

2023 ANNUAL REPORT





Cena and Mont

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 2023 it felt like the old TV announcement, "We now return to our regularly scheduled programming!"

At our first Sunday Luncheon since 2019, I enjoyed celebrating the long history of the festival and its connection with Warrensburg's past. In the Fall of 2021 I was put in touch with Polly and Ken Prendergast. Polly's father, Mont C. Draper III, had passed away and generously left money in his estate to remember and honor his mother, Cena Christopher Draper, one of the very first authors to be celebrated at the first Children's Literature Festival back in 1969.

Cena's grandfather, J.H. Christopher, developed Pertle Springs into the vibrant resort that put Warrensburg on the map. Much of that land is now part of the UCM campus.

I was touched that Mont wanted to honor his mother in a way that recognized her both her deep roots, as the fourth generation of her family to grow up in Warrensburg, and her contribution to the world of stories. Cena Christopher Draper wrote both plays and novels that demonstrated her love of outdoor adventures among the hills of Missouri. At the luncheon we welcomed Mont's daughters, Polly and Tacy, and Polly's husband Ken, with a video montage and a new Wikipedia entry on Cena.

I appreciate how these connections with the past are a bridge to what we continue to do today- bring authors and illustrators together with young people.

-A. Maya Kucij, Director

A photo of Cena and Festival attendees from the Daily Star Journal at the 1979 CLF.





Gary Schmidt, the 2023 Sadler-Gilbert Series speaker

OVERVIEW

On March 5th the 54th Children's Literature Festival started off with the Sunday Luncheon featuring Gilbert-Sadler speaker Gary Schmidt. Gary had been slated to be the luncheon speaker in 2020 when the festival was canceled due to the Covid pandemic. He spoke about his career as a teacher and as a writer, and he read many wonderful letters he has received from young people through the years.

On Monday, March 6th and Tuesday, March 7th, the campus filled up with excited students, teachers, librarians, parents and other lovers of children's literature. They heard from 23 authors and illustrators who presented to approximately 3400 people over 2 days. Attendees came from 103 schools from 39 counties all across the state of Missouri. For the second year, registration fees were waived thanks to financial support from the Missouri Arts Council, the Missouri Humanities Council, and additional funding from UCM's Academic Affairs.



FESTIVAL GOALS

1

To provide the experience of meeting a published author or illustrator in person

2

To promote reading and validate the research and creativity behind the process of bookmaking

3

To make a significant and visible contribution to a culture of literacy in the state of Missouri

4

To work towards fair representation of all groups within our Festival program and to be truly inclusive by seeking active participation by all individuals

NEW IN 2023

One of our key recommendations after our 2022 festival was to find a replacement for our event management software system. The former company whose system we used folded under Covid when the majority of large in-person events were cancelled world-wide. After many demos and conversations with vendors, we chose Regpack, an online registration, payment, and user management system. Although robust, it had a steeper learning curve than anticipated and resulted in some delays and frustration. Registration for the festival is complicated and in 2024 we are hoping to pivot to a user-driven system that will allow attendees to self-select authors and sessions. This will enable festival organizers to spend less time on registration logistics and more time on other ways to help the festival run smoothly.



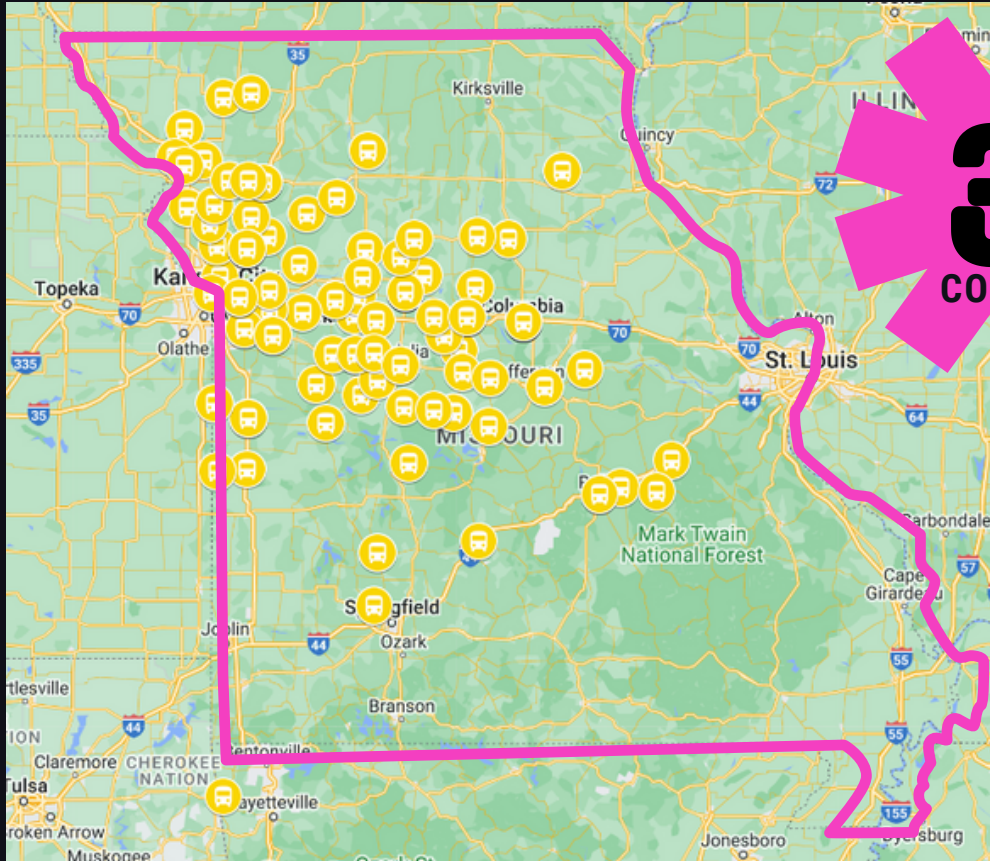
New in 2023 was CLF-branded bookplates that authors could sign at their convenience and that were available to anyone purchasing that author's books at Book Sales. This helped a lot with logistics, as it often not possible for authors to sign books after each presentation, especially in the largest venues.



