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Title

Editorial

Permalink

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Journal

Library Hi Tech News, 18(10)

ISSN

7419058

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Publication Date

2001-10-01

DOI

10.1108/lhtn.2001.23918jaa.001

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Peer reviewed

Editorial

Julia Gelfand, Colby Riggs, Philip Calvert, (2001) "Editorial", Library Hi Tech News, Vol. 18 Issue: 10.

One of this journal's co-editors was recently involved in organising a major conference for school libraries. The experience was, for the most part, instructive and worthwhile, and without doubt the company of colleagues that one wouldn't otherwise have met was good return on the time and energy that had to be expended. The conference, fortunately, was a great success in all aspects. The keynote speakers gave delegates much food for thought, speakers at the parallel sessions likewise, and the conference environment, the dinner and the socialising were all big hits with the delegates. The conference even produced a budget surplus so some money can be returned to institutions and associations that offered seeding funds. This happy situation, though, could not possibly have come about without the very generous support of a few institutions and companies, and that is something we all need to remember. There are few, if any, conferences organised by library associations that could survive without sponsorship and trade exhibitors. It is fair to ask what the sponsors and exhibitors expect in return, and how far our conferences go to delivering on those expectations. Most companies have long given up the hope of doing enough business at a conference to even cover expenses, let alone provide new revenue. What they want, in a word, is exposure. They want their company name to be seen and heard as often as possible in the context of an event that will be fondly remembered by most delegates, who are or should be potential customers. So, in addition, to putting the morning coffee scrimmage in the trade exhibition area, what else can conference organisers do to help those who help us? Regular acknowledgements by those who have to do the daily housekeeping announcements, for a start. It costs nothing to mention selected sponsors and exhibitors each morning and encourage delegates to visit the stands. Projecting the company logos on a screen at the back of the stage is another good way of giving very cheap exposure to sponsors, and if a speaker has been specifically sponsored by one organisation, then go the whole hog and ask someone from that company to give the introduction. In short, let's give them something back for all that they give to us. If we don't, then they might not be around the next time we go out with a begging bowl.

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