

Guidelines for setting up and running a Urantia Book outreach booth

In considering hosting a booth at a public event such as an Expo, there are many things to keep in mind. First is that it is a commitment of time and resources and that wise planning is required to make the best use of these human and financial resources. Secondly, this work is a service to humanity and we will serve our fellows best when we take the time to prepare ourselves. This guide is intended to help make your outreach the best of experiences. As it is a work in progress, feel free to add your thoughts for its improvement.

NOTES RELATED TO SPONSORING A BOOTH AT AN EXPO or OTHER VENUE

Advance Planning

The first consideration when you wish to do a booth is if you have the resources to do the undertaking, both financial and manpower. A small event could be managed by one person per shift but larger expo's need two or three people manning the booth at all times.

Booth fees at events can vary from free to over five hundred dollars. Contact the Fellowship for financial help paying for the booth and getting supplies. While the Fellowship can possibly cover the cost of the booth, local reader groups are encouraged to raise some of the funds to help defray the cost so the Fellowship can afford to do more booths across the country. Ask around, as there may also be funds available from local UAI chapters, societies or private contributors.

Preparation

Now that you have your booth scheduled, let's look at the steps to get prepared. Here is a checklist of things to consider.

- 1- Schedule speaking - After the booth rental is paid, make sure you have requested a speaking spot if they are offered. They are usually included in the booth fee but you need to request a speaking spot to be on the schedule.
- 2- Banner - You will need a banner or backdrop to inform attendees what the booth is. It should be a well designed display that is inviting and non offensive to anyone. Check with the Outreach Committee to see what is available to be sent. Banner designs can also be sent electronically so you can go to your local sign maker to have your own banner printed. (Usually for about \$60)
- 3- Handouts and literature – You will wish to have some items to hand out. There are some brochures and CD's available as give-aways. You will also want to have a handout that lists local activities and contact information. It is also good to have a follow up event(s) that you can invite people to. This might be a new readers introduction or a social with local readers or a Study Group.
- 4- Books to sell – You will need books to sell. Books are available from the Fellowship or the Foundation. We have found it works well to sell the books for \$10. This requires subsidizing the cost. The Fellowship can help in this matter and it is good to get some volunteers to subsidize some books as a gift to the new readers you will be introducing to the book. At a small local event you may sell 5 or 10 books. At a large expo that is staffed with experienced workers, you can sell upwards of 50.
- 5 – Volunteers – It is important to include local readers for working at the booth as it is a valuable experience not unlike what the Master asked his followers to do when he walked the earth. Send an e-mail out and make some calls to get a team scheduled. Make a simple chart that has time slots in 2 or 3 hour intervals. Be aware of having too many people in the booth at one time. This will intimidate some folks who might have stopped otherwise.
- 6 – Training – Once your crew is established, ask them to attend a pre-event meeting to go over some guidelines for working at the booth. If you have a seasoned crew from past years, you may wish to have

coffee with the new recruits to go over a few things. In the event that you have mostly new people, set up a time and go over the following list with them:

- a) **SET UP** Select a set up team that will arrive with materials an hour before the event starts to set up tables, banner and materials. Make sure someone is in charge of having all items needed at the booth at the designated time. A tear down team is also needed.
- b) **BOOTH DISPLAY** Keep the booth attractive and neat at all times. The materials on the table should be neatly arranged for ease of use by passers-by. Put the literature you want them to take first closest to where they will stop. Put specialized information farther back or under the table to bring out when needed. There will often be two or three parties at the table so have at least two sets of literature so it can be reached from any point. Books should be stacked a few high at the ends and middle of the table so one can be accessed by anyone stepping up to the table. I suggest not having them open as it doesn't mean anything to a non-reader. If they show interest we can open the book to a section they may have an interest in. The table cloth should be a neutral color and not distract from the literature on the table and be large enough to cover the front of the table so the materials stored underneath are not visible. A small vase of flowers can make the booth more attractive as well.
- c) **ACCOUNTING** Someone needs to track both the books and the money. Be sure to do a daily inventory so you know how many books were sold and if the money and the book count matches. If you are selling multiple items from different vendors, it is easier to have multiple envelopes that are kept under the table adjacent to the items for sale. A final accounting at the end of the event is important and needs to be reported to any and all sponsors and contributors to the booth. Be sure to start the event with some change in the envelopes for breaking larger bills.
- d) **CONTACT SHEET** Be sure to have a couple of clip boards with sign up sheets on them. Provide a line for name, address, e-mail, phone and interests. Also add some check boxes so they can check if they are interested in anything the local community might offer like study groups, mailings, events notifications, introduction to the UB, etc. It is easy to forget to ask folks to sign up so help each other remember to ask. It can be easier to use a sign in card so it can sit at the back of the table where it is easier to see and remember to use. Collected information will need to go to the Fellowship, Urantia Foundation, local UAI if they helped at booth, and local study groups and societies operating in the area.
- e) **INTERACTING WITH PUBLIC** This is the most important part and the whole reason we are there. I have seen every possible way of interacting. My least favorite is the booth helper that sits in the back of the booth politely waiting for some passerby to ask a question. This approach, while very non-threatening, is highly ineffective in introducing people to the UB. Visitors, not having a clue what the heck this big book is, will take a piece or two of literature with some intention to read it in the future. The reality is that most of the literature will wind up in the trash before it can be read. It turns out that people actually appreciate being addressed and spoken with, especially when they pick up that you are genuinely interested in their souls welfare. Most will intelligently interact with you once we initiate the conversation. The most crucial part of standing behind the table is to be attentive to every person walking by. I cringe when I see two readers chatting with each other while someone walks by glancing over our way then walking on. We **MUST** be more interested in their spiritual welfare than we are in catching up on each others lives. We must be ready to **SUDDENLY** interrupt our conversation to step forward and engage the passer by in a conversation. Often their glance only lasts a second or two and if we don't respond immediately, they move on. Bear in mind that an expo environment is a bit overwhelming and over stimulating. They get glassy eyed after passing fifty booths. I usually say something like "Are you familiar with the Urantia Book?" When they say no, I often ask about their

