

How To Start A Book Sale:Complete File

Form A Comittee

A successful book sale involves the work of many people. Co-chairs are the best

combination when beginning to plan your sale. This way each one can oversee specific aspects of the sale or at least the two can work together to have a "meeting of the minds" when necessary.

Your committee ideally will consist of people who have varied talents (and don't we all). You will need your chair or co-chair, a publicity chair, which is one of the most crucial positions, and several committee members to work on the other parts including refreshments (important to the morale and maintaining the energy of the workers), sorters, pricers, packers, those unpacking, and those responsible for set up and clean up.

Each committee member in charge of a specific aspect can draft other members of your group to help in one or more areas.

A positive and congenial relationship with the Director of the Library is essential. It is most likely that the book collection will be done at the Library. These books will have to be taken to a designated storage area, most likely within the Library, and this will involve the custodian assisting with the moving of these books. Book donations will range from a few to several boxes, so a large enough donation area is important. The Library has to deal with these incoming donations, and it is important to have the cooperation of the staff as the process begins.

IMPORTANT: Book sales involve a great deal of carrying and hauling. Boxes of books are quite heavy. You will need volunteers to carry the boxes to storage and out, and possibly carry leftover books. If you do not have such a group, the recommendation is for you to advertise through the school for students who need community service (most schools require this now) or make contact with Scout troops. In addition, many libraries have a docent program where students volunteer for community service. If you work with the Library coordinator of this group, there are often many available workers to help.

Supplies

As the preparations for your book sale begin, you will need several items for your sale. Initially pens, pencils, markers, tape, both packing and regular, cash boxes, and bags are needed. In addition, boxes will be needed for book storage. Liquor stores will often supply with you with boxes. In addition, you might ask the Library to save the boxes in which the books are delivered.

It might be premature to discuss supplies for your sale here, however, you will need tables for the books, hand carts for moving boxes of books, category signs for the tables, book ends, maps and an alphabetized list of categories for your patrons (**do not make and**

print maps until you have finished placing your books on the tables), and possibly, boards and milk cartons (but more on that later).

Book Storage & Disposal

At this point, you may not have any books for your sale, but before you begin to collect them, you are going to have to have a place to store the books that will be donated. Most times, your library will be only to glad to offer you storage space for a fund raiser that is surely to benefit them. If not, an alternate location will be needed.

Depending on your length of collection time, you have to prepare for the storage of several thousand books. In the process, you will also be pricing, sorting, boxing, and storing these books so the space must be adequate. One possibility might be that books are dropped off at the library and then picked up and transported to a home. This is a cumbersome process and does require a great deal of time and manpower. Therefore, finding a sufficient space at the library is your best alternative.

At the same time you are preparing for book storage, you need to consider book disposal. You will be receiving a great number (sad, but true) of books that are not saleable. As difficult as it will be, you cannot sell every book that is donated to you. Those coming to your sale wish to see and buy books in good condition. A books sale with many moldy, torn, damaged books that customers have to sort through to find a good book will turn people away. Therefore, you will have to have a means of disposal. Large trash barrels within your sorting area will help you with sorting out those books not suitable for the sale.

However, you will need a larger means of disposal. Some libraries have several dumpsters for trash, cardboard, and books. If your library has a large enough dumpster for book disposal, you can speak with the librarian and ask if you may use the dumpster during the course of your sale.

Otherwise there are other means, including such companies as PRO QUO who will provide you with bins for disposal of your books. They will then pick up these bins and actually pay you for the books you are throwing away. It is a small amount of money, but it is a means of disposal if you have no other means. It is important to understand, however, that these bins are large, and pick up is usually only every three to four weeks. So make sure you have adequate space if you undertake this method. This can also be a means of disposing of surplus books after the sale.

Collections

In order to have a successful sale, you need as many books as possible. If your Library has a Public Relations director, he will be able to put a notice in the newspaper that you are collecting books, state specific dates for the collection and the place of collection. In addition, committee or Friends' members may receive permission to place flyers in their places of employment or in various markets. When making the request for books, it is important to note any specific types of books you do not want. Readers Digest Condensed books, encyclopedias, textbooks more than 10 years old, for example, are not the best sellers at a sale. It is a good idea to list the types of donations you would like: books in

good to excellent condition, both fiction and non-fiction, quality sets, children's books, media, and records (if you decide to sell them).

However, unfortunately, it often does not matter what limits you place on donations. Unless there is someone there to monitor what is coming in, you will no doubt receive many, many hundreds of books that are not suitable for sale. This is an occupational hazard that few books sales prevent. However, if you live by the saying, "You have to kiss many frogs before you find a prince," you maintain a sense of humor through it all and you will find there will be many wonderful books donated to you. For the most part, you should be very happy with what is donated to you.

