

Advertising Your Book Sale

Before you do any advertising, when you are choosing the date for your large book sale, be sure to check that the room to be used for the book sale is available on the date and times of the sale plus the date and times for setup and cleanup of the tables and books/media for the sale. Be sure to make the room reservation as well as requesting tables from other rooms or locations, if necessary, so that you will have the place and tables for your book sale.

One other item for preparation before you do any advertising: if you need help from other groups or people, be sure that those people will be available as needed. For example, if you use area teens for setting up tables and carrying in boxes full of books, be sure that the teens will not be away on a school vacation just when you are hoping to get their help.

As soon as you have chosen the date for your book sale, you should post a flyer in your library and in the Friends book sale area (book nook) giving the date and hours of the book sale.

Around six weeks prior to the book sale, you should start more advertising so that customers will write the sale date in their calendars and will plan to come to your book sale. You want to get the word out to library patrons, area residents, and other people in surrounding communities who are likely to come to your book sale if they find out that you will be holding one. Some suggestions are:

1. Print **bookmarks** to place around your library and in the book nook for patrons to take. When people take these bookmarks home, it will be more likely that the sale date will get written in their home calendars. If you can find or make holders for the bookmarks, they are less likely to get scattered or moved out of the nice, neat stacks in which you placed them. If you design your bookmarks so that you get five vertically across each piece of 8 1/2" x 11" paper, they will be easy to separate with a paper cutter, and they can be stacked in a tray approximately the size of a fork or tablespoon holder. Look in your stationary store or a store which carries storage items,

3. Next you want to choose the **placement** of your article, in what newsletters, newspapers, online circulars, etc. you want your blurb or short article to appear so that it will reach the widest readership of people who might come to your book sale. Some of these places you have probably already planned for, but there are many places where you can ask for your article to be included, and even if you don't get there the first time your ask (your timing may have just missed their printing date or perhaps there is not room the first time that you ask), it is worthwhile asking again, and eventually you may succeed. Mostly, however, people will be very glad to include a blurb about your book sale. Why? For a very important reason... which you should be sure to emphasize in the material sent out about your book sale:

The money raised at your book sale goes to your local library, to help them 1) add to their collection of books, media, and e-books, 2) to help provide special programs at the library for adults and children. Many communities and school districts can no longer support their libraries the way that it was possible before budgets were tightened, and the Friends' help for their libraries is very important to keep updating collections and bringing in programs that area residents want to attend.

Now back to the **placement** of your book sale article. The top of this list is probably some of the places that you would think of first, but keep reading because each of these will reach at least some people who would not hear about your book sale except in a particular place...

City newspaper(s), usually in a Calendar of Activities

Local newspaper, daily, weekly, or monthly for your section of the city. In our part of town there are two weekly newspapers, and both are widely distributed:

Almaden Times and Almaden Resident

Your library's newsletter or the central library newsletter

Your Friends of the XYZ Library newsletter

City Councilmember's monthly or semimonthly newsletters
(email or printed)

County Supervisor's newsletter (email or printed)

Senior Center's newsletters or schedule of activities

Online Web sites of all of the above

Facebook groups for your library or your Friends of the XYZ Library

Schools in your area's newsletters or information home to parents

There is a new site that has started in the San Jose area in the past couple of years, and its use is growing rapidly.

The name is *Nextdoor*, and coupled with that name is some reference to the section of the city, major street name, or perhaps a neighborhood name. In our part of San Jose, the use of the *Nextdoor Almaden* has become an excellent way to learn about activities, area classes, items for sale, and now Friends of the Library book sales. Check on the *Nextdoor* Web site by inputting your zip code, and they will let you know if there is a *Nextdoor* in your part of town.

There will be more places for advertising that you will think of, but this is a good start for getting printed mention of your book sale as well as online distribution of the date and details about your book sale.

4. What **information** should you include in your blurb or article? You may not be given as much space as you would like, so try to put the most important facts near the top.

Book Sale

Friends of the XYZ Library (to be sure that readers understand that it is donated books and media being sold, not the library's book collection!

Day of the week and Date

Time (start time and end time, plus any time when the prices are lowered, like maybe the last hour of the book sale

Street address, city, and zip code, possibly a major cross street near the library if the street address of the library may be hard to find

Prices of major categories, for example:

Most paperbacks 50 cents, hardbacks \$1.00 (children and adults)

Some of the categories books are sorted into: i.e., cookbooks, parenting, medical, travel, crafts, romance, computer, business, home & garden, science fiction, remainder = non-fiction

Some special books (like coffee table books), priced slightly higher (\$2.00 to \$5.00)

Media (CDs, DVDs, audio books) and tell if not selling VHS tapes and/or cassettes. In many areas of the city, residents no longer have the hardware to play these older format media, and so the local library's Friends groups have stopped selling those formats. Suggest, if customers ask, that they might find those at a nearby branch library or at a store such as Goodwill.

Mention if you will have textbooks or encyclopedias included in the sale. Don't forget to include if you have any "Bag of Books" sale toward the end of the selling time, for example, the last hour of the sale having a "Bag of Books for \$5" where the users can buy a tote bag (or bring a bag sold by the Friends) and fill it for just \$5, maybe including both books and media items (but probably not audio books).

These are just some suggestions for your sale, but the more that you can include in your advertising, the more potential customers you may find coming to your book sales.

5. **Flyers (aka posters)** in area stores and shopping centers may bring in some people who do not read area newspapers and/or are not on the computer to see your advertising in those places. Flyers with some clip art will get the attention of people walking by, especially if you have some colorful designs there.

