Attending an International Book Fair

A Guide for First-Time Participants

Attending an International Book Fair: A Guide for First-Time Participants

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Introduction

Whether you are a seasoned publisher or just starting out with the idea of expanding your market outside of Canada, the international markets can be tantalizing and a bit over-whelming. *Attending an International Book Fair: A Guide for First-Time Participants* is designed precisely for those taking that important first step into the international publishing landscape.

As in any new venture, taking the time to learn as much as you can from those who have gone before you is important. So too is your own research on the various steps to make attending an international book fair attractive and profitable, along with knowledge on available funding. The right information can help you make informed decisions to achieve success in growing your sales as you become experienced in the wider world of rights sales. This guide will steer you in the right direction and help avoid any major pitfalls.

To attend an international book fair involves a commitment of time and an outlay of financial resources. If your list has the likelihood for rights sales, then doing everything possible to ensure foreign revenue should be part of your sales strategy. Determining that potential can come from unsolicited interest from a great review, an author interview, or the alert eye of a foreign scout or agent. More often than not, interest arises from good publicity and promotion and solid planning at acquisition.

Attending an International Book Fair: A Guide for First-Time Participants begins with the understanding that the decision to start selling rights is inherent in your head contract—meaning that you have acquired world rights for the author's work in question. You have determined that having world rights, meaning having the right to license the work internationally, is the correct goal for the house on behalf of the author. Such terms as territory, royalty splits on rights, and export sales including book clubs and digital formats should be clearly understood.

While it may appear daunting at first, selling rights can be incredibly exciting. Every publisher remembers their first fair, so don't be shy. You will receive lots of hearty congratulations and likely frequent raising of glasses during these first social occasions. Take full advantage of this collective goodwill.

This guide outlines the steps you must take in preparation for making your entry on the world stage as positive and productive as possible. Take time to review Appendix 1: Book Fair Survival Guide for a handy list of suggestions, tips, and other ideas gleaned over the years.

International Book Fairs

There are a great number of international book fairs that occur over the course of the calendar year, many of which will seem as appealing as the next. If money and time were no object, one could be travelling and selling much of the year. However, that would be incredibly taxing as well as expensive and likely not the most effective use of time for any publisher. Livres Canada Books maintains a list of the upcoming major fairs on its website. The International Publishers Association also maintains a comprehensive list on their website.

With so many fairs taking place throughout the year, how is one to decide which fair to attend? The general consensus is that it is better to concentrate on the main international fairs that have the most potential to maximize the odds of success. These include the London Book Fair (LBF) and Livre Paris (formerly the Salon du livre de Paris) usually held in March; the Bologna Children's Book Fair (BCBF) for the children's market, generally in April; the Frankfurt Book Fair (FBF) in October; and the Guadalajara International Book Fair (FIL) in November.

Some Canadian publishers have been exploring markets through events such as the Salon du livre et de la presse de Genève, la Foire du livre de Bruxelles, the Beijing International Book Fair, the Seoul International Book Fair, the Göteborg Book Fair in Sweden, the Sharjah International Book Fair in the United Arab Emirates, and the Salon du livre et de la presse jeunesse de Montreuil. For first-time participants, attending one of the big fairs below is advised before looking further afield.

Once you have decided to take the plunge, one key piece of advice is to bookmark the Livres Canada Books website and consult their funding options for international travel through the FRMAP program.

For a longer list of book fairs, please see Appendix 2: Selected International Book Fairs.

Major Fairs

London Book Fair (LBF)

Country: United Kingdom
Timing: Spring (March or April)

Celebrating its 45th year, more than 25,000 publishing professionals from more than 60 countries attended the 2016 edition of the London Book Fair. One of the advantages of the fair is that everyone is under one roof, organized by sector (Children's and YA,

Academic, etc.). In addition, 30 international stands are featured within the halls of Olympia, where the fair is held.[1]

In 2017, the fair will take place during London Book & Screen Week. Industry organizers are seeing value in bringing together creators of print and those who work in film, television, and other digital formats. In addition, the fair attracts a large number of book distributors, booksellers, and agents who are also in attendance.

