



## **How good it is to hear that buzz again!**

2021-11-02

**The 24th International Book Fair in Kraków, which took place from 14 to 17 October in EXPO Kraków, will be remembered not only as of the first stationary literary event in Kraków during almost two years, but also as an event giving hope, reminding how important it is to have contact with other people, have a sincere conversation, be friendly and smile.**

One of the most significant cultural events has come to an end, but the atmosphere at this year's Fair will surely be remembered for a long time.

241 exhibitors, 300 authors, including Ałbena Grabowska, Jakub Kornhauser, Aneta Jadowska, Agnieszka Lingas-Łoniewska, Nela Mała Reporterka, Zośka Papużanka, Andrzej Pilipiuk, Denis Urubko, Janusz Leon Wiśniewski, Magdalena Wolińska-Riedi, almost 25,000 visitors, numerous accompanying events, including the Festival of Fantastic Literature, Festival of Mountain and Tourist Books, Children's Workshop Zone, Lem Zone, novelty - Fair Television, Translation Sparring, Illustrators' Wall, debates, discussions, exhibitions and only five months (on 6 June this year the Fair industry was "thawed out" after many months of lockdown) to prepare the entire four-day programme.

- We worked hard to offer the best possible space for exhibitors to present their offers and to create safe conditions for all participants. We acted in accordance with our industry's government guidelines, adhering to strict restrictions. Due to the uncertain times, we offered participation in two spaces simultaneously: stationary and online. This formula worked very well. Listening to the positive opinions we received, I am glad that we managed to implement this year's edition in such a form. It proved that nothing can stop the natural need to meet other people. - sums up Grażyna Grabowska, President of Targi w Krakowie.

### **#Opening**

Traditionally, on the first day of the fair, at noon, the bugle call of St. Mary's Church was sounded in EXPO Krakow. The guests were welcomed by Grażyna Grabowska, President of Targi w Krakowie, and Professor Jacek Majchrowski, Mayor of the City of Krakow. During the ceremony, the titles of the

Ambassadors of the International Book Fair in Krakow® were presented for the tenth time. In this way, Targi w Krakowie wishes to honour those who promote reading and support the idea of the International Book Fair in Krakow®. This year, the Ambassadors included the Jagiellonian University rector, Professor Jacek Popiel, a linguist, Professor Jerzy Bralczyk, the long-time chairman of the Znak publishing house, Henryk Woźniakowski, and Adam Szaja, the author of the smaksiazki.pl blog.

- I don't remember when I was here for the first time, but it seems to me that I've always been here, and I can't imagine not coming to the Book Fair in Krakow. It is a holiday and I think that for many people it is a very important date. I am glad that, despite all the obstacles, this fair is still here and certainly will be,' said professor Jerzy Bralczyk.

### **#Change**



The motto was a quotation from the book "Summa technologiae" by Stanisław Lem - "Man lives by change". The words of the most eminent Polish futurologist have a special meaning for the organisers, who, while choosing the quote, did not anticipate how much it would reflect reality.

One of this year's changes was the launch of Fair TV. The meetings were hosted by literary journalists: Małgorzata Bugaj, Agata Passent, Adam Szaja, Łukasz Wojtusik. The most interesting fair events were commented on an ongoing basis from the very heart of the fair, and talks with authors and exhibitors were held about books, current trends and the situation on the market. The new idea met with great interest from viewers, who in comments on social media thanked for the opportunity to participate.

### **#Youth**

- The Fair met with great interest from young readers, who left EXPO Krakow with bags full of books. This was noticed by the publishers themselves, who, like Dorota Malinowska-Grupińska from MG Publishing House, emphasised: "The atmosphere is amazing and I tell everyone that something extraordinary has happened, because the average age of participants in this fair, I would say, is very low. For a couple of years, I was concerned that young people were not coming to the fair, but what I have been observing here since Thursday is really incredible. In my opinion, older people were a bit scared and did not come, but their place has been taken by young people, and there are plenty of them.

Certainly, this year's edition belonged to the young, who took the International Book Fair in Krakow® by storm. - I notice that there are few bigger publishers at the fair, but paradoxically, I bought more books than two years ago. I'm glad that this year I could meet my friends here, take photos with the authors, and just have a nice time "live", not in front of the computer screen. - said the young reader.

The Book Fair in Krakow was visited by numerous bloggers, vloggers, bookstagrammers and booktubers, who reported on their stay at the fair on their social media channels.

