

AUTHORS GUIDE TO THE FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR

By Hannah Johnson, [Publishing Perspectives](#)

PUBLISHING PERSPECTIVES

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[Publishing Perspectives](#) is the online journal of international publishing news and opinion that's been called "the BBC of the book world." With correspondents and personal stories from those on the cutting edge of digital, global, and self-publishing all around the world, Publishing Perspectives provides a window into the industry unlike any other.

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If you have questions about attending the Frankfurt Book Fair as an author or you'd like to share your experience from past book fairs, email us at newsletter@publishingperspectives.com.

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What is the Frankfurt Book Fair?

When: October 9–13, 2013

Where: Ludwig-Erhard-Anlage 1, 60327 Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Every year in October, the largest gathering of the publishing industry takes place in Frankfurt, Germany. The [Frankfurt Book Fair](#) hosts over 170,000 publishers, agents, scouts, librarians, consultants, service providers, authors, and industry professionals from over 100 countries. The fair takes place over five days, from Wednesday to Sunday. The first three days are trade-only, but on Saturday and Sunday, more than 100,000 readers from the public attend to see their favorite authors and find out about new books.

The core business of the Fair is buying and selling book rights (publication rights, foreign rights, film rights, licensing and merchandising rights) around the world. In addition, attendees meet to discuss business deals, learn about global trends and developments in publishing, find service providers, discover the latest in publishing technology, and grow their professional networks.

Each year, over 9,000 journalists from around the world attend the Frankfurt Book Fair, and companies use this time to promote their brands, authors, products and services. The Fair has become one of the industry's leading venues for company and product launches.

Thousands of events take place at the Frankfurt Book Fair, ranging from full-day conferences to intimate workshops and seminars. Speakers from around the world discuss business models, tech trends, rights and licenses, as well as issues related to education and academic publishing, book production, library sciences, rights and licenses, marketing, and more.

Why Should Authors Go to Frankfurt?

The most important opportunity that Frankfurt offers to all attendees is access to people who work in publishing. CEOs, agents, foreign rights directors, and editors walk the halls of the fair all day long. This doesn't automatically mean that you'll be able to pitch your book to everyone you meet, but Frankfurt is platform for almost anyone to forge new relationships and create business opportunities.

With some planning and an open mind about new opportunities, you may generate new business for yourself—or at least find some new friends in publishing.

At Frankfurt, you can:

- Learn about and potentially sell foreign rights

- Gain attention from publishers and agents
- Attend publishing events and conferences
- Identify service providers and consultants
- Network with the industry
- Learn more about the global publishing business

Attending the Frankfurt Book Fair is a big expense and requires not just a financial commitment, but also a large time commitment. Remember that you'll need to do plenty of research and planning ahead to make the Fair a success for you. (Learn more about how to [Research People and Companies](#) and [Schedule Meetings](#).)

Unpublished Authors:

Think of your trip to the Frankfurt Book Fair as a research opportunity. Without the track record of a published author (sales data, fan base, etc), it will be difficult for you to find a publisher or an agent in Frankfurt. However, the Fair is a great place to learn more about the publishing industry, attend conferences and events, research publishers, learn the names of agents and editors, and see what similar titles have already been published. You can also find information on service providers (ebook production, social media services, marketing tools, etc.) who can help you self-publish your book.

You'll have the opportunity to talk with people who work in the business and can offer you insider tips and advice about how to get your work published.

Self-Published Authors:

After you've published your book, the Frankfurt Book Fair offers you the chance to further your career as a writer and publishing professional, at an international level. This means meeting international publishers and potentially selling foreign rights to your book. It's also a great place to network your way to decision-makers and new contacts, learn more about the rights business, and get to know international markets.

As a self-published author, you can demonstrate your track record, book sales, and fan base to potential publishers and agents. Because you already have some experience publishing your own book, you can also identify new digital service providers in Frankfurt that offer the features you want (ebook production, distribution, marketing services, etc.), and do market research for your next book (cover design, freelance editors, translators, interest from international markets, etc.).

Pro Tip: Selling foreign rights is not a back-up plan for poor book sales in your own home market. Publishers and agents will look very closely at your book sales and publishing history before deciding to work with you.

Why Should Authors NOT Go to Frankfurt?

