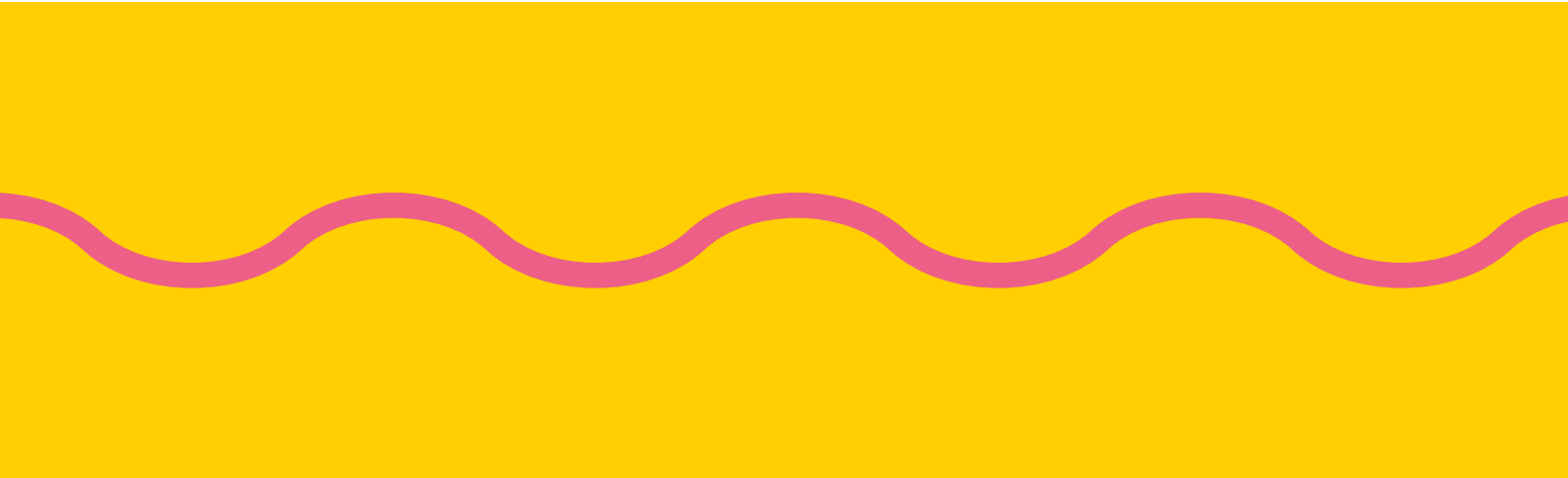
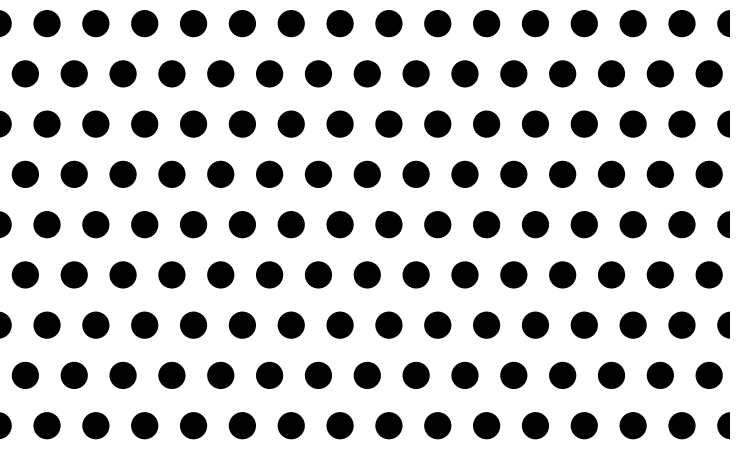


Writers Festival Toolkit

A public libraries resource

From Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service



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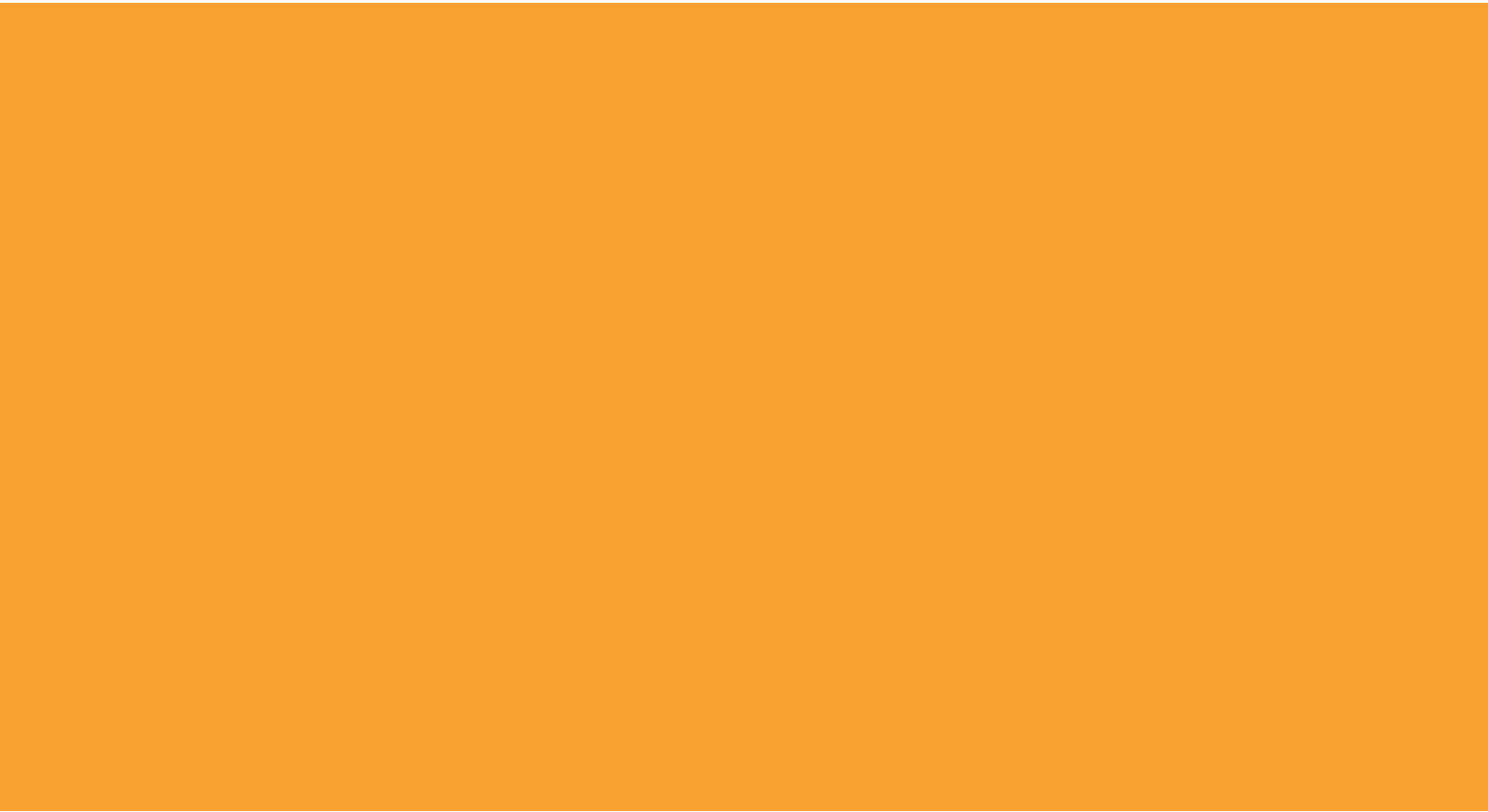
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The Booklovers Festival is an annual event hosted by Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL), enabling members to discover local authors, meet like-minded people, get in touch with their creative side, and have fun. Falling under the banner of a 'writers festival', it features author talks and workshops, and is attended by a mix of writers, readers, and the curious-minded alike. The festival is aimed at people who are interested in learning, and therefore plays an important role for reader development.

The purpose of this Writers Festival Toolkit for public libraries is to help you to plan and create your own writers festival. It highlights the benefits of library writers festivals; provides tools to help you set up a new festival, or grow an existing one; and breaks down the nuts and bolts of programming, production, and marketing/PR. We've also included a showcase of some of Victoria's fantastic existing library writers festivals and invite you to provide feedback.

About the authors

Lisa Dempster

Lisa Dempster is Executive Manager Public Participation at Yarra Plenty Regional Library. Her previous roles have included Festival Director at Melbourne Writers Festival and Emerging Writers' Festival, and Asialink Resident at the Ubud Writers & Readers Festival in Bali.

Sarah Schmidt

Sarah Schmidt is the Reading & Literacy Coordinator at Yarra Plenty Regional Library, where she curates the annual Booklovers Festival. Her debut novel, *See What I Have Done*, was longlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction (2018) and won the ABIA Literary Fiction Book of the Year Award (2018) amongst other nominations. Her writing has also appeared in publications such as *Overland*, *LitHub*, *The Telegraph* (UK), *The Guardian*, *The Age*, and *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

Acknowledgements

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Thank you to all Yarra Plenty Regional Library staff who have brought the Booklovers Festival to life for over ten years.

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WHY A WRITERS FESTIVAL?

About Writers Festivals

Traditional writers festivals featured (mostly) literary authors and poets discussing their works and signing books afterwards. However, writers festivals have evolved rapidly in recent years, with more adventurous and unusual programming flourishing.

Also increasing in popularity are ideas festivals – events where experts (academics, leaders, and yes, even writers) present their work and debate ideas, issues, and hot topics.

Modern writers festivals tend to blend literary programming and ideas programming, and may also include prominent thinkers, journalists and scientists discussing and debating hot topics of the day. They might offer: performances and gigs, family activities, author talks, poetry slams and open mics, storytelling, workshops, artistic interventions, zine fairs, and more. Writers festivals may have become more multi-disciplinary in their approach (think: an arts festival with a literary engine), but words and stories remain at their core.

Supporting the machinations of the publishing industry – promoting and nurturing writers, celebrating and selling books, and creating networking opportunities – is only one aspect of the mission of a writers festival. The other major purpose is to entertain and inspire audiences, add to the creative and intellectual life of a city, and promote the values of literature and literacy overall.

At the centre of writers festivals old and new has always been lively, meaningful conversations and connections between authors and audiences. We believe that this is the goal all festivals strive for – and when it is done well, that live connection creates magical moments for all involved.

Writers festivals should be dynamic, enquiring spaces that present writers who appeal to all kinds of reading audiences. That doesn't mean forms like literary fiction or poetry will be lost or become irrelevant. While most writers festivals in Australia are taking an increasingly open-minded view to the kinds of writing and writers they present, most are still looking for ways to find a satisfying balance between traditional literary forms and more contemporary genres and platforms. Writers festivals must aim to create a program that appeals to a wide variety of readers.

Australian festivals right now are also programming more diversely, and they are richer for it. It is becoming more widely recognised that good writing and ideas come in all forms and genres. Diversity helps to broaden the appeal of literature by giving diverse readers an opportunity to see themselves reflected in literature, and for all readers to access and consider different ways of seeing the world.

Why to run a Writers Festival at your library

In *Victoria's Creative Industry Festivals Review* (2018), Creative Victoria identified cultural, social, and economic benefits to festivals. These are represented in the table below (adapted from Creative Victoria, 2018).

