

**Publishing Translated Literature
in the United Kingdom and Ireland 1990 - 2015
Statistical Report Update**

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Summary of Findings

- Between 2000-2015 the percentage of translations among all publications remained around the much-quoted 3% mark, while among literary publications (fiction, poetry, drama, creative non-fiction, based on category 800 of the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system, translations consistently made up around 4-5%. 2011 represents a peak year with 5.23%. In 2013 literary translations accounted for 4.96%, in 2014 4.81% and in 2015 4.76%;
- Absolute number of translations increased by 88% between 2000-2014 (processed data);
- 10 languages account for over 70% of all the translations published during the period 2000-2015;
- 9 out of 10 most translated languages are European (this includes works originating from outside of Europe, e.g. in all Spanish-speaking, Portuguese-speaking and French-speaking countries in the world);
- French is by far the most translated language (20% of translations over the whole period), followed by German (12%), Spanish, Russian, Italian and Swedish (all within 6-8%), then Norwegian, Dutch, Portuguese and Danish (all within 2-4%);
- 2013-2015: after French and German, the most translated languages in the last three years were Swedish and Italian (equal), followed by (in order) Russian and Spanish;
- Italian saw a surge in translations in 2013, when a record 63 translations were published;
- Likewise, translations from Dutch reached a high in 2014 (28 publications) and the same year saw a record 19 translations from Portuguese;
- One of the major trends observed during the period 2000-2015 is the growth in translations from Scandinavia. Swedish is the language that has been most frequently translated (a total of 501 publications over the period). Translations from other Scandinavian languages have increased as well (268 translations from Norwegian and 159 from Danish).
- Among non-European languages the most widely translated is Japanese. This is the only non-European language that makes it to the overall top ten of most translated languages;
- Japanese is followed by (in order) Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Persian, Bengali, Afrikaans, Korean, Urdu, Yiddish (top 10 non-European languages);
- Ancient Greek and Latin are the most translated languages within the dead languages/old forms category;
- Fiction is by far the most translated genre (accounting for over 60% of translations), with children's literature and poetry contending the second position and drama representing the least translated literary genre;
- Over the last three years (2013-2015) there has been an increase in translations of children's literature. In 2013 and 2015 children's titles represented the 14.5% of all translations, as compared to the 9.9% of 2000 and the 7.4% of 2009.

Publishing Translated Literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland: 2017 Update

In May 2015, Literature Across Frontiers published a statistical analysis of translated literature across the UK and Ireland, covering the period 1990-2012. Since then, data from 2013, 2014 and 2015 has become available from the British Library.¹ As before, this raw data has been processed and analysed to gain an overview of translations into English across the categories of fiction, poetry, drama, children’s books and creative non-fiction [see the [2015 report](#) for information on the processing methodology]. This document presents the key findings from the new data, as well as older findings from previous years for comparison.

The raw data (see Table 1 below) shows that the quantity of translations continues to grow in line with the overall increase in published titles. The percentage of translations among all publications remains around the much-quoted 3% mark, while among Dewey 800 publications (literature), translations consistently make up around 4-5%. 2011 remains the peak year, when translations made up 5.23% of Dewey 800 publications.

Year	All BNB records	Trans.	%	Year	All 800 Dewey	Trans. 800	%
1990	55,933	1,704	3.04	1990	12,087	528	4.36
1991	60,465	1,899	3.14	1991	12,161	612	5.03
1992	64,843	1,894	2.92	1992	12,697	616	4.85
1993	65,878	1,875	2.84	1993	12,881	583	4.52
1994	67,077	1,902	2.83	1994	13,529	578	4.27
1995	68,305	1,667	2.44	1995	13,260	494	3.72
1996	70,041	1,812	2.58	1996	13,430	510	3.79
1997	68,708	1,874	2.72	1997	12,796	513	4.00
1998	71,653	1,794	2.50	1998	13,278	423	3.18
1999	74,498	1,997	2.68	1999	13,244	514	3.88
2000	80,337	2,149	2.67	2000	14,338	596	4.15
2001	74,543	1,984	2.66	2001	13,724	558	4.00
2002	95,965	2,222	2.31	2002	13,552	603	4.44
2003	80,291	2,589	3.22	2003	14,188	636	4.48
2004	77,894	2,425	3.11	2004	14,420	655	4.54
2005	79,948	2,594	3.24	2005	15,618	733	4.69
2006	81,647	2,471	3.02	2006	15,406	755	4.90
2007	92,448	2,626	2.84	2007	18,098	814	4.49
2008	94,579	3,018	3.19	2008	18,446	867	4.70
2009	94,082	2,886	3.06	2009	18,257	798	4.37
2010	91,925	2,849	3.09	2010	18,094	816	4.50
2011	87,412	2,770	3.16	2011	17,905	938	5.23
2012	83,403	2,611	3.13	2012	17,712	879	4.96
2013	99,133	3,169	3.19	2013	23,801	1,181	4.96
2014	94,076	3,117	3.31	2014	23,455	1,129	4.81
2015	85,934	2,615	3.04	2015	18,332	873	4.76

