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K-Books Beyond Borders



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K-Book Trends

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When TV Dramas Become Books: Screenplays and script Books as Collectibles Driving Fandom's Transmedia Consumption

Written by

Lim Dae Geun

Lim Dae Geun | Professor, HUFS

Professor in the Division of Digital Contents at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. He serves as the President of the Korean Cinema Association, Representative of the Asia Cultural Contents Institute, and Director of the World Cultural Arts & Management Institute at HUFS. His research focuses on Chinese cinema, Hallyu and Asian popular culture, cultural content discourse, identity, and storytelling. His recent publications include *Cultural Contents and Digital Contents*.

TV Drama script Books Becoming Bestsellers

In May 2024, the uncut script book for the tvN drama 〈Lovely Runner〉 topped the YES24 overall bestseller list just one day after pre-orders began. Driven overwhelmingly by buyers in their 20s and 30s, this phenomenon was no ordinary book-selling success. Instead, it signaled a new consumption culture where video content reaches the hands of fandom through the physical medium of a book.

The same was true for the tvN drama 〈Our Unwritten Seoul〉, which ended its run in June 2025. The original uncut script book by writer Lee Kang reached No. 1 in YES24's art section as soon as presales opened. A reader noted, "The dialogue was so good. The script book feels like merchandise that soothes the lingering feelings after the drama ended," which perfectly captures the recent script book craze.

Of course, the seeds of this phenomenon were planted long ago. The origin of commercially sold TV drama script books dates back to the 〈Dae Jang Geum〉 scenario collection published in 2004. At the time, viewer ratings exceeding 50% naturally drove demand for the book, but condensing 54 episodes into a single volume created a massive volume of over 1,000 pages, making readability less than ideal. Director Bong Joon-ho's 〈Parasite〉 in 2020 brought about a fresh shift. Following its Oscar wins, the screenplay book sold explosively, proving that film script books could also become bestsellers. The "K-drama script book" craze officially took off in 2022, when the script book for 〈Our Beloved Summer〉 neared 100,000 copies sold.



Cover of the 〈Lovely Runner〉 script book

Why People Buy TV Dramas as Books

Why do readers buy and read books based on dramas they have already watched? First, it stems from the desire for transmedia consumption. The expansion of OTT platforms has transformed content consumption into repeat viewing and in-depth exploration, often referred to as “digging consumption.” script books are the condensed result of this trend. By featuring deleted scenes, unfilmed sequences, and writer commentaries that cannot be accessed through the video alone, script books serve as a unique archive for the drama.

Second, it is driven by the value of physical media and the desire to collect. In an era overflowing with digital content, the craving for something tangible to hold in one’s hands is paradoxically growing. This psychology mirrors that of K-pop fandoms who purchase physical albums even when they can stream unlimited music online.

Third, it comes from the literary rediscovery of scripts as text. script books

themselves are creating a new style of reading. In fact, according to recent statistics, the most checked-out literary genre among people in their 20s at public libraries was drama scripts. For young readers, scriptwriting has already established itself as a distinct literary genre.

However, simply compiling aired scripts is no longer enough to survive in the market. A prominent shift in the script book market is that they are being transformed into elaborately designed, high-quality collectibles. Books now include deleted scenes, writing notes, character concept manuscripts, and behind-the-scenes stills, while set packages bundled with merchandise such as postcards, posters, and photo cards have become standard. For fandoms, a script book is not only a way to remember a drama, but also a symbol of identity that certifies their status as a dedicated fan.

New Reading Culture Driven by K-Dramas

The globalization of K-dramas is opening a new horizon for the script book market. As international fandoms form at a faster pace through global OTT platforms, social media posts by overseas fans expressing their intent to purchase script books right after a drama airs are on the rise. Overseas translation and publication of K-drama script books have strong potential to emerge as a new genre for Korean publishing exports.

The rise of script books and screenplays signals a shift in the reading culture across generations. The expansion of “reverse reading,” where people consume video content first and then deepen their experience through text, interlocks with the maturation of the fandom economy that owns, verifies, and shares content, as well as the culture of repeat viewing enabled by OTT platforms, collectively nurturing the new book genre of script books.

Watching a drama, re-reading it as a book, sharing quotes on social media, and getting the writer's autograph at a pop-up store represent transmedia consumption that experiences a single piece of content across multiple dimensions. The success of collectible books, where stories on screen find new life on paper, stands as the hottest phenomenon of how the fandom economy of K-content is transforming reading culture.

Expansion of K-Content Based on Books: Books Noted by Critics Across Generations

Written by

Sollim Lee, Junhyuk Maeng, Mihyang Kim, Dongseok Jang

Lee Sollim | Publishing Editor

As an editor, she contemplates books that will stand the test of time, while as a critic, she keeps a keen eye on new releases that demand to be read in the here and now. She is also a reader who dreams of a day where she can step aside from professional concerns to simply read to her heart's content, secretly hoping to one day find herself accidentally locked inside a library.

Junhyuk Maeng | Book Editor

Rather than aiming to craft a polished review or a perfect introduction, my true hope is to accurately convey the 'code' shared by myself and the 'us' out there somewhere. As a South Korean reader in my thirties who loves literature, I seek to carefully give voice to a part of that sensibility.

Mihyang Kim | Book Critic-Essayist, IT Service Planner

She worked as a publishing editor for thirteen years, spending three years on books and ten years planning and editing magazines. She is the author of the essay *Mother Said She Was Not Happy*, and co-authored *Key Words of the Korean Publishing Industry 2010-2019*, *What is Film?*, and *Goods Caution*. Having served as a Creative Director at a tech company, she is currently designing, interpreting, and recording the world as a service planner and storyteller.

Dongseok Jang | Literary Critic, Secretary General of the Pajubookcity Center

He is a dedicated reader and writer. Captivated by the vast and profound world of literature, he spends every spare moment reading and contemplating how books resonate with our society. He is currently striving to transform books, the infinite source of all content, into diverse cultural formats. His published works include *The Living Library*, *The Rebirth of Forbidden Books*, *The Birth of Different Thoughts*, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms: A Story Renewed After a Thousand Years*, and *Meeting World Classics for the First Time: A Guide for Teens*.

As Korean books serve as a pillar of K-content and interact with cultural content across other media, we would like to take this opportunity to highlight the original books driving the Korean Wave. In this issue, we examine Korean books selected by critics ranging from their 20s to 50s, covering original novels adapted into dramas and films, published screenplays that have become a current trend, and highly anticipated upcoming releases. Let us explore various perspectives on the power and potential of K-stories, and examine the direction Korean literature—a crucial pillar of K-content—should take moving forward.

The 20s Perspective

Lee Sollim, Cultural Critic

“About My Daughter, About That Distant World”



About My Daughter

Kim Hye-jin’s novel *About My Daughter* begins with a request from the daughter across the dining table. The daughter asks for a large sum of money,

promising to pay monthly interest, and repeatedly suggests using the house as collateral. Given their financial situation, it is far from easy. It would not be strange if she refused right away. Yet the narrator says, “Okay. Let’s think about how to make it work.”

The central conflict in the novel stems from the emotional distance between the mother and her homosexual daughter, whom she cannot bring herself to accept. The mother cannot comprehend her daughter’s way of life. The daughter lives with her same-sex partner, works an unstable job as a lecturer, and unstintingly pours her precious time and money into fighting against the world. The values the narrator held dear all her life, including the way of living she had taught her daughter from a young age while holding her hand tightly, are no longer visible in her daughter’s world. Mournfully venting her anger, the narrator lonely comes to realize that “my daughter’s world is too far from me.” Perhaps that is why, until the very end of the novel, the daughter is referred to simply as “my daughter,” remaining unnamed throughout.

About My Daughter met new audiences and readers in 2024 when it was adapted into a film of the same name. Homosexuality remains a topic that does not easily find broad consensus in Korea, and works dealing with it are often consumed within the language of opposing arguments. Yet *About My Daughter* is not remembered solely for its controversy. This may be because what the story focuses on and illuminates is less a single position or claim, and more the desperate face of someone gazing at another person they can barely understand.

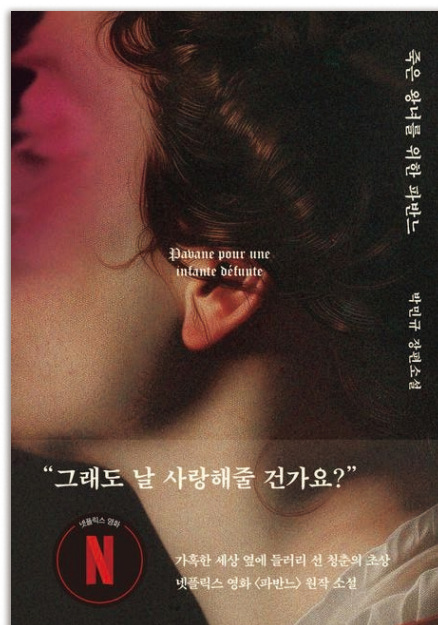
The world created by the daughter is too distant, and the mother cannot cross that entire distance. Thus, they sometimes hurl harsh words at each other. Yet in the silence those words leave behind, the narrator continues to

think: about her daughter, about that child. Even as she insists that she can never truly understand, she speaks as though she will ultimately find a way.

The 30s Perspective

Junhyuk Maeng, Publishing Editor

“When Love Becomes the Recognition of Existence”



Pavane for a Dead Princess

“Could the name of your feelings for me perhaps be pity?”

In the original novel, her “ugliness” is not a simple appearance complex. It is closer to a “social status” that is completely rendered invisible within a capitalist system where beauty, ugliness, and class are glaringly divided. Therefore, what she fears most is not the hatred of others, but the moment her love turns out to be pity. The moment it is proven to be pity, even the minimal inner sanctuary where she can be fully loved collapses. In this way, “love” in the novel was a heavy issue of the “recognition of existence” beyond

mere emotional exchange, and because of that terrible fear, the protagonist ultimately chooses to run away.

Adapted for the screen 17 years after its publication, the film 〈Pavane〉 smoothly refines the heavy, sharp thematic consciousness of the original into the language of the public. It sheds the characteristic critique of capitalism and strangeness, filling that space with the keywords “youth” and “growth.” One might feel that the multi-layered metaphors provided by the text have become somewhat flattened as they transitioned to film.

However, “Mijeong” in the film, portrayed by actor Ko Ah-sung, neutralizes the cruelty borne by the character in the novel with an independent, strong gaze. Rather than being consumed by a sense of existential collapse, she shows the maturity of “knowing how to let go” of the protagonist into reality by overcoming her wounds. The sharp thorns of the printed text met the intuitive visuals of the screen and the actors’ performances, expanding into a firm and warm face with which the younger generation can willingly empathize.

The most interesting point of repeat consumption is completed in the new epilogue, “17 Years Later,” of the special edition of the original novel published to coincide with the film’s release. The heavy ending of the original novel was forged by the narrator’s death and Yohan’s desperate guilt. However, returning to Hokkaido after 17 years, the author confirms their calm and peaceful daily lives, warmly showing respect to the characters who stubbornly endured that harsh world.

