



**LET'S TALK  
ABOUT IT**

**BOOK DISCUSSION SERIES  
AT YOUR LIBRARY**

# Library Handbook

Last Updated – August 2023

For More Information:

Visit our website at: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/ltai/>

Or reach out to the program coordinator:

LeAnn Gelskey  
(208) 639-4148

[LeAnn.Gelskey@libraries.idaho.gov](mailto:LeAnn.Gelskey@libraries.idaho.gov)



## Table of Contents

Handy links for Libraries: .....	2
Program Timeline.....	2
PR Materials & Other Resources.....	3
Library Reporting Requirements.....	4
Receiving & Returning Program Materials and Books.....	4
Managing and Tracking Books .....	4
Program Participants & Attendance .....	5
Venue, Refreshments, Staff/Volunteers.....	5
Working with Scholars .....	6
Logistics and Travel.....	6
Cancellations & Rescheduling.....	6
Additional Tips and Information .....	7
Incorporate the Theme .....	7
Plan for the Unexpected.....	7

## Handy links for Libraries:

- LTAI Home Page: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/ltai/>
- Librarian Resources: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/ltai/ltai-librarian-resources/>
- Theme Content: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/ltai/themes-books/>

## Program Timeline

- **Prior to program launch:** In an ideal world, the following steps will take place well in advance of the program launch each year:
  - ICfL releases the program application and libraries apply to participate. ICfL notifies libraries of their selection status.
  - Selected libraries choose their theme, books, and preferred session dates. ICfL compiles the master schedule using this information.
  - ICfL sends the session schedule to the roster of program scholars. Scholars sign up for sessions depending on their areas of interest, location, and availability.
  - ICfL finalizes scholar assignments and sends libraries their confirmed roster of scholars, along with scholar contact information.
  - ICfL invoices library for their match fee.
- **6 weeks before first session:** ICfL mails library its book sets and posters (see below for more details). We encourage library staff to read each LTAI title that is being discussed at their library.

- **4-6 weeks before first session:** Start program promotion, community outreach, and participant recruitment. Make sure to factor in whatever additional time participants will need in order to check out and read their book prior to the first session and plan your outreach accordingly.
- **4 weeks prior to first/each session:** Contact the assigned session scholar to confirm their participation and finalize logistics for their session. If you have trouble reaching the scholar or getting a response, please contact the ICfL. Things to discuss with the scholar:
  - Date, time, location, directions, accommodations (if needed)
  - Venue information and technology needs
  - Anticipated attendance, expectations, tips for working with your patrons
- **2-4 weeks prior to first/each session:** Distribute books and program materials to participants. We suggest 4 weeks ahead of the discussion date, but no less than 2 weeks, so participants have time to read the book (see below for more details).
- **Week of first/each session:** Check venue, procure refreshments (if applicable), print handouts (if applicable), send reminder to participants (if applicable). If you need to collect books the evening of the discussion, remind participants to bring their books with them.
- **At each session**
  - Introduce Scholar, thank sponsors (ICfL, Humanities Council, Institute of Museum & Library Science, local partners)
  - Scholar will provide a brief presentation/opening remarks about the book, then move into facilitating open discussion.
  - Library staff should track attendance and keep notes on anything that went well, could be improved, etc.
  - At end of session, library staff or scholar distribute and collect participant feedback forms. File these somewhere secure until they can be mailed back to ICfL.
  - Collect books from patrons at the close of the discussion and return to ICfL promptly.
- **After each/last program session:** Libraries return books and feedback forms to the ICfL after each session. When the full program is completed and all discussion sessions are done, ensure that any remaining books have been collected from patrons. Any books not received by May 1 will be considered lost and the library will be charged for replacement.
- **No later than April 12:** Complete the online program report. **Make sure you are collecting the information you need for the final report throughout your program.** (see highlighted items)

## PR Materials & Other Resources

The ICfL has provided additional resources for LTAI libraries on the program's web page. A list of these resources is provided below. <https://libraries.idaho.gov/ltai/ltai-librarian-resources/>

- Participant Feedback Form – PDF copy for download and additional printing
- Book checkout sheet – optional tool libraries may choose to use
- Links to online program reporting form
- Promotional/outreach materials and information
- Tips for hosting a good discussion program
- An electronic copy of this handbook

If you need any additional support or resources not provided on the web page, please contact the ICfL.

