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ANNUAL REPORT



Director's Statement

A highlight of our 55th festival was recognizing one of the event's long-time local supporters, Linda Hoover, who has missed only a couple of Sunday luncheons in our long history. In comparison, this was my 8th festival (9th if you include all the planning we did for 2020!) and already I have difficulty remembering which was which. *When was it the student got his finger stuck in the hole in the chair in Nahm auditorium? What year did we get all that rain and have to run out and buy umbrellas and ponchos for all the presenters? Which is the one when we got a 15 minute warning about the statewide tornado drill?* And of course, the question remains, how will we remember 2024?

Judging by our survey comments, I'm afraid to say that 2024 may be remembered for the very warm temperatures in many of our venues! On college campuses, facilities decisions are centralized and unfortunately, not in our control. It was unseasonably warm for March, and the most we could do was try to distribute fans across campus. However, as you will see later on in this report, our 2024 festival will also be remembered for the incredible presenters we were lucky to host, and for the impact the experience had on our many attendees.

I'm sure Linda has her own highlights from all of the festivals she has attended. We hope that our recognition of her this year will be just one more warm memory she has gained since joining us in the annual tradition that is the CLF.

A. MAYA KUCIJ, FESTIVAL DIRECTOR



Linda Hoover at our 2024 Book Sales, & with Maya Kucij, left





Padma Venkatraman

Overview

Our 55th Children's Literature Festival began March 3rd, 2024 with our Sunday luncheon. Provost Phil Bridgmon started the event off with a few words and Padma Venkatraman was our Gilbert-Sadler series speaker. Padma spoke passionately about book choice and the importance of reading about experiences and cultures different than our own.

On Monday, March 4th and Tuesday, March 5th, the University of Central Missouri welcomed almost 3500 attendees from 43 counties across the state. 24 presenters joined us, including virtual presentations by Mary Downing Hahn, marking her 31st festival!



Book Signings after the 55th Children's Literature Festival Sunday Luncheon

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 2024



One of our key recommendations after our 2023 festival was to try a new approach to registration and have attendees self-select their schedules. This took adjustment on everyone's part! Survey results indicate that the majority (92 respondents, or 64%) were "extremely satisfied," with an additional 21% (30 respondents) "somewhat satisfied," and 7.6% (11) "neither satisfied or dissatisfied". We appreciate the many useful comments we received about how this new system can be improved for next year!

Also new in 2024 was the use of updated Book Sales equipment and software. Since the festival only happens once per year, it does not make financial sense for us to invest in an expensive solution. We reached out to UCM's University Store at the Crossing and they assisted by loaning us their equipment, in addition to training our team on the software. This strengthened our ability to reconcile our accounts and provide debit and credit card services at each of our cash registers!

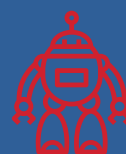
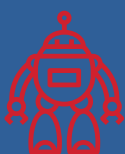


Ronald Smith

We also included a visit to Warrensburg's Retrograde Charitable Toy and Videogame Museum for our presenters. This was a popular event that we will definitely repeat in the future. We spent a fabulous evening playing games and seeing many nostalgic toys and tech from our childhoods!