The warm ending of the film, which omits metafictional tragedy and depicts solidarity and healing among three young people, curiously touches upon this peaceful epilogue of the novel 17 years later on an emotional level.

Though the media differ and the texture of the narrative has changed, the fact that these wounded characters ultimately found their own redemption and peace in their respective worlds gives us deep relief. Readers who lived with the critical questions of the original novel and viewers comforted by the lyricism of the screen eventually meet at a single warm destination. Is this not the most beautiful way for a single piece of content to expand our lives beyond the boundary between text and film?

The 40s Perspective

Mihyang Kim, Publishing Critic

“Reading That Expands the Interpretation of Emotion”



Eun-jung and Sang-yeon Screenplay Set

It is no longer unfamiliar for screenplays to be published after a drama ends. The flow where popular video content leads to photo essays, making-of books, and official screenplays is not a phenomenon unique to Korea. Therefore, the reason to pay attention to Song Hye-jin’s *Eun-jung and Sang-*

yeon Screenplay Set lies not simply in the fact that a Netflix drama became a book. The intriguing aspect of this book is that within the familiar screenplay format, the subtle emotions of relationships long handled with delicacy by Korean dramas are concentrated.

〈Eun-jung and Sang-yeon〉 is a story of two women who have been together since their teens, facing each other again at forty-three after passing through their twenties and thirties. The relationship between the two, who liked and admired yet envied and hated each other, cannot be summarized by a single word like friendship or competition. Envy and resentment, love and shame, growing apart and caring for one another build up across layers of time. In particular, rather than focusing on romance or genre events, this work concentrates on how unspoken feelings pass through a person's life.

It is precisely at this point that *Eun-jung and Sang-yeon Screenplay Set* goes beyond a simple fan item. This book is a three-volume set consisting of screenplay volumes 1 and 2, along with a behind-the-scenes book. It includes not only the writer's original script, but also writer's notes, director and actor interviews, and a list of filming props. Thus, readers do not merely recheck the drama's plot, but reread the texture of words that passed by on screen. Emotions delivered through the actors' expressions and silence linger more slowly within the printed text, and diaries and letters left by the characters continue the narrative even outside the drama. The lingering impression after watching transitions into reading and collecting.

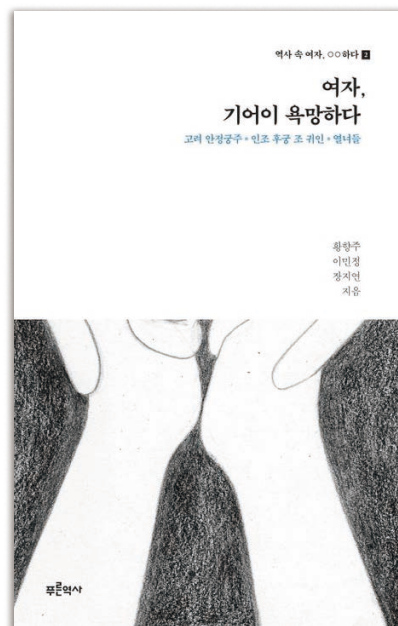
Poverty and envy, friendship and jealousy between women, regrets from old relationships, and companionship in the face of death are not topics confined

to a specific cultural sphere. However, the distinctiveness of this book lies in the fact that these emotions are expressed through the detailed dialogue and long-endured emotional structures unique to Korean drama. Readers who have already watched the video can reread the reverse side of the scenes through this book, while those who have not yet watched can follow the time of the two women like a long novel about relationships. Eun-jung and Sang-yeon Screenplay Set demonstrates that repeat consumption of K-content can be more than mere repetitive consumption, becoming a reading experience that expands the interpretation of emotions.

The 50s Perspective

Dongseok Jang, Literary Critic

“The Prototypes of Content Varying Around Us”



Women, Determined to Desire

It is widely known that the movie 〈The King's Warden〉, which attracted

16.9 million viewers, was born from just a few lines in the *Annals of the Joseon Dynasty*. The content is roughly as follows: “When Prince Nosan met his tragic end, no one took care of him, but Um Heung-do, an official of that town, immediately wept for him, personally prepared a coffin, performed the funeral rites, and buried him. The current tomb of Nosan is that very grave.” Joseon, a nation of records, left behind not only the Annals but also various other documents, serving as a reliable backbone for imaginative descendants to produce content that has thrilled people all over the world.

Among these, the advance of female narratives in history is particularly prominent. The drama 〈Damo〉 from long ago was one such example, and a work like 〈Under the Queen’s Umbrella〉 from a few years ago was outstanding. The recent drama 〈Brave New World〉, which stimulated the public’s imagination by traveling back and forth between the past and the present, was also intriguing. These works generally owe a debt to past documents, including the Annals. *Women, Determined to Desire*, part of the “Women, Did X” series, is filled with women who could very well serve as models for the protagonists in the aforementioned dramas. The main character in “Women, Having an Affair,” written by Professor Hwang Hyang-joo of the Department of Korean History at Seoul National University, is Anjeong Gungju, the second daughter of King Uijong of Goryeo in the late 12th century. Anjeong Gungju was in a romantic relationship with a “musician who taught the geomungo.” The rumor spread far and wide, and King Myeongjong stripped Anjeong Gungju’s husband, Wang Bak, of his title, holding him accountable for “failing to govern his household.” Unable to endure a dull life, Anjeong Gungju used her status and power to engage in acts of deviation.

Yet the reason this record exists is intriguing. The author argues that if Anjeong Gungju had committed adultery with an ordinary nobleman, she would have been recorded merely as an “unidentified princess.” It was precisely because her partner was a musician of humble status that such a bold record could remain. What matters is that, although the status of women was higher in Goryeo than in Joseon, Anjeong Gungju unhesitatingly revealed her desires in a Goryeo society that was nonetheless inevitably closed. The record of Anjeong Gungju is extremely brief. However, it is an invaluable record in that through it, one can read both a woman and a social system, and it can also be transformed into new content by unleashing the wings of imagination.

“Women, Casting Curses,” written by Lee Min-jung, a guest researcher at the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, goes a step further in intensity. Royal Consort Jo, a concubine of King Injo of Joseon, was a figure who “actively utilized not only the curses themselves, but also the contemporary perception of cursing.” Consort Jo’s cursing incident was discovered immediately after King Hyojong ascended the throne. She sought to make her son, Prince Seungseon, the king, but ultimately met her end accompanied by the label “the seed that is the root of disaster.” Even in Joseon, a Confucian state, “incantations based on shamanism” frequently prevailed in the world of women. The author notes that she records the affairs of women as historical facts rather than offering a moral reevaluation of Consort Jo. In addition, “Women, Remaining Chaste,” written by Professor Jang Ji-yeon of the Department of History and Culture at Daejeon University, is also interesting, showing that even chastity followed by death upon a husband’s passing was a cross-section of women’s desire during the Joseon Dynasty. *Women, Determined to Desire* is not a book created as new content

like a drama or movie. Nevertheless, it offers much reference material in that it allows us to examine the prototypes of diverse content continuously varying around us.

Summary

Lee Sollim: Beyond an Understanding That Rarely Reaches Completion

Maeng Junhyuk: When the Expansion of Content Expands Our Lives

Kim Mihyang: Rereading the Time of Two Women Beyond the Screen

Jang Dong Seok: A Single Line of Historical Record, a Treasure Trove for New Content!

An Open Mind

(The Export Journey of Author Lee Hee-joo's Holy Boy)

Written by

Lee Heejoo

Lee Heejoo | Writer

Her works include the short story collection *Cream(inal) Love*, the linked novel series *The World of Love*, and the novels *Phantom Pain*, *Holy Boy*, and *My Angel*. She is a recipient of the Young Writers' Award and the Lee Hyo-seok Literary Award Grand Prize.



Holy Boy

When I first heard the news that the overseas rights contract for *Holy Boy* had been signed, I felt both glad and deeply conflicted. Set in the 1990s in the fictional city of Eungnang, *Holy Boy* follows four women who kidnap a K-pop idol. Featuring female characters who pursue their desires without hesitation, the novel leaves readers with a strangely sticky and uncomfortable lingering taste rather than a sense of comfort. Luckily, there were readers in Korea who cherished the book. However, Korean titles that draw attention abroad tend to be works awarded prestigious literary prizes like Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*, feminist literature in the vein of *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*, or healing fiction. Fitting none of these molds, I felt a heavy pressure over the book being sold with a substantial advance. What if this book fails to live up to the expectations of international readers?

According to what I heard from translator Lee Jo-heun, there was first a request to introduce Korean literature dealing with K-pop, driven by its global success. However, the idol culture of the 1990s, which serves as the

backdrop for *Holy Boy*, was vastly different from today. It was, so to speak, the difference between gayo (Korean popular song) and “K-pop.” While this would be fully communicated to readers who lived through that shift, it might feel unfamiliar to readers whose first introduction to Korean music was BTS. Furthermore, while I attempted to actively embrace genre conventions in terms of form, the book also departs from conventional tropes. I worried whether genre readers would find this fresh or simply unsatisfactory. (For example, at the end of *Holy Boy*, the fate of a key character is left ambiguous. This departs from the track of thrillers or mysteries, where the outcome of events is revealed crystal clear.)

For these reasons, I quietly agonized over the entire process from signing the contract to publication. Right after the French edition was translated, I was invited to France to meet overseas readers for the very first time, but honestly, I did not expect much. However, there was something surprising about the enthusiasm of the readers I met on site. In Paris, I held a book talk alongside two other authors who had published books around the same time, and most of the fifty or so attendees had already read my book. After the talk ended, they got my signature while candidly sharing what they felt about the book and asking questions about what they were curious about. From those who seemed to want to engage in a short discussion with me, I could sense a spirit of generosity. This did not mean they read the novel with unconditional favor. Rather, their attitude was that since the author had poured her heart into writing it, they too would read it with seriousness. This response delighted me as much as praise did. As I answered with all my heart, I vaguely wondered whether having such a high-quality conversation even through an interpreter was possible because

France has such a vibrant culture of debate.

At Quais du Polar (Lyon Crime Thriller Festival), the largest book festival in Europe, I was able to meet even more readers up close. While meetings with readers occur occasionally in Korea as well, it was rare to directly sell books by holding signing sessions at booths between talks. I approached it with the mindset of a salesperson. Having written for roughly ten years and published several books in Korea, I was a newcomer in France. Since it was only natural for most readers to prefer novels from their own country, I wondered how much attention a work by an Asian author, especially one dealing with the niche topic of K-pop, could possibly receive. Surprisingly, Korean culture was even more popular than K-pop itself. While the unique nature of a book festival might have played a role, most responses were that even if they did not know K-pop, they were buying it because it looked interesting. Some readers even greeted me with words like “Annyeonghaseyo” and asked me to write their names in Hangeul. Thanks to this, I was able to hear the sound of the so-called “sold-out bell,” which rings only when all brought copies are sold out. This favorable response extended beyond the book festival venue, culminating in a book review recently published in *Le Parisien*. It is truly a great honor.

