Bologna Book Fair: send me your Q's

by Chazda Albright -

http://greatstorybook.com/bologna-book-fair-send-qs/

The Bologna Book Fair is coming in 10 days! TEN! This is the largest children's book event in the world and I am jumping with anticipation.

I know that a lot of you would love to be going with me this year and can't, so here's what we'll do: Send me your questions, and I'll find out the answers for you.

Are there certain questions you'd love to ask an editor or agent but haven't been able to yet because asking in an email would be inappropriate? Send me your inappropriate questions! I'll needle the answer from someone on your anonymous behalf (only *while* at The Bologna Children's Book Fair - so don't dilly-dally with sending me your questions!) .

After what I've been told and what I've read about the Bologna Book Fair (the largest children's book event in the world), I expect it to be quite different from the Frankfurter Buchmesse (the largest book event in the world).

(Check this *series*: Buchmesse Experience 2015 for details.)

The Buchmesse is always an incredible event, but it isn't really for authors. Not really. Primarily, it's for editors, agents, distributors and printing companies. But if you want to know what's happening in the publishing industry, there's no better place to find out all the ins and outs, and the ups and downs.

There are certain industry standards that stick and are traditional, but there are fluctuations year to year. The Buchmesse is where you can learn a lot about all that, very quickly.

For that reason, I would recommend to any author that they go – but to go with certain expectations. Agents aren't looking for new manuscripts there. They're selling. Illustrators are invited to show their portfolios, however. There's an Illustrator's Corner, and agents and editors looking for talent are receptive to that.

What I expect to be *different* at The Bologna Book Fair:

Kids or No Kids.

The Buchmesse allows children, and the Bologna Children's Book Fair does not.

School programs are organized in cooperation with the Buchmesse, so classes are brought in and toured to special events designed with kids in mind. It makes for an excellent Field Trip. This is the type of stuff I think is great.

I spontaneously spent a couple of hours with a classroom of kids as they played with 3D Printing programs and Lego Learning tools and other, amazing computer set-ups that make my laptop look like a wrench. Kids aged 11-14 got to play with this stuff all day, a special day closed to the regular public. It was neat.

BUT…

I've also seen people bring their babies in strollers - on days that are closed to the general public. I don't know how they get through the door. It's hard for *me* to get through! How is this kid in diapers doing it? OK, I only saw 3 babies amongst 10,000+ other people, but still. How?

Honestly, it's rather annoying - because as much as I love babies, I worked hard to get to the Buchmesse. Getting my ticket wasn't easy and every time I go, I'm checked by Security.

I don't really want to be distracted by an adorable baby when I'm trying to pitch a third manuscript to a fourth editor. It's difficult to keep everyone's interests straight and it's vital that I do so. A distraction means I might start pitching the wrong manuscript.

This actually happened to me once, where I totally dropped the ball and ended up pitching the one manuscript that I knew this one particular editor wouldn't want. I had ten minutes with her and blew it completely.

In fact, it was already over after 45 seconds, because once she heard stand-alone story, that was it. She was only interested in trilogies. (Not series, but trilogies specifically.) I knew this about her. I had done the research, but I just flopped. I was, in truth, exhausted and I just switched her around with someone else.

I have so much information I need to keep straight and I've worked so hard to get there, it does bug me that the kid in diapers is able to relax and be adorable without even trying. It's just there, reclining. I'm sweating.

The Bologna Book Fair website clearly states that no children are allowed into the fair, so I'm envisioning a baby-free zone. Part of me doubts this is really true, but we'll see. On the one hand, it's a shame that no kids are allowed into this fabulous bookland, but on the other - I'll be able to stay more focused. No adorable distractions.

Agents Open to Pitches – or not.

Agents at the Buchmesse are flatly uninterested in meeting with authors. No chance. They're there to sell the manuscripts they already represent.

I was able to speak with only one agent while at the Buchmesse. She asked for my business card and a mock-up, but she vanished, never responding to any of my correspondence.

It's my understanding – and I've heard this from many – that agents attending the Bologna Fair are looking for manuscripts. I'll have to see for myself, but I'm hopeful.

Editors Open to Pitches.

At the Buchmesse, this was a hit or miss. Two editors flatly refused to speak with me. Many editors were receptive to speaking with me about my work for a few minutes, and nearly all asked for my business card.

Of those editors I spoke with at the Buchmesse and followed-up with email, all kindly remembered me and responded to my correspondence. I was able to make some good contacts there and fond memories.

I've heard that the Bologna Fair is considerably chattier, that editors are very interested in speaking with authors – and for more than a simple pitch. If that's true, it should be very exciting and a lot of fun.

Focus on Kids Stories.

The Buchmesse has every kind of book you could ever imagine, every genre and every book type - from electronic to antiquarian. The Bologna Book Fair is just for kids' books. I can't wait to see what's there.

Send me your questions!

I'll get the answers.

Have *you* been to the Bologna Children's Book Fair? Write below and let me know - what was your experience like? Or, as ever, send me an email.

Keep creating, no matter what.

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