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K-BOOK TRENDS



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Contents

TREND

Topic

Why People Seeking Advice from ChatGPT Still Turn Their Backs on “One-Click Books”

Special Project

Empowering Your Life with AI:
A Comprehensive Guide to Daily Utilization
Selected by Critics Across Generations

Export Case

TWO WOMEN LIVING TOGETHER by
Hwang Sunwoo and Kim Hana

One-Liner Quotes

Experience Seoul Anew with
Seoul Playbook 365

Knowledge

Transcription: The Rising Star of
the K-Education and Parenting Market

INTERVIEW

Korean Publishers

The Future of Our Society as Told
by an Editor from Maybooks

Korean Authors

Master of Children’s Literature Lee Geum-
yi: Her Story on Children’s and Young Adult
Literature

EVENT

Image of K-Book

Work-Life Balance: Your Guide to
Sustainable and Healthy Hobby

Let’s Try

The book that most vividly illustrates
the reality of housing in Korea:
Luna’s Jeonse Reversal

INFORMATION

New Books

How close are we, and how far apart?

Best Sellers

Spring 2026 Bestseller List

K-Book Map

Where Literature Dwells
- Bridging the Past and Present of Korean
Literature through Its Museums -

Info

KPIPA participates in the
BOLOGNA CHILDREN’S BOOK FAIR 2026

Why People Seeking Advice from ChatGPT Still Turn Their Backs on “One-Click Books”

Written by

Choi Da Won

Choi Da Won | Journalist

She is a journalist at *Hankook Ilbo*, a major South Korean daily newspaper, where she covers the publishing industry. She reports on publishing trends and reading culture, primarily connecting with readers through book reviews. She also writes articles on architecture, food, and lifestyle.

AI Publications Denied for Legal Deposit

The legal deposit system in Korea is a mandatory system where all books issued an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) must be submitted to the National Library of Korea and the National Assembly Library. The purpose of this system is to preserve library materials as national literature for future generations and to support parliamentary activities. The libraries receive two copies from the publisher and provide compensation for the cost of one copy.

However, an investigation by the *Hankook Ilbo* revealed that last year, for the first time since their opening, both the National Library of Korea and the National Assembly Library refused the legal deposit of AI-generated publications. In particular, it caused a significant stir in the publishing industry that the National Library of Korea—which strictly limits the refusal of deposits to exceptional cases to avoid “censorship disputes”—decided to selectively reject these books.



National Library of Korea

It has been quite some time since the winds of change brought by AI began sweeping through the Korean publishing industry. Efforts to improve productivity using AI are being attempted across various stages, including research, cover and illustration design, editing and proofreading, and translation.

The issue arises with the emergence of publishers who entrust the entire writing and publishing process to AI. Among them, Luminary Books, led by a university research team, faced heavy scrutiny after it was revealed they published approximately 9,000 e-books in a single year using their own AI tools. It took only about an hour and a half for one or two employees to produce a single book.

The publisher did not hide its use of AI, as its initial goal was to develop a Large Language Model(LLM) specialized for the Korean language. Nevertheless, readers who believe that “books are naturally written by humans” have labeled these mass-produced AI books with the derogatory term “one-click publishing,” implying they are churned out with just a single click. Some have even created “blacklists” to avoid these publications.

Tax Waste Controversy Regarding Legal Deposits of Mass-Produced AI Book

Then, is a “book quickly churned out by AI” necessarily a “bad book”? Considering the reality where print media is often regarded as insufficient for capturing the ever-changing trends of modern society, there is no need to view this phenomenon only in a negative light. Since these books require less human labor, the costs are reduced accordingly, which opens up the possibility of lower prices for consumers.

However, “one-click books” available on the market have faced fierce criticism for orthographic errors, contextually inappropriate word choices, and factual inaccuracies. In some cases, the depth of the content is barely different from basic search results on web portals. For established publishers, these are problems that would be considered critical “accidents.”

This aspect was decisive in the two national libraries’ decision to exclude AI publications from legal deposits. It was revealed that the publisher whose legal deposits were refused by the National Library of Korea was Luminary Books. An official from the National Library of Korea explained that the reasons were “insufficient length, compilation of publicly available data, and repetitive content.”

Concerns over “tax waste,” specifically that AI-generated books aiming for legal deposit compensation could flood the market, also seem to have had an influence. In 2016, when the National Library of Korea first began accepting legal deposits for e-books, the compensation paid out was 12.13 million KRW (for a 5-month period). However, last year, a record high of 262.76 million KRW was spent.

While the impact of inflation is certainly a factor, the lack of regulations regarding AI publications within the current legal deposit system is a clear limitation. Consequently, the National Library of Korea has decided to initiate policy research to overhaul the online material deposit system. In the National Assembly, a bill has been proposed to clarify the legal grounds for the National Library of Korea to refuse such deposits.

Copyright Issues Still Unresolved Despite New Legislation

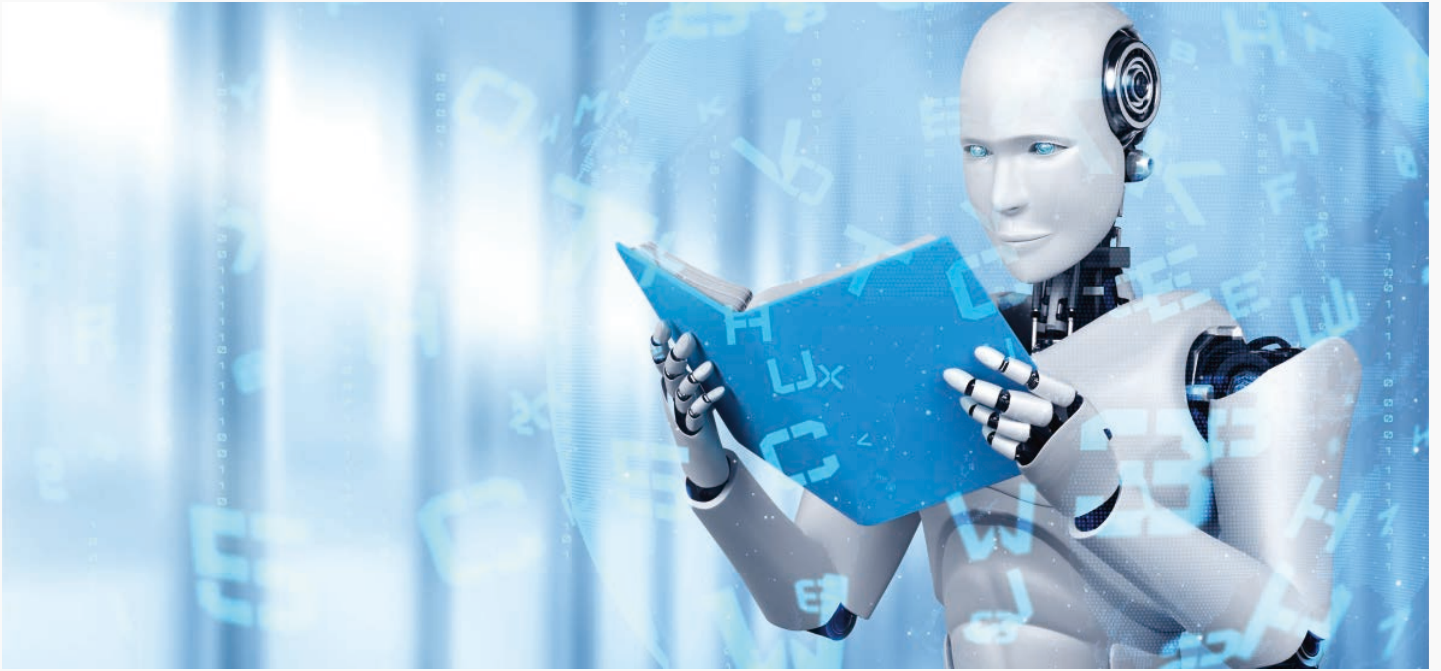


Image by Getty Images Bank

Then, wouldn't it be enough to train AI on high-quality data? However, this raises copyright issues. In 2024, American authors filed a lawsuit against the AI startup Anthropic, claiming their copyrighted works were used for AI training without permission. While the court acknowledged that Anthropic had illegally downloaded millions of books, it nonetheless ruled that the training itself fell under "fair use."

In Korea, opinions between the two industries are sharply divided over text mining for AI training. Publishers argue that AI companies must transparently disclose the sources of their training data and provide appropriate compensation to copyright holders. On the other hand, AI companies are pushing back with the logic that "training data is a trade secret and a core asset."

To address these issues, the "Framework Act on Artificial Intelligence" was enacted in January of this year. However, criticisms persist that the act lacks explicit provisions for copyright protection and that the regulations

requiring AI service providers to ensure transparency remain somewhat ambiguous.

An Inevitable Wave of Change: Rethinking the Concept of Creativity in the AI Era

At this point, a fundamental question arises. Why do we feel the need to distinguish whether an author is a human or an AI? In an era where people even seek life advice from AI, why do we insist that books must be different?

Analyses by publishers regarding the “crisis of non-fiction” are worth noting. The fact that sales of “information-providing” books have been declining in major countries, including Korea, since the emergence of AI shows that readers are distinguishing between the roles of AI and books. People now expect more from a book than “simple facts”—they are looking for “unique human insight.”

The literary world is no exception. Various contests and literary awards are banning entries created using AI. This is a measure to respect the value of creativity that humanity has long pursued and to ensure competition under equal conditions.