Table 1 - Left: Translations in all Dewey categories compared to all publications recorded in the British National Bibliography, 1990-2015. **Right:** Translations in the 800 Dewey category compared to all publications recorded in the 800 Dewey category within the British National Bibliography, 1990-2015.

¹ The source of the statistics presented in this and the previous report is the British National Bibliography (BNB). The BNB is compiled by British Library (BL) and receives publication data from the metadata service providers BDS and Nielsen BookData. Given the nature of the BNB database, there is general consensus that data is always changing and that the number of publications never really settles. After consulting BL on this issue, it has been resolved that data can be considered mostly “settled” after two years and we therefore included 2015 in the present analysis. However, considering the lower number of entries reported in 2015, it can be assumed that the data for this year is not completely settled yet.

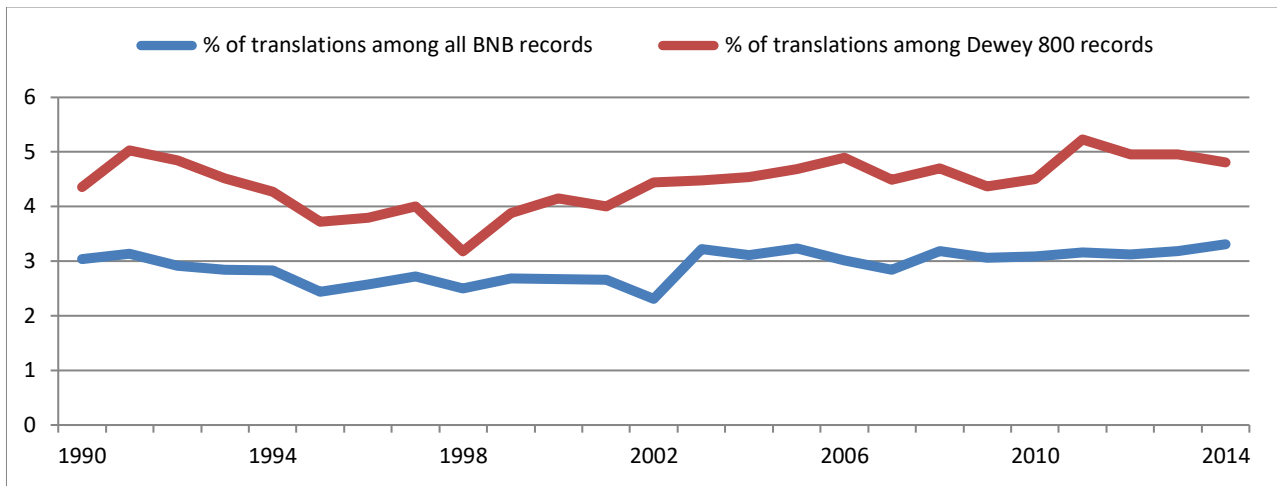


Figure 1 - Percentage of translations published over the period 1990-2014 among all BNB records (blue) and all Dewey 800 records (red).

In the processed data (Table 2), we see an increase of 88% in the absolute number of literary translations over the period 2000-2014 (342 translations in 2000 vs 644 in 2014).

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
342	338	365	390	388	417	421	497	523	526	489	587	578	631	644	521

Table 2 - Number of translations published annually in the UK in the period 2000-2015, using processed data from the 800 Dewey category.