## Library Reporting Requirements

Each library is required to complete a report at the conclusion of their program. The link to access the report is available on the Library Resources web page (linked above). Failure to complete the report may disqualify the library from future participation. In general, the report is due by April 15<sup>th</sup>. However, if your program is delayed or scheduled into the late spring, your final report will be due within a month after the completion of your last LTAI session. The report will ask you for the following information:

- What the library provided for in-kind match and the estimated value of those contributions (rooms, staff time, refreshments, etc)
- Program information and evaluation (attendance, things that went well, things that didn't go well)
- Library feedback for ICfL (things you liked or didn't like, things ICfL can improve)

We strongly recommend that libraries review the program reports at the beginning of their program season to ensure they are collecting and tracking the information they will need for the final report. We also recommend that libraries think about how they will track and document staff and volunteer hours spent supporting the program, as this information will need to be reported.

## Receiving & Returning Program Materials and Books

The ICfL will mail you all your books, posters, and printed participant feedback forms at least six weeks prior to your first discussion session (exceptions noted below). You will receive the number of books you requested in the "LTAI Planning Form." If you need a copy of what you submitted/requested, please let the ICfL know.

**We suggest that you keep the boxes that the books were shipped in and use these boxes to ship them back.** Most libraries opt to pay their own return shipping costs, but ICfL will work with libraries who may not be able to cover this cost, so let us know.

In some cases, multiple libraries may be hosting the same book title during the program season. For books with limited inventory, there may only be enough copies for one library at a time. The ICfL will indicate on your packing slip if this applies to your library. If you are sharing a limited-inventory title with another library, please be advised of the following:

- If another library has the title scheduled before you, you may not receive that particular book until the other library has finished. The ICfL will keep in touch regarding the status of any such book and will make sure you receive it in a timely manner.
- If another library needs the title after you, please ensure that you collect all copies of the book at the close of the discussion session and return the books to the ICfL by the date indicated on the packing slip.

## Managing and Tracking Books

The library is responsible for tracking and managing LTAI books once they arrive, including checking in/out, and paying to replace lost or damaged copies. The LTAI books do come equipped with a unique barcode if libraries want to use on-the-fly or other ad-hoc electronic checkout methods.

The method by which you distribute LTAI books to patrons is up to each library depending on your system and what works best for you. Whatever method and system you use, you should be able to account for each book, which patron it was loaned to, and when it is due back.

## Program Participants & Attendance

Each library is responsible for recruiting and communicating with participants. The method you use to recruit and manage participation is up to you, depending on the size of your audience and how you plan to carry out the program. For example, you might require pre-registration, or allow for drop-ins.

To ensure that small communities can participate, we do not have a minimum participation requirement. However, it is important to recruit and encourage participation from the community. Adequate attendance makes for a more engaging event and a better likelihood that scholars and patrons will participate at your library in the future. We suggest that our very small communities aim for at least five participants at each session, and medium to large communities aim for 10-29.

In general, we suggest scheduling LTAI events in the evening, when possible, as they are more accessible for working patrons, are easier to schedule for program scholars, and tend to have a better track record for success. We also recommend reaching out to local book clubs, social clubs, and other community groups as this can help boost participation as well.

You can find additional promotional and outreach materials and suggestions on the librarian resource page of our website (link at top of this document).

You will be responsible for tracking attendance at each session and providing this information in your final program report. Make sure to keep this information in a secure location until your program is over.

## Venue, Refreshments, Staff/Volunteers

Libraries are responsible for securing an appropriate location for each LTAI session they are hosting. In most cases, discussions will be held on site at the library. However, libraries may also utilize other spaces in their community obtained through partnerships, such as the senior center, coffee shop, bookstore, school classroom, etc.

Libraries may also choose to host virtual LTAI sessions, either as part of their program plan or in response to extenuating circumstances (pandemic, inclement weather, etc). Libraries who opt to host virtual LTAI sessions are responsible for ensuring technology and digital access for patrons and the session scholar. With enough advance notice, the ICfL can provide technical support or guidance to help make a virtual program successful.

Program venues or virtual platforms should be suitable for the size of audience you anticipate and should be appropriate for open discussion and dialogue. Especially for in-person discussions, keep in mind that some books being discussed contain mature themes, passages, and concepts, and that discussion may touch on these topics. This may impact the types of venues where it is appropriate to host the program.

Libraries are welcome to provide refreshments at their LTAI sessions. Refreshments should either be donated or purchased with local funds. Most federal funds and grants cannot be used to purchase food.