In 2023 we added registration for viewing our livestreamed and recorded presentations. This helped us track usage and allowed us to send out surveys to collect feedback.



OUR ATTENDEES

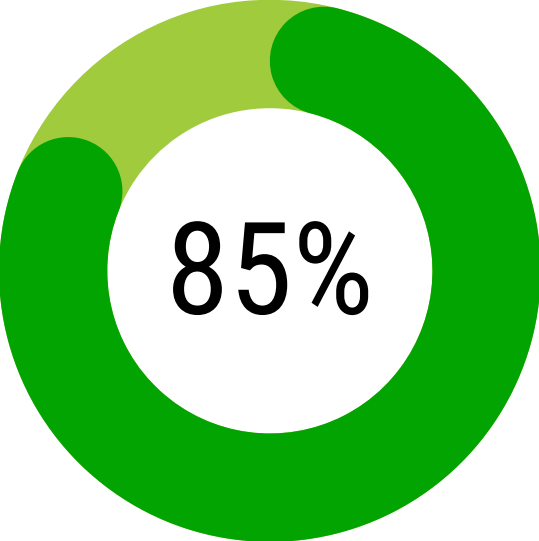


39
COUNTIES

103 SCHOOLS,
INCLUDING **27**
NEW TO THE CLF!



SERVING OUR COMMUNITIES



85%

Title I is a federally funded program that targets schools and school districts where a high percentage of students are from low-income families. The purpose of Title I funding is to ensure that all children meet state academic standards by helping schools establish programs to help these students, often programs that wouldn't be possible without some outside funding. 85% percent of the schools who attended the CLF in 2023 received Title I federal funds (88 schools), an increase from 81% in 2022. The majority of remaining schools (13) were private, and therefore ineligible for Title I funds.

Schools receiving Title I funds





ATTENDEE SURVEYS

Directly after the festival post-event surveys were emailed to the contact person for each school that attended as well as to all individuals. The survey for teachers and individuals consisted of questions divided into the following categories: Registration, Communication and Campus Navigation; Author and Illustrator Sessions; and Book Sales and Publicity. Survey respondents could choose to be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Book Sales certificate.

"I love the variety of authors, and hope [you] continue to have fresh, award winning and highly interactive authors."

"It's amazing! We love it so much! Every year I have at least one student say, you know after being here today I think I could go to college. That's a big deal!"

"It's such a phenomenal event. It changes lives--inspires kids to go after their dreams and do their best. Keep doing this!"

