

# **PSA: Organizing a Reading Series, Considerations**

## **Promotion:**

The best is always word of mouth from satisfied and happy audience, and from the followers of your readers.

But also, direct mailing list emails, mailchimp, twitter, Instagram, shared event or photos and reminders on Facebook. And older school, postcards, bookmarks, posters, calls for contests or special themed reading.

## **Open Mic:**

Invite ringers, poets you admire to sign up for the open mic, while keeping it open to anyone.

Anyone can take 2 minutes of anyone reading their newbie poem, but you want to keep the ratio of polished and raw.

Do you want an open mic at each event?

How do you signal “time” to your reader. (Be aware new readers will likely not look up for someone to catch their eye so audio may be better.)

## **Readers:**

Who is choosing readers? How? Is this information transparent to the public?

Is there a plan for considering who is reflected from the community? What are the demographics of language, age, gender spectrum, queerness, established voice vs. upcoming voice? What’s the ratio of M:F, disabled to able-bodied?

Are you pairing readers who would be interesting together, or randomly?

Do you tell the readers ahead of time how they will be compensated?

## **Permissions:**

Ask permission of individuals if they mind their photo used for publicity. Put up a sign that there will be photos if that’s the default.

Consider some people (such as stalked women) may not want their name or photo made public. This is a safety issue, not only a courtesy issue.

**Volunteers:**

Do volunteers know what they have to do, when?

Does each volunteer have a clear domain of what they are responsible for and not? Do they know what authority they have to speak for the series?

Have you met with volunteers to explain what crosses a line and will cause them to be fired as a volunteer. (Yes, you can fire volunteers.)

**Finances:**

How much are you paying your readers?

Are you paying your venue?

Where's the money come from? City, Province, National funds, writers' groups, from audience donations, corporate sponsors, selling merch, selling memberships to the reading series?

Are you paying travel and accommodations or providing free accommodations?

Are you thanking your volunteers with symbolic recognition gifts?

**Venue Accessibility:**

Is there a hat pass or Pay What You Can option so people of limited finances can get in without being questioned on whether they can pay?

Is the venue close to transit or on major transit lines?

Does the venue have parking nearby and/or affordable to your patrons?

Is the exterior well-lit and easy to navigate for all people?

Is there ground-level access? Is there a ramp, or stop-gap ramp on request?

Is the washroom large enough for a wheelchair and not prevented by a change of floor-level? Is there a help button in the washroom?

Is there a microphone for hearing-impaired? Is there bleed sound from other events in the room or through the walls that would impair hearing?

Is there a person who knows how to use the sound system to avoid squeals or unbalanced or muffled sound?

Can you offer closed-captioning or ASL?

Do you have accessible seating set aside for patrons with more limited mobility?

Is there sufficient lighting at the podium? Many older readers especially need higher lighting levels to see.

How are the sight-lines to the performance area?

Have you set out standards of what is allowed from the stage? Keep it clean-language, or no hate speech, and how long the open mic spot is allowed and how many spots how often one person can have?

Are you hosting in a scent-free space? Do you remind people that is safe airspace so no scents please?

Is it alcohol-free to allow comfort for Muslim and AA patrons? Is there water or non-alcoholic drinks available?

Is there food available? If so, are there options for gluten-safe, and vegan patrons?

**Partnerships:**

Can you cross-promote with the venue? Plug the venue with your events and ask the venue to publicize your events on their calendar or with posters.

Are there other reading series who you can announce or who can announce your series?

Check with the local reading calendars to see that your event will not unnecessarily compete with theirs.

