

## **The children's book market in Brazil and the dissemination of science's books**

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### **Abstract**

It is noticeable that the Brazilian publishing industry has been paying attention to new market circumstances relating to the child's universe. Brazil went through, in the past ten years, a time of great economic stimulus by the government to increase household consumption. Thereby, despite the recent drop in numbers of the sector, it is believed that we are in a favorable moment for the juvenile literary market. The number of libraries increases, considering the large networks, and the sale of children's books occupies the second place in the ranking, with 74%, between the types of books sold by bookstores. However, the concern in communicating information contents and stimulate the pleasure of reading passes, increasingly, to integrate a background in consumer choice for many, directly affecting the space devoted to books whose purpose is to promote science. This research aims to present some considerations on child literary market and the dissemination of science and point out a survey of books with the potential to disseminate scientific knowledge. The methodology used was based on searches conducted in bookstores, publishers' catalogs, centers and science museums and websites, using the following keywords: science for children, children's books and science. The results show that it is still little the space for titles with this bias. Additionally, the acquisition and distribution of these books are still directly related to government procurement. Therefore, this research becomes a necessary initiative to propagate and make known books for children that aim to popularize science.

### **Introduction**

With a trajectory in publishing that has begun in the late nineteenth century, Brazil reached the new millennium with an established industry, and is considered today as the

country with the largest book market in Latin America and the ninth largest in the world (IPA GLOBAL, 2012). Estimated at 435 million books sold in 2012, the Brazilian publishing market declined by 7.36% compared to 470 million copies sold in 2011, the worst performance in the last ten years. However, Brazilian publishers registered a turnover of R\$ 4.97 billion, representing a growth of 3.04% compared to the previous year, when the income was R\$ 4.84 billion. If we consider the 5.84% variation of the IPCA<sup>1</sup> in the year, this slight increase turns into a drop of 2.64% (CBL / SNEL / FIFE 2012).

Analyzing just the market sales (therefore, not including government sales, especially the Federal ones, that support many publishers), was registered a fall of 5.43% in the number of copies sold, dropping from a total of 284 million units in 2011 to 269 million in 2012. Government sales also showed a remarkable decrease of 10.31% in the number of copies, with a decline from 185 million in 2011 to 166 million in 2012.

However, revenue from market sales has increased by 6.36%, from R\$ 3.45 billion in 2011 to R\$ 3.66 billion in 2012, which means a real increase of 0.49% considered the inflation. This was the first real growth in the sales to the market since 2008. Already, the sales revenue for the government showed a decrease of 5.20%. In 2011, the publishers have grossed R\$ 1.39 billion, falling to R\$ 1.31 billion in 2012. Still, these oscillations are expected, since the government purchase program is seasonal.

With regard to children's literature, this research area of interest, data are scarce and often insufficient. Currently, does not seem to exist in Brazil a systematic work on the development and productivity of the national literary market, even less the child one, allowing us to compose and unfold cyclic cadres of the universe of titles, copies, specialized publishers in the industry, among others. Information on the production and sale of books in the country is controversial, incipient and uncertain (LINDOSO, 2004; EARP & KORNIS, 2005).

The most complete data (although the temporal irregularity) on the sector of children's literature were obtained from the article *Brazilian Children's literature and literary studies*, the author Marisa Lajolo (2010). Adapted in this article for a chart, shown below:

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<sup>1</sup> Broad National Consumer Price Index - indicator calculated monthly by IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), which measures inflation in a range of products and services sold at retail, for the personal consumption of households, whose income varies from 1 to 40 minimum wages, whatever source of income, and living in urban areas of the regions. It is considered the official inflation index of the country, being used for monitoring the objectives established in the inflation targeting system.

