

**The reading habits of the French in 2015,
with particular reference to bestsellers**

Merry Ewing

Department of Languages and Applied Linguistics (French)

School of Humanities and Creative Arts

Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law

Flinders University

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the Master of Language Studies,
(August 2016)**

Supervisor: Associate Professor Eric Bouvet

Contents

Title page	1
Contents	2
Abstract	5
Declaration	6
Acknowledgements	7
Examples of headlines related to books	8
Introduction	9
Chapter 1 The state of reading in France	13
Nobel Prize winners	14
Book prizes	15
Libraries and bookshops	16
Books in everyday life	17
Book-related celebrations and special events	19
Book associations	19
Chapter 2: Literature Review	22
Preliminary considerations	23
Literature generally related to reading habits	24
Literature more specifically related to reading habits	27
Literature primarily dealing with reading habits	28
Literature generally related to bestsellers	31
Literature more specifically related to bestsellers	32
Literature primarily dealing with bestsellers	34
Summary of the literature review	36

Chapter 3: Methodology	38
Question one data collection	39
What is a bestseller?	40
Question two data collection	41
Edistat and Livres Hebdo	43
Data lists	44
Data considerations	45
Additional lists	48
1985 and 1965 data collection	49
2015, 1985 and 1965 list comparisons	52
Chapter 4: Presentation of Data and Discussion	54
Presentation of results regarding question one	54
Presentation of results regarding question two	57
Top ten bestsellers 2015	58
Top ten bestsellers <i>L'Express</i> 1985	63
Top ten bestsellers <i>L'Express</i> 1965	66
How bestsellers have changed	69
Frequency of listing in the bestseller lists	72
Number one bestselling books	73
Discussion of results regarding questions one and two	74
2015 data	75
1985 data	76
1965 data	77
Changes in bestsellers between 2015, 1985, and 1965	77
Frequency of listing	78

Concluding remarks	79
Limitations	80
Distinguishing features of this study	82
Chapter 5: Conclusion	85
Reflections	86
Future directions	87
Bibliography	89
List of Tables & Figures	98
Appendices	100
A: Afterword	101
B: Organisations and/or people contacted	103
C: List of data tables	105

The reading habits of the French in 2015, with particular reference to bestsellers

Abstract: How has a literature-loving nation such as France fared in the face of increasing permeation of technology as regards reading habits, and how have bestsellers changed over the past fifty years, further impacting on reading habits? This study examines current reading habits, and specifically bestsellers in contemporary France. Results suggest that while the French see themselves as readers, they, and in particular the younger generation, are reading fewer books overall, whilst as a nation they remain, for the moment, adherents of reading in print form. The study also suggests that French bestsellers have changed quite dramatically compared to fifty years ago, particularly regarding nationality and gender of authors and preferred genres. Difficulty in procuring data signposts further study, as does the generational gap in reading habits.

Declaration

Declaration

I certify that this work does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed *autem*

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the help of the following people:

Associate Professor Eric Bouvet, Department of Languages and Applied Linguistics, Flinders University, Adelaide, the supervisor of this thesis, provided constant support and invaluable guidance.

Monsieur Nicolas Mougin, of Tite-Live-Edistat, provided access to weekly data on bestselling books in France on countless occasions, enabling the collection of data on bestsellers for every week of 2015.

Professor Marc Verboord, Associate Professor, Department of Media & Communication, Erasmus University Rotterdam, sent files containing data on bestsellers for 1965 and 1985, providing the only source of data for those years, thus enabling a comparison to be made between 1965, 1985 and current day.

Monsieur Aymeric Raffin, Coordinator of Adult Fiction Acquisition at Carcassonne Agglo, provided verification of genre selection for all titles used in 1965, 1985 and 2015, enabling consistency of choice and validation from a French point of view.

I would also like to thank those people who kindly responded to my requests by email and or/phone for information on reading habits and bestsellers and in some cases for a quotation to be used in this thesis.

Finally, thanks to my husband, Doug, and many friends in various places, including Paula Taschler, Poussy Faire, Pascale Vigneron, Nicole Gabaude, Liliane and Hubert Gestin, Anne and Patrice Le Blanc, H el ene and Jean-Marie Verdier, Fran oise and Pascale Gair, Valda Casucci and Nelson Parrish, for their interest and support.

2012	UK lost more than 200 libraries in 2012 <small>The Guardian</small>
2013	The Endangered Fate of Barnes & Noble <small>The Atlantic</small>
2013	Habitudes de lecture dans le monde : la France classée 9 ^e <small>ActuaLitté</small>
2014	« Les jeunes lisent toujours, mais pas des livres » <small>Le Monde</small>
2014	Independent bookshops in decline as buying habits change <small>The Guardian</small>
2014	Les Français lisent moins qu'avant mais font plus confiance aux livres qu'à internet <small>L'Express</small>
2015	Toujours moins de librairies parmi les commerces de Paris <small>ActuaLitté</small>
2015	Etats-Unis: les ventes d'ebooks en baisse en 2014 <small>Livres Hebdo</small>
2015	Les lecteurs et le livre numérique en France : les usages progressent <small>ActuaLitté</small>
2015	Les Français achètent de moins en moins de livres <small>Culturebox</small>
2015	Sales of printed books fall by more than £150m in five years <small>The Guardian</small>
2015	Study Reveals the Relationship Between the French and Reading <small>Publishing Perspectives</small>
2015	A Saint-Germain-des-Prés, la librairie La Hune ferme ses portes <small>Culturebox</small>

“Think how often reading has changed the course of history – Luther’s reading of Paul, Marx’s reading of Hegel, Mao’s reading of Marx.”

Robert Darnton (1991, p.161)

Introduction

Lifelogging¹, powerbocking² and shoefies³. Welcome to the digital age. These trends, new to most in 2015, bear witness to the fact that we live in an age of unprecedented change, as technology continues to create new *modi operandi*. The very writing of this thesis is one such example, as it is

being *typed*, not handwritten,

on a *laptop*, not a typewriter,

in countries in which the national language has been Korean, then French, and finally English,

thousands of miles from the university in which the author is enrolled, and

which is *supervised in weekly meetings via Skype*, not on campus.

More pertinent, however, is the reading done for this thesis, as it is

researched online, not in the reference section of the university library, and

most references accessed and read online, not in a book in print form,

and/or *bought from an online retailer*, not a bookstore, without the benefit of being able to browse and select in traditional form.

Unimaginable and enormous changes, compared to say, 1965, or 1985.

¹ 'the practice of digitally recording everything you do all the time' from the Macmillan Dictionary

² 'The act of powerbocking is jumping and running with elastic-like spring-loaded stilts', from Wikipedia.

³ 'Taking a self-portrait of one's shoes or feet to suggest a situation, location, or mood', from Sparks and Honey

The processes involved in the creation of this thesis are examples of the enormous changes that have permeated the daily acts of reading and writing. But what does this have to do with French reading habits? If one Australian student can experience such a *bouleversement complet*⁴ of reading and writing habits in a comparatively short time, what might be the state of affairs for a nation, *la belle France*, reputed to be one of booklovers, and birthplace of much of European literature? What does reading look like in France now? Do the French still love reading? In 2015, how are the French reading? Have they embraced e-books, or do they remain attached to books in print form? What are they reading, are they reading as much and have their reading tastes changed over the past thirty or fifty years? What is the preferred genre of the French? Do bestsellers represent the entirety of French reading tastes, or only part of it? How have bestsellers changed over the years? Where is reading headed in France? These are some of the questions that form the basis of this enquiry, recognising as it does, the importance of investigating reading habits as noted by Darnton above, which will be directed towards answering the key question, what are the reading habits of the French in 2015, particularly concerning bestsellers? An attempt will also be made to respond to some degree to issues noted above.

The initial hypothesis for this study is that French reading habits are changing. It is considered by the author of this thesis that the French are reading fewer books, whilst reading differently, using a combination of print material and online resources. Further, it is considered that they are slowly adopting e-books but remain keen proponents of books in print form, while being committed to books and the act of reading in general. Specifically, it is believed that what the French are reading is changing dramatically. The most popular genres are considered to be different to those of earlier times. Essentially, the starting point for this thesis is that in 2015, (at the time when this research was started) both how and what the French are reading now, is, as the French would say, *une autre paire de manches*, or in other words, a different kettle of fish.

⁴ Translated as 'Quantum shift'
This expression has been translated by the author of this thesis, as have all further translations.

Firstly, to examine the current situation, the following research question will be posited to arrive at a composite picture of French reading habits in 2015:

1. What are the current trends regarding reading behaviour in France?

Secondly, to examine the reading habits of the French in 2015, with particular reference to bestsellers, and to get a specific sense of what the French are reading, in seeking to determine whether French reading habits have changed, this question will be asked:

2. How have French bestsellers changed over the past fifty years, with particular reference to author, original language and genre?

To answer the first question, I planned to examine current trends, with reference to the amount and manner of reading, and the use of digital technology, as determined by current commercial studies.

To answer the second question, to determine whether French bestsellers have changed over the past fifty years, I undertook to make a comparison between bestsellers of 1965 and 1985, and those of 2015, by examining in detail records of bestsellers in 1965, 1985 and 2015, in terms of genre, original language and author, to determine trends in the three time periods, and what, if any, differences could be established.

This thesis will be presented in six parts. Firstly, as part of the Introduction, I will begin by outlining the hypothesis which forms the basis of this study, present my central research questions, and explain how I decided to go about answering said questions. Chapter One will provide relevant background information regarding literature and reading in general in France. The literature review, which will examine available literature with the aim of both informing and noting gaps, will form the second chapter. This will be followed by the third chapter presenting the methodology, in which the precise manner in which data was obtained will be outlined, alongside difficulties

encountered. Chapter Four will present the results, and analysis and interpretation of the data obtained, including a discussion of both limitations and those qualities which distinguish this study from others. The final chapter will include the conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

This introduction has sought to present the aims of this study and to establish the parameters of the investigation, as a prelude to a description of the state of reading in France. The following chapter will investigate the current situation in France regarding books and reading and attitudes to both, to provide a foundation upon which a clear picture of the reading habits of the French in 2015 may be built, and subsequently viewed.

“There are two things you don’t throw out in France – bread and books.”, according to Bernard Fixot, French publisher and founder of XO, publishing house of Guillaume Musso, top-selling French author, as Baron (2015) quoted him, (p.197).

Chapter One

The state of reading in France

In the minds of many, France is thought of as a book-loving country. Is this so? It is the considered opinion of this author that it is indeed the case, and that there is a plethora of background material firmly establishing France as a nation deeply committed to books and reading. In addition to this, there is a different prevailing attitude to books in France, not just by the populace but officially, which plays a large part in determining the place of books in modern day France. The following categories will be discussed to describe the current situation in France regarding books, from which to create a picture of reading habits, and also as examples of the esteem in which the French hold both books and the act of reading. The categories are as follows:

- Nobel Prize winners
- La rentrée littéraire
- Literary prizes
- Libraries and bookshops
- Laws and protectionist policies
- Books in everyday life
- Book-related celebrations and special events
- Book associations

Nobel Prize winners

One of the aims of this thesis is to confirm France as a nation with a vibrant book culture. How fortuitous then, that in 2014 the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Patrick Modiano, should be French. Patrick Modiano became the eleventh French winner of this prize, and the fourteenth to have written in French, meaning that France has more winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature than any other country. This sets the scene for citing France as a nation that takes literature, books and reading very seriously.

La rentrée littéraire

In September, France experiences the excitement of *la rentrée littéraire*, a literary happening which is uniquely French, as François Busnel, journalist and then Editor in Chief of *Lire*, a monthly literary magazine, notes when he says “La rentrée littéraire est une exception française.”⁵ Translated as the new publishing season or the autumn catalogue, *la rentrée littéraire* is presented as a prelude to the literary awards, which start taking place in November each year. According to *Livres Hebdo*, a trade magazine devoted to books and publishing, and as reported in *Le Monde*, in 2015, 589 novels will be published, appearing between mid-August and October, 18 fewer than last year, of which 393 are French, and 68 of those are first novels, and 196 are in a language other than French, most of which are in English. The idea that such an event is eagerly anticipated and not just by commercial interests but also by the book-loving public, helps to place France as a country with a keen interest in reading. This also leads us to the literary prizes.

⁵ Translated as ‘The new publishing season is uniquely French.’

Book prizes

Researching French literary prizes reveals certain points. Firstly, the number of annual prizes is breathtaking, believed to exceed two thousand, as noted by Hazareesingh (2015, p.296). Secondly, there is an interconnectedness of the prizes themselves by dint of the history and stories surrounding the creation of these prizes. Finally, there is the love of literature which led to their creation in the first place. The most recognised and coveted of these prizes, all of which are awarded in November, are:

- Le Prix Goncourt, which began in 1903, is THE literary prize of the year, bestowing on the winner a token prize of 10 euros and invaluable prestige. Under the Goncourt umbrella are now five other literary prizes, which include le Prix Goncourt des Lycéens, le Goncourt de Premier Roman, le Goncourt de la Nouvelle, le Prix Goncourt de la Biographie, and le Prix Goncourt de la Poésie
- Le Prix Renaudot, dates back to 1926, and is chosen by a jury of ten.
- Le Prix Fémina, created in 1905, is chosen by an all-female jury, and is said to have come about in response to what was regarded as chauvinism of the times, as seen in the awards of le Prix Goncourt.
- Le Prix Médicis, actually comprising three prizes, French novel, foreign novel and non-fiction, which are awarded on the same day, was created in 1958 by Gala Barbisan and Jean-Pierre Giraudoux with the aim of not being the same as the other prizes.
- Le Prix Interallié, which arose from a group of journalists who were awaiting the announcement of the Prix Fémina in 1930, is chosen by 10 journalists and the previous winner, and has no monetary value, for a novel written by a fellow journalist.
- Le Grand Prix du roman de l'Académie Française, first awarded in 1915 to Paul Acker, is given to the author whose novel is judged to be the best of the year.

It is evident, given the above, that a country with over two thousand literary prizes takes literature seriously.

Libraries and bookshops

Libraries and bookshops are one indicator of the strength of a country's book culture. In information obtained from the École Nationale Supérieure des Sciences de l'Information et des Bibliothèques (hereafter ENSSIB), (M. Ewing, personal communication, September 2, 2014) there are around 16,500 public libraries in France. Furthermore, according to the latest results of the World Cities Culture Report (2015), of 34 world cities Paris has the highest number of public libraries (1,100), with 9.2 per every 100,000 people. As a means of comparison, London is noted as having 353 public libraries, and with 4.2 per every 100,000 people. Furthermore, according to le Syndicat de la Librairie Française (SLF) (M. Ewing, personal communication, July 2, 2015), there are approximately 20,000 points of sale, which includes between 2500 and 3000 bookshops in France, of which around 500 are said to be independent. In information received from the Booksellers Association, United Kingdom, this stands in stark contrast to the 4139 points of sale in the UK, which includes 2,195 high street bookshops, including chains and independents (M. Ewing, personal communication, July 8, 2015), although there are more independent bookshops (939). Whilst the numbers of libraries and bookshops in France rate well in comparison with other countries, particularly the UK, which is a country of similar levels of population, what is noteworthy is that these numbers are decreasing.

Laws and protectionist policies

The attachment to books goes beyond the individual in France. One of the reasons that France has more bookshops *per capita* than many other countries is that the book industry is a protected one, with both laws and subsidies designed to safeguard it. In 1981, the Lang Law (so named after Jack Lang, then Minister of Culture) designated books as having a fixed price, by allowing no more than 5% discount on the published

price, with the aim of safeguarding the independent bookshops. More recently, in July 2014, in response to the practice by the retail giant, *Amazon*, of offering a 5% discount and free postage, whilst paying lower taxes in Luxembourg, the Anti-Amazon Law, (Loi n° 2014-779 du 8 juillet 2014) has been enacted, with the purpose of helping independent bookshops to survive. Additionally, through the French government's *CultureCommunication* branch, subsidies are provided by the government for such bodies as le Centre national du livre, bookshops, and publishing houses. It must be noted, however, that such subsidization is not purely altruistic, as, according to the official French government website (2016), the book industry employs more than 80,000 employees, constituting nearly 20% of all employed in the cultural sector. In the words of the French government again from the official website, (2016), "La filière économique du livre peut être considérée comme la première des industries culturelles."⁶ For a range of reasons, in France books matter.

Books in everyday life

Books feature prominently in French daily life through various forms of media, such as newspapers, magazines, television shows, blogs, and websites. *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, major French daily newspapers, cover news about books, with *Le Monde* also providing a weekly supplement, *Le Monde des Livres*. To cite but two, *Paris Match* and *L'Express* are weekly magazines, with sections on books. There are also magazines dedicated exclusively to books, such as *Livres Hebdo*, a weekly print publication accompanied by daily articles and updates online, with a primarily professional readership. There are also monthly publications such as *Lire*, *Books*, and *Le Magazine Littéraire*, with a more general readership. All manner of magazines discuss books, including some which could be described as less than highbrow but rather more representative of a general audience, such as *Elle*, *Les InRocks*, *VSD (Vendredi, Samedi, Dimanche)* and even the inflight magazine of Air France, *Madame*, which dedicated three full pages to books in the 2015 Août-Septembre (August-September)

⁶ Translated as 'Economically, the book industry can be considered as the foremost of the cultural industries.'

edition. Books are generally regarded as objects of interest, as can be seen from the coverage they are accorded.

In addition to those television programs devoted to books and reading, such as *Un Livre, Un Jour*, a Monday-to-Friday show on France 3, part of the France Télévisions Group, and *La Grande Librairie*, a weekly one-hour show hosted by François Busnel on France 5, also part of the France Télévisions Group, a particularly noteworthy example of the importance of books as part of daily life may be seen through television interviews with authors. Consider *Les Cinq Dernières Minutes*⁷ with Elise Lucet during the Monday to Friday one o'clock news program of France 2, also part of the France Télévisions Group. Of a possible 22 segments in June 2015 on themes related to the arts, such as music, theatre, film, performing arts and literature, six were devoted to books, representing a diverse group of authors, and all appearing in a mainstream program with an extremely wide audience. What a lively example this is of the interest of the French general public in matters literary.

To keep abreast of news relating to books, websites abound, including those of the aforementioned *Livres Hebdo*, and *Edistat*, two sites whose intended audience is professionals such as publishers, booksellers and librarians, generally those concerned with commercial aspects. Information is provided on weekly bestselling books and news that pertains to anyone in the book world. Other sites include Salon Littéraire and ActuaLitté, and newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations have sites focusing on books, such as *Culturebox* for France Télévisions Group, *Livre France* for RFI (Radio France Internationale), and *France Info - Le livre du jour* for Radio France. As for blogs on books, they are too numerous to single out. What is clear is that there is a richness of information related to books in everyday life in France.

⁷ Translated as 'The Last Five Minutes'.

Book-related celebrations and special events

Beyond the everyday aspect of books there exist special events and circumstances which emphasize the importance of books, in commercial and leisure related ways. Firstly, there are the various book villages in France, eight as of 2015, such as Montolieu, in Languedoc-Roussillon, established in 1990, and Bécherel in Brittany. The book villages attract book lovers and tourists alike. Whilst the *raison d'être* for these villages may have been commercial, without interest from the general public they would cease to exist.

Books and book-related events are celebrated at every opportunity. For example, the Institut Français, which according to its website (2015) is “in charge of implementing France’s cultural action abroad”, is creating the opportunity to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Roland Barthes, noted French cultural and literary critic, by inviting web users to participate in a unique digital experience. From Livres Hebdo comes news of a special book-related event. Moving beyond French shores, to Australia, is Le Van du Livre, (French Books on Wheels), an initiative now in its second year, in which a minibus full of French books will travel the length and breadth of Australia to promote French literature, in a unique cultural experience involving Australia and France.

Book associations

Apart from the various groups whose principal focus is the commercial side of the book industry, such as le Syndicat National de l'édition (SNE), or the French Publisher's Association), la Société Française des Intérêts des Auteurs de l'écrit (SOFIA) and le Syndicat de la Librairie Française (SLF), there are other associations supporting the book industry and/or the act of reading.

The first of these is le Centre national du livre (CNL), which, according to its website (2015), is “a public institution of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication. Its mission is to support all the participants in the publishing process – authors, publishers, booksellers, librarians, and those who organize literary events – via various measures and commissions.” As noted earlier, the CNL receives subsidization from the French Government. In 2014 and 2015, the CNL has commissioned two studies regarding French reading habits, the results of which have been vigorously and passionately discussed by the president of the CNL, Vincent Monadé, and which will be discussed in the presentation of data.

La Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BnF), covering five different sites, has over 14 million books and digital access to 3 million, and provides a range of services, including the lending of, and access to its collections, accessing documents and answering questions, in French and English. This is considered to be a marvellous and priceless resource for anyone, not just the French, who is in any way inclined towards books, reading and the seeking of information.

Extending beyond France, the French Embassy in New York not only has a Cultural Services Section devoted to books, among other cultural endeavours, producing a weekly newsletter and the latest news concerning French publications and translations, but also in 2014 opened the Albertine Bookstore onsite, which is, according to its website (2016), “devoted solely to books in French and English with more than 14,000 contemporary and classic titles from 30 French-speaking countries.” How many other countries offer such facilities, or perhaps more pertinently, consider it important to offer them?

Two other noteworthy groups include Lire et faire lire, and Bibliothèques Sans Frontières (BSF), an NGO, which is currently implementing a new program, *Ideas Box*,

a portable multi-media toolkit, created by French industrial designer, Philippe Stark, in the 10th arrondissement of Paris. Both groups are out in the community, promoting reading, and the right to read.

Finally, to round off this exploration, a French publication, *L'histoire des plus grands succès littéraires du XX^E siècle*⁸ (2002) presented a list of books considered to be successes of the twentieth century, and the story behind each book. The list contained 46 books, of which 14 had been written by French authors, almost a third of the total number, showing the very prominence and popularity attributed to French writing. This cements the picture of France as a nation that values both reading and books.

In summary, this chapter has sought to provide background information regarding the state of books and reading in France in 2015. The list of book-related activities, enterprises and events is too numerous to be covered by the scope of this thesis. But the sum of the interest in, and promotion of, books and reading, as described not just in the activities of the groups mentioned above, but in the previous seven categories, distinguishes France as a nation for whom books and reading are very important, something to be prized, as well as being commercially important. It also provides a solid foundation from which to examine the reading habits of the French in more detail, and to delve into French bestsellers, the ongoing focus of this study. The following chapter, that of the literature review, seeks to investigate the literature pertinent to this study.

⁸ Translated as 'The history of the biggest literary successes of the twentieth century.'

« effectivement il n'y a que très peu de textes scientifiques sur les best-sellers récents en France »⁹

Lyllette Lacôte-Gabrysiak¹⁰

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Having set the scene in Chapter One, in establishing that France has a vibrant book culture, it is thus now timely to examine the literature concerned with the current-day reading habits of the French, and in particular bestsellers in both modern day France and during the past fifty years. As will be revealed in greater detail, standing in stark contrast to assumptions made about the availability of information, and borne out by the quote above, the quest for literature and information on reading habits and bestsellers in particular, yielded surprising results, in that there is remarkably little, a paucity, in fact. This will become obvious during a detailed examination of literature relating to this subject, which will be presented in the following format. Firstly, some introductory remarks will be made, concerning both the literature related to the subject of the thesis itself, and the resulting search for pertinent material. The second section will comprise a description of available literature, ranging from that which is more general in nature, to that which is most informative and specific to this thesis. Finally, a gap in the literature supporting the research question of this thesis will be noted, leading to the methodology used in this study.

⁹ Translated as 'Indeed there are but very few academic texts on recent bestsellers in France.'

¹⁰ M. Ewing, personal communication, August 3, 2016

Preliminary considerations

Let us begin with some background information and points to bear in mind concerning the available literature for this investigation of reading habits and bestsellers. Firstly, although the two subjects are intrinsically linked, by virtue of the fact that examining bestsellers provides a window through which one aspect of reading habits may be viewed, literature has been examined according to two different themes, from the general to the more specific, beginning with reading habits.

