

Overall

In 2020, the world relied on books, scientific research and learning resources more than ever before, but we also encountered significant unforeseen difficulties.

Publishing 2020 is a summary of the UK publishing industry's response to an extraordinary year, containing statistical snapshots of the industry.

It finds that the industry has been robust in the face of the pandemic, but there are ongoing difficulties in the education market and for the many authors, booksellers and smaller publishers who have struggled throughout the year.



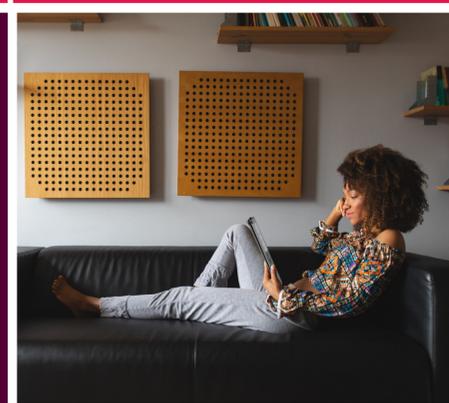
Consumer

In 2020, the nation turned to books for comfort, escapism and relaxation. Despite the many difficulties of COVID-19 – such as bookshop closures, cancelled author events and postponed publication dates – reading triumphed, with adults and children alike reading more during lockdown than before.

This year's statistics show a boost for fiction as the UK experienced a reading boom across all parts of the consumer sector. Despite this success, publishers were acutely aware of the difficulties facing authors at this time. They pivoted online, with digital book launches and literary festivals enabling authors to continue to talk about their work to global audiences. Making sure authors can continue to protect their livelihoods will remain a focus of the industry as we move forward.

“2020 was a challenging and unpredictable year, with consumer publishers having a wide range of experiences. But the power of a good book became clearer than ever, as people embraced reading and listening for comfort and entertainment. Digital growth in 2020 was crucial to the sector's success, but a balance of formats and ways to reach consumers will remain vital.”

*Perminder Mann
CEO Bonnier Books UK,
Chair of Consumer Publishers Council*



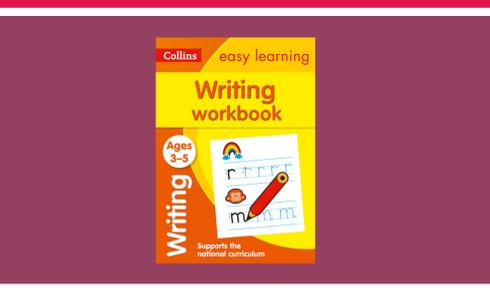
Education

With schools and colleges closed, 2020 was for many the year of home schooling. At this critical time, publishers assisted with this transition to remote learning; from making sure students had the high-quality resources to continue their studies from home, to offering support to teachers as they adjusted to new ways of working.

By working closely with the teaching community and ensuring pupils had high quality learning resources to hand, publishers did their utmost to make sure learning could continue during the pandemic. However, the dip in sales reveals the extent to which the sector has been hit. In particular, the pandemic severely impacted export sales of education materials – a key part of the industry's international offering.

“2020 brought a range of challenges for the UK's education sector, as teachers, pupils, and publishers all grappled with unprecedented school closures. The education landscape inevitably saw a strong shift to digital and publishers worked hard to support remote learning across the country, many with free content. We now turn our attention to the recovery programmes being implemented by government, and we will continue to work closely with the Department for Education and schools to meet their needs over the coming year.”

*Jane Harley
Policy and Partnership Director Oxford University Press,
Chair of Education Publishers Council*



Academic

Scientific development was hugely important in 2020 as the global search for public health solutions took place in response to the pandemic. From publishing peer-reviewed vaccine research to making papers internationally accessible to world health bodies, academic publishers played a crucial role in helping the world address the issue of COVID-19. As expected, at a time when demand was high for academic research, journal exports showed slight growth.

Academic publishers were also on hand to help students and researchers continue to learn and work while Higher Education Institutions were closed. Many students turned to digital resources while bookshops were closed, but a slight rise in digital sales did not offset print decline and the industry still experienced difficulty with a loss of income in academic print book sales in 2020.

“When colleges and campuses closed, Higher and Further Education publishers acted quickly to support remote learning and teaching: participating in a free textbook programme and extending licence permissions. There has been a revolution in digital learning which may well be here to stay and publishers remain on hand to help students, teachers and libraries embrace this new way of working.”

*Andrew Robinson
Director of Higher Education EMEA Cengage Learning,
Chair of Higher and Further Education Publishers Council*

