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## School Visits: A Librarian's Perspective

*Pascale Duguay* | [2019-01-11](#)

My high school usually welcomes two authors every year. They come at the request of the language departments. Everything is planned between the teachers and the authors, and I have nothing to do except making sure the library is available on the scheduled dates – at least in theory.

Surprises always pop up minutes before the presentation is due to start. One author might suddenly request a white board and markers, another a projector, sometimes all three. I've learned to be ready for anything, but what if I – superior librarian that I am – had not been there to save the day? In all instances, these near setbacks could easily have been avoided with simple communication.

Here's a little insider tip: Schools are not the most proficient at passing along information. By knowing this fact alone, you'll be one step ahead of the game next time you're invited to give a presentation. Although my school has attempted to correct this problem, some things still manage to catch me unawares. Fortunately, there are several things you can do to avoid running into this situation.



First, find out where your presentation will take place – library, classroom, auditorium, gym? If your presentation will be held in the library, ask for the name of the librarian. Then tell her what you'll need ahead of time: white board, screen and projector, audio, etc. Do you want the chairs set up in a semicircle facing you? If it's a hands-on workshop, will the participants need tables to work on? Don't skip this step even if the teacher or whichever staff member you've been communicating with knows all the details. Although the information might reach the librarian, it could do so at too short notice to do much good.

Here's another insider tip: Schools can take an amazingly long time to get stuff done. This is due in large part because most things need the approval of several people or committees before they can get under way. And as all these dedicated people have a lot on their plate, the process is slowed even more. So make sure you start the ball rolling way ahead of your scheduled visit.

If your presentation is to take place in another part of the school, ask whether the school has a library and who is responsible for purchasing books. Get in touch and say hello. Why? Simply because the library staff may not be aware of your coming at all! If your presentation catches the students' interest, they'll likely ask the librarian to order your books. Make it easy for her. Send her a list of your published titles along with the age group and reading level of each. None of the presenters have done this for me yet, which is a huge oversight. Librarians are busy people. Don't assume they have nothing better to do than look you up, or that they'll remember to do so once the dust has settled and you're long gone. At my school, I oversee every aspect of the library including selecting and buying the books that end up on the shelves. Like most school libraries, my budget is modest so be aware that I'm the one you need to impress if your books are to make it on my limited to-buy list.

Finally, to generate extra publicity and sales, give the librarian lots of bookmarks. Kids love them and my supplies always need replenishing. It's a great way to reach out to readers, no matter what they happen to be reading as well as making a lasting impression both on the students and librarian!

BIO: Pascale Duguay is a freelance writer, translator (French/English), and high school librarian. She resides in the lively bilingual community of the Quebec Eastern Townships.

Pop in for a visit at [pascaleduguay.com](http://pascaleduguay.com).