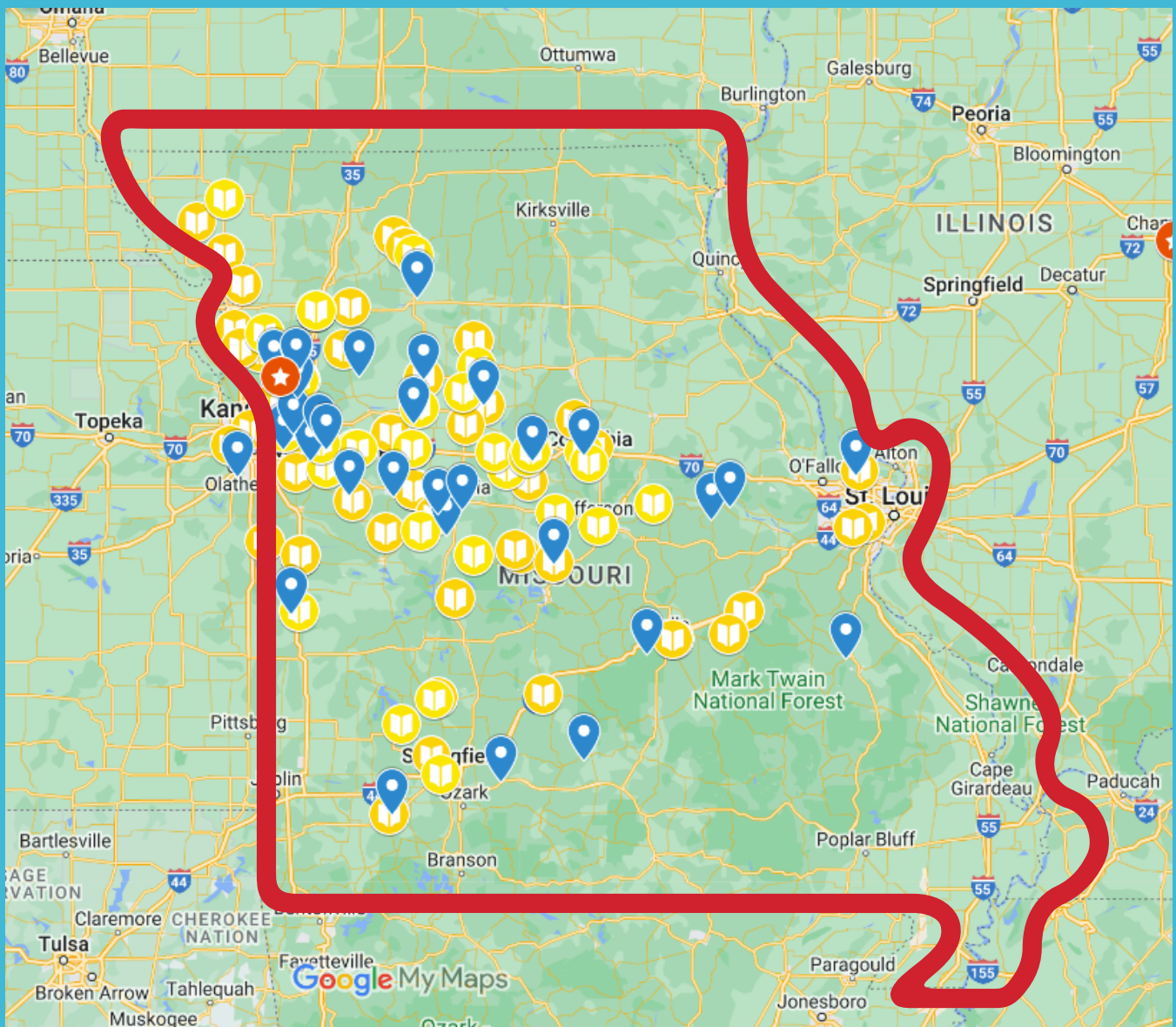


Daniel Nayeri



Our Attendees

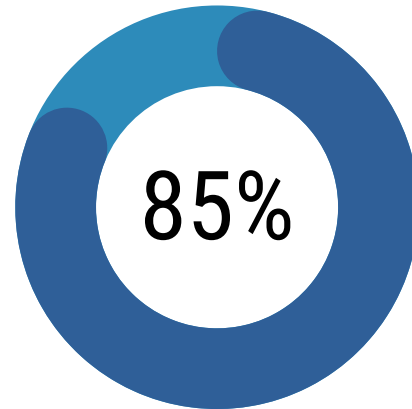
The majority of our attendees come in school groups from across the state of Missouri. In 2024 we welcomed 117 schools, including 27 new to the CLF!



<https://bit.ly/4dPLnt5>

Serving Our Communities

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 2024 received Title I federal funds (99 schools), which was the same percentage as in 2023. The majority of remaining schools were private, and therefore ineligible for Title I funds.



**Schools receiving
Title I Funds**

"We absolutely LOVE the Children's Literature Festival. I will continue to bring students every single year. Thank you for what you do for kids. This gives us an opportunity that we cannot afford to provide to our students as a low income Title 1 school. Bringing authors into our school is just not something we are able to afford at this time. The fact that you are able to bring so many together for us means more than you could ever know."

Quote from one of 2024 survey respondents



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 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 (those from schools) or free registration for a family of 4 (individuals).

Attendee Surveys

I love this trip and so do the students. We are helping students become readers and writers. Thank you so much for all the hard work that is put into this each year."

It was a wonderful experience. Hearing the authors present helped bring their books to life.

The whole draw of the festival is that students get to interact personally with real authors and get to see them as real humans."

"We were so happy with our first experience. Thank you so much for all the work you put into planning this wonderful event. Our children came to school the next day already asking if they could attend again next year. That is a true sign of a successful event!"

