

2015 Lakefly Review

The Lakefly Writers Conference was held Friday, May 8 and Saturday, May 9, 2015, at the Oshkosh Convention Center. This year we collaborated with the Wisconsin Writers Association (WWA). They organized an Author Showcase book fair featuring state authors that was free and open to the public (as well as conference attendees). The event was held in a separate room at the Convention Center on Saturday, May 9th, and featured over 30 Wisconsin authors as well as other vendors.

The WWA indicated they would like to partner with us again next year, pending approval by their board this fall. Assuming approval, we will be working more closely with WWA to promote the Author Showcase locally, and to survey vendors at the end of the event regarding sales, connections made, etc.

Attendance highlights:

- There were a total of 74 paid registrants (up from 63 in 2014 and 56 in 2013).
- Three people attended from Iowa, two from Chicago, and one from Minneapolis.
- Twenty-one attendees reside in Oshkosh.
- Twenty-six people also attended the conference in 2014 or 2013; or both.
- The Best Western Premiere reported they rented a total of 39 hotel rooms (up from 28 rooms in 2014), including seven rooms on Saturday night.
- There were five walk-ins, up from two in 2014.

The conference opened at noon on Friday, May 8, and 68 attendees checked in that day, which tells us people find the conference valuable enough to take off work and/or spend the night. Programs were held Friday afternoon until 4 p.m. We reserved a room at Beckett's from 4 to 6 p.m. for speakers, volunteers and conference attendees without plans to enjoy dinner together (dutch treat). An evening awards ceremony was held Friday evening at the library (see Writing Contests below).

Professional comedian Carl Strong warmed up the audience on Saturday morning and set the tone for a day of learning, exchanging ideas and meeting new people. Other speakers that went over particularly well include 2015 Wisconsin Poet Laureate Kimberly Blaeser, Det. Jeremy Wilson from the Oshkosh Police Department, Milwaukee copyright/publishing attorney Ellen Kozak, fantasy author Scott Lynch, and keynote speaker Michael Perry.

Using surveys submitted from the 2014 conference, we implemented some changes in 2015, including adding an autograph session and using classroom-style seating (as opposed to

auditorium-style). We addition, we booked several speakers that were recommended to us by attendees.

Writing Contests

The Lakefly Planning Committee decided to award winners of the writing contests at a separate ceremony Friday evening under the dome of the Oshkosh Public Library. In previous years, the ceremony was held during the Saturday luncheon at the Convention Center and required winners and their guests to register for the conference.

Over 60 people attended the awards ceremony, including conference speakers and attendees, and family/friends of winners. Cash prize awards and refreshments for the event were generously provided by the Friends of the Library. This event was a huge success; it provided a social event for conference attendees staying overnight, brought people to the library, and more properly recognized the contest winners. As an aside, one of the contest winners is affiliated with the Wisconsin Writers Council and she did a nice write-up after the conference for their e-newsletter.

In all, Lakefly received 97 contest entries from 77 contestants, including 15 students ranging in age from 11 to 17. Because the students were competing against adults with more education/experience in writing, the Contest Committee decided that next year they will include a contest category for writers age 17 or younger.

Promotions

Because we've not had much luck with traditional promotion methods, this year we had three digital billboards along Highway 41 for a one-week period in April. In addition, we concentrated heavily on use of social media, as well emailing previous attendees. As in previous years, we sent out press releases to major Wisconsin newspapers, added our event to local and state-wide events calendars, and contacted known writers clubs through-out the state. We were especially pleased to see the national magazine *The Writer* included our event in their monthly listings of upcoming conferences.

In 2014, the Oshkosh Public Library granted a \$120 trust fund request to train two members of the Oshkosh Area Writers Club (OAWC) on how to use Oshkosh Community Media Services' video and editing equipment for the purpose of starting a local television show featuring area writers. To that end, members of the OAWC taped about a half dozen interviews with speakers and attendees at the conference. The tapes are currently being editing for broadcast this fall, and will also be used to promote the 2016 Lakefly Conference.

Other

The Lakefly Planning Committee expanded this year and currently includes myself, a WWA board member, four members of the Oshkosh Area Writers Club, and three community

members, including the director of the Winneconne Public Library, a former UW-O professor, and a retired librarian.

In the absence of a local bookseller, the UW-Oshkosh bookstore sold books for us this year and expressed interest in doing so again in 2016.

One item the committee expressed concern over was the Lakefly website. I met with a web design company, Candeo, in Oshkosh. They presented numerous suggestions for improving the website, especially in the area of html coding which is picked up search engines and would draw more people to our website. The cost to revamp the website was \$2000 and the committee felt if we were going to ask the Library for a trust fund, they preferred to ask for funds to rent a billboard.

Regarding funding, we approached several area banks to ask if they would sponsor the conference refreshment breaks but no one responded. In addition, we investigated grant possibilities but all the grants we found required events to be free/open to the public, which makes Lakefly ineligible. That said, it's our goal to continue to seek funding from other sources besides the Library and the Friends of the Library; and/or to find community collaborators to help offset expenses.

Financial Report

Revenue:

\$1000	Friends of the Library for writing contest cash prizes
\$2000	Friends of the Library for speaker/photographer stipends
\$250	Friends of the Library for door prizes
\$ 45	Friends of the Library (refreshments for contest awards ceremony)
\$255	WWA (reimbursement for use of Author Showcase room at Convention Center)
\$2965	Conference Registration Fees
\$5381	OPL Trust Funds for Library Excellence: Development and Programming funds
\$1663	OPL Promotional Materials budget line for Printing
Total = \$13,559	

Expenses

\$900	Writing contest prize money
\$3400	Speaker/photographer stipends
\$250	Door prizes
\$ 45	Refreshments for awards ceremony
\$3707	Convention Center – rental fee, food costs (includes space rented by WWA, formal lunch on Saturday)

\$1274	Hotel expenses for speakers
\$1663	Printing by Winnefox Library System
\$2200	Billboard
\$120	Online reservation software

Total = \$13,559

Respectfully submitted by Ruth Percey, Head of First Floor Public Services