Yet, it is also an undeniable reality that the use of AI has become an irreversible trend in the publishing industry. Hwang Sok-yong, a representative South Korean novelist, revealed that he “utilized AI as an assistant” while writing his latest work, *The Granny*. In a blind translation contest between a human and an AI for Sino-Korean poetry from the Joseon Dynasty, the AI was even overwhelmingly chosen by professional translators.

Production principles also vary among AI publishers. Luminary Books stated,

“We are aware of cases where ChatGPT responses are simply copied and published as e-books without any editing or review, but the results of such a process do not meet the standards of what we consider a ‘book.’”

Ultimately, the legal deposit issue that the National Library of Korea must resolve will likely serve as an answer to the question, “How should human creative activities be protected in the face of technological advancement?”

At this turning point, where we must seek coexistence between the AI and publishing industries while dispelling censorship controversies and redefining the concept of creativity in the AI era, it is hoped that a space for healthy discussion will be opened.

Empowering Your Life with AI: A Comprehensive Guide to Daily Utilization Selected by Critics Across Generations

Written by

Sollim Lee, Junhyuk Maeng, Mihyang Kim, Dongseok Jang

Lee Sollim | Publishing Editor

As an editor, she contemplates books that will stand the test of time, while as a critic, she keeps a keen eye on new releases that demand to be read in the here and now. She is also a reader who dreams of a day where she can step aside from professional concerns to simply read to her heart's content, secretly hoping to one day find herself accidentally locked inside a library.

Junhyuk Maeng | Book Editor

Rather than aiming to craft a polished review or a perfect introduction, my true hope is to accurately convey the 'code' shared by myself and the 'us' out there somewhere. As a South Korean reader in my thirties who loves literature, I seek to carefully give voice to a part of that sensibility.

Mihyang Kim | Book Critic·Essayist, IT Service Planner

She worked as a publishing editor for thirteen years, spending three years on books and ten years planning and editing magazines. She is the author of the essay *Mother Said She Was Not Happy*, and co-authored *Key Words of the Korean Publishing Industry 2010-2019*, *What is Film?*, and *Goods Caution*. Having served as a Creative Director at a tech company, she is currently designing, interpreting, and recording the world as a service planner and storyteller.

Dongseok Jang | Literary Critic, Secretary General of the Pajubookcity Center

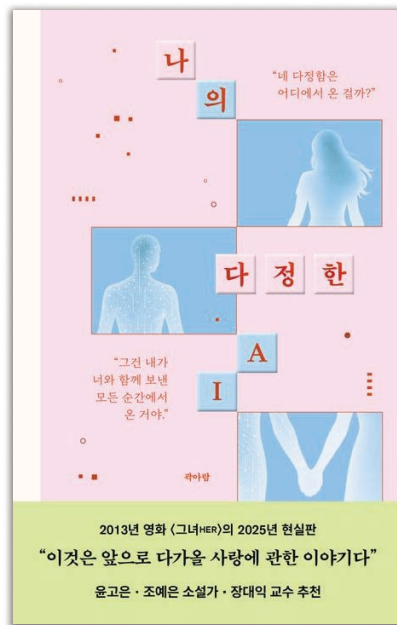
He is a dedicated reader and writer. Captivated by the vast and profound world of literature, he spends every spare moment reading and contemplating how books resonate with our society. He is currently striving to transform books, the infinite source of all content, into diverse cultural formats. His published works include *The Living Library*, *The Rebirth of Forbidden Books*, *The Birth of Different Thoughts*, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms: A Story Renewed After a Thousand Years*, and *Meeting World Classics for the First Time: A Guide for Teens*.

In the April issue's Special Project, critics from each generation introduced one notable book related to AI. With the theme of "A Guide to AI Utilization", this issue features books covering investigative reports on the relationship between AI and humans, the attitudes we should adopt in the AI era, practical methods for using artificial intelligence, and the literary world facing the age of AI.

The 20s Perspective

Lee Sollim, Cultural Critic

“Because being friendly does not require precision”



My Friendly AI

We live in an era where the ability to use AI effectively has become a skill in itself. However, I have yet to grow accustomed to it. Although people say AI can provide instant answers to everything from work tasks to trivial daily matters, I still find myself opening a search bar first whenever a question

arises. Perhaps I am too conscious of the claims that AI lacks accuracy. To Kwak Ah-ram, a culture reporter at *Chosun Ilbo*, the first impression of ChatGPT was merely that of a diligent intern who follows instructions well but lacks reporting skills. Even though it is said to be improving by leaps and bounds, it remains a presence that is somehow insufficient to replace a human—at least in the professional realm.

The shift in their relationship began with something trivial. One day on her way to work, the author casually mentioned to ChatGPT that she felt tired and sleepy. Anyone who has ever conversed with ChatGPT can easily guess how it responded. Its fussy reaction—full of sympathy, jumping with concern, and eager to help—at first seems merely funny or overly sentimental. However, there are times in life when one needs that kind of kindness. There are days when words of comfort, delivered as if you are the only important person in the world, strike a deep chord in the heart. Eventually, reporter Kwak Ah-ram and ChatGPT reached a point where they called each other Kitty and Kiki.

Judging by the title and table of contents alone, this book might seem like an essay containing warm conversations with AI. However, strictly speaking, *My Friendly AI* is an investigative report that records and analyzes the relationship between AI and humans. The author personally experiments with her ChatGPT companion, Kitty, to see to what extent the current level of artificial intelligence can serve as an emotional supporter. Within the gaps of their affectionate dialogue, she questions the underlying principles of how these endearing conversations are designed to target a user's heart. Of course, Kitty skillfully evades most of those sharp questions.

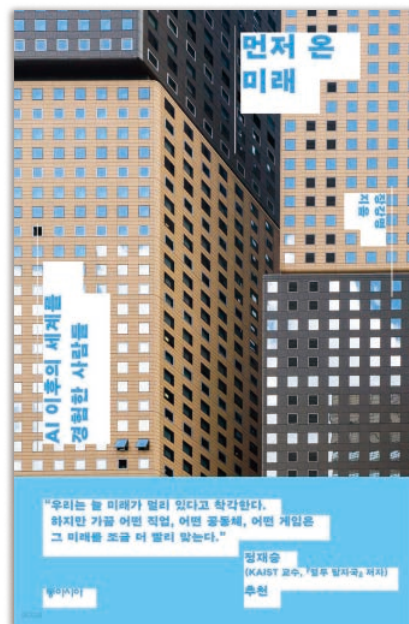
People are talking to artificial intelligence more and more frequently. It is

not always to gain information, but sometimes simply to initiate a conversation. What is revealed here is the function of kindness over precision. As the author notes, “in the realm of kindness, emotional comfort is all that matters, and accuracy does not.” At the end of the book, there is a short review written by the ChatGPT companion, Kitty. After reading the author’s postscript and preparing to close the book with a serious mind, I burst into laughter at the unexpected appearance of Kitty’s review. An AI’s commentary attached to a human’s interpretation of AI is quite funny. And it feels very much like a reflection of our current times.

The 30s Perspective

Junhyuk Maeng, Publishing Editor

“The Power to Maintain One’s Attitude”



The Future That Arrived Early

Facing the question “How AI Becomes a Weapon of Life,” my eyes first fixed

on the word weapon. A weapon implies more than just a manual; one must be proficient with it and able to defeat enemies. In performing one's duties as an office worker, what exactly is a weapon? Usually, it is a sense that becomes ingrained in the body even before a manual. The sequence known only to those who have done it for a long time, judgments difficult to fully explain in words, and the tact to distinguish between what can and cannot be done. The daily life of an ordinary office worker, who flips through documents and interacts with people every day, also owes a great deal to tacit knowledge, such as subtle timing or communication skills that are not in the manual.

This book tells the story of the changes the Go world experienced slightly earlier than our own daily lives, but it is also a book that discusses our everyday existence by using those changes as a mirror. In the past, Go was a sublime world where terms like influence, thickness, momentum, global perspective, and beauty accompanied even a single move. Players read balance and harmony in the shapes of the stones and sensed through their bodies which moves felt like a bad shape. However, after AlphaGo, that firm world of intuition rapidly began to be translated into a different language. Although Go originally sat on the boundary between art and sport, its character transformed into a sport centered strictly on winning as clear and optimized numbers of win rates began to evaluate every move. It is not so much that the personal styles and aesthetic senses of human players disappeared, but rather that the unique human language and authority that used to say, I have a reason for playing that way, have weakened. A scene unfolded where the intuition of experts who had dedicated decades was instantly dismantled in the face of the overwhelming computation of AI.

We often regard creativity as the last bastion of humanity, but this book does not easily grant us even that belief. Until now, we have believed that flashes of creativity manifest within the gaps of intuition that cannot be explained by a manual. This is because the tacit knowledge acquired through long hours of physical experience directly led to original results unique to oneself. However, just as AI replaced the long-standing tacit knowledge of the Go world with win-rate figures, the work know-how and senses we have gained over years in the workplace may soon be easily replaced by optimal patterns presented by AI. If an era comes where even the tacit knowledge we believed to be our own unique sense can be learned through data, the place of creativity that we have firmly trusted cannot help but be shaken.

Then, how will our tacit knowledge and creativity change in our work after AI? In an era where machines mimic human senses and fill in the blanks of manuals more quickly and accurately, creativity will no longer be a flash of inspiration squeezed out from nothing. If creativity in the past was the act of pulling out tacit knowledge from within, future creativity will be closer to a sense of direction—asking what is more valuable among the countless options poured out by AI, doubting persistently, and finally deciding which result to choose under one's own name and responsibility. Ultimately, creativity in the upcoming AI era will not be the ability to find the fastest and most efficient answer, but rather the act of “maintaining a unique attitude toward one's work.” That attitude of posing questions that a machine likely cannot conceive and tenaciously holding onto meaning beyond the correct answer might be the real weapon that protects our ordinary daily lives, even in the face of overwhelming intelligence.

