

Big Books, Small Food: The Secret Role of Canapés in Publishing Success

Dienstag, 16. Mai 2023 16:45 (1 h 15m)

In our Cambridge Element, *The Frankfurt Book Fair and Bestseller Business* (2020), we theorised buzz as existing in “hard” and “soft” forms. Hard buzz, we argued, occurs in market-ready reports in the mainstream media. Soft buzz, on the other hand, exists in the form of partial, lived experience, frequently generated at convivial events. Movement between these two buzz states - for example from one-on-one rights sales meetings or an after-hours party into a trade press report or social media post - is indicative of how a business-to-business event such as the Buchmesse operates in generating big bookness.

In the work-in-progress we present in this paper, we will consider some of the ethical and social dimensions of buzz creation, as it happens at in-person events and online. We will also contemplate how buzz creation relates to the understanding and (lack of) researchability of global bestsellers, and the predicaments such research can produce. In so doing we will explore the role of small food (canapés) in forming publishing success, as well as considering the digital interventions of reading communities and AlgoBooks (bookish algorithms).

This paper will include an (as yet unwritten) musical number destined to go viral and become the go-to citation for all future scholarship on big books.

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