Secondly, in considering the secondary strand of this thesis, the reading habits of the French in 2015, the very contemporary nature of the investigation reduces the available literature overall, particularly in terms of academic works. Obtaining any information is a difficult enterprise when seeking it as up-to-the-minute as possible, as has been the case in this instance, and thus data regarding reading habits in 2015 has primarily been determined through commercial studies and trade publications, as will become obvious in the discussion on literature primarily dealing with reading habits.

Finally, as alluded to earlier, particularly in regards to bestsellers prior to today, it would not be stating this point too strongly to say that it was quite unexpected to discover how little information exists, either in the form of academic studies, articles and scholarly works, or in simply trying to find any data pertaining to bestsellers of yesteryear, by which is meant the very recent past, such as before 2010, for example. As a major thrust of this investigation was intended to be the carrying out of a comparison between bestsellers of 1965, 1985 and 2015, and then relating that to reading habits, an assumption had been made prior to the commencement of the study that, in this the digital age, it would be a simple matter of pulling up the bestsellers records of 1965 and 1985 and comparing that data with records from 2015. That was not to be the case by any means. Without wanting to pre-empt the conclusions of this investigation, an immediate gap in the literature was identified, concerning bestsellers, and to a lesser

degree, general reading habits in France, thus supporting the research questions posited in the introduction.

Literature generally related to reading habits

Having noted certain key aspects related to the search for available literature, let us begin by examining material of a more general nature which has informed this study but which is also considered to be a starting point, firstly in terms of looking at reading habits.

For general reading and background information, several titles have proved useful. Firstly, *French Literature A Beginner's Guide* (Clark, 2011) provides an overview of French literature, ranging from the Middle Ages to today, outlining literary movements, such as existentialism and autofiction, and detailing a vast array of influential French writers, from François Rabelais in the sixteenth century, to Voltaire in the eighteenth century, right up to Michel Tournier in the twentieth century. The book concludes with a brief but pertinent discussion entitled “*The twenty-first century: literature after paper?*”

The following titles, whilst not directly related to the themes of this investigation, help to lay the groundwork for considering current-day reading and reading habits, by examining the state of the book and its future. *This is Not the End of the Book* (Eco & Carrière, 2009) and *Words Onscreen The Fate of Reading in a Digital World* (Baron, 2015) both deal with reading in the digital age, and provide a context through which reading habits in modern times generally can be viewed. Eco and Carrière, in the first case, through vigorous discussion on the longevity of the book in a technological age, provoke consideration of many issues. These include the life of the book compared to ever-changing technologies, believing that “the book is like the spoon, scissors, the hammer, the wheel. Once invented it cannot be improved.” (p.4), the reliability of information obtained from the Internet, and the impact on culture due to rapid

technological change, in what they call “the constantly changing nature of the present” (p.58). Whilst their book raises general questions, Baron’s book brings us to the coalface, in looking at reading habits quite specifically, for example, in noting two different reading behaviours, such as reading on the prowl and continuous reading (p.22), and in citing a cognitive psychologist who estimates that “given the amount of time readers average on a web page, they only have time to read at most 28% of the words” (p.42). Both books lead the reader to a deeper consideration of a daily activity, that of reading, and the impact of changing reading habits for everybody.

The third title, *How the French Think An Affectionate Portrait of an Intellectual People* (Hazareesingh, 2015) makes reference to countless titles and authors who have influenced French thought throughout the ages. Hazareesingh discusses the place of literature in French society, noting, the paradox of the success of writers such as Dumas and Proust who are internationally known, whilst contemporary French authors do not enjoy the same success beyond French shores (p.296). This book also provides snippets of information regarding books and literature in France, such as “the market for books on general culture aimed at a non-academic audience is buoyant” (p.316) and is considered to be an excellent starting place in this regard.

For information further afield than France, to provide a more global sense of reading habits, the following surveys provide information which relates to reading habits. Firstly, from the UK, *Booktrust Reading Habits Survey 2013 A national survey of reading habits and attitudes to books amongst adults in England* (DJS Research, 2013) is a quantitative study of reading habits, involving 1500 participants. It constitutes a useful means of comparison with studies carried out in France. One of many interesting results is that 76% of participants prefer to read physical books, while only 10% prefer e-books, (p. 2). Pertinently, as regards reading habits, “people who were read to and encouraged to read as children are significantly more likely to read as adults, both to themselves and to their own children” (p.4), which we will see is a similar finding in France. In a

similar vein, *A Snapshot of Reading in America in 2013* (Zickuhr, 2014) is a study of American reading habits, involving 1,005 adults and conducted in both English and Spanish. This study (Zickuhr, 2014) reveals, among other things, that “76% of American adults ages 18 and older said that they read at least one book in the last year.” (p.1), also providing a means of comparison with what happens in France.

Already noted in Chapter One, *World Cities Culture Report 2015* (B O P Consulting, 2015) is a comparative study of culture, carried out under the auspices of the Mayor of London, profiling 29 major cities of the world, by looking at data in 70 cultural indicators. This also provides a means of comparison, pertinently for this investigation, between Paris and London, in the areas that relate to books and reading, such as the number of public libraries and bookshops per every 100,000 people.

Without pre-empting presentation and discussion of data, there are similarities and differences between the results of these studies and those carried out in France. The importance of having parents read to their children was noted in both the UK and France, whilst France comes out more prominently as a nation of readers, with 90% of French people seeing themselves as readers, compared to the 76% of Americans who had read at least one book in the past year. As for a city comparison, re bookshops, London has 360, compared to 1,134 in Paris. Interestingly, though, the number of book titles published in London in 2013 was 184,000, compared to 80,255 in Paris in 2014, leading one to think that the French have more access to books, but the British provide greater choice of titles.

Literature more specifically related to reading habits

Moving from literature more general in nature, to that looking more specifically at the two strands, reading habits and bestsellers, let us begin with *History of Reading* (Darnton, 1991). This is a clear examination of the way reading behaviour has been studied over the ages, making strongest reference to France, among other countries including Germany and the US, to name but two. This is an excellent starting point for anyone embarking upon a study of reading habits, providing as it does, an extensive appraisal as to what has happened historically regarding the study of reading habits. Written in 1991, what is needed now is a continuation of Darnton's study to bring us up to today.

Now to turn to contemporary studies, which have been commissioned by various bodies and conducted by market research groups such as *Ipsos*, *CSA* and *Le Motif*. In recent years there are many examples of these studies, including the most in-depth, "*Les Nouveaux Lecteurs: Etat des lieux et évolutions des pratiques de lecture depuis 2011*"¹¹, a study which was carried out by *Ipsos* in 2014 on behalf of *Livres Hebdo*, examining changing reading habits since 2011. This study revealed that seven out of ten French people say that they have read at least one book in the last year (of 2014), and that on average, readers of books in print form read 15 books a year, representing a drop, from 2011, whilst readers of e-books are reading more, on average at ten books a year. The most popular genre is listed as *policiers* (crime novels). Further studies include *Les habitudes de lecture des Français pendant les vacances d'été*¹², which was carried out by *CSA* in 2015 on behalf of *Direct Matin*, a free daily paper. Findings revealed that *polars* (another name for crime novels) and adventure novels are the favourite choices for holiday reading. On further breaking down this data, it was found that older readers, and women in particular, prefer these two genres, whilst men prefer *bandes dessinées* (encompassing comic books and graphic novels) and science fiction.

¹¹ Translated as "The New Readers" The state of play and evolution of reading practices since 2011.

¹² Translated as 'Summer holiday reading habits of the French.'

*Les Français et la lecture*¹³ (BVA, 2015), carried out on behalf of *Doméo* and *la Presse régionale*, and *Les Français et les livres*¹⁴ (Ifop pour *Dimanche Ouest France*, 2016) are both very recent studies. The first, *Les Français et la lecture*, notes that 77% of French people like to read, notably those 65 and older, and in particular, women. In the second study, 32% of participants cite reading as the activity with greatest cultural value, and noting that women and older readers are the biggest fans of reading. There is an abundance of such studies, whose prime focus is reading habits, rendering them too numerous to mention within the confines of this investigation. Having noted this, a further two studies, which will be outlined shortly, will form the main source of information regarding current reading habits.

Literature primarily dealing with reading habits

Now to consider those texts that are directly connected with the themes of this investigation, starting with reading habits. *Les pratiques culturelles des Français à l'ère numérique Éléments de synthèse 1997-2008*¹⁵ by Donnat (2009) is the summation of an excellent study carried out in 2008 on behalf of the Ministry of Culture and Communication of the French Government, also referring to the previous study in 1997, the fourth and fifth in a series, beginning in 1973, the second in 1981 and the third in 1988. It reports on cultural practices of the French, including screen culture, listening to radio and watching television, music and reading, the latter obviously being the section most relevant to this investigation. The most relevant of these questions relates to the number of books read and the genres read most often, revealing that overall, in 2008, the French were reading less, the average number of books read dropping from 21 in 1997 to 16 in 2008, and that the preferred genre was *policier* (crime novel). These results provide a sound means of comparison for both primary and secondary data, to be discussed in the chapter on presentation of data.

¹³ Translated as 'The French and Reading'.

¹⁴ Translated as 'The French and Books'.

¹⁵ Translated as 'The cultural practices of the French in the digital age.'

Donnat (2011) provides an even more pertinent view of reading habits in *Lecture, livre et littérature: Evolution 1973-2008*¹⁶, in which he deals solely with the results of the five studies into cultural practice as they relate to reading and reading habits. It is possible to monitor the changing practices of the French between 1973 and 2008 regarding such aspects as the number of people who read the newspaper on a daily basis, those who have read at least one book in the past year, and those who use library facilities. Results also include the impact of age, sex and social stratum on reading habits. The most noteworthy statistics include the number of readers who had read at least one book during the previous 12 months, which started at 70 in 1973, rose to 75 in 1988 and then returned to 70 in 2008. Accompanying that data, the number of readers who had read at least 20 books per year has steadily declined, from 28 in 1973, to 16 in 2008.

Referring again to commercial studies as mentioned above, a further two have been chosen, in this instance carried out by market research groups such as *Ipsos*, and *OpinionWay*, from which to extrapolate a picture of reading habits in modern-day France. They have been selected because they are considered to be the most recent, authoritative, in-depth, and likely to yield information congruent with the aims of this investigation, in looking at what people are reading, the medium by which they are reading and when and how much they read.

Firstly, *Les Français et la lecture* (Ipsos, 2015) was commissioned by Le Centre national du livre and carried out by *Ipsos*, one of the largest global market research companies, from the 3rd to the 11th of February, 2015. This study is considered to be the most in-depth, as it investigated six main areas, including whether the French read, how they have become readers, what their reading habits are, where and how they get their books, why they read and conversely, why they do not read.¹⁷ The information garnered from this study, and the one below, will form the basis of the secondary data to be presented in Chapter Four.

¹⁶ Translated as 'Reading, books and literature: An Evolution 1973-2008'.

¹⁷ Permission was obtained from CNL to refer to this study.

*Usages du livre numérique*¹⁸ Baromètre SOFIA SNE SGDL (OpinionWay, 2015) is the fifth study of its kind and is different to the CNL study, because it is primarily concerned with the state of ebooks, in terms of the numbers of people reading them and the profile of e-book readers. Taken together, these two studies, both of which have been commissioned by groups concerned with reading, rather than essentially promoting sales, give a comprehensive picture of French reading habits.

Finally, in 2014, Tirthankar Chanda, a journalist with Radio France Internationale, presented a series of interviews, involving 25 presenters working for RFI, and entitled *Que lisent ceux qui font RFI ?*¹⁹, in which he asked a series of questions about reading and reading habits. Whilst the participants represent a specific group, all journalists, and educated, and mostly over 30, this series provides a window through which their attitudes towards reading may be viewed. Certainly as a whole, the presenters showed a predisposition to reading, evidenced by comments such as “c’est aussi bien qu’un beau voyage, non? Un plaisir inépuisable...”²⁰ (Bernard Nageotte, 2014) and in many cases, had a great attachment to books. Notably, a large percentage (nearly 80%) cited the importance of the family in influencing attitudes towards reading, just as other studies already mentioned have done. Most startling was the lack of patronage of e-readers, with only three interviewees liking and using them, whilst 68% spoke about their attachment to printed books, citing the tactile nature, the smell, and the rapport, with books, as but some examples. This series is extremely valuable for the glimpse it provides of the attitudes of a particular group to reading, especially as this group could be said to represent a segment of the French population.

¹⁸ Translated as ‘Use of e-books’.

¹⁹ Translated as ‘What do RFI staff read?’

²⁰ Translated as ‘It’s as great as a wonderful trip, isn’t it? An inexhaustible pleasure...’

Literature generally related to bestsellers

Having considered the literature regarding reading habits, let us move onto that literature focussing on bestsellers, reflecting as it does on a more specific aspect of reading habits, the 'what' people are reading.

Le Quid 1966, in its fourth edition, devotes approximately a page and a half to bestselling titles, from its section on *Littérature* (Literature), which comprises 48 pages, of a possible 852. *Le Quid 1986*, a much bigger book physically, at more than twice the size of the 1966 version, and 1,697 pages, has nearly four pages on bestsellers from the 79 dedicated to literature. Unfortunately, the information on bestsellers in both editions, which begins with an explanation about the difficulty in compiling bestseller lists, is cumulative, rather than specific to the year of publication, and international rather than French. Thus, it does not yield the data sought regarding bestselling titles of 1965 and 1985.

*Le "best-seller": la fabrique du succès*²¹ (Berthou, 2006) is a paper presented in 2006, largely dealing with what constitutes a bestseller. It is useful for the questions it provokes in considering what constitutes a bestseller, such as whether a bestseller is determined by the number of books that are sold, having to achieve the sale of, for example, 100,000 or 30,000 copies. However, the focus of this paper does not directly relate to the current investigation.

From Frankfurter Buchmesse (the Frankfurt Book Fair) comes a summary of the French book industry, *Information on the Book Market in France*, which succinctly sets out all related information to the French book market, such as the approximate number of publishers and bookstores, as well as a breakdown of sales in terms of genres and the ranking of translated languages of origin. This last aspect particularly relates to the

²¹ Translated as 'The bestseller: the making of success'

current investigation into bestsellers of 2015, confirming not only that English is the language most commonly translated, at 62% of all titles, (7,744 titles), but also the increasing breadth of languages being translated (p.5). It also details regulation of prices, according to French laws, and provides information about key associations, such as le Syndicat National de l'Édition Française (SNE). Although referring to statistics of 2014, the usefulness of this document lies in the fact that a lot of information is provided in just six pages, in one place. This is thus an ideal place to start to acquire knowledge of the French book industry.

Global eBook A report on market trends and developments by Rüdiger Wischenbart (2015) also reflects data from 2014, focusing on e-book sales. Apart from noteworthy figures regarding the growth of the digital trade sales, from 29% in 2012 to 44% in 2013 (p.64), and an explanation of the reaction to Amazon's practices, what is striking about this and the article above are the sources of information, which include GfK via *Livres Hebdo* and other surveys. This will be discussed at a further point in this review.

Literature more specifically related to bestsellers

*Une histoire des best-sellers*²² (Rouvillois, 2011) is essentially a book about bestsellers in general; firstly, starting with the notion of a book and looking at how to define the term 'bestseller', (although no definitive definition is provided); secondly, from the author's point of view, how to achieve a bestseller; and finally, from the reader's perspective, why one buys a bestseller. The book suggests that being a bestseller goes beyond just the numbers of books sold, to include the time it takes for a book to reach bestseller status, citing Shakespeare's works as an example, and the location of the bestseller, which may be beyond the original site of publication. Whilst these are valid considerations, this book is concerned with what constitutes a bestseller, rather than studying bestsellers themselves in the same way that this investigation is attempting to do, in examining bestseller lists, and drawing conclusions about the effect on reading

²² Translated as 'A History of Bestsellers.'

habits. This book, which is broad in scope, examines international bestsellers, rather than just those that are French. This renders its usefulness to consideration of what constitutes a bestseller. It also provides confirmation, where possible, of French bestsellers in 1965 and 1985 determined via other sources, as for example, those cited by Todd, and those found in *L'Express*, and in noting the difficulty in establishing accurate sales figures.

Similarly, *L'histoire des plus grands succès littéraires du XX^e siècle* (Vidaling, 2002), as stated in Chapter One, deals with those books considered to be the greatest literary successes of the twentieth century, from an international point of view, detailing 46 books, of which 14 have been written by French authors. This point is useful in itself, demonstrating the strong presence of French authors in an international market, but that is the extent of application to this investigation.

Market logic and cultural consecration in French, German and American bestseller lists, 1970-2007 (Verboord, 2011) has a different focus, that of cultural consecration, and is primarily concerned with bestsellers. As such, it provides useful background information on bestsellers in general and French fiction bestsellers in particular, such as the fact that “French bestseller lists contain more different bestseller list authors” (p.300). This study also provided access to 1985 and 1965 data on bestsellers, which will be elaborated on in the Methodology.

The article ‘*Paris: A nation of readers*’ (Murphy, 1987) is primarily about Bernard Pivot and the French television book-chat show, *Apostrophes*, which he hosted during the seventies and eighties, but contains many snippets of information about bestsellers and the book industry in France at that time, and pertinently for this study, refers to bestsellers of 1985. In regard to bestsellers at the time, Murphy notes that ‘they are

usually – though not always – noted in *Les Succès de la Semaine*²³, the list provided each week by *L'Express*' (p.1). He goes on to report that “Aside from fiction, what the French read most is politics and history” (p.2), and makes reference to a title by François de Closets, '*Tous Ensemble*' (All Together) which put him at the top of the *L'Express* list again, at the end of 1985.' (p.2). As will be seen in the Methodology, the lists in *L'Express* referred to by Murphy form the basis of bestseller data of 1985, and generally speaking confirm the findings of this investigation of that time period, rendering it extremely useful.

Literature primarily dealing with bestsellers

Apart from the weekly published bestseller lists, a press release by GfK (2016), outlining the top ten bestselling books of 2015, complete with sales figures, (M. Ewing, personal communication) serves to verify findings by this study, rendering it extremely important.

To conclude, this review examines the two most useful texts, beginning with *A Century of French Best-Sellers (1890-1990)* (Todd, 1994) representing the sole publication concerned with the documentation of bestsellers over such a long time period. It specifically examines French bestsellers, pertaining to books achieving high sales status, in this case for eleven time periods between 1890 and 1990. In addition to the bestseller data, information is provided regarding the life and times in France during the particular time period, giving context and linking the success of books to prevailing ideas and trends. The chapters on the 1960s and the 1980s allow for a means of checking the limited data available elsewhere on bestsellers of 1965 and 1985, making it extremely relevant to this investigation, whilst the book as a whole gives an excellent historical and cultural background to the successful literature of all eleven time periods. The difficulty in obtaining accurate data is also noted, as Todd comments in the Introduction, that “unfortunately, for commercial reasons publishers are also notoriously coy when it comes to giving details of print runs, either grossly exaggerating them or

²³ Translated as 'Bestsellers of the Week'

even refusing to reveal them at all.” (p.1). As this book relates to the current investigation, it is extremely useful, with one drawback, in that it only goes up to 1990, leaving a lapse of 25 years, and indicating a need to explore that very gap.

Fortunately, «*C’est un best-seller!* » *Meilleures ventes de livres en France de 1984 à 2004*²⁴ (Lacôte-Gabrysiak, 2010) does indeed address some of that gap, in examining bestsellers up to 2004, and is closest in form and purpose to the study being carried out here. A similar lack of studies is noted, “très peu d’études ont pour objet ces ‘meilleures ventes’ ”²⁵ (p.1) as are similar difficulties in procuring data, “les sources officielles n’existent pas pour le livre comme elles existent pour les disques ou les entrées en salle de cinéma.”²⁶ (p.2). This particular study looks at what constitutes a bestseller, suggesting sales of at least 100,000 as one criterion (p.3). It also examines authors of bestsellers, noting that the profile of a bestselling author as being male, French, over 40 and a writer by profession, does not necessarily correspond with those authors who appear most in the bestseller lists (p.6). The correlation between bestsellers and literary prizes and genres is considered, concluding that it is really only le Prix Goncourt which carries significant influence, among other criteria (p.9). Whilst covering many similar aspects, relevant to the current study is an examination of the nationality of authors, noting that although French authors rank as the majority, their presence is dropping, from 72.3% in the years 1988-1994, to 46.2% in 1999-2008 (p.14). These data provide a means of comparison for what has been determined in 2015. In summary, this is an excellent reference concerning bestsellers of the twenty-year time period between 1984 and 2004. But, as noted earlier, this is the digital age, in which a year can herald unimagined and unparalleled changes. As the Lacôte-Gabrysiak study is concerned with data up until 2004, there remains an eleven year gap which needs to be not just explored, but also recorded, in terms of bestsellers.

²⁴ Translated as ‘It’s a bestseller!’ Bestsellers in France from 1984 to 2004.

²⁵ Translated as ‘Very few studies focus on bestsellers.’

²⁶ Translated as ‘Official figures do not exist for books in the same way that they exist for cd sales and cinema entries.’

Summary of the literature review

In contemplating this review, two points emerge for consideration. Firstly, whilst at first glance, it would appear that there are adequate studies on reading habits and bestsellers, on closer examination there are very few that are directly applicable to this investigation. In relation to the scope of this investigation and to the research questions posited in the introduction of the present thesis, there are clearly gaps in the available literature, the most obvious of which relates not only to studies on bestsellers, particularly regarding information beyond most recent times, seeking quantitative data, but also qualitative research on the subject. The other obvious gap lies with reading habits, in which studies like that of Darnton are necessary to document the way reading habits are being measured right up to today. Further, references in this area, apart from the Donnat comparative surveys, are dependent on market research. Secondly, what has become evident through the search for literature is that information seems to stem from one or two sources, and thus a lot more independent research is required in both areas, those of reading habits and bestsellers.

The review of the literature performed above has identified a clear gap in available literature on bestsellers. What is lacking, and thus what is needed, is a continuation of the Todd book and the Lacôte-Gabrysiak study, in which bestsellers from 1990 and then 2004 onwards, and up to today, are quantified, examined and discussed. Not only is there a gap in the literature, but access to the limited data on bestsellers is not straightforward and precludes ease of retrieval, as will be discussed next in the Methodology chapter.

It is thus now opportune to turn to the Methodology, which aims to describe the methodological steps undertaken to collect, organise and code primary and secondary data, in order to provide a current account of reading habits and an in-depth examination and comparison of bestsellers of 1965, 1985 and 2015. This will be done in order to answer the two research questions, firstly, as to what the current trends

regarding reading behaviour in France are, and secondly, as to how French bestsellers have changed over the past fifty years, with particular reference to author, original language and genre, with the intention of attempting to right a decided imbalance of information.

« Il existe effectivement très peu de données sur les ventes de livres en France, en particulier avant les années 2000. »²⁷

Nicolas Mougin, Edistat²⁸

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter will begin with a definition of reading habits and an explanation of how information and collection of secondary data regarding current reading habits in France was obtained. A clear understanding of what is meant by the term 'bestseller' is pivotal as bestsellers are the main focus of this investigation, and so this will be followed by a discussion of what constitutes a bestseller. Moving from the general to the more specific, this delineation will precede a description of how the methodology was carried out regarding gathering of primary data concerning bestsellers, with concurrent explanations of why it was done in this manner, and problems encountered along the way. This detailed picture of the methodology will lead into a fourth chapter, that of presentation, discussion and interpretation of the data.

It is timely to restate the questions propelling this study:

1. What are the current trends regarding reading behaviour in France?
2. How have French bestsellers changed over the past fifty years, with particular reference to author, original language and genre?