A limited number of source languages (10) accounts for over 70% of all the translations published during the period 2000-2015. Considering all the processed Dewey 800 translations from European languages over the period 2000-2015, French is by far the most translated language (20% of all translations over the whole period), followed by German (12%). Spanish, Russian, Italian and Swedish follow (all within 6-8%), then Norwegian, Dutch, Portuguese and Danish (all within 2-4%) (Table 3).²

If we focus our attention only on the last three years we see similar trends being confirmed for French and German (20% of all titles were translated from French in 2013; 17% in 2014 and 20% in 2015; while 12% of translations were made from German in 2013 and 2014, and 14% in 2015). After French and German, the most translated languages in the last three years were (in order) Swedish, Italian, Russian and Spanish. Italian saw a surge in translations in 2013, when a record 63 were published. Likewise, translations from Dutch and Portuguese reached a high in 2014 (28 and 19 publications respectively).

Looking more closely at these two cases, only 5 titles (by 2 authors) out of the 28 translations made from Dutch in 2014 are translated from Flemish authors, while the remaining 23 are from Dutch or Netherlands-based authors. Interestingly, half of the 28 registered Dutch translations are children's titles (10 of which are by the famous Dutch illustrator and author Dick Bruna). Of the 19 translations from Portuguese, 17 were from Brazilian Portuguese (Table 4).

² What we hereby refer to as translations from European languages also include works originating from outside of Europe (e.g. translations from all Hispanophone, Lusophone and Francophone countries around the world).

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Tot	%
French	77	82	82	97	93	95	92	80	117	99	84	109	110	129	112	104	1562	20.39
German	57	37	43	43	44	47	51	61	51	73	60	89	73	77	79	74	959	12.52
Spanish	24	20	25	38	45	43	38	42	54	32	45	39	36	35	35	38	589	7.69
Russian	14	16	24	35	28	23	20	38	45	44	44	43	58	37	47	29	545	7.11
Italian	20	25	22	29	21	25	27	32	25	36	45	41	35	63	49	30	525	6.85
Swedish	12	12	14	17	18	21	18	33	36	44	33	49*	52	44	49	49	501	6.54
Norwegian	6	12	17	13	7	17	8	11	21	18	16	25	19	27	28	23	268	3.50
Dutch	15	21	17	14	6	14	11	11	11	18	23	14	10	18	28	19	250	3.26
Portuguese	7	9	12	3	12	7	12	11	14	12**	10	5	7	10	19	10	160	2.08
Danish	7	5	7	6	10	13	6	10	7	10	7	9	21	18	14	9	159	2.07

*Three books translated from the Swedish into English via the Finnish.

**One book translated from the Portuguese into English via the Spanish.

Table 3 - Top ten most translated European languages over the period 2000-2015 (making up 72% of all translations over that period).

	2013	2014	2015	Tot
French	129	112	104	345
German	77	79	74	230
Swedish	44	49	49	142
Italian	63	49	30	142
Russian	37	47	29	113
Spanish	35	35	38	108
Norwegian	27	28	23	78
Dutch	18	28	19	65
Danish	18	14	9	41
Portuguese	10	19	10	39

Table 4 - Top ten most translated European languages over the period 2013-2015.

In general, one of the major trends observed during the period 2000-2015 is the growth in translations from the Scandinavian region. While Swedish is the language that has been most frequently translated (a total of 501 publications over the period, compared with 268 from Norwegian and 159 from Danish), there has also been an increase of translations from the other Scandinavian languages. In particular 2013 and 2014 were record years for Norwegian. Finnish, on the other hand, has not appeared to benefit as much from the general surge in translations from the Nordic region. Its slower growth can be seen against the growth of Swedish, Norwegian and Danish in Figure 2 (below).

