

Author Appearance Q and A

For many authors, the best part about being published is the opportunity to meet prospective readers through author events. Here are some frequently asked questions about promotional appearances that we receive from authors:

Q: How do bookstores decide which books to feature in their autographing programs?

A: Bookstores actively seek out books and authors to support their in-store programs. They typically schedule events that they believe will stimulate traffic and sales and promote goodwill in the community. If your book is geared to professionals in your field or has a very narrow audience, it might be difficult to schedule author signings in stores that cater to the general reader. Because bookstores can be quite selective about their author events, opportunities for signings are limited. Publishers are in keen competition to schedule their authors for slots in dynamic, well-organized, and popular stores. To ensure enough lead time to promote and organize events, bookstores usually schedule signings **three months ahead**.

Q: What if I have time to schedule a last-minute signing during an unexpected trip?

A: Because stores fill their calendars and promote signings months in advance, most will not schedule spontaneous events.

Q: I'd like to have a signing at my local bookstore during December to take advantage of

holiday sales opportunities. Can this be arranged?

A: Because of limited sales space during the holiday season, many bookstores hesitate to schedule author events between Thanksgiving and New Year's for books that do not have wide appeal to gift-givers (bestsellers, cookbooks, photo books, etc.).

Q: Where will my author signings be scheduled?

A: Invariably, you will enjoy the best turnout in your hometown and local area. We will review your author's questionnaire for suggested signing venues. If you are traveling to an area that is related to your topic, we would be pleased to investigate signing opportunities for you. **We need to know travel plans as early as possible in order to maximize chances of scheduling an event.**

Q: What if I arrange an event myself? Is that ok?

A: Events should not be scheduled until **after** the book's publication date. Earlier events risk not having books available for sale.

If you have contacts at a venue that you feel comfortable approaching about an event, feel free to do so! If you do confirm an event, be sure to alert UNC Press

as soon as possible with the venue's contact information, as well as the exact time, date, and location for the signing.

Q: What about signing opportunities in cities where I will be attending a meeting or conference?

A: If you have requested a signing at a local bookstore during a conference, UNC Press will try to arrange one for you. Please keep in mind that such signings are often difficult to book as many other authors will be in the area at the same time.

Q: What if I change my mind about a scheduled signing?

A: Bookstores understand that emergencies occur and will usually work with us to re-schedule an event. Because of the amount of effort that stores put into each event, it's considered bad form to change dates or cancel signings without good reason.

Q: Who handles the promotion of bookstore events?

A: Once an event is confirmed, UNC Press will send the venue promotional materials and an email (copying you) confirming the event details. Promotional materials usually include a jacket, press release, and author photo (if >>

you have provided us with one). UNC Press also posts the signing date, time, and location on our website and your author page if the event is open to the public.

Once UNC Press has booked you for an event, the bookstore customarily designs and executes the promotional campaign. Each bookstore handles publicity differently. Some bookstores issue press releases; others produce newsletters; some rely on in-store signage; a few will advertise in local newspapers.

Q: How can I invite people to my signing?

A: To help generate a core audience for an event, stores often ask authors for contact lists of local friends and colleagues. Having this type of support during your signing creates a festive buzz in the signing area that will draw casual browsers to your event. You can also feel free to invite people yourself.

Q: How can I help streamline the author signing process?

A: **Please respond as quickly as possible when we present you with possible dates and times for signings.** Often we are working under a bookstore's newsletter deadline or competing with other publishers to get an available spot. A typical signing will generally require three or four contacts between you, the Press, and the venue before a final date and time can be set. Your responsiveness ensures that we will secure a spot for you on the store calendar, meet

deadlines, and thus make the signing more successful.

Q: How many copies of my book will be available at the signing?

A: Bookstores determine their own order quantities for author signings. UNC Press advises on quantities and ensures the book will be available at the event.

Q: Will I be reimbursed for expenses related to my author signing?

A: UNC Press has a modest budget to help defray the costs associated with author travel. Prior to your event, we will discuss out of town event expenses and confirm any amount of compensation that we can provide. Reimbursements without prior approval are not possible. Receipts are required for all reimbursement requests, within two weeks of the trip.

Q: What will be expected of me at the signing?

A: Some bookstores will seat you at a table with a display of your books for an informal "meet and greet." Most will prefer that you have a brief presentation, an introduction to your topic, followed by audience Q&A and a signing. The length and format of your presentation may vary from store to store. It's a good idea to develop a short (fifteen to twenty minute) informal talk that will appeal to a general audience and help stimulate discussion in a variety of venues. In most cases, store signings should be informal and relaxed.

Be prepared to meet a variety of people at your signing, and to chat about topics other than your book. It's a good idea to have a supportive person with you in case it's a slow day at the store—simply having one person already at the table encourages others to approach. Promptly acknowledge people who come to your table, even if you are already talking to someone. You may also engage store staff in conversation to keep your table lively. If refreshments are available, feel free to offer them to people stopping by your table—they may linger and buy a book! If you have promotional materials such as a poster or postcards, be sure to have those out and visible. If you have a conversation piece related to your book (a map, a photograph) by all means bring it. It's important to appear available to, and interested in, the store's clientele. Avoid reading or doing paperwork during your signing.

Q: How will I know if my signing has been a success?

A: Try not to gauge success by the number of books sold or the number of people in attendance. Bookstore promotions can reach thousands of potential book buyers, most of whom will not be able to attend your signing. Often the publicity, in the form of in-store displays of autographed books and bookstore newsletters, continues long after the event. Simply having a signing gets the word out about your book, and that's what successful publicity is all about!