



TIPS FOR PLANNING LIBRARY PROGRAMS

Some of the following tips may help you plan special programs in your library.

1. **Scheduling**—Check to be sure your program does not conflict with another program that would appeal to the same audience. Line your speakers up first and work around their schedules.
2. **Printed invitations**—Be sure you allow enough time to design, proof, print, and deliver invitations so that recipients will have time to respond. You may decide to use first class postage to ensure timely delivery. Provide a central phone number for responses.
3. **Printed programs**—Plan for an insert for last minute changes. Do you hand them out or leave them on seats? Leaving them on seats is probably more efficient, but handing them out provides Library employees a PR opportunity to meet and greet.
4. **Location**—In most instances you will want to have your meeting in the library. But if you expect an overflow crowd, you might think about moving your meeting to a larger space. But remember, a poor turnout is more noticeable and can be more embarrassing in a large space than in a small space.
5. **Publicity**—Use agency notices and posters; announce on web sites; send notices to library supporters and special interest groups; post signs in cafeteria, on library doors, etc. Use a press release to publicize the event through in-house organs and local news media. Be sure to include information on the library as well as the event. Plan ahead to be sure publicity is disseminated in time.
6. **Library promotion**—Use the occasion to promote your library. Hand out brochures, business cards in Rolodex format, and bookmarks with hours and phone numbers. Issue library cards to new users. Offer to put new users on your mailing list for publications or announcements.
7. **Seating**—If seats are reserved, use some kind of marker for each chair—ribbon, paper with scotch tape, etc. If you need extra chairs, order them from your agency and check the day before to be sure they will be delivered. Call a rental company if your in-house chair arrangements fall through.
8. **Visitor feedback**—Ask for suggestions or comments about the library or the event on a form with a few prompts rather than one with open-ended questions. Ask questions that will be helpful to library managers and/or planning the next event.
9. **Clearance of visitors**—Some agencies may require visitors to provide social security number, date of birth, or other information 24 to 48 hours ahead of time. Place one person in charge of collecting this information from visitors and forwarding it to the office in charge of security.

10. **Hosting**—Have library staff available to meet visitors and answer questions. Hosts should be alert for important visitors and be sure that they are not left unattended. Organizing a welcoming party for speakers and special guests at the building entrance is a nice touch.
11. **Name tags**—The letters should be as large as possible for easy reading.
12. **Podium**—Reserve a podium with light, microphone; be sure an extension cord is available. Be sure the microphone is ON before the program starts.
13. **Speaker requirements**—Ask your speaker if any special equipment is needed— projector, overhead, VCR, easel, etc.
14. **Parking**—Arrange parking for speakers and special guests if possible.
15. **Water for speaker**—Have a cup or pitcher of water available at the podium.
16. **Gold scissors for ribbon cutting**—Gold scissors may be difficult to find. If so, spray a large pair with gold paint.
17. **Library closed sign**—Post sign on library door announcing closing during the ceremony.
18. **Handling coats**—Borrow or rent coat hangers and coat racks if the weather requires them.
19. **Hearing impaired attendees**—Book ASL speaker for hearing impaired.
20. **Gifts for speakers**—Consider items with agency logo if speaker is outside agency. If you give a plaque or a certificate, have it done in time to correct any errors before presentation.
21. **Food**—Consider luncheon for special guests or finger food for all. Put someone in charge of all food activity. Be sure you have extension cords for warmers, coffee, etc. Bring in extra trash cans to the food and drink area.
22. **Document the event**—The record of the event can be used to promote the library and to provide useful information for future events. Have guests sign a register. Take photos (by a professional, preferably) to be used for further promotion of the library. Make a videotape. Request these services well ahead of time. Determine ahead of time the photographic groupings—who should be photographed with whom? Have someone in charge of arranging the groupings. Make transcripts of speeches for guests and the news media and for posting on your web site. Make a photograph album of events.
23. **Thank you notes to speaker**—Do them as soon as possible after the occasion.
24. **Don't panic**—No matter how hard you try, you can't remember every single detail or prevent the unavoidable. Also, audiences seldom arrive in a critical mood and seldom notice mistakes.