



The timeline of Frankfurter Buchmesse from 1949 to today

For 75 years, Frankfurter Buchmesse has served as a multiplier in the industry: that means 75 times promoting great stories, 75 times ensuring valuable encounters, 75 times hosting socio-political stages, and 75 times amplifying stars from media and culture. And every year, a new chapter is written.

What started in 1949 with around 200 publishers in Frankfurt's Paulskirche has developed into the world's most important industry platform for content and ideas. Today, the history of Frankfurter Buchmesse is part of the history of Frankfurt, the history of German democracy and the history of the international media and publishing industry.

*A History of Frankfurter Buchmesse from 1949 to 1999 (based on Stephan Füssel (ed.), 50 Jahre Frankfurter Buchmesse: 1949 – 1999, Frankfurt/Main 1999)

1949-1989



1990-2022



History from 1949-1959

1949 1950 1951 1952 1953 1954 1955 1956 1957 1958 1959

1st Frankfurter Buchmesse

March

In March, the Book Fair Committee is founded. Its members are Alfred Grade, Walter Gericke, Gottfried Löbemann, Dr Heinz Bergmann and Dr Kurt Georg Schauer. St Paul's Church is leased as a venue.

June

On 10 June, the **first official announcement appears in Börsenblatt**, the trade journal serving Germany's publishing industry; by mid-August only 100 registrations have been received. The Working Group of the German Publishers & Booksellers Associations is not able to decide whether to participate. A book show is therefore held in Stuttgart (160 exhibitors) from 27 August to 25 September and from 1 to 23 October in Hamburg (57 exhibitors).

18 to 23 September

The first book fair in Frankfurt is held in St Paul's Church, organised by the Hessian Publishers and Booksellers Association, with **205 German publishers** taking part. The fair is notable for the uniformity of the stands (the "normal stand" consists of a slanted two-sqm panel with four movable slats, rented to exhibitors for DM 100). Börsenblatt recognises the event by publishing a special advertising issue which simultaneously serves as the fair's catalogue. Published annually since then prior to the fair, this issue becomes an essential reference work for the retail book trade during the Christmas season. The statistics assembled by the fair's management record

9,046 paying guests in addition to 4,500 interested attendees admitted for free. Some 8,400 titles are exhibited. The final report ascertains that some 21,000 contracts were signed, totalling approx. DM 2.6 million. An exhibition of French books is held simultaneously in Frankfurt's City Hall.