An author who sells a book overseas for the first time is terrified yet earnestly longs for one thing: that my writing will be read by readers beyond borders, and that we will connect. Through this experience, alongside the fact that far more readers than I had thought possess an open mind, I came to realize an old truth anew. Reaching universality beyond specificity. That is what we call literature.



Meeting readers at Quais du Polar

Why a Pastor Laughed at the Buddha's Joke

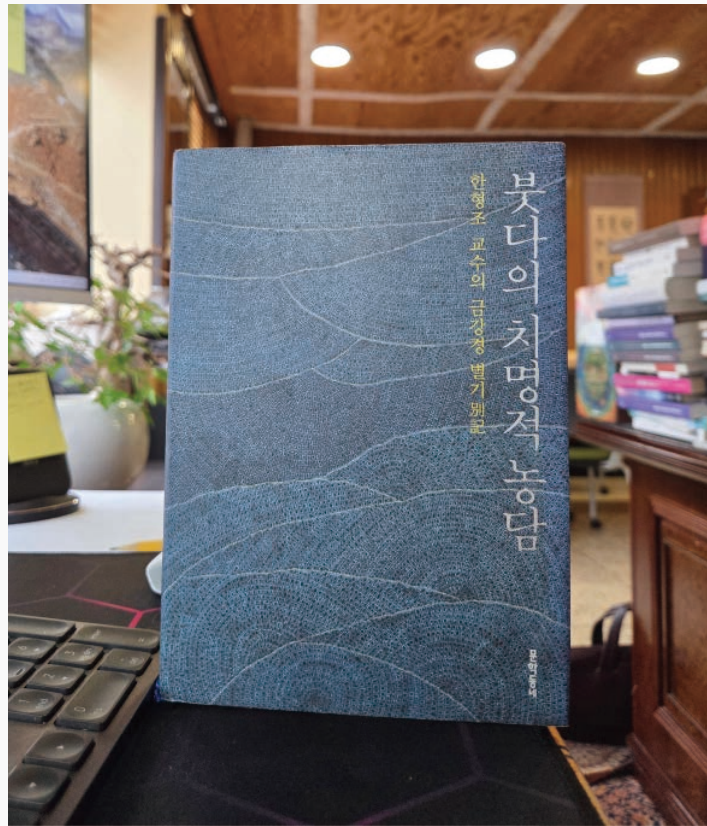
Written by

Dr. phil. Choi, Joo-hoon

Dr. phil. Choi, Joo-hoon | Pastor

He earned his doctorate in Lutheran theology in Germany and currently serves as the senior pastor at Jung-ang Lutheran Church. Through preaching and theological writing, as well as broadcasting, lectures, and writings that cross the boundaries of art, philosophy, and literature, he has broadened the language of faith. He is the author of *Rediscovering Luther*, *What is Worship?*, and *Choi Joo-hoon's Stories of Famous Paintings*.

The Buddha's Fatal Joke: A Reading of the Diamond Sutra, by Han Hyoung-jo, Munhakdongne, 2011



The Buddha's Fatal Joke: A Reading of the Diamond Sutra

If I were asked to pick a Buddhist book on my bookshelf that I, as a pastor, reach for often, I would choose this one without hesitation. The title alone catches the eye, referring to a scripture that teaches enlightenment as “the Buddha’s fatal joke.” The author, Han Hyoung-jo, is a scholar who has taught Eastern philosophy for a long time at the Academy of Korean Studies. Unraveling the *Diamond Sutra* in the language of today, this book is both a commentary on Buddhist scripture and a guide to the “art of living (ars vitae)” that asks how we ought to live.

A Joke Aimed at the Self

The sentences in the *Diamond Sutra* move in a strange manner. After stating something, it immediately denies it, only to slyly return to it by saying that is

precisely why it is called so. Han Hyong-jo reads this endlessly repeating speech pattern of negation as a joke the Buddha throws at us. While jokes originally bring laughter, there is something firm hidden within this one. This is because it collapses in a single moment the “self” we cling to so tightly, along with the merits, honor, and self-image we have worked so hard to build, revealing them to be illusions. Starting from the analysis of Abhidharma, the author weaves a broad array of Buddhist thoughts into a single thread, spanning the exploration of mind in Yogacara, the logic of Madhyamaka, the worldview of Huayan, and the direct simplicity of Zen. He explains that all of these ultimately point to one single truth. Thus, he states, “Buddhism is many, yet it is one.” (Han Hyong-jo, *The Buddha’s Fatal Joke*, Paju: Munhakdongne, 2011)

Above all, the virtue of this book lies in the fact that it does not push difficult Chinese scriptures off into the distance. It brings the enlightenment of ancient Zen masters who said, “When hungry, eat; when tired, sleep,” right into the middle of everyday life for Buddhist novices like myself. Facing the truth that the Way does not reside somewhere deep in the mountains, but right at the table where one fully enjoys a single meal, the high wall known as religion lowers by quite a bit.



Gilded Silver Plates of the Diamond Sutra from the Reliquary of the Five-story Stone Pagoda in Wanggung-ri, Iksan
(Source: National Heritage Digital Service, 2018 Cultural Heritage Investigation in Jeonbuk Region by Professor Eom Ki-pyo, <https://digital.khs.go.kr/>, 2018)

A Mirror of Another Faith

Here, I must make a confession. Having lived my entire life within the Christian faith, I often pause before this Buddhist scripture. The reformer Martin Luther describes the human impulse to purchase salvation through one's own righteousness, the endless desire to prove oneself, as the deepest disease of faith. Yet, the Buddha's joke targets that very same spot: the more you grasp, the more you lose, and only when you let go do you truly gain. Two traditions with completely different starting points arrive at remarkably similar diagnoses regarding human self-idolatry. This is not to say that the two paths are the same. Even if their diagnoses appear similar, the prescriptions each offers are distinctly different, and erasing that difference hastily is honest to neither side. However, when I earnestly look into the

language of another faith, I come to understand more clearly what my own faith has been speaking of all along.

Reading a book of another religion is akin to standing in front of an unfamiliar mirror. In a mirror that only reflects oneself, one can never see one's own face anew. The Buddha's joke offers a smile to me as a Christian, while simultaneously prompting me to ask from a different angle what I have been clinging to so desperately all this time. In an era where religions build high walls against one another, this book quietly shows how the wisdom of someone who has walked a different path can make the language of my own faith deeper and richer. Thus, beyond a commentary on scripture, this book is like a warm and delightful invitation extended from one person to another.

Korean Publishing Market in 2025 Through Statistics

Written by

Park, Iksoon

Park, Iksoon | Korean Publishing and Copyright Research Institute, President

He has served as Head of the Editorial Department at Woongjin ThinkBig, Secretary General of the Korean Publishers Association (KPA), and Adjunct Professor at the Graduate School of Digital Image and Contents at Dongguk University. Currently running the Korean Publishing and Copyright Research Institute, he continues his research and educational work on publishing and copyright issues, including the Fixed Book Price System, Public Lending Right, publishing statistics, and publishing contracts.

Industry Statistics and Management Information Statistics

Publishing industry statistics are broadly classified into industry statistics and management information statistics according to the perspective and purpose. Industry statistics are statistics on general industry status that look at the overall publishing industry, which are useful for industry analysis and policy formulation. On the other hand, management information statistics break down book classifications and comparison items, making them primarily useful for the business activities of publishers and bookstores. Depending on the content of the statistical information, industry statistics and management information statistics are divided into general statistics, production statistics, distribution statistics, and consumption statistics.

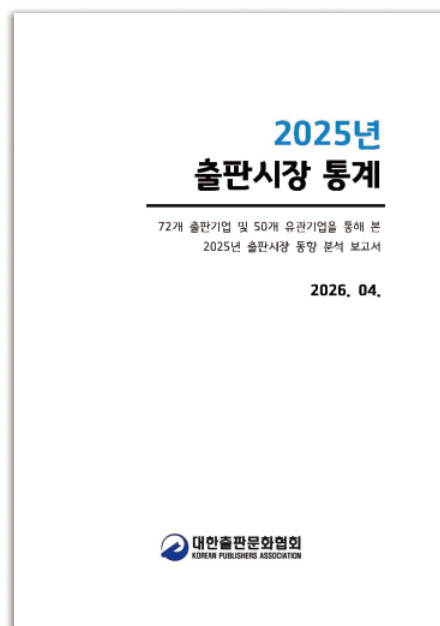
The “Publishing Industry Survey” published annually by the Publication Industry Promotion Agency of Korea (KPIPA) is a representative industry statistic covering the current status of the Korean publishing industry, released about a year and a half after the end of the fiscal year. As of 2025, here are several statistical materials that will be useful for domestic and international users seeking accurate and prompt statistics on the Korean publishing industry and publishing market.

Key Publishing Statistics from Statistics Korea

Through the Online Shopping Trends Survey, Service Industry Trends Survey, and Household Income and Expenditure Survey conducted by Statistics Korea, key statistics related to the Korean publishing industry as of 2025 can be identified. In 2025, transaction value of books in online shopping malls reached approximately 2.5949 trillion KRW, down 0.4%

from 2024 (approximately 2.6063 trillion KRW). The 2025 Production Index for Book Publishing (current index, 2020=100.0) stood at 103.8, an increase of 2.3% compared to 2024 (101.5). From this, it can be estimated that the total sales of Korean publishers slightly increased. In 2025, the average monthly household expenditure on book purchases for households with one or more members nationwide was 10,826 KRW, down 982 KRW (8.3%) from 2024 (11,808 KRW).

KPA's "2025 Publishing Market Statistics"



The 2025 Publishing Market Statistics Report

The statistics on the previous year's publishing market, which the Korean Publishers Association (KPA) has compiled and announced every April since 2020, is a report analyzing the sales and operating profit status of major publishing companies, related corporations, and major bookstores. Because it is the earliest to release the performance and rankings of major publishers leading Korean publishing in terms of scale, it attracts high interest within the industry and significant attention from the press.

In the “2025 Publishing Market Statistics,” the recent three-year business performance of 72 companies was presented and analyzed. These included 63 book publishers in trade and educational publishing (with one duplicate) and 9 comics, webtoon, and web novel publishers among those that disclosed their 2025 audit reports through the Financial Supervisory Service’s Electronic Disclosure System.