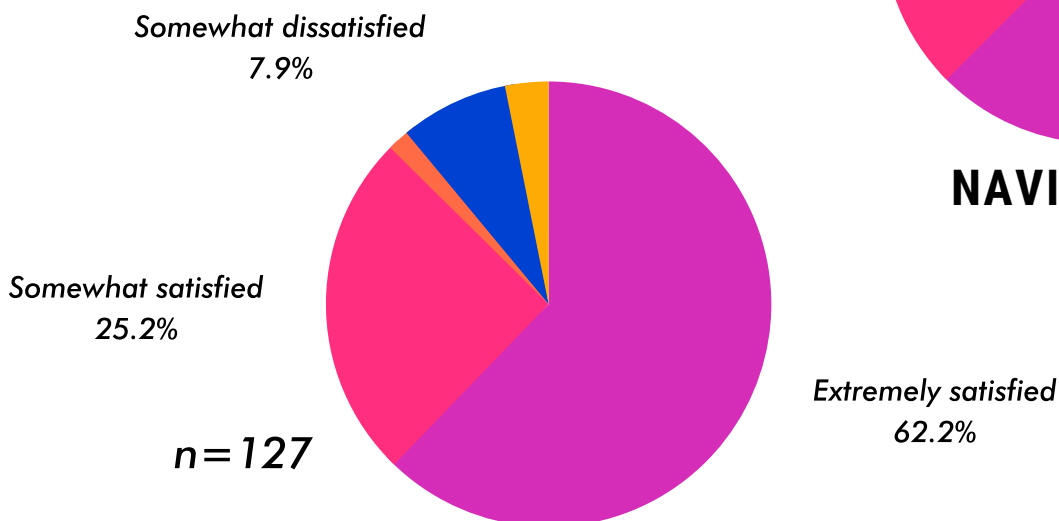
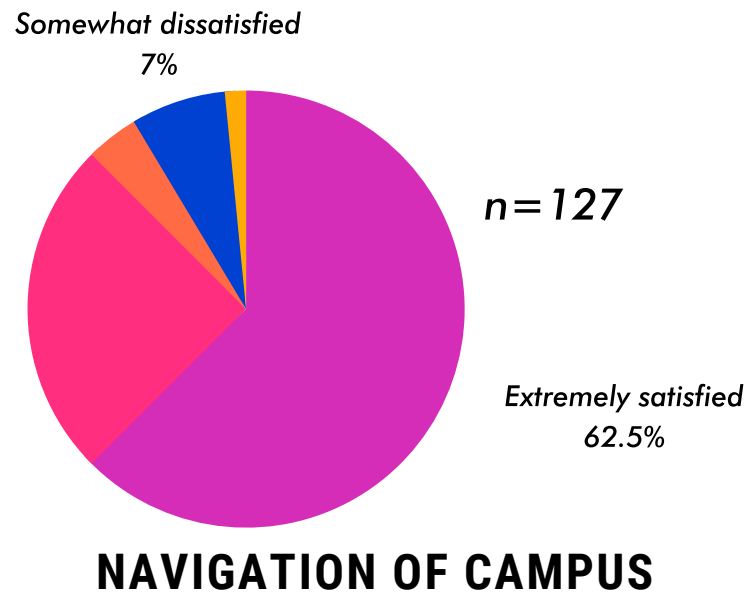
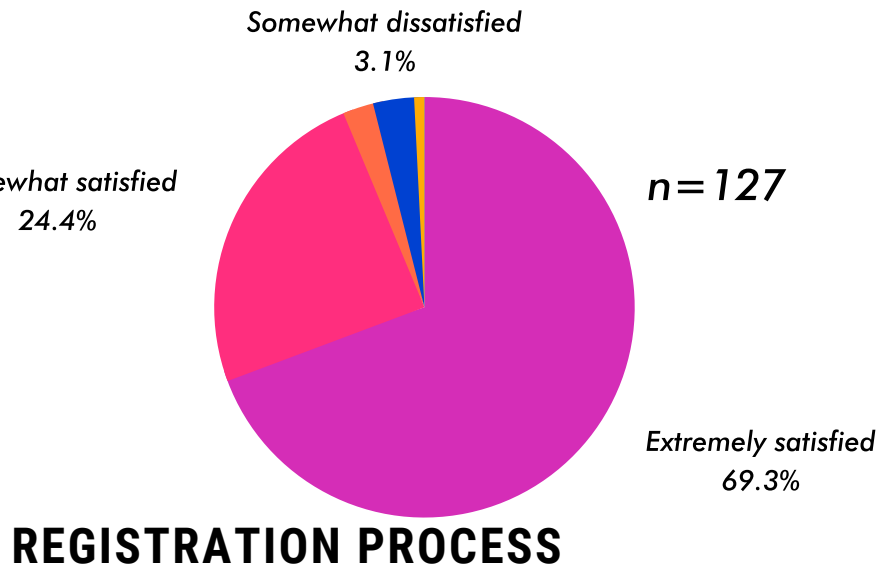
"Thank you for providing such an amazing opportunity for our students! I always LOVE attending and I know the students I take come away with an appreciation for other cultures, new literature, an excitement for reading and the star-struck knowledge that they met an author!"

**QUOTES FROM 2023
SURVEYS**

SURVEY RESULTS

Survey results on attendee satisfaction with Pre-Festival processes and information-sharing were overwhelmingly positive.

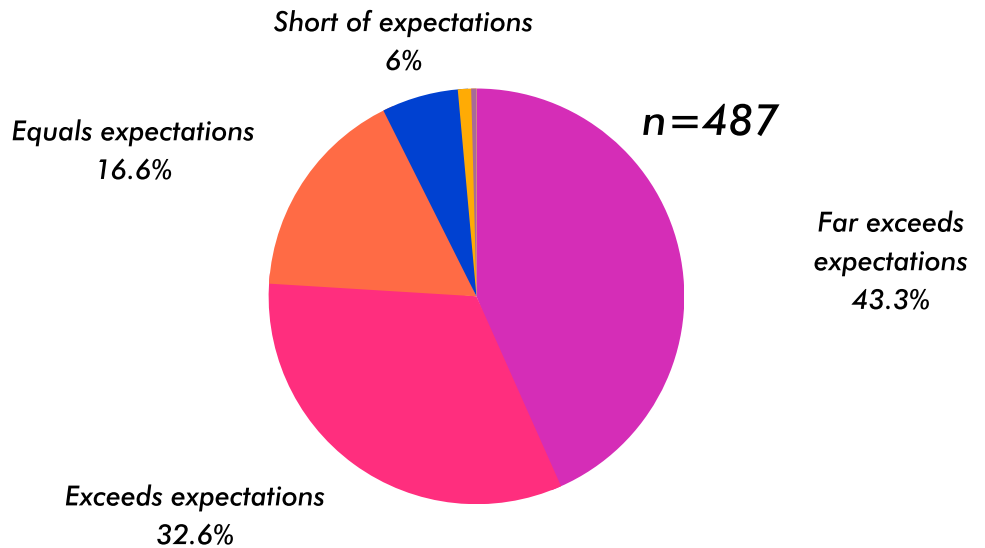
The majority of survey respondents said they were extremely satisfied with the registration process, navigating campus and the completeness of the information they received prior to the event.



