

BOOKSTM ARE MY BAG

LOVE BOOKS, LOVE BOOKSHOPS

Guide to BAMB Events

Books Are My Bag

Books Are My Bag (BAMB) is a trade-wide, non-political campaign, aimed at raising awareness of the high street bookshop (independent and chain). Its ultimate objective is to encourage people to shop in their local bookshop.

Bookshop Day (BD) forms a key part of the campaign, and all bookshops, large and small, chain and independent, are strongly encouraged to back the day by hosting some kind of event or activity on that day. This year Bookshop Day is on Saturday 6th October.

There is a full guide on running events available free of charge from the BA, but this document should give you some ideas for the sorts of things you might be able to run in your shop on BD, if you don't already have anything planned.

Guide to BAMB Events

Why Do Events?

Events are one of the most effective marketing tools available to a bookshop. They can help attract a non-traditional audience to your shop. In summary we do events for the following reasons:

- Good for driving sales/profit
- Good for profile
- Bringing new customers into the store
- Good for morale
- They're fun

Types of Event

There are many different types of event that a bookshop can hold. Below are some of the main ones, (and these are fleshed out in more detail in the full events guide), but I'm sure you can think of more:

- Signing
- Reading / talk / debate / interview
- Book launch (either with a local author, or focussing on a major national title that you know will work for your customers)
- Local area events
- Seasonal
- Themed
- Literary lunch / dinner
- Bookstall
- Informal stock signing
- Children's events
 - Activity day
 - Storytime
 - Signings
 - Talks or demonstrations
- School events (schools coming in to you, you going out to schools, teachers' evenings, etc)
- Family fun days / activity days

Have a think about what sort of events work well with your store and your customers and try and build something around that.

Events with an Author

Signing

A book signing is the classic event format, and is suitable for most shop sizes and types, and many different types of author. These are almost always free for customers to attend. There are many titles published at the start of October, so you could organise a signing for BD.

Reading / talk / panel discussion / interview

These sorts of events tend to get scheduled on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, but if you have a strong and loyal audience, then you could consider them for the weekend.

As BD is aimed at promoting bookshops in the high street, it would be best to only hold this sort of event if you have the space to hold it in-store.

Local Author Event

Virtually every town has several (or more) people living within it who are writing a book, have written a book, or have written several books. Some of them will be books that you keep in stock. One thing that every local author loves, is the chance to promote their work.

So embrace it, and celebrate local talent by hosting an event specifically for them. Gather 10 / 15 / 20 of them all together (obviously bringing friends and family to support). Get some wine organised (even better if you can get a local wine shop to sponsor it). Then take charge of the evening, and run it a bit like a speed dating event. Get a lectern and invite every author to talk about their book for precisely two minutes. At the end of the two minutes, if they're still talking, make sure you have a bell / whistle to buzz them off stage.

These events can be really jolly, and everyone ends up supporting each other by buying each other's books (you tend to sell about half a dozen of each title). It allows the authors to feel like they belong, and gives you a great way of doing something for your local authors.

Events without an Author

Literary Quiz

This could either be run as an evening 'pub quiz' style event (with wine /beer included in the ticket price), or you could do a quiz which people take away and bring back with a closing date for entries. Include some questions that people can't look up on Google (relating to your shop perhaps, or the local area). You could either run it in the run-up to BD, with the winner announced on the day, or start it at BD and run it for a week or two during October.

The alternative is to run a quiz that ties in to a specific publication. There could perhaps be a new quiz book out, or a new edition of something like the Radio

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Times Guide to Films. Many publishers will help provide prizes for this sort of event – particularly if you can tie the quiz to a particular title.

Local Events

There are all sorts of events stores can run that focus on the community angle:

- Local author signing / event (see section above)
- Local author launch party – see the Guide to Running Bookshop Events for more details on this
- Local history group
- Reading group / writing group / knitting group
- Locally generated competitions (possibly in conjunction with your local paper or radio)
- Poetry event (in 2018 National Poetry Day is on Thursday 4 October)

A lot of these will be things you do already, but perhaps they could be timed to ensure they happen around BD.

Only on the High Street

See if you can get other local retailers involved to support the idea of encouraging people to shop in-store for that day. If everyone rallied together, might the local council be convinced to offer free parking (or free parking for an hour)? Would other retailers 'go orange' to tie in with the BAMB POS? Could you offer discounts that run across several shops? Offer a 'shop and drop' service? Allowing people to purchase goods, and pick them up at the end of the day when they've finished shopping (books are very heavy to lug around all day). Have you got anyone who is very fit in the store who could act as a cycle courier for the day – dropping books off free of charge at people's houses within a 5 mile radius of your shop?