Facts & Figures

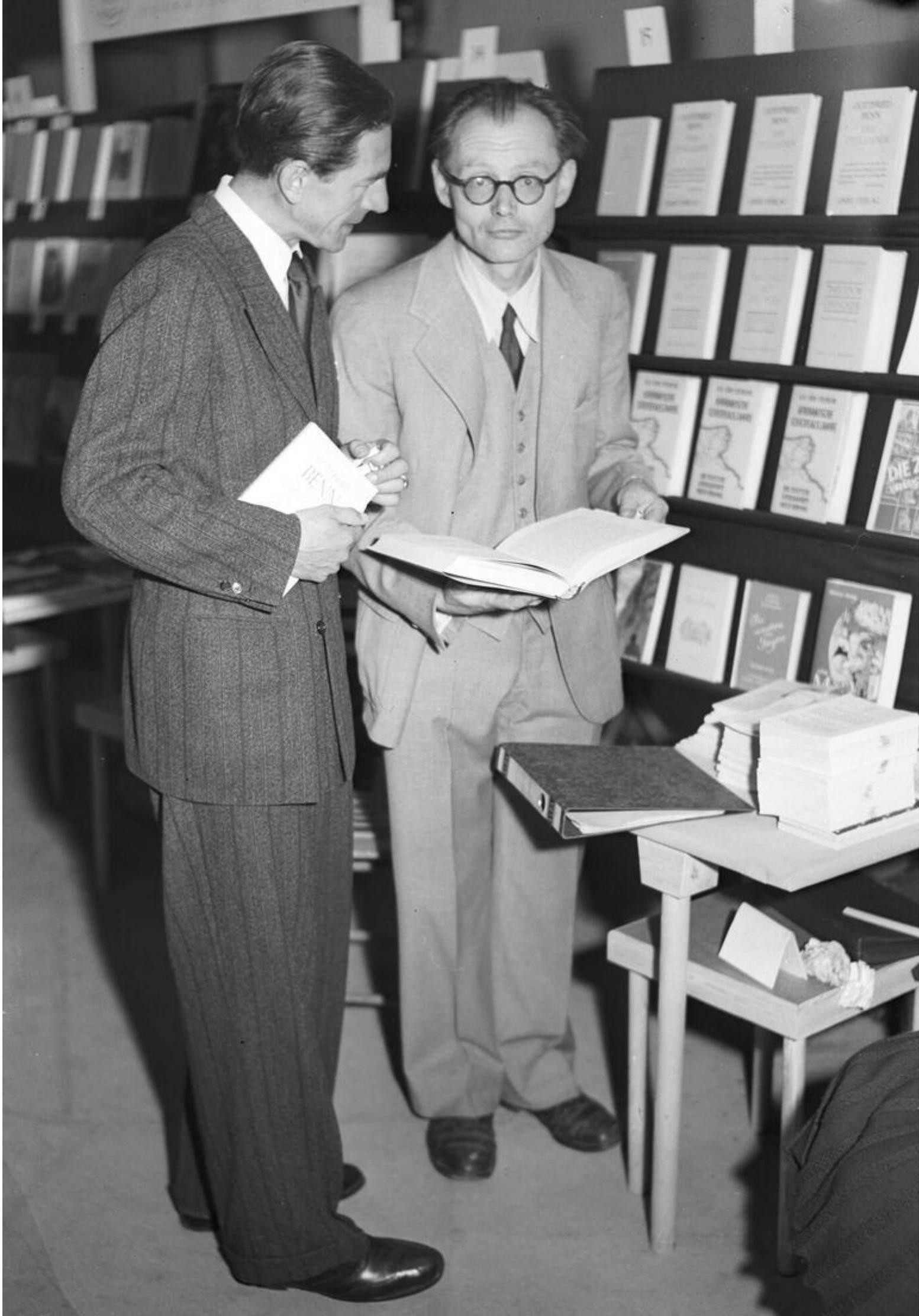
9,046

guests

205

german publishers

NaN



Max Niedermeyer (left), Chairman of the Hessian Publishers and Booksellers Association, with bookseller Heinrich Cobet (right)

History from 1960–1969

1960 1961 1962 1963 1964 1965 1966 1967 1968 1969

12th Frankfurter Buchmesse

21 to 26 September

Hall 5 is also used for the fair. The expansion of the exhibition space is necessary not only because of the growing number of participating publishers, but also because larger (double-width) stands are increasingly in demand. **A double-width version is used for a small special exhibition for the first time**, one that becomes an important part of the fair in coming years: "Practical Aids for Booksellers" (later: "Rationalisation in the Book Trade").



Literary scholar and writer Walter Jens (left) with the Head of the German Publishers & Booksellers Association, Werner Dodeshöner (right)

History from 1970-1979

1970 1971 1972 1973 1974 1975 1976 1977 1978 1979

22nd Frankfurter Buchmesse

24 to 29 September

By 1970, the book fair is no longer the centre of student unrest. There are only a few demonstrations against the stands being misused by the Greek government for propaganda purposes. Just as the fair opens, East Germany signs the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property as well as the Stockholm Protocol.

Ten publishers of religious works join forces, the best known of whom are Don Bosco Verlag from Munich, Driewer Verlag from Essen and Katholisches Bibelwerk from Stuttgart. The aim of this alliance is to coordinate the planning and production relating to certain topics and to launch joint advertising campaigns. The newly founded Austrian publishing house Aktuell Verlag introduces itself by presenting a publication examining juvenile delinquency around the world. A total of 3,384 exhibitors from 66 countries are in attendance for six days on 39,000 sqm of exhibition space. The fair's 113,069 visitors take the opportunity to browse some 213,000 books.

For the first time, the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade is awarded to a married couple: social and political scientists Alva und Gunnar Myrdal.

Facts & Figures

213,000
books

113,069
visitors

3,384
exhibitors



Henry A.
Kissinger
MEMOIREN
1968-1973
C. Borchmann

Henry A.
Kissinger
MEMOIREN
1968-1973
C. Borchmann

RUDOLF AUGSTEIN

HENRY A. KISSINGER

History from 1980–1989

1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989

32nd Frankfurter Buchmesse

8 to 13 October

The **focus topic is "Sub-Saharan Africa"**, which also shapes the programme of cultural events, the International Evening in the Congress Hall and political activities by the public in that demonstrations are held in front of the South African stand. Four issues of the special issue of Börsenblatt Extra International appear in three languages for the book fair; they are published by Börsenblatt in cooperation with Macmillan, the US publishing group.