SURVEY RESULTS CONTINUED

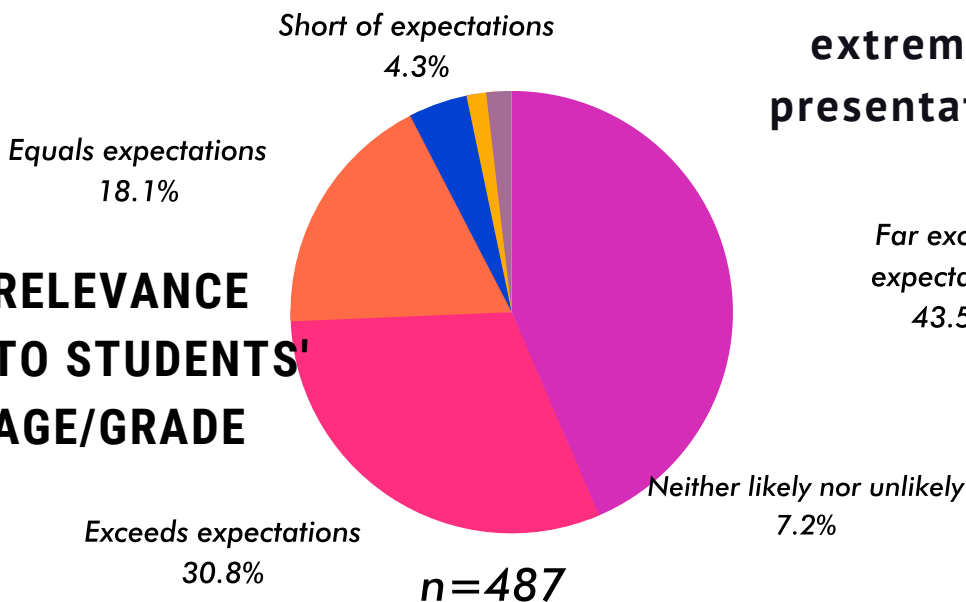
76% of total responses received indicated that the 2023 presenters either exceeded or far exceeded expectations for presenter engagement. Close to 75% of survey respondents said that the presentations were relevant to their students' grades or ages.

PRESENTER ENGAGEMENT

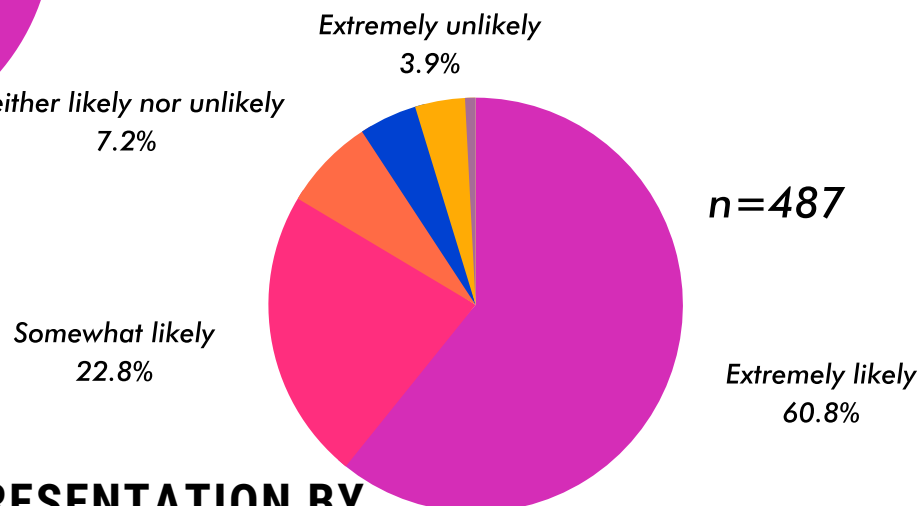


60% of total responses received indicated that the attendee would be extremely likely to attend another presentation by that author again at a future festival.

