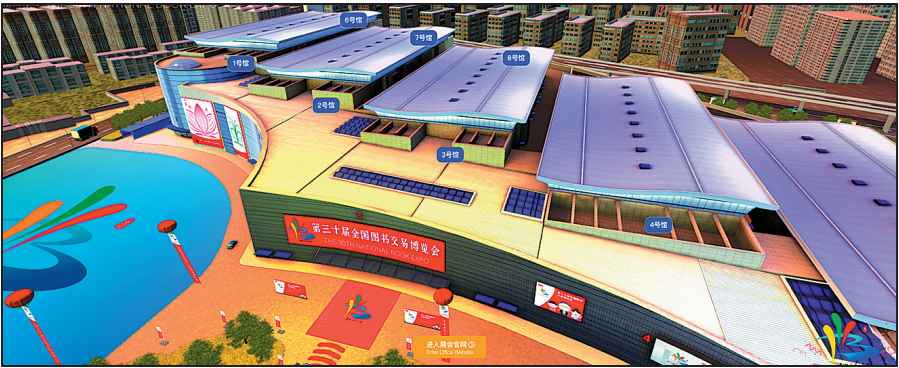


LIFE



# A turn up for the books

Added tech feature at key publication expo opens another exciting chapter, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.

Book fairs have an air of excitement. New works vie for attention, writers — both established and hopeful — discuss their offerings, and readers itch to get their hands on particular tomes. All this creates a buzz, an atmosphere of, dare it be said, great expectations.

All of this was true at this year's National Book Expo in Jinan, Shandong province, with one exception. This time the voices of a group previously unheard of at book fairs — livestreaming hosts — became a key element of the cacophony.

Visitors walking the aisles of the exhibition halls would fail to miss livestreamers standing in front of LED ring lights and several phones, talking about books with both patience and vigor.

They promoted the books for hours at a time and hardly ever left the cameras, except for a short lunch break, when they asked their assistants to cover for them, before they wolfed down their food and went back to work.

The 30th edition of the expo, from July 15 to 19, drew more than 1,600 publishing organizations, and many opted for livestreaming to promote their books and events.

While some bigger organizations set up their own broadcast booth and livestreamed their campaigns, the smaller ones worked with social media influencers to boost sales.

The booth of a Beijing-based publishing company Jingyiboyuan was a particularly busy attraction, with several livestreaming hosts promoting books on their own social media platforms at the same time.

The company has worked with social media influencers for a year, mostly for their in-house children's book brand "Little Red Sail".

"Livestreaming is more often

used to promote children's books, because these books have a wider customer base. Anyone with a child in the household, parents and grandparents for example, will consider buying the books," He Bin, the company's sales representative, says.

The company first started adopting a livestreaming model, he says, because they noticed a trend of launching online campaigns on video streaming platforms. Aside from cooperating with livestreaming hosts that boast more than a million followers, the company also created their own social media accounts.

According to He, the company's annual turnover has increased from 60 million yuan (\$9 million) in 2019 to 150 million yuan in 2020, and livestreaming sales accounted for about 20 to 30 percent of the increase.

Selling books on livestreaming platforms is no longer unusual in the Chinese market. One iconic example is livestreaming host Wei Ya, a top salesperson on online shopping platform Taobao, who can easily sell 30,000 copies of a book within seconds.

According to a report on the Chinese book retail market, released by Beijing-based industry research company OpenBook at the expo, in the first half of 2021 children's books accounted for 58.54 percent of all book sales on short video and livestreaming platforms.

Apart from the ubiquitous presence of livestreaming, the expo's organizing committee also employed technology to promote the event and enhance visitor experience.

This year marks the first time that there has been an online version of the expo. Its unique virtual reality venue allows book lovers around the country to "attend" from the



**Above:** A livestreaming host introduces books at the booth of a publishing company during the recent National Book Expo in Jinan, Shandong province.