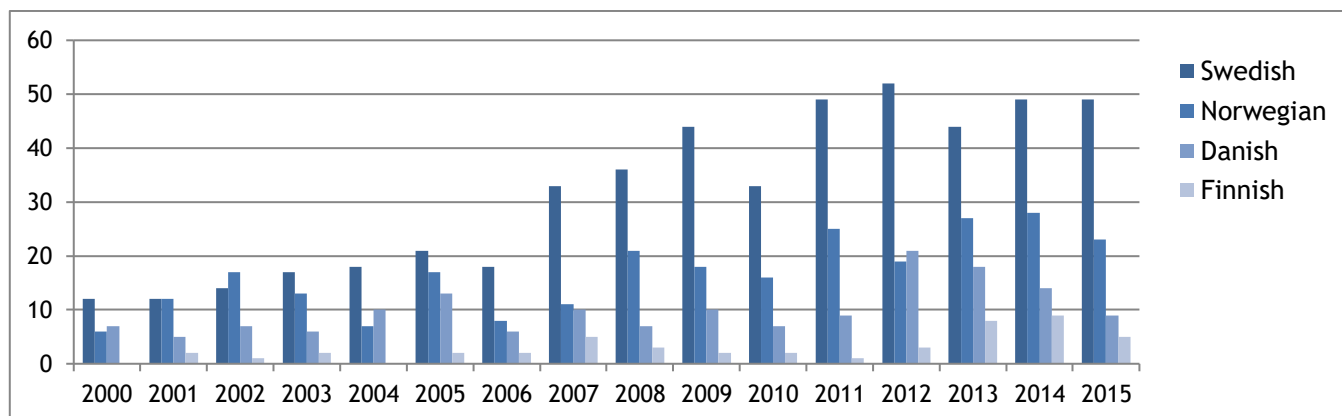


Figure 2 - Growth of translations from the Scandinavia region over the period 2000-2015.

Polish is the most translated European language outside of the top ten. The annual number of translations from this language remained quite stable over the period 2000-2015 (usually below 10 titles per year). Polish is followed by Icelandic, modern Greek (which experienced its record year in 2014 with 12 translations), Hungarian and Turkish (Table 6).

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Tot
Polish	3	2	5	1	3	7	1	9	10	6	4	6	8	7	6	7	85
Icelandic	2	2	5	2	3	2	3	2	7	5	4	5	8	5	7	5	67
Greek	3	3	2	0	1	3	2	9	6	6	7	2	1	7	12	2	66
Hungarian	1	6	1	3**	7	4	5	4	4	4	7	1	4	10	2	0	63
Turkish	1	2	2	1	2	3	2	4	5	6	6	6	3	4	4	8	59
Finnish	0	2	1	2	0	2	2	5	3	2	2	1	3	8	9	5	47
Czech	1	2	1	0	2	2	3	2	2	4	6	4	2	1	9	0	41
Catalan	2	0	2	1	0	0	2	5	2	2	4	3	0	3	7	2	35
Romanian	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	3	0	3	1	0	1	3	21
Serbian	0	0	0	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	0	2	0	4	2	2	19
Albanian	1	0	0	0	0	1*	1*	3*	0	1	2*	4	2	1	2*	0	18
Galician	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	2	2	1	1	0	1?	17
Bulgarian	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	4	0	0	3	0	3	0	1	1	15
Estonian	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	4	0	2	2	3	0	0	1	0	14
Croatian	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	1	12
Slovenian	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	9
Slovak	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	8
Ukrainian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	2	1	8
Armenian	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	7
Serbo-Croatian	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	6
Lithuanian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	6
Montenegrin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	1	6
Basque	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	6
Latvian	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	4
Georgian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	4
Macedonian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	3
Bosnian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
Belarusian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	3
Faroese	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Maltese	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Sardinian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Friulian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Nynorsk Nor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

* One book translated from the Albanian via the French.

** One book translated from the Hungarian via the German.

Table 5 - Translations from the remaining European source languages over the period 2000-2015.

Other European languages: total translations 2000-2015 (languages are listed in descending order)

80+ translations: Polish

60-70 translations: Icelandic, Greek, Hungarian

40-60 translations: Turkish, Finnish, Czech

35-20 translations: Catalan, Romanian

20-10 translations: Serbian*, Albanian, Galician, Bulgarian, Estonian, Croatian*

>10 translations: Slovenian, Slovak, Ukrainian, Armenian, Serbo-Croatian*, Lithuanian, Montenegrin*, Basque

>5 translations: Latvian, Georgian, Macedonian, Bosnian*, Belarusian, Faroese, Maltese

1 translation: Sardinian, Friulan, Nynor Norwegian.

* The source languages reported in the table and above are the ones found in the databases (and therefore those provided by the publishers). Some publishers do distinguish between Serbian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Bosnian, whereas others refer to Serbo-Croatian in general. If we consider all these languages together under the umbrella term Serbo-Croatian, the total number of translations over the period 2000-2015 would be 46 (Serbian 19; Croatian 12; Serbo-Croatian 6; Montenegrin 6; Bosnian 6).

[For more information on this see the [2015 report](#): section 4, *Case study: The jigsaw puzzle of Balkan literatures in translation*, pp. 21-24].

Welsh remains most translated indigenous language, with a record 7 translations in 2013 (Table 7).

