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BookExpo 2019: Where Publishers and Librarians Find Their Happy Place

It's an increasingly complex digital world for librarians and publishers alike, but at BookExpo, it's all about the books

By Andrew Richard Albanese | May 10, 2019

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Photos: Sonya Sones (2nd from l.), Andrea Scher (2nd from r.), Beowulf Sheehan (r.)

Mary Ting, Eoin Colfer, Jasmine Guillory, Akwaeke Emezi

The march of technology has brought a slew of changes to libraries and publishers, and of course even to BookExpo, which continues to experiment with different formats to serve its various constituencies across the book world. But as the 2019 edition of the show nears, librarians say its value over the past decade has remained constant. Years of dire predictions about the future of books and libraries in the digital age have given way to the reality that books and reading are here to stay. And though librarians and publishers are still grappling with how to best serve readers in the digital age, at BookExpo the focus is on their shared mission: connecting authors and readers.

"BookExpo is more important for me than ever," says PW contributor Brian Kenney, director of the White Plains (N.Y.) Public Library. "Our public is looking to us more than ever to answer that essential question: what should we read next? And BookExpo gives me a leg up on what's being published."

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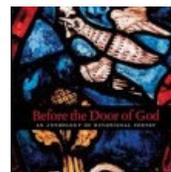
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One of Kenney's counterparts in the greater New York City area, Susan Riley, director of the Mamaroneck Public Library, agrees. "As a library director, I'm often mired in administrative functions," she says. "So I really look forward

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to reconnecting with publishers and discussing the titles that will be coming out soon. And my staff members enjoy getting autographs from their favorite authors. We all value BookExpo so much that I offer to send every professional at my library for at least one full day each year.”

Sure, libraries are expanding to offer a wide range of services and programs in the digital age. But books and reading remain the beating heart of the library, Kenney says, citing, among other trends, a surge in reading group activities at the White Plains Public Library. “We’re up to seven groups—including groups reading short fiction, crime fiction, memoirs by women, and, of course, the mainstay, literary fiction. And in the fall, we’ll be bringing on several more

groups, including one devoted to nonfiction and another for adult readers of YA fiction. We also support at least a dozen other book groups in the community.”

Riley and Kenney agree that for librarians at BookExpo, the Book Buzz panels are invaluable. “While I enjoy walking the show floor for galleys and news, even this old hand can find the experience pretty overwhelming,” Kenney says. “I look for programs that help me cut through the noise and winnow down the titles, like the Adult Editors Buzz programs and *Booklist’s* Annual Shout & Share. And what BookExpo also provides is a chance to hear and meet authors. Like most libraries, we host a lot of author events, ranging from simple readings and signings to things like the keynote at our annual gala. I’m always looking for authors who are lively, engaging, provocative, and comfortable with a crowd. In one day at BookExpo, I can catch a score of authors in action.”

The Librarians’ Lounge

Librarians, we know how you feel: BookExpo can be a test of endurance. At some point, you’re going to need to drop those heavy book bags, get off your feet, grab a beverage and some food, and recharge (yourself or your phone)—maybe even chat with a fellow librarian and meet a great author or two while you’re at it. Once again, we’ve got you covered. Be sure to check out the Publishers Weekly Librarians’ Lounge, located in the main exhibit hall at Booth 557. Thanks to our cohost Baker & Taylor and our sponsors—Book Vine, Disney, Harlequin, Move Books, National Geographic, Penguin Random House Adult Library Marketing, Random House Children’s Books, Rowman & Littlefield, Sourcebooks, and Vesuvian Books—this year’s lounge will again be the place to be for librarians at BookExpo.

Start your 2019 BookExpo by joining us for a kickoff lunch in the lounge on the fair’s opening day, noon–1:30 p.m. on May 29, courtesy of Rowman & Littlefield, which will be providing lunch each day of the show, 12:30–1:30 p.m. After lunch on May 29, stick around the lounge for an afternoon of great programming. Meet Sourcebooks’ bestselling author Chris Ferrie, who will be on hand to sign galleys of his upcoming picture book, *There Was a Black Hole That Swallowed the Universe*, 2–3 p.m. Meet Vesuvian Books’ authors Mary Ting (*ISAN*); Alexandra Weis (*Realm*); Gareth Worthington and Stu Jones (*It Takes Death to Reach a Star*); and Christine Brae (*The Year I Left*), who will be on hand signing copies, 3:30–4:30 p.m.

On May 30, start your day in the lounge with a cup of tea or coffee and a light breakfast starting at 9 a.m. sponsored by Move Books. From 9:30 to 10:30 a.m., meet Disney author Eoin Colfer, whose *Artemis Fowl* is being adapted into a motion picture set to release next year. Colfer will give away signed teacher’s editions of *Artemis Fowl* for the first 100 people. From 11 a.m. to noon, grab a sweet treat and meet Harlequin authors Megan Angelo (*Followers*, Graydon House); Tarryn Fisher (*The Wives*, Graydon House); Noelle Salazar (*The Flight Girls*, Mira); and Karine Jean-Pierre (*Moving Forward*, Hanover Square). After lunch, at 1:30 p.m., meet veterinarian and author Gary Weitzman, 2–3 p.m., sponsored by National Geographic. Pick up a signed copy of Weitzman’s *Complete Guide to Pet Health*—and for those of you missing your own pets, word is that Weitzman may be joined in the lounge by some of his furry friends. Penguin Random House Adult Library Marketing will host authors Marcy Dermansky (*Very Nice: A Novel*); Benjamin Dreyer (*Dreyer’s English: An Utterly Correct Guide to Clarity and Style*); Jasmine Guillory (*The Wedding Party*); Liz Moore (*Long Bright River*); and Regina Porter (*The Travelers: A Novel*) from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Grab a signed copy, a summer treat, and enter for a chance to win a “Sweet Summer Reads” tote bag, filled with a selection of Penguin Random House’s hottest new titles.

On May 31, start BookExpo 2019’s final day by joining us in the lounge beginning at 9 a.m. for coffee and a light breakfast, followed by a meet-and-greet hosted by Random House Children’s



The Most Anticipated Books of Spring 2020

Books and author-illustrator Christopher Myers, creative director of the new imprint Make Me a World. Myers will be joined by two authors from the imprint's inaugural list, coming this fall: Sarah Deming (*Gravity*) and Akwaeke Emezi (*Pet*). From 11 a.m. to noon, author service provider Book Vine Press will be on hand to answer questions about its service, along with two of its authors, Leonard W. Heflich (*Live as Long as You Dare*) and Gabriel Moran (*Missed Opportunities: Rethinking Catholic Tradition*).

And throughout the show, Baker & Taylor reps will be on hand in the lounge to talk with librarians, and to share information about its popular Pop-Up Libraries program. We look forward to seeing you there.

A version of this article appeared in the 05/13/2019 issue of *Publishers Weekly* under the headline: Where Publishers and Librarians Find Their Happy Place

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