According to the “2025 Publishing Market Statistics,” the total sales of the 72 publishing companies in 2025 were approximately 4.853 trillion KRW, a decrease of 1.3% (approximately 61.6 billion KRW) from the previous year. Their total operating profit in 2025 was approximately 137.0 billion KRW, down 13.4% (approximately 21.1 billion KRW) year on year. The 2025 total sales of major educational book publishers (42 companies) reached approximately 4.1061 trillion KRW, dropping 1.2% compared to 2024 (approximately 4.1577 trillion KRW). Total sales of major trade publishers (22 companies) in 2025 stood at approximately 431.0 billion KRW, down 6.9% compared to 2024 (approximately 462.8 billion KRW). Meanwhile, total sales of comics, webtoon, and web novel publishers (9 companies) in 2025 reached approximately 315.9 billion KRW, up 7.4% from the previous year.

The sales status of major trade publishers (22 companies) over the past three years (2023–2025) is shown in the table below. The 2025 sales of Munhakdongne and Changbi, which rank first and second respectively, decreased significantly. This is interpreted as a base effect following the explosive surge in sales for these two publishers during the fourth quarter of 2024, as they published the representative works of author Han Kang, who was selected as the Nobel Prize laureate in Literature on October 10, 2024.

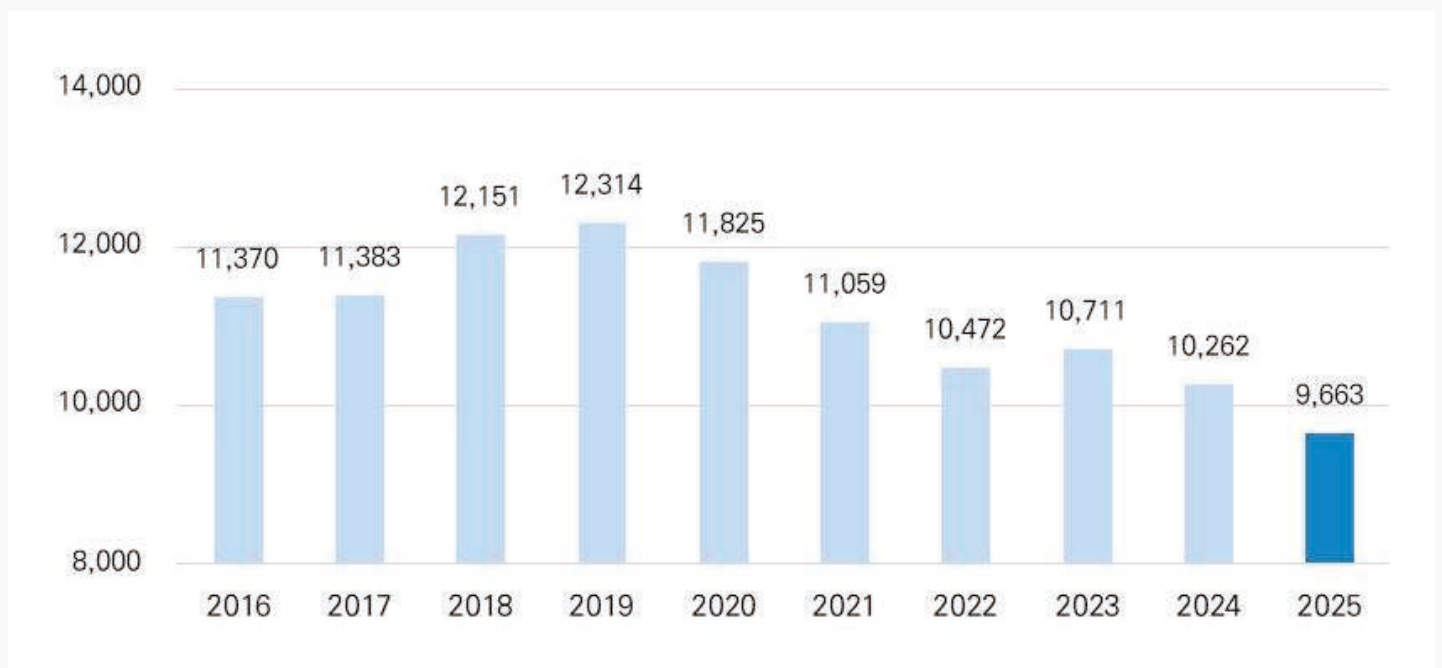
Sales Status of Major Publishers (2023–2025)						
Rank		Publisher	Sales (Million KRW)		Previous Sales (Million KRW)	
2025	2024		2025	Change (%)	2024	2023
1	1	Munhakdongne	36,870	-20.4%	46,334	32,255
2	2	Changbi	36,014	-18.6%	44,227	25,468
3	5	Wisdom House	35,940	7.5%	33,437	32,786
4	3	Dasan Books	35,081	-10.3%	39,123	40,043
5	4	Gimm-Young Publishers	32,226	-4.4%	33,708	33,271
6	6	Book21	29,285	-12.4%	33,423	35,350
7	8	Gilbut Publishing Co.	25,119	4.8%	23,979	23,705
8	11	Minumsa	20,612	23.8%	16,646	14,264
9	7	Woongjin ThinkBig (Trade Division)	20,364	-23.2%	26,502	24,811
10	9	Sahoipyounghon	19,301	-6.7%	20,686	19,338
11	12	SeongAndang	17,237	4.2%	16,542	15,574
12	10	E-Public Korea	17,234	-3.9%	17,935	19,252
13	17	Random House Korea	13,972	14.1%	12,250	13,610
14	13	Hanbit Media	13,316	-14.9%	15,643	14,943
15	14	Sigongsa	12,326	-10.4%	13,763	18,748
16	16	Hakjisa	12,146	-1.3%	12,307	12,421
17	15	BIR	12,091	-5.8%	12,834	18,577
18	20	Parkyoungsa	11,927	9.7%	10,870	11,465
19	19	YLC	10,383	-6.9%	11,156	10,945
20	18	Yearimdang	10,258	-13.1%	11,806	20,548
21	21	Bear Books	7,736	-11.9%	8,784	9,655
22	22	iArchitect	1,592	79.1%	889	675
Total		22 Publishers	431,030	-6.9%	462,844	447,704

Sales Status of Major Publishers (2023–2025)

2025 Korean Publishing Production Statistics

The “Korean Publishing Production Statistics” is compiled and analyzed based on deposit materials submitted to the Korean Publishers Association (KPA). It is a publication production statistic that includes the previous year’s number of new titles published, copies printed, average price, number of translated books, and number of publishers, as well as publication production trends over the past decade. These statistics are published in the *Korean Publication Yearbook*.

According to the “2025 Korean Publishing Production Statistics,” the number of new titles published in 2025 reached 64,991, an increase of 1.1% compared to 2024 (64,306 titles). Among these, the number of translated titles was 9,663, down 5.8% from 2024 (10,262 titles). The average copies printed for the first print of a new edition stood at 1,610 copies, up 39 copies (2.5%) compared to 2024 (1,571 copies).



Number of New Translated Titles over the Past 10 Years (2016–2025)

Source: Korean Publishers Association (2026), 2025 Korean Publishing Production Statistics, p. 8.

By category, literature accounted for the largest share of new titles published at 22.4%, followed by social sciences (18.9%), children's books (12.3%), applied sciences (10.7%), comics (8.5%), philosophy (5.0%), religion (4.9%), study guides (4.5%), arts (3.8%), history (3.0%), general works (2.3%), language (2.2%), and natural sciences (1.4%). For translated books, a high volume of titles was published in comics (2,693 titles), literature (1,810 titles), and children's books (1,332 titles).

MUZE, a Publishing House Without a Title

Interview by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

Park Jeongmin | Publisher of MUZE Publishing

He is an actor and the publisher of MUZE Publishing. Since founding the publishing house in 2020, he has published nine books, starting with *Saving Deeds*.

True to its philosophical name, MUZE (meaning “untitled”) publishes books filled with profound thought. The books from MUZE contain writing that is as beautiful as it is deep. It releases works that leave a lasting imprint on readers’ hearts, such as *The Story of Manu*, *My First Summer*, *Wanju*, *Sister’s Diary*, and *Saving Deeds*. We look forward to seeing what comes next for both the books of MUZE and the publishing house itself. In this issue, we aim to explore the publishing philosophy and vision presented by MUZE.



Park Jeongmin, Publisher of MUZE Publishing

Q. The name of your publishing house is MUZE, which means “untitled” or “having no title.” Could you explain the origin and meaning behind this name?

When I first established the publishing house, I could not come up with a suitable name at all, so I registered the company under the name MUZE, which is commonly used to indicate having no title. You could say it was a byproduct of hassle, lacking both a proper name and meaning at the time.

However, as we published author Park So-young's *Saving Deeds*, meaning began to take root in the name MUZE. Working alongside an author who dedicated her life to caring for nameless abandoned animals to create a book about their rights, I felt a growing desire to continue telling stories about nameless things in the future. With the conviction to serve as a voice for the countless nameless existence in this society, not just abandoned animals, MUZE strives to craft every book with care and devotion.



Saving Deeds

Q. We are curious about how MUZE came to be. Could you share the story behind founding MUZE with our international readers?

After publishing my book *A Useful Human Being* in 2016 and opening a bookstore called "Book, Night, and Day" in 2019, I began to learn a bit about how books are created and introduced. Books also became much more precious to me in my personal life. Although the bookstore came to an end during the pandemic, I wanted to continue working with books, which naturally led me to set up a publishing house. After making one book, we

were unable to publish another for four years. Then, as we created *Sisters' Diary* in 2024, our engine started running again. In 2025, *My First Summer, Wanju* received immense love from many readers, and before I knew it, three wonderful colleagues joined the team. Together with them, I pour my passion into crafting books every single day, and I plan to build this company into something truly remarkable for the even more colleagues who will join us in the future.

Q. While all your books are precious, if you were to introduce one signature MUZE title to international readers, which book would you consider MUZE's flagship title?

I believe *My First Summer, Wanju* by Kim Geum-hee, one of the defining authors of our era, will continue to serve as a major pillar for MUZE for a long time to come. It was the first installment of our Listening Novel series, where audiobooks are produced first for visually impaired readers before being released as print editions. Thanks to author Kim Geum-hee, who deeply resonated with this vision, and the overwhelming support from countless readers who embraced this cause, MUZE was able to clarify the path of what we must do moving forward. It is a deeply precious book that made us acutely realize which direction our attitude toward books and the sincerity of those who create and introduce them ought to head.



My First Summer, Wanju

Q. You, as the publisher of MUZE, recently opened "Book and Day" within the shelf-rental shared bookstore Yeonnam Seoga. What does a book mean to MUZE?

I believe books have walked alongside humanity for a very long time, and they will continue to do so in the future. MUZE aims to be a sturdy amplifier so that valuable words can endure over time. We want to keep creating books that serve as a medium for sharing, communicating, and discussing good thoughts.

Author So Hyang: A Deep Message Centered on Humanity

Interview by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

So Hyang | Writer

She writes across various genres, including children's literature, young adult fiction, mystery, romance, and science fiction. Beloved by many readers, her compelling stories are hard to put down once opened. *The Haunted Stationery Store* has been published overseas, and her short story *Portland Officetel* has signed a drama rights contract.

