

# Organizing School Book Fairs

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**S**chool Book Fairs are organized to generate excitement about reading and provide additional funding for school libraries through a commission sales structure. Typically the teacher-librarian will contact one of the companies that routinely provides this kind of service and make arrangements for the book fair to be held in the school at a specific time period for a set number of days. The companies that provide this service usually offer a variety of options in terms of structure and profit margin.

There are a number of issues to consider before setting up a book fair at the school:

- What is the primary purpose of the book fair? Is it to put books into the hands of children, or is it to provide additional funding or a combination of both?
- When is the best time of year to do this? Parent interviews? Education Week? Special school celebrations?
- Who will be involved in the planning and promoting of the book fair?
- Who will be available to help during the book fair - setting up, handling cash, helping students and parents make selections, supervising?
- Where will it be held in the school? There may be restrictions due to location of the library within the school, e.g. second floor location with no elevator, or the impact of the book fair on access to the school library.

It is also important to clarify with the book fair vendor:

- What kinds of titles are provided? Can specific requests be made? Can the teacher-librarians

look at the books or lists of books first? How will backorders be handled?

- Are promotional materials provided? Costumed characters? Videos? Book talks? Planning support?
- Are bookcases provided that can be closed at night or is everything laid on out tables? This may also depend on the location of the book fair in the school.
- What kinds of book fairs are available? Is there an option for a 2-for-1 book fair later in the year?
- What is the commission rate? Is there an option for taking a combination of cash and books from the profit?
- What other materials are available for sale? Pencils? Bookmarks? Posters?

Some of the key vendors that provide book fairs are listed below. In some cases, schools make arrangements with a local bookstore as well to provide special buying events.

### **Minnow Books**

<http://www.minnowbooks.com/>

Contact: Greg Blount  
Phone: 1.800.263.5210

### **Panorama**

Contact: Margaret Hirter  
Phone: 905-938-2665 ext. 844 or 1.800.845.9771

### **Scholastic Books**

<http://bookfairs.scholastic.ca/index.htm>

Central Ontario (Markham)  
Phone: 1.800.387.-5750 or 905.887.3600  
Fax: 1.800.336.7494 or 905.887.3589 ■