Try and think of some things that as a physical bricks and mortar store that you can offer that online can't, and make sure you shout about them VERY LOUDLY on BD.

Themed Events

There are many different themes that one can build an event around, and these can really be tailored to match your local market. It could be something for children (more on this later), or it could be one of the following:

- Crime
- Books for Christmas / seasonal showcase (talk about the big new books coming / just come out)
- Health
- Sci-fi / Manga
- Travel
- Film / TV

- Lifestyle – Gardening / food and drink / art & craft / antiques /
- Business / current affairs
- Environment / sustainability / etc

A themed night can take many guises – it could mean a single author or expert doing a talk, it could be several people talking about or demonstrating different areas of expertise. The possibilities are endless, and these sorts of things could be on offer throughout BD, or at a scheduled time for an evening or daytime event.

These are a superb way of driving footfall into your shop, and one of the best things is they don't need an author in attendance. A local wine merchant for example could run a wine tasting, briefed in advance to recommend one or two wine books from an agreed selection catering for a number of price points. Similarly, a local artist can give a watercolour demonstration or workshop, again recommending one or two helpful titles – they don't need to have written them, merely to have the authority to make a recommendation that your customers will trust.

Role Reversal / Work Experience

If you have an author living locally, or a publisher, or one of your local journalists, why not invite them to come and work in your shop for the day? Give them some of the physically tough jobs (bringing in the delivery / shifting round crates of books, etc) but also give them some of the more mentally challenging; a customer asking for that book 'It was on the radio last week – can't remember the title'; 'My son likes David Walliams – what else would you recommend'; 'My friend was reading this book, it had a pink cover', etc.

It can be a great way of getting local coverage, and a lovely way of showing people your expertise and knowledge – things they can't get online!

Lucky Dip

Contact publishers and ask for a free book or two. Wrap them up and offer them as a lucky dip to customers.

Or (if a publisher or publishers will support with a limited amount of free stock), wrap some selected titles up, and offer them to customers. No one would know what they are getting, and it could be a really good way to get people reading something they wouldn't normally read. Ask customers to write a review that you can use in the shop afterwards.

Children's Events

Children's events are a wonderful way of introducing an events programme into your shop if you don't already have one and are perfect for BAMB. They are fun, simple and easy to do, and can really help build links with your local community, highlight your range and knowledge and introduce new readers to the joys of books. There are a variety of different types of event you can host, depending on the age of your target audience.

Family Fun Days / Activity Days / Storytime

Many of the standard event formats can be adapted for children's events, however, one of the most successful types of event for children are themed activity days. The list of potential themes really is endless and can change according to the current trends – so be prepared to be flexible in what you suggest, and listen to the advice of people with children, and to your children's bookseller, as to what would be popular.

In general, having some activity sheets – puzzles / colouring in / dot-to-dots / etc – are always popular, and can be photocopied. Many children's publishers provide some amazing kits for you to use – so do some research before you decide which activity day(s) to hold.

There are also a limited number of character costumes available – again, talk to your reps if you see them, and your wholesaler if you don't. Hints and tips on running activity days are in the full events guide, but anything that involves colouring in, glitter, making a mask is usually a roaring success. Decorating cup-cakes seems to be a really popular BAMB activity too – just make sure you have your area well protected so the clean-up is easier.

The great thing about activity days is that there is almost always some sort of output from the children, which you may be able to use in your shop. For example, you could have a Captain Underpants activity, and invite the children to colour in their own pair of pants from a stencil you've made. Keep them and hang them on a washing line in your shop after the event. It creates a talking point and will give the children an excuse to bring in Mum, Dad, aunt, granny, etc to come and see their pants.

Storytime

For something a little more controlled, storytime is always popular. Whether you pick old favourites to read, or whether you go for something new that you're hoping parents will then buy – make sure you've practised reading it out loud before doing it in public, ensuring you know the story, and are relaxed, comfortable and confident with the rhythm of the book.

Summary

Events can be extremely rewarding. If you don't already have an active events programme in your shop, BAMB is the perfect place to start. The BA has provided you with a cracking POS kit to help you dress your store, and both publishers and authors are keen to organise events on BD to celebrate and support bookshops.

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