CHENG YUEZHU / CHINA DAILY **Top left:** Over 600,000 visitors attend the expo which also plays host to more than 1,600 exhibitors.

**Top right:** A VR version of the expo allows book lovers around the country to take a glimpse of the exhibition center from their own homes. **Below:** The expo commemorates 100 years of the Communist Party of China with an exhibition of related publications, activities and book launches.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

comfort of their own homes.

By simply clicking on the expo's official website, users will be presented with a link to the VR venue, which shows an animated version of the overall exhibition center.

All eight exhibition halls, each with a different theme, are listed, and users can choose where they

wish to "walk around" and browse the booths in detail.

Publishers' names are displayed on the virtual booths, which also provide information about the company and the books that it showcased at this year's expo.

"This year is the first time we have added this online VR venue feature. This is, in fact, a response to the COVID-19 outbreak, which has raised the bar for expo organizers," says Yang Yang, head of the online expo team.

Yang says that the team started building the online venue in May, requesting each of the publishing houses to provide the layout of their booths and the books they intended to present at the expo.

Because many of the smaller publishers did not have the funds or technology to create their own VR booths, the team shot immersive 360-degree videos throughout the exhibition center after the installation was completed.

The online expo also features an official website and a WeChat account, where users can browse, preview and purchase more than 5,800 types of books from over 430 publishing houses around the country.

The website also details the diverse range of events that took place during the expo, and major events are available for online viewing.

This year's expo set records in terms of size and quantity.

With a main venue in Jinan's Shandong International Convention and Exhibition Center and two subvenues in Yantai and Tai'an, the expo covered a total area of 100,000 square meters and exhibited over 400,000 products, from publications to cultural merchandise.

Hosted jointly by the National Press and Publication Administra-

tion, Shandong provincial government and Jinan municipal government, this year's expo pays homage to the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China with an exhibition of publications and book launches themed around the history of the CPC.

It also featured more than 600 events including a readers' conference, an annual award ceremony for the "top 10 readers", panel discussions with literary experts, and a reading festival for children.

Admission was free to all exhibition halls and events, and up to 5 million yuan of book vouchers were also available for visitors to take advantage of.

Shandong Xinhua Bookstore Group developed a platform for this year's expo, which not only allowed the visitors to claim the vouchers and pay for their books, but enabled the publishing companies to track their inventory and sales volume in real time.

"This platform has saved a lot of manpower and resources for this year's expo, and ensured a good experience for both the visitors and the exhibitors," says Ma Xuejun, general manager of the Jinan branch of the group.

According to the expo's official statistics, this year's event posted a record high in terms of book sales. During the five days, the expo registered more than 600,000 visitors, generated a retail revenue of over 26 million yuan from in-person sales, and around 150 million yuan in revenue from livestreaming activities.

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## Russian influencer creates new life in Shenyang

SHENYANG — Any stranger talking to Misiutkin Vladislav on the phone for the first time would consider him a native of Shenyang, the capital of Northeast China's Liaoning province.

Far better known as Dawei in China, Vladislav, 26, from Irkutsk in south Russia, speaks fluent Chinese with a thick northeastern Chinese accent.

"I am having a great time in Shenyang, and my dream is to settle here," says Vladislav, an owner of three restaurants in the city.

In 2014, Vladislav, then a university student, decided to embark on a journey to the city about three hours away by air from his hometown.

He says it was his father who had advised him to study in China. "He believed I would have a better career here because of China's rapid development."

"Looking back, it was a wise decision," he adds.

After graduation from university, Vladislav became well-known locally thanks to his mastery of Chinese.

A comedy video he filmed on the Shenyang subway went viral on the Chinese short-video platform Douyin in 2019. It shows him bantering about cultural differences between China and Russia with his Shenyang accent.

The success of this video spurred the young Russian to become an online influencer in China. His later videos, featuring the northeastern accent and culture shock themes, have earned him a nickname among his 2 million followers as "that foreigner who forgets his mother tongue".