RELEVANCE TO STUDENTS' AGE/GRADE



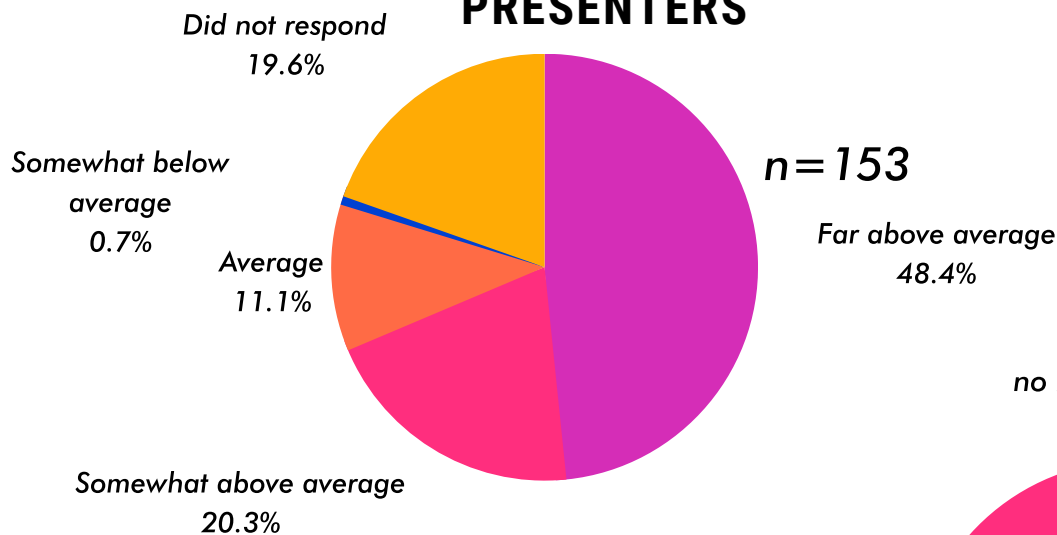
LIKELIHOOD TO ATTEND A PRESENTATION BY THIS PRESENTER IN THE FUTURE



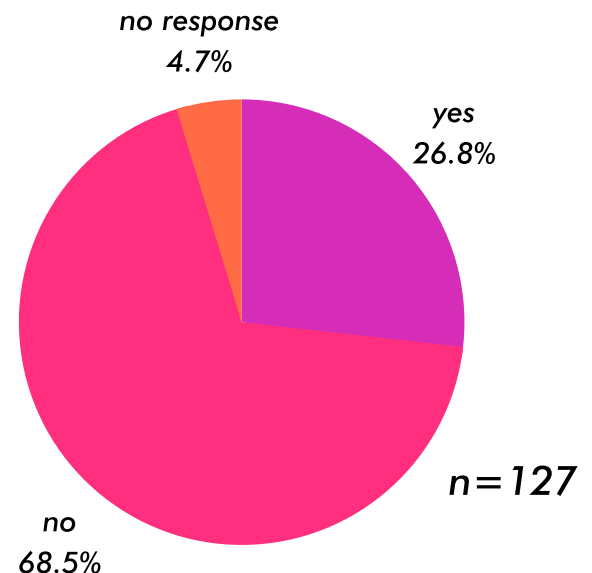
SURVEY RESULTS CONTINUED

One of our goals is to "work towards fair representation of all groups within our Festival program and to be truly inclusive by seeking active participation by all individuals". To achieve this, we try to promote literature that reflects and honors the lives of *all young people*. We wish to maintain the level of *at least 50%* diverse voices in the presenter lineup. In 2023, 68.4% survey respondents indicated far above, or somewhat above, average satisfaction with presenter diversity in 2023. Interestingly, we had a higher rate of respondents who chose not to respond to this question, almost 20% which is up from 6% in 2022.

SATISFACTION WITH THE DIVERSITY OF PRESENTERS



The majority of respondents were *not* interested in virtual presentations. This is potentially in response to the amount of virtual experiences available during the height of the pandemic.



INTEREST IN VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS



Padma Venkatraman and Wendy Shang

PRESENTER SURVEYS

A post-event survey was sent out to all the 2023 presenters. The survey for presenters consisted of questions divided into the following categories: Pre-Festival Experience, Festival Experience, Presentation Sessions, and Looking Forward. 17 out of the 23 presenters filled out the survey

The respondents found the Festival to be either extremely (14) or very well (3) organized and 100% wished to be invited back for a future festival. 100% of respondents rated the Festival personnel to be excellent, with 88% finding their volunteers to be excellent.

"This festival continues to be well-organized, thoughtfully planned and tremendously fun. It's an honor to participate."

"I heard from so many readers who said I was their favorite author or that my books were the best they'd read - and even more significantly, a few said it inspired them to think of careers they hadn't considered before, and one mom said my book had made her kid start falling in love with reading."

"The festival overall makes me so proud of being a part of the organization that creates a love of reading and encourages that love by bringing sought-after authors within the driving distance and monetary reach of thousands of Missouri students."

QUOTES FROM 2023 SURVEYS



University Librarian Janette Klein

VOLUNTEERS

150 volunteers provided their time and energy to helping the Festival be successful. 29 volunteers worked both Monday and Tuesday. 12 were return volunteers and 21 had attended the festival in the past, either as a student or teacher. The majority of our volunteers work primarily as author/illustrator ambassadors, introducing the presenter, directing teachers and students into the room for sessions, etc. Volunteers also assist with Book Sales and the Presenter Lounge. A special shout-out to Angie Curtright, who has been volunteering as Festival Airport Driver Extraordinaire since 1997! We are very grateful to everyone who assists with this event!



