How to talk to vendors and get free stuff

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- who we are
- why presenting
- not getting paid by presenters (disclaimer)
- Show of hands:
  - how many people in the room have never been to the exhibit hall?
  - how many people have visited, but don't know what to say or do?
  - how many of you feel like seasoned pros, but are hoping for tips?
- Share stories and tips or ask questions throughout for prizes
- This is your opportunity to ask burning questions of people obsessively go to the exhibit hall
DEMYSTIFYING VENDORS

- Vendors by Type:
  - Schools
  - Publishers and Distributors
  - Architects and Building Improvement
  - Products or Services
  - Professional Interest
  - Performers or Program Contractors

Common vendors found at library conferences: Schools, Publishers and Distributors, Architects and Building Improvement, Products or Services, Professional Interest, and Performers or Program Contractors. How do you interact with one of these subjects in the wild? We’ve got a whole list of type-tailored questions:

- Schools
  - Do you have any continuing education opportunities?
  - Tell me about trends you are seeing with students and projects?

- Publishers & Distributors
  - What’s new?
  - What are you excited about?
  - What’s your favorite title this year?
  - Who is your target audience?

- Architects/Building Improvement
  - Tell me about trends you are seeing in libraries.
  - Do you have experience with “green” or sustainable design?
  - What makes you different from the competition?
  - Are libraries able to continue services to patrons while (buildings are renovated, carpet or shelving is installed, etc)? How so?

- Products or Services
  - How can we use your product/service in our community with limited funding?
- What new features do you have?
- How can you assist us in meeting our goals?
- Can you share examples of ways other libraries successfully used (X)?
- How does (product or service) work?
- How can your company's products or services make my job easier and satisfy our patron's needs?

- **Professional Interest**
  - What do you do?
  - What does your organization offer (its members/the profession/my library)?
  - What are the benefits of working with you?
  - Convince me. Why should I (apply, join, share)?

- **Performers/program contractors**
  - How can we use your product/service in our community with limited funding?
  - What's new?
  - What are you excited about?
  - What are KIDS excited about? What are the trends?

- **Anyone**
  - How can you help my library or our patrons?
  - What brings you to MLA this year?
DEMYSTIFYING VENDORS

They want to meet and learn from YOU
- "We are eager to learn more about the needs of librarians so that we can create better, more useful products."
- "Any ideas on what may help your library that you have not yet seen... We are here to help LIBRARIES and we want to do it to the best our ability."

They aren’t (too) scary
- "Most vendors want to establish long-term relationships, we do not want to do a hard sell sales pitch."
- "We don’t bite. We are there with services and products to help them."
- "Vendors are friendly and want to speak with librarians. It’s why we come and it helps support your conference."

They want to develop relationships
- "We are there for them and would love to use this opportunity to meet in person and answer any questions they may have."
- "Most vendors want to establish long-term relationships, we do not want to do a hard sell sales pitch."

There are FUN things to do!
- "Brian Freeman will be in my booth!"
- "We bring character friends (princesses, mermaids, etc.), feel free to come take a photo with them!"

They just want to chat...
- "...it can get pretty boring not speaking with anyone. If we don’t get positive feedback from attending, then the company may choose not to attend anymore."
- "Everyone is welcome to stop at a booth and ask for more information. There is no obligation involved, and the information you learn may come in handy in the future."

You don’t REALLY even have to talk!
- "I am also an introvert! At our booth you can make paper, you don’t have to talk!... it’s possible to walk around the exhibit hall and not talk to anyone."
- "They can get show specials, free drawings, free give-aways. If they don’t want to talk to the person in the booth, that is just fine."

We asked vendors what they wished you knew about the exhibit hall. Here are a few favorite quotes, organized by category, that help illustrate why vendors come to exhibit halls and why you should make a point to visit the hall.
“Think of all the fairs, fests, back-to-school nights at which you’ve had a table. You want people to stop by to know what the library has to offer and to hear feedback on how you can improve. It’s no different for vendors.” Maggie Snow
Personal:

- Learn something new
- Stay on top of industry trends
  - "What's new in carpet technology?" CRL now has been re-carpeted with minimal down-time because of connection
- Interview
- Networking - build and strengthen connections with vendors - get to know your representatives.
- Solve problems
  - what are the issues my library is grappling with?
  - we need to work together to solve challenges.
- Build researching techniques - database vendors can show you tips, tricks, or features or put you in touch with someone who can
- Build Reader's Advisory skills
  - learn about new titles
  - listen to how the vendor "sells" the book to you
- Free demos (now or later)
- Free stuff:
  - Books
  - Post-its, coffee mugs, cell phone charges, ruler, tote bags, stress balls (photos)
It's all about my library!

Organizational:

- Share new products with colleagues
- Know trends in the industry to inform services
- Personal contact with suppliers
- Have a Budget – take advantage of conference discounts, network with your representatives
- No budget, no worries -
  - Often you can share conference discounts with people not there
  - Share details when there is an opportunity.
    - Dakota County Library now circulates Launchpads, which is a product that an employee saw at MLA, recommended to their manager, who then sent it to administration
    - “Library staff often know what will work and what will be popular with the public more so than library administration” Margaret Stone
- Solve problems
  - What are the issues my library is grappling with?
  - How can our processes be streamlined? book vendors with preprocessing may have answers to fit your needs
- Drew - he wants to hear feedback - Favorite part is the exhibit hall - what session – none going to hang out in the exhibit hall
  - Reason Anoka County Libraries now have hotspots - T-Mobile @ Conference 2018
It's all about the profession!

Profession:

- There is a symbiotic relationship between vendors and library staff that can be a positive impact on associations and the library profession. (this is perhaps a bit esoteric) - Margaret Stone
- Exhibitors fund conference
- Exhibitors advocate for libraries
- Exhibitors sponsor mini events
- A full exhibit hall is a sign of a healthy association - vendors choose conferences where they expect high traffic.
Tips & Wisdom:

- What to say
- They are there to talk
  - let me look under the table and see if we have ......
  - Baker & Taylor Cat calendars
- Utilize desert break with vendors
- Partner with someone
  - Ruth yelling at SirsiDynix
- Watch for special promotions
  - Bingo - Stacey won a free membership at first conference
  - Sign up ahead for discussion or invites from exhibitors
- Caution: Who do you give your phone number to?
  - Guy who calls me every month for 3 years now
  - Guy who called and yelled at us because we didn’t want to have him come do a demo
- Business cards – yes or no – tie to stories – two business cards – library and personal – stickers on back – write on the business card why you talked to this person
- Don’t give business card – ask for flyers brochure
Vendors are people to, if they say hi, say hi back
  - Lewellyn - I'll save these books for you – friends with authors – How's your mom?

What to say/ what not to say

Exhibit hall can be interactive
  - One line story (great prizes) - ARTUnlimited
  - VR demos - Minitex
Thank you!

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