



**LET'S TALK
ABOUT IT**

**BOOK DISCUSSION SERIES
AT YOUR LIBRARY**

Scholar Handbook

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For More Information:

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

Or reach out to the program coordinator:

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Resources and Handy links for Scholars:

- LTAI Home Page: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/ltai/>
 - View the full season schedule & general program information
- Scholar Resources: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/ltai/scholars/>
 - Download the invoice form & instructions
 - Link to online scholar feedback form
 - Download a copy of this handbook
- Theme Content: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/ltai/themes-books/>
 - Access/download the theme essay, book descriptions, and discussion questions for each theme.

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 active and potential program scholars. Scholars sign up for sessions depending on their areas of interest, location, and availability. Scholars are encouraged to pick sessions at multiple libraries and across a variety of themes/books.
 - ICfL finalizes scholar assignments and emails scholars their confirmed session schedule, along with library contact information.

- Scholars provide, as needed, updated W-9, mailing/contact information, and any changes to their bio.
- **6 weeks before first session:** The ICfL will mail you copies of all the books you are presenting. Please note that these books are on loan and must be returned to the ICfL in the same condition you received them. If you wish to mark up a book, we ask that you purchase your own copy.
- **4 weeks before each session:** The library should contact you about four weeks before your scheduled session to discuss expectations and logistics. If you do not hear from the library, you should reach out to them directly. If you have any issues communicating with the library, please contact the ICfL.
- **Week of each session:** Check in with the library to make sure everything is on track prior to your arrival.
- **At each session**
 - Plan to arrive early, introduce yourself to the library staff, and settle in.
 - Library staff will introduce you and provide any “housekeeping” information to participants.
 - Open the session with a brief presentation/introductory remarks about the book and the theme in which it is being explored, followed by a facilitated discussion of the text.
 - At the end of the session, either the scholar or library staff should distribute and collect participant feedback forms. The library will provide copies of the form.
 - While the experience is still fresh, make notes about what worked well and what could be improved. These will help you fill out your scholar feedback form later.
 - If you would like the library to return your copy of the book to ICfL, please notify library staff and leave the book with them before you depart.
- **After each session (within two weeks)**
 - Submit the online scholar feedback form (see below for details).
 - Complete and submit the scholar invoice form and travel receipts to receive your speaker fee and travel reimbursement (see below for details).
 - Return book to ICfL (refer to original packing slip for instructions).

Benefits of Becoming an LTAI Scholar

The Let’s Talk About it program has been taking place in communities throughout Idaho for over 35 years. It is a rich and rewarding experience for scholars, libraries, and participants alike. Many of Idaho’s communities have come to rely on LTAI as their primary source of adult programming, and as a staple of rich dialogue and intellectual exploration for their residents. Many of our scholars enjoy the experience so much, they return year after year. While there is a certain level of time and effort involved, scholars generally find the effort well worth their while.

Making the commitment to serve as an LTAI scholar is a great way to explore communities of all sizes across Idaho, while also deepening and broadening your own work in the Humanities. Scholars often find themselves surprised and delighted by the insights, connections, and exploration that takes place in the discussions they facilitate. Plus, the program pays for your travel to many of Idaho’s out-of-the-way places, providing a wonderful opportunity to see things and meet people you may never encounter otherwise.

Working with the library

Once the season schedule has been finalized, the ICfL will send each scholar their session schedule and library contact information via email. Should you misplace this information, please reach out to the ICfL, as we are happy to re-send it.

You are encouraged to reach out early in the season to make introductions with each library who is hosting you. The library should also be in touch with you as you get closer to your session to discuss logistics and expectations. If you have any trouble communicating with a library or receiving timely responses, please let the ICfL know so we can assist.

Communicate with the library to make sure you understand their needs and expectations and that the library understands your needs and expectations for the session as well. For example, have participants been provided any handouts or materials along with their book? Are there any materials you'd like the library to provide to patrons ahead of the session other than the book and theme materials? Additionally, make sure both you and the library are clear about logistics. What time do you need to arrive and should you bring anything with you? Will you need access to any technology? How long is the session scheduled to last? Etc.

Finally, we encourage both libraries and scholars to be prepared for the unexpected. Between pandemics, forest fires, and just regular old problems like leaking roofs, car trouble and bad weather, things can sometimes go off course. Let the library know your comfort level with different situations and your preference for responding to the unexpected. For example, are you comfortable facilitating an online discussion if an in-person meeting is not possible? Would you be willing to meet outdoors if needed? If the library needs to get a hold of you quickly, what is the best way to do so?

Preparing for and facilitating a session

Before the session, make sure you read not only the book, but the theme materials provided on the ICfL website, including the theme essay, suggested discussion questions, and the descriptions of the other titles being presented in that library's program series.

When preparing for each session, keep an open mind about the community you'll be visiting and the discussion you'll be leading. Don't make assumptions about the participants or what knowledge, beliefs, or experiences they bring with them.

At the session, aim to provide some opening remarks regarding the book and the theme—no more than 10-20 minutes. These remarks should include an overview of the theme (if you are facilitating the first session), or a brief reminder of the theme (if you are facilitating subsequent sessions).

Focus on the evening's book and theme rather than your background, other books by the author, research, etc. Remember, this is an opportunity for the participants to discuss the book rather than an educational or academic setting. Your main job is to facilitate engaging dialogue and keep the conversation going. Stay flexible and be willing to go where the conversation takes you. However, if the discussion veers too far off course and away from the book/theme, your job as facilitator is to guide it back.