spiritual journey and what they are looking for. Their answer provides me materials to respond to rather than just shooting in the dark hoping something I say might interest them.

- f) **MOCK IT!** It is good to do a little practice with your group, especially if many are new to working at a booth. Take turns pretending to be visitors or workers. This builds a sense of self confidence. SEE Kens excellent notes on being at a booth below.
- g) **RELAX** Let us remember to not take ourselves too seriously. Do what is needed to prepare, then go and enjoy your time interacting with your brothers and sisters in the flesh. Don't forget to wink at their TA and Angels.

7 – **Staffing the booth.** Here are some general thoughts:

Wear appropriate clothing to be representative ambassadors for the Kingdom

Dress casual, clean and neat. Be moderate, modest, not gaudy; avoid clothing that would shift attention away from the message and toward your person.

Demonstrate regard for the superior quality of the good news that you are sharing

Convey intentionality and purposefulness; avoid clothing such as shorts, sweatpants, or t-shirts that make your participation at the event seem like an after-thought

Choose comfortable shoes for standing for the majority of your shift

Decide whether the booth staff will wear nametags

Plan for continuity during transition from shift to shift

Don't forget to bring a snack or bag lunch to refresh yourself

PRE-EVENT TRAINING - SOME GENERAL THEMES:

- 1) Demonstrate how to maintain an orderly booth, how to attractively position the literature, and how to display the book. Should one book be displayed open, and if so, to what Paper?
- 2) Emphasize how to distribute the attention given to attendees
 - a) When one booth staff person is talking with someone, don't interject or interrupt unless they indicate that they are floundering and need assistance.
 - b) Ideally maintain 2 or 3 staff persons at the booth; not just 1, not 4 or a crowd
- 3) Remind participants to focus attention on attendees
 - a) Greet passers-by, to draw them toward the booth
 - b) Converse with the attendees, don't talk at them, don't talk down to them
 - c) Establish and re-establish eye contact often, throughout the duration of the interaction
 - d) When 2 staff persons are talking with each other, interrupt yourselves immediately whenever someone approaches near the booth
- 4) Intentionally maintain a positive demeanor both at the booth and when walking around the event
- 5) Rehearse various scenarios and agree upon some generalized responses to the frequent initial questions:
 - a) What is this book about? Is this book Christian?
 - b) Who wrote this book? or, Who was the author of this book?
 - c) How were the Papers received? or, Was this book channeled?
 - d) How come I've never heard of this book before now?
- 6) While seeking unity of purpose, not uniformity of belief, nonetheless, are there some "hot button" issues that are appropriately "soft pedaled" in this setting?

How would you describe *The Urantia Book* teachings related to these often-mentioned topics?

 - a) Institutional religion vs. personal religious experience (personal spiritual experience)
 - b) Other celestial beings, visitations, extra-terrestrials, UFO's, crop circles, etc.
 - c) End-of-the-world predictions, 2012, planetary shifts, climate change, etc.
 - d) Over-population, eugenics, race, chosen people, etc.

- e) Meditation, healing energies, crystals, gadgets, etc.
- f) Astrology, Tarot cards, palm reading, numerology, mediums, psychics, etc.
- g) Gnostic Gospels, the Book of Enoch, other revelations, prophecies, messages, etc.
- H) Life after death, past lives, reincarnation, out-of-body experiences, etc.
- I) Miracles, magic, secrets, mysteries, mystics, etc.
- j) Ghosts, devils, demons, evil powers, etc.
- k) Angels, guardian angels, superhuman guidance or assistance, etc.
- l) The origins of reality, the Big Bang, creation, evolution, the missing link, etc.

