



Knud Wassermann

## The Good Old Book and Generation Z

**Numerous studies and articles have already been written on the reading behavior of Generation Z – those people born between 1999 and 2015. Quite a few of them express their surprise in the first lines that Generation Z will not bury the printed book either.**

A trend study from 2018 by the [IUBH International University of Applied Sciences](#) in Bad Honnef on the „[Reading and Writing Behavior of Generations X, Y, and Z](#)“ comes up with extensive and partly – once again it should be mentioned – surprising data material. All the more astonishing, because the swansong to the printed book already fills whole volumes. However, the data from the above-mentioned trend study alone speak a different language.

### **Only 8 percent read e-books**

The fact that the printed book has had to defend itself for decades against increasing competition from a wide variety of new developments in the media sector is nothing new. But it is not a generational problem. Across all media and generations, respondents read social media texts most often (32 percent), followed by paper-format books (29 percent) and paper-format newspapers and magazines (17 percent). E-books – the once-rumored gravediggers of the printed book – were cited by only 8 percent.

The study also shows that the differences in „books in paper format“ between the generations are the smallest. Generation X (those born between 1964 and 1976) leads this com-

parison. Close behind already follows Generation Z (1995–2010). Generation Y (1977–1998) follows at a slight distance in 3rd place.

### **Boot to digital formats**

„Gen Zers are bookworms, but they avoid e-books,“ can be found in an article on „World Economic Forum“ published in cooperation with [„Business Insider“](#). Reasons for this are seen in eye strain, a desire for digital detox, practicality, and social media trends such as [#BookTok](#) or on Instagram in the form of the account [„Subway Book Review“](#), which we have featured in previous blogs. But Generation Z is also embracing print books in their love of libraries and to support their local bookstore.

But perhaps the most surprising trend, according to the article, is the way Generation Z consumes books. While they typically spend their free time in front of a screen, data and interviews with Business Insider suggest that the same is not true for reading books. In this case, these young people are giving digital formats the boot and opting for the timeless paperback.

As research by [„Nielsen BookData“](#) revealed, printed books were the preferred reading material for surveyed British book buyers aged 13 to 24 in the period between November 2021 and November 2022. This accounted for 80 percent of purchases, while e-books only achieved a 14 percent market share in the same period. The young readers of Generation Z seem somehow charmingly old-fashioned in their reasons for choosing printed books.

### **The printed book has timeless advantages**

However, if one looks for the timeless advantages of the printed book rather than sentimentality in these reasons, one is closer to reality. This applies to leisure readers on the beach as well as to students in the course of their education. Wang Sum Luk, a 21-year-old student studying English at Oxford University who is quite familiar with using e-books, puts it succinctly: „It doesn't strain the eyes as much when reading, and I can concentrate better when I read a printed book with the computer off.“ The eye-friendliness of printed text is also an important argument for Lili Dewrance. The 23-year-old Londoner told Business Insider that reading an e-book doesn't allow her a break from the screen or a „digital detox.“

Of course, hard facts aren't the only factors at play when Generation Z chooses print books. Lili Dewrance describes the approach to a book: „I enjoy treating myself to a new novel, and I enjoy supporting my local bookstore. It's an experience that doesn't exist with digital downloading.“

### **83 percent of children prefer to reach for the good old book**

More than a third (35 percent) of children in Germany and Austria also read every day. The [tutoring platform „GoStudent“](#) headlined a survey with „Generation Z still reads frequently – and books instead of iPads.“ This is according to a survey conducted by the company on the occasion of World Book Day in Germany, Austria, Spain, and France. Around 3,000 children between the ages of 6 and 18 took part in the survey between April 13 and 19, 2021. The results show that reading „under“ the covers is still in fashion.

35 percent of children prefer to read before falling asleep. And while 31 percent of children say they generally enjoy reading in their free time, around 30 percent say they don't care when they read. However, according to the survey, it does matter in what form a book is read. 83 percent of children in Austria and Germany still prefer the good old book.

Yours,

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