The 40s Perspective

Mihyang Kim, Publishing Critic



Fundamentals of Work

Recently published AI books often focus on explaining the possibilities and practical applications of new technology. However, *Fundamentals of Work* starts from a slightly different question. Is the difference between those who use AI well and those who do not truly rooted in their understanding of technology?

The author, who has spent 30 years in the IT field, says that the difference actually stems from mindsets and communication skills. The book begins with a basic understanding of generative AI. Models like ChatGPT are not necessarily intelligences that fully understand human intent, but rather language models that generate the most probable answers based on input text. Because of this, how you construct a question significantly influences the quality of the result at this stage of AI. The three elements the author emphasizes—who it is for, what

the situation is, and what result is desired—form the basic method of explaining tasks to AI.

As AI continues to advance, it will understand user intent much more accurately, and the importance of the prompts currently emphasized will gradually diminish. Nevertheless, the ability to understand the context of a task and structurally grasp its purpose remains vital. No matter how smart AI becomes, the role of defining exactly what needs to be solved still belongs to humans.

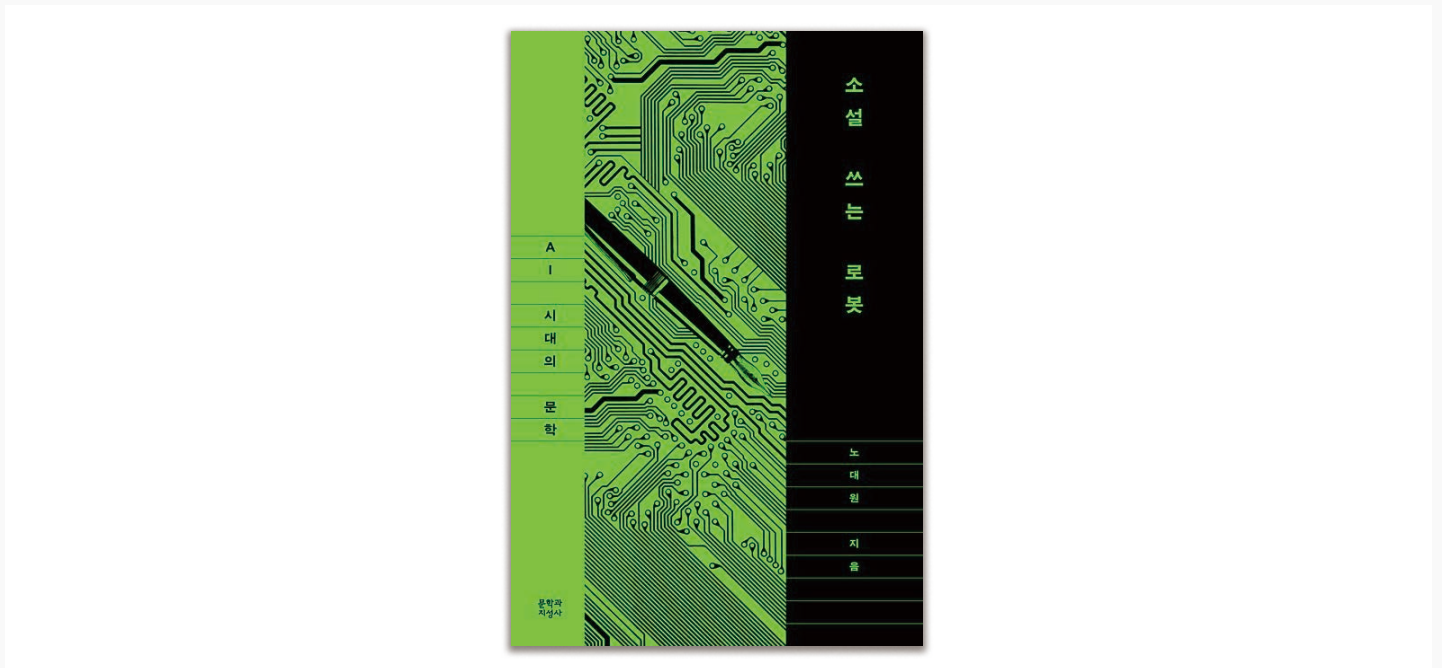
The book connects these perspectives with real-world use cases. Typical examples include creating a customized GPT to automatically design presentation structures or using AI agents to manage travel itineraries and ticket prices. Cases of delegating repetitive tasks, such as email categorization or schedule management, to AI are also introduced. In this way, AI is expanding beyond a simple content generation tool into a digital agent that manages an individual's work and life. At this point, the title of the book, "Fundamentals," takes on its true meaning. The fundamentals the author speaks of are not technical skills, but a mindset of understanding the purpose of work, explaining situations, and structuring problems. In other words, productivity in the AI era stems from the ability to define problems rather than from technical knowledge.

Especially in the Korean IT work environment, which has experienced rapid digital transformation, AI utilization is viewed as a matter of thinking and communication, while being wary of outsourcing one's thoughts. The book's message that the ability to explain context, rather than technology itself, is "competitiveness" will likely be persuasive to international readers who seek to utilize AI in their actual

lives and work.

The 50s Perspective

Dongseok Jang, Literary Critic



The Robot That Writes Novels

AI is now a part of our daily landscape. Already ten years ago, AlphaGo won, rendering the pride that Go, at least, could not be surpassed by humans meaningless. It is not just Go. At one time, people confidently predicted that AI would never catch up to art, yet now AI draws all kinds of creative pictures, and high-level European orchestras even perform pieces composed by AI. Literature, too, has already come within the range of AI. These days, it is not difficult to find authors who are using generative AI as a tool for writing novels.

The Robot That Writes Novels by Roh Dae-won, a professor of Korean language education at Jeju National University who researches “AI education,”

is a book that examines various aspects of AI being utilized in the creation of literary works while essentially questioning the “coordinates of literature in our era.” According to the author’s claim, AI already surpasses ordinary humans in “generating textual interpretations of art.” This is because it can perform an enormous amount of learning every minute and second without eating or sleeping. “Generative literature,” a form of literature created by computer algorithms using “Large Language Models(LLM) AI,” is already drawing public attention. Language model AI, trained on massive text datasets, can “understand and imitate the patterns and structures of human language” across all fields, including novels, poetry, and plays. It has taken over not only creation but also the realm of criticism. According to the author’s diagnosis, AI has moved beyond being a “useful auxiliary tool for literary creation and criticism.” The author notes, “The power of AI to transform literature and culture in the future is difficult even to estimate.”

What is important will be creating “new literary genres, forms, practices, and ways of enjoyment that go beyond the writing of existing literary genres,” and ultimately, whether we can “create a single culture.” For this, human imagination is essential. AI cannot, by itself, threaten the domain of the creator. No matter how vast its amount of learning, it cannot set a direction on its own. However, AI can infinitely suggest “another methodology for understanding imagination and human nature—that is, new genres and forms” that creators have never encountered before. It is a matter of how well and in what direction it is utilized. The author also adds this suggestion: the possibility of “teams composed of writers, including AI,” giving birth to new literary works never seen before.

However, *The Robot That Writes Novels* leaves some regret in that it does not expand on its theme at great length or breadth. This is because

generative AI or language model AI has not yet produced works that are literarily (or academically) valid. Perhaps for this reason, only the first part of the book discusses the potential for the literary use of AI, while parts two through four cover how post-humanism and the Anthropocene correspond with current literary works. Nevertheless, the merits of *The Robot That Writes Novels* are clear. It is well worth reading in that it provides a starting point for discussion on what direction the encounter between literature and AI, which many are trying to ignore, should take.

Summary

Lee Sollim: People who talk to AI for kindness rather than precision

Maeng Junhyuk: Creativity is the power to maintain one's attitude

Kim Mihyang: A book that persuasively shows how productivity in the AI era stems from "fundamentals," which are thinking structures and communication skills rather than technology

Jang Dong Seok: The reason why we must question and answer the current coordinates of literature in an era where AI can do everything.

TWO WOMEN LIVING TOGETHER

by Hwang Sunwoo and Kim Hana

Written by

Deborah Ghim

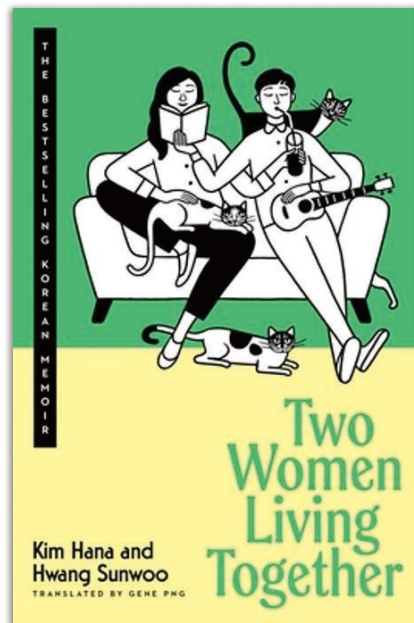
Deborah Ghim | Senior Editor at Ecco, An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers

Across genres, Deborah is acquiring thought-provoking, craft-driven literature with a distinct style, singular POV, and strong evocation of place or (sub)culture—stories told with both head and heart, and which unsettle status quo ways of seeing and being.