Unpublished Authors:

Many unpublished authors go to the Frankfurt Book Fair to find a literary agent and leave disappointed. If this is your goal, keep in mind that agents use their limited time in Frankfurt to sell rights for books they already represent, not necessarily to find new clients. In order to gain entry to the Literary Agents Center in Frankfurt, you'll need to have a pre-arranged appointment with an agent exhibiting there. You'll be turned away if you come to the Agents Center without a documented appointment, which must be arranged in advance of the Fair.

Like agents, publishers primarily attend Frankfurt to buy and sell rights. Of course, editors and publishers are always on the lookout for new authors, but editors don't generally use their time in Frankfurt to meet with new authors and read manuscripts.

Consider instead, attending a local writers' conference, where agents go specifically to identify new clients. The [Association of Writers & Writing Programs](#) (AWP) is a good resource. Alternatively, visit literary agencies' and publishers' websites, where you'll find submission guidelines for unsolicited manuscripts.

Self-Published Authors:

If you are not interested in building relationships with traditional publishing companies, Frankfurt might not be the right venue for you. The majority of exhibitors and attendees work in the traditional publishing industry. While you'll also find a number of companies at the Frankfurt Book Fair who work with self-published authors, their primary goal in Frankfurt is to meet with industry contacts.

It's still uncommon for authors to sell their own foreign rights, even self-published authors. In most rights meetings at the Fair, agents and rights directors present an entire catalog of books available for translation. As an individual author, you have a more limited selection of books. Keep in mind that, from a rights buyer's perspective, a half-hour meeting with an individual author has less business potential than a meeting with an agent.

Weigh the pros and cons of a trip to Frankfurt, come up with some realistic, achievable goals for your trip, and decide if you're ready to invest the time and money to attend.

How Much Does It Cost?

The key to getting the best deal possible on flights and hotels is to **book early**. Of course, how much you spend will depend on how much luxury you want or need. Many hotels are fully booked months before the Fair, and flight prices will go up the later you buy your ticket.

Assuming you will attend the Fair for 5 days, below is a list of expenses you'll need to consider for your trip (prices are approximate):

Flight from the USA: \$2,000

Ticket to Frankfurt Book Fair: \$90

A five-day ticket costs 68 euros if you purchase in advance online, or 96 euros at the door. Single-day tickets are available for 34 euros in advance, or 48 euros at the door. Tickets include free use of Frankfurt's public transportation (underground trains, streetcars, and buses) for the duration of their validity.

Hotel, 5 nights: \$1,200–\$4,000

Expect to pay around \$250—\$700 per night for a hotel room. The closer to the fairgrounds you stay, the more you'll pay. Make sure you factor in the conversion rate from euros to dollars when looking at hotel room prices.

—or—

Private room, 5 nights: \$350–\$600

This is a room in a privately owned apartment. Many fair-goers choose this option to save money. These rooms generally costs around \$70–\$100 per night. Find out how to [book a private room](#).

Taxis and transportation: \$200

This figure includes train tickets to and from the airport and approximately one taxi ride per day—the trains in Frankfurt stop running around midnight. Your book fair ticket includes public transportation in the city from October 8–13.

Events and conferences: \$0–\$1,000

While there are thousands of free events at the Frankfurt Book Fair, the larger conferences and some of the workshops are ticketed (see [Events](#)).

Food and drinks: \$200–\$500

You'll find plenty of inexpensive restaurants in Frankfurt, but don't forget that the dinners, drinks, and networking that take place after the Fair closes each day are just as important as the Fair itself. Don't miss out on forging great relationships with people because you want to save a few dollars on dinner (see [After Hours](#)).

Promotional material: \$150
Don't forget to bring business cards and marketing handouts describing your work. Get these printed if you don't already have some (see [Promotional Material](#)).

TOTAL COST: \$4,000–\$9,000

Your First Trip to Frankfurt

Almost anyone's first trip to Frankfurt can be overwhelming. With over 7,400 exhibitors, 13 hall levels, and over 170,000 industry attendees from over 100 countries, the Frankfurt Book Fair is massive event. Many people—agents, publishers and authors alike—reserve their first trip to Frankfurt for discovery and networking.

Think of Frankfurt as a long-term investment in your publishing career, not a single trip that will yield immediate results. Book publishing is a business built on relationships, which take time to develop. You'll spend a lot of time on your first trip meeting people and learning more about the business. Once you start to build a network, subsequent trips to Frankfurt and other industry events can capitalize on who and what you know.