So Hyang is a children's book author and novelist. After winning the Kim You Jeong New Writer Award in 2022, she went on to write numerous children's books and novels, including *The Haunted Stationery Store*, *The Peculiar Tale of the Stationery Store Without a Sign*, *Gates of Morpheus*, and *Imitation Girl*. She has also contributed her works to various anthologies. Beloved by many readers, Author So Hyang shares her thoughts on books and the power of writing that reflects our society.



Writer So Hyang

Q. Could you tell us what inspired you to start writing and introduce yourself as an author?

Hello, I am So Hyang. It is a pleasure to greet you all.

When I was young, I was a girl who wanted to be a detective, not a writer. Instead, I became an elementary school teacher. As I raised my own children and worked with students at school, I naturally came across children's literature and young adult novels. This led me to submit my very first children's story to a contest on a whim, and winning it inspired me to seriously pursue writing as a career. A year later, one of my short stories won an award as well. Becoming a writer later in life was something I had never imagined before. Since 2021, I have published over 20 novels and children's books, and occasionally published works in literary magazines. Having my books continually published while still refining my craft early in my career makes my case a bit unique. Initially, due to the nature of my profession, I mainly wrote children's and young adult literature, but over the past two years, adult fiction has accounted for a larger portion of my publications.

Q. Along with children's literature, you have written various novels. Is there a specific message you keep in mind depending on the age group of your readers?

I have written across a wide range of genres, not just for different age groups. My works span realism, sci-fi, historical fiction, romance, mystery and thriller, as well as fantasy. I have also written in various formats, ranging from short stories to full-length novels. Because my initial training period was short, I continuously received writing commissions from publishers after winning my first short story award. As a result, I had no choice but to dive deep into studying each genre whenever a new request came in. Though the timeframe was brief, I underwent a far more rigorous writing training than if I had trained on my own. Perhaps because of this, hardly any of my works

overlap in terms of subject matter, genre, or mood.

I believe that literature, after all, is an art form for understanding humanity. That is why (whether it is children's literature or novels) I strive to embed a deep exploration and understanding of human nature in my work.

First of all, contrary to what many people assume, children's literature is the most challenging genre for me to write. Although I have met countless children, thinking from their perspective requires continuous effort. Being an elementary school teacher actually makes me even more cautious when writing for children. I also make a conscious effort never to use specific students I have taught or actual classroom episodes in my stories.



Another Jeong Dawoon, *The Peculiar Tale of the Stationery Store Without a Sign*

My children's story, *The Peculiar Tale of the Stationery Store Without a Sign*, features a child who tries to avoid loneliness through drawing. It is a frame narrative with a strong plot twist, making it a truly engaging read. The reason I place so much emphasis on an entertaining story is that I want to infuse it with a perspective that comforts children's hearts beyond mere amusement. I firmly believe a story should never become a lecture.

Similarly, another of my children's books, *Another Jeong Dawoon*, follows a protagonist who transfers to a new school due to the emotional scars of school violence, only to meet a classmate who shares the exact same name as her former bully: Jeong Dawoon. The story realistically portrays the process of psychiatric treatment. Through this new Jeong Dawoon, her psychiatrist, and a snail brought inside on a rainy day, the protagonist heals her emotional wounds and learns to reach out to others once again.

As for my young adult novels, I began writing them while raising my own children. As they outgrew their cute childhood years and entered adolescence, I observed and explored how they transformed into what felt like complete strangers. I was genuinely curious about the world of teenagers. Since it is such an unstable period in life, I try to depict characters who face their anxieties head-on while taking a step forward and growing. Lastly, adult fiction is the realm where I can most naturally reflect my personal thoughts and critical awareness. Personally, I am quite fond of mysteries and thrillers.

My novel *Portland Officetel*, published last year, was featured in an unconventional short story anthology about forbidden love. It received many favorable reviews for being a rare second-person narrative, as well as for its plot twists, core message, psychological and background descriptions, and the aesthetic, alluring mood that permeates the entire work. Perhaps because of this, despite being a short story by a new writer, it signed a drama rights contract with a major Korean production company. Although the title will likely change, you might be able to watch it as an OTT series in a few years. Next year, a full-length book will be published in the form of a linked novel series including *Portland Officetel*, with added backstories for each character. The book title will

also be *Portland Officetel*. I am currently writing it as an intriguing, unpredictable novel where the interconnected backstories of the characters (which could not be fully addressed in the short story) weave closely together.



Images related to *Portland Officetel*

The Haunted Stationery Store is my very first full-length novel. It depicts the experiences of a painter (hwawon) from the Royal Academy of Painting (Dohwaseo) during the Joseon Dynasty in modern times. The story unfolds in a format that alternates between the past and the present. Featuring Joseon paintings, artists, and the persecution of Catholics as its core themes, many readers have mentioned that they thoroughly enjoyed the story and were moved to tears by its ending. This book has also been translated and published overseas.

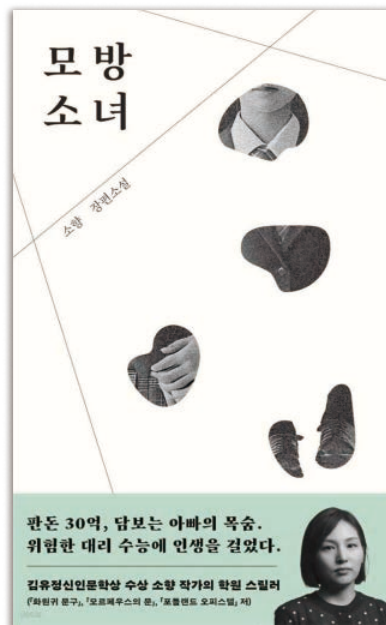


The Haunted Stationery Store, Gates of Morpheus

Gates of Morpheus is a collection of seven Young Adult sci-fi short stories. Under the expansive umbrella of science fiction, it captures a variety of issues and values in fresh formats, including the reality of school violence, forgotten history, human identity, artificial intelligence, competition and fairness, and methods of saying goodbye. Traversing time and space through scientific imagination, the anthology has received many favorable reviews for being both surprising and refreshing.

Lastly, my new full-length novel, *Imitation Girl*, is a mystery thriller that portrays the true face of Korean society, where academic elitism intersects with the myth of meritocracy. This work questions how the college entrance exam, a system that appears most fair on the surface, is actually influenced by class and capital, as well as how individuals find themselves pushed to the edge of choices within it. Through the process of imitation, the lives of two girls, Yeong-ri and Cho-rom, become increasingly entangled, exposing fractures within power dynamics, while the consequences of their choices hit deeper and heavier than anticipated.

Beyond its provocative premise of proxy test-taking, *Imitation Girl* is a psychological thriller and social mystery that relentlessly pushes the question of what each of us strives to imitate. With its powerful immersion and narrative appeal, many readers have mentioned that they read it in one sitting as soon as they opened the book. This work is also currently drawing strong interest from multiple drama production companies.



Imitation Girl

Q. You are an author beloved by many readers both at home and abroad. What do you think is the reason your works resonate so strongly with people?

When I create a story, what I value above all else is entertainment. Creative writing is certainly not easy and requires various virtues, but I believe that entertainment must come first. Only then can messages, emotions, lasting impressions, and artistic beauty be naturally conveyed to the reader, which I think is the biggest difference between fiction and non-fiction. Perhaps because of this, I often hear that once readers open my books, they become

so immersed that it is hard to put them down.

Also, since I am fond of art, paintings or music frequently serve as complementary elements in my works. Readers seem to become even more deeply immersed when they feel artistic beauty within a novel.

For me, I can only start writing when a vivid image comes to mind. Once a single, striking image takes shape, I build the narrative around it. That is why people often say my works have strong visual quality, making them feel as if they are watching a drama or a movie unfold right before their eyes.

Q. Could you share your thoughts on the power of literature to reflect our society?

Over the years, I have written many novels that address social issues. I have dealt with various topics including juvenile offenders, school violence, the tragic deaths of young teachers, the Korean college entrance exam system, school testing systems, the invisible social classes of modern society, and disability.

I am a citizen living within the fence of society, and I know how much blood was shed and how many painful struggles took place throughout human history before citizens came to exist. That is why I believe that the most personal issues are the most social issues.

Since I am not a sociologist, I cannot inform or persuade people about social phenomena through great academic knowledge, articles, or columns. I am a creator. Therefore, I express the emotions, thoughts, curiosities, and anger I feel while living in society through the form of fiction.

Even those who find dense history books difficult to read can experience that

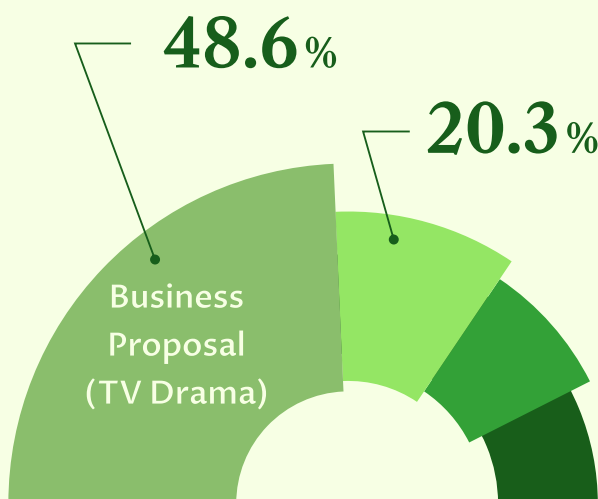
ra as if it were the present through a novel depicting a single scene in history. Literature allows people to listen to minorities, human rights issues, and the stories of others they previously had no interest in, enabling them to empathize with those stories as if they were their own. I believe that is the true power of literature.

Coincidence for the Characters, Inevitable Adaptation for Web Novels

Edited by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

Q. From page to screen, which K-story stayed with you?

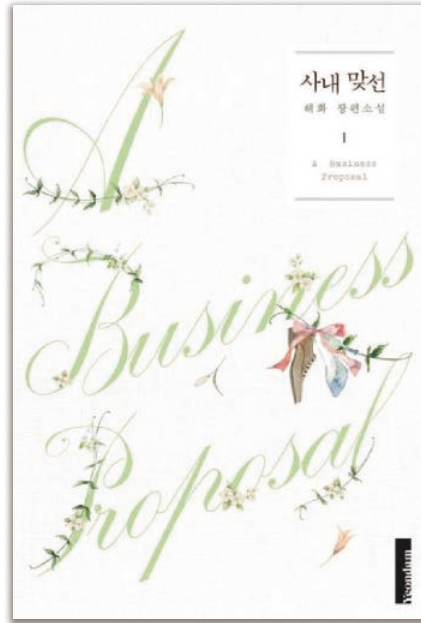


48.6% Business Proposal(TV Drama)

20.3% Kim Ji-young, Born 1982(Film)

16.2% Reborn Rich(TV Drama)

14.9% The School Nurse Files(Netflix)



Hae Hwa, *A Business Proposal* (Printed Edition), Yeondam, 2022

The question for this issue was, “What is your most memorable K-Story?” Among book-based K-Stories, the top choice selected by 36 out of 72 respondents (50%) was *Business Proposal*. Introduced for the first time in this year’s 〈Image of K-Book〉, *A Business Proposal* is a web novel following Shin Ha-ri, a female protagonist who attends a blind date in place of her friend, only to discover that her date is the CEO of the company where she works.