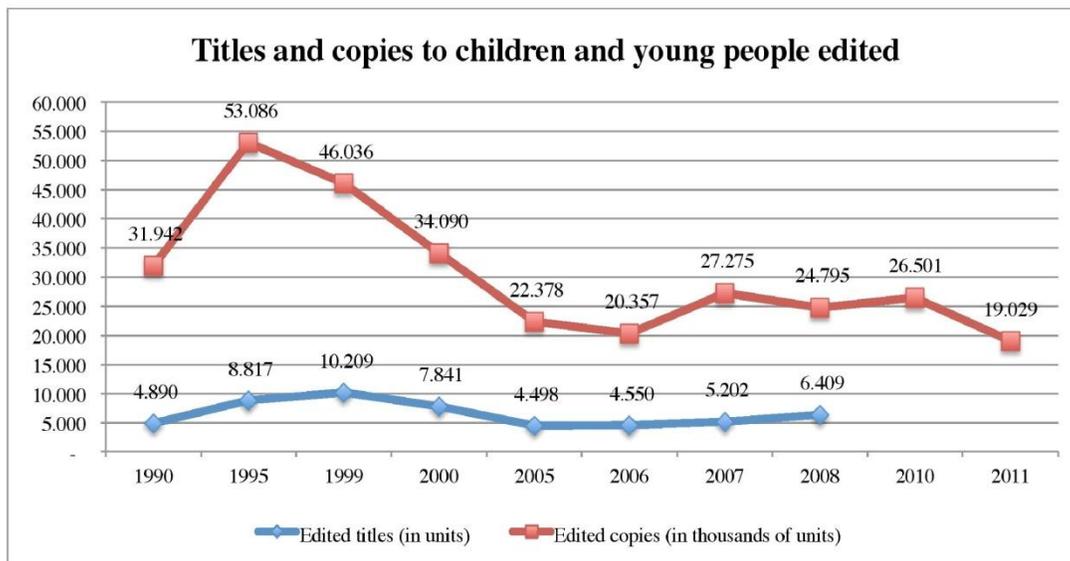


Figure 1. Titles and edited copies for children and young people, adapted from Lajolo (2010). And produced copies in 2010 and 2011, obtained from the research of the Brazilian publishing industry (CBL / SNEL / FIFE 2011).

In the chart, it is possible to see a significant increase in the number of titles and copies in the period 1990-1995. This is possibly due to the advancement in the editorial and graphic quality of the productions of children's literature. According to Britto (2004), the public preference for national authors such as Ruth Rocha, Ana Maria Machado, Ricardo Azevedo, Pedro Bandeira, Ziraldo, among others, may have influenced the quality and quantity of children's books in the period.

It is after 1995 that the Brazilian market of children's books undergoes a more apparent transition, with a decrease in titles and copies of national storybooks number. This reduction may be related to an economic issue, due to the implementation of the Real Plan (an economic plan), because of the strong appreciation of the domestic currency against the U.S. dollar, since this was one of the bases of the plan to curb inflation. But this encouraged so much the imports of products such as books. Other factors may have influenced this reduction in the number of titles and copies, as purchase of copyrights and even the issue of

printing (now being exported). These options appear to be more advantageous than working with national works.

Despite having internationally award-winning authors, the Brazilian market had found opposition in international fairs, failing in selling copyrights in the same extent that buying. That explains the flurry of foreign books published in the period. According to Brandão (2001), in this epoch the Brazilian market welcomed an increasingly massive amount of foreign titles chosen by the low price at the expense of its quality, without concern if the text is promoting a dialogue with our culture.

Possibly, the Brazilian authors books recovered their position in the national market (not with impressive numbers as in the early 90s), due to the increasingly assertive government procurement, seeking to instill in children a national identity paper. For example, we have the National Library School Program (PNBE, the acronym in Portuguese), developed since 1997, which aims to promote access to culture and to encourage reading among students and teachers through the distribution of literature, research and reference collections of works.

Starting in 2005, small fluctuations<sup>2</sup> occur in the number of titles and copies edited, from year to year, which does not directly affect the market. One of the main factors responsible for these variations was possibly the very dependence on government purchases from publishers, since they lie waiting for government purchases, and this one waiting to get lower prices. The government uses its largest buyer power to impose the publishers an ongoing price reduction (EARP e KORNIS, 2005).

One of the consequences of government being largest buyer of books in the country is that public schools receive, each year, huge amounts of new titles (in 2013, for example, were about 6.7 million literary works), where the final consumers, students, become, therefore, the indirect customer of Brazilian publishers. Thereby, thinking in business terms, the potential market for the publishing industry is very large.

In this context, it is noticeable that the publishing industry has been paying attention to new market circumstances relating to the child's universe. Brazil went through, in the past ten years, a time of great economic stimulus by the government to increase household consumption, either via increased availability of credit to the consumer or by the rise of a

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<sup>2</sup> Edited titles: 2006 = 4.550; 2007 = 5.202; 2008 = 6.409 unities. Edited copies: 2006 = 20.357; 2007 = 27.275; 2008 = 24.795 unities.

considerable mass of families to the middle class. Thereby, despite the recent drop in numbers of the sector, is believed that we are in a favorable moment for the juvenile literary market. The number of libraries increases, in large networks (ANL, 2012), and spaces for children are becoming more and more sophisticated. The sale of children's books follow this trend, occupying the second place in the ranking, with 74%, between the types of books sold by bookstores (ANL, 2012). Emerge the specialized publishers, not only in textbooks, but also in game books (eg, the publisher Brinque-Book), made to "read with your hands." Moreover, to meet the technological demands, commercialization of digital content, including e-book, increasingly gained importance in the bookstores.

