

Children's and YA publishing is on the rise again, while the share of translations declines. The focus on current topics and themes continues. Today the Swedish Institute for Children's Books presents its annual Book Tasting with an overview of the children's and young adult books published in Sweden in 2021.

By the last day of February 2022, the Swedish Institute for Children's Books (Sbi) had received a total of 2,204 printed books for children and young adults published in 2021, which is a higher number compared to the previous year by 167 titles (an increase of 8 percent). After several years of decline following the publication peak in 2017, the publication total increased once again. The increase mainly consists of titles from hybrid publishers and publishers specializing in easy-to-read books.

– It is difficult to pinpoint one single reason for the increase, but the fact that things are returning to normal after the pandemic may be a contributing factor. The increase in hybrid publishing is also linked to the pandemic in the sense that many seem to have had more time to write. This can in turn explain the 50 % increase of debut works, says Kajsa Bäckius, librarian at the institute.

Digital publishing for children and adolescents also continues to increase, and is now approaching printed books in terms of the number of titles published. However, works published in digital formats only remain relatively few. The printed book is not losing ground despite the rise in digital publication.

The children's and young adult books of 2021 reflect a continued interest in current topics through themes such as the environment, activism, and body positivity. The pandemic also leaves its mark through the many books on diseases, vaccine, and outdoor activities such as mountain hiking and gardening.

– The strong orientation towards the contemporary suggests that children's and young adult books remain important for reading children in terms of identification and the processing of their surroundings, says Sara Lafolie, librarian at the institute.

Four guest writers have contributed to Book Tasting 2022. Author Mårten Sandén takes a closer look at criminals and crime in the children's and young adult books of 2021, noting a great variation in how criminals are portrayed depending on the target group's age and the book's genre. He also reflects on the criminal character in relation to moral and ethical aspects. The question of who is a criminal, and why, is not always a straightforward matter.

Dr Tuva Haglund, Uppsala University, and Dr Malin Nauwerck, Sbi, explore depictions of parenthood in the picturebooks of 2021. Their overview shows the many nuances in the portrayal of the relationship between parent and child, and how it is influenced by societal norms. In addition, they highlight how both care and the lack of care can be expressed in text and image.

Dr Ann Steiner, Uppsala University, examines the digital publication of 2021. She observes, among other things, that there are surprisingly few overlaps between the most popular audiobooks for children and the most popular printed books aimed at the same target group.

The written report (in Swedish) is available at www.barnboksinstitutet.se/bokprovning. An English translation of selected texts from the report will be available later in the spring.

The Swedish Institute for Children's Books collects all printed children's and young adult books published in Sweden. The annual Book Tasting has been arranged by the institute since 1994.