Be prepared for negative reactions to a book due to tone, length, language, explicitness, etc. Keep your own personal bias about the book or author out of the discussion. Additionally, be prepared for some participants who have either not read the book or not finished the book.

If you are facilitating the last session in your host library's series, plan to include some time at the end to wrap up the series and provide closure about the theme and the books that have been discussed.

Before leaving the discussion session, make notes about what went well or could be improved while the experience is fresh. These notes will help you complete your scholar feedback form after the session is over.

If you have questions, reach out to the ICfL. We can connect you with one of our long-time LTAI scholars who would be happy to provide additional tips or advice.

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.

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. In the case of extenuating circumstances (car trouble, family emergency, blizzards), please make every reasonable attempt to notify the library that you will not be able to come to the session. Remember, libraries are counting on you to make their program work!

If the library must cancel, reschedule, or move a session to virtual due to unavoidable or extenuating circumstances, we ask them to provide scholars with AT LEAST 48 hours' notice (preferably more) so that you can cancel hotel reservations and other travel plans without incurring cancellation fees. We recognize that scholars put a lot of time and effort into preparing for their sessions and expect libraries to respect scholar time by providing timely notice of any changes to the schedule. If a library fails to provide timely notice or is otherwise noncommunicative, we ask scholars to inform the ICfL.

Travel

Scholars are responsible for making their own travel arrangements but are encouraged to ask the local library for suggestions. Travel will be reimbursed by the ICfL according to state guidelines and rates. Airplane travel is not allowable unless approved in advance by the ICfL. A copy of the reimbursement invoice is available on the LTAI scholar web page, as well as a separate document with detailed instructions for completing your reimbursement request which includes the current year's travel rates.

Due to budget limitations and rising hotel rates, we ask that scholars be mindful of incurring lodging costs and only do so when staying in a community overnight is necessary due to distance or safety. In general, scholars are asked to choose the most economical lodging options. If affordable options for accommodations are not available, please contact the ICfL to discuss the situation before making alternative or more costly arrangements. If scholars have a close friend or family in the area they would prefer to stay with, they are welcome, but not required, to do so.

Keep in mind that small, rural, or resort communities may have limited lodging available. The ongoing COVID pandemic/recovery has significantly impacted the hospitality sector. We suggest that you ask the host library for recommendations and make reservations well in advance of your visit. Additionally, when making hotel reservations, we recommend asking the hotel about their refund policy, whether they charge a cancellation fee, how far in advance they need a cancellation, etc. We further suggest that you make this information available to the host library so they can give you sufficient notice if your session is cancelled or needs to be rescheduled. Libraries are asked to provide AT LEAST 48 hours' notice of a cancelled event.

Paperwork and Reimbursement

After each discussion session that you facilitate, you will need to complete an invoice (including applicable receipts) and scholar feedback form. Both forms should be submitted within two weeks of completing each session and can be located on the scholar resource page:

<https://libraries.idaho.gov/ltai/scholars/>

Scholar Feedback Form

The scholar feedback is provided via an online form. The most current link to the online form can be accessed from the LTAI scholar web page. If you have any trouble completing this form, please contact the ICfL. This feedback is essential, as it helps the ICfL identify areas of success and issues needing improvement.

We recommend that scholars look over the feedback form prior to their first session to make sure you are prepared to respond to each question. You may find it helpful to take a few notes at the close of each session while the experience is fresh and use these notes to completing the feedback form.

Online Scholar Invoice Form

The scholar invoice is now an online form that can be accessed from the link on the LTAI scholar page. Instructions are on the form, but if you have any problems completing this form or uploading supporting receipts, please let us know so we can work out an alternate solution.

To receive payment and reimbursement, scholars must submit the online invoice along with appropriate receipts. Please refer to the invoice instruction document for more information on which travel expenses require receipts. In general, receipts are required for lodging, airfare (must be approved by ICfL), and other allowable expenses that aren't paid using a calculated rate. Receipts are not usually required for mileage/gas or meals, as these expenses are paid at a calculated rate, not at cost.

Once completed, the invoice and receipts may either be uploaded into the online invoice or submitted electronically by email to the LTAI program coordinator or mailed on paper to ICfL via USPS. These items should be submitted to ICfL within two weeks of the session date.

Beginning in 2022, the honorarium/speaker fee for each session has been raised to \$200 and will be reviewed on an annual basis each year. This is a set fee and is non-negotiable. This fee is provided in recognition of a scholar's time spent facilitating each session (in person or virtual). Scholars are asked to track their prep hours and travel time for each session and report these as in-kind match on the invoice.

Please be aware that payment can take up to a month after the ICfL receives an invoice. Payment will be mailed as a paper check to the address provided by the scholar, unless other arrangements are made in

advance with the ICfL. Direct deposit is available, but it requires a few extra steps and registration in the state's payment system. Let the ICfL know if you'd like information about direct deposit.

The ICfL retains discretion regarding the payment of the honorarium/speaker fee in the case of session cancellations or scholar no-shows. Such situations will be considered on a case-by-case basis depending on circumstances.

Other Tips and Information

- Keep the box, packing materials, and packing slip that ICfL uses to ship you the loaned copies of LTAI books. This will make it easier to send these materials back.

MORE TIPS TO COME!

Are you an LTAI scholar who has a few tips or helpful information you think other scholars should know? Feel free to pass them along to the ICfL so we can add them in to this section as appropriate.