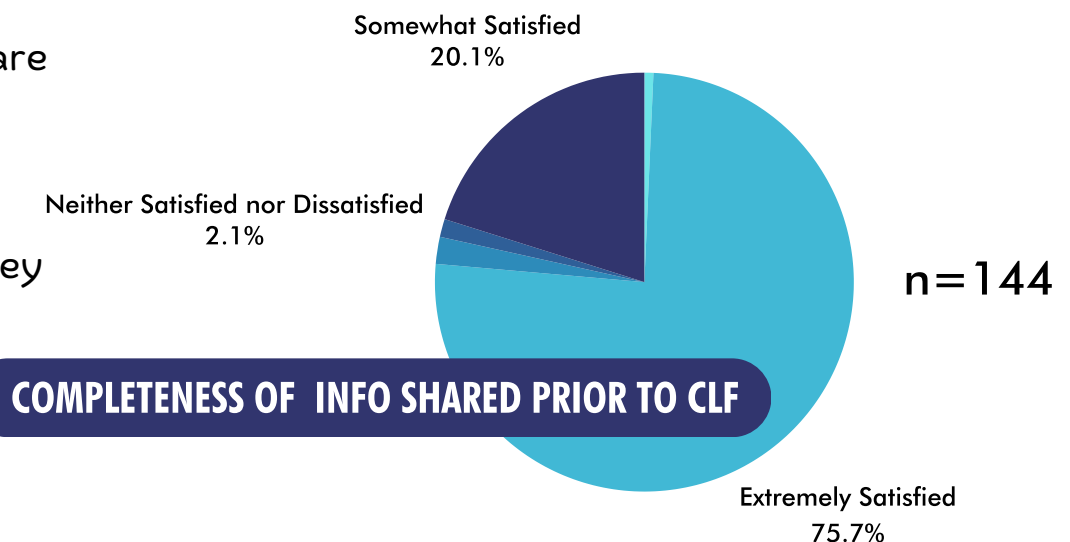
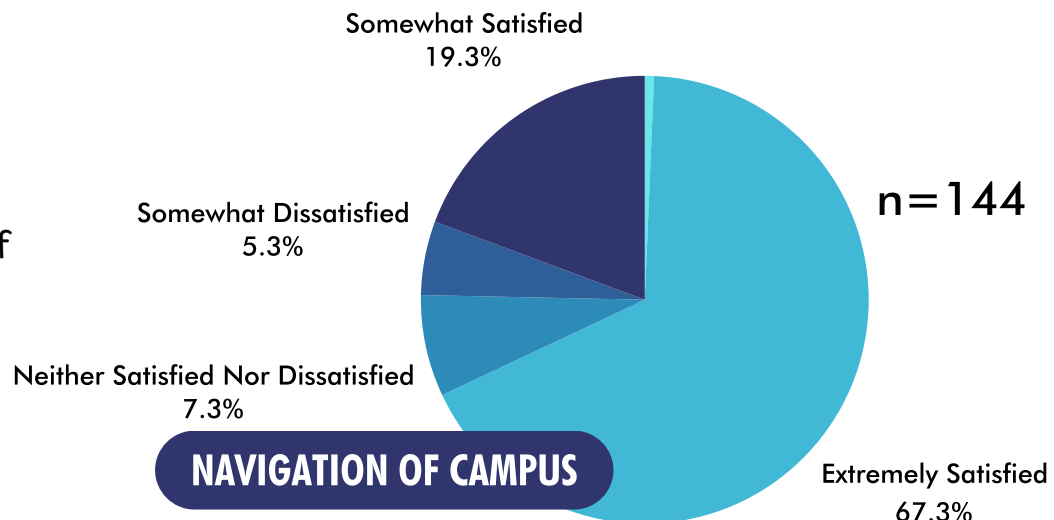
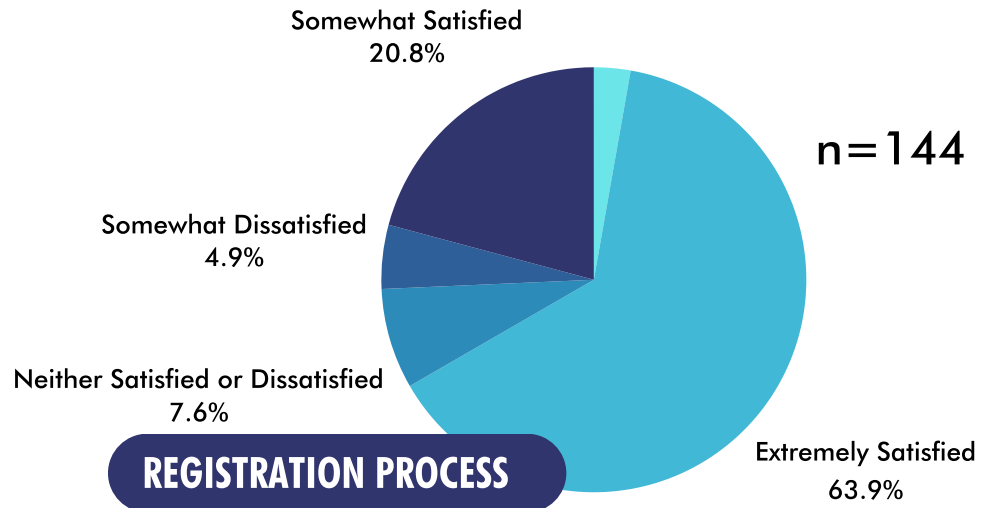
I will continue to bring students to the festival year after year. It is ran so well. Nothing is a surprise. I can plan to the finest detail in advance for our parent volunteers.