Everything that unfolds between Shin Ha-ri (who must get rejected at all costs for her own safety) and CEO Kang Tae-moo (who is ready to marry anyone just to avoid distractions at work) shows how a series of coincidences turns into inevitability, and eventually, true love.

First serialized on KakaoPage in 2017, *A Business Proposal* was published as a physical novel (currently out of print), adapted into a webtoon and physical print, and produced as a drama series. Having evolved across multiple media, it has established itself as a hit IP that continues to drive repeat engagement for readers across various formats and platforms.

In particular, with its drama adaptation staying on Netflix's Top 10 list for 10 consecutive weeks starting in May 2022, A ***Business Proposal*** showcased the enduring potential of K-Stories beloved across multiple platforms. K-Books are leading Korean storytelling and driving the Hallyu wave through diverse media. Likewise, A ***Business Proposal*** continues to demonstrate the power of K-Stories as it transforms across various platforms.

Of course, just as the title varies slightly across formats, there are subtle differences in storytelling depending on the media. However, the core storyline maintains its powerful presence on every platform. We invite you to dive into the raw power of this K-story, starting with the foundation of it all: the web novel A ***Business Proposal***.

The Engine of K-Content, K-Story

Edited by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

Welcome to *Book Grocery*, a monthly K-Book Trends feature that recommends books based on readers' real stories. If you would like to receive a book recommendation tailored to your concerns or situation, please submit your story through the form below.

[Submit your story](#)

A Story from a K-Book Trends Subscriber in Ukraine

In today's world, where people consume short videos and quick content every day, Korean book-based media franchises remind us that powerful stories still begin with words. Behind every memorable character and emotional scene is an author who first created that world through writing. I hope more people discover the original books, because reading offers a deeper understanding that no screen can fully replace. For me, that is the true value of these adaptations.

Recommended Book for This Story



A Shop for Killers

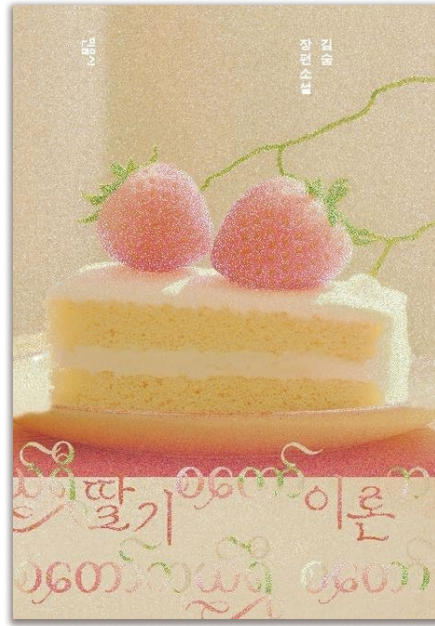
Even in an era accustomed to short-form videos and fast-paced media like Reels and Shorts, there are works that prove compelling stories ultimately begin with text. Novelist Kang Ji-Young's *A Shop for Killers* is the original novel behind the Disney+ series 〈A Shop for Killers〉.

While the drama captivates viewers with its rapid pacing, suspenseful action, and striking visual aesthetics, the original novel provides a far more nuanced portrayal of the relationship between Jian and her uncle Jinman, the backstories of the characters, and the survival methods each chose. Emotions and situations that inevitably pass by quickly on screen can be savored and deeply understood through the slow, deliberate pace of the book.

Above all, a book allows readers to imagine the appearance, spaces, and voices of the characters for themselves. Even when reading the exact same sentence, each reader envisions Jinman and Jian differently, interpreting the characters' choices through the lens of their own unique experiences. In the spaces left empty where the author chooses not to reveal everything, readers complete the scenes, guess at the characters' emotions, and discover the true meaning of the story on their own.

Reading also carries the special privilege of encountering a story at one's own pace. You can pause at a line that touches your heart, or flip back to earlier pages to reexamine a character's actions. In this process, the meaning behind the words and deeds Jinman left for Jian, as well as the trust and affection built between them, resonate with an even deeper warmth.

If you enjoyed the drama, reading the original novel will allow you to discover hidden contexts within familiar scenes and uncover the inner worlds of the characters anew. Beyond the excitement of its screen adaptation, *A Shop for Killers* comes highly recommended as a book that lets you experience the unique value of reading: imagining, interpreting, and dwelling slowly within a story.



Kim Soom, *Strawberry Theory*, Minumsa, 2026.

Novelist Kim Soom is an author who quietly listens to and observes the lives of the socially vulnerable, such as Comfort Women survivors and visually impaired individuals, expressing their stories in her own unique literary style. *Strawberry Theory* is a work that depicts the lives of workers in a strawberry field through the eyes of “Hshapyae,” a female migrant worker who moved to Korea from Myanmar. In Hshapyae’s homeland of Myanmar, a tragedy of fratricidal war unfolds due to civil conflict, while the aftermath of earthquakes leaves her family living on the streets.

The money Hshapyae sends home goes toward repairing their house, putting her only younger brother through school, and enabling her mother, who sells fish at the market, to visit the hospital. To her, strawberries represent money and family, but also labor and a chain of burden. Her hands are covered in scars from picking strawberries, and despite frequent overtime work, she remains unpaid. Her salary is never delivered on time. Though she dreams of returning home one day, her younger sister, whose life hangs by a thread, earnestly urges her not to return. Hshapyae’s roommate, Bopha, comes from

Cambodia. She is an undocumented migrant worker who fled a brutal farm known locally as the "bad strawberry field" and took refuge where Hshapyae works.

Though the two share a room, they speak different languages and face different circumstances, making it impossible to share their daily lives or their pain. They exist merely as hands that pick strawberries. Called daughters, elder sisters, and nieces by others, they live as walking automated teller machines, transferring the cash their families need. In Hshapyae's lodging, besides Bopha, there are Wanna from Cambodia, Thura, an undocumented worker from Myanmar, and Mariel from the Philippines. All of them came to Korea dreaming of ordinary lives, but as they work endlessly submerged in a sea of strawberries, the things precious to them paradoxically drift farther away. Thura chose to have an abortion after being betrayed by her lover, and Mariel, longing for her husband and child back home who have gone silent, dreams every single day of boarding a plane. Even when the waves of life rise to their chins, they head back to the strawberry fields once more. For them, strawberries are life and family.

The characters in the novel are alter egos of the real workers the author met. Though they endure the chains of poverty and racial discrimination through hard work, they are never respected as precious human beings. The strawberries they work so hard to harvest become expensive cakes, yet their lives show no sign of improvement. Beyond these strawberry pickers, author Kim Soom continues to record the tragic lives of other workers whom Korean society has failed to protect.

On December 20, 2020, Sokheng, a Cambodian worker who froze to death inside a greenhouse during a severe cold wave, met a lonely death just two

months before her scheduled return home. Boonchu, a Thai worker who died of a heart attack after working in a pig farm for over ten years, was secretly buried on a hillslope by the farm owner and his son before being discovered by a coworker. Tulsi from Nepal took his own life just six months after starting work at a pig farm, unable to endure constant harassment and physical abuse.

The novel opens with a few lines of monologue: “I came as a human being. First, as a human being. You are the same. You came to the strawberry field first as a human being. Even if they spit on their luck, grumbling that ‘a person showed up’ when they didn’t ask for one.” These migrant workers are unable to step into the future they once dreamed of. They cannot break free from the families and homelands they left behind, nor from poverty, war, disease, and an unfulfilled future. *Strawberry Theory* is the personal confession of Hshapyae and Bopha, who write in their journals, bathe, and cook dishes from home every single day to shake off the haunting fear that, at any moment, they might sink into something less valued than the very strawberries they pick.

Unless they take care of themselves, keep themselves alive, and feed themselves, their efforts become a struggle for survival, a resistance against discriminatory, numb eyes that reduce them to nothing more than hands picking strawberries. No one can live entirely alone. Every moment of joy and sorrow, of despair and hope, begins through someone and is healed by someone. Though invisible to those lighting candles on brilliant, sweet strawberry cakes while singing “Happy Birthday to You,” the lives of these women, who undoubtedly exist somewhere out there, are just as real, just as much of a reality. This book is a sheet of photo paper capturing time, recording their breathing and their pain.

Beat the Heat with Books: July's Bestsellers

Edited by

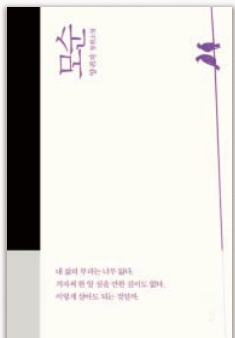
The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

In this August issue, we look at the overall ranking charts of Youngpoong Bookstore, the second-largest brick-and-mortar bookstore chain in Korea. Although Youngpoong Bookstore does not stand out as significantly online, its strength lies in services connected to its solid offline network. Examining Youngpoong Bookstore's bestsellers provides valuable insights into current Korean reading trends.

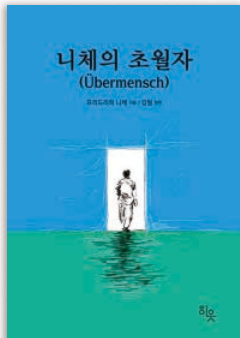
The title claiming the top spot at Youngpoong Bookstore in the first week of July is *Contradictions*, a steady seller that has enjoyed continuous love throughout 2026. *Contradictions* has maintained a steady position on the charts this year, though its specific ranking fluctuates across different bookseller lists. A key characteristic of Youngpoong Bookstore’s chart is that fiction and children’s literature account for the vast majority of titles. Every month, children’s titles such as the *Hunhan Nammae* series make their way into the top ranks. Fiction also receives steady support—alongside *Contradictions*, titles such as *Rapid*, *Project Hail Mary*, and *Siddhartha* frequently resurface near the top of the chart even after briefly dropping off.

In addition, books in the humanities continue to gain steady popularity. Works such as *Nietzsche’s Transcendent One* secured spots within the top 10 during the first week of July, confirming that readers’ favorite titles remain widely loved into midsummer.

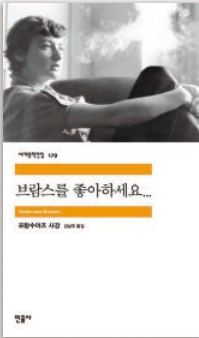
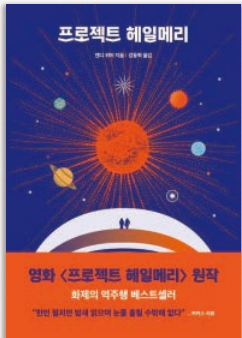
For a detailed breakdown of the bestseller rankings, please refer to the table below.