Michelle Trent, Brenna Davis, Cindy Skahan, Jim Dutton



Shin Batz, Shara McNeeley, Rusty Smith

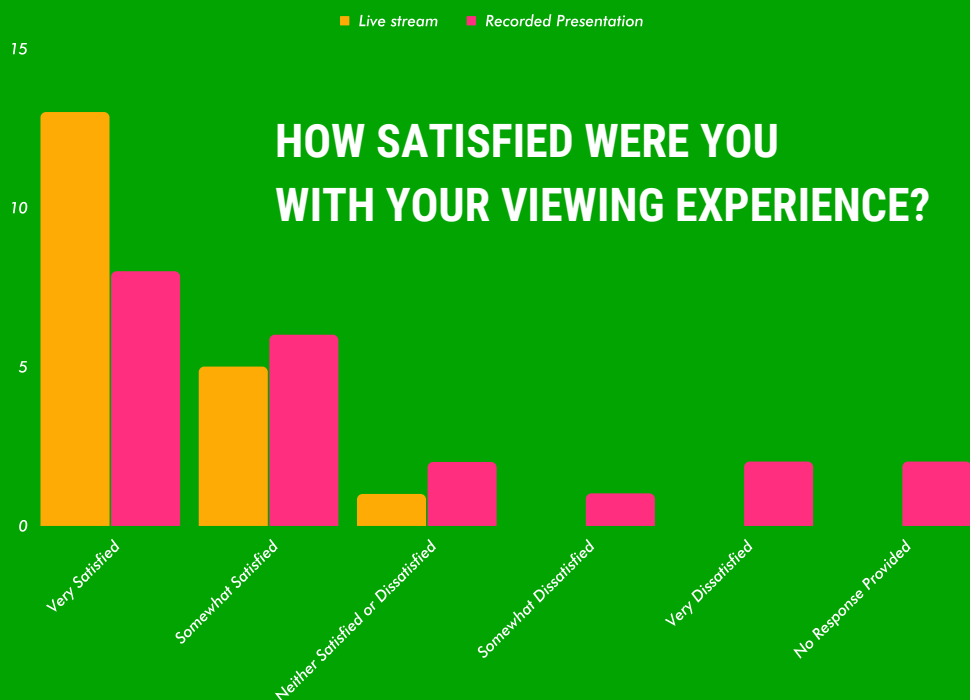
LIVE STREAMING PRESENTATIONS

In 2022, thanks to efforts of Digital Media Production students in the Corporate and Freelance Production class at UCM, we were able to live stream and record several presenter sessions and make them available for a limited time after the event. In 2023 we continued this practice in order to try to expand the reach of the festival. This provided a great hands-on learning experience for our UCM students.

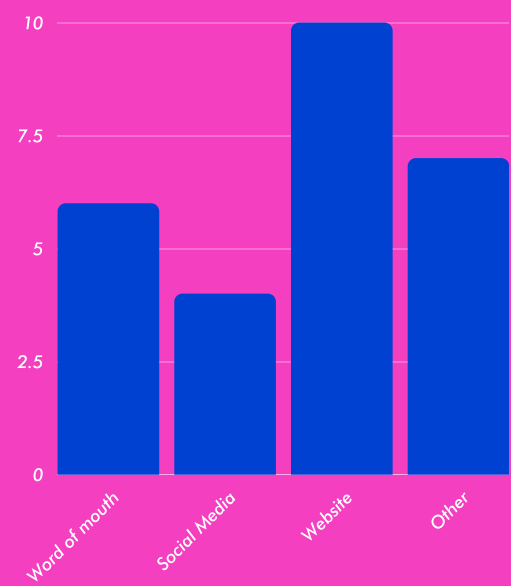
This year advance registration was required in order to receive the links to watch. Anyone who signed up received a survey to collect information about their experience.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. There was frustration with audio quality on one of the videos, the result of a mistake of one of the production students who accidentally turned the volume down for the first several minutes. Luckily this presentation was recorded twice! Respondents reported that viewing group sizes ranged from 2-3 people to as groups of more than 45. Additionally, an equal number of respondents took advantage of the live stream and the recorded sessions.

"I was so excited that my students could experience the author talk even though they couldn't be there in person. Thanks so much for making the recordings available" - 2023 survey respondent



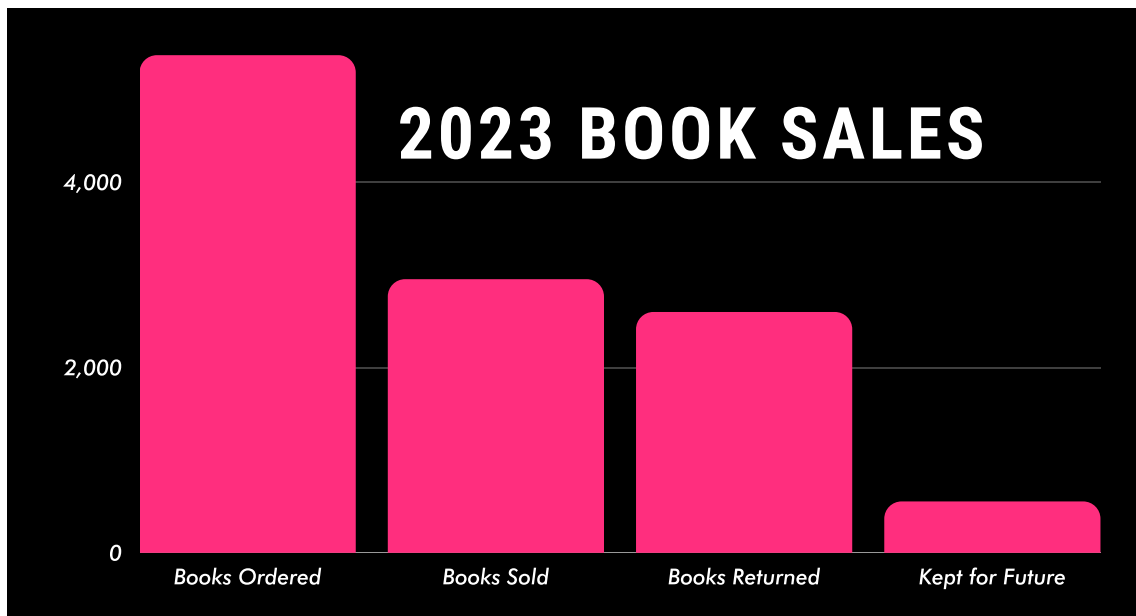
HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE STREAMING OPTIONS?