"We appreciate the hard work that goes into planning the festival. It was a very impactful experience for our students."

Survey Results

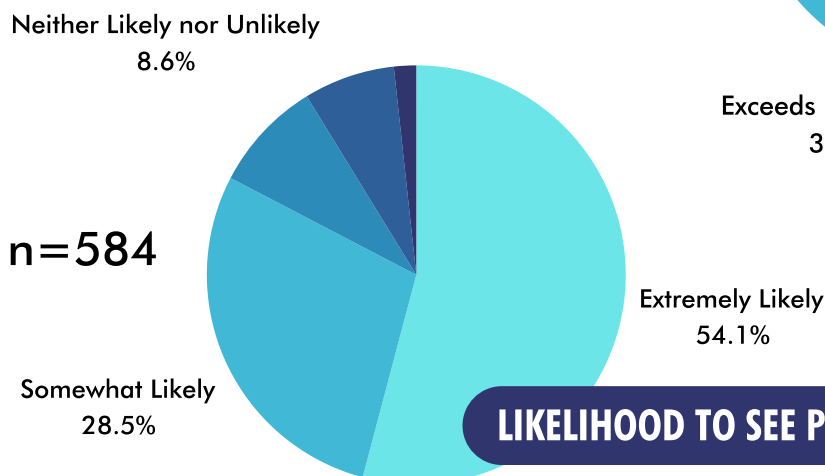
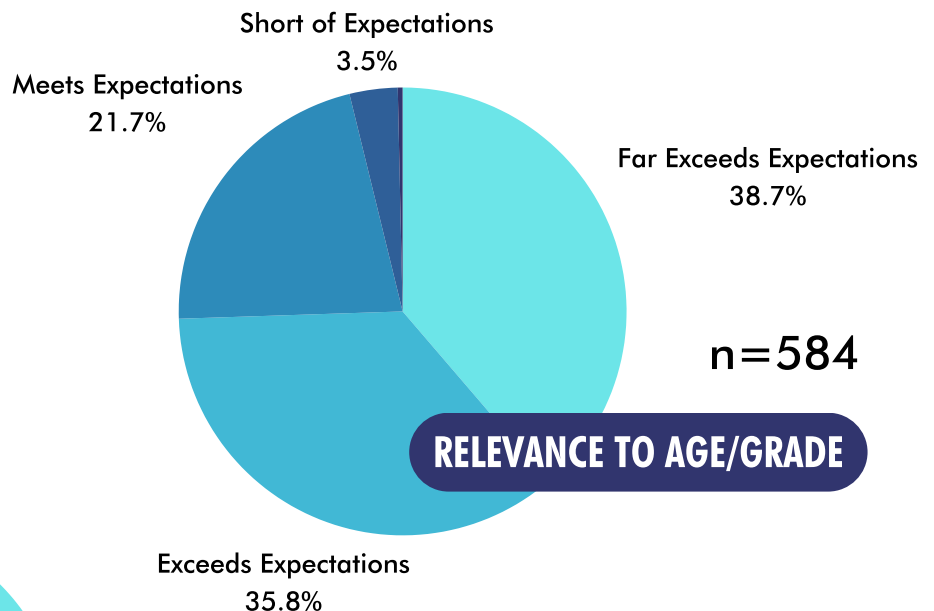
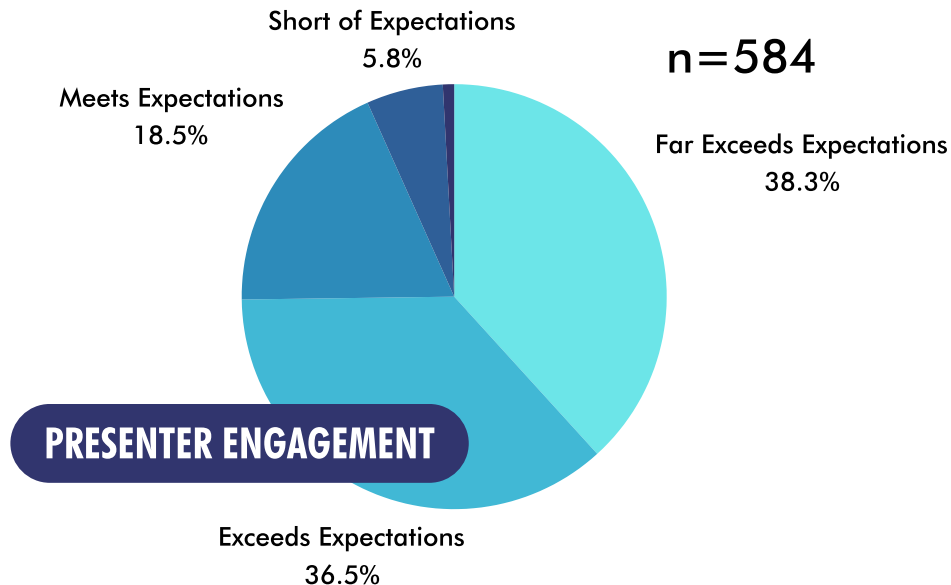
Survey results on attendee satisfaction with Pre-Festival processes, information-sharing and campus navigation were overwhelmingly positive. As noted in the “New in 2024” section, our new registration process was well-received by the majority, but there is always room for improvement! For example, many respondents want to see the schedule in advance of registration in a grid layout to help them plan their day.