BENEFITS	EXAMPLES
Cultural benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Providing a vehicle for showcasing creative works from a fragmented base.▪ Furthering the development of creative/artistic talent.▪ Providing distinctive platforms for combining and curating old and new, small and large works, and different art forms.▪ Helping Victorian creative talent to connect with opportunities in other markets.
Social benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Facilitating wider public access to creative art forms.▪ Supporting wider social goals (education, health, and social cohesion).▪ Engaging more Victorians in cultural and creative endeavours.▪ Providing distinctive, high-profile public events.
Economic benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Providing creative employment.▪ Stimulating cultural tourism.▪ Enhancing Victoria's brand and reputation in other states, and overseas.▪ Providing year-to-year leverage of creative sector infrastructure (e.g. venues).

The benefits outlined here by Creative Victoria reflect the many objectives that can be achieved through any arts festival. Let's consider more closely how writers festivals in particular can have cultural, social, and economic benefits for your community.

With writers festivals a staple of many city and town cultural calendars, you might wonder why libraries should run writers festivals, too. Tourism Research Australia (TRA) data suggests that tourist visitation at both regional and Melbourne festivals has grown significantly over the past decade. This is a growing audience and membership base that your library can tap into.

Creative Victoria (2018) pinpoints March as the busiest calendar month for festivals in both Melbourne and regional Victoria.

On the one hand, a festival allows you to differentiate between your regular, year-round programming (such as single-author events) and something that is more special and curated, which could potentially bring a different audience to your library and area.

In 2019, Yarra Plenty Regional Library ran a survey about library writers festivals. Of the respondents, only 37% said that they do run a dedicated writers festival.

These benefits include the following:

Collaboration

A writers festival is a collaboration between readers, writers, and the library: together we deepen the reading experience and bring words, ideas, and creativity alive. It signifies to readers, no matter where they are in their reading journey, that reading is a creative activity that allows us to diversify our choices, strengthen our reading confidence, and provide opportunities to connect to one another through the reading experience.

Supporting Writers

Writers are readers too, and a festival is a great opportunity for them to connect to their readers and community while feeling supported as a professional artist by the library.

Connection

Of those libraries surveyed that do run festivals, 37% reported doing so to connect with local readers. A festival enables writers and artists to network with their peers, try out new ideas or approaches to public speaking and writing workshops, or to actively engage with local communities in a way that isn't always accessible at marquee national festivals.

Profile Raising

37% of our surveyed libraries identified raising the library's profile as a primary reason for running their writers festival. A festival allows you to showcase what your library service has to offer and is also a great way to encourage attendees to become members of your library, helping to increase your loans.

Enrich and diversify readers

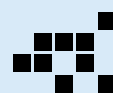
A writers festival is a dialogue between reader and writer: somewhere in the middle is the opportunity to increase, enrich, and diversify reading choices; bring books to life; increase health and wellbeing; strengthen a reader's confidence, enjoyment and engagement with reading, books, and ideas; improve people's social connectedness and engagement; and encourage communities to be active and creative.

CASE STUDY

Booklovers Festival, Yarra Plenty Regional Library

The Booklovers Festival has been running for 12 years. Over its lifespan the festival has experimented with different formats, themes, and objectives before finding its perfect fit a few years ago for both the library and the community. Booklovers' mission is simple: feed your curiosity. Unlock the story behind the story. Programming the festival means that everything should relate to discovering what is at the heart of a story and where it comes from. At what point does fiction cross the border of truth? These questions of why and how are at the centre of the relationship between reader and creator and is the cornerstone of curiosity. Ultimately what we are seeking from curiosity is that connection and understanding, for a shared experience. We crave something that leaves us wanting more, to be told something we don't know.

Booklovers Festival is a time to engage with our diverse communities through curiosity and self-expression by delivering opportunities such as author talks, writing workshops, discussions, mentoring, skilling up, and more. YPRL develops their programming with community in mind (both in terms of their interest and the areas we can continue to develop their journeys) as well as offering a program that is unique, informative, inspiring and fun. YPRL ensures that their festival reflects a diverse community not only in their region but across Melbourne by engaging with diverse speakers, authors, topics and community groups.



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SET YOUR VISION

Setting out your vision for a festival can be challenging – but it's also an essential first step, creating a solid foundation for everything that comes after. Let's walk through it together.

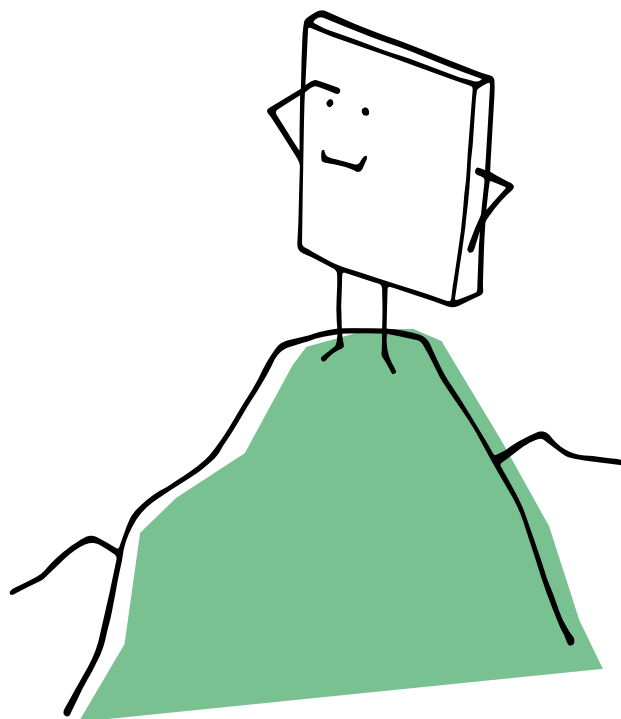
How to develop an artistic vision

An artistic vision is a roadmap for what you want your festival to achieve. You might like to think of it as a short 'elevator pitch' that will help you define your festival and explain it to attendees.

There is no 'right' way to write your artistic vision. It can be a simple statement that unites everyone working on the festival – describing precisely what you are trying to achieve. It might be a paragraph in your project plan or grant application, but it should be able to be explained briefly. A good artistic vision should be short, punchy, and concise.

Consider these vision statements from some new and more established festivals:

- **Melbourne Writers Festival:** To be Australia's boldest literary festival.
- **Emerging Writers' Festival:** Australia's premier festival for new and emerging writers.
- **Write Around the Murray:** WAM is Australia's most welcoming literary festival.
- **Mountain Writers Festival:** Place, Story, Nature. The festival's focus on place, story and nature not just as a theme, but as the festival's entire purpose now and into the future, is unique in Australia.
- **Word for Word Festival Geelong:** Word for Word is Australia's only literary festival dedicated to showcasing non-fiction writing in all its many genres, forms and facets.



Develop your own artistic vision

Work through the following questions to develop your own festival's artistic vision. Some of these questions will be aimed at how you envision the festival internally for your organisation (for example, what it means for the service and how it fits your overall goals and visions), while other questions tackle the way in which you share the vision externally with your audience.

Be clear about what you want to achieve. This exercise will help you identify the *main aim* of the festival. This, in turn, will help you figure out what the festival will look like.

Ask yourself the following questions, and write down the answers:

- **What will make our festival unique?**
Why would people come to our festival and not others?
- **What will people feel at our festival?**
Do you want them to feel inspired, informed, challenged, connected?
- **What kind of festival do we want to host?**
Will this festival take place over a weekend, a week, or a month? Will the festival take place at one of your libraries, or several? Will your festival focus on author talks only, or will you also provide space for local groups to perform and present? Will you offer workshops?
- **How will we host the festival?**
Will you appoint a staff member to produce the festival, or have a working group? Will you produce this festival with community consultation? Do you want to strengthen existing library partnerships, or use this to foster new partnerships, too? How will you market the festival? Will you produce festival programs, advertise on your library website, or both? Will you reach out to local radio?

- **Why do we want to host a festival?**

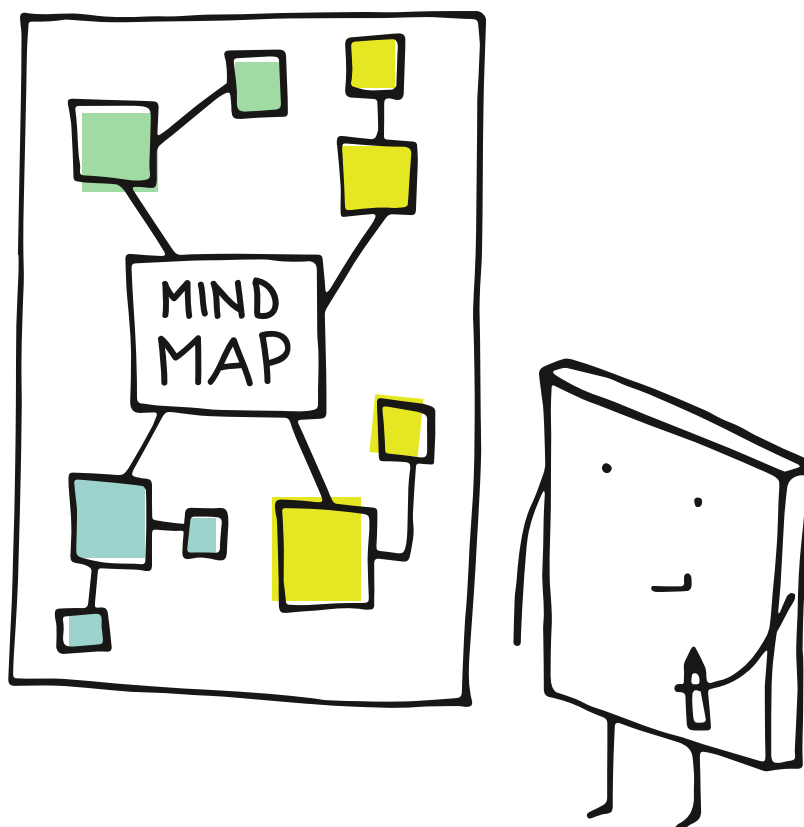
Does the festival 'simply' meet an organisational strategic framework? Have you noticed a need arise in your community? Do you think something is missing from the current festival market? Do you want to deepen and strengthen partnerships? Do you have a community full of artists that need a platform?

- **Who would we host the festival for?**

Is this festival going to cater for everyone in your community, or do you want to be specific about your target audience? Is your aim to continue to bring public libraries further into the cultural arena? Are you aiming to position your library as a safe and trusted institution of community life?

Sure, you can be the only writers festival in your region! But what is your point of difference and vision that will inspire artists and audiences to attend?

As a library, your focus on community and a reader-centred experience might inform your festival aims and intention. As a community hub, you're well positioned to understand what your community wants and needs. Look out for unique opportunities available to you and make them central to your artistic vision!



DEVELOP A PROGRAM

Programming an exciting writers festival doesn't mean you have to reinvent the wheel. We've gathered an extensive overview of traditional and more unusual events to inspire you, before turning it over to you.

Programming: Setting the theme

The main benefit of working to a theme is that it allows you to structure your programming around the theme. It can be hard work simply throwing together a bunch of ideas and hoping they attract people – but if you pick a theme and work around that, you can cohere events, and also explore the threads of a theme in different ways.

Sometimes people opt for themes such as 'food' or 'crimes of passion'. You can also take a broader approach to theme that encompasses your aims and the goals of the festival, using this as a template for the types of programming you do. A theme also helps you ask speakers to talk about something specific rather than a generalised topic, giving your audience a unique experience.

Event types and formats

Think about what sort of events you would like to feature at your writers festival. Most festivals offer a variety of formats to suit different audiences and to keep the festival interesting. There are no right or wrong ideas when it comes to the kinds of events – or the mixture of events – you might like to feature at your festival. Much of this will be determined by the length of your festival, your budget, your vision, and your intended audience.

