

Librarian's Shelf by Kelli Keyes

Annual Author Fair/ Book Festival

With new and easier ways to publish books, Columbus Public Library is often approached with requests to hold book signings for local authors. Since it is our mission to connect people and ideas, we want to say yes, but coordinating individual book events with events the library is already hosting makes it nearly impossible for library staff. So this is our challenge: What would be the best way to support local authors, connect them with readers, and do so in a productive, efficient manner?

We decided to host an annual author fair and call it the Book Festival. Every November, like we have for the past three years, we plan and host a fair for our local authors. This year it will be on Saturday, November 4th at 2 pm. Here's how it works: an author comes to the library with their new book and wants to promote it at CPL.

"Great!" we say. "Here is a brochure explaining our annual author fair that we hold every November. If you are interested let me take down your email, and a librarian will contact you. She will keep you informed of the coming plans for the next author fair and when and where it will take place."

We go on to explain how the fair functions. A librarian contacts them for their bio information and pictures and also to let them know the date for the fair. Each author is spotlighted on our Facebook page with a biography. We plan for a two hour open house on a Saturday, from 2 PM to 4 PM, where guests can come and go as needed. We advertise the coming fair in local newspapers, the library newsletter, on Facebook, on local radio, on posters, power points, emails, and newsflash. All the tables are ready to go for the authors to create their book displays. Each author will have space to set up and display their books so they can sell and autograph them. The library provides cookies and coffee for everyone.

Our goal in having an author fair is to unite readers and writers. November works well because people are looking for Christmas gifts and what better way to spend your money than on a signed book written by a local author that you can support. We bring in children, young adult, adult fiction and nonfiction authors so the topics cover a large range of interests. If an author donates a book to our library we will accept it and consider it like any other donation. If it meets our collection criteria we will add it to the shelves. At our last author fair we had 18 authors come to sell their books. How often do you get to visit with the author of a book that you want to purchase, and then have them sign it? These author fairs are not only fun for people looking to buy books, but also for budding authors. All of that information and experience in one room is pretty exciting! The authors have the opportunity to visit with each other and trade stories. Everyone that has attended our author fairs enjoys themselves, authors and visitors alike. For our next author fair we are going to implement a suggestion from one of the attending authors. We will have a book reading in an adjoining room. Guests can enjoy their refreshments while listening to authors read from their own books. Mark your calendars on November 4th for this year's author fair. You won't want to miss it!

If you have questions about the author fair please contact Rachelle McPhillips or Kelli Keyes at 402-564-7116 option 2.