

fact sheet #9

for Friends and Foundations

PLANNING A BOOK AND AUTHOR EVENT

A great way to promote reading and provide a fun program for readers is to hold an author event. Authors are often eager to find a venue for promoting their work and readers always enjoy hearing the story behind the writing. It takes a bit of work to organize an author event; however, this can be a great idea if you are looking to bring a large audience into the library or a way to raise funds for the Friends.

1. Talk to your local bookstore to see if there are authors already lined up to do a book signing at their store. See if you can partner with them by hosting the author at a program before or afterward.
2. If working with the local bookstore isn't possible, contact several publishers to see if they have authors who will be touring your area in the near future. Find out what would be required on your end to host a traveling author including fees, expenses, type of venue, whether or not you can charge admission to the program, and whether you'd be willing to sell books. Be realistic. Don't expect Toni Morrison to speak! Contact authors far in advance through their publishers' publicists. Begin planning 6 to 12 months in advance.
3. Consider local authors who would be more likely to come to your library pro-bono and won't have travel expenses.
4. Line up a co-sponsor for the event. A local newspaper, department store, or bookstore are good options for sharing the costs and the promotion.
5. Invite the co-sponsor to introduce the author. Ask them to share costs with in-kind services, such as printing the program, invitations, or free ads in their publications. Make plans for getting advance publicity and follow-up coverage in the media.
6. Ask local merchants to donate cheese, wine, and goodies for a pre-event reception. Be sure to give credit in the program, news releases, and during introductions.
7. Make a fuss. Authors like to be catered to. Offer to entertain at cocktails or dinner, provide a quick tour, etc., if he or she is interested. Many authors enjoy talking to a writing class if time permits.

8. Make sure you invite the county chair, mayor, chancellor, heads of departments, local council representatives – the men and women who make decisions concerning the library. Often this makes an appropriate event to honor someone who has made a special contribution to the library.
9. Remember, most authors are there to sell books. Plan in advance to have copies available for sale and autographing. This is very important. Order more than you expect to sell. You can usually return them, but authors are upset if books run out. This is also a way to earn up to 40 percent of the proceeds, if you order through the library's vendor instead of through a bookstore.
10. Make sure someone is familiar with the author's work and can give an introduction worthy of him or her.
11. For more information on hosting an author event, see *Even More Great Ideas for Libraries and Friends*, available from United for Libraries.

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