Most festivals aim to have a big, high-profile, and/or interesting first event to kick things off – something that you can invite key stakeholders to speak at and to promote in your media.

Most festivals also have a special closing event – something exciting to mark the end.

Like everything, the format of these are up to you!

Consider your existing program

Part of the joy of running a festival is taking what you already have at your service and exploring what else you can do with it to make it feel unique – not only for your service, but for your festival. Think about how you can use events to engage with ready-made audiences:

- Book clubs
- Storytimes with special guests/themes
- Maker Space activities
- Writing
- Author talks

What do you already do that has an audience, that people attend and like? Include it in your festival! A festival is a great way of promoting ongoing events like writers' groups and book clubs – you might even pick up new members.

Traditional event types and formats

Traditional festival programming typically includes:

- **Author talk:** A writer presents the themes/ideas from their book in a presentation, with audience questions at the end.
- **Panel:** Three or more writers discuss shared themes/ideas in their work. A moderator steers the conversation and facilitates audience questions.
- **In discussion:** Sometimes called an 'in-conversation', this is where a writer is interviewed one-on-one. Discussions can range more broadly than in author talks and panel events, as a writer's whole body of work and life can be investigated.
- **Workshop / masterclass:** Events that consist of a teacher/presenter sharing hands-on skills, offering materials and how-to guides.
- **Open mic:** Writers can volunteer to share their work live on stage.
- **Performance:** Artists/creatives present a scripted performance of their work using theatrical elements.
- **Book launch:** This could be a speech or short in-conversation with the author. Book launches are generally held during the book's release month and are usually free to attend. Organised by the publisher, book launches often have wine and/or nibbles.
- **Literary walks:** An individual or guide takes audiences to various literary locations over a specific period of time, usually two to three hours. Literary walks can be based on an author or theme, or a specific area's offerings (e.g. a tour of local second-hand bookstores).
- **Living Libraries:** The Living Library is an event that brings together people who have special interests, beliefs, or experiences where they can share their personal stories. In this program, participants can 'check out' living books (people!) for a personal conversation. A Living Book could be an Aboriginal elder, artist or writer, councillor, or anyone with a story to share!
- **Zine fair/independent press fair:** Small festivals consisting of a few artists/writers sharing their work at individual tables in a market-style communal space. The event can be curated or open to submissions and can also include workshops and talks.
- **Family day:** Family days can include library tours, workshops, talks, and children's activities programmed over one day. Family days promote library services to the local community and support local authors and literary initiatives.

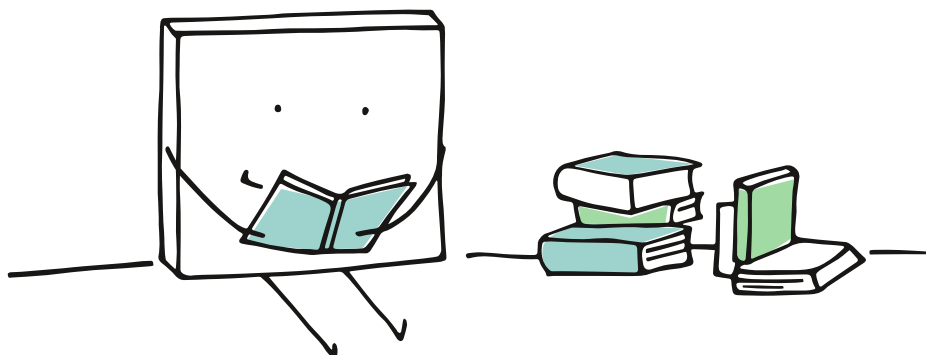
- **Live broadcasts:** Live events that are simultaneously broadcast online or through traditional media channels. Audio live broadcasts might be transmitted through public radio stations or online channels, while video broadcasts are usually streamed online (via Facebook Live, YouTube Live, Periscope, IGTV, etc).
- **YA day:** A day of events and activities celebrating young adult literature that can consist of author events, meet and greets, and workshops.

More unusual event types and formats

Literary events are only limited by your imagination. Experiencing something new, strange and different can be one of the best things about attending a festival.

Remember, these globally popular events were once just a spark in someone's imagination:

- **Lit Hop:** Mini-festival of multiple-location literary events where participants move from one experience to another during a set time (one afternoon/evening). Events have easy access between them, using public transport options and audience participation elements to keep punters interested as they move through the program.
- **Literary Death Match:** A competitive literary event where four artists read their own writing for seven minutes or less and are then critiqued by three judges (not necessarily writers, but artists and creatives). Contestants are judged on literary merit, performance, and intangibles. Two finalists compete in a game show-type finale to decide who wins the Literary Death Match.
- **Book Slam:** A storytelling salon in which writers perform in a nightclub environment. A mix between a classic reading, a gig, a book club and a stand-up show, Book Slam audiences are encouraged to interact with the performer.
- **The Moth:** Started in New York in 1997, The Moth is a theme-based, unscripted performance evening. Storyteller hopefuls put their names in a hat, with ten participants chosen to tell a five-minute true story incorporating the theme. Stories must be told without notes. The stories are scored by teams of judges selected from the audience, and a winner is chosen.
- **Women of Letters:** A live storytelling event founded in Melbourne in 2010 by Michaela McGuire and Marieke Hardy. Women of Letters evenings see female-identifying creatives read a letter based on a theme (e.g. a letter to their childhood friend).
- **PechaKucha:** PechaKucha means 'chit-chat' in Japanese, where this storytelling format was devised in 2003 by Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham. A PechaKucha Night (PKN) sees around a dozen presenters showing 20 slides with 20 seconds of commentary on each. Presenters can be from any creative field.
- **TEDx:** TEDx is a grassroots initiative that brings the spirit of TED – to research and discover 'ideas worth spreading' – to local communities. TEDx events are organised by passionate individuals who seek to uncover new ideas and to share the latest research in their local areas. TEDx talks are organised independently under a free license granted by TED. These events are not controlled by TED, but event organisers agree to abide by the TED format, with guidelines for curation, speaker coaching, and event organising provided.
- **Creative Mornings:** A Friday morning breakfast and talk series started in New York to encourage creative talent and to provide an open space for artists to connect with like-minded individuals. Events are usually free for audiences, so they depend on local partners, sponsorship, in-kind support, and collaboration.
- **Side Project Sessions:** Melbourne writer Madeleine Dore created Side Project Sessions as a regular event series consisting of three-hour workshops that encourage and support creatives working on personal projects. Side Project Sessions provide accountability, space, time, and a regular routine.
- **Silent Reading Party:** Organised events where punters are invited to a location to quietly read together. Venues might be a park, a beer garden, a civic space, a cafe, or anywhere that silent reading can take place.
- **Comic Con:** Comic book conventions where artists table stalls to share and sell their work. Comic Cons can also involve meet and greets with creators/talent, panel talks, and workshops. Originally started by fans and not-for-profits, Comic Cons now are usually run by commercial interests for profit.



DEVELOP A PROGRAM

Practical considerations

With such a world of possibilities, the options feel limitless. And in a sense, they are – but we're also beholden to things like budgets, venues, and staffing capacity.

Things to consider when choosing event formats include:

- Size and suitability of your venue/s.
- Resourcing: what is needed to deliver this event, and can you afford it?
- Will your library need to be closed to the public to deliver this event?
- Diversity of programming.
- What sort of events your writers will feel most comfortable delivering.
- What sort of events your audience will feel most comfortable attending. It's okay to schedule more challenging formats – but perhaps keep the balance to 'mostly comfortable', with a few 'out of the comfort zone' events.

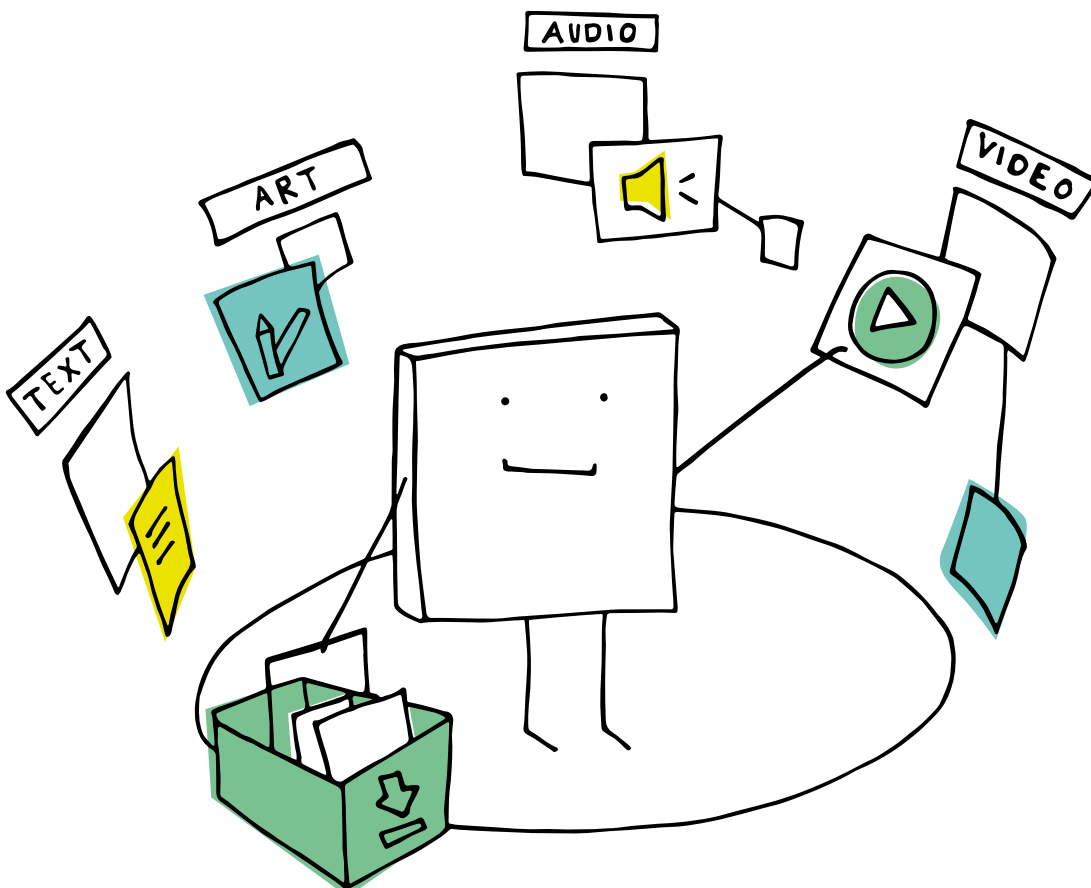
Brainstorm your festival program

Now for the fun part – brainstorming your festival program! You might like to use online tools and collaborative options like Trello, MS Teams, or Padlet to bring your ideas together.

Using your brainstormed ideas, consider the following practical elements:

- What events are you already doing in your library that you could include in a writers festival?
- What equipment will you need to deliver this event – a stage, microphones, presenters, and chairs for presenters and audiences?
- Is there a mix of different event types? Make sure your festival covers a variety of options for attendees.
- Is there at least one event format that might make good media? Be sure to include something unique and quirky to help boost your festival's profile!
- How many staff will it take to deliver your events? A workshop might take one, whereas a gala storytelling event might take many.

Having balanced your wildest dreams with practical considerations, you should have a rough idea of what you can achieve in your festival.



CASE STUDY

Dandy-Con Comic and Pop Culture Festival, Greater Dandenong Libraries

The Dandy-Con Comic and Pop Culture Festival was originally developed as a youth engagement project by the City of Greater Dandenong. It was delivered for the first time in April 2019, with great success.

