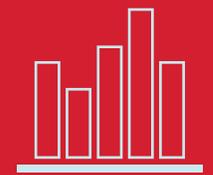




LIVRES CANADA BOOKS®

Distribution and Sales in the US

A Guide for Canadian Publishers



Part 3: Key Conferences and the Five GETS



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Key Conferences

The 2021 edition was a success, and 2022 looks like it will be even better. There will be plenty of opportunities to meet with wholesalers, distributors, retailers, and publisher services companies. For the US market, everything and anything you need is included in this conference.

Regional Independent Booksellers Conferences (Bookstores)

Within the American Booksellers Association (ABA), eight regional associations have their own conferences. Since these are smaller in scale than most conferences, and since they are all about selling books at independent bookstores, they can present some excellent one-to-one opportunities.

Each regional conference has its own format and flair. Most have author signings, impressive keynote speakers, and educational sessions. The ABA also attends each regional conference. These events offer deep insight into how independent booksellers do their title selection, in-store merchandizing, click-and-mortar hybrids, and direct customer contact (emails, etc.). If you are looking to understand the mindset of US independent booksellers, these are excellent opportunities to do so. Even if you are working with a distributor or wholesaler, these conferences provide a great format for interactions with the bookstores.

The names, locations, and conference details for the regional associations can be found here <http://www.bookweb.org/node/5031>.

CAMEX (College bookstores)

CAMEX is the main, perhaps only, conference focused on the college bookstore business. While it is not a publishing conference, there is a significant amount to learn about how books, and other merchandise, moves through the various supply channels and makes it to a college website or shelf. This conference is generally held at the beginning of March and moves around the country from year to year. The 2022 conference featured both an in-person event—February 26 to March 2 in Louisville, Kentucky—and an online event—March 15–17.

Five key factors will determine your success in the US market:

1. **Publishing books in the categories that sell:** Mystery, Sci-Fi, and Romance are always strong.
2. **Adapting your financials to create digital and POD books:** For indie presses, short runs are converting to ebook or POD.
3. **Changing your sales structure/practices to focus on the key players:** Ingram and Baker & Taylor for bookstores; Follett, Brodart, Baker & Taylor, and Ingram for libraries; PGW, IPG, and NBN as sales/distributors agents. These firms give the greatest possible reach for a market the size of the US. They can handle the logistics for you. You still need to participate in driving sales via promotion and advertising, but they can even help with that.
4. **Driving awareness through conference attendance:** The conferences and events covered in this guide are intended to help you use a targeted approach to get the best return for your investment.
5. **Driving title awareness through marketing:** America has a vibrant community of independent publishers. The Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA)⁵ is a wonderful organization focused on helping us move forward together. Several Canadian publishers are members. There is a wealth of information available to members of IBPA as well as a wide variety of conference and educational opportunities.

Getting your title data into Bowker's Books In Print is a good first step. Having your titles listed on Amazon.com and with Ingram and Baker & Taylor (either directly or via a distributor) is a critical step.

Joining IBPA will provide you with a strong support network and a rich selection of market training opportunities. The conferences, including the IBPA Publishing University, are wonderful events to learn about the US market and build your network connections.

5 Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA): <https://www.ibpa-online.org>.

Appendix 1: Resources

Major Conferences

American Library Association

ala.org/conferencesevents/node/7

CAMEX

camex.org

Digital Book World

digitalbookworld.com

International Literacy Association

literacyworldwide.org/meetings-events/ila-conference

Texas Library Association

txla.org/annual-conference

U.S. Book Show

usbookshow.com

Bookstore Data

Book Industry Study Group

bisg.org

About the Author

Michael Johnson has been in the book distribution business for almost 40 years. Eighteen of those were at Follett Corporation where he had a variety of jobs across several divisions, including running Follett Digital Resources. Michael also has a long history in the creation and distribution of digital content, both ebooks and e-textbooks. Michael's first ebook delivery platform was deployed in 2001, and that system is still in use today.

In 2008, Michael founded the strategic consulting firm Full Potential Associates, which focuses on the blend of publishing/technology/education. Michael spent six years on the Board of Directors for the Association of Educational Publishers. His consulting puts him in an excellent position to keep tabs on all aspects of the publishing and sales ecosystem.

Michael is currently the Director of Content Partnerships at Benetech, an international non-profit that focuses on helping publishers create and distribute fully accessible digital content for readers with print disabilities.

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