Register Your Book Club
The monthly newsletter

Book Expo America 2012

Last month I had the distinct pleasure of attending my very first Book Expo America. Held at the Jacob Javits Convention Center, Book Expo is the largest book industry event in North America and one of the largest gatherings of English language publishers in the world. It was an impressive event to say the least. For three days in June, more than 1,000 vendors including such notable publishing houses as Random House, Penguin, Harper Collins & Macmillan invaded 3 levels of more than 760,000 sq. ft. of convention floor space. Those naysayers who believe the printed book is in danger of becoming obsolete should have witnessed the throngs of eager attendees patiently waiting in line to receive free autographed copies of books by such authors as Ian McEwan, Janice Maynard, Alan Furst, Junot Díaz, Amor Towles, Chris Bohjalian and Brenda Jackson just to name a few. As much as I love my e-reader, to my knowledge you can’t get an e-book signed by your favorite author (although, I am sure someone will create an App for that...hmmm).

The highlight of my visit to Book Expo America was listening to one of my favorite authors, Barbara Kingsolver (“The Poisonwood Bible”, “Animal, Vegetable, Miracle”), announce the 2012 winner of the Pen/Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction. Established in 2000 by Barbara Kingsolver, the Bellwether Prize was created to promote fiction that addresses issues of social justice and the impact of culture and politics on human relations. A $25,000 prize and a two year publishing contract with Algonquin Books are awarded biennially to an author for a previously unpublished novel. Ms. Kingsolver chose the amount of $25,000 because that was the amount of her first book advance which allowed her to quit her day job and concentrate full-time on writing. Past winners include Hillary Jordan (2006 winner for Mudbound) and Heidi Durrow (2008 winner for The Girl Who Fell From the Sky). As an added bonus, both Hillary Jordan and Heidi Durrow spoke as well. This year’s recipient of the Penn/Bellwether Prize is Susan Nussbaum for her manuscript Good Kings, Bad Kings which will be published in the spring of 2013.

As the day came to a close, I gathered my rolling suitcase filled with a treasure trove of books of all shapes, sizes and genres and started my journey back to Penn Station. I thoroughly enjoyed Book Expo America 2012 with one exception: I could have used a bigger suitcase.

-Lisa Jones, Readers’ Services Librarian
Book Club in a Bag Titles You Might Have Missed....

As librarians, we’ve noticed that many book clubs only want to read the newest and hottest book club titles; however, this means groups might be missing out on some fantastic reads just because they may be a few years old. Listed to the right are some of my favorite book club titles that we have available as Book Club in a Bag sets. I hope your group takes advantage of these wonderful discussion titles.

Someone Knows My Name by Lawrence Hill
“Kidnapped as a child from Africa, Aminata Diallo is enslaved in South Carolina but escapes during the chaos of the Revolutionary War. In Manhattan she becomes a scribe for the British, recording the names of blacks who have served the King and earned freedom in Nova Scotia…”

Those Who Save Us by Jenna Blum
“A professor of German history begins a long journey back into a past she has pushed aside, returning to Germany to reopen the wounds of her own life—as well as that of her mother—as a child living in Nazi Germany.”

The Invisible Wall by Harry Bernstein
“In a memoir set on the eve of World War I, the author describes growing up in a working-class town in northern England, where Jews and Christians were strictly divided, and how his sister's love for a Christian boy broke down the invisible social barrier.”

Mudbound by Hillary Jordan
“In 1946, Laura McAllan tries to adjust after moving with her husband and two children to an isolated cotton farm in the Mississippi Delta.”

A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini
“Two women born a generation apart witness the destruction of their home and family in war-torn Kabul, losses incurred over the course of thirty years that test the limits of their strength and courage.”

The Thirteenth Tale by Diane Setterfield
“Having spent sixty years creating a series of alternate identities for herself, enigmatic Vida Winter pens a painful letter to young Margaret Lea when the latter begs her to disclose the truth about her secretive birth.” (All descriptions from the publishers)

- Jackie Ranaldo, Head of Readers’ Services

The oldest books are still only just out to those who have not read them.
- Samuel Butler

New to Book Club in a Bag

State of Wonder by Ann Patchett has been added to our collection of Book Club in a Bag titles. This is the second book in our collection by Ms. Patchett. The first book, Bel Canto has been a very popular title with our patrons. State of Wonder was our June monthly book club choice; which was very well attended.

In State of Wonder, “Dr. Marina Singh embarks upon an uncertain odyssey into the insect-infested Amazon, she will be forced to surrender herself to the lush but forbidding world that awaits within the jungle. Charged with finding her former mentor Dr. Annick Swenson, a researcher who has disappeared while working on a valuable new drug, she will have to confront her own memories of tragedy and sacrifice as she journeys into the unforgiving heart of darkness. Stirring and luminous, State of Wonder is a world unto itself, where unlikely beauty stands beside unimaginable loss beneath the rain forest's jeweled canopy.” (from the publisher)

Please contact Readers’ Services, 921-7161, ext 241 to reserve these books for your Book Club.

-Evelyn Hershkowitz, Readers’ Services Librarian