

Author Events: Turning Point or Tipping Point?

By Carl Lennertz, HarperCollins

Ok, checking in about author events and what's next, given gas prices and soaring plane and hotel costs, and with the huge fall touring season imminent.

You have been the innovators on the author event front, as in so many areas, and we do understand the enormous amount of time and energy you take to plan and run author events; we still feel very strongly that they can be crucial in building an author's career, even if the copies sold any given night are not always up to expectations.

Many of you have been going offsite more, trying different ticketing strategies, reaching out to book groups, pairing food and books, and using Myspace and Facebook to boost attendance.

We have been trying to improve event effectiveness, too. We are asking authors to think of bookstore events as talks about the book and not just readings, and to be briefer. We've tried to go regional with some newer authors, sometimes putting them in a car with gas money and reading copies and asking them to go meet you and make friends.

Looking ahead, there's something we should do together this fall.

We all need to educate authors on ALL the other benefits of an event with a store besides what happens the night of the event: the newsletters, emails, + calendars, the displays, the in-store enthusiasm, the staff pick that might result from the event, signed copy sales, and so on. It would help us AND you a lot if you showed authors the evidence of all the tangible pre- and post-event marketing activities, the things they wouldn't get if they didn't come to the store at all. Yes, it could soften the blow if turnout is light, but even in the spirit of keeping it positive, they will be thrilled to see all thisand tell their fellow authors that,

hey, they need to be on the road, too!! And tell their publicists how great your store is! We try and tell them these things, but you have the proof right there.

With costs and author feelings about lower turnouts a growing issue, we all need to communicate the extra benefits and residual effects as much as possible.

Thank you! Please email (carl.lennertz@harpercollins.com) if you have thoughts or ideas on this matter. It is vitally important.