dolphin Press
5	<i>The Flurry Little Chick Touch Book</i>	Changjiang Children's Publishing House
6	<i>Mr. And Miss Marvel</i>	Posts And Telecom Press
7	<i>Reciting Ancient Chinese Poems With Laughter</i>	Hunan Education Press
8	<i>Pete The Cat - Personality Trainer For Kids Aged 3-6</i>	Wenhui Press
9	<i>Miyayoshi's Super Picture Book</i>	Qingdao Publishing House
10	<i>Hello! Maths</i>	Hubei Children's Publishing House