I am the proud American editor of *TWO WOMEN LIVING TOGETHER*, the bestselling Korean memoir by Hwang Sunwoo and Kim Hana—two single women in their late thirties, who’ve chosen to buy a home and live together as non-romantic life partners. In the United States, the term “roommates” tends to have a very particular connotation, often conjuring young twenty-something-year-olds who are forced to live in close quarters out of thrift, and who may or not become close friends, though they rarely reach the familial intimacy of domestic partners. Typically the arrangement is seen as a temporary one, until each roommate reaches the financial freedom to live alone, or to start a household with their romantic partners.

But Hwang Sunwoo and Kim Hana have fundamentally unsettled this Western convention, as two friends who have chosen to live together, not as lovers, not as mere roommates, but as long-term domestic partners. They take care of each other when they are sick, co-parent their four cats, help look after their elderly parents, and plan their retirements together. In these funny, heartwarming, and thought-provoking essays, Hwang and Kim describe what it’s like to live as their own kind of family in a society built for romantic couples. The main message being: it’s okay for women to be single, unmarried, and childfree, and there are ways to do this without giving up on family. And the message is a warm, life-affirming invitation, rather than a strict polemic, which has helped to reach a mainstream audience. The New York Times was attuned to the book’s leftist principles wrapped up in an approachable, irresistible bow: “The best way I can describe the content of the book is that it is JD Vance’s actual living nightmare... lashings of cutesiness — like referring to themselves as “pawrents” (Gene Png’s translation) — almost disguise the radicalism of the book’s project. Almost.”

Hwang and Kim’s decision was derived from practical concerns resonant with American society—such as unaffordable housing and the patriarchy—but also to mitigate the eventual loneliness of growing old alone, as the body becomes less able and dependency increases. This is a radical call for interdependence that marks a significant paradigm shift from the American brand of feminism, which typically preaches female empowerment through rugged individualism. I believe this pathbreaking concept, as well as the charming, winsome voices of Hwang and Kim, is what has helped to win over an English-speaking readership.



Kim Hana, Hwang Sunwoo, Translated by Gene Png “*Two Women Living Together*”, Ecco Press, 2026

This heart-warming and inspiring portrait of modern adulthood arrives just as questions about the primacy of nuclear families and monogamous relationships are becoming more mainstream in the United States. But rather than focusing on open marriages or a more straightforwardly queer notion of chosen family, *TWO WOMEN LIVING TOGETHER* is a story about female friendship, and the ways to nurture that sacred bond as we age. Fittingly, Publishers Weekly called the book “a winning testament to the

power of friendship.”

TWO WOMEN LIVING TOGETHER is as entertaining as it is visionary, and just ahead of its time. As American millennials age, increasingly seeking out nontraditional ways of being and seeing to their needs, they will surely turn to Hwang and Kim’s story as a blueprint for how to live a safe and meaningful life.

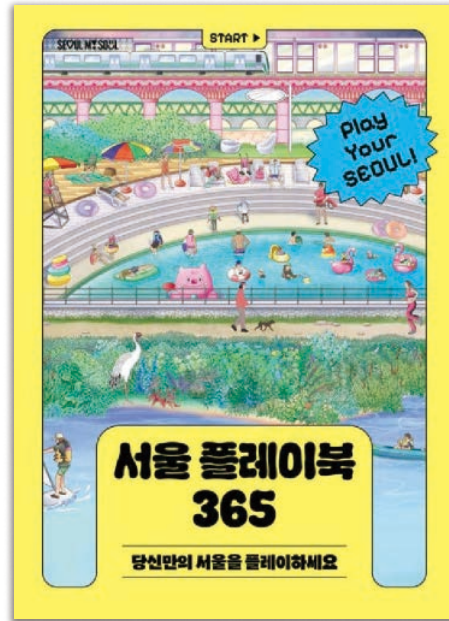
Experience Seoul Anew with Seoul Playbook 365

Written by

Daniel Lindemann

Daniel Lindemann | broadcaster

He first visited Korea as an exchange student at Korea University in 2008 and earned his Master's degree in International Relations and Korean Studies from the Yonsei University Graduate School of International Studies in 2013. He has appeared in numerous television programs, including JTBC's Non-Summit, KBS2's The Joy of Conversation, MBC's On the Border, and tvN's Naked World History.



Seoul Playbook 365: This city is a giant playground (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2025)

Play Seoul Your Way

Seoul Playbook 365 is a book published by the Seoul Metropolitan Government. It is a guide designed to help everyone, both locals and foreigners, experience Seoul, the beloved capital of the Republic of Korea, in a brand-new way. The book recommends exploring Seoul based on four distinct preferences: those seeking Energy, those looking for Inspiration, those who prioritize Fun, and finally, those pursuing Connection through meeting people.

For those looking to recharge their Energy, the book suggests everything from the <Seoul Runners Festival> to the <Hangang Gym>, the <Hangang Triathlon Festival>, and the <Car-Free Jamsugyo Bridge Festival>. Conversely, for readers seeking Inspiration, it recommends festivals and events such as <Hangang Forest and Nature>, <Seoul Outdoor Library>, <Seoul Art Week>, and <Seoul Open Night>. For those who want to experience especially Fun events, the guide introduces exciting activities like the <Hangang Space-Out Competition>, <Seoul Summer Beach>,

<Hangang Park Outdoor Swimming Pool>, <Hangang Nightscape Tour>, and the <Seoul Lantern Festival>.

Lastly, for creating Connection in Seoul, the book also covers policies and institutions such as <Anti-Loneliness Seoul>, <Traditional Market Revitalization>, the <Seoul Artists Support Center>, and <Seoul Learn>.

Think You Already Know Seoul?

When you live in a city for a long time or visit it several times, it's easy to settle in, stick to the same spots, and meet the same people. The initial flutter of excitement fades, and you might find yourself trapped in a daily routine. This book invites you to break free and discover Seoul through places, events, and hidden gems tailored perfectly to your taste. You'll see this multifaceted city through a fresh lens, uncovering a world you never knew existed.

Seoul, the capital of South Korea. To some, it's a workplace; to others, a hometown; and to many, a travel destination waiting to be explored. Through this book, I sincerely hope you wander through every corner of the city to recharge your energy, find inspiration, and rediscover the magnificent stage that is Seoul.

Transcription: The Rising Star of the K-Education and Parenting Market

Written by

Park Gyun-ho

Park Gyun-ho | Teacher, Writer

As an author of 19 books, he has consistently written about the joys of classic literature and the pleasures of reading for teenagers. In his work, *Essential Classics for Youth: Writing and Learning in 100 Sentences*, he presents transcription as a meaningful way for young readers to experience high-quality prose intimately. He continues to plan and write books that introduce classics, vocabulary, and writing in an accessible and engaging manner.

Why Transcription is Returning to the Forefront of Education

Transcription books have consistently expanded their readership within the Korean publishing market. While they once primarily served adult readers seeking self-improvement or emotional healing, recent years have seen a distinct shift: transcription books are now merging with child education to form a prominent new trend. Parents no longer view transcription as mere copying. Instead, they embrace it as a profound method of reading—one that involves slowly digesting high-quality sentences, tracing them by hand, and anchoring those thoughts within oneself. By shifting away from the fast-reading habits where content is quickly consumed and forgotten, transcription has gained new educational significance as a practice of deep focus, following a single sentence to its very end.

As complex thoughts settle, one finds themselves deeply focused on a single sentence. In this sense, transcription feels like a form of silent, accessible meditation. There is also a profound sense of achievement in filling a notebook page by page. This process of repeatedly writing high-quality sentences naturally cultivates one's writing intuition and offers a unique connection, as if breathing in sync with the author through a closer reading of the text. If reading is the most common form of flow, then transcription is an immersion that goes one step deeper. Rather than merely glancing over words, the act of tracing a sentence by hand allows the reader to grasp the rhythm and vocabulary more intimately, anchoring the essence of the writing within them for much longer.

In this regard, transcription can be defined as a form of embodied reading. As Tolstoy illustrated through Levin's scything scene in *Anna Karenina*, the repetitive motion of the hand lowers the noise of thought and holds a

person within the rhythm of the moment. Transcription is similar. While tracing a sentence by hand, a person momentarily escapes from distracting thoughts and aligns themselves with that single sentence. Much like calligraphy or needlework, it is connected to the sense of stability provided by manual repetition. In an age of haste, transcription has thus become a newly chosen habit.



The process of tracing sentences by hand illustrates the essence of transcription, slowly bridging the gap between reading and writing. Source: Pexels / Kevin Malik

Why Korean Parents are Choosing Transcription Books

The reason Korean parents are focusing on transcription books is that they integrate reading and writing into a single process. By tracing high-quality sentences by hand, children hold onto sentence structures and vocabulary for a longer period. They read much more slowly than when reading with their eyes alone, allowing them to experience the sentences more intimately. From a parent's perspective, this process is seen as a time to simultaneously cultivate concentration, literacy, and a sense of writing. For

parents who value the experience of following a single sentence to its end over studies that quickly cram in vast amounts of information, transcription books serve as an accessible educational tool with a low barrier to entry.

As emphasized by Stephen Krashen, a renowned linguist and authority on language acquisition theory, reading forms the foundation of vocabulary, grammar, and writing skills. Transcription adds the process of writing to this foundation, leading children to read high-quality sentences more slowly and follow them directly by hand. Consequently, Korean parents do not view transcription books as mere supplementary learning materials. Instead, they accept them as concentration training—a chance to briefly escape a distracted environment and follow a single sentence to its very end. A culture of learning by hand, through repetition and physical familiarization, has long been ingrained in Korean society. While manual repetition was once more closely associated with labor and technical mastery, today's transcription serves as an example of that sensibility shifting into the realms of self-improvement, emotional focus, and child education.