The library had noticed a gap in programming for young adults, and wanted to create a festival with a wide range of free activities, performances, and workshops that anyone could attend and participate in. By not charging stallholder fees, the festival enabled artists, cosplayers, stallholders, and workshop facilitators a chance to participate for free, also.

The library worked with other departments in Council, such as Youth Services, and undertook community consultation and outreach activities to work with the local community in organising the festival. Local youth advocacy groups and education providers, along with support organisations such as Headspace partnered with the library to bring the event to life.

From anime to superheroes, pop culture and beyond, participants were encouraged to attend dressed as their favourite character for a vibrant and fun atmosphere. The festival played host to Fandoms, cosplay competitions, exhibitions, and comic stalls, a performance stage, and offered free airbrush tattoos for all. Events included manga, Lightsaber, comic writing, fan art, Kamishibai (paper theatre), zine workshops for participants 12 years and above, and roving entertainers providing photo opportunities for all ages.

Plans for the 2020 festival incorporated feedback from participants and staff who attended the first event, with the aim of a bigger and better festival. Unfortunately, the festival was unable to go ahead due to Covid-19 restrictions.

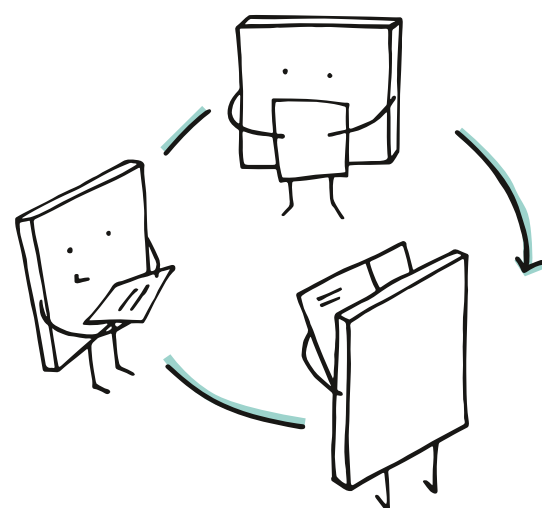


CASE STUDY

Yarra Plenty Regional Library service

YPRL's Booklovers Festival has included some unusual events. Some of our favourites include:

- **Fact/fiction conversation series:** This event pairs a fiction writer with a non-fiction writer to discuss the ways in which their work overlaps in different mediums.
- **Micro Fiction Workshop in a Micro Bar:** This small workshop about how to write very short fiction took place in a very small bar outside the library as a way to engage a younger audience.
- **Book club with an author:** The author is invited to a mass book club and is directly involved in the conversation of their book.
- **Mobile Poetry:** Throughout the festival our mobile library had an ever-changing magnetic poem that community members of all ages could interact with and contribute to.



WORKING WITH AUTHORS

Sourcing authors to participate

Essential to any writers festival is, of course, writers! But where do you start?

It's a good idea to start local:

- If you have a local writer collection or program, you can draw from the authors who are represented there.
- Research: local media outlets often feature local writers, so can be a good resource for finding out who is in your local area.
- Do a call-out on your newsletter and in your branch.
- Google.

Here are some avenues you might use to get in touch with authors:

Publishers

Most publishers have a catalogue of upcoming titles so you can see what will be published up to six months in advance – ask to be put on their mailing list. This will help you stay up to date on what's hot.

Check who published an author's latest book and contact them – there is usually contact information for the Publicist or Marketing Team available on the publisher's website. Using the general email is fine. Publishers want their books promoted and are usually happy to pass on event invitations to the authors that they publish.

Publishers are likely to respond more quickly for more recently published books. Most books have a 'PR life' of 3–6 months, unless they are listed or win major awards.

Agents

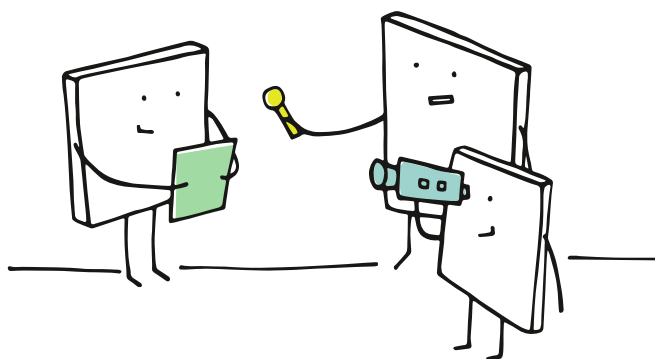
Agents are generally a bit less active in the promotional activities of their authors, but they are a possible avenue for sourcing artists for your festival. When contacting a writer through an agent, use the same process as for contacting through their publisher – most are happy to pass on an invite.

Booking agencies

There are a number of booking agencies that can be used to book writers, comedians, thought leaders, or musicians for festival events. They take a commission or a cut of the final artist fee. Agencies can be a good way to get 'bigger' names who might otherwise be hard to reach or have busy schedules, however, the costs of using an agency can be prohibitive. You need to balance the benefits of programming big-name talent (prestige, boosting audience numbers) with the expense of booking them.

Reach out directly

Many authors provide contact details on their website. Some will have instructions about who to contact for appearances. An emailed invitation and a follow-up if you don't hear back from them is the way to go.



If you have a favourite author, it doesn't hurt to pop them a polite DM on Twitter or Instagram to see if they want to take part. But if they don't respond, don't push it.

EOI process

Some festivals ask for an 'expression of interest' (EOI) or publish an artist call-out for people to be involved in the festival.

To do this, just pop a notice in your newsletter or on your website, and/or place posters in-branch with instructions about how and when people should apply! Think about what sort of information you want from potential artists. Do you just want to know who they are and that they are interested? Are you looking for details about event ideas they would like to be involved in? Would you like to hear about their expertise and prior experience? Is there something else you need to know?

Top tip: Keep an Excel spreadsheet or database where you save contact details for authors – such as their email address or publicist contact details. Centralising this information in one place will make life much easier for you, your staff, and anyone who might need to locate these details in future.

Source moderators

Think of moderators as a much-needed host at your (sometimes noisy) literary dinner party. They help shape the flow of conversation throughout the event by asking interesting, prepared and researched questions, or even by making your guest/s comfortable when they may not be especially talkative. It is the moderator's job to also keep the event running to time (and to a brief if you have one). They play an integral part in the 'question and answer' component of your event by encouraging the audience to ask questions and managing the flow of conversation between artist and audience. In short, moderators should be engaging, confident, great time managers and wonderful conversationalists... while making it all about your special guest.

If they are confident public speakers and well read (or are willing to do their research), library staff could step into moderating roles in the festival. Authors, critics, and media can also make great moderators. Keep an eye out for people with a special interest or connection to a work or theme – these people can help make an author conversation truly memorable.

Working with local artists to ensure maximum impact

Building a positive relationship with local authors is key to a successful festival.

Before the event

Include authors in your programming discussions. In some cases, it is helpful to include the writer in the development of their session or event. During the publicity of a book, writers often end up discussing the same things over and over, and they will welcome a chance to speak about something new or different. Don't be shy to ask them for input when planning a session: What are they good at doing? What are they comfortable doing? Not every writer enjoys offering a lecture-style presentation, and they may prefer an in-conversation approach. When a writer feels engaged with their session, it will give them ownership and they'll be more likely to promote the event. They will also feel more invested in doing a great job.

Some authors will feel most engaged by being given an unusual assignment for the festival. For example, the City of Melbourne Library Service's 'Desert Island Books' conversations feature writers discussing five books that mean a lot to them or have influenced their work. For writers, this can be a novel conversation, and for audiences this can feel like an intimate insight into authors' own reading lives. Offering a different event format or even altering traditional formats entice artists to engage meaningfully with the festival, while also giving readers and communities a unique experience. It enhances their reading experience by offering them a different connection to the writer or book, or something new to consider about what it takes to make a book.

If your festival is also offering opportunities for the community to upskill or try something completely new (such as creative writing workshops for beginners), this is a great way to bring in artists who aren't currently promoting a new book to be part of the festival and connect with readers and writers. It's also a great way to engage more of your local writers and artists both as presenters and participants.

During and after the event

Encourage authors to promote their session at your festival. Make it easy for them to do this by supplying website links to the event, hashtags, invitations to the launch of your festival, and online links to the festival program. If authors identify with specific communities, discuss with them how best to engage their audiences and communities.

At the end of the event, and again at the wrap-up of the festival, don't forget to thank the writer! You can do this in person or by email. If you can't manage individual emails, then a group email is better than nothing – just be sure to use BCC!

Author payments

The Pay the Writer campaign was established to advocate minimum rates of pay for authors and illustrators for events and other services, and to make it clear to everyone that artists are professionals. Everything they do – from creation to freelance work, appearances and visits, and everything in between – is part of their profession, and they should be paid accordingly.

Often artists are asked (and even expected) to perform services for free for the 'exposure' a library event may bring them. Keep in mind that the average annual income for writers in Australia is \$12,900. Would you undertake your library job if it was unpaid? Consider it from the writer's perspective.

The challenge here for many libraries is small budgets.

Payment rates vary across the board and are often influenced by the size and resourcing of the festival. The following table uses data gathered from the Australian Society of Authors' (ASA) recommended rates and Writers Victoria's recommended rates, to use as a guide.

APPEARANCE	AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF AUTHORS	WRITERS VICTORIA
Panel member	\$204	\$100
Panel chair/moderator	\$204-255 (depending on preparation involved)	
Reading (10 mins)		\$50
Seminar		\$250-\$375
Half-day workshop	\$561	\$550
Full-day workshop/masterclass	\$898	\$630-\$880
Keynote address	\$1,020+	

Most writers understand that they will be offered different rates of pay by (for example) a leading cultural institute and a small community library. The level of experience of the writer can make a difference also – established authors may request a higher rate of pay than someone who is emerging.

Some writers are salaried – such as journalists – and may be willing to appear as part of their roles working for newspapers or magazines. The invitation in that case should go to the magazine/paper in question so they can determine whether to send their writer.

WORKING WITH AUTHORS

Many people working in the literary industry – such as publishers, editors, and festival directors – are salaried and may be willing to appear as part of their roles. The invitation in that case should go through the publicity or marketing department of their organisation.

Some writers have day jobs and will waive their fees or donate them back to your organisation. Don't expect it, but thank them profusely when it happens.

Some publishers will volunteer their writers if they are 'on tour' – a short window of time when a publicist is trying to put together as many events as possible to promote a new book. If the date and location line up, you might get a writer at no cost to you. Keep in touch with publicists to stay on top of these opportunities – they will need to be all about the book though.

It's important not to forget the moderators! In panels and in discussion, your moderators do a significant amount of work. They should be paid also.

Book sales and signings

No matter your pay rates, book sales and signings can be a drawcard for an author, acting as a great promotional opportunity and also as a supplement to the agreed pay rate. We'll have a look at what these are and how to run them below.

Book sales and signings can be a great chance for readers to connect individually with authors – however, the time and emotional output of an author in these situations needs to be honoured, too.

Book sales

If you are working with authors who have books or other merchandise, it's important to have an opportunity for them to sell their works following their festival appearance. Some venues will do this in a separate area, and others do it where the event happens.

Keep in mind that publicists will often ask you who your festival bookseller is before they commit the author to an appearance, or even a few weeks out from the event. This may be because they want to ensure the bookseller carries the title (or will be ordering it in), or if the author has several books, they may wish to discuss which titles to sell at the event.

