

CHAPTER SIX

GETTING THE BOOKS

From a Publisher

Every publisher has books in his warehouse that he wants the public to know about; indeed, he usually has quantities of each title which he will be glad to have displayed at book exhibitions. He may therefore be willing to lend the books for exhibition purposes; or he may want to charge them to the organisers, later crediting all those returned in mint condition and only charging for missing or damaged titles.

An example of a specimen letter informing a publisher about a forthcoming exhibition and asking him to provide titles for display, appears as Appendix D. It should, of course, be modified to meet your particular circumstances.

Where there are local publishers or agents of foreign publishers whose books cover the subjects being exhibited, this is clearly the easiest way to obtain the necessary stock. Problems may arise, however, if they want to deal only through local booksellers. There may be two reasons for this. First, the publisher may not want the bother of supplying lots of single orders, which is usually what is wanted for an exhibition; and this is particularly true if the publisher is computerised. Second, the publisher may not want to upset booksellers by by-passing them; and booksellers are often anxious when they see publishers dealing directly with the consumer and leaving them out. This anxiety is increased if there is a selling point at the exhibition (Chapter 15). Where any such

difficulties arise, it is better to offer the local bookseller, or a consortium of local booksellers, the opportunity of providing the books.

From a Bookseller

A bookseller may be delighted to provide the books for an exhibition, but he will almost certainly be more strict than a publisher on conditions for their return. The publisher may, and often does, regard books provided for exhibition purposes as expendable; "promotion expenditure" in other words. The bookseller may still hope to sell the books he supplies to an exhibition, since he has had to pay for them and he will have no budget for promoting titles, only for advertising his shop.

From Wholesalers

Wholesalers, where they exist, will happily supply the books, but will almost certainly expect to sell them to the organisers of the exhibition. This can enormously increase the cost of putting on the exhibition. You cannot expect to recover this expense from sales, though very occasionally there are people who will buy books after the show (for instance tertiary-level books being displayed in a college of higher education).

From a Library

As a rule then, you will be hoping to obtain books on loan from publishers, but there may be instances when they can be borrowed from a library. A local librarian, having a good stock in the subjects to be exhibited, may be willing to lend all or some of the books required.

A number of successful book exhibitions have combined new stock obtained from publishers and booksellers with used stock obtained from libraries. If you decide to follow this procedure, check that every title on display is marked in some way so that it can be returned to the original supplier.

Back-up Stock

Only on very rare occasions are books not pilfered or damaged during an exhibition. You will therefore have to decide in advance what to do about back-up stock. If replacements have to come from overseas, it may be possible to get them in time by airmail; but this is expensive. In many parts of the world something like six months must be allowed for books to come from the nearest industrialised country.