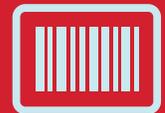
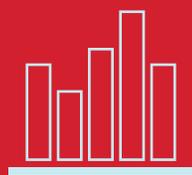
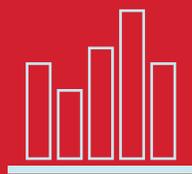
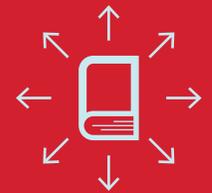




LIVRES CANADA BOOKS®

# Selling Canadian Books in Argentina

A Guide for Canadian Publishers



# Contents

## **1 Introduction**

## **3 Overview of the Book Market**

3 Production in the Commercial Publishing Sector

9 Sales in the Commercial Publishing Sector

11 Status of the Digital Market

12 Translated Books

14 Printing Industry

## **15 Argentina and the Spanish-Speaking Book Market**

## **17 Argentinian Publishers**

17 Trade Publishers

18 Children's and YA Publishers

19 Textbook Publishers

20 Academic Publishers

## **24 Distribution and Sales Channels**

24 Bookstores

28 Distributors

29 Online Sales

## **30 Formats and Pricing**

30 Formats

30 Price of Printed Books

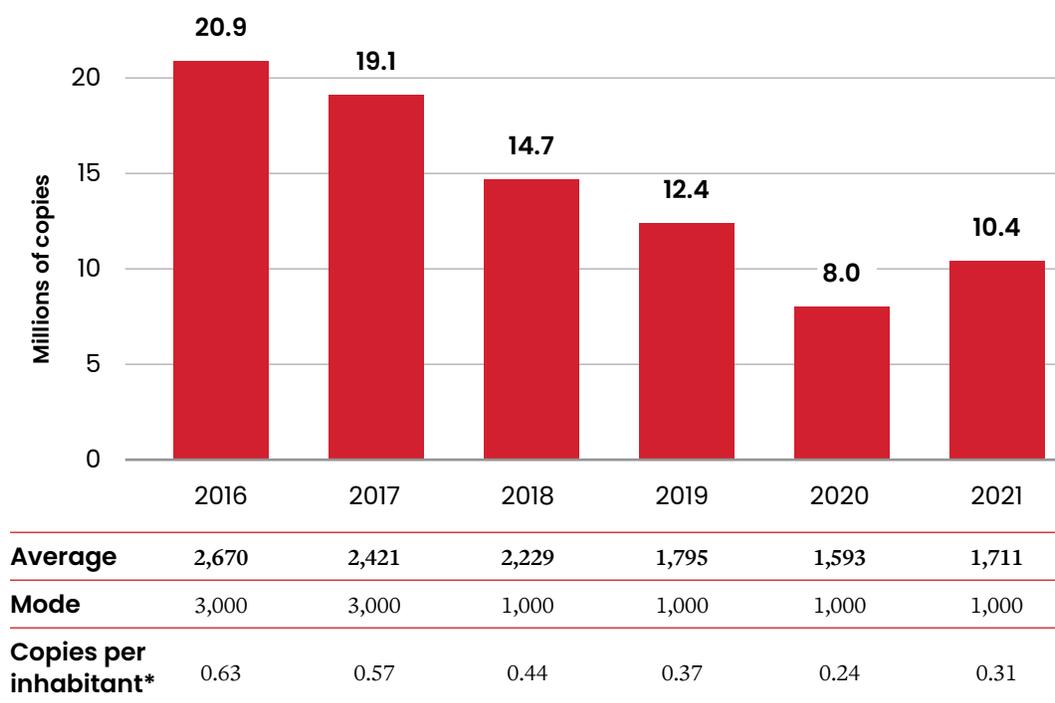
# Introduction

At the time of writing, Argentina's economy is going through a period of turbulence. The country faces heavy indebtedness incurred by the previous administration and the fall of the central bank's dollar reserves. It is also dragging along a protracted inflationary process triggered in 2022 by domestic and international factors. The solution being tried relies on strong fiscal adjustments and tight control of the foreign exchange market, including using foreign currency for imports. These macroeconomic imbalances and the economic plan have not yet slowed the growth that began after the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, the economy is expected to lose dynamism in the coming months. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Argentine economy will grow by 3.5% in 2022, placing it above the 2.7% average expected for the Latin American region.

According to this year's census, Argentina has a population of 47,327,407, which places it fourth in Latin America after Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. In terms of geographic extension, it is the second-largest country after Brazil. Therefore, Argentina's population density is one of the lowest in the region. Furthermore, over 14 million people live in the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area, making the population density much lower in large portions of the country.

Argentina has one of the highest literacy rates in Latin America (99%). This is due to a widespread public education system, which today extends from kindergarten to university. There are 61 state universities throughout the country (57 public and free national universities and four provincial universities) and nearly 50 private universities.

