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Sci-fi revenue reaches 126.1 billion yuan

Popular genre steadily advances into a new phase of high-quality development

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China's science fiction sector is steadily advancing into a new phase of high-quality development, with total revenue reaching 126.1 billion yuan (\$18.25 billion) last year, a record high and a 15.7 percent year-on-year increase, according to a report released in Beijing on Friday.

The 2026 China Science Fiction Industry Report said that revenue of China's sci-fi sector has surpassed 100 billion yuan for three consecutive years. The report was released at the opening ceremony of the 2026 China Science Fiction Convention, which runs from Friday to Sunday in the capital city's Shijingshan district.

"Science fiction goes beyond merely depicting technology. It delves into how humanity should face the future. Today, the development of science fiction (in China) is closely linked to China's modernization journey. It is this remarkable process that makes China a country full of a sense of the future," said renowned Chinese sci-fi writer Liu Cixin at the convention.

"To me, the essence of science fiction can be encapsulated in a single sentence. It compels us to thoughtfully consider why we embark on a journey and where we aim to go before we set out," Liu said.

The sci-fi industry report, published by the China Research Institute for Science Popularization, provides an in-depth analysis of the annual development characteristics and future trends of China's sci-fi sector from five key perspectives — reading, film and television, games, derivatives and cultural tourism.

In 2025, the country's sci-fi publications sector — including books, magazines and online literature — achieved an annual revenue of 5.19 billion yuan, marking eight consecutive years of growth. Sci-fi online literature has emerged as the primary growth driver of digital reading, reaching a market value of 3.73 billion yuan.

Meanwhile, the film and television sector reported revenue of 8.16 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 21.6 percent. Domestic sci-fi series and animations continue to grow in popularity, with short and medium videos generated by artificial intelligence, or AIGC, gaining rapid traction.

The game industry achieved an impressive revenue of 77.91 billion yuan, with domestic sci-fi games

performing exceptionally well in overseas markets.

During the same period, the sci-fi derivatives sector recorded a revenue of 707 billion yuan, marking a remarkable year-on-year increase of 179.4 percent. Original IP remains the core driving force, with innovative products such as AI-powered toys breathing new life into the market.

Revenue in the cultural tourism sector increased by 13.8 percent to 27.77 billion yuan. Theme parks were the main contributors to this growth, with a continuous increase in locally created attractions.

Beijing, striving to establish itself as a national cultural center and a world-class international innovative hub, has seen its sci-fi sector flourish, achieving over 20 percent growth in annual revenue for several straight years, according to the report.

This year's report also introduced two new areas of observation — science fiction technology and equipment, and search popularity. Revenue in the former reached 24.74 billion yuan last year, driven by a cross-sector application framework centered on digital content production tech led by AI and characterized by immersive experiences. Overall search interest in Chinese science fiction surged 203.3 percent year-on-year, and the overseas audience size for blockbuster IPs continues to grow.

Amidst this pivotal moment, as China faces a historic opportunity with the technological revolution and industrial transformation standing at the start of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), Yu Junqing, executive secretary of the leading Party members group of the China Association for Science and Technology, highlighted the strategic role of technological innovation. "By using science fiction as a bridge, we can ignite scientific dreams, stimulate creativity and drive the deep integration of technology and industry. This will lead to the emergence of new quality productive forces and gather the powerful momentum needed to build a strong nation in science and culture," Yu said.

Hans d'Orville, principal adviser at the UNESCO International Center for Creativity and Sustainable Development, emphasized the role of AI in managing resources. "Through cross-border collaboration in the digital age, we can drive sustainable development even further. China is well-positioned to take the lead," he said.