

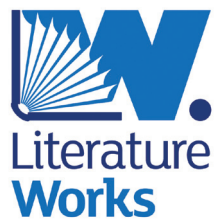
An illustration of a woman with dark hair, wearing an orange top, standing in a library. She is holding an open red book and looking at it. A microphone on a stand is positioned in front of her. The library has bookshelves filled with books, two hanging lamps, and several other people sitting and reading. A small table with a wine glass and a potted plant is also visible.

Literature Works presents

Word on Tour

Creating atmosphere

Giving audiences a great experience
they want to come back to



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Creating atmosphere,

Giving audiences a great experience they want to come back to'

Word on Tour found each library venue to be so unique, with interesting spaces and varying degrees of resource to host live literature events. Whether libraries were large or small, Word on Tour introduced a few extra elements aimed at creating a warm convivial atmosphere that gave audiences a feeling of a real night out. Library staff were delighted with how their spaces were transformed and were keen to recreate the atmosphere at future events. Here are Word on Tour's tried and tested tips for getting the most out of your library venue.

"Great to see the different atmosphere that can be created in our library space, which I feel I can create for future events." - Library Manager, Word on Tour

Timing of Events

- Word of Tour events were mostly in the evening, deliberately aiming to create a different atmosphere, more akin to a night out. This required confident promotion and signage. Winter events, while challenging, can still be a great success, so don't be limited to summer months, unless your heating is not up to the job!
- Before you book the date, check what else is on in the local area such as theatre events. Other national events like football finals can have an impact, so think laterally about what else will compete with your audience segment's attention.

Sound and lighting

- Try stringing up some fairy lights to dress the stage area and bring in a few lamps for ambient lighting to change the feel of the room. Ideally turn any main overhead lights off in the stage area, with some side lights remaining on, for safety.
- If you have an audience of 30 or more, or a larger space you may want to consider a PA system. If you don't have access to one, try approaching another library for a loan. They are also available for hire. This is important, particularly as books on the shelves can quieten sound. Word on Tour tried to sit anyone who found it more difficult to hear in the front row.

Décor for stage area

- You'll need a comfy chair for the writer and small low table, glass and a jug of water. A vase of flowers is a nice touch. Consider the location of power sockets for ease of lighting and sound.
- A pleasant event backdrop can be created by projecting an image onto a screen or blank wall. Check with your writer to see if they wish to include any slides as part of their performance. You'll need projection equipment for this and a screen. It can take a good 1.5 hours to set the event up, so allocate plenty of time and check the equipment works beforehand.
- Music creates atmosphere, so put together a playlist of appealing music to play in the background during the introduction, interval and event end.



Seating

- When laying out seating, be aware of sight lines and try to alternate rows of seats so the audience gets a better view. Try to ensure there are no 'bad seats' behind a pillar, particularly if you have a paying audience.
- Maximise your space well and be resourceful if you need more chairs. Some libraries partnering with Word on Tour borrowed chairs – and even more cups and saucers – from helpful organisations in their community. For items you don't own, use your networks!
- Consider placing a short feedback form or local postcard on each chair with a pen, to gain evaluative feedback. Word on Tour found audiences were very responsive to answering questions this way. As well as asking audiences to rate your event out of 5 stars, you could ask if they are new to your library and invite suggestions for future events and improvements.

Refreshments

- Drink and nibbles are an important part of the event. Tea, coffee and biscuits work well during daytime events. Word on Tour found that wine and nibbles were very welcomed at evening events, giving people the chance to socialise during the interval and feel like they were having a 'night out'. Consider advertising this as included in any ticket price. Some libraries will have a strict no alcohol policy. Word on Tour found that these libraries served quality soft drinks in stemmed glasses and this went down well. You'll need to think about alcohol licensing and applying for a Temporary Event Notice, [information on this can be found here](#).
- If you are not covering refreshment costs in your ticket price, have a donation tin placed prominently. You'll likely need at least two volunteers or staff to set up and serve refreshments; queuing in the interval takes time away from mingling with the community.

A welcoming team

- Enthusiasm from staff goes a long way towards making people feel at ease. Have someone greet people as they enter the library, in addition to plenty of obvious event signage outside. Include a sign for the toilet, too. You'll need someone else to sell or collect tickets, so possibly a cash float. A third staff member would be hosting the writer during this time.
- The numbers of staff and volunteers you will need depends on the size of your event, but we suggest a minimum of three, and you'll need to look at whether extra staff hours should be costed in to your budget.