



Frank Baier

## Back to Reading at Home

**When curfews, contact and travel restrictions are in place, there are still books to be found in leisure time. Today, since the start of the corona pandemic, four out of ten people tend to focus on reading.**

Apparently, the motto is now: back to reading at home. Classic books have gained in popularity in Corona times: Currently, 84 percent of Germans read printed books from time to time – 5 percent more than two years ago. Of course, one fact also holds true: those who read regularly have turned to literature more often since the start of the corona pandemic.

According to the survey, 41 percent read significantly more or tend to read more, while 45 percent have not changed their reading behavior. Only one in ten people said they tended to access literature more or significantly less. These results of a representative survey, carried out in September 2021 on behalf of the digital industry association [Bitkom](#), among 1,000 people in Germany aged 16 and over, were published in the context of the Frankfurt Book Fair.

### **Growth in comics, cookbooks, guidebooks, esotericism**

Several literary genres performed particularly well in the past year in various regions of the world. A special analysis by [GfK Entertainment](#) – based on sales data for eight regions or countries in the period from January to September 2021 – shows: Due to partial growth, there is at least some justification for renewed optimism in the book market.

The comic book segment is recording significant growth. The so-called mangas and manhwas in particular more than doubled their sales in France, Spain, Switzerland and the Belgian region of Wallonia. In Portugal, however, almost three times as many Japanese and South

Korean comics were sold as in the same period of the previous year.

### **Popular cookbooks**

During the corona pandemic, many people – often thanks to regional authors – (re)discovered their passion for cooking. This is because double-digit growth rates for the food-and-drink category speak for themselves, particularly in Italy (+24 percent), Spain (+22 percent) and Switzerland (+20 percent). Cookbooks even achieved growth rates of 48 percent in France and 74 percent in Wallonia, Belgium.

Guidebooks are currently enjoying increasing popularity – especially on the subjects of life-style and personal development (+48 percent in France, +25 percent in the Netherlands), finance (+25 percent in Italy) and health (+31 percent in Brazil, +24 percent in Portugal).

As a comparatively small literary genre, the esoteric market is the biggest winner so far in 2021, with gains of 73 percent (Wallonia) and 60 percent (France), as well as 40 percent (Brazil), astounding even experts. The statistics also show growth in Flanders (+29 percent), Switzerland (+20 percent) and the Netherlands (+19 percent).

### **Declines in travel guides and textbooks**

The travel industry has been hit particularly hard by the Corona pandemic – with a direct impact on travel books. While declines in 2020 were still 44 percent in France, for example, the first three quarters of 2021 saw an 8 percent increase. However, guidebooks are still in the red (-6 percent), as are Switzerland (-13 percent) and Flanders (-6 percent).

Meanwhile, students and teachers at universities in Germany are buying fewer and fewer textbooks and study books. The reason for the (revenue and sales) decline over the past three years is the expansion of royalty-free uses of excerpts of works as a result of the German Copyright Knowledge Society Act. This result can be traced back to textbook monitoring, prepared by publishing consultant Dr. Bertram Salzmann on behalf of the [German Publishers & Booksellers Association](#) on the basis of the MC Metis Buch trade panel from Media Control. Since 2003, when the first free use of excerpts from works became possible, sales of educational media have already declined significantly – by up to 30 percent, according to market participants.

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