
Tips for Acquisitions Editors and Publishers: Maximizing Acquisitions Potential at Conventions

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Convention attendance for publishers serves a marketing purpose. However, for acquisitions editors, conventions present an excellent opportunity to develop new editorial leads, conduct market research and contact authors. Even if your company is not exhibiting, a convention can be productive for an acquisitions editor.

Start preparing **at least two months** prior to the convention. You will learn the necessary steps to prepare so you can maximize results even if your company doesn't exhibit. Your goal, as an acquisitions editor, is to personally meet anyone who can **contribute editorially** to your publishing program.

At conventions, in addition to scouting for author prospects, you will meet with your company's published authors and content reviewers, conduct editorial research and get a sense of the trends and direction of field or discipline.

Since other publishers exhibit, it's a good time to learn about your competitors. Investigate the possibility of co-publishing while you attend a conference.

Determine exactly what you want to accomplish at a conference. Write down and quantify your goals. For example, you might want to meet eight of your company's authors, talk to ten author prospects, investigate co-publishing possibilities with at least three publishers, and sign contracts with two potential authors.

In preparing for the conference, here's what to do:

1. Get copies of the convention literature.
2. Study the topics of the workshops and papers being presented. Who are the speakers and presenters?
3. Ask: "Is there any potential editorially with this topic and speaker?" If there is, contact the presenter and make an appointment.
4. Study the exhibitor list. Are there any potential co-publishing partners exhibiting? If there are, make appointments.
5. Determine if you have any unresolved questions about a subject, market niche, competing product, or trend in your editorial specialty. Write down those questions. Make a determined effort to get answers at the convention.

No exact formula exists for determining the optimal number of appointments you should make. Attempt to make 8 to 10 appointments per day.

Don't be easy on yourself. Work the convention to maximize the return on your time and to justify the cost of attendance.

Use your meals as a way to increase your contact appointment time. Breakfast and lunch are good times to conduct business, dinners less as you don't have the attention-span and concentration if you've been interviewing all day long.

Plan some open time to pursue unexpected opportunities. For example, unexpectedly an author prospect may want to discuss a high-potential project with you. Also, take time for a breather.

Prior to leaving for the convention, write, e-mail and fax your hotel location and hotel phone number to people so

Other tips:

- Walk the floor, study your competitors' exhibit and determine what other exhibits you should visit.
- Visit with other exhibitors and exchange cards

they can reach you. If you are not exhibiting, arrange to use a friendly competitor's exhibit as a place "to hang out" and to meet prospects. If you can afford it, get a suite if you anticipate a number of appointments.

Bring an ample supply of business cards, catalogs, company literature, and contracts.

- Read the program to determine if there are any workshops, papers or symposia of interest.
- Get a copy of the conference proceedings to use for future editorial research.

Prepare an "After Action Report" after the convention. Document important items such as interviews, results, number in attendance, and number of exhibitors. Answer the question: "Is this convention worth the time and expense next year?"

Think of conventions as an excellent editorial opportunity. Some publishers think only in marketing terms for conferences. That's a mistake. With careful planning and purposeful days spent at a conference, you will find a rich editorial payoff.

(For more book acquisitions see *Managing Book Acquisitions: An Introduction*, 1995, 100 pp. and *Book Publishing Contracts: An Introduction*, 1996, 68 pp., both by John B. McHugh)

About John B. McHugh

John B. McHugh is a publishing management consultant and industry commentator. He has held management positions at Houghton Mifflin, Richard D. Irwin, and Wadsworth, Inc. At the American Society for Quality, McHugh served as Publisher and Director of Programs.

McHugh's articles have appeared in *Association Publishing*, *Association Trends*, *The Book Marketing Update*, the *COSMEP Newsletter*, *Independent Publishing*, the *PMA Newsletter* and *Small Press*. McHugh also conducts on-site training workshops for publishers.

Other McHugh Publications of Interest:

Managing Publishing Rights: Acquiring, Protecting and Selling, 158 pp., 1998. \$90.00. Item M-16

Permissions Management for Requestors and Grantors: Dealing with Copyright and Fair Use, 62 pp., 1996. \$70.00. Item M-14

Publishing Management for Nonprofit Organizations: Principles for Associations, Foundations and Societies, 162 pp., 1997. \$85.00. Item M-15

Electronic Rights for Publishers: Protecting Your Interests, 31 pp., 1996. \$22.00. Item MP-7

Book Publishing Contracts: An Introduction, 68 pp., 1996. \$70.00. Item M-13

Managing Book Acquisitions: An Introduction, 100 pp., 1995. \$65.00. Item M-12

College Publishing Market, Third Edition, 100 pp., 1995. \$65.00. Item M-1

11/08