

Do publishers set up bookstore signings and school visits?

Q: Do publishers set up bookstore signings and school visits for authors and illustrators?

Yes and no. Many publishers will help coordinate an appearance when an outside organization requests a visit from one of their authors or illustrators, but will not actively solicit these appearances unless a special author tour is planned. Since author tours are only done for a small number of authors and books each year, getting on the speaking circuit is largely an author's responsibility, and it is done by networking.

Some authors and illustrators make a substantial amount of money on the lecture circuit by getting paid honoraria to speak at schools and libraries. An honorarium can range from several hundred dollars to more than \$1,000, plus expenses for travel, lodging and meals. As a rule, booksellers don't pay to have authors and illustrators come to their stores because it is expected that they will profit from the store's sales.

If you want to get on the school and library lecture circuit, start locally and hone your speaking skills, then expand regionally and nationally. Start by offering a reasonable honorarium and ask for feedback on your presentations, so you know what is working and what isn't. Keep asking for referrals to other schools and libraries that might be interested in having you as a guest. Also be sure to keep the publicist at your publishing house apprised of your activities, so they can inform the sales force and will know that you are willing to accept speaking engagements.

Be sure to let your publicist know what you will accept as an honorarium and how available you are for travel. Often requests come in for authors whose honorarium is too high for the organization to pay, then the publisher can suggest another author or illustrator as an alternative.

To do bookstore appearances, contact the manager or owner of area children's or independent bookstores, or the special events coordinator of a local chain or superstore to find out how they book appearances. Suggest special programs you can do, such as workshops, craft activities, or other events that will help draw crowds, rather than just asking to come sign books. Ask what other events they run where authors can participate. 12/94:1/95