

Getting your books represented at conferences without incurring huge costs.

The conference cycle is starting up again and, each year, authors and illustrators consider whether they should go, what opportunities there may be with their publishers, and if it's a worthwhile investment of time and money. There are no right answers, but there are ways to have a presence without incurring huge costs.

One is to consider attending regional shows, which are gaining in popularity and offer more affordable options for groups who want to exhibit. Another is to coordinate with other authors and illustrators. SCBWI members have often worked together, either independently or at the chapter level to have a booth at local, regional and national conferences being held in their area.

Or, you may want to consider sending your book out on its own to prospect for a publisher, expand distribution potential, and explore foreign markets. Imagine it in London, Beijing or even Dubai. Well, maybe it doesn't need such an exotic itinerary, but if you'd like to showcase it at some of the major trade and library conferences, you can consider a service offered by the Jenkins Group, Inc. called Global Book Shows.

They offer a la carte and package deals for putting books on display at conferences in the U.S. and abroad, such as BookExpo, the Bologna Book Fair, the American Association of School Librarians, and the Beijing Book Fair. Cost ranges from \$95 per title at regional shows like New York State Reading to \$250 for a slot at the London Book Fair.

According to Andrew Parvel, the Jenkins Group's marketing director, "people have gotten foreign rights deals, found publishers and new sales opportunities" by having a presence at conventions. The company will showcase the title in bound galleys, ARCs (advanced reader's copies), f&gs (folded & gathered pages), or in finished format.

Books represented can be by authors and illustrators, or by publishers. A list of the twenty-five shows the company will cover in 2009 is at www.globalbookshows.com. Registration to get books on display needs to be done at least 3-4 weeks in advance. Books featured at conferences are also listed in a catalog designed for that particular show and in a database of titles Jenkins Group has for librarians and educators.

When books are displayed, direct contact information is provided, so interested parties can contact the author, illustrator or publisher without needing to go through a middleman.

Responses to books vary and Parvel says the key selling point is the subject matter. "Keep in mind that your book is in front of people who are seeing tens of thousands of books, so it's difficult to stand out. We do get a lot of traffic in the booth, and often people are looking for specific things. Books that have good cover design will have an advantage –and a clever title can help, but it's the topic that makes the most difference."

Authors choose conferences for different reasons – sometimes because of the regional nature of a book, other times as a way to reach new segments of the market, or to broaden exposure nationally or internationally.

Parvel says they've seen growth in the past few years at a number of conferences and, even though it's hard to project right now, he expects good attendance in 2009 at the Texas Library Association at the regional level; BookExpo U.S., which is in New York City this year, at the national level; and the Beijing Book Fair internationally because of growth in that market. He said that there's particular interest in English language children's books in China because of the government's mandate for ESL programming in the schools.

Another show that the Jenkins Group is watching closely is the new Sharjah World Bookfair, which is held just north of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

So, there are lots of opportunities – even if you decide to have your book do most of the advance work. Then, if it makes good headway, you can start picking the places you'd like to go.1:2/09