Additionally, several respondents said the outdoor feather flags are great but additional information is needed *inside venues* to help users navigate once they get there.



Survey Results Continued

Close to 75% of total responses received indicated that the 2024 presenters either exceeded or far exceeded expectations for presenter engagement, and a similar number said that the presentations were relevant to their students' grades or ages. 54% of total responses received indicated that the attendee would be extremely likely to attend another presentation by that author again 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, which we have done since 2020. In 2024, almost 85% of survey respondents indicated far above, somewhat above, or average satisfaction with presenter diversity, up from 68% in 2023.

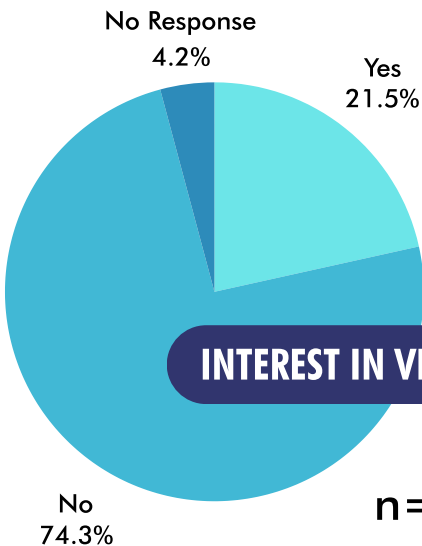
SATISFACTION WITH THE DIVERSITY OF PRESENTERS

Somewhat Above Average
28.4%

Average
11.3%

n=144

Far Above Average
60.3%



Continuing the trend we have seen post-pandemic, the majority of respondents are **not** interested in virtual presentations.

n=144



Presenter Surveys

A post-event survey was sent out to all the 2024 presenters. The survey for presenters consisted of questions divided into the following categories: Pre-Festival Experience, Festival Experience, Presentation Sessions, and Looking Forward. 22 out of the 23 presenters who were in person filled out the survey.

The respondents found the Festival to be either extremely (18) or very well (3) organized and 100% wished to be invited back for a future festival. 21 presenters rated the Festival personnel to be excellent, with 81% finding their volunteers to be excellent (15) or good (3).

Tech support on Monday morning continues to be a challenge, as well as ensuring that our volunteers are well-prepared. Presenters also offered useful suggestions about how to schedule sessions in the future.

"I had a great time. It's a pleasure to participate in the festival, and I feel proud to be a part of its long history."

"More than ever, these events are super important, and all of the staff, presenters, and audience seemed to be aligned in that mission. It gave me so much hope."



"I think this festival is the gold standard for children's book festivals."

"This festival was the best I've attended as an author! Focusing an entire event on kidlit authors really showed how important the organizers consider their young readers to be."

Sunday Luncheon



For the first time, a post-event survey was sent out to 2024 luncheon attendees. We had 25 respondents.

The majority (76%) were extremely satisfied with the pre-event processes. The majority (60%) also were extremely satisfied with meal options, meal presentation, venue and atmosphere.

The majority (76%) were also extremely satisfied with the opening remarks and luncheon speaker, Padma Venkatraman. Most respondents heard of the luncheon through our website (42%) or word of mouth (29%). The majority of respondents went to, and purchased from, book sales.

"The speaker was fabulous! Had I known the luncheon had speakers like this I would have tried to attend them sooner."

"The food was wonderful! The authors have always done a great job leading small-talk and answering questions. The keynote speaker's presentation was WONDERFUL. The overall experience was terrific."

"I really enjoyed Padma Venkatraman's speech. I appreciate highly that the festival did not shy away from the tough topics."

"I was really pleased with the speaker and the length of the program. Everyone seemed very respectful and it was great seeing the authors interacting with the students."



Volunteers

In 2024 63 great folks volunteered their time to help the CLF be successful. 26 were able to help us on both Monday and Tuesday!

Along with many individuals, we welcomed 2 repeat groups of volunteers: National Honor Society members from both Warrensburg High School and Smith-Cotton in Sedalia. For the first time, a group of Epsilon Beta members from Jasper County High School (all the way from Joplin!) were able to assist us on both Monday and Tuesday.



