

Guide:

Participate in the library royalty system in Germany and several other countries through VG WORT

► Legal Basis

[Section 27 \(2\) of the German Act of Authors Rights](#) stipulates that the lending of originals or copies of a work by public libraries is subject to appropriate remuneration: the **Bibliothekstantieme** (*library royalty*). In Germany, this remuneration is paid by the federal and state governments in the form of an annual flat-rate sum and made available to the German collecting societies (e.g. VG BILD-KUNST is responsible for illustrators and photographers, GEMA for music, VG WORT for text).

To determine the library royalty to authors of language works, 21 selected libraries in cooperation with the **Deutscher Bibliotheksverband** (*German Library Association*) report their lending data to the VG WORT once a year. Based on this random data determination, the library royalty is then forwarded to the registered and entitled authors and publishers in the middle of each year in accordance with fixed distribution plans. In data collection, ISBNs and EANs are the decisive keys for assigning titles to right holders.

The collecting society VG WORT is responsible for game authors, as their authors rights essentially refer to the rules of their games. For this purpose, they must conclude a Contract of Perceptions with VG WORT. They receive their revenue solely from the library royalty on the lending of games in public libraries, and only where such lending is documented.

Game publishers can also participate in the library royalty if they register for it at VG WORT. However, different rules apply here than those for authors.

► Registration at VG WORT

The prerequisite for participation in the distributions of VG WORT is the conclusion of a **Wahrnehmungsvertrag** (*Contract on Perceptions*) with VG WORT. This applies both to game authors including rights owners of deceased authors. The conclusion of the contract and participation in the distributions are free of charge.

Game authors not resident in Germany can also register with VG WORT as **Wahrnehmungsberechtigte** (*rights holders*) if their games have been published in German and are distributed in Germany, making it likely that they will be lent in German libraries. However, the registration via the online portal T.O.M. can only be made in German, and the administration agreement exists only in German. If

you are a game author from outside Europe, it is recommended that you have a European bank account (IBAN). The SAZ is happy to help its foreign members with any questions they may have.

The best way to conclude the *Wahrnehmungsvertrag* (Contract on Perceptions) is to register online via the [T.O.M. registration portal](#). After registration, the contract documents must be printed out, signed and the original sent by post to VG WORT by December 31 (date of receipt) so that the contract can still be considered for lending in the respective year. Faxed or scanned documents will not be accepted. A countersigned copy shall be returned to the right holder. He/she receives then also a file number which must be provided for all further transactions. Unfortunately, all forms are in German. So, please use translation software.

The following points are important in the Contract on Perceptions:

- Enter for **Berufsbezeichnung** (job title): *Spieleautor*in* (game author);
- Select in **Berufsgruppe** (professional group): *„Autoren und Übersetzer belletristischer und dramatischer Werke“* (Authors and translators of fiction and dramatic works). Select the same at **Wahlrecht** (Voting rights).
- Select under **Ich habe bereits Bücher veröffentlicht als:** *Autor* (I have already published books as: author). Unfortunately, "Games" and "Game Designer" are not yet stored as categories at VG WORT.
- Click on **Ich möchte den Inkassoauftrag für das Ausland erteilen** (I would like to issue the collection order for foreign countries). We recommend that you click on this option – see also the "Library royalties from other countries" section.

The Contract on Perceptions regulates numerous rights of use and remuneration claims which are transferred to VG WORT for fiduciary representation. This contract is entered into for an indefinite period and may be terminated by the beneficiary with six months' notice to the end of a calendar year. It is possible to restrict the exercise of rights to individual rights and claims as well as to individual countries. In our opinion, however, the large number of rights listed is largely irrelevant for game authors, as they are mostly concerned only with lending in libraries. It is therefore not worth dealing with restrictions. If necessary, changes can always be made at a later date.

► Title announcement

With immediate effect (March 2026), game designers entitled to lending royalties can and should register their German-language titles with VG WORT, provided these are listed in the [database](#) of the *Stiftung Spielen* in Altenburg. **Currently, titles can only be registered using paper forms** ([download](#) from VG WORT), which must then be sent by email to bo@vgwort.de or by post. It is essential that the EAN number of the game is entered. Registering the title ensures that authors entitled to royalties receive a share of the library royalty payments for these games, provided that loans are recorded.

As the form for title registration is only available in German, we have included an English translation in the appendix.

We recommend submitting only titles published within the last ten years; older titles should only be included if they are bestsellers or award-winning games, and ideally still feature in the publisher's current catalogue. This helps to minimise the workload, as older titles are unlikely to be found in the current collections of public libraries in Germany.

The first payment of royalties based on this system will take place in the summer of 2027.

► Library royalties from other countries

With a *Inkassovertrag für das Ausland* (debt collection order for foreign countries), any rights holder can also receive library royalties from other countries. With this mandate, VG WORT will transfer additional foreign rights to VG WORT within the framework of reciprocity agreements with a number of foreign collecting societies, i.e. rights holders from these countries will also receive their library royalties from VG WORT. Such a collection order is therefore recommendable in any case, as games are increasingly being marketed internationally. This option can be ticked right at the time of application or later.

However, the number of foreign collecting societies working with VG WORT on the basis of Public Lending Rights to distribute library royalties is limited and does not always work on a reciprocal basis.

The payment of library royalties on the basis of Public Lending Rights has so far been poorly implemented internationally. Only 33 countries have such laws, 29 of which are in Europe - the remaining four are Australia, Canada, Israel and New Zealand. The collection of the database is regulated very differently and whether – as in Germany – games are also lent in public libraries in these

countries is unclear. In the USA, which is an important country for us, there is still no legal basis – so there is no library royalty; this also applies to Switzerland.

Appendix: English translation of German “Titelanzeige” form:

 Spiele-Autoren-Zunft e.V. Game Designers Association		VG WORT Berlin Office: Köthener Straße 44, 10963 Berlin Tel. +49 (0) 30 2613845, Fax +49 (0) 30 23003629	
TITLE LISTING FOR AUTHORS OF FICTION / NON-FICTION / CHILDREN'S / YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE			
Name:	Date of birth:	<u>File number:</u>	
Address:	Email:		
Please use the electronic registration portal T.O.M. https://tom.vgwort.de/portal/index to register your titles with the Public Libraries Royalties Department, and only use the paper form in exceptional cases.			
Please enter only printed books. Please report audiobooks in the 'Audio Media' section. There is currently no remuneration for e-books in the 'Library Royalties' section for public libraries.			
This title listing does not replace a submission in the 'Academic' section.			
Declaration on the use of AI systems I hereby confirm that the works reported constitute my personal intellectual creation (see Section 2(2) of the German Copyright Act). In particular, I have not created these works not created exclusively through the use of AI systems.			
Place, date, signature _____			
Pseudonym	Title	ISBN / ISSN / EAN	Publisher

This information was compiled after thorough research and in consultation with VG WORT. A liability for the correctness of the information is nevertheless excluded. If in doubt, we recommend that you consult VG WORT directly. We are happy to take up further information from practical experience – in particular about handling public lending rights and royalties in other countries or with game authors from abroad.

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