Bologna Children's Book Fair (BCBF)

Country: Italy
Timing: Spring (March or April)

The Bologna Children's Book Fair is held in the medieval city of Bologna, food capital of Italy, in late March or early April. While it is a smaller fair with just over 25,000 square meters of exhibit space across six halls, 1,200 exhibitors from close to 100 countries and more than 25,000 visitors attended in 2016. Bologna is the primary fair for children's content, and any publisher focusing on rights sales for their children's or YA titles is advised to attend. While print books still rule supreme, the fair has expanded into digital rights and multimedia licensing.

The Bologna Illustrators Exhibit is a highly regarded juried show highlighting the world's best creative talent. Meanwhile, the Bologna Ragazzi Awards (BRAW) honour excellence in books and digital publishing. BCBF also recognizes the most significant children's publishers across six key areas of the world. Finalists are nominated by the BCBF and the Italian Publishers Association, but ultimately decided by voting publishers.

[1] London Book Fair, *Why Exhibit at LBF?* (London: London Book Fair, 2016), http://www.londonbookfair.co.uk/en/exhibit/why-exhibit/.

Frankfurt Book Fair (FBF)

Country: Germany
Timing: Fall (October)

As the world's largest international industry event, the Frankfurt Book Fair is still the main event for publishers all over the world. More than 7,000 exhibitors from approximately 100 countries and close to 300,000 visitors attend to meet, buy, sell, and promote their books. The first three days of the fair are exclusively reserved for trade visitors involved with the negotiation of rights and licenses. This reinforces the mentality that selling rights is a serious business while helping keep the aisles and expansive halls relatively easy to navigate in order to attend meetings.

Many publishers arrive a day or two early for the serious pre-fair meetings with other industry players at the Grandhotel Hessischer Hof and Frankfurter Hof hotel. The buzz you read about hot titles often happens in the cramped lobbies and bars of the hotels or it may come from the agents centre the day before the fair opens.[2]

The general public can enter on the final two days of the fair. The pleasure of witnessing the crowds and seeing the continued relevance and value of books in homes, schools, and public libraries is another reason why many publishers enjoy this particular event.

Livre Paris (formerly the Salon du livre de Paris)

Country: France
Timing: Spring (March)

Francophone publishers and those courting the French-language market might consider attending the newly rebranded Livre Paris. Begun in 1981, this public fair is an opportunity for readers to meet publishers and authors, buy their books, and celebrate the French language. Publishers gather to meet their counterparts or to attend information sessions on the first day. In 2016, more than 150,000 visitors attended to see and talk to the 3,000 writers promoting their work.

[2] Sophie Hicks, *My Frankfurt: Sophie Hicks* (Frankfurt: Frankfurt Book Fair, 2016), http://www.thebookseller.com/insight/my-frankfurt-sophie-hicks-414456.

Guadalajara International Book Fair | Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara (FIL)

Country: Mexico
Timing: Early winter (November/December)

This well-organized 10-day Spanish-language fair is now in its 30th year. The 2015 Guadalajara International Book Fair had more than 750,000 visitors, including 20,000 professionals from more than 1,900 publishing houses and 40-plus countries.[3] Organized by the University of Guadalajara, FIL has been growing annually in size and importance and is now the largest Spanish-language fair in the world. The event is open to the public as well as to publishers, and has become a touchstone event for the promotion of literacy and literature through author events and direct-to-consumer sales. The opening weekend sees large crowds of visitors eager to participate in these events. The subsequent three days are reserved for industry professionals, including publishers, agents, authors, and distributors. Over the course of the last six days, FIL becomes a book-selling marketplace with school children in large attendance.