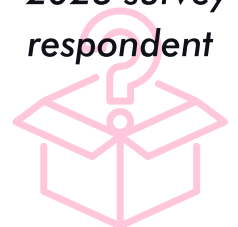
BOOK SALES

Book Sales are an important feature of the Festival. In 2023 Book Sales Coordinators Chad Marnholtz and Kim Anthes continued with successful strategies employed in the past such as presenter photos and larger price lists, table skirts and the large rectangular arrangement of books with room for stock in the middle. They divided books by thirds for Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, which gave all participants the opportunity to buy titles. (Previously Book Sales had experiences sell-outs on Sunday.) New in 2023 was the utilization of book plates for signings, and registers were situated on the east wall of the ballroom to help monitor exit doors and stocks.



*"I thought the
"mystery books" at
the book sale were a
great idea! My kids
loved it! and what a
great way to get rid
of extra books."*

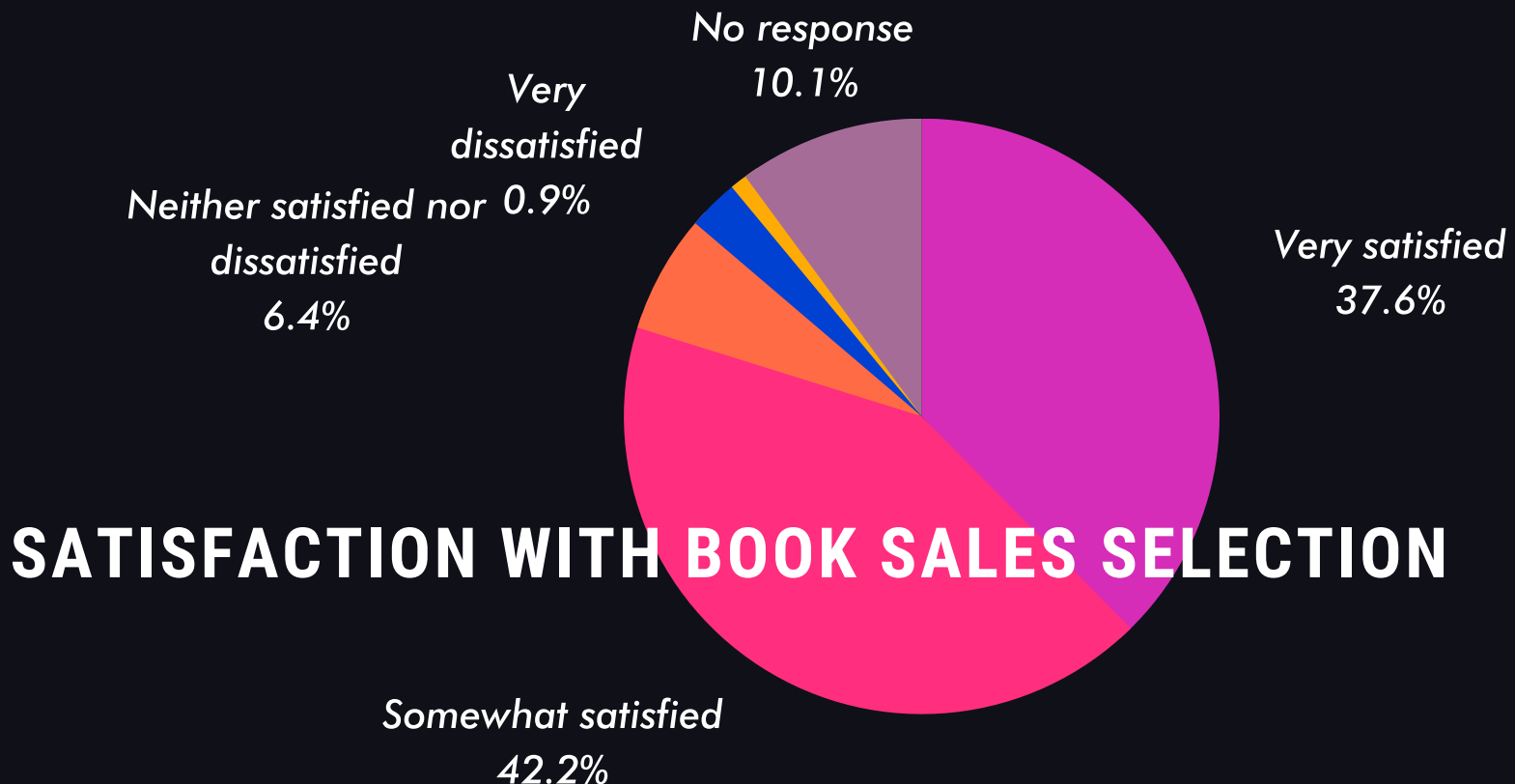
*-2023 survey
respondent*



SURVEY RESPONSES ON BOOK SALES



The majority of respondents wrote that they visited and purchased books at Book Sales and 37.6% very satisfied. Figuring out which titles will be most popular in a given year is almost impossible & we do our best!