In 2015, the commercial publishing sector produced over 27.5 million copies (the average print run is 3,386 copies). In 2021, it reduced to 10.4 million (equivalent to an average print run of 1,711 copies). This 63% drop is partly explained by the unusually high volume of public purchases in 2015 and by changes in printing technologies that make it easier and cheaper to do limited print runs. Argentinians also consume fewer books due to consecutive years of economic crisis and instability.



**Figure 3. Evolution of copies produced by the commercial publishing sector (2016–2021).**

Values expressed in millions.

(\*) 33,398,225 literate people (INDEC, Population Census, 2010).

Source: CAL.

Children’s and young adult books, including educational books, make up 24% of published titles. This is followed by adult fiction, with 13% of new releases. Law and social sciences publications account for 10% each. While average print runs in the first two categories are 2,452 and 2,550 copies, respectively, law print runs average 650 and social sciences average 1,080. Despite an obvious correspondence between most published categories and the number of copies printed, print runs should not make us lose sight of the marked differences between the production volumes of large publishing groups versus small publishing houses. We will return to this issue when dealing with market polarization.

In a survey conducted among attendees of the Buenos Aires Publishers Fair (FED), which took place in August 2022, 56% of respondents said they read exclusively on paper, 40% in both formats, and 4% only digitally. The FED audience differs from the general public in Buenos Aires in that they have an intensive, daily relationship with reading and commonly purchase books throughout the year.

## Translated Books

Argentina has a long history of translation. Much of the recognition of its publishing houses in Spanish-speaking countries is due to the number and quality of its translations. As in other aspects, Argentina's place as a translation market must be analyzed in relation to Spain. While Spain's publishing houses commonly acquire the Spanish rights to major bestsellers and internationally acclaimed authors, Argentine's publishing houses have made the most of their situation, and independent houses stand out for building their catalogues with lesser-known authors, innovative themes, and more daring styles.

It is essential to clarify that the dynamics of translated books in Argentina is not reflected in the Spanish market. The tradition of translation in Argentina dates to the first decades of the 20th century, bolstered by its cosmopolitan culture and the training and excellence of its translators. Spanish publishers commonly hire Argentinian translators when the exchange rate is favourable.

In 2021, 17% of new print releases (just over 1,000 titles) were translations. The annual number of translations tends to follow the dynamics of the market so that the percentage remains relatively stable.

Over the last six years, an average of 60% of translated titles were originally in English. French follows with 15%, German with 5%, and Italian and Portuguese with 4% each. The presence of Portuguese is closely related to the proximity and importance of Brazil.

For this report, we asked publishing houses of different kinds for aggregate sales information for 2021 to have a series of case studies that would give us an approximate idea of the size of various segments of the Argentine book market. It should be noted that the Buenos Aires International Book Fair, an extensive fair with a robust public presence, representing significant sales figures, did not take place that year.

- One of Argentina's two large trade publishing companies reported 2,470,000 printed copies sold in 2021. This figure comprises all its imprints and commercial channels, excluding government purchases.
- An independent publishing house founded in 2014 in the City of Buenos Aires with a catalogue comprised mainly of fiction—and which has one of the top literary bestsellers in this segment—reported 47,069 printed copies sold in Argentina, 1,250 copies exported (since 2018, they print titles directly in Madrid, which are not registered as exports), and 337 digital books. Of those 47,069 books, 69% were sold in bookstores, 21% through public purchases, 7% through subscription book clubs, 1% at the Publisher's Fair (FED), 1% through the publisher's online store, and 1% through purchases made by nationally subsidized public libraries.

## Children's and YA Publishers

With 24% of the total, children's and young adult (C/YA) books comprise the most titles in the commercial publishing sector. Moreover, if we disregard large publishing houses, children's and young adult fiction surpasses all other categories, with an average print run of 2,452 copies and a mode of 3,000. It is a growing market that is achieving good retail prices despite high production costs.

Although C/YA fiction in Argentina follows global trends, it also has its own characteristics. According to one publisher who specializes in C/YA, in the last 20 years, this area of publishing went through three transformations that redefined its profile and deployment in the market. The first one, two decades ago, was the boom in album-style picture books. Then, about ten years ago, it was the publication of sagas for young audiences. Finally, over the last five years, we saw the appearance and multiplication of hardback collections for younger children.

The C/YA segment, especially children's books, comprises just over 60 publishers, between specialized and general imprints. Due to technical and material issues, until a few years ago, children's books were almost entirely printed abroad. Several printers have incorporated new machinery that allows production to be carried out in the country while maintaining the necessary quality. However, the paper and cardboard used for children's books are imported, a disadvantage in a country with sharp fluctuations in the exchange rate. Imported materials do not always meet the standards and preferences of the market. For this reason, and despite an undeniable

# Sector Organizations

In Argentina, there are two chambers of commerce for the publishing industry and the book trade. The first is the Argentine Chamber of Books (CAL) [Cámara Argentina del Libro], which has over 450 members, mostly small and medium-sized publishing houses, with some bookstores and distributors. The other is the Argentine Chamber of Publications (CAP) [Cámara Argentina de Publicaciones], which has about 60 members, including large publishing groups, bookstore chains, and publishing companies, many of which are foreign-owned. CAL manages the country's ISBN registers and uses this information to present an annual summary report on the state of publishing in the country. In turn, CAL and CAP are members of Fundación El Libro, the organizer of the Buenos Aires International Book Fair.<sup>7</sup>

Although CAL membership provides discounts on shipping books, many micro and small publishing houses are not associated. Some independent publishers are grouped into organizations to solve problems and lower costs of space, distribution, commercialization, participation in fairs, etc.