There are a few ways to manage book sales:

- **Festival bookshop:** Invite a local bookseller to sell books at your writers festival events. They usually cover all the costs of running the shop including staff, keeping any profits. Other arrangements can be managed by negotiation. Partnering with a local bookseller in this way benefits both the festival and the retailer, strengthening community relationships.

- **Library-run festival bookshop:** You could run a bookshop yourself, however this is not recommended unless you have a bookseller on your staff, as there is a significant workload and expertise needed to stock and run a bookshop! However, some festivals may choose to use this as an income generation model.

- **Publisher pop-up:** If you're running a smaller event or festival, some publishers and authors don't mind bringing a few copies to sell.

You should always let the publisher and authors know if there won't be book sales at the event so they can make their own arrangements.

Note: Please don't expect an author to supply and sell their own book at the event. Many self-published authors may be happy to do this, but generally speaking, an author mostly wants to come and meet the community, have a great conversation, and not have to worry about administration like book sales.

Book signings

Unless the writer doesn't want to, arrange for a book signing to take place after each appearance or session. During the event welcome, or as the event is wrapping up, the host should mention there will be a book signing, and let people know where it will be.

Some people will buy a book and get it signed, while others might just want a selfie or a few moments with the author. If there are multiple people wanting author time, library staff should carry out 'queue management' and ensure the author doesn't get mobbed.

Integrating collections into the festival

It's essential for libraries to *always* have the speaker's title/s on display during their event. Explain to attendees how to borrow the books either before or after the event. In Australia, authors receive payments for books on loan through libraries, so this is still an important way to contribute to the author's income.

If you need to order titles in, do so well in advance of the event. There would be nothing more disappointing than an author showing up for their event and finding out the library doesn't even stock their book. Ensure you have their most recent title, even if you don't have the full backlist.

FIND YOUR AUDIENCE

Finding an audience for your writers festival shouldn't be too much of a challenge. Like any other part of your writers festival, you'll find it much easier with some background knowledge and a good plan. So let's jump in.

Festival attendance

Arts festivals overall have high levels of attendance and engagement. According to the *Audience Atlas Victoria 2019* report (Creative Victoria, 2019), the festival market has seen significant growth since 2014, and has the second-largest potential market of all art forms tested.

Consider these relevant statistics about arts festival attendees:

- 35% are aged 16–34, which is significantly higher than the culture market average (29%).
- 40% are high engagers (nine or more art forms in the past three years), which is significantly higher than average (14%).
- 48% are in the current market for an event connected to books or writing, which is significantly higher than average (24%).
- 40% have donated to an arts or cultural organisation within the past three years, which is significantly higher than the culture market average (26%).

Library engagement

The library market is large, capturing 4.1 million adults. It also has the largest proportion of lapsed audiences at 1.1 million (or 25%), illustrating strong potential for re-engagement. A writers festival is a great opportunity to welcome patrons back to your library community.

Consider these relevant statistics about library members (from Creative Victoria, 2019):

- 31% are aged 16–34, which is comparable to the culture market average (29%).
- 15% have written stories, plays or poetry in the past 12 months, which is significantly higher than the culture market average (11%).
- 21% are high engagers (nine or more art forms in the past three years), which is significantly higher than the culture market average (14%).
- 71% are in the current art gallery or exhibition market, which is significantly higher than the culture market average (61%).
- 30% have donated to an arts or cultural organisation within the past three years, which is significantly higher than the culture market average (26%).

Engaging your current library community

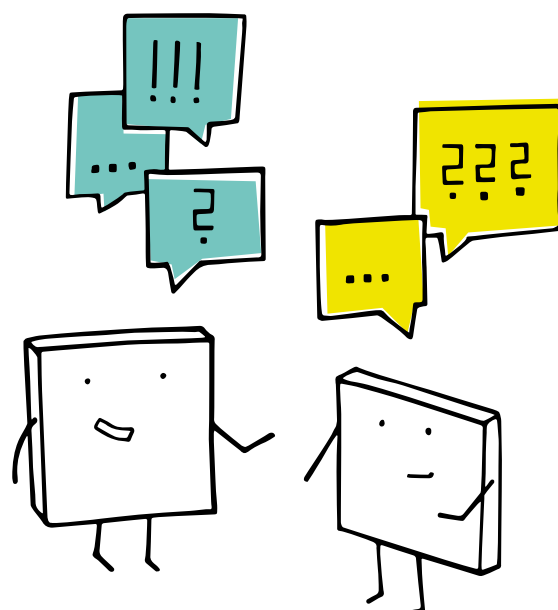
As a community resource, it's important to allow yourself to be both reader- and community-centred. You can program for success by understanding what your current strengths are, and what your existing audiences' interests and preferences are.

Research is key to building a program that provides what your community wants and needs.

Try looking at:

- event statistics: what type of events have been well attended in the past? What was the format? When were they on? Who was the intended audience? Was there a famous writer involved?
- most-borrowed in your collection: what kinds of books are your patrons reading?
- industry trends: what is popular at other festivals and venues?
- what is topical: what issues are featuring prominently in the media?
- Ask them! Do a programming questionnaire to ask what sort of events your patrons would like to see. Or consider meeting with them, or forming an advisory group (more about this later).

Successful festivals are increasingly differentiating the experiences they offer, both in content streams and in price modelling. This means that they can realistically fulfil the festival promise of 'something for everyone'. As a festival organiser, it's a good idea to be clear about who will benefit from each of your programming strands, and how.



FIND YOUR AUDIENCE

Identify festival benefits for your community

To help you identify the benefits your current members, patrons, and library users might get from your festival, ask yourself:

- How can we further engage our community with our collection?
- How can we increase a love of reading through active engagement with the collection and the services we offer?
- What ways are we able to connect readers and our communities to opportunities outside the library?
- How can we inspire and empower our staff to connect to readers and community in new ways?
- What is something that we've always wanted to try with our community that we haven't been able to do before within regular library programming? *Festivals can be great platforms to try something new, and can help shape new program opportunities throughout the year.*

In the Good Books podcast

The YPRL Book Valet events during Booklovers Festival were so popular that they were turned into a podcast: *In the Good Books*. Hosted by three YPRL staff members, the podcast aims to not only engage and inform the reading community by discussing books and how librarians make reading recommendations in an accessible and fun manner, it also heavily promotes the library collection. The podcast is also used to help train and inspire staff in reader advisory. Due to COVID, YPRL has made book valet a regular service feature instead of a once-a-year special. YPRL uses book valet as a way to encourage new memberships and to increase collection circulation. It also helps keep the podcast running by supplying new valets to feature!

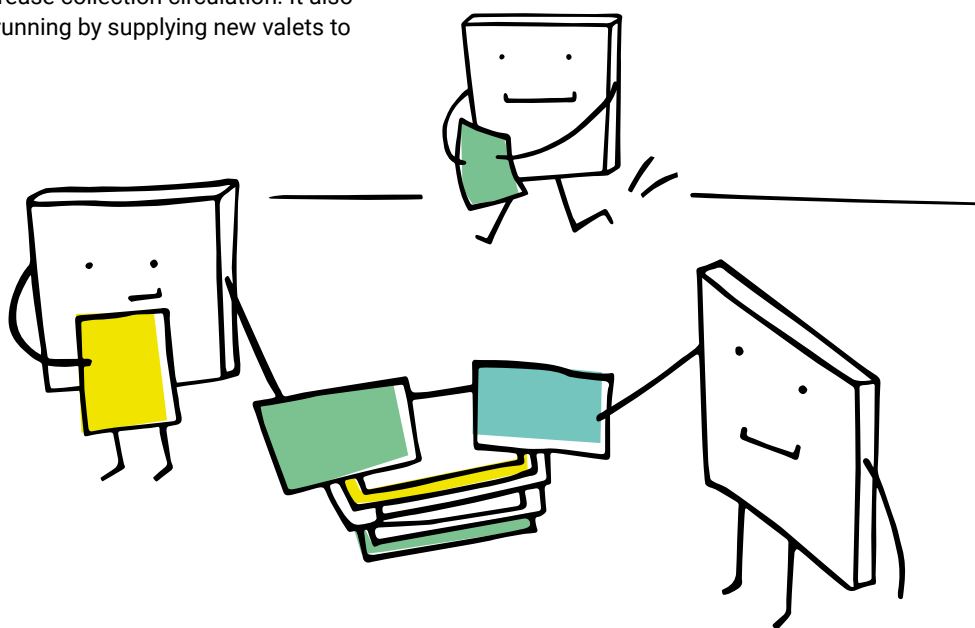
Engaging non-member audiences

Your festival audience can also be drawn from the wider community of people who are *not* already library members. Potential audiences to your festival are also potential new library users! This makes festivals a great opportunity for membership drive, and a chance to ensure that your library services are reflective of the whole community.

One way of finding these wider audiences is to approach them directly. You might like to try placing posters, flyers, or brochures in cafés, neighbourhood houses, bars, and other venues that attract your target audience.

Here are a few other examples of targeting and identifying new audiences:

- If your event is a walking book club, approach local walking groups through the council, YMCA, local gym, or new parent groups.
- If you're hosting an event that is centred around a theme or is of cultural significance, identify potential partners. This is an opportunity to build audiences outside of the library by connecting with other venues, groups, and services who work alongside your field.



Programming advisory groups

Programming advisory groups help to form a bridge between your artistic vision (**Section two**) and your programming (**Section five**). By engaging a combination of staff, experts, and target audience members to be part of your advisory group, you can turn your target audiences into an important programming resource. Who better to identify what your audience wants and needs than your audience themselves?

Your advisory group can begin with your staff. Involving staff in an advisory board ensures that they're contributing their voices and ideas to the festival. This generates a sense of ownership over the finished product.

To source staff for your advisory group, think about the following:

- Who in your staff is working with various communities already?
- What programming has been successful so far that can be expanded in your festival?
- What are some event ideas that staff have always wanted to try? Could that be something that fits within your festival aims and vision? Why not program it your festival and test the waters?
- Are there staff (such as a collections manager or program coordinator) who may be able to offer their expertise to the festival by suggesting how your collection could be used to promote the festival?
- Do your programmers have links to other community groups or partnerships?

Your program advisory board can then expand beyond the library to include stakeholders such as authors, artists, and target audiences.

Consider:

- What local authors or groups of artists can you approach for input?
- What ideas and experiences do they have as artists that could inform your festival?
- As artists, what would they like to see in your festival? What specific events or elements can you offer them? This may include networking, audience meet and greets, reading opportunities, and more.
- As an audience, what do they expect from your festival?
- What does your audience think is missing from other festivals?

CASE STUDY

Whitehorse Manningham Libraries – The Chinese Reading and Writing Festival

This vibrant festival celebrates Chinese and Chinese-Australian literature and culture and aims to encourage community connections by promoting the power of reading, writing, language, and literature to enrich lives.

With nearly 20% of the Whitehorse-Manningham community from Chinese ancestry, the primary objective of the festival was to represent and celebrate this unique community. To create a truly representative community festival, the library co-designed the festival with local community groups who not only sourced some of the presenters and helped create the program of events, but also disseminated information throughout the community, which was key in reaching new audiences. Many festival participants were attending a library event for the first time. Events ranged from Manga workshops aimed at youth audiences to events focused on Chinese literature and food.

Producing the festival directly with partnerships and consultation meant that key local community groups were able to offer presenters information dissemination and other support throughout their networks, which helped solidify community ownership of the festival. This was key for the library to attract a new audience. Securing further partnerships with Deakin University and The Australian Chinese Writers Festival enabled the festival access to their presenters, which further attracted a whole new audience and picked up traction with local media such as SBS radio.



ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING

There are several funding models for writers festivals and different options to generate income.

Most festivals tend to generate their income through multiple sources, such as a combination of:

- Existing programming and staffing budgets (within libraries)
- Local government grants
- Sponsorship from partners (cash or in-kind support)
- Revenue from ticket sales
- Philanthropy and donations
- Advertising sales (for example, ads in printed programs)
- Bar sales if drinks or refreshments are provided

Ultimately, where the income comes from that offsets the cost of the festival is up to each organisation to figure out in the context of what will work for their event format and what capacity staff have to deliver.

Knowing roughly how much your festival will cost (understanding cost of authors, production and marketing cost etc) will help you decide how to seek funding. If your library has venues and capacity within its staff to undertake a one-day festival, perhaps you are seeking only to raise a little cash to cover the cost of a few artists. Longer/more involved festivals or events with high profile artists or musicians and advanced production needs will need a lot more.

For some festivals, an all-day sausage sizzle or bake sale may generate enough income. Running a bar at a high-profile performance event is another option.

Others might decide to sell tickets to some or all of their events, or ask for an optional gold coin donation from attendees.

A library might want to work with community groups and support them to apply for community grants that will cover their involvement in the festival.

The possibilities for funding and partnerships to support a festival are broad and limited only by your imagination. When you are first getting started, begin small and try one or two things. As your income then becomes more established over time, you can look to grow and diversify it.

For its first few years, Booklovers Festival at Yarra Plenty Regional Library was funded only from existing annual programming and marketing funds. After a while, the library sought and gained some partnerships which offset some of the costs.

A case for funding

Several reports exist that you may like to draw upon when making a case for internal funding from Council and/or Government funding.

- [Libraries Work! The socio-economic value of public libraries to Victorians](#) (State Library of Victoria & the Public Libraries Network, 2018)
This report shows that every dollar invested in public libraries generates \$4.30 of benefits to the local community. The report includes specific information for all Victorian library areas.
- [Creative Communities: The cultural benefits of Victoria's public libraries](#) (State Library of Victoria & the Public Libraries Network, 2014)
This report demonstrates that libraries are cultural connectors, they support Australia's complex cultural mosaic, and they incubate creativity.
- **The Australia Council**
The Australia Council for the Arts has a few reports that may be helpful in making a case for funding for your library's writers festival:
 - > [Electorate Profiles](#) (Australia Council, n.d.) displays information on arts and culture engagement in each of Australia's 151 federal electorate divisions.
 - > [Domestic Arts Tourism: Connecting the country](#) (Australia Council, 2020) demonstrates that cultural events are a drawcard for local travel and that local arts tourism is growing.
 - > [Connecting Australians: National arts participation survey 2017](#) (Australia Council, 2017) shows that 98% of Australians engage with the arts; the arts have an increasingly powerful role in promoting social cohesion; and younger Australians create and experience the arts at the highest rates.
- **Creative Victoria**
Creative Victoria provides direct support to Victoria's creative industries through a range of funding programs. In this toolkit, you've already come across [Victoria's Creative Industry Festivals Review](#) (Creative Victoria, 2018) and the [Audience Atlas](#) (Creative Victoria, 2019).
Other useful Creative Victoria resources include:
 - > [VicArts Grants](#)
If you're a Victorian artist or organisation looking for support for a creative project or program, find out about VicArts Grants. This open, competitive program supports a wide array of art forms across a variety of different activities including development, presentation, community arts and international opportunities.
 - > [Regional Development and Touring](#)
If you're looking to tour a professional production, performance, exhibition or program to regional Victoria, or would like to know more about how Creative Victoria supports regional arts facilities, find out about the Regional Development and Touring Program.

CASE STUDY

Word for Word National Non-Fiction Festival, Geelong Regional Library Corporation

Word for Word National Non-Fiction Festival is Australia's only national literary event with a dedicated focus on non-fiction writing and ideas. Word for Word's dynamic and ground-breaking program covers a broad range of non-fiction topics, generating essential discourse and debate.

Geelong Regional Libraries' festival is a great example of why choosing to be a specialist festival allows you to create programming that is not only exploratory and insightful but is a drawcard for writers and audiences alike.

Although it may seem unusual for a public library to run a ticketed festival, there are many benefits in doing so and Word for Word is proof: organisers are able to program on their own terms rather than having to rely on promotional book tours, which guarantees creative, *active* programming rather than reactive programming for the library and community.

Ticketing also helps differentiate the festival from regular library programming, helping to attract diverse audiences to the library and the region. For many, the festival might be the first time they have stepped foot in a public library – and what a dynamic introduction to have!

The significance of having a regional library-based festival, no matter how large or small, not only helps to support local artists and the community but highlights the important role the public library plays as a trusted institution at the heart of public cultural spaces.



Setting up partnerships

Partnering with other organisations will help you reach a bigger audience and build networks. It may also generate income. There are endless ways to partner, depending on the themes and topics of your event.

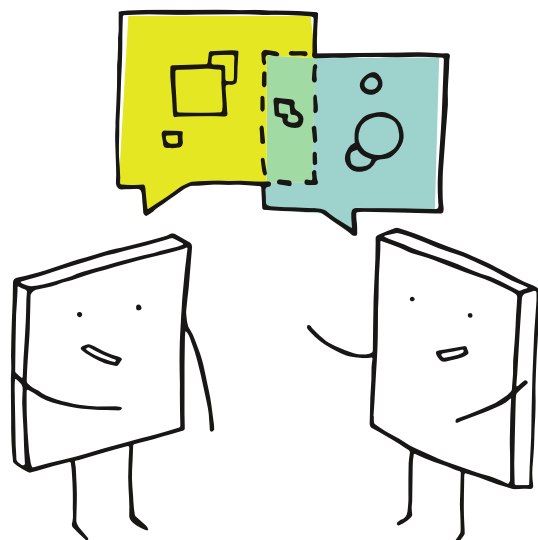
Partnering with booksellers

Author events should include book sales where possible. There are two ways you can organise this:

- Contact the publisher – they have existing relationships with booksellers and experience with organising sales at events.
- Contact a bookseller directly – this is a great way to build relationships for future events/promotions and strengthen community ties.

Booksellers can be reluctant to sell at small events (the small profits from sales don't usually cover the staff cost), so you need to let the bookseller know how the event will benefit them by providing an estimate of audience numbers, and details about how you will promote their business. Ways to promote the business might be a nod to the store in your social media channels, displaying their logo and branding at the event, or including an ad in any printed programs.

When building partnerships, it's important to communicate the reason you want to work with the business. For example, when The Wheeler Centre presented the 'Broadside' feminist writers festival they invited Neighbourhood Books to sell at the event, which is one of very few female-owned and run bookstores in Melbourne. Showing an understanding of the potential partner's business model and how they fit with your event or community is key to winning them over.



ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING

Event venue partnerships

Partnerships with venues can benefit both the festival and the venue.

Council

Venue spaces for bigger events can be expensive. As a library, one of your key festival overheads – venue hire – might already be taken care of, with venue options already available to you within your branch. However, if you are looking for a bigger venue or extra space/s, working with your local council is a good option.

On the larger end of the scale, you could get access to venues like town halls, churches, and civic spaces at low or no cost. If you're pitching a partnership or sponsorship to a council, you need to make clear the ways that your event will support and benefit the local community, particularly marginalised and minority members.

Small businesses

There are numerous event-ready spaces in your local community that you might be able to partner with for smaller events, such as bars, restaurants, and cafes. Beside linking the business to your festival theme or topic, make sure that the customers of the business are also your target demographic – this way you can assure the venue that you can expose them to new ongoing customers by bringing your audience into their venue.

Event spaces

Art galleries, theatres and design studios are just some spaces that you might partner with to host events. As above, make sure you link your audience to theirs, and any other partners you have on board that might be beneficial connections for them too.

Event sponsorships

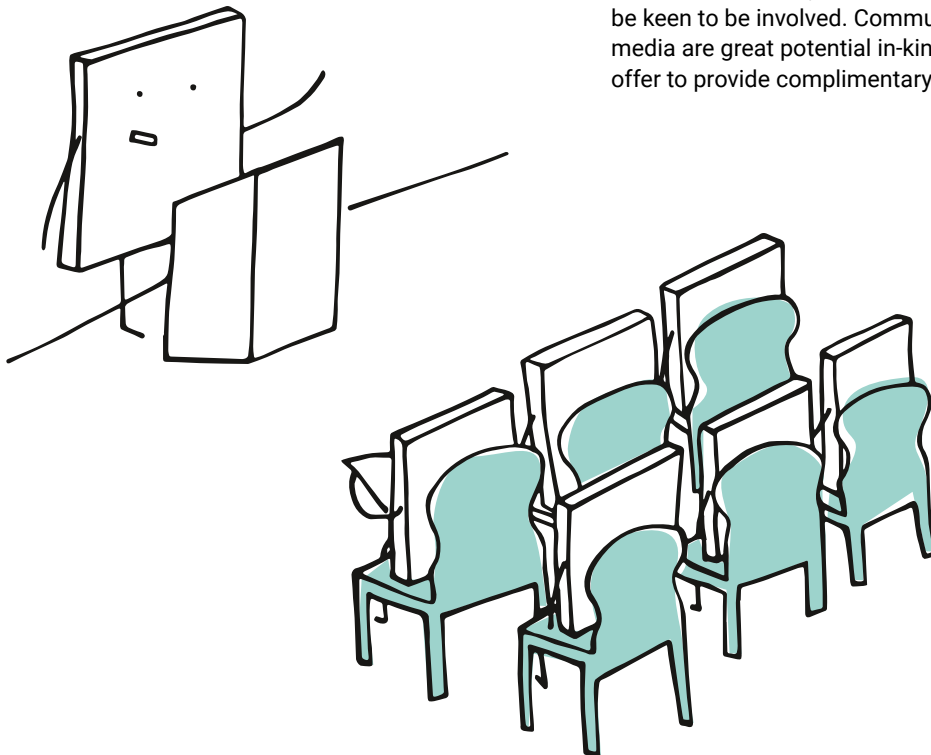
Any person or business can be a potential partner or sponsor – they don't have to be book or literature-related. For example, if you were running a festival about environment and sustainability writing, you might partner with a vegan cafe or restaurant for either venue or in-kind sponsorship. Let's have a look at the different kinds of event sponsorship.

Financial sponsors

Financial event sponsors give money to an event organiser in exchange for promotion or other benefits outlined in a sponsorship agreement. Getting businesses to fund your event can be hard, so you'll need a strong pitch. Create a sponsorship agreement that outlines what you can offer in the way of promotion packages digital/print ads, complimentary tickets, and audience reach.

In-kind sponsors

In-kind sponsors agree to provide goods or services rather than financial support. Examples include venue partners, prize sponsors, food/drink sponsors, and more. If you can find local businesses who have specialised products or services related to your event, it's more likely that they will be keen to be involved. Community radio and independent media are great potential in-kind sponsors – you might offer to provide complimentary tickets for giveaways.



Promotional partners and influencers

Influencers are individuals who have large followings on social media, and can help promote your event to their followers. They might be TV/radio/podcast hosts, popular #bookstagram content-makers, politicians, or social commentators. An offer of tickets and/or meet and greets with your event talent is a great way to get the influencer to your event, where they will hopefully post live updates. Again, make it easy for them – for example, by providing them with graphics and/or copy for their posts.

