Prepare for Book Fairs!

WHY DO PUBLISHERS GO TO BOOK FAIRS?
The obvious reason is to meet with buyers: booksellers, librarians, international publishers, overseas distributors, rights agents. Publishers also meet with press and media and publishing service providers, although contact with these groups does not bring immediate and quantifiable benefit. They may be very useful in the longer term. The London Book Fair also means opportunities to meet buyers from UK booksellers and independents. Editors can also see what other publishers are doing and this might inspire ideas. It is also important for publishers to consider what they want to achieve at Book Fairs. The idea of ‘more sales’ is too vague and doesn’t allow future decisions to be made easily.

The key questions to ask are:

- Do I want to sell copies of my books?
- Who do I need to see to do this? Buyers for chain bookshops? Wholesalers? Book Clubs?
- If I want to sell overseas, do I need to find a distributor?
- Do I have enough titles which will be of interest to buyers in that territory to persuade a distributor to take me on?
- Are my books priced at the right level for that market?
- Can I make money in sending books to this market?
- Will it help my print run to have a small additional export sale?
- Can I cope with the work involved?

If the answers are positive, it is important to think very carefully about which titles you will put forward for display.

- Put together good information.
- Look at pricing strategy.
- Research your potential contacts.
- Get in touch with them before the Book Fair – at least 2-3 months is advisable, busy publishers and agents get booked up!

If you feel you can sell rights to your titles, then there are also preliminary considerations

- Does your contract with your author allow you to sell overseas rights?
- Does the work have potential overseas?
- Do you know about support for translation?
- Have you researched the keys issues in selling rights?

If these answers are positive, then again the information you provide is crucial.
BOOK FAIR - WHICH FAIR? Each Fair has a different focus –
- London Book Fair
- Bologna Children’s Book Fair
- BookExpo America
- Beijing Book Fair
- Frankfurt Book Fair
- And many others

Do your research
Use the internet, most Fairs have a website and highlight their key focus.

Key Fairs – Frankfurt, London, Book Expo, and Bologna (childrens)

Currently Publishing Scotland host a collective stand at Frankfurt & London.

Frankfurt (FBF) is the largest of all the Fairs, held annually in October and covering all countries and all subjects.
London (LBF) is held annually in March/April - an increasingly important rights venue.
BookExpo (BEA) the American Booksellers Association convention, is held annually in May/June, primarily as a showcase for new American publications to the home book trade, but also as a rights forum for American, Latin American and Pacific Rim publishers.
Bologna – illustrators and children’s fair – annually in April.

Get in the loop
Sign up to the newsletters via the Book Fair websites
Use your trade magazine (The Bookseller run features on fairs)
Follow them on Twitter and other social media channels

Timing
Make your life easy - start planning at least 2-3 months ahead of a fair

You’ve identified the Fair you’re attending ...what next??

APPROACH

How to PLAN for the Fair
Essentials
- Focus - identify the things you need to get out of the Fair.
- Research – what you are doing now! But also use Fair brochures to check if there are specific lectures/talks/events to attend. Check the focus of the days of the fair (is the last day a half day, mostly for librarians/printers etc).

Role of Publishing Scotland What is offered, (passes etc) (See page 6).
Travel / Accommodation
- Book in advance – especially for Frankfurt (months ahead)
- Copy other people – phone up a publishing friend who’s been
- Get advice on hotels/accommodation from Publishing Scotland
**Making Appointments**

**Practicalities**

- Keeping a schedule – just keep it bang-up-to-date. Key info: time/date, correct name of contact, meeting location. Cram in as many as possible.
- Contact – with the above, keep a note of who you contacted and if you suggested a time/place (mark it on your schedule in pencil/red and then ink/black in firmed up meetings). Confirm appointments in writing and keep a copy – confusion often reigns.
- Key info – time (day and hour), location (your/their booth number), name and job title of contact, any key issues to be discussed. It’s common for those selling rights to have people come to them to see books/display material, but if you are not established you may need to carry all your material to the other person’s booth.
- Notes – prepare for meetings when making the appointments: jot down key discussion points next to the appointments name/title.

