

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION MIDWINTER CONFERENCE

Seattle, WA

January 19-22, 2007

My mother once used the phrase “you pay your dues upfront;” she said this to my old college roommate who, fresh from graduation, got his first job: the night shift in the mailroom of a commercial editing business. This job was the first stop before he could work his way up the corporate ladder. What my mother was saying with this phrase was essentially “the hard work in the beginning leads to a big payoff.” That couldn’t have been truer for this year’s ALA Midwinter conference in Seattle.



The 2007 spring library conference season kicked off with a bang this year. With our twelve booth display, including the Combined Book Exhibit, American Collective stand and other full-booth displays for clients such as TD Net, Learning Express and others, the dues we had to pay were on a large scale. It took us two and a half days to set up the carpet and framework, and get the books on the shelves in order. We also watched as the exhibit hall changed from cold warehouse to friendly convention center.

Friday evening at 5:30, the show officially opened, and with it, so did the floodgates. This year’s attendance of 12,015 (1,138 more than last year) filled the hall and took to the exhibits. After the first night’s conclusion, we could tell we were being primed for what would be what many called “the best midwinter in a long time.”

Saturday and Sunday were the main days of the show, with the exhibit hall open from nine to five each day. While our booth was only filled to capacity once or twice, we had consistent traffic during the entire show, and our booth was never without a visitor. Several librarians told us that they love our exhibits and we’re always the best, and others who had never been to a Combined Book Exhibit before could be found looking through, book by book, marking their catalogues as they went.



Monday was the last day of the show, and everyone was all abuzz about the announcements of the latest winners of the Newbery, Caldecott, Coretta Scott King and other awards, but it certainly didn’t take away from any of the traffic. By the day’s (and show’s) end, we had given out hundred’s of catalogues, and were left with zero. If a show’s success can be measured by the percentage of catalogues given out, then 100% makes for a very successful show.

Several books and special displays received a lot of attention. The area of our exhibit devoted to **Choice Magazine's Outstanding Academic Titles** was never without a visitor. Comments on how informative and how beautiful the books are were constant. The **R.S. Means** and **Stowers** special displays were also never empty, and **Readhowyouwant.com** was receiving rave reviews for its services. Art and photography books seemed particularly popular this year, as did graphic novels from **NBM**. Medical books received a lot of attention as well, along with the ever-popular collection of children's literature.

At the show's close, and as the exhibitors began their deconstruction and packing, the hall was still recovering from the excitement of the show. A near record attendance, consistent traffic, positive comments and the giving out of 100% of our catalogues was proof that the payoff far outweighed the dues we had to pay.

This year's booth representatives were Jon Malinowski, Janet Fritsch, Peter Birch and Seth Dellon. The ALA Annual conference is being held this June in Washington D.C and next year's midwinter conference will be held in Philadelphia, PA.