Offering benefits and perks

Benefits and perks you can offer your sponsors include:

- promotion on your channels, including e-newsletter and social media
- advertising in your printed program
- free tickets to events
- meet and greet with talent
- exposure to your audience (always provide estimated attendee numbers)
- an outline of your publicity plan (confirmed interviews, articles, ads, etc) where they might be mentioned
- ongoing relationship and community-building.

An introductory email is always the best way to approach a potential sponsor. Include a simple paragraph about the festival and its goals/intentions, the reason you want to partner with them, how the partnership will benefit them (and you – tell them how great they are!), and an invitation to talk further.

If you don't hear back in a week, you should follow up with a call. If they show interest, you can put together two or three sponsorship options for them – this is particularly helpful when looking for financial sponsorship, as people are more likely to choose *something* from several options, rather than deciding yes or no. Try to include specifics around how their money will be spent so they can see how their support will work in action. Always finalise sponsorship deals **in writing** with a sponsorship agreement.

CASE STUDY

State Library Victoria

State Library Victoria developed crucial partnerships with the Emerging Writers' Festival (EWF), The Melbourne Writers Festival (MWF), the Garrett podcast, and The University of Melbourne and Black Inc for the *Writers on Writers* series as a way to reconnect the biggest and busiest public library in the state to literature and literary programming for adults. This helped establish a literary precinct in Melbourne with the SLV as the heart.

In the past, much of SLV's programming centred around the library's exhibitions. When the Wheeler Centre was established, literary programming for adults temporarily ceased at the SLV while they tried to understand which, if any, role the library could play in Melbourne's literary landscape. It was soon obvious that public libraries – particularly *this* public library – could play a significant role in promoting and supporting local authors and artists and local literature and culture, as well as promoting their unique collection through new programming.

Being the home to EWF and MWF meant that each festival could use library space in exchange for programming around the SLV collection. The Garrett podcast records in the library and co-hosts live events with SLV. Former Director of Experience, Justine Hyde, emphasised that it can take time to establish partnerships, but they are *crucial*. Partnerships open doors, help stakeholders, and allow you to connect back into the community around you. When you have a partnership, you can do so much more: so long as there are tangible benefits with each partnership, they are worth pursuing, because it is hard to do things on your own.



GET THE WORD OUT: MARKETING AND PR

Starting a campaign

In all promotions, the first and most important question is *audience* – who are you talking to and how will your event benefit or interest them? Think about the kind of person you're trying to attract to your event, including their demographics and what kinds of media they might consume. Once you have a good idea of your target audience, you can put your campaign together.

Firstly, you need three key elements...

Elevator pitch: Write a one-sentence description of your event, keeping in mind your Artistic Vision. This is what you would use to explain your festival to anyone who asks! Then write a one-paragraph description where you expand on the main ideas/themes/intentions. Perfecting the "elevator pitch" will make your planning easier and your communications uniform.

Design: Streamlined design elements and branding could include a logo, a colour scheme for all promotional materials, or specific imagery and formatting. Once you have an image or logo, create a high-resolution version in a suitable size for all the main social media platforms. For example, the optimal image size for a Facebook post is 1200 x 630 pixels. (Note: if you're getting original art made you should credit the artist or designer – which is also a great way to support and promote local artists.)

Media release: A media release (MR) is the quickest way to get the important details of your festival to media and potential partners. A media release should be a one-page PDF including the following:

- An eye-catching image of either a logo, a photo of a past event, key talent, or the venue space.
- A brief description of the festival, including your goals and intention. What is it? Who is it for? Why is it happening? If it is a recurring event, you should include a mention of past successes (i.e. 'After a sell-out series last year...' or, 'Responding to growing participation numbers...')
- An endorsement quote from a past audience member, a participant, or a partner. Where possible, this should be from someone well-known in the community or literary scene.
- Technical details like locations/times, accessibility, and key talent.
- Information about any partnerships (this might just be a small 'proudly supported by' section with organisational logos or names).
- Contact details of the person who is available for interview about the event (usually the curator/director). If you have any big-name talent involved in your event, ask them if they're willing to do some promotional interviews.
- Where to find further information about the event (web links or directions to web content).

Note: Where these elements are placed on the MR and how big they are depends on what is most important for your event. For example, if you have a fantastic endorsement from a celebrity, you might want to put that closer to the top. You can find many examples of MRs online.

Targeting your promotions

Once you have all your elements, you'll need to target your promotions. Your promotions will be scaled by how much budget you have, but many of the following tactics will only cost your time.

Media: Send your MR via email (remember to blind cc if you're bulk-emailing) to a broad media list. Your media list should include television, radio/podcast, printed news/magazines, and online organisations. (Note: Many news organisations have their media contact person listed on their website and will specify whether or not they accept MRs.)

As well as the above MR mailout, you should also send personalised emails to the media outlets you think will be most helpful. Again, think about your desired audience and where they might find information. Local media is fantastic for this, including community radio and locally focused podcasts and news websites.

If you don't hear back from an organisation that you'd really like to cover the festival, follow up with a phone call – remember, excitement is infectious! Be passionate and make their job easier by pitching great content. For example, if you're running a YA festival and know a local radio station that has a YA book segment, you should pitch an idea for that specific show.

If you have an opening night event or program launch, invite media to attend – either informally in your pitch email, or with a PDF invitation. This doesn't need to be a big event – it can be a small launch at the library with staff, friends, and hopefully the local newspaper.

Own-channel promotion: Using your physical and digital spaces is an easy and effective way to promote your event. Own-channel promotions might include:

- setting up a Facebook event
- promoted posts on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook
- inclusion in e-newsletter and/or printed library materials
- banner/MREC ads on all library web pages
- a designated landing page on the library website
- library displays (posters, bookmarks, postcards, flyers, etc)

All social media content should direct people to the designated event page on your website, where people can find more detail.

Networking: Once you have the above digital promotions organised, provide artists, partners, and friends with collateral and ask them to help spread the word. Collateral is any content that promotes the event and might include social media images, links to the website page and/or Facebook event, your event description, or even a suggested social media post. You can also offer physical collateral like posters or postcards. The easier you make it, the more likely people will share your content.

Hot tip: ask every person working in your library to share your marketing – either by forwarding an email, posting it to Facebook or whatever works for them. What better ambassador for your festival than library and Council staff? That way your message will meet an interested audience!

Traditional advertising: Posters, flyers/postcards, library displays, advertisements, etc. If you have the budget, you might look at doing a local poster run or placing an ad in relevant media. If your budget doesn't allow for a print ad, most media organisations have cheaper digital advertising packages available. (Note: you will need to supply artwork to the required specifications).

Innovation: Audiences are constantly bombarded with content – if you can think of a new or fun way to promote your event, do it!

For example, if your event is a children's festival you could print flyers with a colouring-in page on the back that can be entered into a colouring-in competition to be judged on the day.

Competitions not only bring a little excitement (and promotion) to your festival, they can also help boost audience attendance AND be used as a form of membership drive. While they are not essential, they are helpful – and fun! There are many different types of competitions to run, including:

- **Bring a friend:** Bring a friend to a festival event and join them up to the library to go into the draw for a festival book prize pack.
- **Best question:** Encourage people to an event by offering donated prizes as 'rewards' for asking questions at the end of the event. The 'best' (or depending on how many prizes you have, every) question receives a prize.
- **Passport competition:** Encourage people to attend as many events as possible by collecting stamps on a card during the festival. The more events they attend, the more chances they have of winning the grand prize. Hopefully, it's books!

Accuracy: All of the above elements *must* feature good design and copy. Check and double-check all promotions for spelling/grammar errors, images for pixelation, framing, and accurate colour. If you can afford a professional designer, hire one – particularly if your promotions include posters or print ads, as these can have specific image requirements.

Getting help: Brainstorm with colleagues, friends, and members of your local community to get ideas to focus your promotions. If the above hints and tips seem overwhelming, and the budget allows, freelance publicists can put your campaign together and will have insights into media contacts and audiences that you might not have considered.

Basic campaign timeline

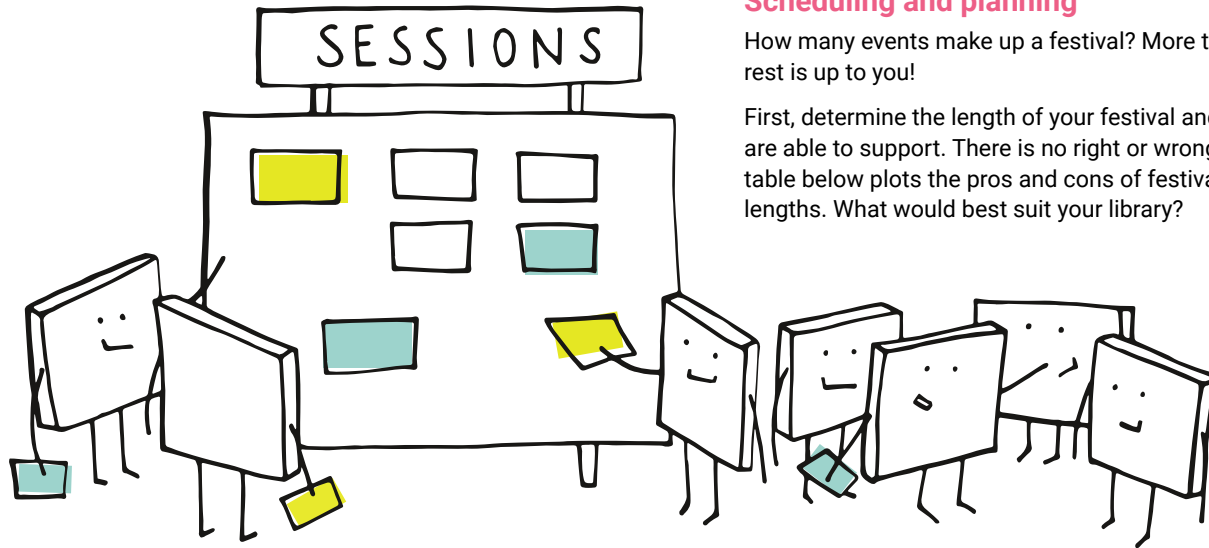
Below is a basic timeline to follow for marketing and promotions.

DUE	TASK
3–6 months before event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finalise description and basic pitch ▪ Contact potential partners/sponsors ▪ Confirm any external venues
3 months before event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finalise media release and design ▪ Book any ads and printed promotions ▪ Confirm partners/sponsors ▪ Send out media release
2 months before event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confirm media and chase leads
1 month before event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Printed media interviews/promotions (these are usually done two weeks to one month before publication release)
1 week before event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Radio ▪ News media interviews ▪ Promotion

This information should also be included in your planning timeline, in Section seven, above.

Keeping a plan like this somewhere visible will help your event promotion run smoothly, and ensure nothing slips through the cracks.

MAKE IT HAPPEN: PRODUCTION



Scheduling and planning

How many events make up a festival? More than one. The rest is up to you!

First, determine the length of your festival and what you are able to support. There is no right or wrong answer. The table below plots the pros and cons of festivals of varying lengths. What would best suit your library?

Given your resources, access to authors, community needs and wants – how long should your festival be?

LENGTH	PROS	CONS
One day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Great way to get started and try out new festivals without committing too many resources. If successful, you can extend. ▪ A good, focused call to action for people to attend ('one day only, don't miss out!'). Generates a buzz. ▪ If you have limited resources, it can be better to have a great one-day festival program rather than a lacklustre extended program. ▪ One day can be the perfect length for some communities. If you're hosting a family festival, a festival in a small town, or a festival on a niche topic, a great buzz and sense of connection can happen with everyone knowing they are in it together. ▪ Great for booksellers, food trucks and other local suppliers. ▪ Able to do a single, targeted marketing/media push with a clear message. ▪ Great for a single-site festival. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Challenging if there is something else on the same day in your local area. Coordinate with other organisations to ensure there are no clashes. ▪ Can be impacted by poor weather or other factors outside of your control – only one chance to get it right! ▪ Author availability can be a factor – only one day for them to be able to participate.

