

PUBLISHERS' ASSOCIATIONS

by InterLit staff

The particular focus and priorities of Christian and secular publishers associations vary according to the concerns of their members. Cost and obligations of membership varies widely, as do benefits. Here, however, is a list of the types of activities and benefits that professional associations offer.

Linkage. Publishers' associations unite persons and organizations in the industry, both within the country or region. They also provide access to international associations like the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), the International Publishers Association (IPA), and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

Information exchange. Publishers' associations can serve as a forum for the interchange of ideas with respect to publication, sales, copyright and other matters of interest to book publishers. In so doing, they allow the concerns of small, medium and large-scale publishers to be heard.

Market research. Due to the nature of their constituency, publishers' associations can usually solicit and publish data on the industry more cheaply and effectively than could its individual members.

Publications. As a logical extension of their information function, most publishers' associations provide print and electronic information to their members and to the public through newsletters, magazines, special reports, web sites, and so on. The Associação Brasileira de Editores Cristãos (ABEC), the African Publishers Network (APNET), and many others prepare informative and worthwhile publications.

Reference materials. In addition to publishing their own information and data, many publishing associations subscribe to and provide lending libraries of the materials that some of their poorer members might well not be able to afford.

Referral services. Publishers' associations can often provide members to suppliers of specific services and may even review or provide recommendations. Also, some associations serve as employment clearinghouses for both individuals and member organizations.

Professional development. Many associations organize training or provide access to training offered by others. For example, in November, Letra Viva, a network of Christian publishers in Latin America, will provide training at their regional conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The same month, ABEC, in Brazil, will work

with Cook Communications Ministries International to provide training on sales strategies. Publishers' associations provide or facilitate publicity for numerous seminars, workshops, and conferences.

Promotion, distribution and sales services. Letra Viva not only enables participation of its members through combined booths and exhibits at such venues as Expolit and book fairs, but it also produces a full-color promotional magazine featuring its members' books, for distribution to the general public. Moreover, it has sponsored the creation of an office with a warehouse in the United States to facilitate fulfillment of orders for the books of its member organizations.

Standardization. Industry organizations can foster the development of standardization for industry practices. For instance, the Evangelical Press Association in the United States has published a code of ethics as well as a non-binding set of guidelines for editors. The guidelines cover such matters as payment terms for writers and copyrights.

Recognition. Through sponsorship of competitions, and by providing scholarships, awards, and other types of recognition for its member organizations, a publishers association can promote and reward excellence.

Public Relations. Associations can foster good relationships with organizations and professionals related to the publishing industry such as booksellers, author guilds, distributor groups, librarians, teachers, etc.

Advocacy. Publishers' associations can promote and protect the interests of their members. They can lobby industry suppliers, requesting larger discounts for their members. They can lobby government entities for more expenditures in education and literacy programs. They can mount joint campaigns on national and international policies that affect the book industry, to build an environment that favors publishing.

How can you join the associations that will best meet your needs? First, do some research. On the web, or through informal surveys of your peers, find out what organizations serve your country or region. Take an active part in both Christian and secular associations whenever this is appropriate. Make full use of the benefits available and volunteer your own expertise and resources as well. An effective association requires the full participation and commitment of its members—each one can make a valuable contribution for the benefit of all. ❖