



## EVENT MODEL: BAR NOIR AND OTHER “OUTSIDE THE BOX” EVENTS

As we are fortunate to have the Dashiell Hammett Award presentation at this NAIBA conference, the NAIBA board elected to do something different for the accompanying author meet-and-greet. We created a thematic event with added flourishes wherein a number of notable mystery and thriller writers would assemble. You can present similar programs in your own store by considering these observations:

- Among your patrons, there is a great demand on their available free time. Many other home responsibilities and diversions vie for a reader’s attention. You want customers to patronize your event, but may have a little difficulty in capturing their interest. By grouping authors – especially those writers who share something in terms of your patrons’ reading interests– you have the opportunity to bolster the appeal of your event offering. There is strength in numbers! It is easier to promote a package with loads of appeal for specific readers, as opposed to trying to market a series of events on an individual basis. The name recognition and cache of one featured author will generate interest in your program, but the inclusion of additional authors is icing on the cake! Additionally, with multiple author presentations, each author attracts his or her own fan base. It is also a grand way for your readers to discover new talent! It’s a win/win situation for all involved.
- Your own time and resources may be limited so, if you can only do a single event, do it well.
- Food is a highly social element – we break bread together; we share a meal, we meet for drinks; and we throw dinner parties. Think about making some food and refreshments part of your program. Here are some helpful hints. Always note the ingredients in your preparations as this will be much appreciated by any participants with dietary restrictions or food allergies. Look to food items that can portion-controlled and are service friendly, i.e. things that can be poured into paper cups, ladled into plastic bowls; or served on disposable plates. Remember to have utensils and napkins on hand along with a trash receptacle for waste. Think small portions – a tasting is all that’s required.

Here’s a listing of “**OUTSIDE THE BOX**” **EVENTS** that have been presented by booksellers throughout our region:

- **BAR NOIR:** A presentation of assembled mystery and thriller writers supplemented with bar snacks and beverages. Think local business alliance! This is a grand opportunity to partner with a local micro-brewery, wine merchant, or vineyard.
- **SWEET TEMPTATIONS:** A presentation of assembled romance (or chick-lit) writers with a dessert buffet. Think local business alliance! This is a grand opportunity to partner with a local bakery, ladies’ fitness centers, cosmetic and fragrance merchants, or other specialty shops with female clientele.
- **GAS FREE VACATIONS:** A presentation of travel narrative writers with foods pertain to their subject. Think local business alliance! This is a grand opportunity to partner with a local travel agency or ethnic restaurant.
- **SPORT FAN FEST:** A presentation of sports writers, journalists, or radio commentators with popcorn, peanuts, hot dogs, and draft beer. Remember to notify the sports editor of your local newspaper.
- **BUSINESS BROWN BAGS:** A presentation of writers (or books) that address new trends in business, management, marketing and sales, or finance and investments. Present this event as a lunch program complete with brown-bag sandwiches and refreshments. Remember to mail information to your corporate accounts.
- **THE BUSINESS OF BOOKS:** A presentation or speakers – other than authors – in the book business. This could include editors, publicists, small press affiliates, creative

writing professors, local journalists, local critics, internet bloggers, and more. Local writing groups love these events!

- **HOT TYPE AND TEA:** A presentation of fiction or non-fiction authors whose work deal with specific historical periods. Serve hot tea and finger sandwiches. Don't forget to involve the historical societies in your community in your plans.
- **COVERED DISH SOCIALS:** Host a covered-dish social with writers that address some community issue or current event. This is a wonderful opportunity for community dialog and deeper understanding. Think globally but act locally! You provide the plates, napkins and utensils.
- **CHILDRENS' AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATORS:** Pair some the author/ illustrator together for loads of fun for the younger set. Make it a party with themes compatible to the featured personnel.
- **FIRST FICTION:** A presentation of debut authors. It's always tough to generate interest in an unknown author but remember that there is strength in numbers! Link you event to those programs like FIRST FRIDAYS conducted in many business communities. FIRST FRIDAYS usually involved a joint promotion by several local merchants, with the offering of extended business hours. Local restaurants, art galleries, and specialty shops are the partners to consider. Some communities also present seasonal or holiday specific fests.
- **THE BOOK & THE COOK:** A presentation of cookbook authors with samples prepared from their recipes. Events can feature authors gathered around specific themes, foods, or cooking styles. Think seasonally! Summer is a great time for features on Bar-B-Q, marinades, fresh produce, and picnic fare. Fall is great for soups, stews, crock pot foods, and tailgate tastings. Winter is wonderful for seasonal entertaining, hot drinks, cookies, bars, and biscotti, eats for entertaining, hors d'oevres, and seasonal sweets. Spring is good for events featuring family favorites, nutritional foods for fussy kids, and quick cooking for busy soccer moms.
- **BOOK & MOVIE CLUB:** A book club gathering based on specific book and movie pairings. Featured speakers could include the local movie critic, area filmmaker, video artist, or film professor. Serve movie candy, popcorn, and soft drinks.

Above all, remember that "God is in the details." Go the extra distance and add the tiny flourishes and decorative touches that will enhance the theme of your presentation. Be creative and have fun!