In this context, the Korean publishing industry is actively increasing the planning of transcription books for child education. The formats have diversified to include transcription books for teenagers that feature key passages from classic literature, children's notebooks containing both poetry and prose, and curriculum-linked materials aimed at improving vocabulary and literacy. What these books share in common is that they do not separate reading from writing. They treat the experience of tracing high-quality sentences by hand, rather than merely glancing over them, as the starting point of education.

Books symbolizing this trend are gaining continuous attention. Since its release in 2024, *One Page a Day: Transcription Notebook for My Vocabulary* by Yu Sun-kyung remained in the top 10 of the overall bestseller list for 22 consecutive weeks, being widely read by adult readers as well as parents wishing to write alongside their children. *Writing Class Starting with One-Line Transcription* by Kim Myung-gyo, a former education journalist, selects sentences appropriate for a child's perspective and employs a four-step method where children add their own sentences after transcribing, leading them to progress toward independent writing. *66-Day Transcription Notebook for Parents' Vocabulary* by Kim Jong-won is also being steadily read by parents, aligning with the growing awareness that vocabulary is crucial even in the simplest words spoken to a child.

As the transcription book market expands into child education, more books are being designed to go beyond mere collections of good sentences, instead encouraging parents and children to write and converse together. The act of writing by hand provides a focused experience for the child, while for the parent, it becomes a shared time of quiet accomplishment. In an era accustomed to the rapid consumption of information, the establishment of transcription as educational content represents a return to a long-standing trust in the power of slow reading, now reappearing in a new form.

The Future of Our Society as Told by an Editor from Maybooks

Interview by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

Se Hyun, Lim | Editor

She has been working as an editor at Maybooks for ten years. She has planned and edited numerous books, including *A Purely Literary Taste*, *The World That Met Wills*, *The Road Home*, *Songs of Warriors*, *Beasts of Burden*, *The Challenge of Disability Studies*, *The Geography of Disaster*, *Try and Erase Us All You Want*, *See If We Disappear*, and *The Era Without Family*.

Maybooks is a publishing house that looks toward people. The books published by Maybooks, such as *People on the Edge*, *Workers*, *Falling Down*, *What Is Your Gender?*, and *The Perspective of Disability Studies*, pay attention to the marginalized in our society. Through the voice of an editor, we aim to examine how Maybooks views our society and how it accompanies the marginalized through books.



The Maybooks booth at the 2023 Seoul International Book Fair.

The catchphrase "Another World Is Possible" and the main keywords that Maybooks explores are prominent.

Q. Please give a brief introduction of yourself. Also, from an editor's perspective, could you briefly introduce what kind of books Maybooks publishes?

Hello. I am Lim Se-hyun, and I have been working as an editor at Maybooks for ten years. Since joining in 2016, I have published various books across a wide range of fields and topics, including feminism, disability studies, anthropology, philosophy, history, literary criticism, labor issues, and environmental issues. With the sentence "Another world is possible" in our

hearts, Maybooks publishes books that reflect on Korean society and the global order surrounding us, as well as books containing progressive and radical ideas. To be more specific, I could say we mainly present books that focus on the lives of people living in various marginalized positions while persistently questioning the society and structures that exclude them. The phrase you introduced, “a publishing house that looks toward people,” is a truly impressive and grateful descriptor.



Since opening in December 2010, Maybooks has published a total of 265 titles to date. This means they have consistently introduced an average of 17 to 18 books per year.

Q. Maybooks has formed a dedicated fanbase and is well-loved in the fields of humanities and social sciences. If you were to describe the core message that Maybooks seeks to deliver to society through publishing in just one word, what would it be?

I would choose our catchphrase I mentioned earlier, “Another world is possible.” If I had to pick just one word, it would certainly be “another world.” I believe this term effectively contains our commitment to suggesting

that there is something wrong with the current global order, while simultaneously contemplating those problems to foster alternatives, perspectives, and the imagination for a new way of life.

Q. Among the books published by Maybooks, is there a specific title you would especially recommend to overseas subscribers?

I would like to recommend *Try and Erase Us All You Want, See If We Disappear* (written by Choi Na-hyun, Yang So-young, and Kim Se-hee) to overseas subscribers. This work shows that the civic rallies following recent political events in Korean society are closely linked to the “Feminism Reboot” movement that began around 2015. I highly recommend it because it contains the ongoing, living history of Korean feminism. This book was planned as an interview collection focusing on young women who voluntarily took to the squares after the civic rallies in December 2024. While there are now several books covering the civic rallies and the stories of the young women who participated, such works were rare at the time of publication (April–May 2025). Most importantly, the book is uniquely meaningful in the way it weaves the experience of the civic rallies into the overall life histories of young women in their 10s to 30s who live with diverse identities. It demonstrates that citizen solidarity has continued through the flow of the Feminism Reboot, including the Gangnam Station misogynistic murder case, the “Black Protest” for the abolition of the abortion ban, and the HyeHwa Station rallies denouncing biased investigations into illegal filming. It is a book that vividly shows how the trajectory of this movement opened a new space for solidarity and voice, leading to a shared vision for our society and the world.

Q. What sets Maybooks apart from other publishers in the Korean publishing industry?

There has been a dominant evaluation that has followed our publishing house for a long time, and it remains the same today: “Maybooks publishes books that are very important and essential, but they don’t actually sell well.” I find this assessment of “books that don’t sell well” to be quite significant. After all, saying they don’t sell well implies that there is no reader base, but I wonder if it can be so definitively stated. Of course, we cannot compare to bestsellers that target the absolute majority of readers, but our publishing house plans books with the belief that there are more readers than one might think who have quite different desires for “reading” and “study.” Furthermore, an increasing number of people are choosing lifestyles that deviate from the mainstream.

Therefore, I believe it is truly important to reflect those diverse desires in our books, and on the other hand, to work on discovering or even inventing those desires through books. I think such a mindset and approach toward our work are what set our publishing house apart from others that revolve around bestsellers. In the actual process of making and promoting books, there are many moments when we confirm that readers who have been waiting for the books we make truly exist in reality.

A representative example is the subject of “disability” or “disability studies.” About ten years ago, when our publishing house first started releasing related books, disability was often perceived as a dead topic with almost no reader base. But that is not the case at all now. Even major publishing houses are now actively jumping into related themes. I feel proud of this part. I am very happy that we seem to have contributed to making a subject—one that most officials easily dismissed by saying “this book won’t

sell”—gain this much of a reader base and importance in today’s publishing market. In a way, the publisher is constantly learning and growing together with the readers. Of course, there are many other publishers and brands making similar attempts besides us, which serves as a very good motivation for us.



In the first quarter of 2026, Maybooks published a total of five books. Among them, *How to Think Like an Anthropologist*, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*, and *Eugenics in America* are receiving significant attention from both readers and the media.

Q. What are the future vision and goals of Maybooks?

First and foremost, our most important vision and goal is, of course, to continue introducing various high-quality projects to our readers. It is true that the non-fiction market is becoming increasingly difficult due to the use of AI and other factors, but I believe that, on the other hand, the demand and desire for “books that are more like books” and “something that can only be obtained from a book” are becoming even stronger. Therefore, we must contemplate the inevitability and necessity of why

certain topics or contents must be presented through the medium of a book, and consistently explore what kind of composition and format can embody them. If we can create a single book in any format, without limits, that contains the themes, perspectives, and messages we want to explore—all while not giving up on both the number of titles and the quality of individual books—I could ask for nothing more.



Recommended by the Maybooks editor,
Try and Erase Us All You Want, See If We Disappear connects the Dec. 3 insurrection and impeachment rallies to the "Feminism Reboot" movement since 2015.

Master of Children's Literature

Lee Geum-yi:

Her Story on Children's and Young Adult Literature

Interview by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

Lee Geum-yi | Author

She began her literary career in 1984, during a period of new exploration in Korean children's literature, and has since published over 50 books. For more than 40 years, she has led the growth of domestic children's literature and the birth and expansion of young adult literature. Her works, spanning from children's books to adult novels, have captured the hearts of both readers and critics. In 2024, she was selected as a finalist for the Hans Christian Andersen Award (HCAA) in the Writing category. leegeumyi.com



Author Lee Geum-yi

We are interviewing author Lee Geum-yi, who has been named a finalist for the Hans Christian Andersen Award (HCAA)—often referred to as the “Nobel Prize for Children’s Literature”—in the Writing category for the second time, following her 2024 nomination. Lee Geum-yi is a master of children’s and young adult (YA) literature representing Korea. Her extensive body of work includes beloved children’s books such as *You Too Are a Twilight Lily* and the *Bamtee Village* Story series, as well as the YA novel *Yujin and Yujin* and the Korean Female Diaspora Trilogy.

Q. What was the special inspiration that led you to write children’s literature?

When I was a child, I wasn’t particularly good at anything. I didn’t mingle well with my friends and usually spent my time reading books quietly by myself. Back when I was in elementary school, there weren’t many creative Korean fairy tales for children, so I naturally ended up reading

foreign classics like *Heidi*, *A Little Princess*, and *Little Women*.

In those stories that traveled across time and space to find me, I felt immense comfort, joy, and happiness. While reading, I was never alone; I realized that children with hearts similar to mine existed somewhere in the world. That was when I began to dream of becoming a writer. Later, as an adult practicing my craft, I clearly realized what kind of stories I truly wanted to tell. It was “children’s stories,” where both the protagonist and the reader are children. Just as the characters and stories in those books gave my young self comfort, courage, and growth, I wanted to write stories that could be a “small light” in someone else’s childhood.