According to Chettri and Rout (2013, p. 14) Shen (2006) defines reading habits as "how often, how much and what students read." I would like to expand on this definition so

²⁷ Translated as "There is indeed very little data on the sale of books in France, particularly before 2000."

²⁸ M. Ewing, personal communication, December 4, 2015

that for the purposes of this study, the term 'reading habits' will be defined as 'how often, how much, by what medium, and what people read'.

Question one data collection

Beginning with the first question and ensuing collection of the secondary data, the methodology was, as will be revealed, a simpler and more straightforward enterprise than that pertaining to bestsellers.

Firstly, in a concurrent and ongoing quest for information and studies related to reading habits and bestsellers, various people and organisations were contacted, generally by email but also sometimes by phone, as personal contact was more effective in ensuring a response to email enquiries. To cite but three of those contacted initially, these groups and individuals included the BnF, ENSSIB and Jane Riviere of le Centre national du livre (CNL). At a later stage of the investigation, contact was also made with Matthieu Prin, from the World Cities Culture Forum, Uzo Onuora at the UK Booksellers Association, and Professor Naomi Baron, the American University, Washington D.C.. All efforts were met with varying degrees of success.

Additionally, four of the top ten bestselling French authors of 2014, including Katherine Pancol, Marc Levy, Michel Bussi and Laurent Gounelle, and also Bernard Fixot, agent for Guillaume Musso (top selling author in 2015, for the fifth year in a row) were contacted by email, to ask for their thoughts regarding the reading habits of the French, which could be quoted in this thesis. Both Katherine Pancol and Marc Levy replied, as may be seen from quotes included. Further to this, Katherine Pancol sent the email address of her editor, Nathalie Collard, who tried to help in the quest for data on bestsellers in 1965 and 1985.

When avenues for finding as complete a list of studies regarding current reading habits as possible had been exhausted, all current studies regarding reading habits were perused, to select those most recent and most pertinent to this investigation. As a matter of courtesy, permission was sought from, and granted by, the CNL and the RFI, among those studies considered to be the source of the most useful data. The most relevant and recent studies were then combed for data relevant to the investigation and collated, to present information regarding current trends in reading behaviour, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

What is a bestseller?

Turning now to the second question, involving bestsellers, and the gathering of the primary data, firstly, a clear understanding of what constitutes a bestseller is necessary in order to answer the main question driving this thesis, 'How have French bestsellers changed over the past fifty years, with particular reference to author, original language and genre?' What constitutes a bestseller? Is it a book which has sold a certain number of copies, such as 100,000? Or is it a book which is ranked in comparison to others in terms of sales, as ascertained by professional data gatherers, achieving the highest sales? Or perhaps a combination of these two factors? Having considered a number of aspects that constitute a bestseller, for the purposes of this paper, a bestseller will be deemed to be a book enjoying the highest sales during a given period.

As the examination of French bestsellers is being carried out with the aim of determining French reading habits and changes over a fifty year period, two points are offered for consideration prior to an outlining of the Methodology. Firstly, the title bestseller does not necessarily equate to a book of highest literary quality, but rather reflects the number of books bought compared to other books. Rouvillois (2011) offers two opposing viewpoints, firstly that of Maurice Nadeau, French writer and editor extraordinaire, who felt that by its nature, a great book does not sell well, implying that bestsellers were of inferior quality, and then that of Carlos Ruiz Zafón, a bestselling

Spanish author, who believed that success was the best gauge of a book's quality (p.13). For the purposes of this study, 'bestseller' does not mean best. The term indicates that by comparison with other books, it has been bought by more people.

Additionally, and further to this point, just because a book has been bought or borrowed from a library does not mean that it has been read, either partially or in its entirety. As Todd (1994) notes "the fact that a book is sold is still no guarantee that it is actually read" (p.5). Indeed, with advances in technology and the drive to understand consumer habits to augment sales, the reading practices of those reading ebooks can be, and are being, tracked. Interestingly, according to *The Guardian*, in 2014, (reflecting data received from *Kobo*, an online bookseller headquartered in Canada), winner of the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, *The Goldfinch*, by Donna Tartt, was completed by only 44.4% of those who purchased it as an e-book in the UK. This point is made to add an extra dimension to the notion of 'bestseller', and as an acknowledgement of the difficulty in determining reading habits. Without intending to detract from the worthiness of this thesis, it should be noted that bestsellers are indicative of general reading habits, but cannot be seen as the definitive measure.

Question two data collection

To answer the second question, concerning changes to the nature of French bestsellers, three time periods were chosen, reflective of three different generations, for an examination of bestsellers of the following times:

1. 2015, representing present day,
2. 1985, and
3. 1965.

As previously indicated, an assumption was made that bestseller lists would be easy to procure, for all three time periods. As has been noted in the Literature Review, this was

to prove completely inaccurate. The path to gathering data has been an unexpectedly challenging one.

Originally with the plan in mind to compile and examine statistics of bestselling titles over a six month period, the first step, regarding 2015, entailed an online search of sites presenting bestseller lists, revealing, apart from sales sites such as *Fnac*, *Decrite*, *Cultura* and *Amazon*, the following sites:

1. SensCritique : Les 50 meilleures ventes livres de la semaine
http://www.senscritique.com/liste/Les_50_meilleures_ventes_livres_de_la_semaine/72033
2. Booknode : Meilleures ventes de livres en France
http://booknode.com/meilleures_ventes_france
3. Edistat : Top 200 ventes hebdomadaires marché
<http://www.edistat.com/palmares.php>
4. Livres Hebdo : Meilleures ventes
<http://www.livreshebdo.fr/>
5. Rue des livres : Les meilleures ventes de livres
http://www.rue-des-livres.com/top_ventes/

Following exploration of these sites and email contact with the BnF and ENSSIB, it was discerned that there are two organisations publishing weekly bestseller lists, essentially intended for professionals in the book industry, which are then re-reported by other sites. For example, both *SensCritique* and *Booknode* publish the data from *Edistat-Tite Live*. It must also be noted that in the digital age, e-books are a vital component of book sales, and whilst as will be noted, both *Edistat* and *Livres Hebdo* include online sales, *Kobo*, referred to earlier, also publishes bestseller lists as does *Amazon*, reflecting only online sales. As the two groups, *Edistat* and *Livres Hebdo*, previously referred to in the Introduction, combine print sales with digital sales, they have been chosen as the primary source of data, as outlined below.

Edistat and Livres Hebdo

In information gleaned from its website, *Edistat* has been gathering data on bestsellers in France since 2004. This is based on sales from 1,200 points of sale throughout metropolitan France, and since January 1st, 2015, an appraisal of online sales has been incorporated into the data collection. Each week, on Fridays, a list of the top 200 bestselling books is made available on the *Edistat* website. This is open to general access. For further and more in-depth information, a subscription is required. In September, the format for the top 200 changed to include ranking, weeks present in the list, a small picture of the cover, title, prizes won, EAN number (International Article Number), author, category, editor, publishing date and price.

Livres Hebdo dates back to 1979 (Todd, 1994, p.7) and according to its website, is published in print form as well as online. Each year 44 editions are provided as a magazine in print form, making it the only trade magazine in France concerned with books. At the beginning of 2015, after presenting data collected by *Ipsos* for fifteen years, *Livres Hebdo* switched to *Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung* (GfK), a German market research group, for data collection when *Ipsos* decided not to continue research in the book industry. In this case, information is gathered from 4,000 points of sale, which includes online sales. Every week, on Thursdays, bestseller information is provided in the following categories:

1. top 20 (all genres)
2. top 50 romans
3. top 50 essays and non-fiction
4. top 25 paperbacks, and
5. top 12 bandes dessinées.

This information is available in limited form to the general public and in full form by subscription, as are the archives, Regarding the presentation of the Top 20 data, ranking and number of weeks on the list, title, author, publisher, date of publication, EAN number (International Article Number), price, a short description and details of any prizes, and a link to any other relevant articles are included.

To obtain data on bestsellers for the complete calendar year, assistance was sought and generously given by *Edistat*, in providing access to back issues. A personal subscription was taken out by the author of this thesis, which enabled collection of lists from the *Livres Hebdo* archives.

Data lists

As to the lists themselves, a table was created in which the following categories were noted, for the ten top selling books from both sources, as per the example below:

1. Week number, source and date
2. Ranking of the book
3. Title (and awarding of any literary prizes)
4. Author
5. Nationality of author
6. Original language of the book
7. Gender of author
8. Fiction or non-fiction
9. Genre of the book

Table 1 Top Ten Bestseller Listed Books

Week 1: Edistat les 200 meilleures ventes de livres du 05 au 11 Janvier 2015							
Position	Book Title	Author	Nationality of author	Original Language	Gender of author	Fiction or non-fiction	Genre
1.	<i>Soumission</i>	Michel Houellebecq	French	French	Male	Fiction	Roman

Week 1: Livres Hebdo meilleures ventes du 05 au 11 Janvier 2015							
Position	Book Title	Author	Nationality of author	Original Language	Gender of author	Fiction or non-fiction	Genre
1.	<i>Soumission</i>	Michel Houellebecq	French	French	Male	Fiction	Roman

Data involving title and author was logged in on a weekly basis, in two lists, one containing the top 15 books, and the second containing the top ten, as per each source, whilst the remaining categories of nationality of author, original language, gender of author, fiction or non-fiction and genre had to be determined on an individual basis. These categories were chosen in order to see what the French are reading and who is writing what they are reading, and thus whether the French are subject to new and different cultural influences. Unexpectedly, what was constructed as a simple exercise proved to be more difficult and much more time-intensive to carry out than anticipated, particularly but not exclusively in the category of genre.

More specifically, noting the week, source and date and ranking of the book was straightforward, as was the recording of the title, which was done exactly as the title appeared in the list.

Data considerations

The nationality of every author had to be sought, and at this stage unforeseen difficulties began to emerge. How should a nationality be allocated for authors who have dual nationality, such as Eric Emmanuel-Schmidt, who is French born, but has taken Belgian citizenship? And what about those books written by a Collectif? In the case of Collectif and those situations in which the nationality could not be determined, it was decided to create a category of **Unable to Specify**.

In the main, the original language of the titles was easier to determine, although books such as *Loué sois-tu* written by Pope Francis, which is the annual 'encyclique' or letter sent by the Pope to the bishops and simultaneously published in seven different languages, and *La BD est Charlie* written by a Collectif posed problems. Once again, **Unable to Specify** was used where necessary.

As for the gender of the author, just as with the nationality category, in the case of a book having been written by a Collectif, **Unable to Specify** was used. In those cases where a book had been written by two or more males, as in the case of many of the bandes dessinées, male was recorded, and where the authors were one man and one woman, a half point was recorded for each. The rationale here was that for statistical purposes, each book would have a value of one in each category, and where that could not be applied, the description **Unable to Specify** would be used.

In the section of fiction and non-fiction, which at face value would appear to be a straightforward choice, difficulties arose when trying to decide on how to classify humour, as, for example, in the case of *La femme parfaite est une connasse!* written by Anne-Sophie & Marie-Aldine Girard. Books such as the prize winning (Prix Renaudot 2014) *Charlotte* by David Foenkinos, and *La BD est Charlie* also posed problems, to cite further examples.

As for the genre category, this proved to be the most difficult section. *Edistat*, for some of 2015, provided a genre description, whilst *Livres Hebdo* did not. In September, as already noted, *Edistat* changed format and genre was no longer given. To provide some sense of uniformity and to allow for comparison amongst the titles, thus enabling any trends in the bestsellers to become apparent, the genres below were decided upon and used by the author.

Table 2 Fiction genres, in alphabetical order

Bande dessinée including Manga, Franco-Belge and American comics	Chick lit	Dystopian	Fantasy
Humour	Plays/theatre	Roman including novels in the case of English titles	Roman d'amour including romance and love stories
Roman autobiographique	Roman d'aventure	Roman historique historical fiction	Science fiction
"Sex-seller" covering books such as the 50 Shades of Grey series, from the erotica and erotic romance genres	Short stories	Thrillers including crime, mysteries, polars, policiers, psychological and suspense	Young adults combining books for adolescents and young adults

Table 3 Non-Fiction genres, in alphabetical order

Advice	Biography including autobiographies, biographies and memoirs	Calendar	Child Development
Cooking	Economics	Education	Esoterism
ESSAY	Exposé	Guide Book	Health
History	Literary Study	Philosophy	Politics
Psychology	Reference including educational material, dictionaries and medical matters	Religion	Satire
Science	Society	Sociology	Travel Including Travelogues

However, the choice of these genres underwent considerable change. Essentially, deciding on the genre to which each book belonged required the skills of a trained librarian, and so it was decided that once the lists were completed for 2015, the services of a French librarian would be sought, with the aim of ensuring the selections made by the author were correct. In Carcassonne, Languedoc-Roussillon, over the course of four meetings and email exchanges, Monsieur Aymeric Raffin, ‘Coordinateur des acquisitions fiction adulte’²⁹ of Carcassonne Agglo’s public library, provided invaluable direction regarding the allocation of genre. This resulted in numerous changes, including relabeling some titles, and the adding and deleting of genres, such as the changing of erotica to *sex-seller*³⁰, the addition of *roman autobio* and esoterism, and the deletion of *roman de guerre*, as well as expanding on the components of *bande dessinée* to include ‘American comics’.

It is immediately noticeable that most of the genres are written in English, whilst some (*bande dessinée*, *roman*, *roman d’amour*, *roman autobiographique*, *roman d’aventure*, *roman historique* and *sex-seller*) remain in French. This has been done to reflect a different cultural point of view, especially where the word *roman* is involved. The translation for *roman* in English is ‘novel’, which presupposes to an English speaker that the book is fiction. This is not the case in French, where *roman* has a much broader sense, and can encompass both fiction and non-fiction. Whilst deserving of greater

²⁹ Translated as the Coordinator of Adult Fiction Acquisition.

³⁰ This term, which was not familiar to the author of this study, was suggested by the Librarian as he considered the genre of ‘erotica’ to have a hard connotation, which did not apply to those texts appearing in the bestseller lists.

delineation, further explanation of the complexities surrounding the *roman* genre is constrained due to the parameters of this investigation.

Two keys points emerged through the meetings with M. Raffin, that are note-worthy. Firstly, the allocation of genre is subjective, despite the best efforts of Melvin Dewey, inventor of the Dewey Decimal Classification System. This is not an exact science. As M. Raffin noted when he commented “classer les livres en fonction d'une liste de genres préétablis est une entreprise bien plus complexe qu'elle le semble a priori.”³¹, this is not a straightforward exercise, and that another librarian might have chosen different classifications, depending on their degree of experience, and their reason for allocation of genre. But genre selection of all titles has been verified by him, representing a consistency of judgement. Secondly, the French and Anglo consideration of a genre is clearly different, as can be seen in the choice of ‘roman’, rather than the more specific delineation in English of war stories, for example. As the aim of this thesis is to examine the reading habits of the French, the guidance provided by M. Raffin helped to achieve genre selection which is more culturally sound, from the French point of view.

Additional lists

Alongside the weekly lists of the bestsellers, additional lists were compiled. These included lists measuring the frequency with which books appeared in the bestseller lists.

Table 4 Frequency of Bestseller Listed Books EDISTAT

No	Title	Prize	Nat	M/F	Jan	Feb	Mar	Ap	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total no.
1	<i>Soumission</i>		F	M	√√	√√	√										9
2	<i>After, Saison 1</i>		U	F	√√	√√											6
.			S		√√												

³¹ Translated as ‘To classify books using a list of pre-established genres is a more complex undertaking than it might at first seem.’

Table 5 Frequency of Bestseller Listed Books LIVRES HEBDO

No	Title	Prize	Nat	M/ F	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total no.
1	<i>Soumission</i>		F	M	√√	√√											8
2	<i>After, Vol. 1</i>		U	F	√√	√√											8
.			S		√√	√√											

Lists were also created to note the number one book from both sources each week.

Table 6 Top Selling Book from weekly bestseller lists 2015

Week	Date	Source	Title	Author	N/lity	Language	Gender	F/NF	Genre
5.	2-8 Feb15	Edistat	<i>Elle & Lui</i> (396p)	Marc Levy(54)	French	French	Male	F	Roman d'am
		LH	<i>Elle & Lui</i> (396p)	Marc Levy(54)	French	French	Male	F	Roman d'am

1985 and 1965 data collection

Whilst compilation of the bestseller lists for 2015 was ongoing, so, too, were efforts to collect data from 1965 and 1985. As *Edistat* has only been operating since 2004, there was obviously no data for the earlier time periods. Todd (1994) notes that “*le Bulletin du Livre* was founded in 1958. In 1979 it was absorbed into *Livres hebdo*. As the latter publication does continue to deal with the subject - see, for instance ‘Les meilleures ventes de 1985’, *Livres hebdo*, 6 January 1986, pp. 82-6” - attempts were made to retrieve this information. Unfortunately, no data could be found in the online archives, which appear only to provide files from 2006.

Enquiries were made to the BnF and ENSSIB once more, as well as to a variety of different organisations, including Lemotif, le Syndicat de la librairie Française, le Syndicat national de l'édition, the Cult.Comm section of the French government, l'Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine, and GfK, for any data pertaining to bestsellers of 1965 and 1985. As with the initial enquiries at the outset of information

gathering, in general contact was made by email but again in some cases also by phone as a means of introduction, and to ensure a response to email enquiries. This resulted in varying degrees of response.

Todd (1994) noted “in the 1960s and 1970s further details of bestsellers for other periods were published in *Le Bulletin du livre*. The most comprehensive lists remain, however, those given annually by Dominique and Michèle Frémy in their bestselling *Le Quid*, but even they are forced to admit the details which they reproduce are far from accurate.” (p.2). As a result of this, *Le Quid 1966* and *Le Quid 1986* were purchased, but taken alone, as noted in the Literature Review, the lists provided were not sufficient to be used definitively, especially as the following proviso (p.304) accompanies the 1985 lists, “Best-sellers. Il est difficile de dresser une liste complète des best-sellers parus dans le monde ou même simplement en France. Les chiffres de tirages sont rarement communiqués, et quand ils le sont, ils ne sont guère vérifiables. ”³² A similar disclaimer exists for the 1965 lists.

Both Murphy (1987) and Todd (1994) note that ‘*les succès de la semaine*’, as published in *L’Express* is useful as a source of bestsellers. An effort was made to access the archives of *L’Express* through Flinders University Library and an email was sent to *L’Express*, followed by two phone calls, to try to find any information on bestsellers of 1965 and 1985 that might exist. Neither enquiry resulted in locating the bestseller information.

Ultimately all enquiries met with a similar response, as can be seen from the following example, concluding, as the Mougins quote introducing this chapter states, that bestsellers records for those time periods, particularly 1965, did not exist. Nathalie Collard, editor of Katherine Pancol, stated “en fait je crois tout simplement que cela

³² Translated as ‘Bestsellers. It is difficult to draw up a complete list of bestsellers worldwide or even in France. The numbers of circulation figures are rarely communicated, and when they are, they are hardly verifiable.’

n'existait pas à l'époque..."³³ (M. Ewing, personal communication, July 8, 2015.) This seems to be borne out by the very small amount of literature that could be found on this subject. Following a suggestion from Christophe Evans, of ENSSIB, a subscription was taken out for *Le Monde*, in the belief that as their archives go back to 1930, bestseller records might be found there. However, this also proved fruitless.

However, in exhausting what appeared to be the last avenue of research, from Julie Le Men at IMEC, came the information that "nous conservons à l'IMEC la collection complète des *Livres Hebdo* (de 1979 à nos jours) ainsi que du *Bulletin du Livre* qui l'a précédée (1959-1979)."³⁴ It is thus possible that bestseller records for these time periods may exist but one must go to Caen in Northern France to IMEC, with verification of academic purpose, to access these records. It is also possible that copies of *Le Bulletin du livre* held by the BnF may contain bestseller information.

At the point where this author was about to concede that in current circumstances, data could not be found for 1965 and 1985, and thus a comparison would not be possible, the article by Professor Marc Verboord (Erasmus University Rotterdam), previously referred to in the Literature Review, was found, entitled "*Market Logic and cultural consecration in French, German and American bestseller lists, 1970-2007*", in which he cited details of French bestsellers from lists published in *L'Express*. An email was sent to M. Verboord enquiring as to how he had accessed these lists, because as previously mentioned, the author had already both contacted *L'Express* in unsuccessful attempts to locate these lists. M. Verboord replied immediately, attaching all *L'Express* files, containing weekly details in '*les succès de la semaine*' for every week of 1985, and '*les succès du mois*'³⁵ in 12 monthly lists for 1965.

³³ Translated as 'In fact, quite simply I believe that the data did not exist at the time.'

³⁴ Translated as 'IMEC holds the complete collection of *Livres Hebdo* (from 1979 to current day) as well as that of *Bulletin du Livre* which preceded *Livres Hebdo*.'

³⁵ Translated as 'Monthly bestsellers'

Lists were now created for 1965 and 1985 in the same way as for 2015, although there were significant differences in the way the raw data was presented. In 1965 there were only monthly lists, and in October the format changed, making continuity of compilation impossible. In the case of the 1985 lists, titles were presented in two sections, ten books in ‘**Romans, récits, nouvelles**’ and ten in ‘**Etudes, essais, documents**’, essentially doubling the data, and the research required to complete the lists.

Table 7 Bestseller Listed Books 1985

Week 1 : du 04 janvier 1985 (Source <i>L'Express</i>) Romans, récits, nouvelles							
Position	Book Title	Author	Nationality of author	Original Language	Gender of author	Fiction or non-fiction	Genre
1.	<i>L'Amant</i> * Prix Goncourt 1984	Marguerite Duras	French	French	Female	Fiction	Roman autobio

Table 8 Bestseller Listed Books 1965

Month 3 Week 10 : du 08 au 14 mars 1965 (Source <i>L'Express</i>, Les succès du mois)							
Position	Book Title	Author	Nationality of author	Original Language	Gender of author	Fiction or non-fiction	Genre
1.	<i>Journal d'une femme en blanc</i>	André Soubiran (Prix Renaudot 1943)	French	French	Male	Fiction	Roman

2015, 1985 and 1965 list comparisons

On close examination and analysis of these lists, it became apparent that comparisons with lists of 2015 would not be a matter of ‘comparing apples with apples’, because the data presented by *L'Express* was achieved by asking certain bookstores throughout France for sales figures. In 1965, this only involved 25 locations, including one overseas, New York, and representing 48 bookshops. In 1985, there were 76 locations, including two outside France, those of Brussels and Geneva, representing 92 bookshops. This data could not be said to be an accurate representation of bestsellers of the time, although of the seven titles listed by Todd (1994) specifically as 1965 bestsellers, five appear in *L'Express* data, and of the 15 listed by Todd for 1985, 14 appear in the 1985 *L'Express* lists, providing validation of those titles as bestsellers of

their time. However, from these lists a picture emerges of certain trends of the times in question, and as the best available information, these trends will be discussed as a broad indication of reading habits of the times.

Once all lists had been completed and genres verified, compilation of data took place, focusing on summarizing three main areas:

1. the top ten bestsellers of 2015, 1985 and 1965,
2. the frequency of listing in the bestseller lists of 2015, 1985 and 1965, and
3. the number one bestselling book of 2015, 1985 and 1965.

This will form the core of the presentation and discussion of data in the next chapter.

Evidence that informs this thesis regarding reading habits of the French has thus been gathered through a variety of sources, and represents a broad spectrum. In total, the data collection regarding bestsellers of the three time periods comprises 20 different tables, all of which are listed in the appendices. Once compiled, the results make for interesting reading, as will be shown in the following chapter, that of presentation and discussion of data.