Plan Ahead for a Successful Trip to Frankfurt

Frankfurt is not the kind of trade show where you can simply show up, chat with people in their booths, and pick up free books. To have a successful visit to the Fair, you need to do a lot of planning in advance. This includes figuring out what you want out of the trip, setting up appointments with people you'd like to meet, identifying events you want to attend, and making your travel arrangements well in advance.

Define your Goals

Why do you want to go to the Frankfurt Book Fair? Answering this question is important because it will inform which events you attend, who you set meetings with, and of course, how much success you will experience. Here are some examples of what you might want to accomplish:

- Build a network of publishing contacts
- Find an international publisher for your book
- Learn more about the international rights business
- Identify new technology to help you create, sell or market your work

- Learn about self-publishing opportunities internationally
- Meet other indie authors in Frankfurt
- Market research on international publishing markets

Research People and Companies

Once you've decided what you want to achieve in Frankfurt, create a list of people you'd like to meet and companies you want to learn more about or who you can help you reach your goals. Use this list to set up meetings ahead of the Fair (see [Schedule Meetings](#) below), and give you a plan of action while you're at the Fair. You can find a list of Frankfurt Book Fair exhibitors in the online [Exhibitors Catalog](#). You should also read industry blogs, trade journals and websites for more names and companies (see [Extra Links and Resources](#)).

Schedule Meetings

Generally speaking, most people have fully booked Frankfurt schedules by the end of August. Meetings are scheduled in half-hour increments, and it's not unusual for a busy agent or publisher to have back-to-back meetings all day long. This means that in order to have longer conversations with people, you have to contact them in advance and set a time and place to meet at the Fair.

Start by identifying companies or people you'd like to meet. **Contact them as soon as possible** via email with a request to meet in Frankfurt, and be sure to include some brief information about your work and why you want to meet. Keep your request concise, polite, and professional. You might also suggest a day and time for the meeting. If the company has a stand, suggest that you meet at their stand. (Stand numbers are usually written out like this: 4.2 B123. This means Hall 4.2, row B, stand number 123.)

Think of your meeting request as an initial pitch of yourself and your work.

Don't be put off by a few no's. The self-publishing community in Frankfurt is still new, and most publishers and agents don't expect Frankfurt meeting requests from authors. Keep in mind that during many meetings in Frankfurt, agents and publishers are able to present an entire catalog of books that have already sold successfully in their home markets (and internationally, in some cases), which means each half-hour meeting has a lot of business potential. As an individual author, you'll have a more limited selection of titles to present.

If you aren't able to schedule a meeting with a particular person, try to catch this person at their company's booth. The larger stands will have a reception desk, where you can leave a message and a business card.

Pro Tip: The fairgrounds of the Frankfurt Book Fair are huge. If you have meetings scheduled in different halls, leave plenty of time between appointments to get from one hall to another. It can take up to 15 or 20 minutes to talk from one side of the fairgrounds to the other. [Download the map of the Frankfurt Book Fair](#).

Events: Conferences, Workshops, Discussions and More

There are thousands of events at the Frankfurt Book Fair. Many talks and panel discussions are free to attend, but some of the conferences and workshops are ticketed. Below is just a short selection of events authors might find interesting. Check the online [Calendar of Events](#) in September, when the official events guide will be posted.

CONTEC Frankfurt Conference

Tuesday, October 8 • 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. • €654.50

CONTEC Frankfurt will address the complexity of today's publishing business. The content and technology sectors are already intertwined. CONTEC provides the opportunities for each to take the next steps forward together. Stakeholders from across the publishing ecosystem will gather in one arena to redefine and redesign the experience of publishing.

Publishers Launch Frankfurt Conference

Tuesday, October 8 • 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. • €535.50

This is a trade publishing strategy and tactics conference for consumer publishing executives, agents, retailers (and those who wish to do business with them). The program will address scale and consolidation across the publishing world, vertical publishing strategies, as well as implications (and opportunities) of the explosion of digital publishing from non-traditional players and authors and agents publishing directly.

Rights Express Seminar

Wednesday, October 9 • 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. • €178.50

"Rights Express" is an introductory seminar focused on the international rights and licensing business. At this half-day intensive training, hear international experts share their knowledge and expertise with beginners and junior rights directors. Learn how to identify and prioritize rights markets, how to find and contact potential licensees, and how to offer and negotiate rights deals successfully.