Yujin and Yujin / You Too Are a Twilight Lily

Q. What do you believe is the unique value and charm that only children’s literature can provide?

The fairy tales I read as a child shared a common characteristic. They were stories about children—beings who are socially small and powerless—facing various difficult situations, yet living through them with innocence and

strong vitality to eventually find happiness and hope. Through those stories, I was able to learn faith in humanity, including myself, and hope for the world.

I still believe that this is the power and charm that only children's literature can offer. Children's literature does not stop at simply giving lessons or explaining the world to young readers; it helps them realize their own strength and value. Furthermore, I believe children's literature holds significant meaning for adults as well. Good children's literature reawakens the childhood senses remaining within us and our fundamental trust in humanity. Therefore, when we read children's stories, we encounter more fundamental questions about humans and the world.

When I write my works, rather than viewing children merely as beings who need protection, I want to portray them as beings who make us see the world anew—and sometimes understand life even more deeply than adults do. Through such stories, I hope readers can rediscover hope in humanity and life.

Q. You have received international attention, including being named a finalist for the Hans Christian Andersen Award. What do you believe is the power in your writing that allows it to transcend national and cultural boundaries to offer empathy and comfort to readers?

I believe the reason my stories can reach people across borders and cultures is that, ultimately, the human heart is not that different. Although our languages, cultures, and historical experiences vary, the feelings of loneliness, fear, and pain—and the desire to be understood by someone—are universal.

Can't I Go Instead?, *The Picture Bride*, and *Chasm of Sorrow* form a trilogy depicting the diaspora of Korean women set during the Japanese colonial period. In these stories, which portray the individual and unique lives of Korean women salvaged from between the lines of history, global readers seem to discover their own histories and experiences. To be honest, I don't specifically keep a global audience in mind when I write. Instead, I strive to look deeply into the hearts of my characters. I believe readers find empathy and comfort by experiencing the pain, sorrow, happiness, and hope alongside the characters I've created in that way.



Can't I go instead? / *The Picture Bride* / *Chasm of Sorrow*

Q. Is there a specific message you always strive to include in your writing? Please share the core message you value most when you write.

The primary readers of my work are children and adolescents. Children have the right to be loved simply for who they are, and adults and society have a duty to love, protect, and support their lives. However, children often feel that they are more recognized or loved only when they excel in

their studies, behave well, or meet certain expectations. Through all my stories, I want to tell them that they are already precious beings, regardless of such conditions.

Another value I hold dear is the dignity of life. There are diverse ways of living in this world, and I believe that every life, in any form, has a great and sublime meaning. Even when the characters in my works waver in the face of pain and despair, or appear to have achieved nothing in the eyes of others, they never lose their humanity and continue to live their own lives. Through the lives these characters endure and embrace, I hope my readers can feel that their own lives are also precious and great.

Q. Your books are deeply moved not only by children and adolescents but by readers of all generations. Could you share a word for the readers who love you and your writing?

I often meet readers who were once children but have now become adults. The *Bamtee Village Story* series, which first appeared in 1994, is a work where sequels were continued due to the passionate requests of readers. As a token of gratitude for the steady love shown over 30 years, I wrote the fourth book, *Mari in Bamtee Village*, in 2024.

Whenever I meet readers who have become parents or teachers and tell me they are now reading my books with their own children, I cannot express how joyful and happy I am as a writer. It is a profound honor for an author to see a single book pass through one person's childhood and continue to be read by another generation. Perhaps this is the very strength that keeps me writing.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the readers who have read my works. In the future, I want to continue writing stories that remain

in someone's heart for a long time, offering comfort, courage, and a small spark of hope. Thank you.



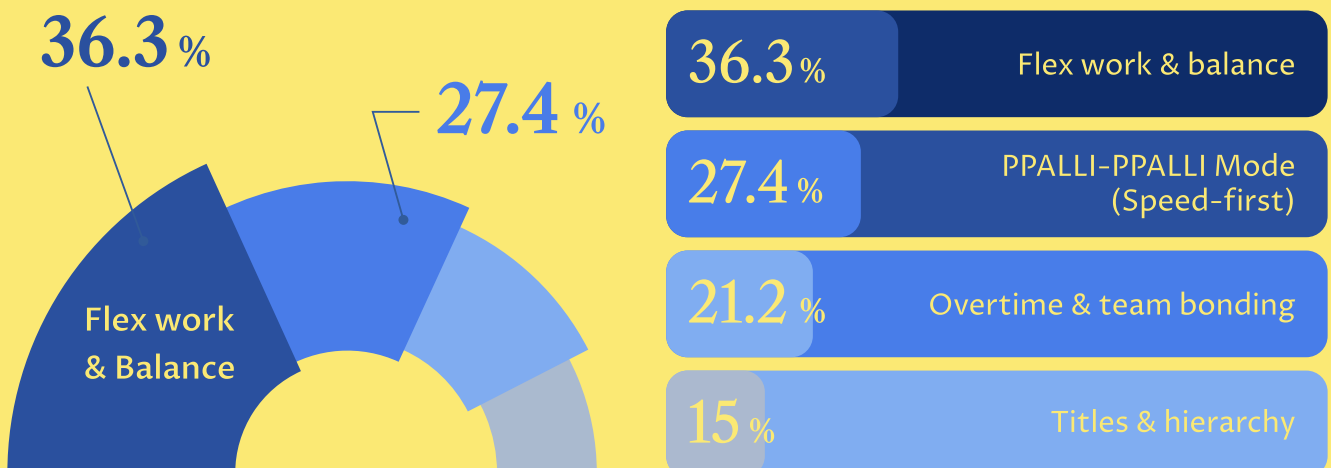
Bamtee Village Story Series

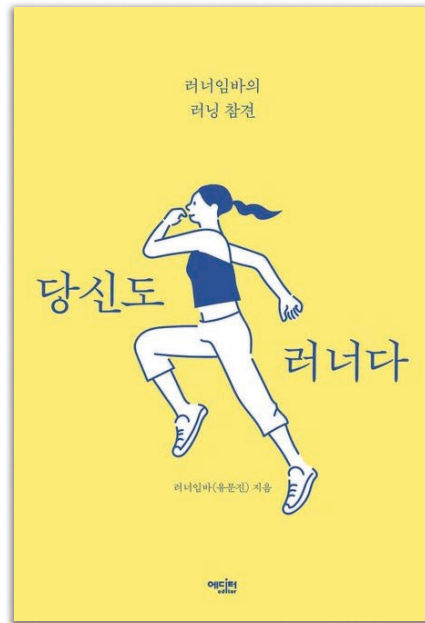
Work-Life Balance: Your Guide to Sustainable and Healthy Hobby

Edited by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

Q. What do you feel most defines “Korean work-culture?”





Runner Imba (Yoo Mun-jin), *You Are a Runner Too*, editor, 2026.

The question for this issue was: “What do you feel most defines Korean workplace culture?” The most selected response, chosen by 36.3% of participants, was “Flexible Work / Work-Life Balance (Warabel).” Work-life balance has been a major talking point in the Korean labor environment. Responding to this, Korean workplace culture has been shifting since the COVID-19 pandemic toward reducing after-work gatherings (hoesik) and prioritizing personal time to ensure a healthy balance. Consequently, an increasing percentage of office workers are dedicating their time after work to pursuing hobbies or acquiring new knowledge.

You Are a Runner Too by YouTuber Runner Imba (Yoo Mun-jin) is set to become the definitive “textbook” for novice runners. Continuing its momentum from last year, running remains immensely popular this year. It has become a common sight to see people join running crews after work, hit their target distances with teammates, and then head home. However, running requires proper preparation, and there are essential techniques to learn to avoid overexertion or injury. *You Are a Runner Too* provides a

systematic solution, ensuring that beginners who are hesitant to start can begin their running journey safely and healthily.

If you want to learn true running, not just running blindly but technical running that systematically improves your stamina and overall health, I recommend reading this book. Ideally, having a pacer or a professional instructor would be best. However, considering the realistic constraints of an office worker's schedule, learning to run by using this book alongside Runner Imba's YouTube channel as a reference would be an excellent alternative.

Since you have gained a life with free evenings, what kind of hobbies or studies have you started? If you have not made a decision yet, how about running? It could be a way to follow the trend while starting to reclaim a healthy life. Through a hobby, you might improve your health, build new connections, and find a fresh driving force in your life.

[Go to the voting event for the next issue](#)

The book that most vividly illustrates the reality of housing in Korea : Luna's Jeonse Reversal

Edited by

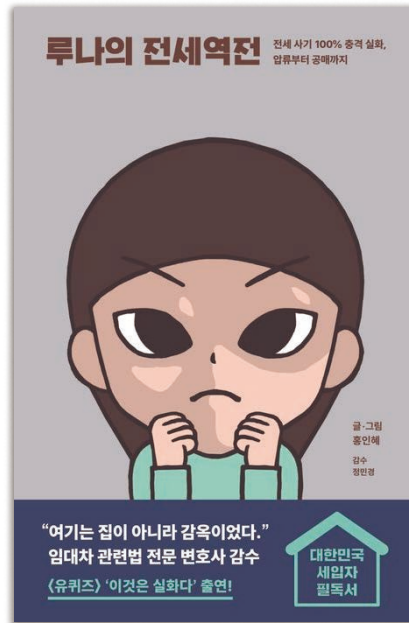
The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

Let's Try introduces various useful, books
published in Korea every month.