Once the word is out, the books will come quickly and in great number.

Food,Sorting,Pricing,Boxing

Contained in these four words is the core of your book sale.

Each component is important in the execution a successful sale.

The decision to sort then price, or price then sort is an individual one. Depending on how your committee works, determine the process that works best for you. Sometimes, a pricer will price many books and the sorters will follow and sort them. Other times, sorters will categorize books, and then the pricer will price and box the books.

A. FOOD

Food may seem an unimportant topic when discussing a book sale. It is not. Light refreshments, sometimes more, and beverages are essential throughout your sale preparations and your sale. When you have your pricing and sorting "parties", coffee "and" is a nice touch, and people appreciate it. During your sale, especially if people are working long hours, and, if you have a small group, this may happen, you must provide a light lunch to keep them going. There are some libraries where people work through the whole sale. These are incredibly dedicated people who help make your sale the success you hope it to be. They deserve to be taken care of. This does not mean expensive, gourmet meals; it means nice, simple, food to thank them.

B. SORTING

As stated, when the books arrive, there will be many in various conditions. The very first task is to discard those books that are moldy and damaged. That being said, look at what you are discarding carefully. An old moldy, falling apart signed Mark Twain will still be worth quite a bit of money. However, you will find yourself the recipient of many books that are obviously not saleable that should be relegated to Book Heaven. Book disposal is addressed above.

Important when sorting is deciding the categories under which you will sort your books. Obviously, you will not sort your books into the categories of fiction and non-fiction, although, at times, it may seem the best course to follow. Your fiction is usually categorized into Science Fiction and Fantasy, Romance, Mystery, and General Fiction. Some purists will refine these categories even more; however, you have a good delineation if you use just these categories.

Children's books are best classified into Children's and Young Adults. Non-fiction is a bit more complicated. Of course, you will have your general categories of Art, Cookbooks, History, and Biography, and Religion. And then it begins. If you have Religion as a category, then you are probably going to want to sort it into Christian, Jewish, and Other. If you have History, you start dividing that into Civil War, Military History, American, and World History. See what we mean. General categories will work well if you are holding your first book sale; Medicine can include psychology; Family and Children can include couples and relationships; Self- help can include diet and exercise. Decide on your categories and post them on your sorting shelves. Sometimes your donations will drive your decision to create a new category or two. However, when people ask where a specific book might be and you can point them in the correct direction or category, they will search.

You might visit a book sale or two to get an idea of the various possibilities for categories and use their lists as a basis for yours.

C . PRICING

There are many philosophies concerning pricing, and each established book sale has some standard; however, these standards are subject to change as well. Again, a visit to a book sale or two will give you some idea of pricing, and you may adopt your pricing policy around this.

Generally, mass-market paperbacks are 50 cents. It seems like a very small price for an \$8.00 book, but that price has been established for a long time. You might try charging \$1.00, and you may set a new standard, but for now this has been a standard. In fact, there are a few books sales that charge twenty-five cents for these paperbacks (definitely not recommended for your sale), and then people do complain at the 50-cent price.

Hardcover fiction is generally priced at \$1.00 or \$2.00. Given the high cost of a hard cover book, \$2.00 seems quite an acceptable price. New fiction, books that are four years old or newer, will bring \$3.00 to \$4.00. Children's books can range from 50 cents to \$4.00. A book under \$5.00 is 50 cents; a books \$5.00 to \$8.00 is \$1.00; books \$10.00-\$20.00 range from \$3.00 to \$4.00 depending on popularity and condition. Harry Potter books and other such popular titles can bring in \$5.00.

Non-fiction is more of a challenge. Generally such books range from \$2.00 and up. Pricing a book one-sixth of its original price is a good starting point. You can price up or down depending on topic, condition, and popularity of the subject matter.

IMPORTANT:

As stated it is important to have a very diverse committee. Anyone familiar with books, an amateur collector, even your true book lovers (aren't we all?) might call attention to a book that appears special. There will definitely be times when you come across a book that you notice is old, signed, appears unique, something that gives you a sense it is special.

You might establish a committee of one or two who might research these possible "special" books. Sites such as www4.addall.com will help you identify if a book might be included in your box of "specials". Even if you just have a hunch, it is a good idea to look up these books. It is wonderful and amazing to see what treasures have been donated to you.

D . BOXING

When the books have been priced and sorted, you will box them to store before your sale. It is very important to box your books carefully, whether they are stored for a few weeks or a few months. Books should be packed flat, and, if books are packed on their spines, the spines should be down, yes, down. Pack tight and carefully so boxes can be stacked on top of each other for storage. It is very important to **LABEL** the boxes with their specific category.