« le Français est encore (pour le moment) un grand lecteur de livres en papier. Même si le numérique se développe lentement mais sûrement. »³⁶

Katherine Pancol³⁷

Chapter Four

Presentation of Data and Discussion

In his article entitled *History of Reading* (1992), Robert Darnton, in discussing studies of reading, made a pertinent observation when he said “the microanalysts have come up with many other discoveries - so many, in fact, that they face the same problem as the macroquantifiers : how to put it all together?” (p.147.). The same conundrum presents itself here, in this investigation which is looking in very close detail at large amounts of information, as how best to present the diverse range of data. This chapter will be offered in three parts. Firstly, recalling the double strands of research, the results of the two questions propelling this study will be presented in order. This will be followed by a discussion of what the results have revealed. Secondly, this will be followed by a critical regard of what are considered to be the principal limitations of the study overall. This chapter will conclude by focusing on those features which distinguish this investigation and possible future directions for further study.

Presentation of results regarding question one: What are the current trends regarding reading behaviour in France?

Now let us begin by looking at the first question, which will be answered through secondary data. This will be discussed in three parts, firstly by looking at the general results of the recent CNL³⁸ study, in light of progressive results from the Donnat³⁹

³⁶ Translated as “The French are still (for the moment) avid readers of books in print form. Even if digital technology is developing slowly but surely.”

³⁷ M. Ewing, personal communication, May 27, 2015.

³⁸ The Centre National du Livre Study, carried out by Ipsos, 2015.

studies, secondly by focussing particularly on certain aspects of the RFI series of interviews as they relate to the CNL study, and finally in briefly summarising the fifth *Baromètre* to arrive at a sense of digital reading habits to complete the picture of trends regarding reading habits.

Beginning with the principal results of the CNL study, as reported by Arald (2015), 90% of French people consider themselves as readers, having read at least one book in the past twelve months. It is noted that this stands somewhat in contrast to comparative data provided by Donnat (2011), whose study is considered to carry more weight, by dint of its longevity and comparative nature, where:

- in 1973, only 70% had read one book in the past year,
- in 1981 74%,
- in 1988 75%,
- in 1997 73%, and
- in 2008 again 70%,

The average number of books read per year is 16, 14 in print form and two digitally, whilst in the Donnat studies, in 1997, the average number of books read was 21, which then dropped to 16 in 2008. Those described as keen readers in print form in having read more than 20 books in the past year are generally women over 50 who are educated and comfortably off. Conversely, those characterised as readers of ebooks are young, male and technologically savvy. Thus far, according to this study, only 1% of French are exclusive readers in digital format. Another key statistic found in this study is that the family context during childhood resonates strongly in the formation of reading habits, noting that for one in every four, reading was held to be very important, with 45% of those who grew up in a family in which reading was considered to be very important going on to become keen readers, as opposed to 28% of the general population, whilst the absence of books in the family home during childhood had a strong impact on the number of non-readers. The French recognise that they are reading less than before,

³⁹ Comparative studies carried out by Oliver Donnat for the French Government, 1973, 1981, 1988, 1997, and 2008.

due to an increasing number of available activities in leisure time, with cause for concern being noted in the number of readers who are reading less at 45% in relation to the 15-24 age group, as opposed to 33% of the general population.

It is very interesting to compare the results of the study above with the interviews carried out by RFI. Recalling one of the major findings in the study commissioned by the CNL that 9 out of 10 French people consider themselves as readers, compared to the 76% of Americans as noted in the Zickuhr study in 2014, the RFI interviews with 25 presenters revealed that all the presenters saw themselves as readers, to varying degrees, ranging from enjoying reading to being passionately enthusiastic about it. This could, perhaps, have been anticipated, considering the nature of their jobs. Further, in another pertinent link with the CNL study, concerning the link between reading habits and family background, 80% mentioned the positive influence of family towards reading, and 68% explicitly noted having books at home, with a further 48% remembering having read books from La Bibliothèque Rose and La Bibliothèque Verte in their childhood. This finding of the importance of establishing good reading habits in childhood also appeared in the UK Booktrust study (2013), in which it was noted that “respondents whose parents encouraged them to read whilst growing up read more as adults.” (p.3.) A final observation arising from these interviews was the surprising attitude to digital devices, in which 84% or 21/25 preferred to read books in print form, in line with the comments of Katherine Pancol at the beginning of this chapter regarding the preference of the French for books in print form. Again though, this may be attributed to their jobs, in which books could be said to represent an escape from the screen format of their daily work, as indeed was suggested by one of the interviewees.

The final source of information regarding reading habits comes from the fifth Baromètre SOFIA SNE SGDL carried out by OpinionWay in 2015, in which a slight rise in the number of readers using e-books is noted, at 18%, as opposed to 5% in 2012, and 15% in 2014, consistent with an increase in the sales of tablets and e-readers. The profile of

an average reader of e-books is that of a male, less than 25 years of age, having graduated with a Baccalauréat and more likely to live in or near Paris. The use of smartphones as a device for reading is increasing, whilst e-book readers tend to be readers of different formats, including print.

Presentation of results regarding question two: How have French bestsellers changed over the past fifty years, with particular reference to author, original language and genre?

Now let us turn our attention to the second question, in which the answers have been sourced from primary data. In order to answer this question, as outlined in the Methodology, the first step has been to establish the state of bestsellers in the three time periods, 2015, 1985 and 1965, with regard to the following three categories,

1. the top ten bestsellers of 2015, 1985 and 1965,
2. the frequency of listing in the bestseller lists of 2015, 1985 and 1965, and
3. the number one bestselling book of 2015, 1985 and 1965

As a precursor to presentation of results, mention must be repeated regarding the lack of uniformity of data. Whilst this represents the best available information that could be found for the three time periods, it is noted that a direct comparison is extremely difficult, due to the differing formats, and size and sources of data. The 2015 data may be regarded as definitive, but in line with the comments of Nicolas Mougin at the beginning of this chapter, data pre-2000 is scarce, and so 1965 data is scant and considered indicative rather than certain.

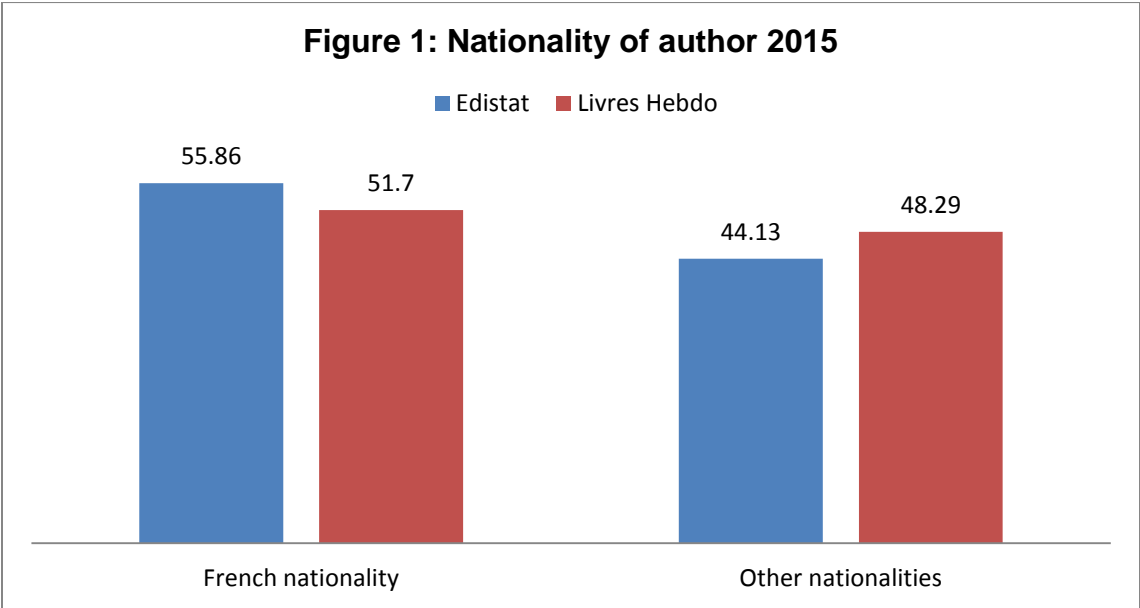
Now, turning to the data, firstly, a summary of the top ten bestsellers will be provided, beginning with 2015, from both sources of data, *Edistat* and *Livres Hebdo*, considering the nationality and gender of the author, the original language of the text, whether the text is fiction or non-fiction, and the genre of the text, recalling the meaning of the

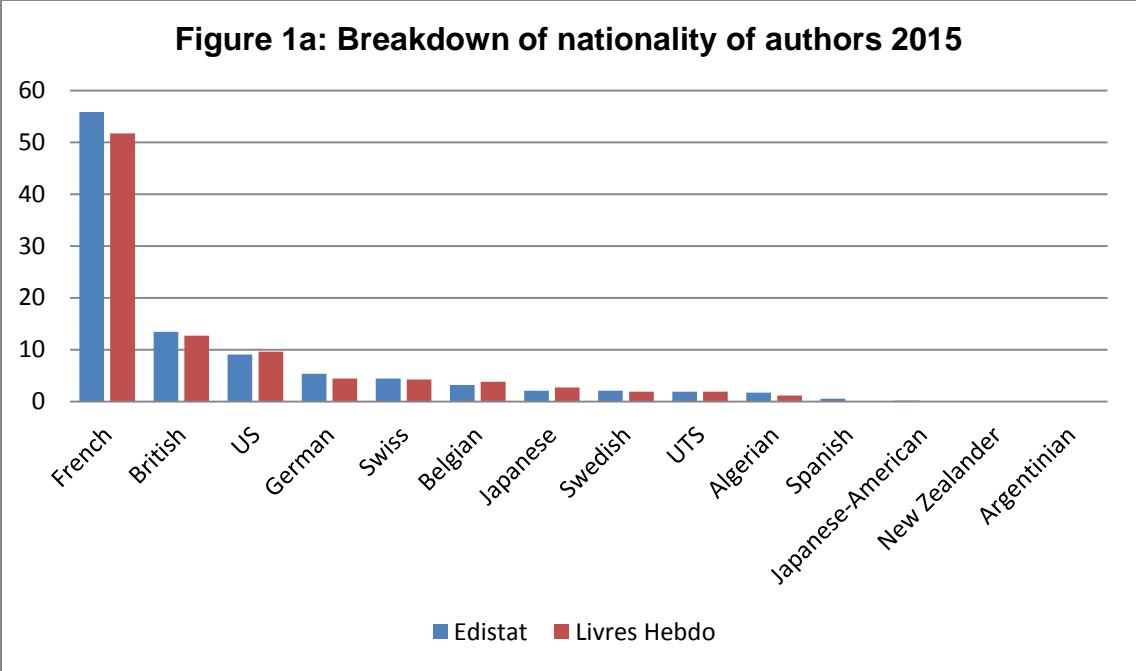
abbreviation **UTS**, which signifies Unable to Specify. A complete breakdown of results may be found in the 18 tables included in the appendices.

Top ten bestsellers 2015

Nationality of author

The majority of authors in the *Edistat* lists were French, at 55.86%, with 44.13% of foreign authors, the largest foreign group being British at 13.46%. The figures from *Livres Hebdo* showed a bare majority of French authors, at 51.70%, and 48.29% foreign authors, with British authors again being the largest other group.





Original Language of Text

As would be expected, French was the predominant original language of texts in the *Edistat* lists, at 66.53%, with other languages making up 33.46%, of which English had the biggest presence at 22.69%. Results from *Livres Hebdo* were very similar, with slightly less texts being French, at 63.82%, and correspondingly more coming from other languages, at 36.17%, of which English made up 22.69%.

Figure 2: Original language of texts 2015

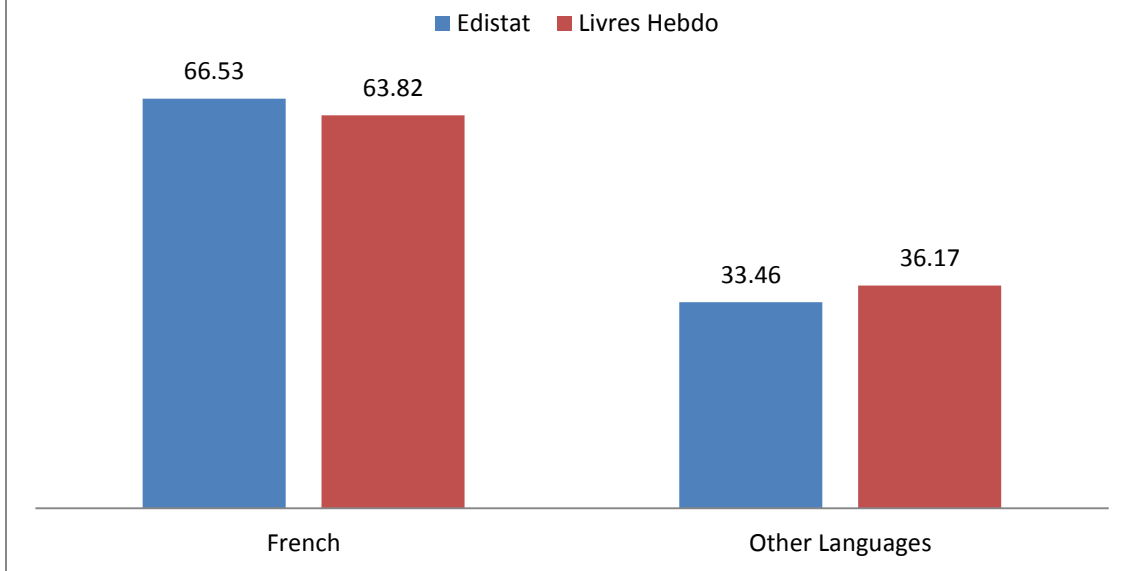
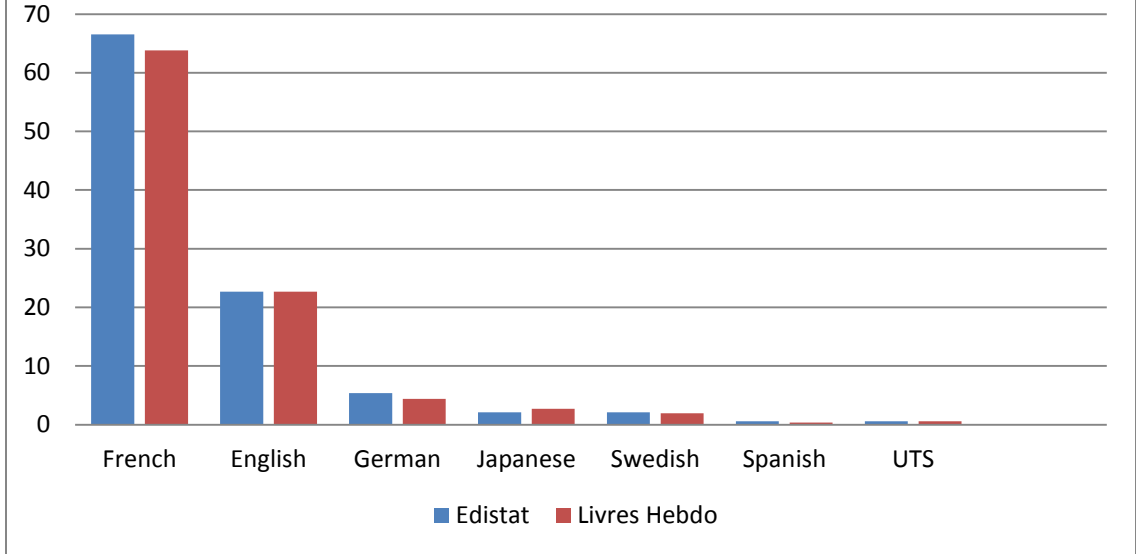
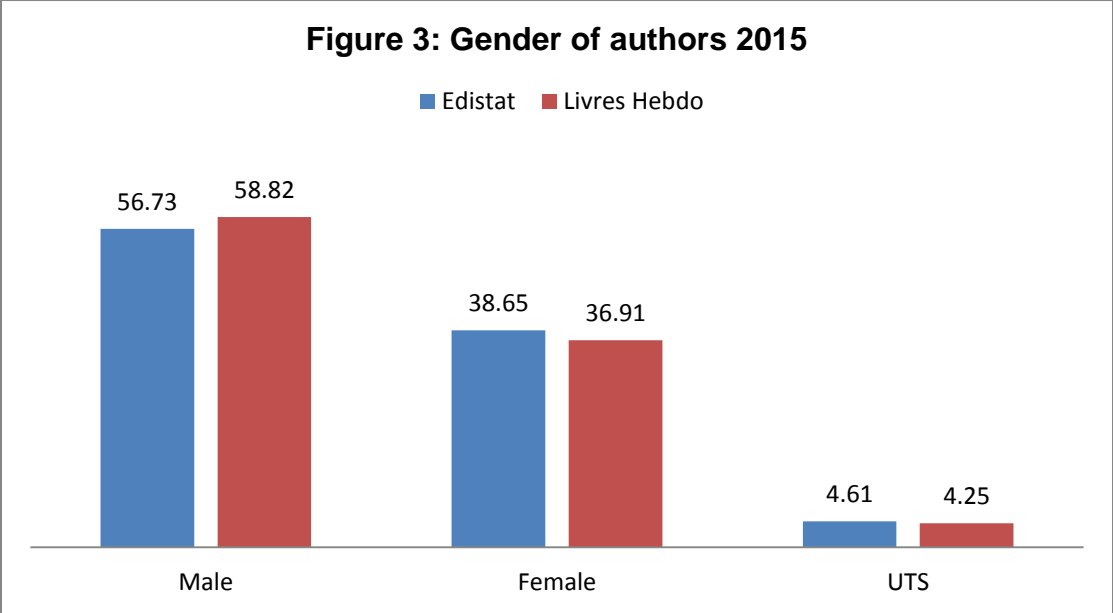


Figure 2a: Breakdown of original language of texts 2015



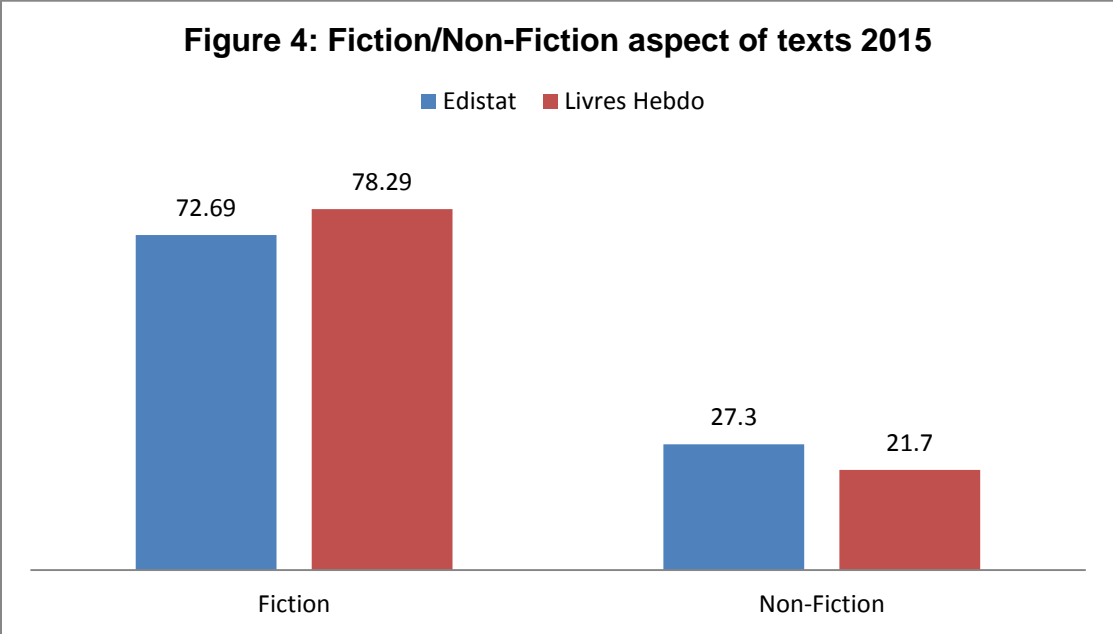
Gender of authors

The majority of authors were male in both lists, with more males in the *Livres Hebdo* list and a correspondingly slightly stronger presence of female authors in the *Edistat* list.



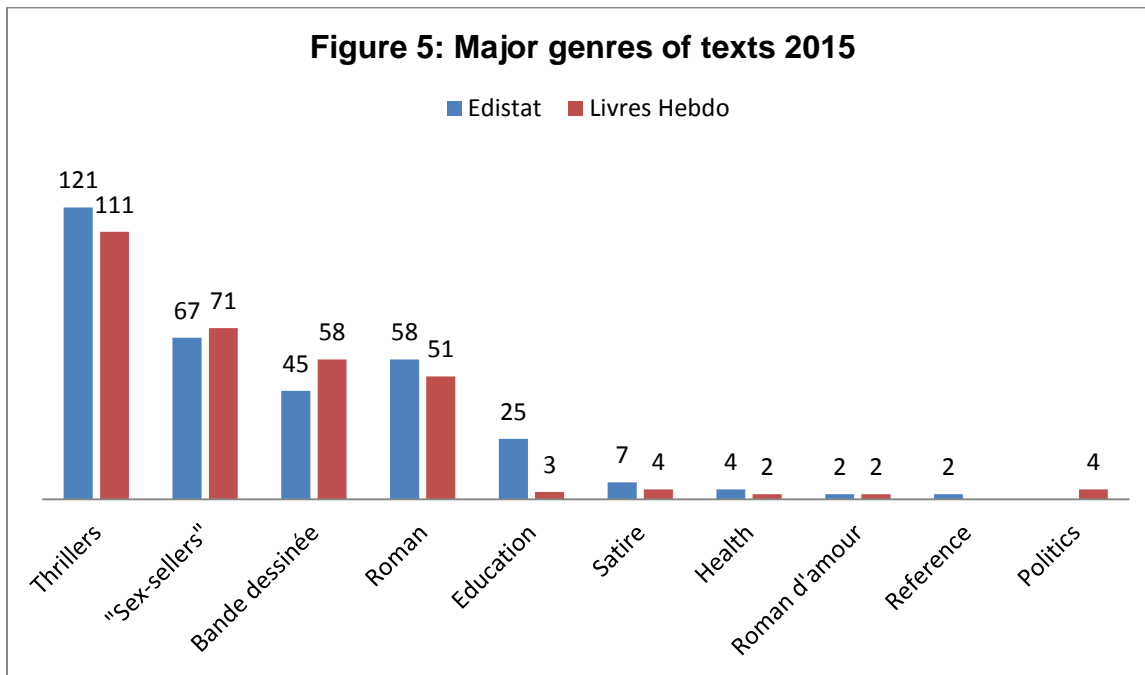
Fiction/Non-Fiction aspect of texts

Fiction titles have a much stronger presence than those of non-fiction in both lists.