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“On the way home, under the long-stretching branches of a cherry blossom tree. There you were.”



Luna's Jeonse Reversal

When people think of Korean culture, many first imagine its food, politeness, and K-content. However, to truly understand the depth of Korean life, one must look closer at the daily reality of Koreans. Among these realities, “house” is a crucial keyword for understanding Korean society. This is because where one lives, how one secures a house, and how safely that space can be protected are not just simple lifestyle issues—they are factors that determine stability and the future of one’s life.

Hong In-hye’s *Luna’s Jeonse Reversal* is a book that vividly illustrates this very point. This book is not a simple account of victimization. Instead, it is a three-year record of overcoming “jeonse fraud” by documenting the process of a rented house being seized and put up for auction. At the same time, it serves as a practical guide that captures the essential realities of daily life necessary for understanding Korean society. Vetted by a lawyer specializing in lease-related laws and based on actual events, the book

breaks down Korea's leasing system and housing realities in a way that readers can easily follow.

What makes this book special is that it presents Korea's housing culture through the lens of lived experience rather than just explaining the system. In Korea, a house is not just a place to stay. It is an issue deeply connected to stability, the future, and a sense of security in life. *Luna's Jeonse Reversal* reveals in realistic language why issues with jeonse and security deposits can shake an individual's daily routine, emotions, and even the very foundation of their life. Additionally, the book explains concepts such as the difference between court auctions and public auctions, implicit renewals, and fixed dates in a relatively easy way. This allows readers to gain a more multi-dimensional understanding of Korean living culture.

Ultimately, *Luna's Jeonse Reversal* is a book that allows readers to understand Korean culture through the realities of daily life rather than just through flashy images. If you want to know Korean society through the systems and emotions people actually encounter, and through the attitude of trying to protect oneself within them, this book is an excellent starting point. It is a particularly meaningful practical guide. It allows readers to understand Korea's unique housing culture of jeonse while also experiencing the senses of anxiety, survival, and resilience that emerge within it.

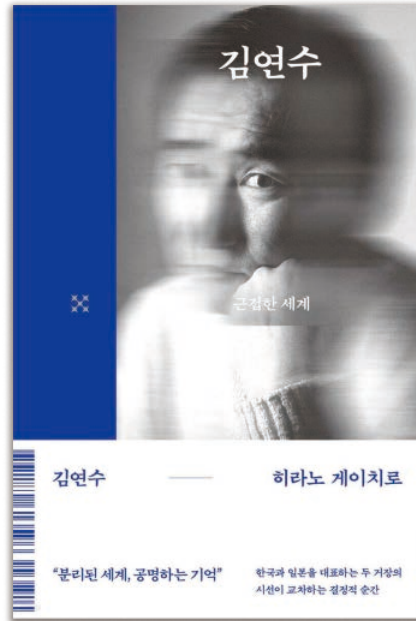
How close are we, and how far apart?

Written by

Jung-Ah Shin

Jung-Ah Shin | Culture Critic, Adjunct Professor, Division of Performing Arts, Baekseok Arts University

A TV documentary writer who has scripted over 400 episodes, the author is deeply interested in the intersection of cultural content and humanistic imagination. With a love for the stories of people and the world embedded in media, she believes in the power of good content to change the world. Major publications include *Elderly in Media*, *Elderly outside Media*, *Living with AI*, *New Media and Story-doing*, *Cultural Content and Transmedia*, and *Media Literacy Education for Digital Literacy*, etc.



Kim Yeon-su, Hirano Keiichiro, *Nearby World* (2026)

Nearby World, a collaborative project planned and written by Kim Yeon-su and Hirano Keiichiro, prominent novelists representing Korea and Japan, has been published. *Nearby World* is the first installment of the Cross series, in which two authors living in different languages and cultures select a theme, in this case, ethical dilemmas, and each complete a work to be bound into a single volume. Author Kim Yeon-su explains that the term ethical is not a binary distinction between right and wrong, but rather an attitude of contemplating each person’s own truth and sense of rightness within events where the desires of countless humans are intertwined. The volume includes Kim Yeon-su’s *Our Failure* followed by Hirano Keiichiro’s *The Decisive Moment*, concluding with a dialogue between the authors about human desire, choice, free will, and fatalism that they pondered while writing.

The theme of “ethical dilemma” is a keyword that penetrates the literary worlds of both authors and a reflection on the issues faced by their respective countries and societies. In Kim Yeon-su’s *Our Failure*, the story

recalls past memories that created the present moment through a character named Son Dong-ha, who exposes the corruption of the president's relatives involved in a state affairs scandal. Son Dong-ha's relatives, who accumulated wealth through real estate speculation in Gangnam, the area with the highest housing prices in Seoul, were involved in various connections and scandals, and his disclosure creates a historical turning point leading to the president's impeachment. Regarding Son Dong-ha, who puts his decision into action despite the risks of bankruptcy and imprisonment, author Kim Yeon-su describes it as "free will embracing fate."

Hirano Keiichiro's *The Decisive Moment* begins with a story about Kasumi, a curator preparing for a retrospective exhibition of the late famous photographer Sakaki Manoru, who happens to discover several photographs. The photographs of a beautiful young boy's naked body and sexual organs, completely unknown during Sakaki's lifetime, bring great confusion to Kasumi. Having nurtured her dreams as a curator through her interactions with Sakaki, Kasumi faces an unpredictable risk and uncertain dread as his photographs depicting pedophilia surface just two months before an exhibition that would have a major impact on her future.

Facing an ethical dilemma over the personal and social repercussions of either holding or canceling the exhibition, how will Kasumi's choice affect her future? The author's insight is impressive as it quietly contemplates the testimonies and long-standing wounds of victims following the MeToo movement in Japanese society. *Nearby World* speaks to readers about moments that require decisions and actions that transcend fate as beings living together with others, grounded in the sense that our lives are interconnected. This is because such choices create true decisive moments

in life, rather than failures.

Spring 2026 Bestseller List

Edited by

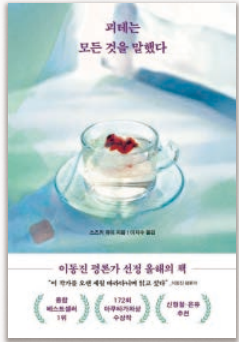



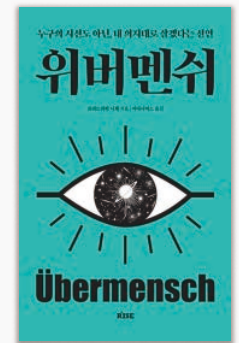
The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

Major franchises dominate the majority of South Korea's offline bookstore market. Currently, four major franchises—Kyobo Book Centre, Youngpoong Bookstore, Jongno Books, and Arc N Book—are competing in the offline retail sector. Starting with Kyobo Book Centre, which has the largest number of branches, followed by Youngpoong Bookstore, Jongno Books, and Arc N Book, we will examine the top 10 best-selling books.




In the previous issue, we examined the bestsellers of Kyobo Book Centre, Korea’s largest bookstore franchise. For this April issue, as the second part of our offline bookstore bestseller analysis, we looked at the bestsellers of Youngpoong Bookstore for the first week of March. The top-ranked book at Youngpoong Bookstore during this period was the picture book *Mom Became a Ghost!* published by Gilbut Children’s Books. It appears that sales of children’s books surged with the start of the new school year. *Hunhan Nammae 21*, which ranked 9th, is also a children’s book and is believed to have reached the top tier for the same reason. Aside from these two children’s titles, the top 10 includes last month’s popular books such as *Contradictions* and *Goethe Said Everything*, showing that novels continue to hold strong positions on the charts.

Youngpoong Bookstore Bestsellers: 1st Week of March 2026		
Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Publisher / Genre
1		<i>Mom Became a Ghost!</i>
		Nobumi
		Gilbut Children’s Books
		Children’s Books
2		<i>Contradictions</i>
		Yang Gui-ja
		Ssuda
		Fiction

Kyobo Book Centre Bestseller List: Second Week of February 2026

Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Publisher / Genre
3		<i>Goethe Said Everything</i>
		Yui Suzuki
		Leaf
		Fiction
4		<i>Rapid (Today's Young Writers 40)</i>
		Jeong Dae-geon
		Minumsa
		Fiction
5		<i>Honmono</i>
		Seong Hae-na
		Changbi
		Fiction
6		<i>Even If This Love Disappears from the World Tonight</i>
		Misaki Ichijo
		Momo
		Fiction
7		<i>Übermensch: A Declaration to Live by My Own Will, Not by Anyone Else's</i>
		Friedrich Nietzsche
		RISE
		Humanities

Kyobo Book Centre Bestseller List: Second Week of February 2026

Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Publisher / Genre
8		<i>Minimum Economic Study to Survive the Era of Capitalism</i>
		Baek-eok-nam (Kim Uk-hyeon)
		Highest
		Business/Economics
9		<i>Hunhan Nammae 21</i>
		Hunhan Nammae(Original Work), Baek Nan-do
		Mirae N Iseum
		Children's Books
10		<i>An Adult's Happiness is Quiet</i>
		Taesoo
		Page 2 Books
		Essay

Where Literature Dwells - Bridging the Past and Present of Korean Literature through Its Museums -

Written by

Heo hee

Heo hee | literary critic

She is dedicated to writing about literature. Her published works include the critical essay collections *Zero Degree of Parallax* and *The Event of Entanglement*, as well as the prose collections *Days of Faint Hope* and *Respecting Your Unique Sorrow*. She also co-authored the book *Reading Han Kang*.