Sale Set Up:Organizing Tables,Placing Signs,Unpacking Books

If you are fortunate, no matter how much space you place between tables, you will not have enough room for people to move. However, when you begin, you do want to make sure that you have room between tables so at least two people can move comfortably in the aisles. Ideally, and for most efficiency, tables should be placed approximately three feet apart.

The placement of the tables, whether one, two, or more adjacent to each other depends on the size of your room. However, you do want to allow for a break between tables in the form of an aisle so people can move up and down with some degree of comfort. Then it is important to determine placement of categories for each table. There is definitely a science to deciding on how best to utilize space depending on the number of boxes in each category. The book has been written, but the science remains somewhat inexact. Generally, it is beneficial to place related categories together on a table, for example, self-help, diet and exercise, and medicine might be grouped together. Similarly, all religion, books on death and dying, and philosophy might also be grouped together. After you have set up your tables and placed your signs, you can begin bringing your books to their respective tables.

BOARDS AND MILK CARTONS

Space is finite, and if you are fortunate to have many, many books for your sale, you are going to look for the best way to display these books. Many book sales use a double-tiered system that involves the use of milk crates and six-foot x 12" x $\frac{3}{4}$ inch boards on six foot tables. The milk crates are placed on the back of the tables with the boards on top providing a second shelf for book display. Books can, of course, be stored under the tables,

but it is more difficult to see these books and the double-tiered system does allow for the best access.

IMPORTANT:

As stated before, and as you will quickly find out, books are heavy. If you place your biggest, heaviest books on the top tier, the milk cartons will bend and eventually collapse. You can display some of your more desirable books here; just be sure to balance the weight. It may seem unnecessary advice, but sometimes you may not realize the amount of weight you have put on that first tier until you see the milk carton slowly begin to bow.

UNPACKING

As books are unpacked, all should be facing in the same direction and all should be as accessible as possible to the potential buyer. Whether you use a double tiered system or not, there is often an overflow of books. Your hardcover, most desirable books should be placed on your tables, and the small paperbacks should be placed in flats under the table. You can always place the flats on a low box to raise them and provide better visibility and access.

In the course of unpacking, you may sometimes find a better table arrangement than the one you originally planned. Change whatever you wish before you create your maps, create your maps, print them, and if more change is necessary, make it the next time.

Extra boxes can be placed under the table for use by your patrons.

Publicity

This deserves a category all to itself. The success of your book sale will depend on many factors, but one of the most, perhaps the most Important is your publicity. It is crucial to have a publicity chairperson who will do what is necessary to give your sale good press. However, it is not an exclusive position. Again, if the library has a Public Relations person, he or she should certainly be asked to help with publicity. He or she will have access to a number of contacts who might be happy to help publicize the sale as a special favor. In addition, other members of your committee may know of sites or contacts that will broaden your contact.

Several sites on-line will publicize your sale for a minimal fee and provide broad coverage, even including surrounding states:<http://www.booksalefinder.com>. And <http://www.whofish.org> are two examples of sites that offer widespread coverage. In addition, paid ads in local newspapers are important, and it is also very important to check for possible free publicity in the papers weekend sections or library news update pages. There are also radio, television, and cable stations that will publicize your event.

IMPORTANT:

It is sometimes amazing how much advance notice is required for submission of advertising for a specific event. Check early on the due dates for publication of your event. Obviously, the more publicity you have the more exposure you have and the greater potential for a better sale.

Types Of Sale Days

Your sale days can take several forms and what your committee chooses you defines your sale, so consider the various options.

ADMISSION / FEE

Some groups charge an admission fee for a "preview night or day" or even for a few hours. Those who pay a fee are allowed the "first choice" of book selection.

DOUBLE PRICE

Some groups charge double the marked price of their books (the price they marked the book) for a few hours or a day. This is another type of "preview" where attendees pay no fee, but the double price in order to have a "first choice" of book selection.

MARKED PRICE

People attending the sale pay no admission fee and the marked price of the book.

HALF-PRICE

Books can be purchased at half the marked price on a designated day.

BAG SALE

Purchasers can fill a bag for a designated price. (You supply bags)

Half-price and bag sale days are usually at the end of a sale to help reduce the number of books left.

SALE COMBINATION

A sale may be comprised of any number of combinations from the list above or of the committee's own creation.

One example might be:

- **Double price for a few hours Thursday night for preview;**
- **Marked price for books for Friday and Saturday;**
- **Half-price Sunday from 9-1;**
- **\$5.00 a bag from 1:30-4:00. (a half-hour break when the sale is closed allows for preparation for this).**

Details Of The Sale

The Sale: Numbers/Opening, Bank, Cashiers, The Schedule, Security ("Stashes"), Holding Area/High Volume:

NUMBERS

It is hoped that your sale is large enough that enough people want to attend that they appear days in advance and want a "number". At most sales people will appear up to a few hours before, put their boxes down, and return before the sale opens. At larger well-known sales, people do show up days in advance or write for their "number". What this means is that you begin with "1", and progress through as many numbers as you need. People will show up and, take their place. in line by the number they have been given. If you are just starting out, it is fine to say that you do not have a number system and that people will take their place inline as they arrive.