Major genres of texts

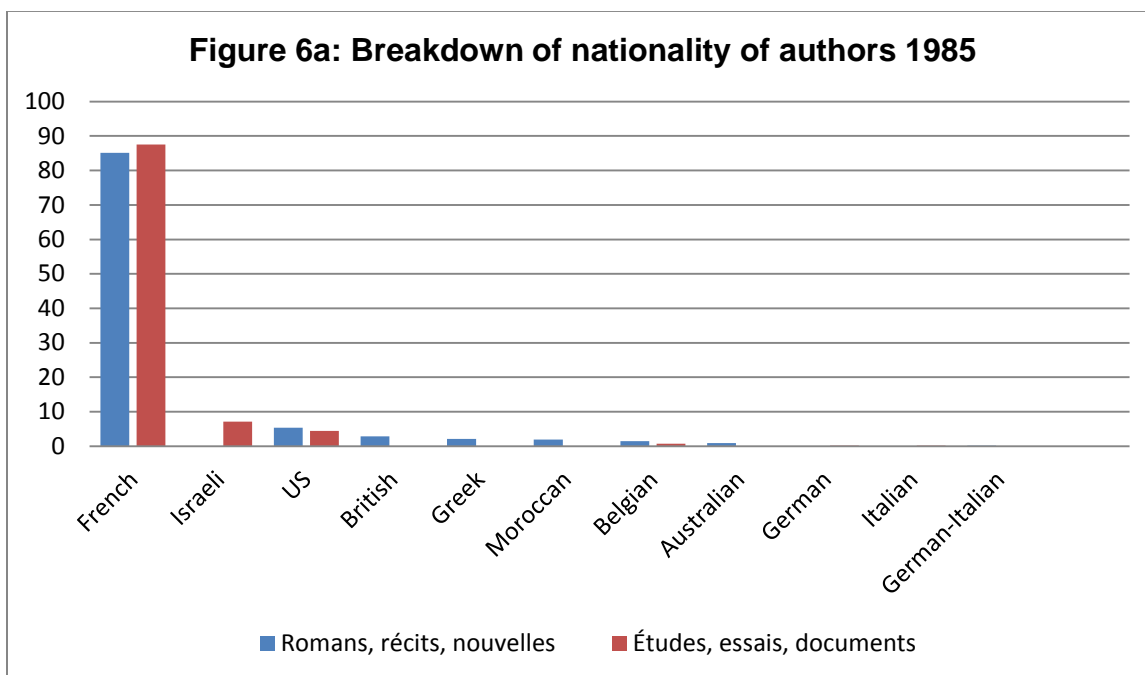
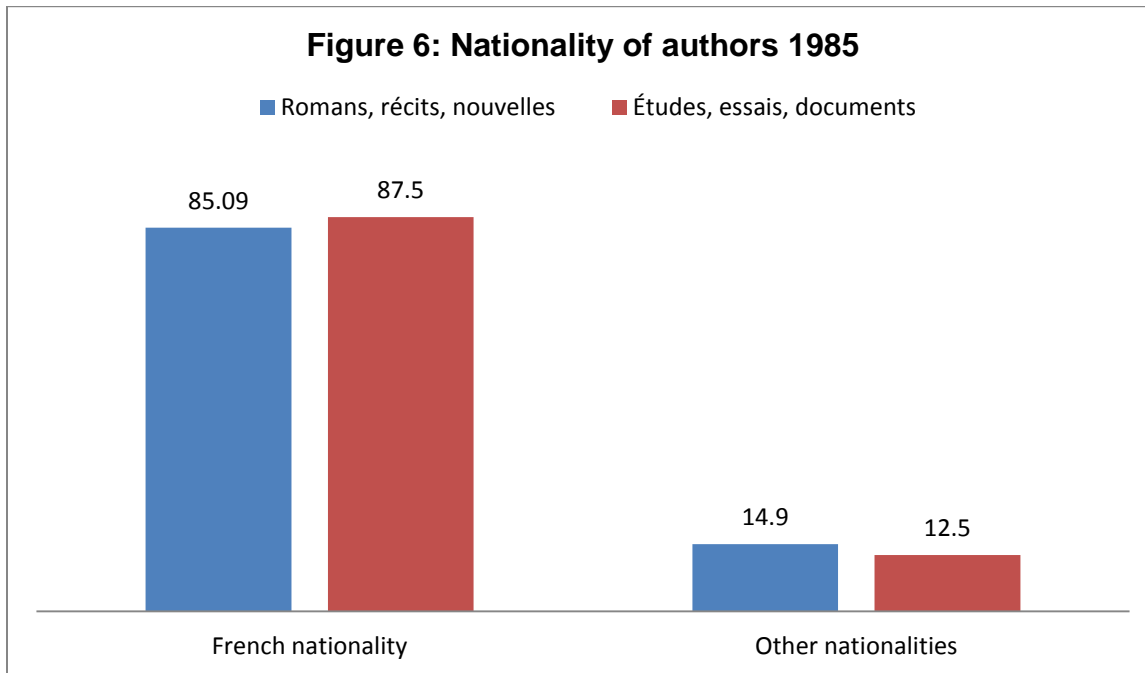
From both sources, the thriller genre is clearly most favoured by readers, followed by the genres of *sex-seller*, *roman* and *bande dessinée*, although *Edistat* figures show a preference for *roman* over *bande dessinée*, whereas *Livres Hebdo* show a preference for *bande dessinée* over *roman*.



Top ten bestsellers *L'Express* 1985

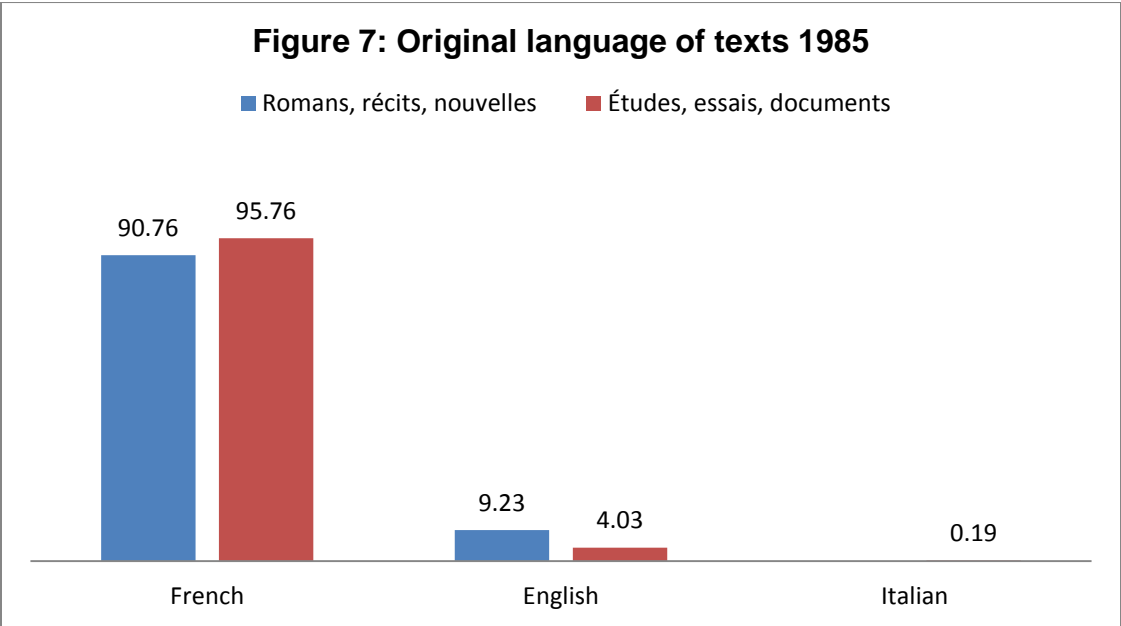
Nationality of authors

French authors dominate both lists, at 85.09% in the Romans list and 87.5% in the Études list. As for the largest group of foreign authors, US authors placed at 5.38% in Romans, and Israeli authors at 7.11% in Études.



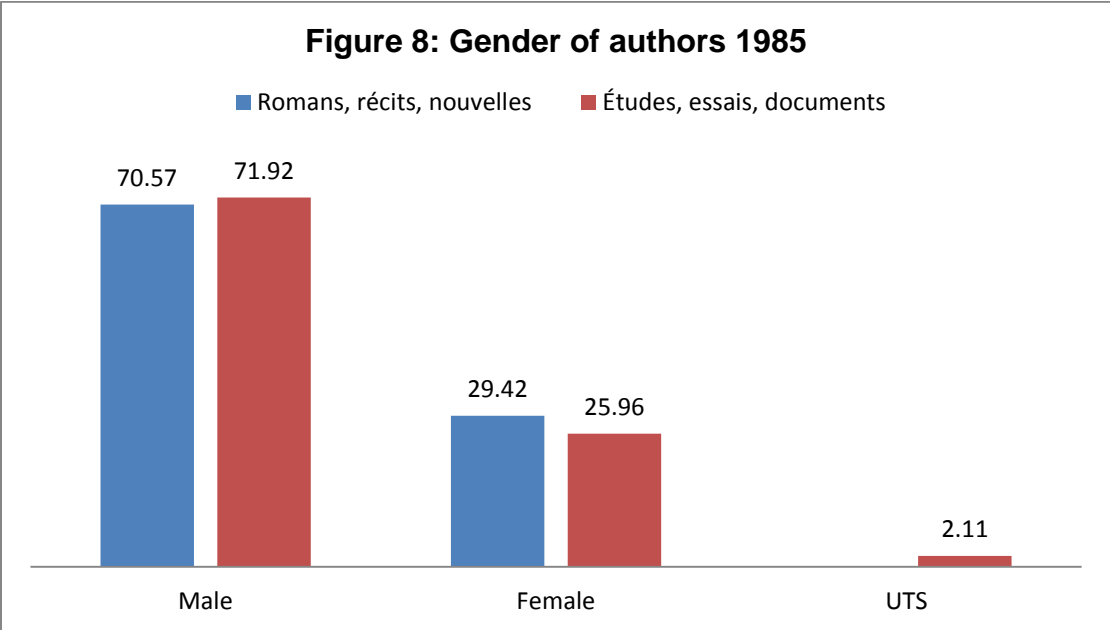
Original language of texts

The texts have been almost exclusively written in French, with the only other languages being English and one text in Italian.



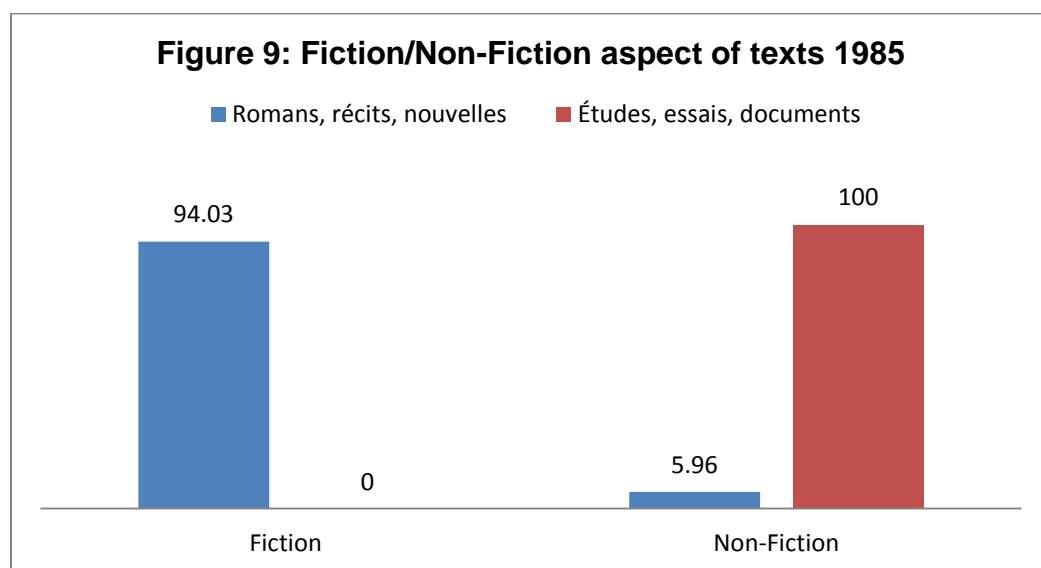
Gender of authors

It was far more likely that the author of a bestseller in 1985 was male, as the proportion of male authors to female authors was approximately two to one.



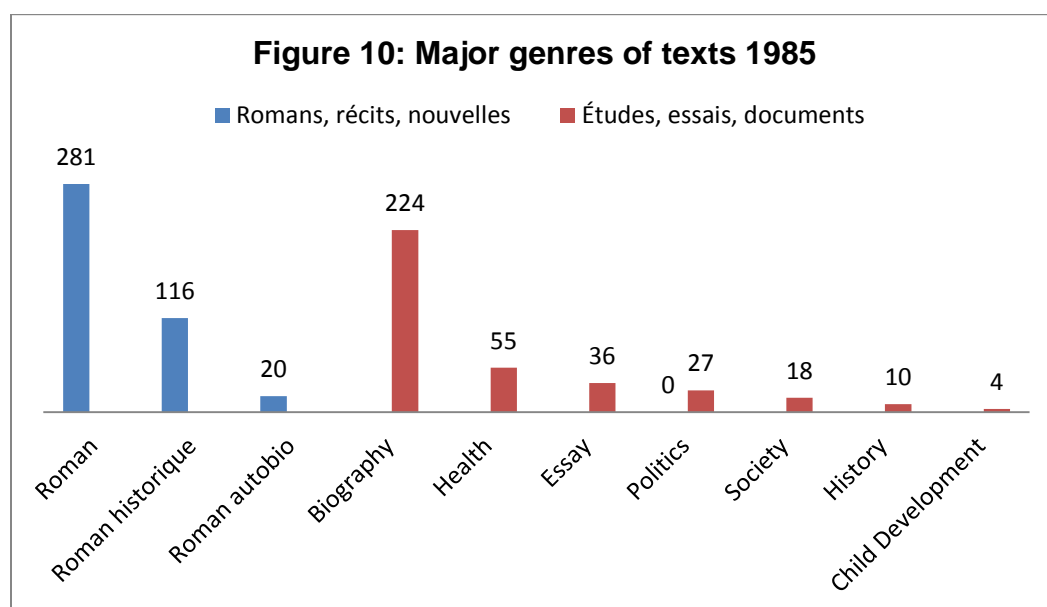
Fiction/Non-Fiction aspect of texts

As the two lists for 1985 were presented in terms of 'Romans, récits, nouvelles' and 'Études, essais, documents', it was anticipated that the first category would be exclusively fiction and the second non-fiction. However, that was not quite the case, with four titles over various weeks listed in the Roman section as non-fiction.



Major genres of texts

Texts fall into three main genres in Romans, with *roman* clearly the fiction genre of choice of most readers at the time, and biography the non-fiction choice.

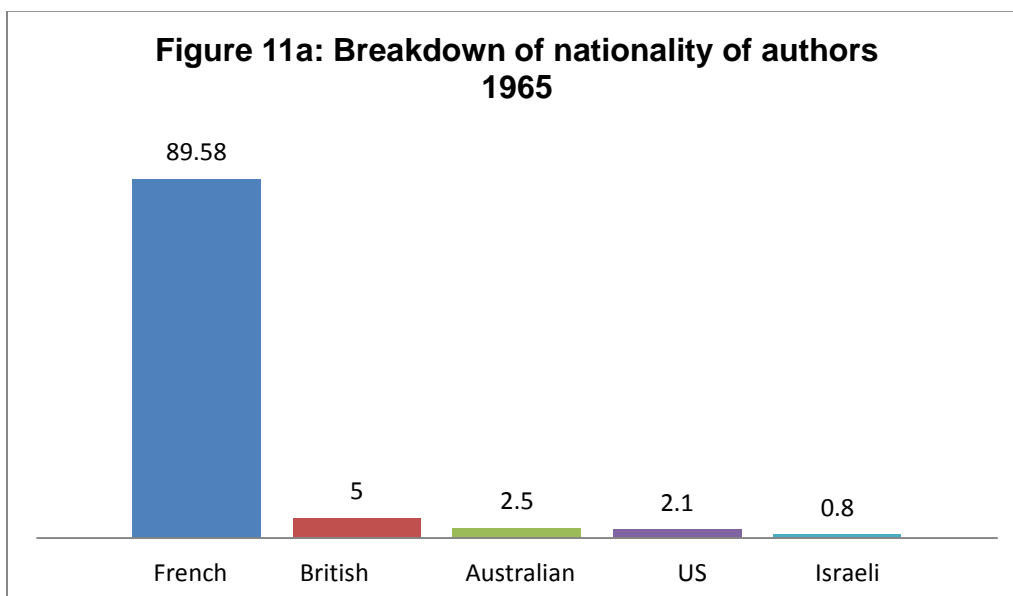
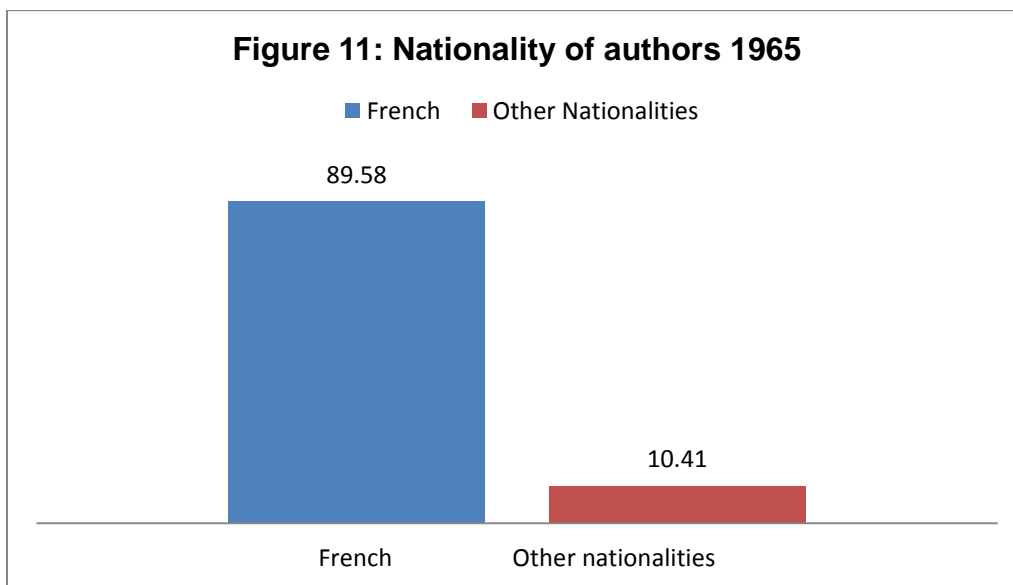


Top ten bestsellers *L'Express* 1965

Firstly, it is noted that despite the change of format in months 10, 11 and 12, for the sake of gathering data, the data for these three months was counted as the top ten books sold, even though this may not have been the case.

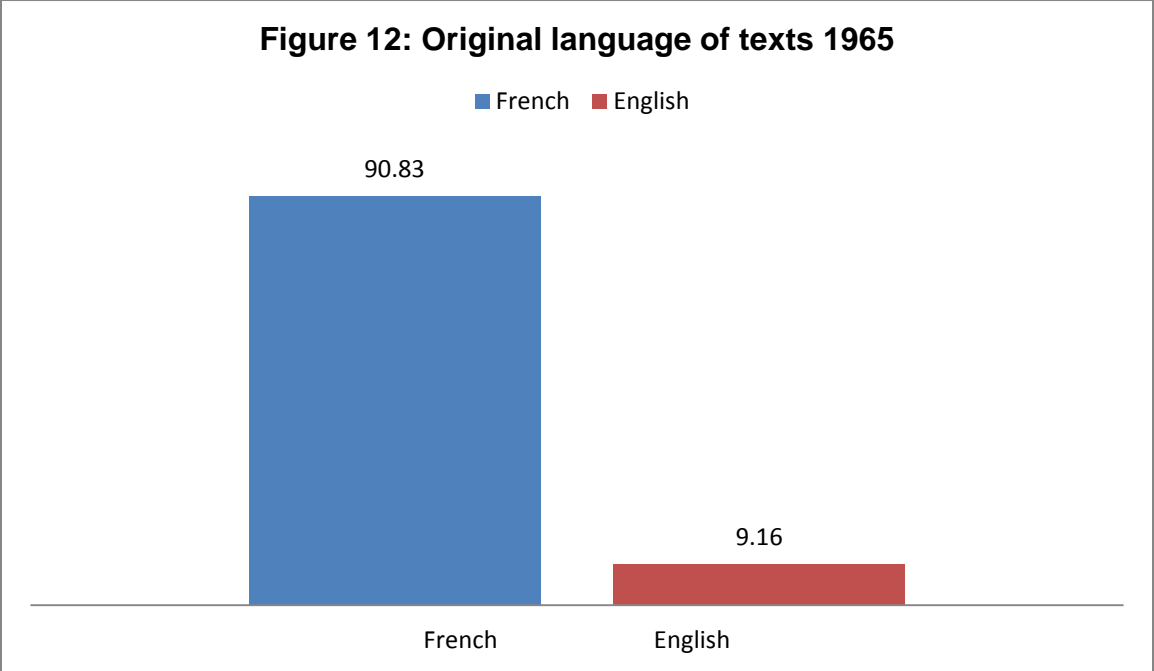
Nationality of Author

This was predominantly French, at 89.58%, other nationalities being listed as 10.41%, with British being the largest other group at 5%.



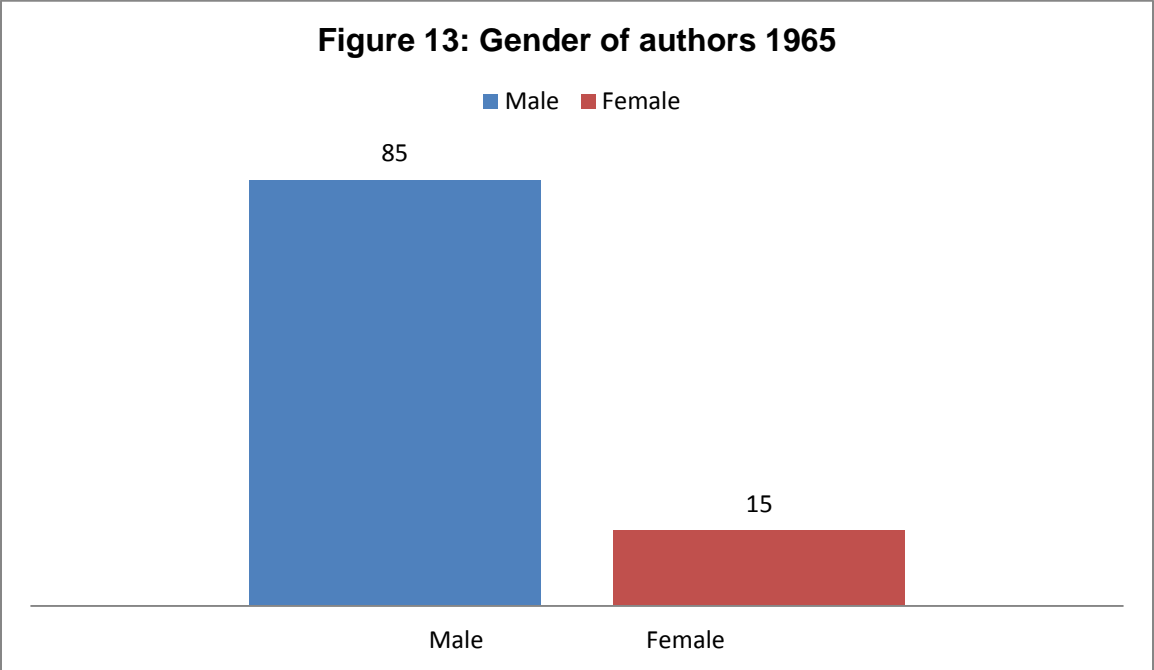
Original Language of Text

Again, this was predominantly French, at 90.83%, with only one other original language, English, at 9.16%.



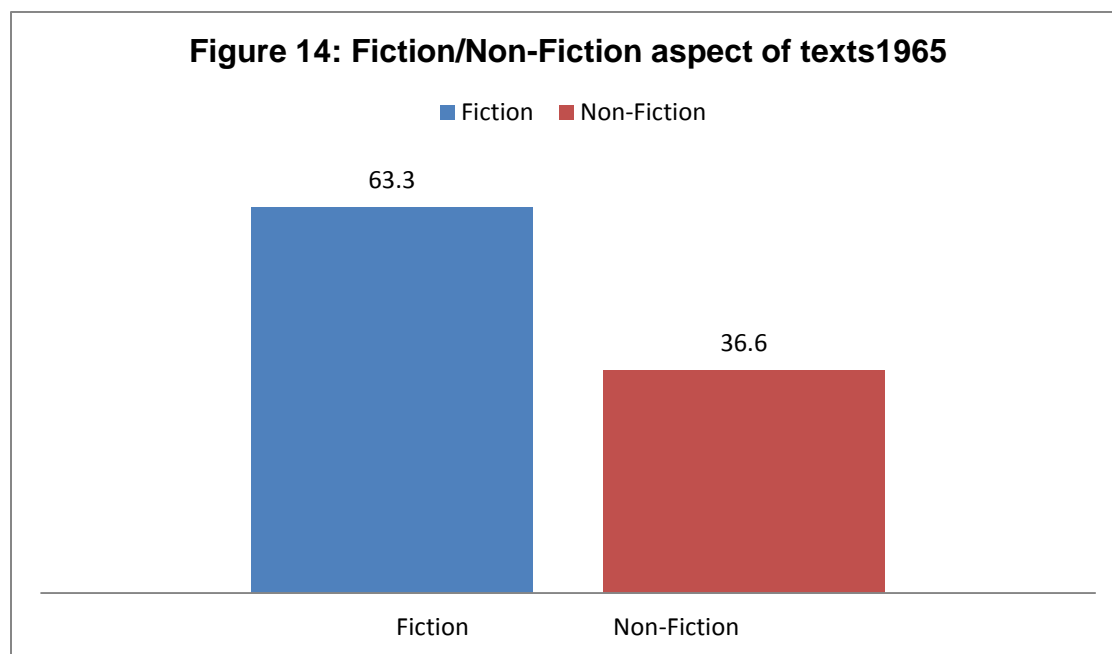
Gender of Author

Male authors made up 85% of the total, whilst the remaining 15% were female.



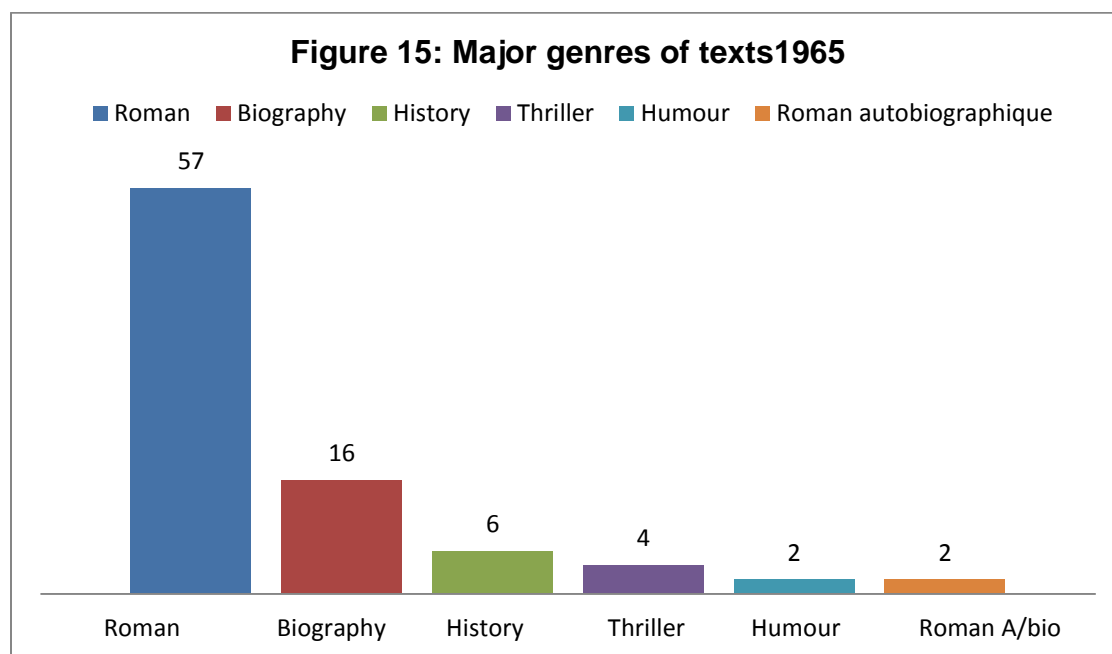
Fiction or Non-Fiction aspect of texts

This was broken down into 63.3% fiction, and 36.6% non-fiction.



Major genre of texts

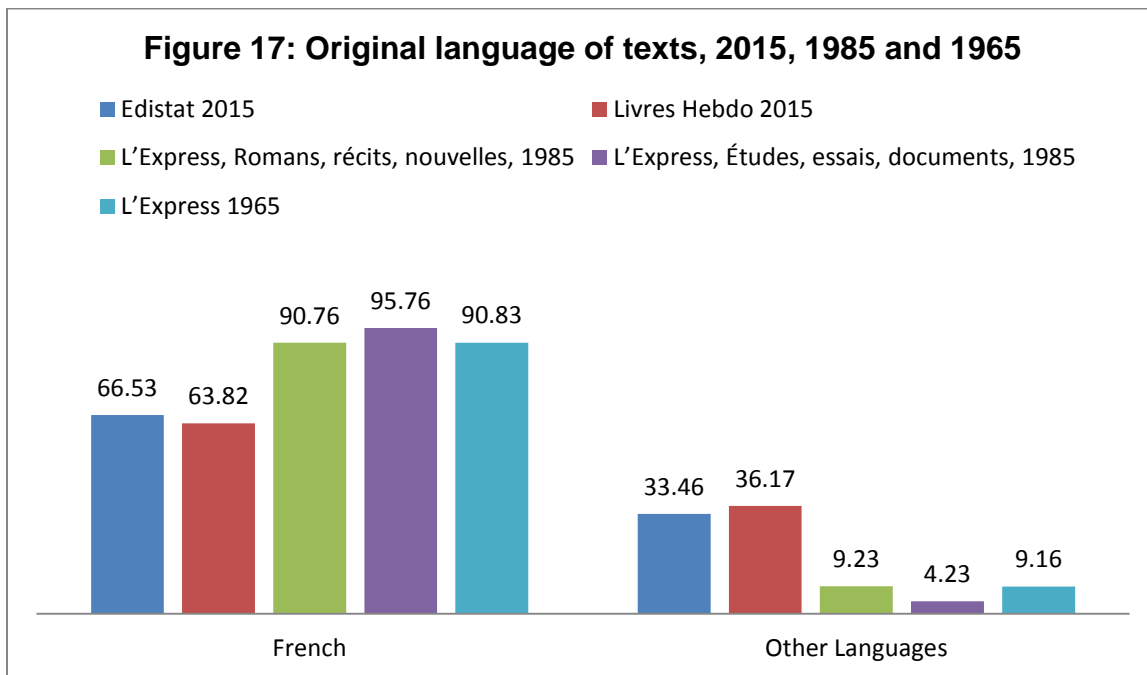
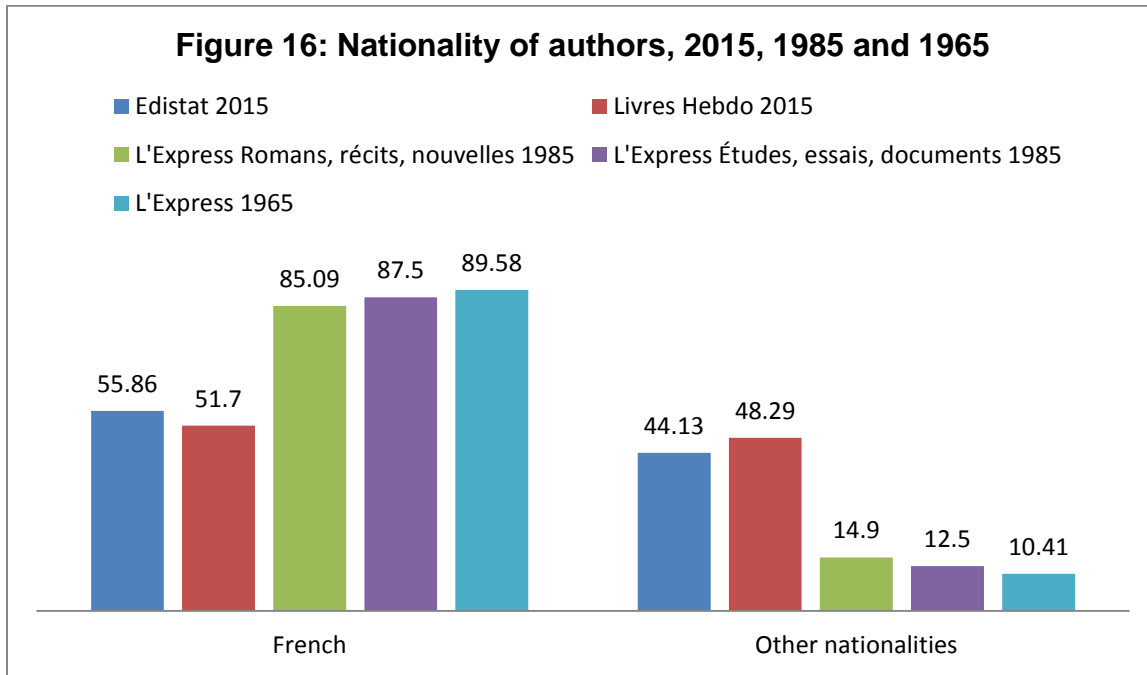
Only six genres were listed as main genres, including those of *Roman*, Biography, History, Thriller, Humour, and *Roman autobiographique*.



How bestsellers have changed, a comparison between the three time periods, 2015, 1985 and 1965

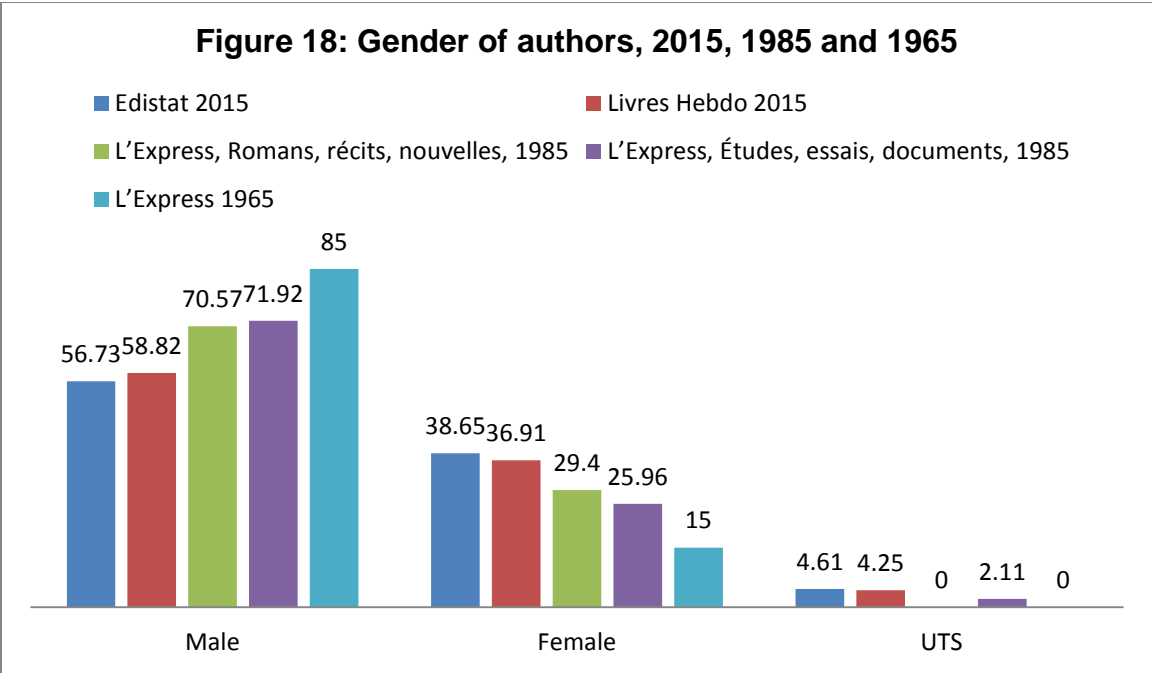
Nationality of authors

The number of French authors and books written in French is clearly decreasing.



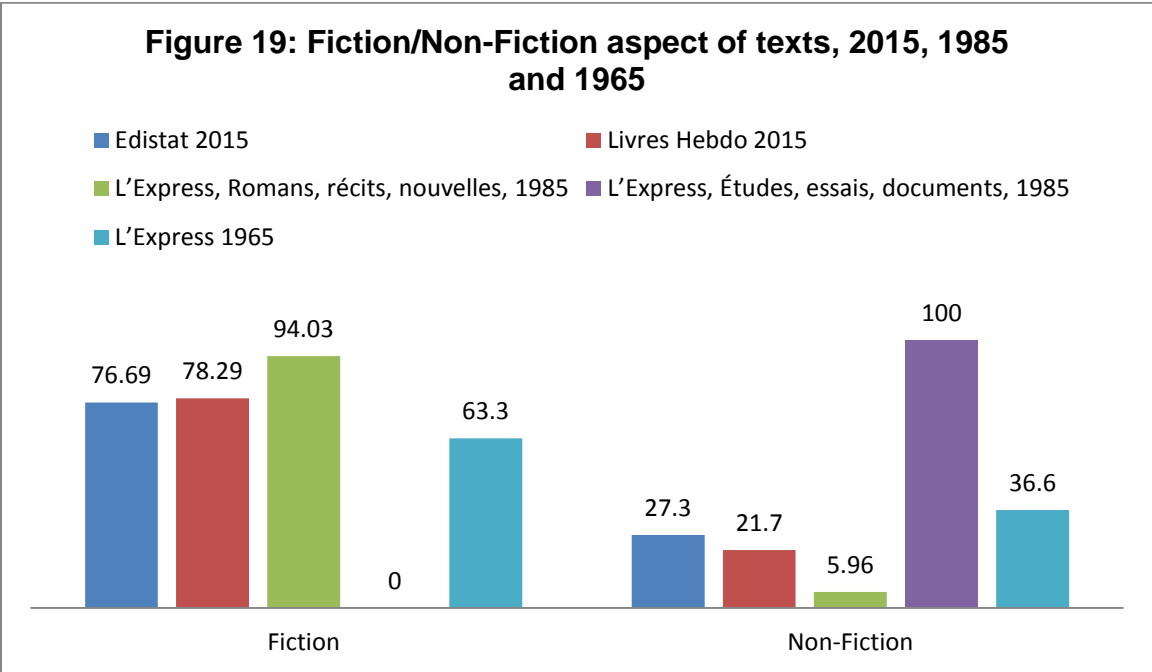
Gender of authors

Male authors are decreasing, and correspondingly, the number of female authors is increasing, in a marked fashion.



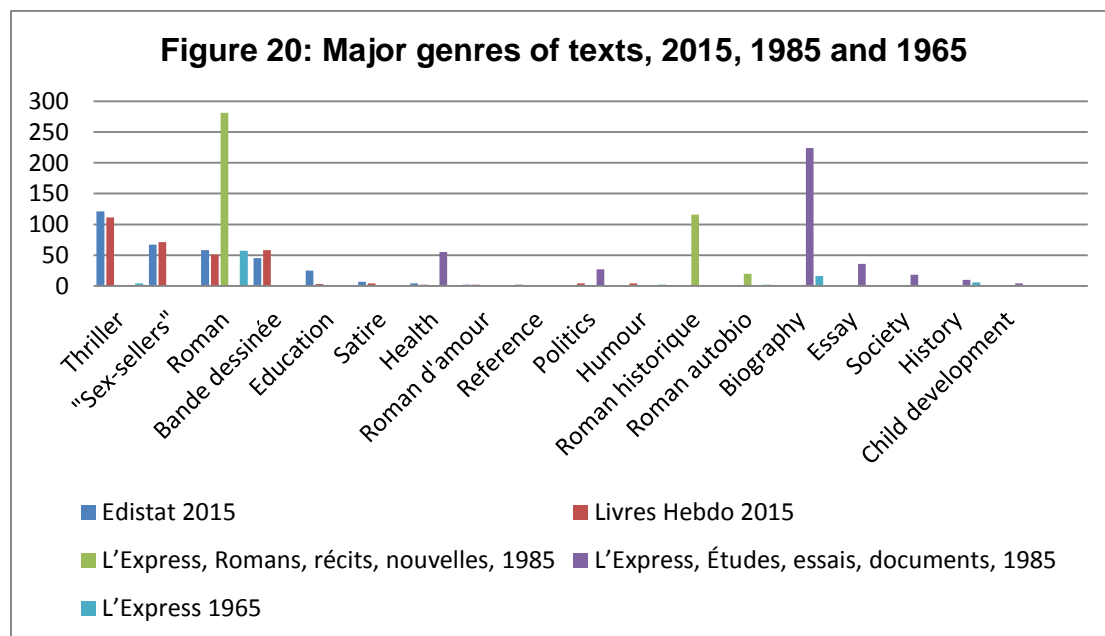
Fiction or Non-Fiction aspect of texts

Fiction texts have increased, whilst non-fiction texts have decreased.



Major genre of texts

In terms of the major genres chosen by readers, the *roman* genre is present in the three time periods, whereas the thriller, erotica/*sex-seller* and *bande dessinée* genres, two of which are absent in 1965, are strongly represented in 2015. Similarly, genres such as biography and child development do not appear in 2015.



Frequency of listing in the bestseller lists

Data concerning the frequency of listing in the four lists is outlined in the table below. Most striking is the fact that the book which appeared most often in the bestseller lists in 2015 was written by a foreign, female author, compared to those of 1965 and 1985, which were written by French males.

Table 9 Frequency table, 2015, 1985, 1965

Category	<i>Edistat</i> 2015	<i>Livres Hebdo</i> 2105	<i>L'Express</i> 1985 Romans	<i>L'Express</i> 1985 Études	<i>L'Express</i> 1965
Weeks	52	47	52	52	12
No. of titles	106	102	59	59	54
No. of authors	80	72	58	58	49
No. of authors with more than 1 title	17	16	1	1	5
Longest running title	<i>Le Charme Discret de L'intestin</i>	<i>Le Charme Discret de L'intestin</i>	<i>La cité de la joie</i>	<i>Victor Hugo</i>	<i>Journal d'une femme en blanc</i>
Author	Giulia Enders	Giulia Enders	Dominique Lapierre	Alain Decaux	André Soubiran
Nationality	German	German	French	French	French
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male
Fiction/NF	Non-Fiction	Non-Fiction	Fiction	Non-Fiction	Fiction
Genre	Health	Health	Roman	Biography	Roman
Time in lists	28 weeks, across 7 months	23 weeks, across 6 months	28 weeks, across 8 months	40 weeks, across 10 months	Listed 9 times

Number one bestselling books

As for the number one bestselling books of each of the lists, the genre of the 2015 title is noteworthy, being a *bande dessinée*, as is the growth of foreign authors and texts originating from other languages.

Table 10 Weekly top selling books, 2015, 1985, 1965

Category	<i>Edistat</i> 2015	<i>Livres Hebdo</i> 2015	<i>L'Express Romans</i> 1985	<i>L'Express Études</i> 1985	<i>L'Express</i> 1965
Weeks	52	50	52	52	12, but 2 titles given for 3 time periods
No. of top sellers	17	17	11	9	9
No. of authors	14 (3 authors had 2 titles each)	14 (3 authors had 2 titles each)	11	9	9
Nationality breakdown	French 67% British 15.38% Swedish 9.61% Swiss 5.76% US 1.92%	French 76% British 12% Swedish 10% Swiss 4% US 2%	French 90.38% Belg-Fr 7.69% US 1.92%	French 78.84% Israeli 21.15%	French 100%
Language	French 73.07% English 17.03% Swedish 9.61%	French 76% English 14% Swedish 10%	French 98.07% English 1.92%	French 100%	French 100%
Author av. age	47.72 years	47.92 years	55.45 years	50.55 years	49.33 years
Gender breakdown	M 66.36% F 33.65%	M 68% F 32%	M 42.30% F 57.69%	M 46.15% F 53.84%	M 80% F 20%
Fiction/NF breakdown	Fict. 90.38% N-F 9.61%	Fiction 92% N-F 8%	Fiction 100%	N-F 100%	Fiction 80% N-F 20%
Major genre	Thriller	Thriller	Roman	Health	Roman
All major genres breakdown	Thriller 16/52 BD 13/52 Roman 10/52 "Sex-seller" 7/52 R d/am 3/52 Yg Adult 2/52 Education 1/52	Thriller 15/52 BD 14/52 Roman 10/52 "Sex-seller" 6/52 R d/am 3/52 Yg Adult 2/52	Roman 38 Roman autobiographique X 12 Roman historique x1 Roman d'aventure x1	Health 18 Biography 13 Psychology 11 ESSAY 10	Roman 11/15 Biography 1 History 1 Roman autobio 1 Travelogue 1
Longest listed top seller	<i>Astérix, t. 36 ; le papyrus de César</i>	<i>Astérix, t. 36 ; le papyrus de César</i>	<i>Le diable en rit encore</i>	2 titles : <i>Moi, ta mère,</i> and <i>Ma médecine naturelle</i>	<i>Les Eygletière</i>
Author	Jean-Yves Ferri & Didier Conrad	Jean-Yves Ferri & Didier Conrad	Régine Deforges	Christiane Collange, Rika Zarái	Henri Troyat
Nationality	French	French	French	French, Israeli	French
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male
Fiction/NF	Fiction	Fiction	Fiction	Non-Fiction x2	Fiction
Genre	Bande dessinée	Bande dessinée	Roman	Psychology, Health	Roman
Time in lists at number one	11 weeks	11 weeks	11 weeks, across 3 months	11 weeks	Listed 3 times

Discussion of results regarding research questions one and two

Considering the first research question, what can be drawn from the three sources, the 2015 CNL study, the RFI interviews and the fifth Baromètre study, regarding French reading habits? Essentially, if 90% of French people describe themselves as readers as determined by the CNL study, or even the 70% as reported by Donnat (2011) regarding his 2008 study (p.40), then France may be described as a nation for whom the act of reading is important, even if they are reading less than they would like. Secondly, the link between childhood experiences with reading, in particular as per family attitudes to reading and the presence of books in the home, and later reading habits is recognised as being crucial, particularly as the younger generation, aged between 15 and 24, identified as the stand-out group reading fewer books, is reading a smaller number of books. Whilst it is acknowledged that the age group of 15-24 year-olds read differently, in line with advances in ever-developing technology, the consequences of a French younger generation reading fewer books requires further scrutiny, as this is predicted to create a domino effect, resulting in subsequent generations reading very differently. Thirdly, print form remains the preferred choice of format, certainly of the older generation. Finally, one is struck by the difference in the profile of keen readers, being female and over 50, in contrast to younger readers reading fewer books, and the profile of those choosing e-books as being one of younger males. The generational differences in reading habits, apparent through the results of these studies, is noteworthy, and signals the need for further investigation, as the picture conjured up by the word 'reading' undergoes greater and faster changes than previously could have been imagined. In 2015, and today by extension, reading for a 15-24 year-old can be a startlingly different activity for someone of baby boomer age, in what they read, the way they read, and most significantly, their purpose for reading.

Discussion of question two is more complex, as it involves data from three different time periods, in three different categories, and an ensuing comparison. Importantly, this data dovetails with that of question one, by providing longitudinal information regarding changes in reading habits.

2015 data

What has emerged from the 2015 data? Firstly, the authors are more likely to be French, although only slightly in the majority, confirming the decreasing numbers of French authors, as also noted in the 2010 Lacôte-Gabrysiak study, and male, at an approximate rate of 1.5 male authors for every female author. The original language is more likely to be French, with English as the most significant other language, confirming data from the Frankfurter Buchmesse report previously noted in the Literature Review. However, it is to be noted that there was only one week out of 52 in the *Edistat* lists and one week out of 47 in the *Livres Hebdo* lists in which the authors were all French, and in which the original language was French. Further, the growing presence of female authors, and in particular foreign female authors, should not be ignored, nor the fact that there were authors of ten other nationalities writing in five other languages. Note the presence of Giulia Enders' book, *Le charme discret de l'intestin*, as the longest running title of the year, and the enduring presence of E.L. James' four titles of erotic romance, the popularity of both books verified by the GfK annual sales figures. Fiction is preferred over non-fiction, to the extent that for two weeks in the *Edistat* list and four weeks in *Livres Hebdo* there were no non-fiction texts at all. Confirming Hazareesingh's comment (2015) as noted in the Literature Review that "the market for books on general culture aimed at a non-academic audience is buoyant", (p.316), four genres, also verified by GfK statistics, (but with a different ranking in terms of popularity) including thriller, sex-seller, roman and bande dessinée, dominate the bestseller lists, with a French bande dessinée, *Astérix t.36 : Le papyrus de César* by Jean-Yves Ferri and Didier Conrad proving to be both the biggest seller of the year, and the title at number one for the longest period.