Every year we try to improve the festival, and one small thing we did in 2024 was to provide downtime activities for volunteers. We had puzzles and coloring pages as well as a list of things that could be done during their times off. We also did a volunteer survey, but had a small response rate (14 out of 63, or 22%). One of our recommendations for 2025 is to have a paper survey volunteers can complete the day of the event!



Dow Phumiruk and her volunteers

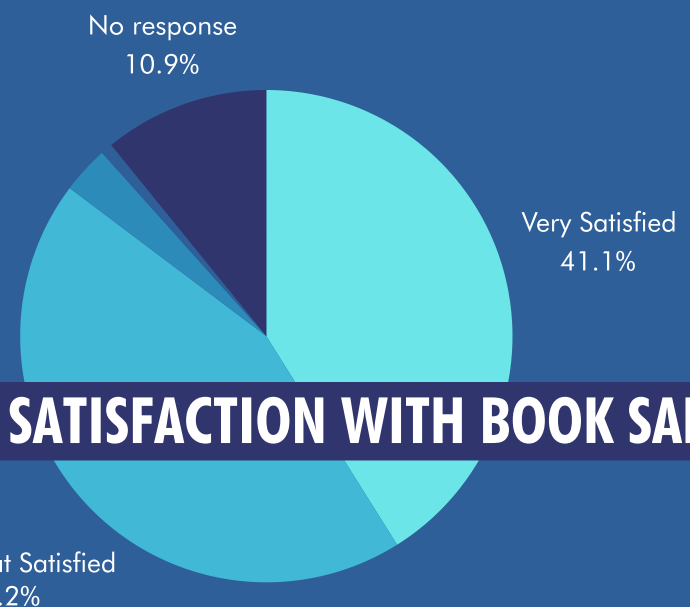


Book Sales

As noted in our “New in 2024” section, this year we were able to use the UCM University Store’s cash registers, which was a tremendous help with our reconciliation process.

Also, in 2024 book orders were placed primarily through a vendor network called PubNet, which helped simplify the process.

As has been done for the last several years, stock is divided into 3 separate dates (Sunday, Monday and Tuesday) in order to minimize disappointment for those attending on later days. The majority of our survey respondents reported visiting and purchasing books at Book Sales, and 85% noted they were very or somewhat satisfied with the selection.



SATISFACTION WITH BOOK SALES

2024 Bookmark Contest

A bookmark contest launched in 2019, and is currently in its 4th year! (We did not hold the contest during our virtual event in 2021, nor during our abbreviated event in 2022.) We are excited to report a record number of **289 entries** in 2024, a 91% increase from the number we received in 2023! We had 21 participating schools as well as several entries from homeschoolers. UCM's Manager of the Office of Health Promotion, Suzy Latare, served as judge. Six winners' designs were printed and given away during the Festival. All winners and honorable mentions received certificates in the mail and students received multiple copies of their winning design. All entries were displayed in Book Sales in the Elliott Student Union.

2024 Bookmark judge, Suzy Latare



Bookmarks on display
at 2024 Book Sales



Grade 3 Winner: Griffin Linscott, Northwestern R-1
Grade 4 Winner: Caleb Peery, Homeschooler
Grade 5 Winner: Mallory McNeeley, Marshall Public School
Grade 6 Winner: Lila Davis, California Middle School
Grade 7 Winner: Ella Bloch, Rolla Junior High
Grade 8 Winner: Milly Hough, Lebanon Middle School



2024 Photo Scavenger Hunt



SCAN ME

RULES

- Everyone on the team must be in every picture, except the chaperone, who takes the picture
- All photos must be taken during the Festival, on the UCM campus
- Have fun, but be respectful at all times!

BONUS ITEMS (5 POINTS EACH)

- With something that begins with the letter "O"
- Inside the Old Swimming Pool
- With someone wearing a UCM name tag
- With an author
- Entire team jumping (everyone must be in mid-air to count)

2024 PHOTO SCAVENGER HUNT

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL MISSOURI
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE FESTIVAL
EST. 1988

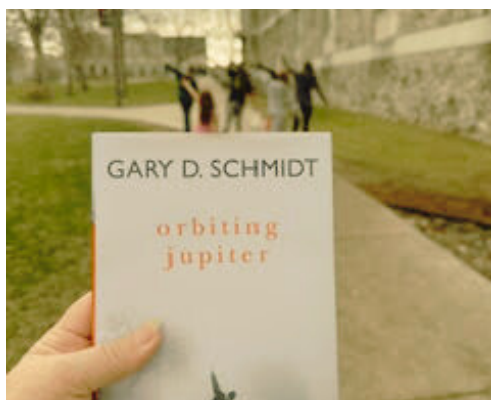
TAKE A PICTURE (1 POINT EACH)

- Posing with a statue
- With your lunches
- In front of the library
- In the Student Union
- With a mule
- Recreating a scene from a book cover (Book cover must be in photo too)
- A wild animal
- With a yellow vehicle
- Making the funniest faces
- With everyone's reflection
- With everyone reading a book
- With any kind of CLF sign
- In front of the UCM sign
- On the otherside of a window

THIS ACTIVITY IS OFFERED AS ANOTHER FUN WAY TO ENJOY THE FESTIVAL AND OUR BEAUTIFUL CAMPUS. THERE IS NO OBLIGATION TO POST PICTURES TO SOCIAL MEDIA.