**Scheduling**

- Block out time – clear your schedule for any lectures/events you’re attending.
- First appointment – work out when you’ll arrive at the Fair, give yourself time to get sorted.
- Duration – meetings usually last for 25–30 minutes.
- Gaps! – important to leave space to pick up appointments from people who drop by or have tracked you down.
- On the move – if you need to run between booths/halls, schedule in time to do that. Perhaps try and have blocks of meetings at your booth, then meetings where you travel around.
- Breaks! – 4 meetings in a row – perhaps max before you need a break. IMPORTANT otherwise you won’t present clearly.

**Contacts**

- Sub-agents - meet on the first day.
- Ask agents before the fair to recommend anyone you should see. They know which editors might be interested in your titles.
- Basic e-mail approach: send a note explaining who you are, that you are attending the fair on specific day(s) and would like to meet. Include your auto signature so they know who you are…. And your web address.
- Make new contacts at each fair – parties are the best meeting place!
- Another priority should be publishers in the territories where you don’t have subagents. Of course also USA and Australia.
- Receiving requests – don’t be afraid to quiz people about what they want to discuss, see if they are buying or selling rights etc. If you don’t think it will be worthwhile, you don’t have to say yes!
How to make the most of your time at the Fair

Orientation
☐ Do your research before you go – use Fair brochures and info, know where you are going, where it is and how to get there from your hotel. It is also worth getting to the Fair a day early, to navigate the city and fair (if you can access it)

Appointments – talking the talk...
☐ Courtesy – obvious warning – people are tired so if they are at your booth, offer a seat, some water or coffee, give them time to settle before launching into a pitch.
☐ What to Say – Use your research, check your appointment notes – did you have key things to discuss – make sure you cover them. Research publisher web sites before a meeting so you can relate titles you are about to present to titles they have already published.

Watch out for fiction buyers if you only publish non-fiction and vice versa. Better to save everyone’s time and grab a break.

☐ Keep notes for each appointment listing what each publisher is currently considering, if they had bought from you in the past and how much they had paid.
☐ Take a list of recent rights deals to see what figures have sold in each territory just in case you get an on the spot offer and need to do some quick calculations.
☐ Take Notes – take a notebook and pen (plus spare pens!) to make notes from your meeting; a small A5 pad doesn’t take up room. Keep business cards, in the back of the book and write duplicates of all notes. Staple their business card into the notebook, noting the books they were interested in neatly beside it, so that you can make sense it when you get back to the office.
☐ Note What? – Make use of every contact. Even if their particular area is quite specialist ask them to let you know who to contact in their company regarding the other categories you are presenting. Collect background info on them /their company, clarify what you’ve agreed to send them or that they would send you.

Walkabout
☐ Research - make time to walk about and see who and what the Fair is about.
☐ Chance meetings - it’s a cliché but some of the best meetings you’ll have are bumping into people, or wandering by a stand and seeing someone that proves to be a useful contact in the future.
☐ Get an overview - it prepares you for your next Fair.
☐ Pick up an appointment – wandering around will allow you to set up a meeting with a contact you’ve just discovered, having had the chance to check out their booth/catalogues.

And now that you’ve started making appointments you also need to think about what you will present or discuss....
PREPARATION – YOUR ‘FAIR PACK’
What material to take / how to prepare it / how to tailor material for each Fair etc.

Most important – Rights List
☐ Even if you lose everything else your rights list will enable you to have constructive meetings. In an ideal world you would have a new catalogue immediately prior to a Book. The advantage of a rights list is that you can leave out books which will not sell overseas.
☐ Keep the copy in the rights list shorter than your usual catalogue copy and make sure you specify what territories you control.
☐ Include a section at the back for titles which have already been published but which have sold well overseas.
☐ Don’t take the same books to every Fair or people will get bored meeting you.
☐ Email the rights list to your agents ten days before the Fair to give them time to ask questions or request material.

Rights Folder
A rights folder is a means of illustrating the titles you are presenting: eg jacket on the left hand page and AIs on the right hand side. Include more than one AI so that you hand it over if someone seems particularly interested in a book and doesn’t want to carry the whole rights list with them. Editors require whole suitcases to carry the books, catalogues and rights lists they are presented with during Fairs. Keep a copy of your schedule in the front of the rights folder.