In recent years, Shenyang has rolled out a series of preferential policies for foreign investors, including streamlining the approval process, and tailoring visas, for startup entrepreneurs. In October 2020, Vladislav set up his catering company in Shenyang's pilot free trade zone.

His three restaurants sell food from both China and his homeland, such as coconut coffee, which is trendy in China, and traditional Russian shashlik.

Benefiting from his popularity on the internet, his business is thriving.

Looking back on his life so far in China, Vladislav says that his understanding of China had been reshaped by his real-life experiences.

"Before I came here, all my impressions about China were from movies," Vladislav says. He was astonished by the skyscrapers and busy streets when he first set in the country.

"Even things beyond my imagination are happening in China now," he says, praising China's achievements in technology and infrastructure, such as 5G networks, mobile payment, express delivery and high-speed rail.

Looking ahead, Vladislav says that he hopes to bring his younger brother to China after his high school education. "I believe he will have better chances in China, too," he says.

XINHUA



## Kiwi harvest is ripe for global appeal

XI'AN — Squatting in his orchard, Wang Manliang checks the plentiful green kiwi fruits on the branches and expertly picks off the bad ones.

"The sunburned fruit often turns out to be unqualified even if it matures," says Wang, pointing to a long brown bar on the side of a kiwi fruit, which indicates an excessive amount of sunlight. "You cannot muddle through when it comes to the quality."

Wang owns an orchard in Ningqu village, Meixian county in Northwest China's Shaanxi prov-

ince. The county is dubbed as "hometown to kiwi fruits" in China due to its long cultivation history that dates back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

As China's main production area of the kiwi fruit, Meixian grows one out of every seven kiwi fruits in China, accounting for about a tenth of the world's total output.

Wang began to plant kiwi fruits 12 years ago, but he failed to increase production due to a lack of technique and experience.

Things looked up when a planting demonstration park was set up in

the village, attracting experts who now provide training and guidance for local farmers.

Since the standardized planting techniques were introduced and promoted in the village, Wang saw his income from the orchard double as a result of the new agricultural model.

Currently, he can earn around 30,000 yuan (\$4,630) annually from the harvest of each 2,000-square-meter area of soil.

As of 2020, Meixian county had planted more than 200 square kilometers of kiwi fruits, with an annual

yield of around 500,000 tons and a value of 5.5 billion yuan.

The burgeoning kiwi industry now contributes to about 80 percent of the per capita disposable income for local farmers.

To improve the fruit quality, the county has teamed up with the Northwest A&F University to promote key growing techniques, including pollination, sod cultivation in orchards and scientific pruning among the farmers, and guide them to comply with eco-friendly and organic food standards.

"The scientific and standardized production model we have introduced aims to make the local kiwi fruit industry tilt toward modern agriculture rather than separated

forms," says Liu Zhisheng, the county's Party chief, adding that standards have also been adopted in postproduction procedures covering fruit sorting, refrigeration and further processing.

Equipped with advanced sorting facilities and large-scale cold storage, the county's national-level kiwi fruit industrial park has attracted more than 20 enterprises and now boasts an annual storage volume of up to about 100,000 tons of fruit.

China's major e-commerce platforms, including Alibaba and JD, also joined the bonanza, selling around 60,000 tons of seasonal fresh kiwi fruits online every year.

Kiwi fruits processed by compa-

nies, including Shaanxi Qifeng Fruit Industry, a leader in the country's kiwi fruit production, have been exported to many regions over the globe, such as Europe, Southeast Asia and the Middle East, according to Dang Honggang, deputy director of the industrial park.

Last year, about 40 tons of kiwi fruits from Meixian were exported to Santiago, Chile — the first time China has exported the product to South America.

"It indicates that the standardization level and our fruit quality are gaining recognition in the global market. We believe our kiwi fruits will continue to gain ground worldwide," says Liu.

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