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Tot
Welsh	5	2	2	3	3	1	1	5	1	0	4	5	6	7	3	6	54
Irish	1	1	0	0	2	3	0	1	4	1	2	1	4	8	6	1	35
Scottish Gaelic	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	5	1	1	2	1	16
Scots	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	7
Cornish	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	6

Table 6 - Translations from indigenous languages into English (2000-2015).

Among non-European languages the most frequently translated is Japanese (2013 was a record year with 17 translations). In fact, Japanese is the only non-European language that would make it to the overall top ten of most translated languages (it would be in 9th position, thus removing Danish from the list). (See Table 7 and Table 3).

Japanese is followed by Arabic (although the number of translations between 2013 and 2015 is far lower than the 31 translations registered in record year 2009), then Chinese (Table 7).

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Tot
Japanese	5	8	6	7	6	8	11	15	8	8	9	16	16	17	16	14	170
Arabic	12	4	5	5	4	10	5	9	16	31	10	11	13	7	6	10	158
Chinese	5	4	8	4	11	8	12	13	17	8	4	8	11	7	8	10	138
Hebrew	3	6	10	5	4	6	5	6	6	3	8	7	2	8	5	2	86
Persian	14	3	5	2	4	5	6	5	4	5	0	2	4	4	4	5	72
Bengali	1	1	2	7	2	4	4	2	2	1	1	7	0	2	3	1	40
Afrikaans	3	0	2	1	2	2	0	0	2	4	1	3	3	1	1	4	29
Korean	0	1	0	0	0	5	0	2	1	0	1	0	1	5	4	4	24
Urdu	0	1	2	3	1	3	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	19
Yiddish	1	2	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	5	0	0	1	16
Hindi	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	7
Punjabi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	5
Tamil	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Mayan	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Kannada	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	3
Azerbaijani	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	3
Mandingo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Somali	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Malay	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Berber	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Burmese	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Ethiopian	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Indonesian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Kikuyu	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Maori	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Nahuatl	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Pushto	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Sindhi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Telugu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1

Uzbek	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Vietnamese	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Zapotec	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Sotho	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Kazakh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	
Igbo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	
Marathi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	
Taiwanese	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	

Table 7 - Translations from non-European languages (2000-2015).

Ancient Greek confirms itself as the most translated dead language over the period 2000-2015, while the second most translated dead language is Latin (Table 8).

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Tot.
An Greek	13	19	22	18	10	11	10	10	10	14	9	11	11	7	16	14	205
Latin	7	4	7	11	12	6	20	17	10	10	8	10	10	10	10	6	158
Old English	1	1	2	1	1	0	4	2	2	3	1	0	0	2	4	0	24
Mid English	0	2	1	2	0	1	2	3	2	0	0	3	2	2	0	2	22
Old Norse	1	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	1	0	2	1	4	3	1	21
Old French	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	0	2	3	3	1	1	1	18
Sanskrit	4	3	0	1	1	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
Akkadian	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6
Mid German	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
Old Occitan	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Mid French	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
AngloNorman	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Mid Dutch	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Breton	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ottoman Turkish	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Sumerian	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Chagatai-Turkic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
An Egyptian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Old Welsh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Syriac	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1

Table 8 - Old forms and dead languages (2000-2015).

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Tot
Multilingual	4	3	2	3	6	3	6	6	0	6	3	4	7	6	9	3	71

Table 9 - Multilingual Publications (2000-2015).

Fiction remains by far the most translated genre (over 60%), with children’s literature and poetry contending the second position (see Table 10). Over the last three years there has been an increase in translations of children’s literature. Drama remains the least translated genre, with a peak at an 8% share in 2014. Non-fiction only represents a small percentage because of the nature of the selection (800 Dewey does not include non-fiction titles except those with literary subject).

Genre	2000	%	2009	%	2011	%	2013	%	2014	%	2015	%
Children’s Literature	34	9.94	39	7.41	60	10.22	92	14.58	73	11.33	76	14.58
Drama	34	9.94	35	6.65	30	5.11	24	3.80	57	8.85	34	6.52
Fiction	193	56.43	344	65.4	400	68.24	392	62.12	403	62.57	314	60.26
Narrative Non-Fiction	13	3.8	21	3.99	20	3.41	31	4.91	23	3.57	28	5.37
Poetry	68	19.88	84	15.97	77	13.12	92	14.58	88	13.66	68	13.05
Mixed Genres	-	-	3	0.57	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.19

Table 10 - Genre distribution (2000, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015).