

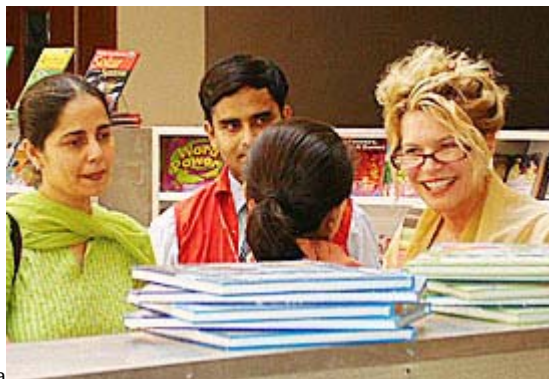
Scholastic Book Fairs™

Scholastic holds over 170,000 book fairs in 28 countries, bringing the joy and excitement of reading to children in schools around the world. As Book Fairs Field Service Manager for the U.S. Central West Region, Deborah Roberts Kaiser has visited countless book fairs throughout California. Here, she tells us what it's like to visit a book fair more than 7,000 miles away.

For the past 11 years, I have been the Field Service Manager for the Central West Region of Scholastic Book Fairs. My husband Jack and I have just returned from Northern India where we journeyed by car through the State of Rajasthan and New Delhi. The first thing we noticed during our travel was the explosion of dazzling colors that sumptuously complements the earthy desert terrain. And, oh my, the dress! Rich or poor, the women here proudly go about their daily chores decked out in a fireworks-display of brilliant red, yellow, green, and orange saris.



Photos by Jack Kaiser



Deborah (right) at a book fair in India

Many of the centuries-old cities continue to preserve a surprising number of stunning forts, temples, and monuments recalling conquests by the Mongols, Turks, Persians, Mughals, and ultimately the British, until 1947 when India achieved its cherished independence. While the

sights and the food were a tourist's delight, even the weather totally cooperated and exceeded our expectations.

A FOCUS ON CUSTOMERS: "IT'S UNIVERSAL " All that having been said, however, what I most remember was my visit to a [Scholastic Book Fair](#) at K.R. Mangalam School in New Delhi, expertly organized by my previously unknown colleague Branch Manager Leona Srivastava, who served as our most charming host and expert guide. Be advised that after 14 years with Jack, I have not once been able to entice my spouse to attend a book fair anywhere in my Central West Region of California. But in India, a mere 7,000 miles away, he was more than happy to accompany me on this Indian Scholastic Book Fair tour.

After Leona retrieved us from our hotel, she and I quickly connected and chatted, and I learned about the Book Fairs India style, all while Leona multi-tasked juggling not one but two cell phones. Jack turned to me and said, "I feel like I'm at home! You're always talking on several phones at the same time, taking orders, smoothing a librarian's ruffled feathers, and hearing feedback from your team. Scholastic: I guess it's universal."

When we arrived at the Mangalam School, the librarian, who was assisting students with their book selections, greeted us most graciously. While observing her interaction with the students, Jack said to her, "You seem like a very nice person and are doing a terrific job with the kids. In California when my wife gets home from work, she usually talks about her 'time with those cranky librarians!'" Without skipping a beat, she turned to him and said, "Well, someone has to discipline the children!" and her sweet expression promptly changed, as she looked him up and down.

My new colleague, Leona, is an incredible dedicated employee who truly loves her work. On my visit, she shared with me a contest called "Are Your Teachers True Friends, Philosophers & Guides?," showed me marketing materials like the Student Wish List, and introduced me to her cashiers who share her enthusiasm. We talked about successful sales business practices, as well as thoroughly enjoying our time together.

AT THE FAIR When the students streamed into the Book Fair, their energy and excitement were palpable, just like it is stateside. The Scholastic representative and the children's teachers helped them find their selections from the many racks that were attractively arranged in a sunny courtyard.



Scholastic India book fairs feature rolling wire racks, as opposed to the hinged metal cases that are used in the U.S. India expects to incorporate more cases in the future, as the growth and reach of Book Fairs increase.

Scholastic has the best books anywhere, including India. About 90% of the books are published in English; the other 10% are in Hindi, which is a direct language descendent of Sanskrit. As a gentle, expressive language featuring an elegant written alphabet, Hindi is popular in song and

verse. It is also the “first language” of more than 180 million Indian citizens.

There were many “crossover” titles in the assortment of books for sale. Eager readers seemed to gravitate towards the fantasy books and “fun reference” titles like The Scholastic Book of World Records, a perennial favorite of kids everywhere. As is the case in the U.S., India uses themes for its fairs, and the theme of the fair I visited was “Hats off to Reading”.

Jack was enjoying the Book Fair so much that he eventually wandered off to snap photographs of children working on art projects or listening to stories. The principal noticed and hurried over, waving her finger in an east/west direction, a universal gesture for “no pictures!” As is the case in U.S. schools, in India kids cannot be photographed without parental consent. Jack complied with her instruction but was not deterred in the least — moving on to visit every tech lab, English language lab, and yoga class, and testing all the equipment on campus!



A FAIR TO REMEMBER I learned so much during this incredible adventure. After our visit to India I now have a confirmed Book Fairs husband. It only took 14 years and a wonderful trip around the world to New Delhi to convert him! Our new Indian friends freely shared with both us their lives and vibrant culture with grace and pride. While we may be many thousands of miles apart physically, we are all still very much alike. I will keep and cherish my fond memories of Scholastic Book Fairs, India, forever.

To learn more about Book Fairs at your school go to <http://www.scholastic.com/bookfairs/>