

BookCon and Book Expo of America In New York -- One City, Two Events and LOTS of Books

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The Book Expo Of America (BEA) and [BookCon](#) 2.0 just ended this weekend in New York City. If you love books, you should have been there. Actually, if you love movies or TV shows, you should have been there too, since lots of your favorite movies and TV shows are based on books or spin-off books. And if you love sports or food or astronomy or gardening or mysteries or history or just about anything else, you should have been there. An app? Pshaw! They've got a much better book about that.

The BEA is where the publishing industry talks to itself. Editors and writers and publicists and librarians and bookstore owners and marketers all get together and take casual meetings and attend panels and go cheer on authors so they can jazz each other up about the many books just out or coming up this summer and fall.

[BookCon](#) is where the publishing industry talks to the world, offering more panels (but FUN ones) and author signings and movie screenings. It's like ComicCon's smarter kid brother. And a big star at both of them is John Green, the best-selling author of *The Fault In Our Stars* and *Looking For Alaska* and *Paper Towns*, which has been turned into a movie that opens July 24th. Green chatted with [BookFilter](#) and seemed positively abashed about having no new book on the horizon but perked up considerably when talking about the movie and public education and his passion for soccer. (For those not following the FIFA scandal, "Blatter" is the name of the head of that troubled org.) Check it out:

And here's the trailer to the movie.

If you haven't read *Paper Towns*, don't fear -- it's virtually cancer free and filled with witty dialogue teens only wish they could spout out on command. Green's a rock star because he does naturally what so many authors are attempting: using social media to stay in touch with their fans. It works for Green because he's not doing it to promote his books; he's doing it because he loves it. Check out [his website](#), and [Crash Course](#), terrific online videos about history and math and science and literature and more, all designed to be great resources for students, teachers and anyone who wants to learn something fun. (Anyone, that is, except the Mongols.) John and his brother Hank created it and have now partnered with PBS and hope to make educational resources available for free to everyone around the world.

As you can see, Green's multi-media career is going full bore. But [BookCon](#) is just getting started. The big Comic-Cons reach more than 100,000 people. This year was the second edition of BookCon and they're hoping to hit 15,000 to 20,000. Yet with care and smart moves, the sky is the limit. Book tours have become increasingly difficult for publishers to fund. So instead of sending out each other individually, why not bring the fans to them? I can easily imagine [BookCons](#) on the east and west coast, north and south some four times a year: every season has great books, every season a big movie or TV show linked to a book is getting launched or enjoying a new season, and every big name author like Judy Blume and Stephen King and David Sedaris and Diana Gabaldon and John Grisham and yes John Green can draw passionate fans. With them as anchors, a lot of newer authors these name brands respect and support can reach tons of fans all at once. Brien McDonald, the show manager of [BookCon 2015](#) for ReedPOP talked with me about what was happening at this year's event and their plans for the future. (The sound is iffy, but that's because unlike John Green, I'm pretty new to all

this video-ing stuff.)

For me, the BEA was pretty sleepy this year. In years past, people would trundle around luggage on wheels so they could pile up on galleys, the advance copies of big releases. Now with so many books available as e-galleys online, that intense drive to "get" a certain book right away so you could read it and judge for yourself just wasn't there. The aisles seemed less crowded -- especially in the vast area where a huge contingent from China laid out elaborate displays of books published in China and Chinese books they hoped to promote in the US. It was impressive, but with faux grass and small shrubbery in the middle of mini-plazas they'd created, the displays looked like quiet public gardens for private contemplation whenever you stumbled into that area of the show floor.

[BookCon](#) was more exciting. The fans weren't nearly as overwhelming as the aisle-clogging crowd at Comic-Con in the fall But they were just as passionate. Starry celebs included Mindy Kaling, BJ Novak, Jason Segal, Judy Blume and R.L. Stine of Goosebumps fame. But just as many fans were excited to see vloggers turned authors like Connor Franta or attending panels like the Rotten Tomatoes event where the audience squared off with critics like Joe Neumaier of the New York Daily News and voted on the best and worst movies based on books. (I know Neumaier and happily booed when he said The Golden Compass was good. And kudos to the young woman who amusingly and correctly said the worst book into film was The Cat In The Hat.)

The event still needs a lot of TLC to grow. I wish the floors were filled with indie sellers just like Comic-Con. Specialized booksellers and self-published authors and vendors of pulp fiction collectables and contests and give-aways (a lot more give-aways) would help give fans a lot more to do than roam the aisles of booths publishers mounted for BEA and then mostly abandoned once [BookCon](#) began. [BookCon](#) is such a no-brainer -- people spend some \$16 billion a year on books (not counting textbooks and the like or that number would be much bigger). Every season brings great books. And every season deserves an event with a lot of hoopla to let people know those books are coming out. Next year [BookCon](#) takes place in Chicago. Hopefully some day soon it'll come to a city near you.

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