

ILA Exhibitor Survey

Idaho Library Association

October 2006

Survey Summary

Exhibitors view themselves as partners with the library community and come to conference to show their support and goodwill. They also want leads and sales opportunities.

What are you most likely to spend additional money on?

Attendee list:

- Feel like it's my right
- ILA distributes free

Program advertisements: (OCLC, ProQuest, Follett)

- Need more than one advertising opportunity
- Anyway to get visibility & presence
- Include opportunity to buy more space

Event sponsorship: (Thompson-Gale, Follett, OCLC, Baker & Taylor)

- Nice and you want a big sign
- National exposure more important

To make the opportunity successful, they need conference information, including a contact person, as soon as possible.

Attendance size and history and other shows in the region factor into exhibitor interest.

Space should be comfortable and take into consideration technical needs. Attracting participants into the area and to individual booths is important, and suggestions included a kick-off reception, bingo cards, food, and action items at the booths and in the exhibit area. No conflict scheduling blocks should be at least 30 minutes, with

45 minutes ideal. Exhibitors could become more active participants by serving on the planning committee or in continuing education sessions partnered with librarians.

All exhibitor necessities (electricity, Internet, etc.) should be built into the registration price. Additional amenities (boxed lunches) are appreciated and should be built into the price too, with \$300 to \$350 range being comfortable. Only large, corporate vendors are interested in sponsorship or advertising opportunities.

Survey Results

Ten Exhibitors Interviewed:

Thomson-Gale, Follett, Books on Tape, Quality Books, OCLC, Information School (Univ. of WA), Scholastic/Grolier, Baker & Taylor, ProQuest, World Book

What are the best vendor areas you have seen, and what made them successful?

Best exhibit areas: OR, WA, ID

Planning:

- Easy to find information on website, with clear contacts, rates, etc.
- If doing demos or technology fair give several months notice to plan travel arrangements

Environment:

- Lighting
- Comfort

- Ability to read PC screen
- Open layout
- Room size
- Always want more exhibit space

Amenities:

- Food (in back of the room)
- Exhibitor reception with happy hour (cash bar) with entertainment
- Boxed lunches for exhibitors worked well

Activities:

- Door prizes (providing they don't take away from exhibitor time)
 - Bingo cards (all booths are visited)
 - Scavenger hunt (make sure exhibitors have materials)
 - Go to exhibitor to get mixer for drinks
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ILA Exhibitor Survey

- Silent or live auction at exhibits
- Get door prizes from exhibitors and package the smaller ones together
- Second day is slow—ramp it up

Scheduling:

- no conflict time for at least ½ hour and allow another 15 minutes for participants to get food, restroom break

Other:

- Destination exhibitors
- Chocolate & give-aways at exhibitor booths;
- Texas Library Association has a exhibitor advisory committee to directly involve folks

Have you done any vendor demonstrations at other library conference, and if so, describe your experience. Would you like to see this offered as an option at ILA?

Good experience:

- More educational than sales; speak mostly to existing customers
- PR situation
- Use as an avenue to show new products
- Book exhibitors focus on subject of selection, acquisition, workflow potential, technology, collection development
- A short time was good to introduce new books

Bad experience:

- Utah has exhibitor demos to sign up for, but no one shows
- Sales rep is busy
- Up against other sessions
- Not applicable if not selling technology based product
- Separate room for demos

Suggestions to make it work:

- Lot of pre-conference publicity so exhibitors and participants know about it
- Have 15 minutes at the start of the session

- Make sure exhibitor has a captive audience
- Have section in exhibitor area to do demos (computer projector, etc.)
- Have process well planned for presentations
- Include a librarian familiar with the product to help present
- Don't make it an add-on expense
- Intermingle the presentations with exhibitor times
- Extend no-conflict time to include demonstrations

Do you have any ideas on how you could be more involved in this conference?

- Assign librarians to escort exhibitors
- Facilitate exhibitors meeting other exhibitors
- Exhibitor rep on planning board
- Florida give an award every year
- Exhibitor breakout sessions
- Participate in round tables
- Ask exhibitor's to help in registration

How much of a factor does cost factor into your decision to attend the conference?

- Under \$500, not a big deal
- Factors are travel, return on investments and leads—one sale is enough
- \$300 ok, \$425 too much
- Don't nickel & dime (electricity, internet connection, trashcans)
- Stay at less expensive hotel to save on expenses
- Depends on target audience and exhibitor product (K-12)
- Depends if it conflicts with other shows in the region
- Price determines if we can attend (I School)
- Chose conferences based on attendee size and history
- \$350 max—include breakfast and boxed lunch in booth cost
- PR opportunity only, support and participation important

Ideas

- Host back-to-back drop-in sessions (Tech Tools) where librarians can ask questions about blogs, podcasting, MP3's, You Tube, RSS, email management, etc. Ask vendors to participate to share their knowledge of these tools (round tables with laptops).
- Have a "Marketing to Commuters" session, featuring traveling sales people (exhibitors) and ask what services their local libraries can provide.