



Literature Works presents

# Word on Tour

## Author selection and care

Giving your performer a quality experience, so they will return



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# Author selection and care

## Giving your performer a quality experience, so they will return

The choice of writer or performer for your live literature event will hopefully be a strategic one, informed by multiple factors such as audience preferences, local interest and perhaps knowledge of how the writer has been received at other library venues. Not least of the factors will be your ability to pay a writer. While some writers are happy to donate their time to local libraries, especially when launching a new publication, it is important to provide writers with opportunities to earn money from relevant paid work. The following tips will help you to select a suitable writer or spoken word performer and provide them a quality experience. This, in turn, ensures your audience has an inspiring and memorable event.

## Selecting and Securing a Writer

- Where funds allow, consider pairing writers. Word on Tour demonstrated that audiences are hungry for events that are different from the standard author reading. It paired poets, novelists, non-fiction writers and performance-based authors in combinations that inspired the audiences with thought provoking exchanges.
- When considering which writers or performers would be suitable for your event, Literature Works' [Writers' Academy](#) is a good place to start. This is a showcase of writers who have achieved recognition and excellence in literature across the South West. It includes novelists, short story writers, poets and spoken word artists.
- Try following other libraries on social media and see who they have chosen for events. A strong network of libraries that offer opportunities to writers and host live literature is important.
- There are no right or wrong choices, as long as you match the writer to your audience through [targeted promotion](#). Hosting someone local tends to appeal to audiences - whether they're someone you know has worked well in the area, or whether you're trying for new and hard-to-reach audiences by showcasing new voices.
- If you are not sure how suitable the writer will be for your audience, then ask. Use a phone conversation as an opportunity to interview them and discuss their approach to events.
- When you contact your shortlist of writers, have a few event date options in mind.

## Engaging your writer

- In 2019, the standard appearance fee for writers is between £150 and £250 per event. Fair travel expenses should be in addition to this and should follow a policy.
- You will need a formal written agreement or contract, covering fee and expenses and setting out the expectations of both parties, including any resources that are needed and your cancellation policy. Requirements or restrictions, such as the making of recordings should be included in any formal agreement so each party is clear.
- Be sure to get a high definition digital image from the writer to use in your promotional material, along with some copy about them and their work. You might want to set a word limit for this.

## Author Care

- Assist the writer by outlining travel directions and local accommodation options if necessary. Clear communication and contact details are essential and important details, including a contact number, should be re-confirmed shortly ahead of the event.
- It's helpful to remember you are hosting the writer and just like any guest, they appreciate some warm hospitality. If your writer is hungry, late and not had a chance to draw breath before the event, this could come across to your audience. While most libraries won't be able to offer green room facilities, most writers will need a private place to freshen up before performing. Ensure you have refreshments available and have planned a meal into the author care arrangements. At the very least have the option of a sandwich available, as smaller towns can have very limited restaurant options by the time an evening event finishes.
- At the event ensure someone is familiar with the writers' work and can give them a worthy introduction. In the lead up, encourage reader groups to have focussed on the writer or peruse their work yourself.
- Consider photo opportunities and have your camera ready so you can use images to publicise your success. This can help attract an audience for your next event. Some writers will not allow their events to be recorded and some prefer photographs to be taken at the end of an event. Do tell the writer in advance if media have been invited and are attending. Some audience members like to photograph and tweet live updates from high profile events, so explain any procedures to the audience in your introductory remarks.

## Books for Sale

- Most writers will expect to see their works for sale at the event. This is a great opportunity for book signing and mingling with the audience. At least 3 weeks prior to the event, ask your local bookseller if they stock the books required, to give them time to order them in. Invite them to sell the books on the night. If you do sell books on the night, ensure you advertise this fact otherwise people come to events without money.
- If you can't get a book seller in, then invite the writers to bring their own books to sign and sell. Performance poets will often have stock of their own books to bring in for sale. Also have extra publications in stock to make a prominent display.