Hot Spot Stages

October 9–13 • 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. • Free

At each of the Hot Spot exhibition areas, located throughout the fairgrounds, you'll find round-the-clock presentations from digital and tech companies. Each Hot Spot focuses on one of these topics: Digital Innovation, Education, Kids & eReading, Mobil, Professional & Scientific Information, and Publishing Services.

Publishing Perspectives Stage

Wednesday to Saturday, October 9–12 • 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. • Free

The Publishing Perspectives stage in Hall 8.0 N170 will feature four days of panel discussions, presentations and conversations with leading industry experts and professionals. Topics range from marketing, licensing, social media, international business, and more.

Frankfurt StoryDrive Conference

Friday, October 11 • 9:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. • €327.25

StoryDrive is the international forum for trends and innovation in media and entertainment. Since 2010, this event has focused on new forms of storytelling and pioneering business models. Leaders from the publishing, film, TV, and games industries gather here to present their visionary narrative concepts and to offer new perspectives on the media world of tomorrow.

Ignite Self-Publishing

Saturday, October 12 • 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. • Free (registration required)

Join self-published authors, service providers and professionals working in the field of self-publishing for a two-hour event that includes two Ignite sessions (six presentations of 5 minutes each), a panel discussion, and a networking reception.

Timeline for a Successful Frankfurt

August

- Research companies and contacts in Exhibitor Catalog

- Schedule appointments
- Need a visa for Germany? [Request an invitation from Frankfurt](#) (Deadline: September 1)
- Is your passport up to date?
- Book your flight and hotel room

September

- [Subscribe to Publishing Perspectives](#) to read about Frankfurt and the industry
- Search [Calendar of Events](#) and [Frankfurt Academy](#) event offerings
- Follow the [Frankfurt blog](#) for info about events and attendees
- [Buy your Frankfurt Book Fair trade visitor ticket](#)
- Buy tickets to conferences and workshops
- Create and print promotional material
- Does your mobile phone work in Germany?

October

- Print out your appointment and event schedule (with contact names and locations), travel plans, Book Fair ticket
- Check the weather and pack accordingly (be sure to bring comfortable shoes)
- Attend the Frankfurt Book Fair!
- After the Fair, send follow-up emails to people you met

At Frankfurt: How it Works

Like any event that has taken place for many decades (the first modern Frankfurt Book Fair took place in 1949, but the tradition goes back to the Middle Ages), the Frankfurt Book Fair has its own sub-culture and set of do's and don'ts. Here are a few pro tips to help you network and get the most out of your trip.

Meeting Etiquette and Tips

Have a discussion points ready for each meeting. If you've done your research about the company or person, you should know a little bit about what they do and how you might work together.

Arrive on time. This seems like a no-brainer, but most people will only wait for 5-10 minutes for their appointments to show up. Time is precious in Frankfurt.

Take notes and gather business cards. This will help you keep track of everyone you met and who you want to contact later. If you promise to send someone information after the

Fair, write it down so you don't forget. These notes will help you follow up effectively, which in turn will help you make the most of your new contacts (see [After Frankfurt](#)).

Have your promotional material ready. Leave a little information about yourself so that the person you are meeting has something to take home. This will help them remember you and potentially follow up on your conversation.

Keep it to 25–30 minutes. It's likely that the person you're meeting has another appointment right after yours.

Be polite and professional. Another no-brainer, but word travels quickly at the Fair. Protect your professional reputation and treat everyone with courtesy and respect.

What to Wear

Most people in Frankfurt are dressed in business casual attire. Men wear jackets and, sometimes, ties. Women wear dresses, skirts, or nice pants. Dress to match, and you'll be seen as an industry professional, more so than if you show up in jeans and sneakers.

Promotional Material

Create a set of materials about you and your work that you can give to people you meet, and keep electronic copies that you can easily email. Here are some suggestions about what kind of promo material to create and what information to include:

Business cards: You'll give these out to everyone you meet, so bring enough to get you through the trip. If you don't have any business cards, get some printed. You can use an online printer like uprinting.com, which offers online business card design and printing for around \$30.