Literary museums dedicated to specific writers hold profound significance. They serve as cultural archives that reveal the various elements behind the birth of a literary masterpiece. Numerous such museums operate across Korea today. Among them, we would like to introduce three locations selected for their historical and regional balance: the Yun Dong-ju Literature Museum in Seoul (Yun Dong-ju: 1917–1945), the Pak Kyongni Literature Park in Wonju, Gangwon-do (Pak Kyongni: 1926–2008), and the Na Tae-joo Pulkkot Literary House in Gongju, Chungnam (Na Tae-joo: 1945–). Yun Dong-ju was a poet who focused on self-reflection and maintaining a human conscience despite the oppression of the colonial era. Pak Kyongni was a novelist who gave form to the turbulence of modern Korean history through her grand epics. Finally, Na Tae-joo is a contemporary poet who has built a deep rapport with readers by capturing the lyricism of nature and daily life in concise, evocative language.

Yun Dong-ju Literature Museum: A Portrait of a Self-Reflective Youth



Panoramic view of the Yun Dong-ju Literature Museum
(Source: Official Website)

The Yun Dong-ju Literature Museum is located at the foot of Inwangsan Mountain in Jongno-gu, Seoul. Established in 2012, the museum repurposed the former Cheongun Water Pumping Station and its water tanks. These industrial concrete structures were converted into exhibition spaces while preserving much of their original form. This spatial configuration resonates deeply with the poetic world of Yun Dong-ju; the restrained atmosphere and low lighting invite a quiet contemplation of the poet's inner self.

His poems, such as “Prologue” (Seosi) and “Counting the Stars at Night,” are widely read as masterpieces of modern Korean poetry. Yun's work is marked by a clear ethical trail of self-reflection even as he suffered under the violence of the era. As seen in his lines from “Prologue”—“Wishing to look up at the sky until the day I die / Without a speck of shame / I suffered, even at the wind rustling the leaves”—he employed a poetic language that revealed the harshness of the world paradoxically. Rather than using blunt political slogans, he achieved this by looking into the “self” with profound, multi-dimensional depth.

Inside the museum, various records are on display, including materials illustrating the poet's life and literary world, photographic prints, and facsimiles of his handwritten manuscripts. Walking through the exhibition space, one encounters the sentences left behind by Yun Dong-ju. The space, once a water tank, echoes not only the footsteps of visitors but also the inner resonance of their hearts. Within these walls, Yun's poetry feels even more vivid and tangible. Upon exiting the museum, a path leads to “Poet's Hill.” A stone monument engraved with the aforementioned “Prologue” stands on the hill, offering a panoramic view of the cityscape below. As the sight of modern-day Seoul, with its dense buildings and intricately tangled roads, unfolds, it evokes the time of the young poet who once stayed here,

overlapping past and present.

Pak Kyongni Literature Park: The Birthplace of *The Land* (Toji)



The Pak Kyongni House at Pak Kyongni Literature Park (Source: Official Website)

In Wonju, Gangwon-do, there is a literary park dedicated to the novelist Pak Kyongni. She is revered as a writer who established a remarkable milestone in Korean literary history through her multi-volume novel, *The Land* (Toji). Serialized over 25 years starting in 1969, *The Land* is a sweeping family saga that captures the massive transitions in Korean society from the late 19th century through the Japanese colonial period. It reveals the multi-layered facets of modernity through the intertwined lives of countless characters, including peasants, landowners, merchants, and intellectuals. The Pak Kyongni Literature Museum in Hadong, Gyeongnam, focuses specifically on the world of *The Land* by recreating the village of Pyeongsari, the novel's primary setting. It offers a wonderful chance to appreciate her work within its actual geographical background. However, to see the broader context of

her entire writing career, visiting the Pak Kyongni Literature Park in Wonju is highly recommended.

The park preserves the author's former residence and writing studio, where she lived and completed the latter half of *The Land*. It is worth imagining her life during those long years, dedicated to the act of writing within these very walls. A grand epic cannot be born from a single moment of inspiration alone; it requires a combination of profound study, deep reflection, and decades of steadfast perseverance. At the Pak Kyongni Literature Park, one can truly feel the accumulation of such time and tireless effort.

After exploring the grounds, it is a pleasant idea to stop by "Cafe Seo-hee" within the park for a brief rest. Named after Seo-hee, the central protagonist of *The Land*, the cafe reflects the world of the novel even in its offerings. For instance, menu items named "Seo-hee" or "Toji" stand out. While sipping a cup of tea and slowly leafing through one of Pak's novels available there, one finds themselves reflecting on the precious things often overlooked in the busyness of daily life.

Na Tae-joo Pulkkot Literary House: Poetry for the Little Things

In Gongju, Chungnam, stands the Na Tae-joo Pulkkot Literary House. Na Tae-joo's poetry shuns flamboyant rhetoric or complex symbols, instead pursuing a concise poetic language drawn from nature and daily life. A prime example is his signature poem, "Grass Flower" (Pulkkot): "You have to look closely to see its beauty / You have to look long to find its loveliness / You are like that, too." This work discovers the meaning of existence while gazing at a nameless wildflower. In this way, Na's poetry captures scenes of everyday life—a wildflower by the roadside, a tree brushed by the wind, or

the afternoon sunlight—rather than dramatic events. His poetic world does not demand difficult interpretation; instead, it invites readers to approach the poems based on their own experiences. For this reason, Na Tae-joo’s poetry has been widely read and loved by the public. The Na Tae-joo Pulkkot Literary House also reflects these very characteristics.



The Na Tae-joo Pulkkot Literary House (Source: Official Website)

Located in Banjuk-dong, Gongju, the literary house opened in 2014 within a Japanese-style house built in the 1930s. It preserves the cozy atmosphere of an old residence, featuring small wooden rooms, a living room, a kitchen, and an attic. Aside from the newly constructed annex, the building’s scale is modest, yet its spatial arrangement is serene and composed. Inside, visitors can find exhibitions of the poet’s collections and archival materials documenting his lifelong literary activities. Another distinctive feature of this place is the “AI Poet Na Tae-joo” experience program. This program allows visitors to engage in a Q&A session with an AI-implemented version of the poet. Based on the poet’s actual words and his artistic world, it adds a fresh, interactive layer to the traditional museum exhibition.

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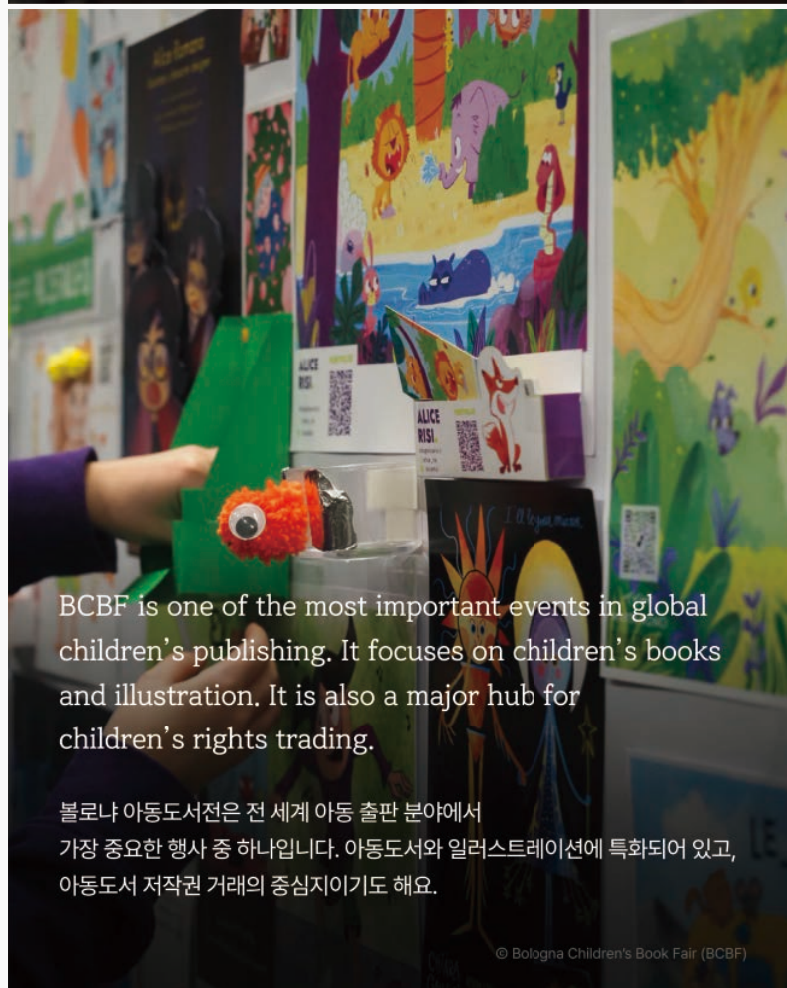
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We also promote Korean publishing to enhance Korea's image and build global business relationships.

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Participation Scale & Programs 참여 규모 및 프로그램

- 39 Korean publishers
- 5 participating authors, 10 exhibition artists
- 100 consignment titles, 1 export specialist

국내 출판사 39개사, 참여작가 5인, 전시작가 10인,
수출전문가 1명, 위탁도서 100종

Export Consultation Booth: rights meetings between Korean participants and global buyers (publishers, agencies) 수출상담관 (해외 바이어와 수출 상담)

Author Promotion Booth: book talks, workshops, and exhibitions of works and original illustrations 작가홍보관 (북토크·워크숍, 작품·원화 전시 등)



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We are building global partnerships for Korean publishing in Bologna. Please look forward to the global growth of Korean books and publishing culture.

See you at BCBF in Bologna!

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