OPENING

Adhering to your schedule is another crucial component to your book sale's reputation. You must open at the time you say you will. You **CANNOT** open before your scheduled time. Dealers and patrons have read the schedule as you posted it and expect it to be adhered to. If you open early, it will be perceived that others had an unfair advantage in gaining access to your books. This could have quite a negative impact on your sale. If it is raining, let people into your lobby, if the line is long, enjoy the fact that when you open **ON TIME** everyone will feel as if you have given all an equal opportunity to access your treasures. You can stay open as late as you want; you do not have to close at the stated time. It is the opening time that is important.

BANK/CASHIERS/SCHEDULE

BANK

You certainly do not want to run out of change at your sale, so make sure you open with an adequate bank each day. If you have a double price night or a half-price session, make

sure you have enough change and bills so you do not have to frantically ask volunteers to empty their pockets.

Two cash boxes and six people at two cashier stations and six people on the floor is a good average for a sale held in an auditorium or community room. However, if you have 50,000 books or more and several tents, then you will obviously need a cashier, cashbox, and helper for each location, and several people on the floor. At the cashier station, there can be a couple of combinations. You can have one person add, one person take the money and make change, and one person bag. One person can add, take the money and make change, and one person can bag. One person can do all of the above, but the line will certainly move more slowly. Some combination of the first two is most desirable.

IMPORTANT: Cashiers

Your cashiers may potentially handle significant sums of money. Sometimes you must be selective in choosing cashiers. Some people will wish to cashier, and may not be able to handle the stress of a large order or of making proper change in a rushed situation. Assign these people as baggers, as necessary. It is difficult to refuse people a position; volunteers are hard to find, and you need them. However, if there is a potential risk to your income, you must do what is best for your organizations. Money should be counted each night, and cashiers should start with a new bank each day.

IMPORTANT: Taking checks

It is fortunately rare that you might receive a bad check. However, one bad check is one too many. The best procedure to follow is to ask to see a license for any purchase over \$25.00 or any check purchase at all and to ask for a telephone number.

SECURITY

Security can be an issue as well. While most patrons are honest, there will be those who will change prices, take DVDs (a far more common occurrence these days), or even take a book. It is not easy to monitor the activity during a sale, however, it is important to be aware of these potential risks and take whatever precautions you can to make the sale pleasant for all.

STASHES

This is the name given to those books people hide so they can be purchased more cheaply on a different sale day. It not only negatively impacts you, but your other customers are often witness to this act. It is important to watch for this through out the sale. Equally important is to check each evening for unusual collections of books in odd areas and/or for a number of books put in the wrong categories. A wise move is to "kick the boxes". If you have put boxes under the tables which people can take when they make their purchases, kick them. Often, books are hidden under them so people can come the next day and collect them.

To that end, “floaters” become an important part of your staff for the day.

These floaters can also take purchases to a **HOLDING AREA** and add **HIGH VOLUME ORDERS** so people do not have to wait in line.

Obviously every customer is important to the success of your sale and should be treated well. You will find your dealers may be somewhat more demanding and provisions made for them will be appreciated.

If at all possible, it is advantageous to establish a high volume area for the book dealers or other high volume purchasers. These people collect a large number of books quite quickly and need a place to store them until they decide to sort through them and select their purchases.

One or more people should be available to staff this area exclusively. Again, this will depend upon whom your sale attracts.

The holding area must be a protected area. People who place their books here should not have to worry they will be touched.

Supply your staff with large cardboard so they can write the person’s name on it, and place it on their books. Give the dealer a smaller card with their name on it. The dealer shows the card as he adds books to those in the holding area.

Once a dealer completes his purchases, someone has to add their order. It is imperative you have competent people who can expedite an order that may be potentially hundreds of dollars.

It is not true that you cannot have too many people working. When your customers are on the floor looking at books and your sale is crowded, you cannot have people in their way, straightening or moving books. Areas need to be straightened, but at appropriate times, and an appropriate time may be at the end of the day so things are organized for the next day. If at all possible, you do want people to straighten during the day. It just has to happen when the opportunity presents itself.

FINAL THOUGHTS

No matter how much advice is given, it will not always fit your unique situation. Feel free always to experiment, to change, to be different, to have fun. Go to other books sales, observe, borrow ideas (remember, imitation is the greatest form of flattery), and make your sale as unique as you are.