Not all stores are willing to post flyers in their windows or on their doors, but it never hurts to ask. If you point out that the funds raised at the book sale will go to your local library, stores are often willing to post a flyer where the members of the local community benefit when the local library will get books and media added to their collection and can put on more programs for

local residents. It will also help (a great deal!) if, when a store was willing to post a flyer for one sale, you return one or two days after the sale to take down the flyer. Stores do not have a lot of time to monitor when flyers are out of date, and if you follow up by removing the flyers for them, they will think much more positively about your request for posting a flyer for a future sale. Be helpful, and your future requests are more likely to have a positive response.

The stores which seem to have the most customers noticing your flyers and making a note to come to your book sales are grocery stores and drug stores (or pharmacies). These will frequently have a bulletin board or some special area for customers to post notices or flyers of special events, so take advantage of their willingness to post your flyers.

Here are a few clip art images which you can include on flyers about your upcoming book sales.



These same 1-page flyers should also be sent to nearby branch libraries or libraries in nearby towns, anywhere that people live close enough to want to come and look through your books for sale. These flyers should also be posted at strategic spots around your library and, if applicable, around the building where your library is one of several agencies. It is a good idea to wait until about two weeks prior to the book sale to post lots of the flyers. The one poster in your book sale area is usually sufficient to let regular book sale customers know when to expect the next book sale, and people who have not come before will be notified in plenty of time when the flyers go up with two weeks' notice. Be sure to include your library's name, street address, and even city if there are several towns close enough that you are

advertising in multiple towns. Also include the most common prices (like 50 cents for paperback and \$1 for hardback), the types of books and media to be sold (if you have room for that on the flyer), and the dates/hours of the sale. The flyers get attention easily when printed on glossy photograph paper, and again, remember to take them down from around your building after the sale is over.

6. One big attention-grabber is the **banner**. Yes, over the building's front door, and for just the one week prior to the book sale, will get the attention of people entering your building, people driving by on the street, and nearby residents like people walking their dogs, etc. The banner can just say something like "Book Sale Next Saturday". There is now a "pocket" which can be bought and taped in a relatively small area on a banner where you can slip in a typed date for each sale, making it easy to have the banner let people know the specific date of the book sale.

7. We also used **A-frame signs** (like realtor's signs advertising their open houses) for many years on main streets and corners near the library. When we tried not putting these signs out for one book sale, we still had just as many customers show up. So, because of the cost and the need for a person or two people to drive the signs around, get out of the car and put up the signs, and then to go around at the end of the sale and collect all of these signs again, we finally decided that people had discovered the sale from one or more of our many other advertising methods, and so we discontinued the A-frame signs.

8. One last bit of advertising help: On the day of the book sale, put up an **easel** inside your building's front entrance, perhaps 15 feet inside, with a bright-colored poster board reminding people that your book sale is this day! Even with all of your advertising, some people may have forgotten that this is the day, and your poster will remind them to head for the book sale and find some goodies.

9. Speaking of **goodies**, some Friends groups have offered their teen helpers a chance to earn a little money during the book sale, and the teens have set up a table where they sell coffee or water as well as cookies. Shopping for good books takes time, and the customers may become tired and hungry or thirsty. A little break with refreshments may keep them at your sale a little longer and make them ready to spend a little more time perusing your offerings. Even the customers' children there may be more willing to stay a bit longer if they can have a cookie and some water to slake their hunger and ease their restlessness. Try it, and if the people in your area like this idea, you will find that you get repeat customers!

10. For workers at your book sale, the teens and Friends members doing the selling, it is nice to have a table with free refreshments for workers off in a nearby room: water, juice, sodas, cookies, fruit, and even cake. In our case, the library staff is so thankful for the Friends members' efforts to raise money for their library that they willingly bring in many goodies to eat and drink on both setup day and book sale day. What a nice treat!

11. **Online Web sites advertising and listing book sales** around the country, listed by city within state, are starting to mushroom by leaps and bounds. Well, maybe not quite that quickly or that well listed, but you should take advantage of every place that you can find to list your book sale. As of the date that this article was written, the current Web sites listing book sales are:

BookSaleFinder.com
BookSalePirate.com
BookSaleManager.com
BookSaleBuddy.com

Some of these Web sites will request that you post a flyer at your book sale stating that you use their Web site to advertise your sale, and that is certainly easy to do, especially when they have written the text for their flyer and ask

only that you print their flyer and post it. It's simple, and well worth your while to have your sale listed. Some local sales have even seen customers visiting from out of state after seeing your ad in one of these Web site and liking what you will be selling!

12. **Friends, neighbors, and relatives.** Give each of them a handful of bookmarks, a few flyers to post, and whatever else you can think of that they might be willing to hand out to their friends and neighbors. If they live within a reasonable distance away, all of the above people may want to come to your book sale to see if they can find some books that they want to read. Getting the word out is the main objective of all of your advertising.

13. **Word Of Mouth** also works wonders, so tell everyone that you see at meetings, exercise class, and in the groceries as you are waiting in line to check out. Each new person who you talk to may come to your next book sale and may even bring a friend..., and then those people may tell other friends to try the following sale because they found such great books at the sale that they attended. Your sale profits may mushroom, and all because of a little chat in the store line.

14. There are many ideas above for ways to advertise your book sale. I'm sure that you will have some ways that have worked for you and your Friends of the Library book sales. We would love to hear about your ways that worked, and we would like to try them and add them to the list here. Even ones which work for you but do not work for us will be added to the listings above. Maybe other Friends groups will try those ideas and find that they work wonderfully for their book sale advertising.

So do let us hear from you. Use the “Contact Us” tab across the top of the window for this Web site, and tell us your good ideas. Even hearing about some ideas which did not work well for your group may save some time and money for some other groups. It’s all in the sharing, and we hope to hear from you about things that do or do not work for you and new ideas that some of us can try. Best of luck in your ongoing book sales, and we hope that your sales will grow.

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