Youngpoong Bookstore Bestsellers: 1st Week of July 2026		
Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Publisher / Genre
1		<i>Contradictions</i>
		Yang Gui-ja
		Ssuda
		Fiction

Youngpoong Bookstore Bestsellers: 1st Week of July 2026

Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Publisher / Genre
2		<i>Siddhartha</i>
		Hermann Hesse / Park Byung-deok (translator)
		Minumsa
		Fiction
3		<i>Hunhan Nammae's Common Curiosity 15</i>
		Hunhan Nammae (Original Work) An Chi-Hyun (Author)
		Mirae N Iseum
		Children's Books
4		<i>Nietzsche's Transcendent One</i>
		Friedrich Nietzsche / Kim Chul (translator)
		Hieut
		Humanities
5		<i>Mellow TV Team Nappa 1: Friends with a Screw Loose</i>
		Mellow TV (original) / Ahn Kyung-soon (author) / Three Four (illustrator)
		Haksan Kids
		Children's Books
6		<i>Rapid (Today's Young Writers 40)</i>
		Jeong Dae-geon
		Minumsa
		Fiction

Youngpoong Bookstore Bestsellers: 1st Week of July 2026

Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Publisher / Genre
7		Baek & Ah x Gogo Friends Korean Language Special Squad 1: The Beginning
		Baek & Ah, Gogo Friends (Original Work) / Han Bari (Author)
		Baek & Ah World
		Children's Books
8		Do You Like Brahms?
		Françoise Sagan (Author) / Kim Nam-Joo (Translator)
		Minumsa
		Fiction
9		Hunhan Nammae 22
		Hunhan Nammae (Original Work) / Baek Nan-do (Author) Yoo Nan-Hee (Illustrator)
		Mirae N Iseum
		Children's Books
10		Project Hail Mary
		Andy Weir / Kang Dong-Hyeok (translator)
		RH Korea
		Fiction

A Journey Through Time in Literature: The Literary Village of Kim You Jeong, Chuncheon

Edited by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

Spring, Spring, The Camellias, and *Gold-Mining Bean Field*. Kim You-jeong's works, which almost every Korean reader has encountered at least once in school textbooks, continue to vividly convey the atmosphere of rural Korea and the warmth of its people. His delightful humor and empathetic perspective transcend language barriers, reaching global readers through translations, stage adaptations, and various cultural projects.

The Literary Village of Kim You Jeong

Located in Chuncheon, Gangwon State, The Literary Village of Kim You Jeong is a literary space built in the village where the author was born and raised. At the restored birthplace and exhibition halls, visitors can explore his life and literary world, while walking trails that evoke scenes from his novels weave throughout the village. Taking a stroll through the village brings visitors face-to-face with landscapes where the characters from his stories feel as though they might step out at any moment.

Unlike typical memorial halls, The Literary Village of Kim You Jeong has established itself as a complex cultural facility. In addition to exhibition rooms offering a glimpse into the author's birthplace and creative process, it offers hands-on activities such as leather crafting, bead crafting, and pottery making. As you wander around, you will uncover unexpected stories set in Silje Village, the author's hometown.



Birthplace of Kim You Jeong (Source: The Literary Village of Kim You Jeong
http://www.kimyoujeong.org/theme/basic/html/guide/look_place.php)

Gimyujeong Station

The old Gimyujeong Station, located within walking distance of the village, is a perfect spot to savor the remaining mood of your trip. The aged station building and railway tracks create an atmosphere that feels frozen in time, while the book cafe and exhibition space offer a special haven for book lovers.



Gimyujeong Station (Source: Chuncheon Travel ON <https://www.chuncheon.go.kr/>)

Gimyujeong Railbike

For a slightly more special experience, the Gimyujeong Railbike at Gangchon Rail Park comes highly recommended. Following the old Gyeongchun Line tracks, the course cuts through the Bukhan River and surrounding forests, offering a unique transition from the landscapes of

literature to real-world nature. In particular, the various themed tunnels and riverside scenery remain consistently popular with families on summer trips as well as international tourists.



Gimyujeong Railbike (Source: Chuncheon Travel ON <https://www.chuncheon.go.kr/>)

Korea Reading Festival

For those who feel a lingering wish for more after an August book trip to Chuncheon, here is one more thing to look forward to: the 2026 Korea Reading Festival will take place from September 18 to 20, 2026, around The Literary Village of Kim You Jeong and the Gongjicheon area. If your August book tour in Chuncheon left you wanting more, or if you wish to revisit, waiting for the 2026 Korea Reading Festival in September would be a wonderful option.



2026 Korea Reading Festival (Source - Korea Reading Festival: <https://korearf.kpipa.or.kr/>)

The legacy of Kim You Jeong's works extends far beyond merely documenting a rural era. Through performances, screen adaptations, and translations, his novels continue to expand into new cultural content, reaching diverse audiences even today. Starting from the literary village and following the old railway tracks along the Bukhan River, a journey through Chuncheon reveals how Korean literature continues to breathe and thrive beyond the boundaries of time and genre.

Address

Literary Village of Kim You Jeong: 1430-14 Gimyujeong-ro, Sindong-myeon, Chuncheon, Gangwon-do

Gimyujeong Station: 1435 Gimyujeong-ro, Sindong-myeon, Chuncheon, Gangwon-do

Gimyujeong Railbike: 1383 Gimyujeong-ro, Chuncheon-si, Gangwon-do (Sindong-myeon)

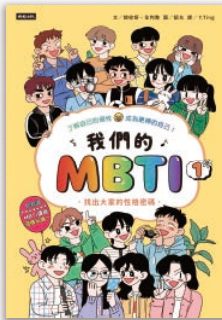
Titles Selected for the Overseas Publication Grants 2026

Edited by

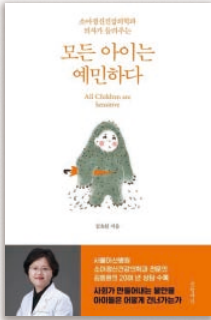
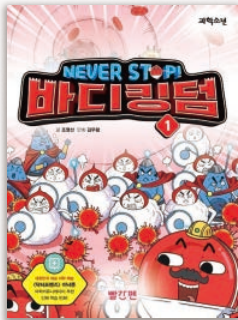
The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

The Publication Industry Promotion Agency of Korea (KPIPA) provides publication grants to promote the export of Korean publications. The grants provide partial financial assistance to foreign publishing companies that have published or intend to publish Korean content in accordance with copyright agreements. A total of 30 books from 22 publishers across 11 countries were selected; the list is as follows:

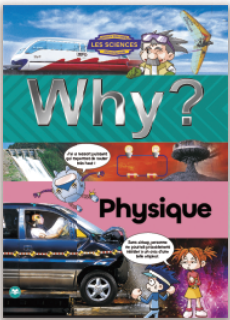
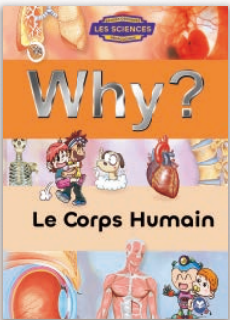
Titles Selected for the Overseas Publication Grants 2026

Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Applicant / Country / Language	
1		ยืมรับคนไม่ดีที่ผ่านเข้ามาในชีวิต (무례한 사람에게 웃으며 대처하는 법)	
		English title How To Deal With Rude People	
		Jeong Moon Jeong	Amarin Corporations PCL
		Thailand	Thai
2		ที่เบลอๆ เพราะยังไม่เจอตัวเอง (흐릿한 나를 견디는 법)	
		English title How To Endure My Blurry Self	
		Ssug	Amarin Corporations PCL
		Thailand	Thai
3		<i>La face cachée de Kim Jong-un: Politique et stratégie du dirigeant nord-coréen</i> (우리가 모르는 김정은: 그의 정치와 전략)	
		English title The Kim Jong-un We Don't Know: His Politics and Strategy	
		Cheong Seong Chang	Atelier des Cahiers
		France	French
4		MBTI 1-5 (우리들의 MBTI 1-5)	
		English title Our MBTI 1-5	
		Jo Su Yeon, Jeon Pan Kyo	China Times Publishing Company
		Taiwan	Traditional Chinese
5		RENGARENK BEYNLER KULÜBÜ (컬러풀 브레인 프렌즈)	
		English title Colorful Brain Friends	
		Cha Ye Jin	China Times Publishing Company
		Türkiye	Turkish Language

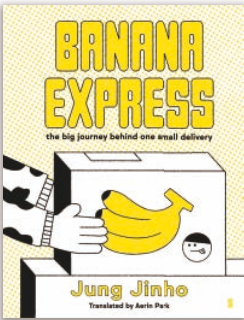
Titles Selected for the Overseas Publication Grants 2026

Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Applicant / Country / Language	
6		所有孩子都很敏感 (모든 아이는 예민하다)	
		English title *Every child is sensitive	
		Kim Hyo Won	ECUS CULTURAL ENTERPRISE LTD.
		Taiwan	Traditional Chinese
7		活下來的我們 (제가 참사 생존자인가요)	
		English title *Am I a survivor of the disaster?	
		Kim Cho Long	ECUS CULTURAL ENTERPRISE LTD.
		Taiwan	Traditional Chinese
8		完美的碎片 (흠결 없는 파편들의 사회)	
		English title *A Society of Flawless Fragments	
		Kim Hyun Mee	Folio (Beijing) Culture & Media Co., Ltd.
		China	Simplified Chinese
9		NEVER STOP! 1-2 (NEVER STOP! 바디킹덤 1-2)	
		English title Never Stop! Body Kingdom 1-2	
		Never Stop! Body Kingdom 1-2	Grimm Press Ltd.
		Taiwan	Traditional Chinese
10		小醫師復仇者聯盟16：血液疾病，把傷痛化為力量！ (의사 어벤저스 16: 혈액 질환, 아픈 만큼 자란다!)	
		English title Doctor Avengers Vol. 16	
		Ko Hee Jung, Jo Seung Yun	Hsiao Lu Publishing Co., Ltd.
		Taiwan	Traditional Chinese

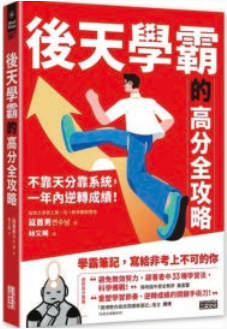
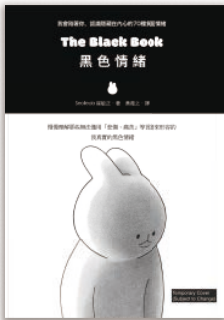
Titles Selected for the Overseas Publication Grants 2026

Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Applicant / Country / Language	
11		小醫師復仇者聯盟17：耳鼻喉科疾病，守護身心的防線！ (의사 어벤저스 17: 이비인후과 질환, 내 마음을 들어 줘!)	
		English title Doctor Avengers Vol. 17	
		Ko Hee Jung, Jo Seung Yun	Hsiao Lu Publishing Co., Ltd.
		Taiwan	Traditional Chinese
12		我的女儿安静地崩溃了 (딸이 조용히 무너져 있었다)	
		English title *My daughter was quietly breaking down	
		Kim Hyun Ah	Hunan Science & Technology Press Co. Ltd.
		China	Simplified Chinese
13		100 Great Inventions that Made the Lives Convenient (맛있고 재밌고 편리한 것들의 기원과 원리 100)	
		English title 100 Great Inventions that Made the Lives	
		Im Yu Shin	Iwasaki Publishing Co., Ltd.
		Japan	Japanese
14		Why - La Physique (Why? 물리)	
		English title Why? Science #17 Physics	
		Cho Young Sun, Lee Young Ho	Mediterranean Publisher
		Tunisia	Arabic
15		Why - Le Corps Humain (Why? 인체)	
		English title Why? Science #02 Human Body	
		Huh Soon Bong, Song Heo Suk	Mediterranean Publisher
		Tunisia	Arabic

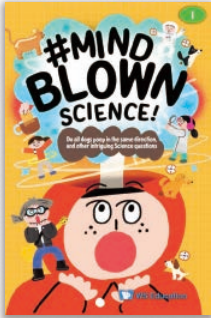
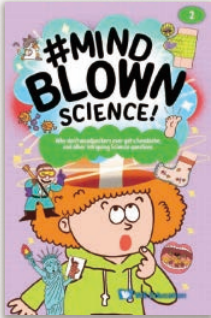
Titles Selected for the Overseas Publication Grants 2026

Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Applicant / Country / Language	
16		<i>Girl Talk: Tentang Dewasa dan Jiwa Merdeka</i> (소녀 취향 성장기: 나를 성장시킨 여자들의 이야기)	
		English title Girl's Talk: A Coming of Age - The Stories of Women Who've Helped Me Grow	
		Lee Ju Ra	Patriots Publishing Sdn. Bhd.
		Malaysia	Malay
17		我也想要愛！：障礙女性的情慾、身體與自由 (다른 듯 다르지 않은 - 장애 여성들이 오롯이 구성한 성과 사랑, 섹슈얼리티의 의미)	
		English title Different Yet Not	
		Im Hae Young	PsyGarden Publishing Company
		Taiwan	Traditional Chinese
18		愛你，愛你，永遠愛你：寵物離世陪伴書 (펫로스 사랑한다 사랑한다 사랑한다)	
		English title Pet Loss. I love you, I love you, I love you	
		Shim Yong Hui	PsyGarden Publishing Company
		Taiwan	Traditional Chinese
19		<i>Banana Express: the big journey behind one small delivery</i> (바나나가 더 일찍 오려면)	
		English title To Receive Banana Earlier in the Morning	
		Jung Jin Ho	Scribble, an imprint of Scribe Publications
		Australia	English
20		ให้ถ้อยคำเหล่านี้จุดแสงสว่างที่ปลายอุโมงค์เพื่อเธอ (너에게 들려주는 단단한 말)	
		English title A SOLID WORD FOR YOU	
		Kim Jong Won	SE-EDUCATION PCL
		Thailand	Thai

Titles Selected for the Overseas Publication Grants 2026

Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Applicant / Country / Language	
21		JUNGBRRE got smaller than an insect! (Vol. 1-5) (곤충보다 작아진 정브르, 생물학습만화 1)	
		English title JUNGBRRE got smaller than an insect! #1-5	
		Kang Min Hui, Kang Shin Young, Jungbrre	Shanghai Huishi Culture Co., Ltd.
		China	Simplified Chinese
22		後天學霸的高分全攻略 (모든 시험에 적용되는 33가지 진짜 공부법)	
		English title *33 Proven Study Strategies That Work for Any Exam	
		Yeon Su Nam	SUN COLOR CULTURE CO., LTD.
		Taiwan	Traditional Chinese
23		普通兄妹怪奇科學家 3 (흔한 남매의 흔한 호기심 3)	
		English title Common Sibling 3	
		Ahn Chi Hyeon	SUN COLOR CULTURE CO., LTD.
		Taiwan	Traditional Chinese
24		The Black Book (검은 감정)	
		English title The Black Book	
		Seolleda	Sunrise Press, a division of AND Publishing Ltd.
		Taiwan	Traditional Chinese
25		Stop Overthinking: Minimalist Rules to Overcome Decision Anxiety (선택과 결정은 타이밍이다)	
		English title CHOICE AND DECISION IS TIMING	
		Choi Hoon	Tianjin Xingwen Culture Communication Co., Ltd.
		China	Simplified Chinese

Titles Selected for the Overseas Publication Grants 2026

Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Applicant / Country / Language	
26		Thư cho con (딸에게 보내는 굿나잇 키스)	
		English title GOOD NIGHT KISS TO MY DAUGHTER	
		Lee Eo Ryeong	VIET NAM AZ COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE COMPANY LIMITED
		Vietnam	Vietnamese
27		#MindBlownScience: Do All Dogs Poop in the Same Direction? (영똥하지만 과학입니다 1 - 개가 똥을 누는 방향은?)	
		English title Ridiculous Science Vol. 1: Where does a dog poop?	
		Won Jong Woo, Choi Hyang Suk	WS Education
		Singapore	English
28		#MindBlownScience: Why Don't Woodpeckers Ever Get a Headache (영똥하지만 과학입니다 2 - 진짜 발 냄새를 찾아라!)	
		English title Ridiculous Science vol. 2: Find the real smell of your feet!	
		Won Jong Woo, Choi Hyang Suk	WS Education
		Singapore	English
29		可可寶拉的怪奇科學研究所1 (코코보라 1 세상 모든 궁금증을 다룬 학습 만화)	
		English title Cocobora 1: An Educational Comic That Covers All the World's Curiosities	
		Redpajamayaco, Park Jong Eun	Yuan Liou Publishing
		Australia	English
30		ให้ถ้อยคำเหล่านี้จุดแสงสว่างที่ปลายอุโมงค์เพื่อเธอ (너에게 들려주는 단단한 말)	
		English title A SOLID WORD FOR YOU	
		Kim Jong Won	SE-EDUCATION PCL
		Taiwan	Traditional Chinese

* Titles marked with an asterisk are books that do not have English titles and have been translated arbitrarily.

2026 K-Book Market In NewYork

Edited by

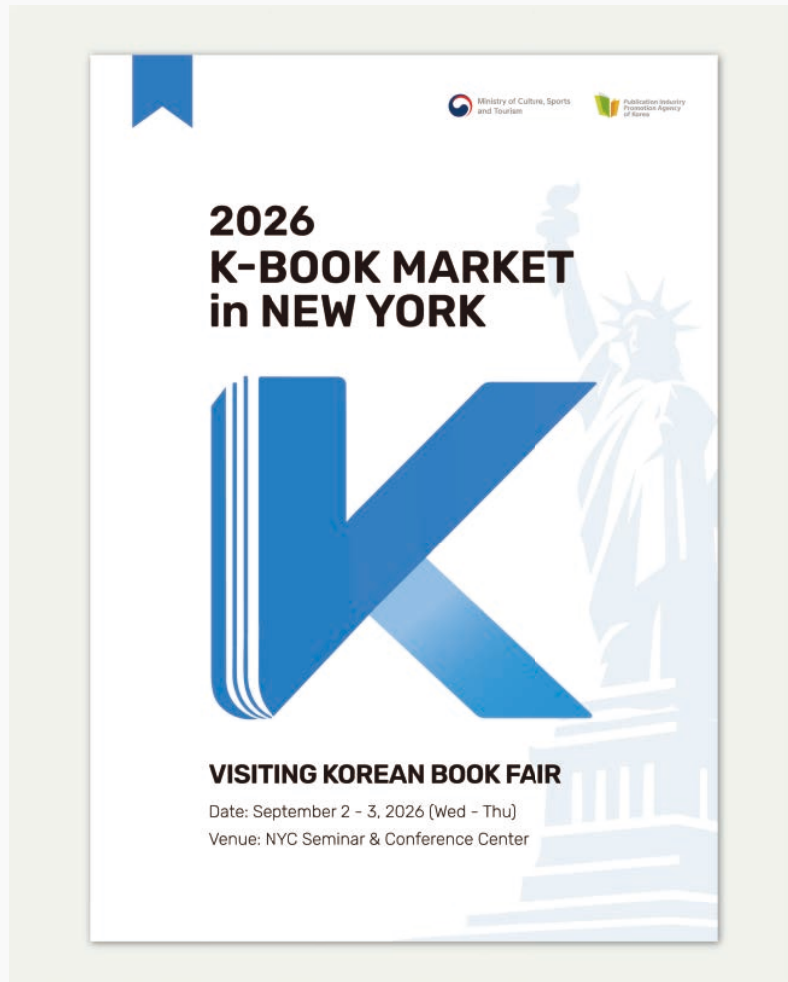
The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

K-Books are heading to the U.S., the world's largest publishing market. The fair will bring together 15 Korean participating companies and around 40 local buyers for one-to-one export consultations. Export specialists will also represent 101 consignment titles in meetings with local buyers.

The program also includes a seminar on the local publishing market, discussions with related organizations, and a planned book donation to the Korean Cultural Center New York.

DATE: September 2-3, 2026 | PLACE: NYC Seminar & Conference Center |
Host: Korea Publication Industry Promotion Agency (KPIPA)

We hope you'll show your continued interest and support for the 2026 K-Book Market In NewYork!



BUSINESS MATCHING

Korean Companies

15



Local Buyers

40



Consignment Titles

101



The fair will bring together 15 Korean participating companies and around 40 local buyers for one-to-one export consultations.

Export specialists will also represent 101 consignment titles in meetings with local buyers.



국내 참가사 15개사와 현지 바이어
약 40개사가 참여해 1:1 수출상담을 진행합니다.

위탁도서 101종은 수출전문가가
현지 바이어를 대상으로 대리상담을 진행합니다.

MORE PROGRAMS

Beyond Export Consultations



Publishing Market
Seminar



Institutional Discussions



Planned
Book Donation



The program will also include a seminar on the local publishing market, discussions with related organizations, and a planned book donation to the Korean Cultural Center New York.



수출상담과 함께 현지 출판시장 관련
세미나와 유관기관 협의가 진행됩니다.
뉴욕 문화원을 대상으로 한
도서기증도 추진될 예정입니다.

EVENT INFO

2026 K-Book Market in NewYork

Dates

September 2-3, 2026

Venue

NYC Seminar & Conference Center

앤와이씨 세미나 앤 컨퍼런스 센터

Hosted by

Korea Publication Industry Promotion Agency

한국출판문화산업진흥원(KPIPA)

✿ See you in NewYork! ✿

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K-Book Trends

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