Additional observations which may be seen from closer scrutiny of the lists include the fact that there is a noticeable lack of classics. The exception is a text by Voltaire, *Traité Sur La Tolérance*, which appeared once, in week four of both lists, in the wake of, and propelled by, the Charlie Hebdo tragedy. Secondly, the pool of authors is diminishing as the cult of popularity increases, and certain authors dominate the lists. Furthermore, as would be expected, the bestseller lists reflect trends and events of the time, an example of which has been noted above, and which may be seen from other books written in response to the Charlie Hebdo tragedy and then the attacks in Paris. The growing popularity in mainstream reading of both *bandes dessinées* and erotic romance or, as described by the French librarian, *sex-sellers*, are also reflective of contemporary trends. In what is regarded as more a French phenomenon, the rather exceptional presence of educational workbooks in the bestsellers lists in June and July merits a mention, as for one week in the *Edistat* lists, one such workbook was the number one seller, with these educational texts occupying six of the top ten spots, an event unlikely to happen in many other countries, as for example, in Australia. Finally, the Prix Goncourt, which has the strongest presence, may be seen as the most influential prize in terms of garnering sales, a fact also verified in the 2010 Lacôte-Gabrysiak study.

1985 data

In summary, drawing from the two lists of 1985 data presented earlier, the authors were most likely to have been French, although there were ten other nationalities across both lists. Texts would almost certainly have been French. Whilst there was a two-thirds majority of male authors, female authors were gaining prominence, especially in the top selling books, in which female authors were responsible for more top sellers than male authors. The major genres were those of *roman* and biography, confirmed by an observation by Murphy (1987), when he wrote that “history, especially in the form of biography, is a mainstay of the Express best-seller list.” (p.3). Finally, prize-winning titles were visible only in the *romans* lists.

1965 data

The limited 1965 data indicates that the authors were predominantly French males, the original language of texts was almost exclusively French, non-fiction titles had a larger presence, the preferred genres were *roman*, biography and history, and for the 12 weeks of available data, prize-winning titles were quite prominent.

Information which is not obvious from the graphs includes the fact that the authors included two Nobel Prize Winners, (although Jean-Paul Sartre refused his), and one future winner in J. M. G. Le Clézio, six different literary prize winners, one recipient of the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, one recipient of the Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur, and four members of l'Académie Française. The majority of these prize-winners were male. The only other original language was English, and for three of these weeks, texts were solely in French.

With data established for the three time periods, it is now possible to address the principal question of this study, as to how French bestsellers have changed over the past fifty years, with particular reference to author, original language and genre.

Changes in bestsellers between 2015, 1985, and 1965

Essentially, as far as conclusions can be drawn from data presented in previous pages, the changes between bestsellers during the past 50 years could be simplistically represented by thinking of encyclopedias in 1965 and comics⁴⁰ in 2015 - a chasm of difference. Where nationality and original language are concerned, bestsellers are becoming less French and more multinational. As for gender, moving from a markedly male-dominated field, female authors are becoming more prominent, particularly foreign female authors. Not only are fiction texts more the norm, but preferred genres in 2015

⁴⁰ The term 'comics' is used to provide a contrast, and in no way denies the prestige, variety and form evident in the highly popular genre of *bande dessinée*.

are decidedly different from those in both 1985 and 1965, with the *roman* genre linking the three periods, whilst the influence of major prizes is diminishing somewhat.

Frequency of listing

Whilst it is difficult to say due to the lack of consistency of the data, it would appear that in terms of frequency, titles had longer life in the bestseller lists of 1985 and 1965, whilst authors during those time periods would generally only have one title in the lists. In 2015, the bestseller lists were dominated by a certain pool of authors, with 17 authors from *Edistat* (10 French and seven foreign) and 16 (eight French and 8 foreign) from the *Livres Hebdo* lists having more than one title in the lists. Noteworthy here are the nine titles by three Japanese manga writers, and the ten erotic romance (*sex-seller*) titles by British and American female writers. This points to the growing influence of foreign authors and the different cultural values and practices emanating from their work.

Number one selling book

This is a very interesting aspect to examine, as it is clear that the top selling books of the three time periods have metamorphosed from being essentially French in nationality of author and original language in 1965 to possibly being written by one of four other nationalities, in two other languages. The top selling book is more likely to be fiction in 2015, whilst the choice of genres has changed markedly. Two genres of 2015 are invisible in the lists of 1985 and 1965, those being the *sex-seller* and the *bande dessinée*, although the *roman* genre has retained its popularity across the fifty year period. Compare the title listed longest at number one in 1965, a novel or *roman*, *Les Eygletière* by Henri Troyat, with that of 2015, a *bande dessinée*, *Astérix t.36: Le papyrus de César* by Jean-Yves Ferri and Didier Conrad. Both books were at least written by men, there ending any other resemblance, but serving to underline the vast difference in choices being made by readers.

Concluding remarks

Taking the three categories into account, what can be determined about how bestsellers have changed over the past fifty years? That the bestsellers have changed in essence is beyond question. Considering nationality, the French are now reading bestselling books by a far wider range of authors than just French. Additionally, and perhaps as one consequence of that, the background of the authors has changed, from being one in which authors were likely to be learned, academic, accomplished and occupying positions of influence regarding French language, to coming from anywhere, regardless of their station in life and/or academic prowess. It is interesting to ponder what effect might this be having on the intellectual life of the French, and thought-provoking to consider that in 1965 when writers could be described as more erudite, reading was a pastime favoured by many, whereas in 2015, as the educational background of authors has ceased to determine book sales, the average number of books being read is decreasing. Regarding language, accompanying the growth in both the number of texts with a different original language, and the number of other languages from which the texts are coming, there is a greater chance that a bestseller originates in a language other than French, which exposes French readers to different cultural practices and attitudes. There has been a clear growth in the number of female authors, particularly in the number of foreign female authors, which appears to be directly related to the world-wide popularity of erotic romance titles, once again introducing different influences. Readers are more likely to be choosing fiction titles over non-fiction in 2015, the effect of which would be very interesting to attempt to measure, in terms of increasing or decreasing knowledge. And what readers are now choosing in terms of genre is quite different, particularly with reference to the appearance of genres such as *bande dessinée* and erotica (*sex-sellers*), which were nowhere to be seen in 1985, much less in 1965, and the corresponding drop in genres such as essays and biographies. Taking into account only the top ten bestsellers, what the French are reading in 2015 looks very different to practices in 1965 and/or 1985. Without intending to imply any value judgement, what people are choosing in 2015 could be said to be more populist and less academic, perhaps politely described as more colourful. Just as language evolves and changes, so, too, have bestselling books in France.

Limitations

Now to turn our attention to the second aspect of this chapter, that of the limitations of this study. After careful scrutiny, two main limitations present themselves, the lack of uniformity of data procured, which was unforeseen, and the scope, which was unavoidable. However, opportunely, both herald further avenues for future study.

Firstly, in the wake of the difficulty of locating data for 1965 and 1985, what was achieved for 1965 was not only very limited, but also not substantial enough to make firm comparisons. Additionally, considering the four sources of information, it was not possible to achieve uniformity of data. The data from *Edistat* ran for 52 weeks, but was based on sales figures from 1000 points of sale. Data from *Livres Hebdo*, on the other hand, was based on sales figures from 4000 points of sale, but was only available for 47 weeks of the year. Turning to 1985, whilst the data here was available for 52 weeks of the year, it was divided into two sections, thus providing data on the top 20 bestselling books, and consequently was not appropriate for an equivalent comparison. And as for 1965, the data was only available on a monthly basis, and changed format in the tenth month. The end result of the data procurement was four somewhat disparate lists, and it became more a matter of comparing apples with oranges and bananas. However, despite this, it must be said that it is possible to discern a picture of readership regarding bestsellers during the three time periods, some of greater clarity than others.

Secondly, considering the scope of this investigation, it is necessary to bear in mind that it must be compliant with pre-determined parameters. In doing so, and focusing on bestsellers exclusively as a pivotal aspect of reading habits, only part of the whole picture is revealed. At this juncture, two points present themselves for consideration, firstly, measuring complete access to bestsellers, and secondly, total readership beyond bestsellers.

If, as this study has attempted to do, one is looking at bestsellers as an aspect of reading habits, examining bestsellers exclusively through bestseller lists provides only one part of the story. This is not the whole picture. Where else did people in 2015 get their bestsellers from? Libraries immediately spring to mind and thus it is deemed essential to examine library borrowing, both in terms of bestsellers, but also as a key to considering what the population is reading. Books may also be borrowed, lent, given, received and as is noted in the 2016 Baromètre SOFIA, SNE, SGDL study, downloaded both free of charge and/or pirated. To get a true sense of bestsellers and their readership and influence, although it may well be impossible to carry out, all avenues noted here would have to be explored, and within the confines of this study, that was not possible.

As an aside to this point, again to comply with the confines of this study, for 2015, only the top ten books were examined. If that number of books was increased to 20, 50 or 100, clearly a broader panorama would be achieved, and a different result, but once again, that would far exceed the existing parameters.

Next, what about total readership, beyond bestsellers? To get a more accurate picture of reading habits, it would be necessary to investigate what is being read beyond the bestseller lists. What about other groups of readers, such as, to cite but one example, the older and perhaps more rural readers, who favour a genre known as *la littérature de terroir*⁴¹? This genre, which has its roots in the mid-eighteen hundreds, has no presence in the top ten bestseller lists, but the librarian in Carcassonne noted the popularity of this genre in terms of books borrowed. Undoubtedly, there are other such groups that are under-represented or not represented at all in bestseller lists. However, the parameter of this study precluded these considerations.

⁴¹ Translated as 'regional literature'.

To summarise, as noted in the Methodology, 'bestseller' does not necessarily mean best, nor does it necessarily mean read. It is suggested that in the context of this study, it does not necessarily mean the definitive sum of particular books read, but rather the books which have been bought by most people at a given time. To use the analogy of a book, in adhering to the requirements of this study, to give the complete story of bestsellers and reading habits, the opening chapters have been provided, but a large part of the book remains to be written.

Distinguishing features of this study

Having noted the above, what then distinguishes this study from others in the field? If it does, how does this study contribute to existing knowledge in this field?

In answer to the first question, the fact that this study has been carried out makes it distinctive, as so few other studies of this nature exist. Regarding reading habits in general, apart from Darnton and Donnat, these tend to have been carried out by groups, rather than individuals, and on behalf of commercial interests. Furthermore, concerning bestsellers, it is a detailed examination of what information is available, and it is detailed in a different way to previous studies. Todd looked at the prevailing history and mood of the time, whilst noting bestselling titles and providing what background information was available for each book, and locating that to the specific time. Lacôte-Gabrysiak, in a precise study that was very specifically related to bestsellers, and encompassing similar strands to this examination, for example in looking at the number of prize-winning titles and also genre breakdown, noted the numbers of books sold. But the present study both attempts to note features of bestsellers of the modern day and in the modern era, and then to compare those with earlier times, in a very detailed way, in looking at the nationality and gender of authors, the original language, and the genre selection. From other sources, such as GfK, it is possible to obtain a list of the overall top selling books for 2015, but that list will not provide the same degree of scrutiny or consideration as has been achieved here.

Now to respond to the second question, as to how does this study contribute to existing knowledge in this field? It addresses contemporary reading habits and bestsellers, and provides a comprehensive record of 2015 bestsellers, detailed data from 1985 and more sketchy information from 1965, all of which is important from a French heritage point of view. It is considered that this information should be readily available, as an important measure of cultural practices.

In the same vein, this study also highlights some surprising points, the first being the lack of documentation and the lack of ease of access to bestseller information, particularly of times past, and secondly, the assumption that this information was readily available. This could be seen as a clarion call to anyone interested in preserving information related to reading habits and bestsellers for future generations. Finally, it was also discovered that if data is traced back to its source, the same sources are being used, as, in just one example, could be seen by the number of sites relying on bestseller information from *Edistat*. In the digital age, data seems to be acquiring a circulatory nature, as there appears to be a growing but perhaps unwitting reliance on the same sources.

Finally, this study clearly signposts further examination of both bestsellers and reading habits in France in manifest ways. A prime starting point could be an examination of exactly how, what and why the younger generation in France is reading, linked to a study of generational reading differences. Another area to consider is a possible knowledge gap as a result of popular current reading habits. Investigating patronage of e-books, and assessment of changes to cultural practices as a result of reading, provide two quite different avenues to pursue. Looking in depth at the entirety of entries in the bestseller lists, and incorporating all access to books by French readers, including library borrowing, would be a fascinating study. The list is long, but clearly there is a book waiting to be written, to continue the studies of Darnton, Donnat, Todd and Lacôte-

Gabrysiak, to place on record information about both topics, and in so doing, bring the data up to modern day.

« Je ne crois pas que les Français lisent moins, je crois qu'ils lisent différemment.

Alors quelle est la réalité ? Est-ce que le nombre de lecteurs diminue, mais cette baisse serait compensée par le fait que ceux qui lisent, lisent plus ? Difficile de le savoir, il faudrait pour cela établir un vaste sondage. »⁴²

Marc Levy⁴³

Chapter Five

Conclusion

This study has sought to answer two interrelated questions about reading habits in France in 2015, regarding current trends in reading, and changes in bestsellers over the past fifty years. After establishing the esteem in which books are still held in France, reviewing the available literature and presenting the methodology, the results of investigation were provided, having looked at the current trends regarding reading habits and bestsellers of three time periods over fifty years. Firstly, the results show that the French consider themselves as readers, primarily in print form, with 90% having read at least one book during the past twelve months, but reading less books overall. Regarding bestsellers, there has been a sharp decrease in the number of French male authors, a corresponding increase in the number of foreign female authors, and an emergence of different genres, replacing those which were formerly popular. These are the primary findings, as determined by this study.

To elaborate, in referring back to questions driving this study and as noted in the introduction, it is felt that reading is still a valued and important activity in France, albeit one to which less time is being devoted, due in part to increased leisure opportunities. It is considered that the French certainly see themselves as lovers of reading, despite

⁴² Translated as "I don't believe that the French read less, I believe that they read differently.

So, what is real situation? Are the numbers of readers diminishing but this reduction is compensated by the fact that those who read, read more? It's difficult to know, and in order to find out, a survey of vast proportions would be necessary."

⁴³ M. Ewing, personal communication, May 31, 2015.

now reading fewer books per year. In 2015, the way the French are reading looks different, in that there is now a choice of medium, books in print or digital form. As yet there has not been a complete embracing of e-books, but rather a gradual shift, with an increase in the number of e-books being read, particularly by young male readers, whilst the majority of French remain attached to books in print form. What the French are reading in 2015, which is certainly less than it was fifty years ago, is much more populist and less intellectual in nature. It is safe to say that French reading tastes have changed over the past fifty years, again reflecting less erudite choices, witness that in 2015 the preferred genres of the French include the ever popular *roman*, thrillers, *bandes dessinées* and *sex-sellers* (erotic romance). Bestsellers do not represent the entirety of French reading tastes by any means, rather reflecting those books that have been purchased by most people at a given time. Bestsellers have changed in many ways over the years, most significantly in terms of the nationality and gender of authors, moving from being essentially male and French to a more mixed base of male and female authors, from various other nationalities, and genres, with the emergence of *bandes dessinées* and *sex-sellers*, transforming the most popular choices of French readers.

Reflections

Having carried out this study, which has been a genuine voyage of discovery, it is timely to offer three fleeting reflections, separate from the results. Firstly, the lack of readily available data remains surprising, illustrating that nothing should be assumed when embarking on such a project. Secondly, the circulatory nature of data and information is noteworthy, in that a lot of information seems to stem from but one or two points, perhaps unknowingly, and that data sources in general need closer scrutiny. Finally, perhaps the French book industry could be more proactive in preserving information about reading habits and bestsellers in France?

Future directions

Arising from this study, there are many indicators of subjects for further investigation, as has been noted in the previous chapter. In conclusion, selecting but four possible avenues, where firstly the possibility of locating data from 1965 bears further scrutiny, simply as an important record of reading habits of that time. Secondly, having noted the importance of the family environment in establishing and/or fostering good reading habits, it is felt that generational differences, and in particular, the reading habits of the younger generation should be examined, alongside the consequences of reading less and differently, for future generations. Further, it is considered extremely important that the existing studies of Darnton (1991), Donnat (2009), Todd (1994) and Lacôte-Gabrysiak (2010) are continued to bring information on reading habits and bestsellers up to date. Lastly, following on from the book by Rouvillois (2011), *Une histoire des bestsellers*, which focused on international bestsellers, a text dealing solely with French bestsellers is considered to be essential. It is extremely important that data regarding French reading habits generally, and bestsellers in particular, is readily and easily available, as a measure of popular culture.

Approaching the conclusion of this study, I would like to make reference to two experts in their fields, both of whom have been quoted in this thesis, Robert Darnton, acclaimed academic and esteemed librarian, and Marc Levy, highly successful and prolific author. Darnton's quote at the beginning of this investigation demonstrates the power of reading as a means of making sense of the world, and the ensuing influence of others by those who have discovered new ideas through reading. Reading is a powerful activity. Introducing the final chapter, Marc Levy notes what an enormous task it would be, to truly determine the situation in France regarding reading habits, as it would be necessary to carry out a survey of vast proportions. No doubt it would be an undertaking of gargantuan proportions. Marrying these two ideas, for cultural and historical reasons, and for future French generations who might wish to know how, what and why their forebears were reading, it is imperative to at least attempt to record what the reading

habits of this generation look like. All the more so, as the younger generation are the generation reading less.

Finally, where reading is headed in France is a fascinating contemplation. Sans doute, c'est une tout autre histoire, n'est-ce pas ?⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Translated as 'Without doubt, that's quite a different story, isn't it?'

Bibliography

Académie Française. (n.d.). *Grand Prix du Roman*. Retrieved October 14, 2015, from <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/grand-prix-du-roman>

Académie Goncourt. (2015). *Le Palmarès*. Retrieved October 14, 2015, from <http://academie-goncourt.fr/?article=1229180042>

Albertine. (n.d.). *About Us*. Retrieved April 25, 2016, from <http://www.albertine.com/about-us/>

Arald. (2015). « *Les français et la lecture* »: les chiffres clefs de l'étude. Retrieved March 24, 2015, from <http://www.arald.org/les-francais-et-la-lecture-les-chiffres-clefs-de-l-etude/pdf>

Baron, N. (2015). *Words Onscreen The Fate of Reading in a Digital World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Berthou, B. (2006). *Le "best-seller": la fabrique du succès*. Retrieved April 14, 2015, from <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00214287/document>

Bertrand, A. (2014). *La lecture, populaire ? Un regard sur le partage de la lecture*. Retrieved September 8, 2015, from <http://bbf.enssib.fr/consulter/bbf-2014-01-0090-007>

BnF. (2014). *From the royal book collections to the BnF*. Retrieved March 3, 2015, from http://www.bnf.fr/en/bnf/history_bnf/a.from_royal_collections_to_bnf.html

Booknode. (n.d.). *Meilleures ventes de livres en France*. Retrieved from http://booknode.com/meilleures_ventes_france

Buratti, L. (2014). « *Les jeunes lisent toujours, mais pas des livres* ». Retrieved April 29, 2015, from http://campus.lemonde.fr/campus/article/2014/09/24/les-jeunes-lisent-toujours-mais-pas-des-livres_4491903_4401467.html

Burns, R. (1996). *Everyman's Poetry*. London: Everyman

Busnel, F. (2014). *L'édito de François Busnel*. Lire, #428, 5.

Butler, S. (2014). *Independent bookshops in decline as buying habits change*. Retrieved June 10, 2015, from <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/feb/21/independent-bookshops-campaign>

BVA. (2015). *Les Français et la lecture*. Retrieved September 2, 2015, from http://www.bva.fr/fr/sondages/les_francais_et_la_lecture.html

BVA. (2015). *Les Français et la lecture*. Retrieved September 2, 2015, from http://www.bva.fr/data/sondage/sondage_fiche/1740/fichier_barometre_bva_-_domeo_-_presse_regionale_-_observatoire_de_la_vie_quotidienne_-_aout_20159a9c0.pdf

Centre National du Livre. (n.d.). *Le Centre National Du Livre*. Retrieved March 24, 2015, from http://www.centrenationaldulivre.fr/fr/le_cnl/

Chanda, T. (2014). *Bernard Nageotte: «Je ne lirai pas les traités de mathématiques»*. Retrieved from <http://www.rfi.fr/culture/20140729-rfi-bernard-nageotte-livres-lectures-litterature-vacances/>

Chettri, K. & Rout, S. (2013). *Reading Habits - An Overview*. Retrieved April 20, 2016, from <http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol14-issue6/C01461317.pdf?id=6916>

Clark, C. (2011). *French Literature A Beginner's Guide*. Oxford: One World

Couderc, R. (2015). *Communiqué de Presse. Top 50 des meilleures ventes de livres en 2014*. Retrieved March 6, 2015, from <http://www.gfk.com/fr/news-and-events/press-room/press-releases/pages/top-50-des-meilleures-ventes-de-livres-en-2014-.aspx>

Culturebox. (2015). *Les Français achètent de moins en moins de livres*. Retrieved April 25, 2015, from <http://culturebox.francetvinfo.fr/livres/les-francais-achetent-de-moins-en-moins-de-livres-214063>

Culturebox. (2015). *A Saint-Germain-des-Prés, la librairie La Hune ferme ses portes*. Retrieved June 26, 2015, from <http://culturebox.francetvinfo.fr/livres/evenements/a-saint-germain-des-pres-la-librairie-la-hune-ferme-ses-portes-221833>

Darnton, R. (1991). *History of Reading*. In P. Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (pp.140-167). Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press

Donnat, O. (2009). *Les pratiques culturelles des Français à l'ère numérique Éléments de synthèse 1997-2008*. Retrieved from <http://www.pratiquesculturelles.culture.gouv.fr/doc/08synthese.pdf>

Donnat, O. (2011). *Lecture, livre et littérature: Evolution 1973-2008*. In Evans, C. (Ed.), *Lectures et lecteurs à l'heure d'Internet Livre, presse, bibliothèques*. (pp.27-40). Paris : Éditions du Cercles de la Librairie

Druckerman, P. (2014, July 10). *The French do buy books. Real books*. Retrieved July 10, 2015, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/10/opinion/pamela-druckerman-the-french-do-buy-books-real-books.html>

