

The 'Problem' of Piracy in India's Informal Book Markets: Hearing from the Booksellers

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Print book piracy is widespread in India and, according to a recent Nielsen Bookscan survey, is worth an estimated US\$39.90 million. *This value is a quarter of the recorded sales of trade books in the country (US\$159.60 million).* Pirated books are sold and bought through a variety of formal channels including e-retailers like Amazon and Flipkart, brick-and-mortar stores, and informal channels comprising booksellers from makeshift stalls on pavements and road intersections, and itinerant vendors on buses and trains.

Producing, distributing, and selling pirated books are all illegal in India and can lead to prosecution and imprisonment. Despite this, pirated books continue to be openly bought and sold, particularly in India's informal book bazaars. While publishers' and authors' outrage against the sales of pirated editions of their books in India is recorded in the public domain, the effect of this supply of pirated books on bookselling practices in the country has not been explored. This paper draws upon informal interviews conducted with booksellers in India to address this gap and discusses how the ready availability of pirated books in India's book markets are an expression of the precarity faced by booksellers, especially those in the informal sector, in the country. The paper will also highlight how the sales of pirated books are enabled and encouraged by a lack of policy regulations and government intervention in the book market.

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