"German Broadsheet Art of the Present", a new special exhibition, is organised. Some 187,000 visitors peruse the 280,000 titles, including 84,000 new publications, that 5,100 publishers from 92 countries promote at the fair. Media representatives lament the declining quality of literature due to the growing "deluge of books".

Facts & Figures

280,000
books

187,000
visitors

5,100
publishers

Verlag Gustav

Ken Follett Roman

Dreifach

Ein Spionageroman
der Superklasse
vom Autor des Weltbestsellers
"Die Nacht"

Lübbe

"Nach seinem Werk
hat Ken Follett wieder
einen ganz großen Coup gelandet"



Ken Follett Roman

Dreifach



History from 1990–1999

1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999

42nd Frankfurter Buchmesse

3 to 8 October

The opening of the **42nd Frankfurter Buchmesse** takes place on German Unity Day. As always, however, the fair is dominated by its international nature: 8,492 exhibitors from 90 countries present 382,000 titles, including 114,000 new publications, in an exhibition area that has once again been significantly enlarged to 131,000 sqm. **Japan's publishers showcase 10,000 titles** as this year's Guest of Honour.

As usually happens, new developments are not immediately met with enthusiasm, in this case the division of the fair into areas for trade visitors and for the general public, and the rearrangement of the halls. The changes, however, provide more possibilities in terms of space and design. The Peace Prize goes to Karl Dedecius. Stiftung Lesen, the foundation dedicated to reading promotion, is established during the fair.

Facts & Figures

382,000
books

8,492
exhibitors

90

countries



A hostess flips through a book at a stand with Asian titles

History from 2000-2009

2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009

52nd Frankfurter Buchmesse

18 to 23 October

- Harry Potter alters the law of large numbers
- "Fascinating Comics" gets off to a flying start
- The book fair transforms its website into a platform

Guest of Honour: Poland; **Slogan:** "©Poland"

What the publisher Carlsen achieves this Autumn is not just unique, it's a publishing sensation at the very least. **Harry Potter** is the talk of the town and, by the time the book fair starts, the publisher has shipped one million copies of Volume 4 to retailers. A rare euphoria sets in, one that is discussed at length in Frankfurt. The fair itself is celebrating a new **focus topic: "Fascinating Comics"**, which it wants to use to prove that the "ninth art" can play a decisive role in the content business. Moreover, it succeeds better than expected: the fair's management will later abandon its plan to focus on the subject for only three years; the topic fits in right from the start (first book fair without a centre for comics: 2014).

Lorenzo Rudolf, who has been director of the book fair since March, concentrates on business as usual in his first year. Although the fair's website has been relaunched, setting a new standard, that change remains barely recognised for the time being. The fact is: the website has been converted into a B2B and marketing portal, allowing the industry to track trends on an international level and network digitally for the first time – all year round.

Visitors to the fair therefore encounter familiar formats and topics. Once again, it's all about the impact of industry concentration, about the **online book trade**, about **digital media** – and the inauguration of the International eBook Award, endowed with \$100,000, gets the most attention. This year's gathering is decidedly political: not only do **Nobel laureates Czeslaw Milosz and Wislawa Szymborska** represent the Guest of Honour country at the opening ceremony, Polish Foreign Minister Wladyslaw Bartoszewski is also present. He uses his speech to issue an appeal, which is supported by his German counterpart Joschka Fischer, that makes headlines: together, they advocate taking Poland seriously as a player between Eastern and Western Europe even before it joins the EU. The fair also makes an impression with its numbers: the last time it had more than 300,000 visitors was in 1995.

© Tamara Weise on behalf of Frankfurter Buchmesse; Translation: Tim Schroder

Facts & Figures

302,897
visitors

6,877

107

countries



Leni Riefenstahl, German actor, film director and photographer, at Frankfurter Buchmesse

History from 2010-2019

2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019

6 to 10 October

- Frankfurt SPARKS links technology and content
- Rights business benefits from inclusion of games and music
- International Centre and Translator Centre merge to become the Weltempfang

Guest of Honour: Argentina, cultura en movimiento; **Slogan:** "Argentina – Culture in Motion"

Frankfurter Buchmesse expands its concept to include an initiative that will surprise many, and not just in terms of its name: **Frankfurt SPARKS** gives topics relating to digital transformation a new context; at the same time, it allows the fair to increase its exhibitor radius. Film has already been integrated, now the attractive creative industries of **games and music** are added.