- Ducas, S. (2014). *La littérature aujourd'hui : populaire ?* Retrieved September 8, 2015, from <http://bbf.enssib.fr/consulter/bbf-2014-01-0078-006>
- Eco, U. & Carrière, J-C. (2011). *This is Not the End of the Book*. (P. McLean Trans.) London: Vintage Books (Original work published 2009)
- Edistat. (n.d.). *Edistat Statistiques de L'Édition*. Retrieved January 20, 2015, from <http://www.edistat.com/>
- Flood, A. (2012). *UK lost more than 200 libraries in 2012*. Retrieved June 10, 2015 from <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/dec/10/uk-lost-200-libraries-2012>
- Flood, A. (2014). *Ebooks can tell which novels you didn't finish*. Retrieved March 11, 2015, from <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/dec/10/kobo-survey-books-readers-finish-donna-tartt>
- Flood, A. (2015). *Sales of printed books fall by more than £150m in five years*. Retrieved March 11, 2015, from <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jan/13/sales-printed-books-fell-150m--five-years>
- France 5. (n.d.). *La Grand Librairie*. Retrieved September 1, 2015, from <http://www.france5.fr/et-vous/France-5-et-vous/La-chaine/A-l-antenne/p-307-La-Grande-Librairie.htm>
- Frankfurter Buchmesse. (n.d.). *Information on the Book Market in France*. Retrieved May 18, 2016, from http://www.buchmesse.de/images/fbm/dokumente-ua-pdfs/2016/buchmarkt_frankreich_en_170216_56892.pdf
- Frémy, D. (1965). *quid ? Tout pour Tous*. Paris : Plon
- Frémy, D & M. (1985). *Quid 1986*. Paris : Éditions Robert Laffont
- Gary, N. (2013). *Habitudes de lecture dans le monde : la France classée 9^e*. Retrieved from <https://www.actualitte.com/article/monde-edition/habitudes-de-lecture-dans-le-monde-la-france-classee-9e/42524>
- Gary, N. (2015). *Des Français qui aimeraient lire plus, mais lisent moins Mesurer et comprendre*. Retrieved April 15, 2015, from <https://www.actualitte.com/article/monde-edition/des-francais-qui-aimeraient-lire-plus-mais-lisent-moins/54349>
- Gary, N. (2015). *Les lecteurs et le livre numérique en France : les usages progressent*. Retrieved March 24, 2015, from <https://www.actualitte.com/societe/les-lecteurs-et-le-livre-numerique-en-france-les-usages-progressent-55839.htm>

Georges, P. (2015). *Etats-Unis: les ventes d'ebooks en baisse en 2014*. Retrieved June 3, 2015, from <http://www.livreshebdo.fr/article/etats-unis-les-ventes-debooks-en-baisse-en-2014>

Georges, P. (2015). *Le "Van du livre" repart à l'assaut des routes australiennes*. Retrieved June 9, 2015, from <http://www.livreshebdo.fr/article/le-van-du-livre-repart-lassaut-des-routes-australiennes>

Gleed, A. (2013). *Booktrust Reading Habits Survey 2013*. Retrieved April 6, 2015, from <http://fileservr.booktrust.org.uk/usr/resources/1078/1576-booktrust-reading-habits-report-final.pdf>

Hazareesingh, S. (2015). *How the French Think An Affectionate Portrait of an Intellectual People*. UK : Allen Lane

Heyman, S. (2015). *Keeping Tabs on Best-Seller Books and Reading Habits*. Retrieved March 4, 2015) from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/05/arts/international/keeping-tabs-on-best-seller-books-and-reading-habits.html?_r=0

Ifop. (2016). *Les Français et les livres*. Retrieved April 1, 2016, from http://www.ifop.com/media/poll/3328-1-study_file.pdf

In-Folio. (2016). *La Véritable Histoire du Prix Femina*. Retrieved October 27, 2015, from <http://www.prixfemina.org/post/130260648330/la-veritable-histoire-du-prix-femina>

Institut CSA. (2015). *Les habitudes de lecture des Français pendant les vacances d'été*. Retrieved July 29, 2015, from http://www.csa.eu/multimedia/data/sondages/data2015/CSA-Direct_Matin-Les-habitudes-de-lecture-des-Francais-pendant-lete.pdf

Institut Français. (2015). *Barthes Vision*. Retrieved June 27, 2015, from <http://www.barthes.vision/?lang=en>

Ipsos. (2014). *"Les Nouveaux Lecteurs" Etat des lieux et évolutions des pratiques de lecture depuis 2011*. Retrieved June 23, 2015, from <http://aldus2006.typepad.fr/files/enquetelectureipsoslivreshebdo2014.pdf>

Ipsos. (2015). *Les Français et la lecture*. Retrieved March 24, 2015, from http://www.centrenationaldulivre.fr/fichier/p_ressource/6257/ressource_fichier_fr_etude.2015_complet_les.frana.ais.et.la.lecture.pdf

Jédon, S. (2015). *«Ideas box», la bibliothèque des réfugiés va s'industrialiser*. Retrieved July 3, 2015, from <http://www.rfi.fr/culture/20150619-ideas-box-bibliotheque-refugies-industrialiser/>

Lacôte-Gabrysiak, L. (2010). « *C'est un best-seller!* » *Meilleures ventes de livres en France de 1984 à 2004*. Retrieved April 14, 2015, from Communication [En ligne], Vol. 27/2 | 2010 URL : <http://communication.revues.org/3130> ; DOI : 10.4000/communication.3130

Lacarrau, M. (Présentatrice). (2015, June 12). *Les cinq derniers minutes. Jacques Weber : "Reconstituer le vivant dans l'écriture"*. (Television broadcast). Paris: France 2, Le JT de 13 heures. Retrieved July 1, 2015, from http://www.francetvinfo.fr/culture/jacques-weber-reconstituer-le-vivant-dans-l-ecriture_948811.html

Legifrance. (2014). *Loi n° 2014-779 du 8 juillet 2014*. Retrieved from <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000029210814>

Leridon, M. (2013). *Tout ce que vous avez toujours voulu savoir sur la rentrée littéraire*. Retrieved 23 June, 2015, from <http://www.slate.fr/story/77070/faq-rentree-litteraire-livres-prix>

L'Express. (2014). *Les Français lisent moins qu'avant mais font plus confiance aux livres qu'à internet*. Retrieved March 11, 2015, from <http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livres/les-francais-lisent-moins-qu-avant>

Lire et Faire Lire. (2014). *Qui sommes-nous?* Retrieved July 1, 2015, from <http://www.lireetfairelire.org/content/qui-sommes-nous#.VZOGuPIViko>

Livres Hebdo. (n.d.). *Livres Hebdo*. Retrieved January 23, 2015, from <http://www.livreshebdo.fr/>

Lucet, E. (Présentatrice). (2015, June 5). *Les cinq derniers minutes. Fabrice Colin dévoile les mystères de la France*. (Television broadcast). Paris: France 2, Le JT de 13 heures. Retrieved July 1, 2015, from http://www.francetvinfo.fr/france/fabrice-colin-devoile-les-mysteres-de-la-france_938103.html

Lucet, E. (Présentatrice). (2015, June 8). *Les cinq derniers minutes. Les mystères de l'univers expliqués par Christophe Galfard*. (Television broadcast). Paris: France 2, Le JT de 13 heures. Retrieved July 1, 2015, from http://www.francetvinfo.fr/decouverte/les-mysteres-de-l-univers-expliques-par-christophe-galfard_942215.html

Lucet, E. (Présentatrice). (2015, June 18). *Les cinq derniers minutes. Frédéric Larrey immortalise en photos le littoral français*. (Television broadcast). Paris: France 2, Le JT de 13 heures. Retrieved July 1, 2015, from http://www.francetvinfo.fr/france/frederic-larrey-immortalise-en-photos-le-littoral-francais_957683.html

Lucet, E. (Présentatrice). (2015, June 24). *Les cinq derniers minutes. Sébastien Martinez, athlète de la mémoire, dévoile ses secrets*. (Television broadcast). Paris: France 2, Le JT de 13 heures. Retrieved July 1, 2015, from http://www.francetvinfo.fr/decouverte/sebastien-martinez-champion-du-monde-de-la-memoire-devoile-ses-secrets_967327.html

Lucet, E. (Présentatrice). (2015, June 30). *Les cinq derniers minutes. Cuisiner le poisson : les bons conseils du chef Johan Leclerre*. (Television broadcast). Paris: France 2, Le JT de 13 heures. Retrieved July 1, 2015, from http://www.francetvinfo.fr/culture/cuisine/cuisiner-le-poisson-les-bons-conseils-du-chef-johan-leclerre_976769.html

Macmillan Dictionary. (n.d.) *lifelogging definition and synonyms*. Retrieved June 17, 2015, from www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/lifelogging

Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication. (n.d.). *Les Pratiques Culturelles des Français Enquêtes 1973, 1981, 1988, 1997, 2008*. Retrieved March 10, 2015, from http://www.pratiquesculturelles.culture.gouv.fr/08resultat_chap6.php

Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication. (2015). *Livre et Lecture Chiffres clés du secteur du livre : l'édition 2015 (données 2013-2014) est parue*. Retrieved June 10, 2015, from <http://www.culturecommunication.gouv.fr/Politiques-ministerielles/Livre-et-Lecture/Actualites/Chiffres-cles-du-secteur-du-livre-l-edition-2015-donnees-2013-2014-est-parue>

Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication. (n.d.). *Livre et lecture, Marché du livre*. Retrieved July 6, 2015, from <http://www.culturecommunication.gouv.fr/Politiques-ministerielles/Livre-et-Lecture/Economie-du-livre/Marche-du-livre>

Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication. (2016). *Livre et Lecture Chiffres clés du secteur du livre : l'édition 2016 (données 2014-2015) est parue*. Retrieved April 27, 2016, from <http://www.culturecommunication.gouv.fr/Politiques-ministerielles/Livre-et-Lecture/Actualites/Chiffres-cles-du-secteur-du-livre-l-edition-2016-donnees-2014-2015-est-parue>

Moignot, M. (2013). *Villes, cités et villages du livre en France*. Retrieved June 30, 2015, from <http://mondedulivre.hypotheses.org/1684>

Montolieu Village Du Livre. (2016). *Commerces Et Services*. Retrieved April 24, 2016, from <http://www.montolieu-livre.fr/village-du-livre>

Murphy, B. (1987). "Paris: A nation of readers." *The Atlantic Monthly*, pp 21-25. Retrieved September 9, 2015, from Expanded Academic ASAP.

Nobel Prize.org. (2014). *Facts on the Nobel Prize in Literature*. Retrieved June 22, 2015, from http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/facts/literature/index.html

Nobel Prize.org. (2014). *Nobel Laureates and Country of Birth*. Retrieved June 22, 2015, from http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/lists/countries.html

Octobre, S. (2014). *Deux pouces et des neurones Les cultures juvéniles de l'ère médiatique à l'ère numérique. France*. Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication Secrétariat général, Département des études, de la prospective et des statistiques (DEPS)

OpinionWay. (2015). *Un marché en légère progression: plus de lecteurs et plus d'acquisitions de livres numériques*. Retrieved March 24, 2015, from http://www.sne.fr/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/barometre-usages-livres-numeriques-2015_SNE-SGDL-SOFIA.pdf

OpinionWay. (2016). *Usages du Livre Numérique Vague 6*. Retrieved April 26, 2016, from http://www.sne.fr/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Barometre-des-usages-du-livre-numerique_Vague-6_Presentation-mars-2016.pdf

Osnos, P. (2013). *The Endangered Fate of Barnes & Noble*. Retrieved June 10, 2015, from <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/02/the-endangered-fate-of-barnes-noble/272865/>

Prix Interallié. (n.d.). *Lauréats du Prix Interallié depuis 1930*. Retrieved October 27, 2015, from <http://www.prixinterallie.org/laureats-du-prix-interallie-depuis-1930>

Prix Médicis. (n.d.). *L'histoire*. Retrieved October 27, 2015, from <https://prixmedicis.wordpress.com/lhistoire/>

Renaudot. (n.d.). *Historique*. Retrieved October 27, 2015 from <http://prixrenaudot.free.fr/historique.htm>

RFI. (2015). *Que lisent ceux qui font RFI ?* Retrieved December 7, 2015, from <http://www.rfi.fr/culture/20140714-vacances-fil-pages-livres-litterature-ete-lecture-rfi-2014>

Rouvillois, F. (2011). *Une histoire des bestsellers*. France: Flammarion

Rüdiger & Wischenbart. (2015). *Global E-Book A report on market trends and developments*. Retrieved April 29, 2015, from <http://wischenbart.com/upload/Global-Ebook-2015-Executive-Summary.pdf>

Rue des Livres. (n.d.). *Les meilleures ventes de livres*. Retrieved from http://www.rue-des-livres.com/top_ventes/

Sciolino, E. (2012). *The French Still Flock to Bookstores*. Retrieved June 29, 2015, from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/21/books/french-bookstores-are-still-prospering.html?_r=1

Senscritique. (2015). *Les 50 meilleures ventes livres de la semaine*. Retrieved March 5, 2015, from http://www.senscritique.com/liste/Les_50_meilleures_ventes_livres_de_la_semaine/72033

Snaije, O. (2015). *Study Reveals the Relationship Between the French and Reading*. Retrieved March 31, 2015, from <http://publishingperspectives.com/2015/03/study-reveals-the-relationship-between-the-french-and-reading/>

SNE. (2015). *Cinquième vague du Baromètre SOFIA/SNE/SGDL sur les usages du livre numérique*. Retrieved March 23, 2015, from <http://www.sne.fr/communiqués/un-marche-en-legere-progression-plus-de-lecteurs-et-plus-dacquisitions-de-livres-numeriques/>

Solym, C. (2015). *Toujours moins de librairies parmi les commerces de Paris*. Retrieved March 12, 2015, from <https://www.actualitte.com/librairies/toujours-moins-de-librairies-parmi-les-commerces-de-paris-55721.htm>

Sparks and Honey. (2014). *A-Z Culture Glossary of 2015: The Trends You Need to Know to be Relevant*. Retrieved June 17, 2015, from <http://www.slideshare.net/sparksandhoney/az-culture-glossary-of-2015>

Thomas, V. (2015). *Trois femmes puissantes en tête des ventes de la rentrée*. Retrieved October 29, 2015, from <http://www.livreshebdo.fr/article/trois-femmes-puissantes-en-tete-des-ventes-de-la-rentree>

Todd, C. (1994). *A Century of French Best-Sellers (1890-1990) Studies in French Literature Volume 18*. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2014). *Country Profiles Republic of Korea*. Retrieved July 19, 2016, from <http://www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/country-profile.aspx?code=KOR®ioncode=40515>

Verboord, M. (2011). *Market logic and cultural consecration in French, German and American bestseller lists, 1970-2007*. *Poetics* 39 (2011) 290-315

Vidaling, R. (2002). *L'histoire des plus grands succès littéraires du XX^E siècle*. France : Tana

Walter, A. (2015). *589 romans pour la rentrée littéraire 2015*. Retrieved June 26, 2015, from <http://www.livreshebdo.fr/article/589-romans-pour-la-rentree-litteraire-2015>

Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Powerbocking*. Retrieved June 17, 2015, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Powerbocking>

World Cities Culture Forum. (2015). *World Cities Culture Report 2015*. Retrieved April 20, 2015, from http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/assets/others/WCCF_Report2015_FINAL.pdf

World Cities Culture Forum. (2015). *Bookshops*. Retrieved April 20, 2016, from <http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/data/bookshops>

World Cities Culture Forum. (2015). *Number of book loans by public libraries per year (million)*. Retrieved April 20, 2016, from <http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/data/number-of-book-loans-by-public-libraries-per-year-million1>

World Cities Culture Forum. (2015). *Number of book titles published in the country in a year*. Retrieved April 20, 2016, from <http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/data/number-of-book-titles-published-in-the-country-in-a-year>

World Cities Culture Forum. (2015). *Number of bookshops per 100.000 population*. Retrieved April 20, 2016, from <http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/data/number-of-bookshops-per-100.000-population>

World Cities Culture Forum. (2015). *Number of public libraries per 100,000 population*. Retrieved April 20, 2016, from <http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/data/number-of-public-libraries-per-100000-population1>

World Cities Culture Forum. (2015). *Paris*. Retrieved April 20, 2016, from <http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/cities/paris/data>

World Cities Culture Forum. (2015). *Public libraries*. Retrieved April 20, 2016, from <http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/data/public-libraries>

World Cities Culture Forum. (2015). *Total population number*. Retrieved April 20, 2016, from <http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/data/total-population-number>

Zickuhr, K. & Rainie, L. (2014). *A Snapshot of Reading in America in 2013*. Retrieved July 16, 2015, from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/01/16/a-snapshot-of-reading-in-america-in-2013/>

Tables

Table 1 Top Ten Bestseller Listed Books (p.44)

Table 2 Fiction genres, in alphabetical order (p.46)

Table 3 Non-Fiction genres, in alphabetical order (p.47)

Table 4 Frequency of Bestseller Listed Books EDISTAT (p.48)

Table 5 Frequency of Bestseller Listed Books LIVRES HEBDO (p.49)

Table 6 Top Selling Book from weekly bestseller lists 2015 (p.49)

Table 7 Bestseller Listed Books 1985 (p.52)

Table 8 Bestseller Listed Books 1965 (p.52)

Table 9 Frequency table, 2015, 1985, 1965 (p.72)

Table 10 Weekly top selling books, 2015, 1985, 1965 (p.73)

Figures

Figure 1 Nationality of author 2015 (p.58)

Figure 1a Breakdown of nationality of authors 2015 (p.59)

Figure 2 Original language of texts 2015 (p.60)

Figure 2a Breakdown of original language of texts 2015 (p.60)

Figure 3 Gender of authors 2015 (p.61)

Figure 4 Fiction/Non-Fiction aspect of texts 2015 (p.61)

Figure 5 Major genres of texts 2015 (p.62)

Figure 6 Nationality of authors 1985 (p.63)

Figure 6a Breakdown of nationality of authors 1985 (p.63)

Figure 7 Original language of texts 1985 (p.64)

Figure 8 Gender of authors 1985 (p.64)

Figure 9 Fiction/Non-Fiction aspect of texts 1985 (p.65)

Figure 10 Major genres of texts 1985 (p.65)

- Figure 11 Nationality of authors 1965 (p.66)
- Figure 11a Breakdown of nationality of authors 1965 (p.66)
- Figure 12 Original language of texts 1965 (p.67)
- Figure 13 Gender of authors 1965 (p.67)
- Figure 14 Fiction/Non-Fiction aspect of texts1965 (p.68)
- Figure 15 Major genres of texts1965 (p.68)
- Figure 16 Nationality of authors, 2015, 1985 and 1965 (p.69)
- Figure 17 Original language of texts, 2015, 1985 and 1965 (p.69)
- Figure 18 Gender of authors, 2015, 1985 and 1965 (p.70)
- Figure 19 Fiction/Non-Fiction aspect of texts, 2015, 1985 and 1965 (p.70)
- Figure 20 Major genres of texts, 2015, 1985 and 1965 (p.71)

Appendices

Contents:

Page 100: Contents

Page 101: Appendix A: Afterword

Page 103: Appendix B: Organisations and/or people contacted

Page 105: Appendix C: List of data tables

Appendix A: Afterword

A quotation springs to mind when considering the path of this thesis, that of Robert Burns, celebrated Scottish poet, adapted from his poem in 1785, entitled *To a Mouse* to become 'The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry' (1996, p.48).

In 2015, whilst living in South Korea, with the expectation of relocating to France mid-year, I embarked on this thesis, in which I planned to examine the reading habits of the French in the digital age. I chose this subject for a variety of reasons. Firstly, worldwide, newspaper articles were detailing the closure of bookshops, decreasing numbers of libraries, falling book sales, and changing reading habits. What was happening to reading in this, the digital age? From the point of view of a native English speaker and bibliophile, I was, and remain, keenly interested in the future of books and general reading habits. Secondly, my interest was further piqued by noticing that in South Korea, a country with a literacy rate of 97.9%, (as noted by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics in 2014), on public transportation, based on personal observation in 2014, it was extremely rare to see anyone reading a book in print form. Rather, almost all passengers were using smartphones. It seemed to me that in South Korea at least, the nature of reading was changing. What about other countries, though, such as France? Finally, coupling my love of books with being both a student of French and Francophile, I wanted to find out about reading habits in France, as France has long been considered a great lover of literature. I thus undertook to try to investigate the reading habits of the French in three ways, to examine and compare French bestsellers of 1965, 1985 and current day, to examine the reading habits of the members of a small French village, and to study the reading habits of the younger generation as determined through recent studies, with the aim of presenting a picture of reading in France, from a general perspective to a more specific one, reflecting on times past, the present and projecting into the future.

It had been intended that the major source of data would be obtained through the examination of the reading habits of the members of a small village in rural France, in which my husband and I have a house. However, our stay in South Korea was extended by a further six months, simultaneously rendering the survey impossible, and further complicating the long distance procuring of data, which had proved difficult from the outset. This necessitated a major alteration to the thesis, the structure of which had already been created, from primarily looking at reading in France in the digital age, to examining bestsellers in France.

Specifically, the focus of the thesis altered, shifting from but still including to a much lesser degree, an examination of the effect of the digital age on reading habits, to a more specific consideration of bestsellers in France, their metamorphosis over the past fifty years and their influence on French reading habits. In simple terms, my primary data ended up coming from an exploration of bestseller lists, and my secondary data from studies looking at current reading habits. Essentially, what I set out to do, and what I ended up doing became two quite different things.

In light of the difficulties created by location and the ensuing consequences of that, I would like to reiterate my thanks to all those listed in the acknowledgements.

Appendix B: Organisations and/or people contacted

1. BnF, Sindbad, Roger Musnik & Sylvain Papavero
2. Booknode
3. French Embassy, New York, Laurence Marie, Cultural attaché, Head of the Book Department
4. International New York Times, Stephen Heyman
5. Tite Live - Edistat, Nicolas Mougin
6. CNL, Jane Riviere,
7. ENSSIB
8. Culturebox
9. Livres Hebdo, Christine Ferrand
10. Global eBook, Rüdiger Wischenbart
11. Livres Hebdo, Vincy Thomas
12. L'Express, A. Hurstel,
13. Lemotif, Marie-Christine Roux,
14. ENSSIB, Christophe Evans,
15. Marc Levy
16. Katherine Pancol
17. Michel Bussi
18. Laurent Gounelle
19. Nathalie Collard
20. American University, Washington, Professor Naomi Baron
21. SLF, Hélène Clemente,
22. World Cities Culture Forum, Matthieu Prin
23. UK Booksellers Association, Uzo Onuora

24. SNE, Delphine Katrantzis
25. Cult.Comm, Hervé Renard
26. IMEC, Julie Lemen
27. Université de Lorraine, Lylette Lacôte-Gabrysiak
28. XO Editions, Bernard Fixot
29. L'Express, Emmanuelle Pesez & Anne Marion
30. GfK, Raphaël Couderc
31. Erasmus University Rotterdam, Marc Verboord
32. Livres Hebdo, Laurent Montes
33. IFOP, Jérôme Fourquet/Camille Brun
34. KOBO

Appendix C: List of data tables

Table A: 2015 Bestseller comparisons, *Edistat* and *Livres Hebdo*, list of ten books in each. (52 pages)

Table B: 1985 Bestsellers, *L'Express*. (52 pages)

Table C: 1965 Bestsellers, *L'Express*. (12 pages)

Table D: Compilation and summary of data, *Edistat*, 2015 (7 pages)

Table E: Compilation and summary of data, *Livres Hebdo*, 2015 (7 pages)

Table F: Compilation and summary of data re 1985 (11 pages)

Table G: Compilation and summary of data re 1965 (3 pages)

Table H: Frequency and summary of bestseller listed books, *Edistat*, 2015 (7 pages)

Table I: Frequency and summary of bestseller listed books, *Livres Hebdo*, 2015 (7 pages)

Table J: Frequency and summary of bestseller listed books 1985, both sections from *L'Express* (4 pages)

Table K: Frequency and summary of bestseller listed books 1965 (2 pages)

Table L: Compilation and summary of Top Selling Book from weekly bestseller lists 2015, *Edistat* and *Livres Hebdo* (6 pages)

Table M: Compilation and summary of Top Selling Book from weekly bestseller lists 1985 (10 pages)

Table N: Compilation and summary of Top Selling Book from weekly bestseller lists 1965 (2 pages)

Table O: Verification of genres *Edistat* 2015 (4 pages)

Table P: Verification of genres *Livres Hebdo* 2015 (4 pages)

Table Q: Verification of genres 1985 (*L'Express*) – both lists (Romans, récits, nouvelles, and Etudes, essais, documents) (4 pages)

Table R: Verification of genres 1965 (*L'Express*) (2 pages)