

## **Book Fair Organizer's Guide**

Welcome to the world of book fairs! Your book fair will be a great way to connect Unitarian Universalists with books they'll love. You'll also have an exciting chance to welcome visitors to your congregation.

Visitors to our small shop at UUA Headquarters in Boston often tell us how much they appreciate being able to look at the books before buying them. Shopping online doesn't provide that bookstore experience of browsing, thumbing through the books, and sipping a coffee while talking about the books with friends. A book fair provides that experience, and it's the perfect way to match UUs and their visitors with books published just for them.

We make the process as simple as possible for you. This guide provides simple instructions on choosing a time and location for the fair, ordering the books, processing them for the fair, displaying them to the best advantage, and settling your account with us after the fair.

You'll receive a 40% discount on titles published by Skinner House or Beacon Press, and payment won't be due until returns have been processed.

After you finish reading this guide, please start making arrangements for your fair as soon as possible. Your book fair won't be much fun if you wait until the last minute. This guide provides information about best practices, but you don't have to do everything exactly as we suggest. You may have some techniques of your own, especially if you have retail experience. If you have any questions as you read the guide, be sure to contact us at [bookstore@uua.org](mailto:bookstore@uua.org) (or call 800-215-9076). Our assistant manager, Laura Jean Miller, manages the book fair program and will be your main contact.

### **First Steps**

So someone in your congregation, maybe you, thought your congregation might benefit from a book fair, and somehow you were chosen to find out more.

The first step is to decide who is in charge of the book fair. You may want to form a book fair committee. If you're planning the Book Fair solo, you'll still need help, at least for the day(s) of the fair.

Check with the appropriate members of your congregation to set a date and reserve a space and some tables for your fair. The date, time, and location of your fair are crucial to its success. You want to bring your fair to your customers,

so choose a date and time when people will be at your congregation for services or programming. A Back-to-Church Fair in September, A Holiday Book Fair in December, or a Summer Reading Book Fair in late May are all good possibilities. Don't expect people to come to church to attend the book fair.

Many of our book fair leaders choose to hold the book fair for several weekends. This is a great idea, and can be helpful for those customers who don't have time to shop one weekend but may the next.

You also want to locate your fair where the people are. Again, don't expect your customers to walk down the stairway and through a dark hall to get to your fair. How about next to the sidewalk so people can browse on their way into or out of the worship service? Or in the fellowship room so people can browse while they enjoy coffee? Wherever your folks congregate, hold your fair there!

### **Your Friendly UUA Bookstore**

Let us help you make your book fair a great success. Contact us as early as possible, once you've chosen a particular date, or even if you're trying to choose between two dates. We'll put your book fair on our calendar and help you choose from our Book Fair packages. Please note that in order to receive the 40% discount and free shipping (when offered), you must choose from our packages. Please do not place an order on our website as you will not receive the discount or free shipping.

### **The Packages**

Our Book Fair Packages are selected to provide the widest possible selection. It is our experience that the popularity of particular books is extremely difficult to predict at our Book Fairs. The newest, hottest title for UUs in general may have no appeal for your particular customers, while a title that's selling so-so for UUs across the country might be the big hit of your fair. Therefore, we've found that it's best to offer a big selection for browsing and provide order forms for customers. You'll sell the books you have on hand and take orders for anything that sells out or any other Beacon Press and Skinner House books that customers want. After the fair, you'll email us a list of the books you need to fulfill those orders, and we'll send them to you to distribute to your customers.

### **The Profits**

You'll probably make some money from your book fair. Before you've got the cash in hand, you should know what you're going to do with it. If you earmark the profits for a particular cause, be sure to publicize that as you market the book fair. Your cause may be within your congregation or in the larger community. You may also wish to accept donations during the book fair.

Be sure to think about the nitty-gritty of the finances, too. The best arrangement is usually for your treasurer to deposit all the cash and checks you collect into the congregation's account, then pay us for the sold books from that account, and then apply credit or write a check for the recipient of the profits. We also offer credit card forms so that we can process MasterCard and Visa payments for you. Having these forms on hand is important so that people who don't carry cash or checks can participate in your fair!

### **Before Your Books Arrive**

While you wait for your books to arrive, begin publicizing the book fair within your congregation. You know best how information is disseminated through your group, and here are some ideas:

- Include a notice in your congregation's newsletter.
- Print out the Coming Soon sign from our website and post it on a bulletin board or in the coffee area.
- Give a book talk. During an appropriate part of your service or at an appropriate meeting, stand up and talk about a book you'll be selling at your fair. This is a powerful way to sell books—just look at the success of the Oprah Book Club! Maybe a member of your Book Fair Committee could speak each Sunday for a couple of minutes. Or it may be even more effective for your minister to encourage congregants to participate in the fair!

### **After Your Books Arrive**

When your books arrive, you should immediately open the boxes, unpack, and count the books. There is always a chance that your books may have been damaged during shipping or that our warehouse may have made an error and sent you the wrong number of books. There should be a packing list and an invoice in one of the boxes, and you can also use your order list to verify that you have the right books.

If there is anything wrong with your shipment, contact us immediately. We will be happy to correct the problem, but we do need time to do that. Please do not wait until after the fair to contact us about missing books.

We also suggest that you sticker your books, and small post-its placed on the inside cover have worked well for our fairs since they're easy to remove.