Libraries may utilize paid library staff or volunteers to coordinate and conduct discussion events. Please keep track of the number of staff/volunteer hours spent supporting each event and the hours spent planning, conducting outreach, and carrying out program activities.

Libraries will be asked to report on the estimated in-kind value of their venue spaces as well as staff/volunteer hours, so keep track of this information.

## Working with Scholars

Once the season schedule has been finalized, the ICfL will provide each library with their scholar assignments and contact information via email. Should you misplace your scholar's contact information, please reach out to the ICfL, as we are happy to send it again.

### Logistics and Travel

Once your scholars are assigned, you are responsible for reaching out to each scholar and finalizing logistics for each session. For example, start and end times, location, estimated audience size, driving directions, etc. Libraries should keep in touch with scholars and respond to communications promptly. If you have trouble reaching or getting a response from one of your scholars, please contact the ICfL. Keep in mind that many scholars are also working professionals with fulltime jobs. For this reason, we recommend that you be clear about timelines and/or if you need to hear back by a certain date.

If your scholar is traveling some distance to your location, they may need to stay the night in your community. While scholars are responsible for making their own travel arrangements, libraries should be prepared to suggest local accommodations. The ICfL will coordinate all the travel reimbursements and speaker fees for each scholar. Libraries are not expected to conduct any financial transactions with their scholars, however a thank-you card to each of your scholars is always a welcome gesture.

### Cancellations & Rescheduling

While cancellations and rescheduling should be avoided where possible, there may be times when unavoidable scheduling conflicts or extenuating circumstances arise. In these cases, either the library or the scholar are expected to provide as much notice as possible if they have to cancel a session.

If the library has to cancel, reschedule, move to virtual due to unavoidable or extenuating circumstances, we ask that you do so with AT LEAST 48 hours' notice (preferably sooner) so that scholars can cancel hotel reservations and other travel plans. Scholars put a lot of time and effort into preparing for their sessions, so please respect their time by providing timely notice of any changes to your schedule. Please notify both the assigned scholar and the ICfL as soon as you know that a session is being cancelled or rescheduled.

Scholars are asked to provide at least a week's notice to both the library and the ICfL if they have an unavoidable scheduling conflict arise that will prevent them from attending a session. In such cases, the ICfL will attempt to schedule a different scholar or work with the library and scholar to reschedule the session. Libraries should also be prepared for the possibility that a scholar may fail to show up for a session without notice, due to extenuating circumstances (i.e., weather, car break-down, family emergency, etc).

The ICfL understands that preparing for a session takes a lot of work for libraries and we want to ensure that program scholars respect your time as well. If a scholar cancels without sufficient notice or fails to show up for a session, we ask that you notify us promptly.

## Additional Tips and Information

Libraries are welcome to suggest additional tips or information they feel would be helpful to include in this section of the handbook. Contact the ICfL with any suggestions.

### Incorporate the Theme

Remember, Let's Talk About It is more than just a book club! The books for this program have been carefully selected to fit within an overarching theme, and that theme should play a significant role in your approach to the program and the discussions that take place.

Make sure the *theme* for your program is prominent and incorporated into your outreach and promotion efforts, as well as your program planning efforts. Consider printing out and including the theme essay, program reading list, and relevant book descriptions when you distribute books to participants. This will provide them with additional context for the books they are reading.

### Plan for the Unexpected

Between pandemics, forest fires, and just regular old problems like leaking roofs, car trouble and bad weather, libraries should be prepared for things to go off course. We strongly recommend that you have a back-up plan for when a scholar must cancel due to extenuating circumstance, you cannot meet in person due to weather, a meeting space suddenly becomes unavailable, or other similar situations.

Below are a few questions we suggest you think about in advance. Having addressed these questions in advance will allow you to pivot quickly and successfully in response to changing or unexpected circumstances.

- How will you contact program participants and the program scholar if an event must be moved, rescheduled, or cancelled?
- What options do you have for switching venues, going virtual, or moving outdoors?  
One library had great success during the onset of the COVID pandemic by switching to an outdoor "Let's Walk About It" model where scholars and participants bundled up, moved outdoors, and discussed the book while exploring the area's hiking trails.
- Are your participants and/or scholar comfortable with virtual, outdoor, or nontraditional venues? What type of alternative arrangements will work best for your community?
- Are library staff familiar with the title being discussed? Could they lead a discussion in a pinch?  
We encourage library staff to be prepared to facilitate a basic book discussion in the absence of an assigned scholar, using general knowledge of the book and available materials provided by the ICfL.