Every year we offer another way to enjoy the beautiful UCM campus during any festival downtime. We provide a list of photo prompts and some brief rules. Although we have received a lot of positive feedback about this activity via surveys, we don't always receive copies of the photos people take!

This year a group of students chaperoned by Sandy Van Wagner from Smithville, MO did a terrific job and they got full points for their submission! Thanks for the pics!



Key Recommendations

1

Improve campus navigation

- Increase signage inside buildings, making sure paths to specific rooms are clearly marked from all building entrances
- Station volunteers at all entrances to guide attendees

2

Improve registration

- Share schedule in advance and include a grid view
- Open registration at a different time
- Allow people to add multiple authors per time slot instead of requiring multiple groups

3

Improve volunteer experience

- Move volunteer meet-up location to 1st floor of library
- Investigate using an app to help with pre-event communication
- Explore using What3Words to help with campus navigation
- Have survey ready to fill out on day of event in paper or online, and move to Qualtrics system (to be consistent with other surveys)

4

Seek more collaborations with campus partners

- Work with Literacy Education students to add another free time activity such as a story walk
- Work with UCM students to write individualized presenter introductions

5

Minimize stress over technology for presenters

- Provide individualized checklist of requirements for each venue/presenter to Meeting and Conference Services staff to ensure completion
- Provide photos of venues to presenters in advance
- Clarify expectations around preloads



Top row: Gary Schmidt, Maya Kucij, Pablo Cartaya, Rory Power, Ronald Smith, Sharee Miller, Dusti Bowling, Daniel Nayeri, Chris Barton

Middle row: Rob Buyea, Beth Vrabel, Crystal Allen, Dow Phumiruk, H.M. Bouwman, Jennifer Ziegler

Front row: Roseanne Brown, Padma Venkatraman, Roland Smith, Saadia Faruqi, Adib Khorram, Angela Cervantes, Karina Yan Glaser,

Niki Lenz, Janice Harrington

Missing: Mary Downing Hahn



Thank
you



**Missouri
Arts Council**

The State of the Arts

& Becky Sadler Klein,

whose generous support funds the
Gilbert-Sadler Speaker Series

UCM PARTNERS

Meeting and Conference Services: Amanda Montgomery, Klint Braun
Sodexo Food Services: Kelly Haggard, Sonya Lasater, Tinashe Dzvurumi, Shelly Loulous
Theatre & Dance: Ashley Miller-Scully, William Spencer Musser, Alice Combs
Office of Technology: Doug Heath, Josh Blaize, Austin Hutchison, Emma Gardner
Office of Sponsored Programs & Research: Kathy Schnakenburg
Student Activities: Beth Rutt, Christina Kerns
Book Store: Charlie Rutt, Ed White, Leah Sobba

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Comfort Inn
Soapweed
Fitters
Retrograde Charitable Toy and
Videogame Museum
Gunzil & Bowers Bookstore
Marcy Barnhart at Warrensburg
Convention and Visitors Bureau

BOOK SALES

Shara McNeeley
Miles McNeeley
Cindy Skahan
Michelle Trent
Carol Knight
Jones Knight
Brenna Davis
Collin Kuecker
Samnavitha Tirumalasetty
Kordell Ballard

SPECIAL HELP

Provost Phil Bridgmon
Dr. Janette Klein
Angie Curtright
Eddie Osborne
Robin Osborne
Kyle and Emily Constant
Dr. Alex Smith
Andrea Kirkendall
Suzy Latare
Shin Batz
Samuel Olawole Akande
Cameron Nuss

THANK YOU



THANK YOU

CLF Committee

Patty Cary, Registration & Logistics

Chad Marnholtz, Book Sales

Kim Anthes, Book Sales

Kirsten Shaw, Volunteers

Rebekah Mauschaugh, Social Media & Outreach

Maya Kucij, Director

CLF Volunteers

**All the individuals who joined us,
along with the groups from**

- **Warrensburg High School National Honor Society**
- **Smith-Cotton High School Honor Society**
- **Jasper County High School Epsilon Beta**



**Happy Retirement to
Patty Cary,
who retired from UCM in 2024.
We thank her for her many contributions,
but especially her hard work and positive attitude!
We will miss you, Patty!**

Thank you to all our participating schools!

