

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### BOOKSELLING

#### Reasons for Selling

Normally speaking, the difference between a book exhibition and a book fair is that the former aims to show what books are available and the latter additionally sells the books - or at least takes orders for them. Frankfurt has a book fair; so does Delhi; so does Singapore. It is true that these are huge events, but there can be a selling point at any book exhibition.

The main reason for having a selling point is not just to boost the income of the exhibition but to enable any visitor who sees an interesting book to buy it before his interest lapses. Even strong impulses are lost if people have to leave the exhibition and go in search of a bookshop in order to buy a book they have seen. So if you believe that it is important to catch the impulse of the moment, look into the possibility of selling books on the spot.

#### A Bookshop at the Exhibition

This can be organised in a number of different ways. The exhibition committee can set up a stall to sell quantities of the books on display (and maybe even the display books themselves on the last afternoon). This will require getting stock, preferably on sale or return, from publishers or a wholesaler or a bookseller. In the first two cases the chances are that the exhibition will get the same discount as is granted to the retail trade. This in turn means that a successful exhibition bookshop

can be quite an income earner. But if a bookseller supplies the stock, he will be able to allow the organisers only a portion of the discount he has himself received from publishers. This is unlikely to exceed 10%.

### Watching the Cash

Whenever possible some form of cash register should be used when selling. If you are unable to borrow one, a metal cash box will do, though this is more vulnerable to raid and theft. A record should also be kept of sales made. The simplest way is to use A4 sheets divided into two columns, one for the title of every book sold and the other for the money received. Totalling up the latter at the end of each day should give a sum of money exactly equal to the cash in hand.

For the cash register or box, a "float" will be needed each day so that change can be given to the first buyers. A system will also have to be worked out so that if, during the day, there is a change of sales persons, a check can be made so as to make sure that the right amount of cash is handed over from one person to the other.

### A Bookseller at the Exhibition

An alternative to obtaining the books from a bookseller is to get the bookseller to set up and run the selling point himself. The exhibition committee allocates him the space for a stall free of charge, preferably in a prominent place near the exit door, leaving him to provide stock, staff and know-how. In such cases the bookseller generally allows the exhibition a percentage of his profit - possibly as much as 50% of it. The great advantage to the exhibition organisers is that they do not have to worry about stocking the stall or looking after it. The bookseller can bring in extra stock daily as it is needed. Moreover he takes the whole risk. This being so, he is only likely to agree to running the staff if he foresees a substantial volume of trade. Here records of past experience can be useful.