However, it is observed that the value assigned to the children's book, like commodity and object of consumption, has been reflected in the characteristics of the product offered for children. Mostly, the books are produced predominantly with commercial focus, with flashy covers and models, of different sizes, often with interactive resources, toy-books, calling the attention of the consumer at the purchase time. Which, in turn, are factors that positively influence the growth of the children's book market.

However, the concern in communicating information contents and stimulate the pleasure of reading seem to integrate a background in choice for many consumers. And that, of course, is reflected in the characteristics of children's books published in the country, directly affecting the space devoted to books whose purpose is to promote science. The possibility of diffusion and commercialization of the latter appears to be, increasingly, directly related to the evolution of government procurement, since the government prioritizes on your purchases the literary books, of research and reference, ie, that have concerns about the education and culture.

It is believed that, if well structured, children's books can also be excellent allies in the dissemination of science. They can early influence the public awareness on the topic. According Baredes (2008), the contents of an introductory book for children should be interesting for both children and for adults, so that children have their valued curiosity, their interest for knowing and their ability to understand. After all, reading is an invitation to the reader think and ask new questions. A book of science communication for children should not be a treatise on a scientific theme or a book study. The child should not feel obligated but captivated to read (SCALFI, 2012).

## **Methodological Procedures**

Due to the dissemination of science books are not ranked with such nomenclature, were carried out a survey on websites, libraries, science museums and in catalogs of several Brazilian publishers, in the period July-December 2013, to bring together, in a single document, the publications that have the purpose to disseminate science to children through literature. The keywords that constituted the search were: science for children, children's books and science. It is intended, through this survey, propose a list of titles that offer a selection focused on dissemination of science to children and are able to provide support for parents, teachers and institutions working with the non-formal and formal education. Additionally, it is intended to discuss this scenario, articulating about science books and Brazilian literary market.

The criteria used for a book appears in the list of titles proposed consisted of being in the established age group - up to twelve years old, promote a certain scientific knowledge, not be didactic, be playful, encourage the formulation of new questions and, especially, be considered of dissemination of science by the publisher, by author or by the institution promoting the book.

## **Results**

In this survey, a total of 146 titles were found<sup>3</sup>. Of this total, a positive point to observe is that 62% of the survey are titles of Brazilian authored and production. The remainder are made up of works by foreign authors that were translated into Portuguese. Decorticating these data, is possible to observe that, among the national titles, 82% (23) were launched by publishers that sell children's books on various subjects, 14% (4) for research and/or educational institutions and only 4% (1) by specialized publishers in dissemination of science. The data may indicate a possible concern of educational and/or national research institutions to launch books for the purpose of disseminating their work to children.

Counting the number of national and foreign titles released by publishers in this study, it is observed that the publishing house that have more national children's books of dissemination of science launched is Vieira & Lent, followed by Oficina de Textos, Nova Fronteira e Peirópolis. On the other hand, the publishers that have more works translated of

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<sup>3</sup> Available on: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/re193d9lp5yzsqp/Table\\_book\\_Scalfi.pdf](https://www.dropbox.com/s/re193d9lp5yzsqp/Table_book_Scalfi.pdf).

disseminating science to children are Callis and Ciranda Cultural (see Figure 2). The number of translations is equivalent to 38% of the survey. This shows that Brazil is still a major importer of articles on dissemination of science to children.

