

Visitas de autores/Author Visits

Visiting authors can bring excitement to an *El día de los niños/El día de los libros* celebration. They can also bring despair if the visit isn't handled well.

Whom to Invite

Invited authors should have some connection with the program. Check with other librarians for recommendations of authors who are good speakers. Temper these recommendations with the needs of your particular audience. Perhaps children have read many of this author's works, perhaps he or she is just beginning to write children's books and shows much promise, perhaps the author has a personal connection in the Latino/Hispanic community you serve. The author's visit is most productive if used as a culminating event, after the children have had an opportunity to become familiar with his or her writing, rather than as an introductory event to acquaint children with the author's work.

Some terrific authors are not terrific speakers. Some make poor guests. Check with other librarians for suggestions. When you contact the author's publisher, ask about the reception his or her visits have received at other libraries and schools.

How to Schedule a Visit

The most complete information for scheduling author visits can be found at http://www.harperchildrens.com/teacher/author_visits.asp. The Children's Book Council offers abbreviated advice on author visits and a comprehensive list of contact people at various publishers at <http://www.cbcbooks.org/html/visits.html>. No matter how well you know a particular author, contacting him or her through the publisher is usually the best way to book the event unless the author has indicated (on his or her Web site, for example) that direct contact is preferred.

In addition to the above suggestions, the following tips will help the visit go smoother.

1. Take care of as many financial arrangements as possible before the visit. If you can book and pay for transportation costs before hand, offer to do so. Send tax forms to the author ahead of time so that paperwork can be processed. If there are costs you will be reimbursing, let the author know about saving receipts or other ways of reporting those costs. Let the author know when the honorarium will be paid if you are unable to do so at the conclusion of the visit. Give a contact name in case this payment is delayed.
2. Give the author as much preparation as possible. Send a letter describing the audience, the number of participants, and ages or grades of the children. Let the author know how the children will be prepared for the visit. Including anticipatory letters from youngsters is always a nice touch. Some librarians send digital photographs to the author so he or she can see the setting for the program. Along with the letter, send a packet of materials that includes the following information: lodging name, address, and phone number; itinerary, including the names and job descriptions of the people who will be at meal functions, transport the author, or provide other special services; a map of the area showing where the author will be staying and the sites of the visit; and any other pertinent information. (For example, if the author will be housed near a special site (such

- as The Alamo) or museum (The NCCIL: The National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature), let him or her know.)
3. Get the author's address ahead of time so you and others, including children, can write and send thank-you notes quickly.
 4. If book sales will be part of the visit, find out how to conduct these at your site. Frequently libraries and schools have restrictions on such sales and only a Friends' group or a PTO representative can sell them.
 5. Send out information to local newspapers.
 6. Prepare the children as much as possible by having them read the author's books, think of questions to ask, and know something about the author's background.
 7. If there is to be autographing, check with the author for his or her preferred procedure. Some authors request that Post-It Notes™ be used so that names are not misspelled. Others may prefer to autograph book plates for distribution.
 8. If you are planning to give the author a gift, consider the problems that may arise if the author must carry the gift on an airplane. An engraved letter opener, for example, represents a lovely thought but will not pass airport inspection in carry-on luggage. Similarly, large or weighty packages may not fit into a suitcase. If your gift is large, bulky, or won't be allowed in carry-on luggage, offer to mail the gift to avoid these problems.
 9. Enjoy the program and the enthusiasm of the children.
 10. Begin making plans for the next author visit.

If an author visit is beyond your budget or programming goals, consider arranging an online chat or a telephone conference call. The publishers' representatives will help you through that process.

Suggested resources

Peck, Richard. "The Care and Feeding of the Visiting Author." *Top of the News*
Smith, Roland. "Author's Day Revisited." *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries*