2017 PNBA Education Day Wrap-Up
Submitted by Sam Kaas (Third Place Books), Education Committee Chair
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What Worked and What Didn't at the 2017 PNBA Trade Show

What Worked:

– **Track Elimination Fostered More Overlap and Connections**

While much of the data on this is purely anecdotal, since without tracks it's much more challenging to see who went where, but members of the Education Committee were approached throughout the tradeshow by attendees who were happy with this model. While we understand that the elimination of tracks presents some challenges for room planning and advance work at the hotel, we believe that the benefits are significant.

– **Librarian Content**

While 2017's panel from LibraryReads was partially a happy accident, it was a popular and informative session, and one that attendees responded very positively too. We'd love to see more content from librarians, and perhaps educators and other bookseller-adjacent groups, at the 2018 show.

– **Single First-Timer Session**

This worked really well – it filled the room, wheras, according to reports from past years, attendance at the author/pub and librarian first-timer sessions was relatively low. I believe it also helped foster connections between attendees early on in the day. In 2018, I would love to identify some "mentors" to attend the first-timer session(s), and who can then be available for questions and guidance throughout the weekend.

What Needs Improvement:

– **Earlier Call For Proposals**

It looks like the first call for education session proposals did not go out until mid-April last year. The Education Committee would like to push the first calls for proposals up, preferably to early-mid March 2018. This will give us plenty of time to receive proposals by late May (Maybe a May 23rd deadline) so that the committee can discuss and approve proposals in June and early July, call for final production materials by late July, and have some wiggle room to get program materials to Larry and Greg by late August.

Recommended Solution: Send out first call for Education Proposals on or around March 10th, 2018, and assign a deadline of on or around May 23rd for submissions.

– Communication About Room Needs

Some of this was simply slow or incomplete communication on my part (can you believe they let me run events, people?), and some of it just the reality of trying something new – there were a few instances of crossed wires (needing wi-fi in rooms, room size to crowd size, transition times, room configuration) in the course of advance work at the venue.

Recommended Solution: I anticipate that many of these problems won't repeat themselves if we choose to pursue a similar format next fall, since we've now ironed out a few of the kinks. However, the committee should require more specific AV and configuration information earlier, so that this can be passed along to Larry in lieu of the consistency tracking provided.

– Defining the "Fifth Period"

We had a lot of very positive comments about the "Fifth Period" event this year – attendees seemed to appreciate the ~~free beer~~ break between education sessions and the membership meeting, and it may be that some of them were more likely to attend the membership meeting because they were already there for "Fifth Period." However, attendees weren't entirely certain what to do with this event, or what separated it from other similar events throughout the tradeshow. If PNBA chooses to pursue this model for the show again, it would be beneficial to add more direction to the event.

Recommended Solution: The Committee really liked the idea of having a culminating keynote at the end of the day. While that didn't work out in 2017 (and Brian *did* make a valiant effort), we would be interested in pursuing it again for 2018, perhaps with more lead time.

– Survey or Feedback System

We don't *really* have one right now. In past years, we've sent out an email survey, but historically, my understanding is that not a lot of responses have come back (only a dozen or so last year, I think). A consistent attendee survey system will help us tweak the programming much more efficiently in response to the actual needs of PNBA attendees.

Recommended Solution: I would personally be interested in trying a Winter Institute-style session-by-session feedback system; either with actual paper forms, on an app, or both. Capturing fresh impressions from each session in real time is going to give us much more accurate feedback about the individual sessions (instead of making people remember what they liked and didn't later on), and having the feedback forms pushed by the panelists in each session will encourage more people to actually respond. With PNBA's approval, I would be happy to talk to ABA about adapting their feedback form to our use.