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Make sure all important communication about changes are correct!

This year proved to be challenging for our communication about changes to schedules. An error in a document about changes to venues meant that there was confusion and frustration for those attempting to see a couple of the live streaming presenters who were scheduled to be in venues different than what was on their schedule. We are so sorry that this occurred and will work hard that not repeat this mistake in the future.

2

Try a new approach to registration.

The CLF is a complicated event for scheduling. Groups arrive and depart at different times and people have different preferences for the presenters they want to see. Naturally, some presenters are more requested than others. Additionally, UCM's campus has a limited number of venues that can seat large groups of people. One idea is to pre-schedule presenters to specific venues and allow attendees to self-select the sessions they will attend. One potential issue with this approach is that organizers need to have an idea in advance of who will be able to fill the largest venues and will take a lot of the behinds the scenes flexibility. However, it is worth trying out to see how it goes. Stay tuned!

3

Collaborate with UCM students to sell CLF tees

We love tapping into the skills of our UCM community, especially the students who, if they go away for Spring Break, may not even be aware of the historical event that happens every year on campus. In the Fall of 2023 we plan to offer a design contest for Fashion Merchandising students and have the winning design available for purchase at Book Sales.

4

Bring our Book Sales equipment and software up to date to assist with reconciling accounts post-event.

This is a recommendation carried forward from our 2022 CLF Annual Report. It is challenging in today's environment to locate a solution that fits the specific needs our event.

THANK YOU

2023 CLF PRESENTERS



top row: Festival Director Maya Kucij, Gary Schmidt, Roland Smith, Sarah Warrens, Ray Anthony Shepard, Dusti Bowling, Antony John, Mark Oshiro

middle row: Stephen Johnson, Angela Joy, Sneed Collard

front row: Carole Boston Weatherford, Padma Venkatraman, Beth Vrabel, Mae Respicio, Adrianna Cuevas, Paul Griffin, Samantha Edwards, Wendy Shang

missing: Pablo Cartaya, Mary Downing Hahn, John Hendrix, Dorinda Nicholson & Lisa Fipps

THANK
YOU

UCM PROVOST PHIL BRIDGMON
& THE OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS



Missouri Arts Council

The State of the Arts

MISSOURI
HUMANITIES

UCM PARTNERS

- *Meeting and Conference Services: Amanda Montgomery, Klint Braun, & Anthony Cammarota*
- *Sodexo Food Services: Kelly Haggard, Taiesa Lashley, & Justin Dreslinski*
- *Digital Media Production: Dr. Steve Price & Emily Dickmeier*
- *Theatre & Dance: Ashley Miller-Scully, Jamie Gresens & William Spencer Musser*
- *Learning Commons: Faith Ford*
- *Office of Technology: Doug Heath & Josh Blaize*
- *Office of Sponsored Programs & Research: Kathy Schnakenburg & Angelique Henry*
- *Art & Design: Jamie Platt*

SPECIAL HELP

- *Angie Curtright*
- *Pearl Miller, Janis Russell, & Imrete*
- *Kyle & Emily Constant*
- *Sara Evans*
- *Dr. Alex Smith*

STUDENT WORKERS

- *Liz Riggs*
- *Sriharsha Ummediseti*
- *Chibuike Christian Ezeugwu*

THANK
YOU

BOOK SALES

- *Shara McNeeley*
- *Miles McNeeley*
- *Carol Knight*
- *Cindy Skahan*
- *Michelle Trent*
- *Karla Massia*
- *Josh Welker*
- *Rusty Smith*
- *Kordell Ballard*
- *Jim Dutton*
- *Brenna Davis*
- *Griffin Shaw*
- *Lilly Constant*
- *Elise Constant*
- *Lexi Constant*
- *Nate Beyerink*
- *Shin Batz*
- *Brenna Davis*

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- *Comfort Inn*
- *Soapweed*
- *Fitters*
- *La Sous Terre*
- *Gunzil & Bowser Bookstore*
- *Marcy Barnhart at Warrensburg Convention & Visitors Bureau*



THANK
YOU

Becky Sadler Klein

WHOSE GENEROUS SUPPORT FUNDS THE
SADLER/GILBERT SPEAKER SERIES

the estate of

Mont C. Draper III

in recognition of his mother's Cena Christopher
Draper's contributions to literature



*Director, Maya Kucij
Logistics Coordinator, Patty Cary
Book Sales Coordinator, Chad Marnholtz
Assistant to Book Sales, Kim Anthes
Volunteer Coordinator, Kirsten Shaw*



**THANK
YOU**

**TO ALL OF OUR
WONDERFUL
ATTENDEES!!!**