BOOK SIGNINGS AT BOOKSTORES

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Authors love book signings, and they should. They make a book launch feel real and set the scene for a celebration for friends and fans.

Bookstores also love book signings, and they should. They provide entertainment for customers and bring new customers into the store.

That said, some realism will help stave off what is typically disappointment after book signing events.

Bookstores will generally order 25 books, of which fewer than ten typically sell. Then, they return the remainder to the publisher, often creating a significant loss for the publisher as well for authors whose royalties come from net revenue.

Sometimes, in a good case scenario, bookstores will take the remaining books on consignment, paying once all have sold.

For a bookstore signing to work well, the author needs to do much preparatory work. Developing a ready-made fan base to convince bookstores to offer a signing as well as to have a good showing where many books are sold. An example of a worthwhile book signing is the case of the release of the first book by Sula, Parish cat at Old Mission. The cat was famous in the community and beloved by hundreds of parishioners. The bookstore was swamped with Sula fans, and her book sold out within the first 45 minutes. With nearly an hour and half to go, dozens of disappointed Sula fans pacing the store, and no books, the store manager allowed us (the publisher) to bring in our inventory from the car — we had expected explosive sales. Essentially, we turned the books over to the store, which sold them on the spot and replaced our inventory by ordering the same number from the distributor and then delivering them to us for return to inventory. That is very rare, but it does point out the significance of local author-local store for the best location of a book signing.

The best way to ensure a successful book signing is to become friends with your local bookstore. (At any rate, you will have to talk to the events coordinator or manager in order to set up your book signing.) Being a known local author (even an author-to-be) makes setting up a launch much easier, and it may bring some extra fans to you in the process. And think of something special you can do to help the bookstore advertise the signing. For example, we make bookmarks announcing the book and signing that the bookstore can hand out to customers in general. (We can also make this on request for authors; so can your local copy shop.)

If the requirements for a successful book signing at a bookstore are a bit steep, consider launching at your local library. Libraries are always looking for book and author events and will let you bring and sell your own inventory.

Need us to run interference or provide guidance for a book signing, just send us a note!