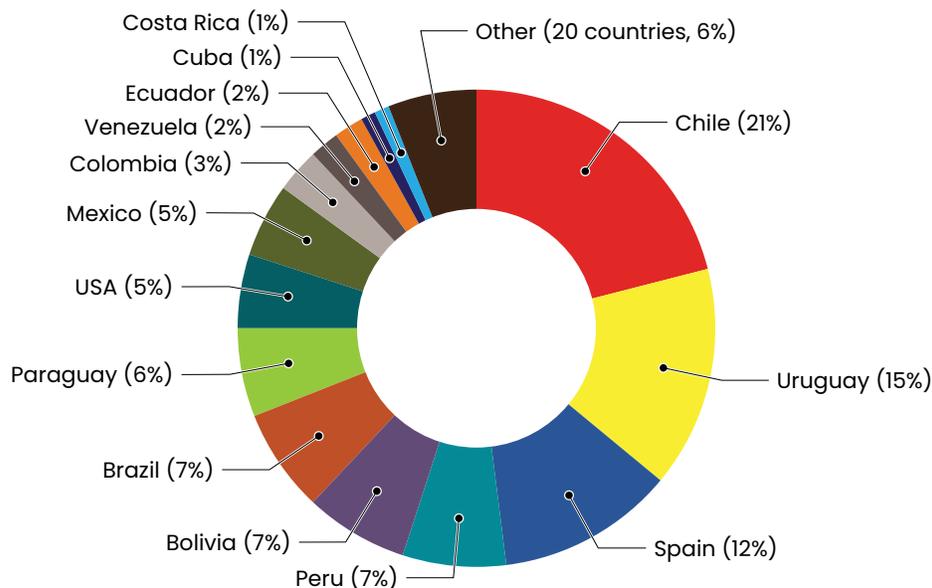
We should also mention the two parallel networks of university presses: the Network of University Presses of Argentina (REUN) [Red de Editoriales Universitarias de la Argentina] and the Network of Private University Presses (REUP) [Red de Editoriales de Universidades Privadas].

Booksellers are considering creating a new organization.

---

7 See Alejandro Dujovne, *Políticas y estrategias de internacionalización editorial en América Latina*, CERLALC, 2020, <https://cerlalc.org/publicaciones/politicas-y-estrategias-de-internacionalizacion-editorial-en-america-latina/>.

the host country, participated. If we exclude participants from Argentina, who represent 85% of the total, the origin of foreign professionals is shown in Figure 10.



**Figure 10. Countries of origin of professionals registered in the professional development workshops of the Buenos Aires International Book Fair (2018).**

Source: Fundación El Libro.

The Buenos Aires Book Fair attracts mainly South American countries and Spain. If we analyze the data in terms of market size, we see that it attracts small and medium-sized markets in the region. Comparatively, Spain and Mexico have very low participation rates relative to their weight in the Spanish-speaking world. This weak presence merits a detailed study. For the time being, and although we do not have updated figures, we can speculate that the Guadalajara International Book Fair is more important for the Spanish publishing industry than the fairs of Buenos Aires or Bogotá. This is reiterated in the various annual reports of the Economic and Commercial Office of the Spanish Embassy in Mexico City: “For the Spanish publishing sector, the [Guadalajara International Book Fair] is an excellent opportunity to increase the level of its exports in the Americas” (Federación de Gremios de Editores de España 2015). The low participation of Colombian representatives in the Argentinian Fair can be partly explained by the fact that the two fairs happen close together.

# Appendices

## Selected Publishers

### Children's Book Publishers

**Pequeño Editor**

<https://pequenoeditor.com/>

**Iamiqué**

<https://www.iamique.com.ar/>

**Limonero**

<https://limonero.com.ar/en/>

**Calibrosopio**

<https://calibrosopio.com.ar/>

**Pupek**

<https://pupekeditorial.com/>

### YA Book Publishers

**VyR**

<https://vreditoras.com.ar/>

**Oceano**

<https://www.oceano.com.ar/>

**Norma**

<https://www.normainfantilyjuvenil.com.ar/>

### Trade Publishers

**Edhasa**

<https://www.edhasa.com.ar/>

**Literatura Penguin Random House**

Literature and essay imprint of Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial.

<https://www.penguinlibros.com/ar/186727-literatura-random-house>

**Sudamericana**

Literature and essay imprint of Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial.

<https://www.penguinrandomhousegrupoeditorial.com/sellos-y-negocios/nuestros-sellos/>