Remember that you'll have to remove your labels before processing the return, so you don't want something that sticks too well. You'll see below that the post-its help with inventory control as well as sales. Label each book with the correct price, which you will see on the invoice. Be sure to use the retail price, not your discounted price. Please do not try to "pass the savings on" to your customers.

We have discounted the books to allow for shipping costs and a small profit. You will not cover your shipping costs if you charge the discounted price rather than the retail price.

Be sure to store the books properly until the day of the fair. It's smart to repack the books in the boxes and store them in a home or office where they won't be moved. Please don't store them in your garage or basement as the books may get moldy.

## **The Day of the Fair**

### **Setting Up**

You want to set up your Book Fair to be attractive and easy to browse. Set up your tables (and tablecloths, if you have them) in the prearranged area. The positioning of the tables will depend on your location, but in general, it's better for sales to have a U shape that customers can work their way around rather than tables placed parallel to each other, which offers lots of opportunities to quit shopping.

Unpack your books and lay them out on the table. As many as possible should be faced out, placed with the cover of the book showing. People are more likely to notice the book if they see the cover. People are also more likely to pick up the book and buy it if the books are arranged in simple stacks rather than creative swirls or geometric shapes (some shoppers don't want to destroy the design).

Set up a space for selling the books. At one end of the tables, or on a separate small table, set your cash box, inventory notebook, and any other items you will want during sales, such as pens for your customers to write checks. Leave a little empty space so customers can set down their books. Put someone in charge of this area who can focus on making change and keeping track of inventory. Give that person a chair if he or she will be there a while. Make sure any helpers know that the money area cannot be left unattended.

If your church office is set up to process credit card charges, you may be able to accept credit cards. Most churches are not set up for this, and we do not recommend that you try to set up a credit card account and swipers for a brief event. We recommend that you accept cash and checks or cash only.

### **Keeping Track of Inventory**

Here's a simple and effective way to keep track of your books as you sell them. You'll need a legal pad or notebook. Earlier you placed little post-it notes showing the title and price inside the front cover of each book. As you sell each book, pull off the post-it and stick it on a page in your notebook or pad. Keep

some tape handy in case the post-its don't stick. At the end of the sale, you'll have a clear record of what you sold.

## **Hospitality**

Your Book Fair is a great way to welcome familiar and new people to your congregation. Be sure to speak to people as they walk up, welcoming them to your Fair. Visitors may ask for introductory materials, which we include in your suggested title list. You may also want to have a few pamphlets at hand to give away.

## **After the Fair**

When your fair is over, be sure to neatly pack books back into their boxes and find a clean, dry place to store them. But please don't store them for very long! You need to return any books that did not sell so you will not be charged for them.

Contact us with any credit cards that need to be processed. The safest way to do this is for you to call us at 800-215-9076 and read off the card numbers.

However, this is not always feasible, so the next best technique is to fax the forms to 617-723-4805. Be sure to include a cover sheet so we'll know where to apply these cards. Also, it's wise to email or call us to let us know the fax is on the way. For security purposes, please don't email card numbers. Once we've received the credit card information, we'll let you know, and you should destroy your copies of the credit card forms at that point.

As you repack the books, count them just as you did when you received the books. When you subtract the number you have now from the number you had before the sale, the number should correspond to the number of labels you have in your notebook or legal pad. If you find a discrepancy, try to find the problem as soon as possible. If you show that more books are missing than were sold, you may be able to find out what happened to the books. Occasionally a customer will walk off with a book to show a friend, intending to pay, and forget. Another possibility is that you or a helper placed a book in a special place to hold it for someone to purchase, and that person never came. If you or your helpers remember something like that, check with the person, and you may be able to recover your book or your money. Since you will have to pay for anything you are not able to return, it is important for you and your helpers to keep a close eye on your books.

Once you have counted your books, prepare a simple packing list for your package. On your packing list, write your account number/customer id and invoice number(s). Then list the books you are returning and the quantity you're returning of each one. This will help our warehouse process everything properly. Pack your books carefully, and fill the box with packing materials such as

cardboard from your leftover boxes. Please do not use newsprint as this rubs off onto the books. Place your packing list inside one of your boxes.

We recommend that you ship your returns via UPS. UPS insures up to \$100 automatically, and you can purchase additional insurance for a few dollars. Please talk to the customer service representatives at your local UPS store to arrange insurance.

Send your returns to our warehouse:

Returns  
UUA Bookstore  
46 Development Road  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Our warehouse will process the returns and send us confirmation, and we will then process the returns in our system. Please be aware that the returns process is the one phase of the book fair program where there can be a significant delay. Our warehouse serves multiple publishers, and returns are processed in the order they arrive, so it is not unusual to experience a delay of several weeks between the time your order arrives and the time we receive the return information to credit you.

Please email us at [bookstore@uaa.org](mailto:bookstore@uaa.org) and let us know that the returns have been sent. In turn, we will email you a statement after the returns have been processed. You should then make arrangements for your treasurer or administrator to send us a check for the correct amount. Because of the possibility of delay, if your congregation needs to pay immediately rather than waiting for the statement, please estimate the amount you will need to pay and send a check for that amount. If there is a discrepancy when the return is processed, we can send you a refund check or a statement for the amount due.

## **Conclusion**

Thank you for reading through the Book Fair Organizer's Guide. We hope you will use it throughout your book fair as a resource. The UUA Bookstore is also your resource. Please contact us whenever you have a question or concern. Our standard office hours during the "church year" are 9am-5pm EST, Monday through Friday. Your main Book Fair contact is Laura Jean Miller, and Ryan Harrison also provides support.