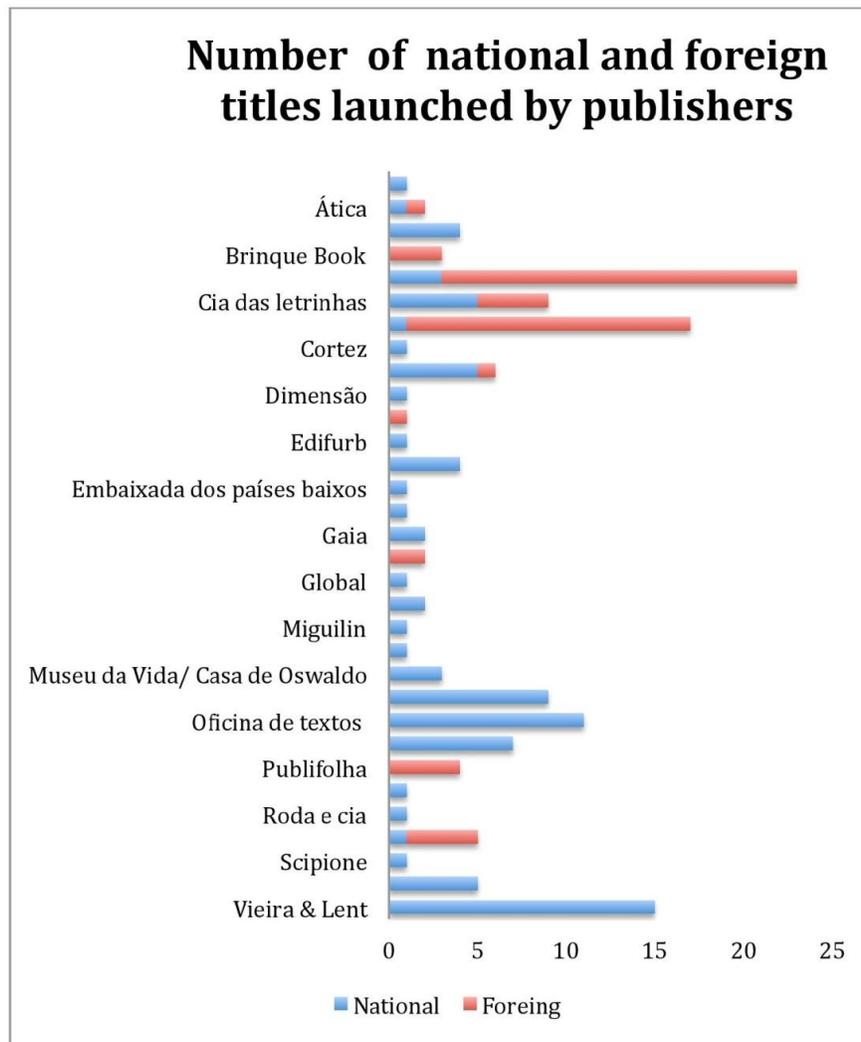


Figure 2. Number of national and foreign titles launched by publishers.

Another significant aspect is the fact that having access to books of dissemination of science in bookstores or via e-commerce is not a simple task. Only 16% of survey books are available for ready purchase. Most books of survey (68%) are only available via request<sup>4</sup>. Another 9% are unavailable at the supplier or publisher. There are even the books that,

<sup>4</sup> Consulted Bookstore: Livraria Cultura of Campinas-SP.

because are produced by research or education institutions, they are not traded and have free distribution. It is the case of the books of Museu da Vida, Espaço Ciência Viva, Embaixada dos Países Baixos and the Federal University of Goiás.

Lack of access to books during the purchase reduces the chance of the book being purchased (even by request), at last, the consumer is not seeing the product and, certainly, there are few parents and consumers who conduct research prior to the purchase in bookstores. From the data presented, it is perceived that the science books for children are still not favored by the children's literary market.

### **Final Considerations**

Analyzing the Brazilian publishing market, it was found, through the survey, that is down the number of children's titles that feature in his proposal the dissemination of science. Admittedly, this number is not stable, since the children's book market is very dynamic, releasing new titles every day. However, the number of 146 titles found in the period cannot be considered significant on the universe of children's books.

Regarding publishers, you can make two considerations. Although there are many publishers in the survey, most have one or two titles on the subject. Moreover, if we look at the most significant publishers in numbers, we see the national books focused on a few issues and the existence of many translated books. That is, we still need to expand the topics covered and produce more books for this purpose.

A plausible conclusion is that there seems to be a greater concern with the production of science books for children from foreign countries. Some initiatives point to a larger existing incentive abroad for this sector, as the international organization American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), which publishes the journal *Science*, which annually awards science books for children (SB&F Prizes for Excellence in Science Books). So does the Royal Society in the UK, which honors books that communicate science to young people.

Therefore, it is believed that there is still much to do in Brazil to boost this segment, either by creating incentive programs, either by the award as a way to recognition for works with this bias. Children's literature can be allied with the dissemination of science, but the books for this purpose have to multiply, have to being known and exploited in school settings, home, research institutions and NGOs working with child audiences. In this way,

these books may contribute to awaken the child's interest in reading and science, in a pleasurable way.

The list provided in this research is only the beginning of discussions on the topic. However, it can serve as a reference not only for parents but also for teachers and schools that aim to work science since childhood. It is believed that are still necessary numerous efforts by the Brazilian publishing market encouraging books that focus the theme, as well as to stimulate and disseminate existing ones. However, we also need more Brazilians authors engaged in the topic, helping to promote the dissemination of science books for children.

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