The costs of European book fairs have made FIL the best place to meet publishers from Mexico and Central and South America, with the added bonus of being an affordable fair. Livres Canada Books occasionally hosts the Canada Stand at the fair, and a number of Canadian publishers and agents regularly attend, often by taking a table in the Rights Centre.

Choosing the Right Fair

This guide will explore the main book fairs as the largest and most important for selling rights and conducting other export related sales.

Three of the five—Bologna, London, and Frankfurt—have a significant Canadian presence with a highly visible and attractive stand organized by Livres Canada Books, as well as a stand organized by Québec Édition. While there is no regular Canada Stand in Guadalajara, FIL may be worth consideration as the largest Spanish-language fair in the world, and with growing interest in Spanish in the United States.[4] A number of Canadian publishers and agents attend, finding sales and partners.

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[3] University of Guadalajara, *Information 2015 Figures* (Guadalajara: Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara, 2016), https://www.fil.com.mx/ingles/i_info/i_numeralia_fil.asp.

[4] Ana Gonzalez-Barrera and Mark Hugo Lopez, *Spanish is the Most Spoken Non-English Language in U.S. Homes, Even Among Non-Hispanics* (Pew Research Center Fact Tank: News in the Numbers, 13 August 2013), http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/08/13/spanish-is-the-most-spoken-non-english-language-in-u-s-homes-even-among-non-hispanics/.

Francophone publishers have long been present at Livre Paris to buy and sell rights, and to meet with their distributors throughout French-speaking Europe and beyond. One doesn't have to speak the language to succeed, but those with linguistic abilities may find these smaller fairs appealing.

The major fairs are held in cities equipped with excellent local transportation to the fair sites and are all well-serviced by the airlines. Support from the host cities adds to the ease in conducting business. Publishers are welcome tourists, viewed as cultured professionals with a keen interest in travel. A good meal after a long day of meetings is high on most peoples' lists. The preferred establishments, by no means the most expensive, are often booked some time in advance, so gourmands should take note.

Each fair highlights an annual featured country or guest of honour, shining a spotlight on literature from that particular market or linguistic region. In 2020, Canada will be the guest of honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair (October 14–18, 2020), an excellent reason to consider attending this event and capitalize on the opportunity to highlight all things Canadian.[5] This news is expected to bring significant attention and excellent economic potential to our publishers in both official languages and to introduce a large audience of readers to a growing body of highly respected and internationally award-winning Canadian literature. Further details can be found on the Livres Canada Books website.

Helpful Resources

To keep up to date on upcoming book fairs and industry news, sign up for the Livres Canada Books newsletter. The monthly updates keep the industry informed of issues and concerns affecting Canadian publishers on rights and export sales. For more detailed market profiles, the Livres Canada Books website has more than 20 market guides and reports on specific countries and regions, including the United States, United Kingdom, France, the Middle East, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America, as well as targeted reports on global digital marketing.

Along with the fair organizations previously listed, there are other resources worth reviewing to bookmark for future reference when the serious planning begins.

The International Publishers Association (IPA) was founded in Paris in 1896 to ensure respect for international copyright. It now comprises membership from more than 60 publishing organizations in more than 50 countries to represent the industry in various key areas like protection of creative work and freedom to publish. Its website contains helpful information about upcoming international events.

[5] Frankfurt Book Fair, *Premiere: Canada to be Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2020* (Frankfurt: Frankfurt Book Fair, 7 October 2016), http://www.buchmesse.de/fbmsite/en/fbf/press/press-releases/03106/.

The Frankfurt Book Fair provides detailed information on many international markets as well as detailed information about the fair.

New York-based *Publishing Perspectives* is a trade journal founded by the German Book Office to provide coverage of world markets for the industry, particularly on rights and licensing. Along with a well-respected daily newsletter, they publish daily magazines (print and digital) during the London and Frankfurt book fairs on industry news taking place on the floor.