LENGTH	PROS	CONS
Weekend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Great to have a focused program with less risk than a one-day festival. ▪ More room for event variety, with more time to deliver, e.g. you might have a Friday gala event and different kinds of activities on Saturday and Sunday. ▪ Can target different audiences at different times: Friday night might be general public for a gala, Saturday could be book club sessions, and Sunday might be writers' workshops. ▪ Great for booksellers, food trucks and other local suppliers. ▪ Able to do a single, targeted marketing/media push with a clear message. ▪ Great for a single-site festival. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The longer the festival, the more costly it can be with staff costs, technology requirements, security, etc. ▪ Can be impacted by poor weather or other factors outside of your control – only one chance to get it right! ▪ Author availability can be a factor – only one weekend for them to be able to participate.
Week/fortnight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunity to space out events in a way that is resource-friendly. ▪ Opportunity to target different demographics on different days/times. ▪ Flexibility in terms of program rollout – might build to a big closing weekend, or might open with a big weekend leading into smaller events during the week. ▪ Great for a multi-site festival with different events/programs for different audiences. ▪ Good time frame for marketing with good pace, can keep interest easily without people getting tired of hearing from you. ▪ Might have more flexibility in author availability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The longer the festival, the more costly it can be with staff costs, technology requirements, security, etc. ▪ If the festival is held on multiple days/at multiple venues, marketing collateral needs to be very clear about what is happening when, and where. Potential for inconsistency in event delivery if being held at different sites. ▪ Transport of marketing and tech materials between sites can be challenging. ▪ May be harder to engage booksellers and other local suppliers over a longer period. There is an option to have them at the 'big events' and explore other options at smaller events.
Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Large amount of time for audience to come and engage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Could be costly. ▪ Really hard to maintain staff energy over this time frame. ▪ Patrons might forget it is on.

Event production

'Event production' covers a massive range of event management elements. It is also a part of festival organisation that can make or break your festival – so it's important to get it right! With so much information to manage, and so many tasks to delegate and complete, let's have a look at some important responsibilities, and some ways of managing them.

Planning timeline

You can never start planning too early! For your festival to run smoothly, it's important to have a sound timeline in place to deliver all the elements of your program. The timeline should start from when you want the festival to happen and move backwards from there. Try to be realistic: send everyone the timeline in advance, alert them to key deadlines, and have someone in charge of sticking to it.

MAKE IT HAPPEN: PRODUCTION

Below is an example of what could be included in your timeline. *This is just an illustration – timelines will differ from festival to festival.*

DAY/DATE	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITY
5 months out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-draft: Ideas for festival events due for sign-off. Festival subcommittee to meet and discuss what to include in the program, and what might be missing from the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Festival coordinator/director
4 months out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all authors and presenters have been finalised and locked in. Program to be signed off and begin preparation for marketing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Festival coordinator/director Program coordinators
DATE/S OF THE FESTIVAL		
+ 1 day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish event, pack down and clean up. Return any hired supplies and equipment. Take down marketing collateral. Ensure all data (door counts etc) is sent to a central location. 	
+ 2 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send email(s) thanking writers. Call to thank partners. 	
+3 days – 3 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send out online evaluation survey. Collate responses. Write post-festival report. Publish blog post(s) about the festival including highlights, attendance statistics etc. 	

Production schedule

Multi-event festivals can be challenging to schedule purely from an audience perspective. You want your festival to feel like there is a lot going on, and not too many clashes. Having two bestselling crime authors speaking at the same time, for instance, will potentially mean disappointed crime readers!

That said, unless you are running one big community day, one of the great things about a festival is the feeling that 'you can't see everything'. It's okay to have clashes or things running at the same time – just try and avoid the real clangers. For example, it's hard to come back from advertising that the same author is appearing in two different events at the same time.

Unfortunately, there is no trick to scheduling perfectly. However, it is essential to have consistent and clear processes for scheduling, behind the scenes. This includes coming up with ways to prevent event clashes, and also simple and useable ways to keep track of all the various pieces of information you and your team will need in order to make the events happen.

Remember, there are a lot of things to keep track of in a festival. Ideally you will keep track of them with as conveniently and organised as possible. Below are just a few of the things that you'll need to keep track of:

- What authors are appearing, and their author bios and photos.
- Date and time of each event, and where they are taking place (see the grid system illustrated below).
- Technical requirements for each event (screens, microphones etc).
- Title of each event, and marketing copy.

If you're lucky enough to have a production manager, they will probably come with their own systems to accommodate the above. For the rest of us, a Word or Excel document with tables might be ideal if that is the system everyone is comfortable using – because they will feel capable of accessing it, updating it, and sticking to it. An expensive digital database tool will be useless if only one person knows how to use it. The system that people will use and understand is the best system for you.

Below are a few systems that you could explore to see what would work best for your team.

Post-it notes

Festivals have been planned using Post-it notes. While this is a great way to move things around, and sticking them up on a wall is nice and visible, it's also risky. If any of your notes fall down, or a cleaner tidies them up, there goes all your hard work! For a similar amount of visibility and flexibility in your planning phase, consider using a digital equivalent like Monday.com or Trello instead.

Grid

There are many ways to create an event grid, including paid services. The easiest way is by using Excel – and, as a program that most people are at least a little familiar with, there's no major learning curve for anyone using it. The easy format also means multiple people can update their sections of the plan as more information becomes available.

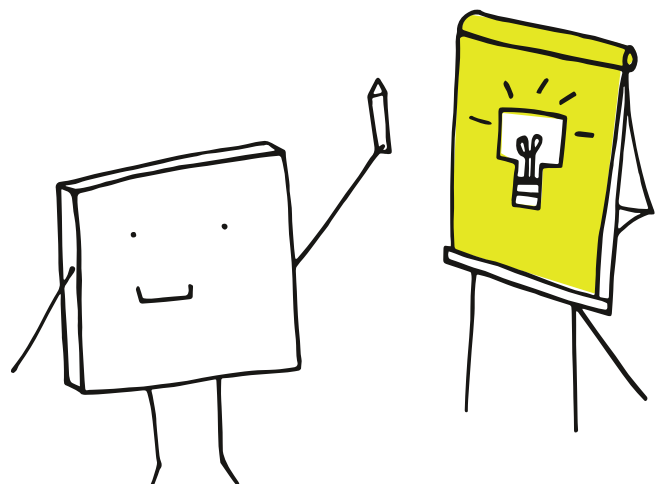
The event grid is usually set up by day. One worksheet will show you every venue that is running that day (across the top), timings (down the side) with the events (including the title of the event, who is appearing in the event, and who is responsible for the event) marked out. For example:

FRIDAY JULY 24 2020	LECTURE HALL	COURTYARD	THEATRETTE
9.00am	Event: [Event title] [Description] Artists: Staff: Manager: Notes:		Event: [Event title] [Description] Artists: Staff: Manager: Notes:
10.30am		Event: [Event title] [Description] Artists: Staff: Manager: Notes:	Event: [Event title] [Description] Artists: Staff: Manager: Notes:
1.00pm	Event: [Event title] [Description] Artists: Staff: Manager: Notes:		

A system like the one shown above is flexible enough to contain as much information as it needs to. It's also easy to update and is a great way to get a broad overview of everything in one place.

When creating a production schedule, consider:

- Who is appearing where?
- Will everyone have time to move between venues if needed?
- Who is in charge of each piece of information?
- Who is in charge of final approval for the program?
- Who is in charge of approving the marketing copy?



MEASURE YOUR IMPACT

When you begin exploring the aims and goals of your festival you will start to identify what success means for you.

In many ways, library-centred festivals are unique in that we understand that not everything we do can be measured in pure numbers of attendees. We want to know how an event or festival impacted our community – how did participants feel when they left? What did they learn?

We can look for many outcomes as markers of success. The best way to know that we've met them is to be clear in our aims and objectives, and also to ensure that we evaluate our festival and events.

Success is about learning from our 'failures', too. Even understanding what didn't work so well for you one year means you can aim to improve it in the following year.

Setting out your KPIs may be different each year, depending on what you're aiming for. However, the bottom line is that success looks different for everyone.

Success for you might be a combination of some of these measures –

- having 100, 1,000 or 10,000 people attend the festival
- ensuring main events were well attended
- feedback/surveys indicating that audiences were satisfied
- showcasing a diverse range of local artists from your area
- amount of media attention
- bringing people to your region
- meeting a financial goal – tickets sold, sponsorships
- meeting the aims and goals of your vision

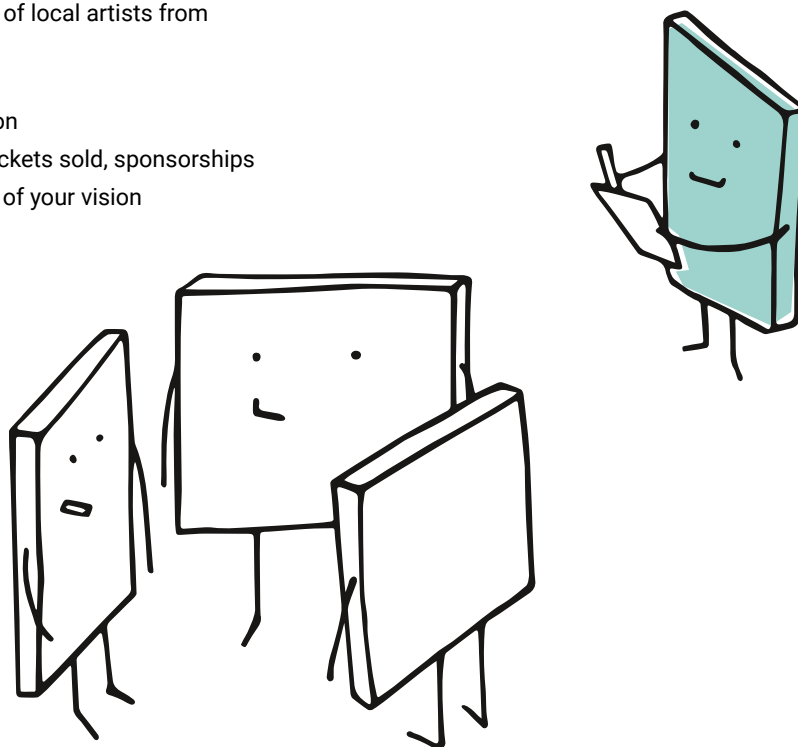
Reporting on your event

The festival doesn't wrap up when the chairs are packed away or when you've sent thank you emails to authors, partners and sponsors. The essential final step in wrapping up your writers festival is reporting.

Your reports can be informed by debriefing with staff, taking in audience feedback, and analysing the data and statistics you have around attendance. You might like to send out a short participation survey to your festival audience (and also to artists for a different kind of feedback) – this can make anecdotal feedback on the success (or otherwise) of your events more solid. It's a really good idea to highlight which events or event types worked well (perhaps your top 5), as this can help inform future programming: your community is telling you what they're most interested in.

In your reporting, it's important to lay out what your festival goals were from the outset, and to assess how your festival has in fact performed against these goals.

Record-keeping of this sort can help acquit any funding, form part of your promotion for future festivals, and help inform your programming decisions in years to come.





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