ADRIAN ELEMENTARY
ADRIAN MIDDLE HIGH SCHOOL
APPLETON CITY R-2
AURORA JR. HIGH SCHOOL
AVENUE CITY SCHOOL
BLACKWATER R-II
BLUE HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY
BOLIVAR INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
BOLIVAR MIDDLE SCHOOL
BOONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL
BRUNSWICK R-2 SCHOOLS
BUCKNER ELEMENTARY
BUEKER MIDDLE SCHOOL
CALIFORNIA MIDDLE SCHOOL
CAMERON HIGH SCHOOL
CAMERON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
CAMERON VETERANS MIDDLE SCHOOL
CARROLLTON ELEMENTARY
CARROLLTON MIDDLE SCHOOL
CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL
CLIFFORD H NOWLIN MIDDLE SCHOOL
COLE CAMP R1
CONCORDIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
COOPER COUNTY (BUNCETON)
CORDILL MASON ELEMENTARY
CRAWFORD COUNTY R I
DADEVILLE SCHOOLS
DOGWOOD ELEMENTARY
DREXEL RIV
EAST BUCHANAN SCHOOL DISTRICT
EAST LYNNE ELEMENTARY
ELDON MIDDLE SCHOOL
FIRE PRAIRIE UPPER ELEMENTARY
FORDLAND SCHOOLS
FRANKLIN SMITH ELEMENTARY
GASCONADE COUNTY R-I (HERMANN K12)
GENTRY MIDDLE SCHOOL
GREEN RIDGE RVIII SCHOOL
GROVESPRING ELEMENTARY
GUADALUPE CENTERS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
HAMILTON ELEMENTARY
HARRISBURG R-VIII
HARTVILLE ELEMENTARY R-2
HARTVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL
HAWTHORNE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
HIGBEE R-VIII
HOLDEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
HORIZON ELEMENTARY
HUME R-8 SCHOOL
INDIAN TRAILS ELEMENTARY
KEARNEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
KNOB NOSTER ELEM. & MIDDLE SCHOOLS
LAFAYETTE COUNTY C-1 MIDDLE SCHOOL
JOHN B. LANGE MIDDLE SCHOOL
LAURA SPEED ELLIOTT MIDDLE SCHOOL
LAWSON MIDDLE SCHOOL
LEBANON MIDDLE SCHOOL
LEE'S SUMMIT MIDDLE SCHOOLS

LONE JACK MIDDLE SCHOOL
MARYVILLE R-II SCHOOL DISTRICT
MASON ELEMENTARY
MATTHEWS ELEMENTARY-GRAIN VALLEY
MIAMI R1 SCHOOL DISTRICT
MID BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
MONTESSORI SCHOOLHOUSE HIGGINSVILLE
MORGAN COUNTY R 1
MORGAN COUNTY R-II MIDDLE SCHOOL VERSAILLES
NODAWAY-HOLT ELEMENTARY
NORBORNE R-VIII SCHOOL DISTRICT
NORTH ANDREW
NORTH PLATTE INTERMEDIATE
NORTH PLATTE JUNIOR HIGH 6-8
NORTH SHELBY
NORTHWESTERN R-1 SCHOOL
OAKHILL DAY SCHOOL
ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL
ODESSA UPPER ELEMENTARY
OREARVILLE R-IV
OUR LADY OF LOURDES INTERPARISH SCHOOL
PETTIS COUNTY R12
PILOT GROVE C4
PLEASANT VIEW R6
POLO R-VII SCHOOLS
PRAIRIE BRANCH ELEMENTARY, GRAIN VALLEY MO
RICH HILL HIGH SCHOOL
RISSLER ELEMENTARY
ROLLA JR HIGH
ROLLA MIDDLE SCHOOL
SACRED HEART CATHOLIC SCHOOL
SAINTS PETER AND PAUL
SANTA FE ELEMENTARY
SEDALIA MIDDLE SCHOOL
SHAWNEE R-3
SLATER ALEXANDER ELEMENTARY
SNI-A-BAR ELEMENTARY
SOUTH CALLAWAY
SOUTHVIEW ELEMENTARY
ST. ANDREW
ST. PAUL CONCORDIA
ST. PETER CATHOLIC SCHOOL
STEELVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL
STEWARTSVILLE ELEMENTARY
STONY POINT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SUNNY POINTE ELEMENTARY
SUNRISE ELEMENTARY
SWEET SPRINGS R7
THOMAS JEFFERSON MIDDLE SCHOOL
TRENTON R-IX
TRINITY LUTHERAN SCHOOL
TURNER USD 202
VERSAILLES ELEMENTARY
VOY SPEARS, JR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
WARSAW SOUTH ELEMENTARY
WILLARD INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL NORTH
WILLARD ORCHARD HILLS ELEMENTARY
WILLIAM YATES ELEMENTARY