Familiar elements such as the Tools of Change for Publishing conference are included in the initiative, and there is even space for two premieres: **Frankfurt StoryDrive**, a two-day conference that looks at the future of storytelling, and **Frankfurt Hot Spots**. Six hot spots are created throughout the fair, exhibition areas that are packed with innovations and gadgets, each focusing on a different theme: Publishing Services, Information Management, Mobile, Devices, Education, Literature & Special Interest. The idea proves popular: over 7,500 exhibitors ultimately come onboard.

Based solely on the figures, no one has any doubts beforehand that the rights business will benefit from this expansion. Launched the year before as the third area for rights deals, the Image Centre has grown to over 700 sqm and now has room for illustrations. In the **Film & Media Rights Centre**, 27 agents are present this year, which might not seem like many compared to the Literary Agents & Scouts Centre (LitAg), which has 522 participants, although industry insiders see it differently. After all, **in Frankfurt the rights and licensing business happens in all directions**. Books, film, games, music, images, illustrations, even merchandising – all of these markets, which are crucial for the content business, are present and accounted for.

Less obvious are the changes made to the hall layout: the fair for rare books and fine art moves to a tent on the Agora, the Gourmet Gallery shifts from Hall 5.0 over and up to Hall 3.1, doubling in size to 800 sqm. Finally, the Weltempfang makes its debut: a merging of the International Centre and Translator Centre.

© Tamara Weise on behalf of Frankfurter Buchmesse; Translation: Tim Schroder

Facts & Figures

279,325

visitors

7,539

exhibitors

111

countries

3,110

events



Israeli writer David Grossmann hugs German politician Joachim Gauck after receiving the Peace Price

History from 2020-2022

2020 2021 2022

72nd Frankfurter Buchmesse

14 to 18 October

- Covid pandemic prevents in-person meetings on fairgrounds
- Online, Frankfurter Buchmesse reaches an audience of millions
- "Signals of Hope" generates poetry, laughter and discussion

Guest of Honour: Canada; **Slogan:** "Singular Plurality"

Five weeks before it should have started, Frankfurter Buchmesse has to cancel the book fair on the fairgrounds, disappointing everyone who was hoping to attend in person. It switches to emergency mode instead; the new Covid restrictions leave it no other choice. Instead of continuing to prepare a large hybrid edition, as originally intended, it now concentrates on Plan B: **the global fair goes online.**

The programme of events runs for a total of 260 hours, becoming a non-stop exchange: at **readings, lectures by experts, at conferences, curated networking sessions.** Litprom organises the symposium "African Perspectives – Writers and Literary Experts in Conversation" together with the KfW Stiftung. THE ARTS+ broadcasts events, ARD streams literary talks live from the otherwise empty Festhalle. Those who miss getting together in the evenings in a bar – the well-known "Frankfurt Factor" – drop by the digital salon **"The Hof"** instead, and those who want to do a licencing deal do business via Frankfurt Rights. With the launch of Frankfurt Rights, the book fair expands its existing platform IPR Licence in which it has been a majority shareholder since 2016. In addition, in keeping with its socio-political mission, it launches an initiative that brings people together: **"Signals of Hope"**. The result is poetry, laughter and, above all, a discussion of the current situation – of the **Covid crisis** and climate change, of human rights, gender diversity, feminism and structural racism. Of the principle of hope.

It's no surprise that the book fair's efforts reach an audience of millions. "Our strategy of cooperating with strong media partners and being present with our offerings wherever our target groups are, whether on our own platforms or in social media, has paid off," says Juergen Boos, president of Frankfurter Buchmesse. He does not mention for the time being the tremendous effort that was required to achieve this success or the fair's financial position after having offered the full range of events free of charge. In July, Germany's federal government made €4 million available, a sum that would clearly not suffice – and certainly not to keep the fair afloat over the long term. The year 2020 thus ends with a restructuring that is as extensive as it is painful – one that includes job cuts.