It is worth noting that more recently publishers use iPads (or other tablets or laptops) to demonstrate titles, saving the need to carry around lots of paper or the actual books.

Daily Notes Folder
Eg make up folders of A4 for each day, with a page of notes for each publisher I am meeting, including recent submissions and details of their latest bestsellers gleaned from their website.

Books
If you are on the Publishing Scotland stand you will have space to display your books. It is a great way to illustrate your strengths so again display the books which you think will sell well internationally rather than your personal favourites which may be too local for an international market. It also means that you may get passing trade/interest.

Manuscripts
Not many people can be bothered lugging around manuscripts. Take a copy of each lead manuscript, so that they are there if someone wishes to read the manuscript over-night. Or again, have this available online to email or access on screen during a meeting.
PRACTICAL TIPS ABOUT FAIRS

- Fitness - adopt a gruelling regime in the weeks running up to the Fair. (joke)
- Big muscles are needed to carry your pack ....less so now it can be digitalised
- Shin-pads – watch out for people with those trolley luggage things which will take your knees off you when you’re charging down an aisle to your next appointment...

No, but seriously
- Speak slowly and clearly, especially if you are meeting people who do not have English as a first language, or if you are working through a translator.
- Keep a copy of your schedule (give a copy to Publishing Scotland desk, on the stand).
- Back-ups – The thing you marked *DO NOT REMOVE* is always the first to go, so it’s good to have a sneaky backup. If you have a laptop, take a pack electronically as backup.
- Be ruthless with catalogues – if you are browsing and pick up loads of handouts, sit down and spend 20 minutes tearing out pages/contact details/web addresses and then recycle the rest – don’t carry it back with you unless you really need it.
- Parties – go to them, you get a great chance to meet new people

Practical advice ...
- Get a good night’s sleep before you fly out to the Fair.
- Don’t forget your passport and your Fair pass- check with Publishing Scotland, if you are on the stand a pass will be provided.
- Tank up on vitamin C before you go, carry a cold and throat remedies.
- Flat shoes ladies/gents.
- Keep bottle of water on hand.
- A constant stream of snacks...vital if you can’t dash off for lunch.

And DON’T throw away your Fair catalogue – use it to plan your Fair the following year...

FOLLOW UP

- Possibly the most important part of the Fair – don’t forget to do it?
- Be prompt and organised so that you make the most of the meeting
- Follow-up should acknowledge the discussion that you had, any action points agreed or material you promised to send, or requested (confirm if you are sending, how you have sent it - either sent by post or attached as a pdf to email).
- If you missed an appointment and couldn’t pick it up, write and apologise, pick up any discussion points you wanted to bring up.
- Timing – most people are swamped by information when they return from a Fair, especially those buying rights. Make your follow-up as clear, helpful and easy to use as possible. Stipulate deadlines, competitive bidding situations, publication dates.
- Report – if you need to circulate a report about the Fair do it immediately. If you wait until you’ve ‘caught’ up on your email etc. you’ll never do it.
BOOK THROUGH PUBLISHING SCOTLAND

If you are responsible for rights, export or books fairs, let Publishing Scotland know so that circulars are sent to you directly. You’ll get a circular about each Book Fair, several months in advance. Please book promptly.

Watch out for freight deadlines (allow around 8 days to get your books from the warehouse to the freight forwarder) and don’t forget to send catalogues. Send only the quantity of books you’ve booked space for. If you have any good display material, contact Publishing Scotland and see if it can be used.

Let Publishing Scotland know who will be attending and if you have meetings planned on the stand. Give details of your schedule and also supply your mobile phone number in case that important contact arrives just when you’ve nipped off for a coffee.

Publishing Scotland staff man the reception so can take messages for you and help get your appointments to you when they come to the stand. They sometimes do a mean tea/ coffee/ chocolate as well!

There is also a drinks reception on the stand at London and Frankfurt – usually sponsored by the Isle of Arran distillery – info on this will be sent, so keep this in mind to invite contacts to.

After the Book fair, do follow up all meetings, however tentative as they may come back next time. Also be prepared for long negotiations as your contact passes the idea around his or her company. It gets easier as they get to know your list, especially once they’ve had some success with it. And if you glean any interesting information at the Book Fair, please consider sharing it!