Note: On a separate sheet, please list additional topics that come to your mind, and discuss them with your fellow trainees

7) Remember to stay on topic with the basic teachings of The Urantia Book

- a) Gently return the conversation to the book, even when attendee brings up other topics
- b) Refrain from promoting your personal beliefs where they differ from T.U.B. teachings
- c) Don't correct or debate the details with other booth staff in front of the attendees
- d) Limit the number of esoteric facts and figures that you mention from the book

This is not about proving your expertise, it's about sparking their interest and curiosity

Example: Which is better to say, "We are one of many inhabited planets in the universe."

-or- "We are planet 606 of 619 inhabited planets in the Satania System."

Example: Which is better to say, "Paradise is at the center of the universe."

-or- "Paradise is beyond time and has no position in space, and you can't see it because of the dark gravity bodies."

Note: Write down other examples and discuss them with your fellow trainees

To utilize the “Parable of the Sower” (P. 151:1) (p. 1688), I cannot seem to decide between two possible scenarios. Was there really a substantial plot of rich soil with only a few tiny weed sprouts and an occasional pebble? Or, was there comparably little truly-available, fertile soil due to the overwhelming number of fully-grown weeds (many other overtly-contradicting philosophies) and the vast number of formidable stones (those who had firmly set their mind against any other path than the one they were presently pursuing)? The good seeds we scattered often seemed to get swiftly “trodden underfoot” (quickly forgotten or summarily dismissed) in all of the commotion, as already saturated minds careened toward the next shiny thing to catch their attention.

Nonetheless, it was fun and educational to work with Thomas Orjala, and at his request I have written out some notes about planning for a booth and preparing the persons who might staff a booth in the future.

Your comments and feedback would be most appreciated. Please share a) your ideas about other types of settings where you think our collective efforts might be even more fruitful, and b) your additional ideas for the training session which could be applicable to any personal or group evangelizing endeavor.

Thanks again to one and all. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

signed/ Ken Keyser <OneLowInAuthority@gmail.com>

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Pre-Event Training (continued)

Practice JESUS' TEACHING METHODS, make an effort to employ them gracefully.

A few are excerpted here, can you find other descriptions to share with your fellow trainees?

12) Never once did he attack their errors or even mention the flaws in their teachings. In each case he would select the truth in what they taught and then proceed so to embellish and illuminate this truth in their minds that in a very short time this enhancement of the truth effectively crowded out the associated error; ... (P. 132:0.4) (p. 1456.0)

13) Jesus' usual technique of social contact was to draw people out and into talking with him by asking them questions. The interview would usually begin by his asking them questions and end by their asking him questions. ... And invariably would he tell these distressed mortals about the love of God and impart the information, by various and sundry methods, that they were the children of this loving Father in heaven. (P. 132:4.2) (p. 1460.7)

14) They all discovered the great value of direct and personal contact with men. (P. 138:2.1) (p. 1539.4)

15) He was a positive teacher of true virtue. He studiously avoided the negative method of imparting instruction; he refused to advertise evil. (P. 140:8.21) (p. 1582.3)

16) "... [R]efrain from all efforts to take something out of the hearts of those who seek salvation? ... [L]abor only to put something into these hungry souls? Lead men into the kingdom, and the great and living truths of the kingdom will presently drive out all serious error. ..." (P. 141:6.2) (P. 1592.4)

17) Do not strive with men – always be patient. (P. 141:6.4) (p. 1593.0)

18) The teachers of the religion of Jesus should approach other religions with the recognition of the truths which are held in common (many of which come directly or indirectly from Jesus' message) while they refrain from placing so much emphasis on the differences. (P. 149:2.5) (p. 1670.6)

19) Jesus taught the appeal to the emotions as the technique of arresting and focusing the intellectual attention. He designated the mind thus aroused and quickened as the gateway to the soul, where there resides that spiritual nature of man which must recognize truth and respond to the spiritual appeal of the gospel in order to afford the permanent results of true character transformations. (P. 152:6.4) (p. 1705.4)

20) Always respect the personality of man. Never should a righteous cause be promoted by force; spiritual victories can be won only by spiritual power. (P. 159:3.2) (p. 1765.4)

21) Pentecost, with its spiritual endowment, was designed forever to loose the religion of the Master from all dependence upon physical force; the teachers of this new religion are now equipped with spiritual weapons. They are to go out to conquer the world with unfailing forgiveness, matchless good will, and abounding love. (P. 194:3.11) (p. 2064.3)