- I am absolutely delighted with how many passionate people are here. Walking up to the stands and asking for a reading recommendation or about a particular book, you can stand for an hour and talk. You can see that people talk about these books with great passion - for me this is something absolutely wonderful. I also notice that there are no random people here, everyone is interested in the subject. I had a huge hunger for meetings. I like the fact that the fair takes place in the hall, it makes it more official. It is nice to meet people live, because I only corresponded with many of them," summed up Zuza, who together with her sister runs the Zaksiążkowane channel on YouTube (over 90 thousand subscribers).

### **#Business**

Exhibitors did not hide their surprise at the turnout and the high quality of the fair. - From a business point of view, participation in the fair was the right decision. Before the event we had wondered how it would be, because we are here for the fifth time and all the previous editions were great for us. After the break and initial apprehension, today I can say that it is very good. People are non-stop coming up, talking, buying books. The physical fair is invaluable,"



concluded Maciej Kowalski of Jama Publishing House.

Robert Łachuta from Fabryka Słów shared this opinion: 'The atmosphere at the Book Fair in Krakow is fantastic. I must admit that we did not expect it. After the closing period and the pandemic, we thought that there would be far fewer people, that we would have fewer customers, fewer conversations. However, the interest exceeded our wildest expectations, lots of people came to us. In my opinion, it was one of the best trade fairs we have ever attended.

Surprise - this is one of the most frequent words uttered at the stands. - We were afraid that due to the pandemic atmosphere and the existing restrictions, there might not be much interest in the fair and there might be fewer customers. However, we are absolutely surprised. In fact there is a lot of traffic, a lot of people following the restrictions. I think that both publishers and authors missed such a meeting. - sums up Monika Pawełek from the Universitas Publishing House.

### **#Happiness**

The joy of being able to meet your favourite author, get an autograph and take a souvenir photo was enormous. This year's Book Fair in Krakow meant that, for the first time, thousands of eyes were also focused on smaller publishing houses. - We are really impressed. This is finally a fair that is alive, where people come to buy something, meet authors, talk, or simply meet each other. We're very pleased, there's a big turnout, there are also big sales, people want to buy autographed books, they want these books to be available to them. They want us, the authors, to come out and talk to them. Many people have been waiting for this contact and, meeting us, they say: "Oh great, finally I have the opportunity to meet you" or "I've always wanted to buy your book but I've been waiting to be able to get an autograph as well" - sums up Mateusz Rogalski, from the Samowydawcy.pl stand, the author of "Defenders of Ahura. Pasowanie".

Not only readers but also publishers missed the Book Fair in Krakow. - We like this year's edition of the fair very much, and we are glad that we took part in it, first of all, because the number of readers who came in large numbers to see different books made us very happy. The turnout is great, the interest is great, the hunger for books, as you can see, is huge. We really missed the fair, the direct contact with the readers, and as you can see, the readers missed it, too. In my opinion, it's impossible to do everything online. Meeting in person is a completely different experience of dealing with books - Agnieszka Stańkiewicz-Kierus, Wydawnictwo KobiECE.

Many exhibitors emphasised that they take part in the trade fair with the readers in mind, who never disappoint and always come to the event in large numbers. - In Krakow, the readers were always there and this year they came, too. I don't know if the hunger for meetings is greater than it was three years ago, but the fact that the fair is held under these circumstances, and that so many readers are here, I consider it a great success. In my opinion direct meetings with readers give strength and satisfaction, they show that this work makes sense, that there are people who want to buy books, who are looking for them. - Lucyna Borowczyk from the Poznan Publishing House summed up.

Anna Pawełek from Dom Emisia Manuscriptum was of a similar opinion - The staff and guests



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were very nice. Compared to other fairs, we have to appreciate the visitors, who are very knowledgeable, know what they are talking about, know what they are dealing with, especially here, where it is not so easy to recognise what books we present. We are a regular visitor to the Book Fair in Krakow, and every time we have a lot of visitors. Many people come to us on purpose, they visit us every year, they know our publications very well and during the meetings they want to see our novelties.

With suitcases of books, with heads full of beautiful memories, with smiles caused by meeting not only authors, but also relatives who also decided to visit the fair, and whom we haven't seen for a long time, we finish this year's edition and look forward to the next one, traditionally held in Krakow, next year.