2018 was another positive year for the print book market and Mintel’s research shows the strength of people’s affection for bricks-and-mortar bookstores, whether part of a chain or independent. Waterstones continues to make acquisitions to better position itself against Amazon, particularly with the looming threat of Amazon potentially opening its own bookstores.”

– Rebecca McGrath, Senior Media Analyst

This report looks at the following areas:

- People want to support chain bookstores nearly as much as independent ones
- Interactive audiobooks could be next opportunity
- Apple could challenge Amazon’s dominance with cross-media subscriptions

2018 was a good year for print books following a slightly stagnant year in 2017. The success was driven by some standout titles from debut authors including Gail Honeyman’s Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine and Adam Kay’s This is Going to Hurt. The current divisive political environment in both the UK and US also fuelled the print market in 2018, with a boom in sales of political books such as, notably, Michael Wolff’s Fire and Fury.

Waterstones acquired Foyles in September 2018 in order to further protect itself from the threat of Amazon, while Waterstones’ parent company Elliott Management purchased major US chain Barnes & Noble in June 2019. Independent stores, meanwhile, grew in number once again. While still a far cry from independent stores’ heyday, this increase indicates a generally more favourable current environment for physical bookstores.

While e-book sales continue to struggle, the value of audiobooks grew further. Advancements in AI and voice assistants are presenting both book formats, but particularly audiobooks, with opportunities to experiment with interactive storytelling.

DID YOU KNOW?

This report is part of a series of reports, produced to provide you with a more holistic view of this market.
Table of Contents

Overview
What you need to know
Products covered in this Report

Executive Summary
The market
Print book market continues to grow
Figure 1: Value of consumer print book market sales, 2014-24
Slight turnaround for digital books
Figure 2: Publisher UK sales of consumer digital books (net invoiced value), 2014-24
Great year for non-fiction print books
Key players
Eleanor takes the crown in 2018
Waterstones makes acquisitions
Apple revamps iBooks as Apple Books
The consumer
Increase in number of people buying books
Figure 3: Book buying habits, April 2018 and May 2019
16-34s nearly as likely to read e-books as print books
Figure 4: Devices used for e-books and audiobooks, April 2018 and May 2019
More digital readers/listeners are using a subscription
Figure 5: E-book paid-for subscriptions, April 2018 and May 2019
Figure 6: Audiobook paid-for subscriptions, April 2018 and May 2019
Home is the main location people listen to audiobooks
Figure 7: Occasions when people listen to audiobooks, May 2019
Dislike for reading on devices is main barrier for e-books
Figure 8: Reasons for not buying e-books, May 2019
Familiarity with author the main driver of book choice
Figure 9: Reasons for buying books, May 2019
Only one in four would give an e-book as a gift
Figure 10: Interest in giving books as gifts, May 2019
Bookstores have a lot of goodwill
Figure 11: Attitudes towards buying books, May 2019

What we think
Issues and Insights

People want to support chain bookstores nearly as much as independent ones
The facts
Interactive audiobooks could be next opportunity

Print book market grows in 2018

Slight turnaround for digital books

Waterstones makes acquisitions

Independent bookshops grow in number for second year

UK government faces calls to remove VAT on e-books

Microsoft closes e-book store

Great year for non-fiction print books

Stephen Fry’s Mythos is top Audible audiobook

Print book market continues to grow

Figure 12: Value of consumer print book market sales, 2014-24

Figure 13: Value of consumer print book market sales, 2014-24

Slight turnaround for digital books

Figure 14: Publisher UK sales of consumer digital books (net invoiced value), 2014-24

Figure 15: Publisher UK sales of digital consumer books (net invoiced value), 2014-24

Value of audiobooks growing rapidly

Figure 16: Publisher sales of digital consumer books, by format (net invoiced value), 2014-18

Market drivers

Waterstones makes acquisitions to “champion” bookstores...

Foyles

Barnes & Noble

...while facing staff petition for living wage

Independent bookshops grow in number for second year

Figure 17: Value of consumer market print book sales, by type of book, 2014-18

Figure 18: Publisher UK sales of consumer digital books, by category (net invoiced value), 2014-18
UK government faces calls to remove VAT on e-books
Charity calls on government to promote reading as way of combatting loneliness
Microsoft closes e-book store

Companies and Brands – What You Need to Know

Apple revamps iBooks as Apple Books
Amazon creates e-book gift option
Amazon opens pop-up shops but not yet bookshops
PRH boosts e-book sales by 27%
Eleanor takes the crown in 2018
Stephen Fry’s Mythos is top Audible audiobook

Market Share

Eleanor takes the crown in 2018
Figure 19: Top 10 consumer print books, by volume, 2018

Stephen Fry’s Mythos is top Audible audiobook
Figure 20: Top 20 audiobook downloads from Audible, 2018

PRH boosts e-book sales by 27%
Figure 21: Volume of UK e-book paid-for download sales, by ‘big five’ publishers, 2018

Launch Activity and Innovation

Apple revamps iBooks as Apple Books
Digital book services produce more original content
Audible offers free Originals to members
Apple Books publishes exclusive audiobooks
Scribd launches Scribd Originals
Amazon creates e-book gift option
Apple Books introduces reading goals
Patterson explores storytelling on Facebook Messenger
Amazon opens pop-up shops but not yet bookshops

The Consumer – What You Need to Know

Increase in number of people buying books
More digital readers/listeners are using a subscription
Home is the main location people listen to audiobooks
Only one in four would give an e-book as a gift
Familiarity with author the main driver of book choice
Two in five are not buying e-books because they don’t have an e-reader
People want to support bookstores
Nearly half of print buyers have bought from an independent bookstore

Book Buying Habits

Increase in number of people buying books
Books and e-books - UK - July 2019

Reading Habits and Devices Used

16-34s nearly as likely to read e-books as print books

More digital readers/listeners are using a subscription

Will Apple introduce a book subscription service?

Audiobook Listening Occasions

Home is the main location people listen to audiobooks

Gamification could help boost out-of-home listening

Reasons for Buying Books

Familiarity with author the main driver of book choice

One in four buy books they see on display

Younger people influenced by a greater variety of factors when buying a book

BuzzFeed partners with Amazon to encourage greater online discussion

Reasons for Not Buying E-books

Dislike for reading on devices is main barrier for e-books

Two in five are not buying e-books because they don’t have an e-reader

Many want to be able to give books to others

Books as Gifts

Only one in four would give an e-book as a gift

Amazon looks to boost e-book gifting

Attitudes towards Bookstores

People enjoy browsing bookstores

Bookstore chains have to be careful not to undermine goodwill

Nearly half of print buyers have bought from an independent bookstore

Finding a niche

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EMAIL: reports@mintel.com
Figure 34: Purchasing from independent bookstores, May 2019

Appendix – Data Sources, Abbreviations and Supporting Information

Abbreviations
Consumer research methodology

Appendix – Market Size and Forecast

Market forecasts
Figure 35: Value of consumer print book market sales, 2019-24
Figure 36: Publisher UK sales of consumer digital books (net invoiced value), 2019-24

Forecast methodology

The above prices are correct at the time of publication, but are subject to change due to currency fluctuations.

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