© Tamara Weise on behalf of Frankfurter Buchmesse; Translation: Tim Schroder

Online Facts & Figures

1,500,000

people watch
BOOKFEST Digital on
Facebook

200,000

users visit
buchmesse.de

3,644

events

Frankfurt Rights Platform

400,000

titles on the Frankfurt
Rights platform

31,100

titles uploaded by
FBM20 members

4,165

registered buyers and
sellers

Match-Making

9,542

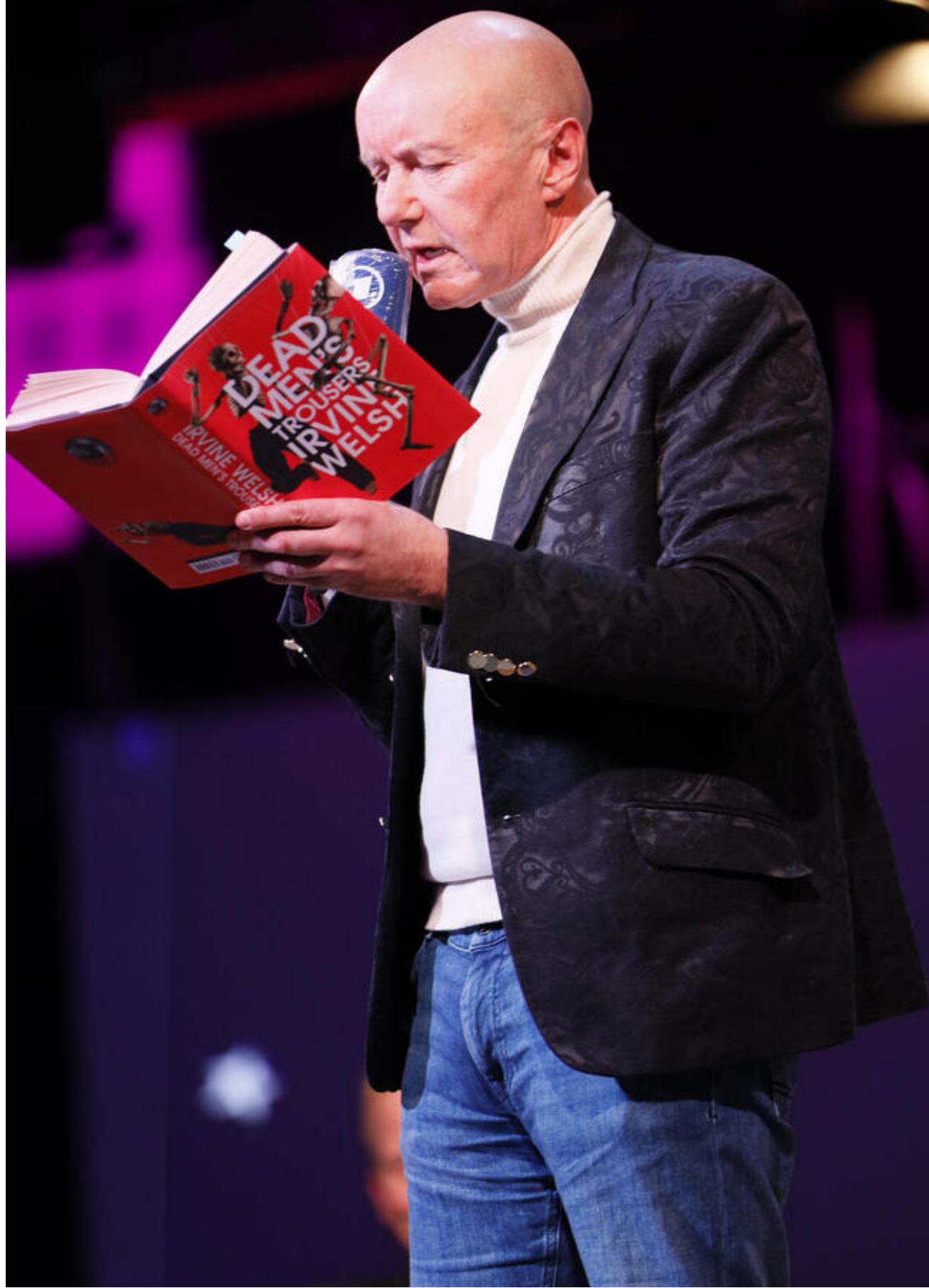
contact inquiries

3,153

matches

2,388

participants



Stay up to date about trends, offers and relevant news by subscribing to our newsletter.

Newsletter

E-mail address*



FRANKFURTER BUCHMESSE
18 - 22 OCTOBER 2023

About us

Welcome to Frankfurter Buchmesse, the world's leading venue for printed and digital content. Here is where publishing experts meet up with partners from the technology and creative industries such as film and games – to exchange ideas, be inspired, try out new technologies and cultivate contacts.

Find out more about us.



Folgen Sie uns



Service

Whitepaper →

Newsletter →

App →

My Book Fair →