One-sheet about your book(s): include the title, cover image, book description, any review quotes or press coverage, as well as your photo, bio, website URL and contact information. If the book has been published, add the ISBN number, book sales data and available rights. Get these printed in color.

(If you are looking for more information on how to create your one-sheet, take a look at what literary agencies do. Many of them will post their [Frankfurt Rights List](#) on their websites, which you can download.)

Postcard about your book: title, cover, short description, a couple review quotes, your website URL, and contact information.

Other information to consider: Goodreads and Amazon reviews, fan base information (Twitter followers and Facebook likes), links to interviews you've given or articles you've written.

Design: A professional design will go a long way toward showing that you are serious about your career as a writer. Hire a freelancer or ask your graphic designer friend to help you. If you want to do this yourself, make sure your page is uncluttered, your images are big and crisp, and the type is easy to read.

If you have self-published your book, don't forget to bring a few copies. You might also consider giving out a download link to your manuscript (you can do this through a cloud-hosting service like Dropbox).

After Hours

What you do after the Fair closes each day is just as important as what you do during the day. Resist the urge to go back to your hotel room early. As mentioned earlier, the publishing business is built on relationships. What better time to build a rapport with someone than over drinks or dinner?

As the Fair winds down each day, a handful of exhibitors will host stand receptions, where they'll serve wine and invite people to mingle. If you see a crowd gathered around a stand sipping wine, ask if you can join in. This is a great way to meet new people.

Publishers also host parties after the Fair, usually in a bar or other venue in the city. Some parties are invitation-only, but others are open to everyone. If you hear about one of these parties or get an invitation, go.

If you find yourself without party plans for the evening, gather up a few people and go out to dinner. You never know where the conversation will lead—to new business, new ideas, and new friends.

After dinner, head over to the bar of [Frankfurter Hof](#), one of Frankfurt's grand, old hotels. This is THE late-night hangout for Fair-goers, and it's a great opportunity to have fun and meet people.

Serendipity

Some of the most successful books that publishers and agents have discovered in Frankfurt are the result of serendipity—chance meetings in hallways, at parties, or in hotel lobbies. Be sure to schedule some free time to simply wander the halls, discover,

and chat with new people. Be open to new ideas that you hadn't previously considered, and always have your business cards handy.

After Frankfurt

Follow Up

Your work isn't over once you get home from Frankfurt. You just spend a significant amount of time and money to attend the Frankfurt Book Fair and create valuable industry connections. Don't let your hard work go to waste by letting these new connections fade. The first thing you should do when you get home is to follow up with every single person you met.

Get out your meeting notes, remind yourself what you talked about and what you said you would send or do, and start sending emails. If you said you would send additional information or pass on someone else's contact information, this is the time to do it. In your email, refer back to your conversation with the person, and make sure you've followed through on the promises you made.

Almost everyone in Frankfurt will send and receive follow-up emails. The information overload can be overwhelming, so keep your emails short and sweet.

If you missed an appointment with someone, send an email with a short apology and suggest that you try to meet another time.

Stay in Touch

After spending a significant amount of time and money to build a new network of contacts, you want to make sure you maintain your relationships. Keep a list of the people you met in Frankfurt, and send an email to these people every now and then. If you decide to attend another book fair, or to attend Frankfurt again next year, this list of contacts should be your starting point for making appointments. They might also be able to recommend more people for you to meet.

Extra Links and Resources

Here are a few websites you'll want to visit, some information to print out and take with you on your trip, and some year-round resources that will help you continue networking and building your business.

Industry News

- [Bookseller+Publisher](#) (Australia)
- [Digital Book World](#) (United States)
- [GalleyCat](#) (United States)
- [Publishers Marketplace](#) (United States)
- [Publishers Weekly](#) (United States)
- [Publishing Perspectives](#) (International)
- [Shelf Awareness](#) (United States)
- [The Bookseller](#) (UK)

Frankfurt Book Fair

- [Calendar of Events](#)
- [Dates and Opening Hours](#)
- [Exhibitor Catalog](#)
- [Guest of Honor info and exhibition](#)
- [International Book Market Reports](#)
- [Who's Who Catalog](#)

City of Frankfurt

- [Deutsche Bahn](#) (long-distance trains)
- [Hotel and Restaurant Guide](#)
- [Map of underground and regional trains](#) (PDF)
- [Tourism Board of Frankfurt](#)