

Volunteer Information SWF 2012

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. By doing so you will get a better idea about the different Sydney Writers' Festival 2012 volunteer roles and their main tasks.

As every year is different to the last, we recommend that even our experienced volunteers read ahead to pick up what has changed and what is new.

The document has five sections:

- Volunteer satisfaction
- Volunteer roles and main tasks
- Volunteer orientation
- Shifts and rosters
- Pre-Festival volunteering

Section 1: Volunteer satisfaction

The Festival believes there is a strong and direct link between satisfied volunteers and the success of the Festival. It is a simple equation. Having satisfied volunteers is a worthy goal in itself but satisfied volunteers are also better able to provide excellent customer service to Festival patrons.

The Festival measures volunteer satisfaction with an annual survey. Over the past three years, at least 90% of respondents rated their overall satisfaction at 8 out of 10 or higher. These are pleasing results but we know we can always try to improve them.

Improving volunteer satisfaction

An important factor contributing to volunteer satisfaction is providing clear information about the different volunteer roles and their main tasks. We will prepare you for your role as a Festival volunteer by:

- Describing the roles and tasks in this document
- Emailing you information about your shifts
- Providing further information and training at the orientation session on Saturday 5 May
- Assigning you a supervisor for your shifts at Walsh Bay and workshop venues

Your role in improving your own satisfaction

The single biggest thing you can do to improve the quality of your volunteer experience is to try to get on top of the information we give to you. This requires you to make a commitment to volunteering that is more than simply turning up wanting to help out. You also need to be motivated to engage with the information and the process.

Background skills and experience

For several years we have said that there is no particular set of skills or work experience required to be a volunteer. We have said that volunteering requires a certain set of personal behavioural capabilities. Having given the matter quite a lot of thought over the past several years after having seen hundreds of volunteers working around the Festival, we think it comes down to people having a love of literature and books as well as the following personal capabilities:

- Empathy
- Reliability
- Resilience
- Enthusiasm
- Tact

If you are person with these qualities in your DNA, then you will enjoy volunteering at the Sydney Writers' Festival.

Volunteer satisfaction promise

In return for your commitment to being a good Festival volunteer, we will continue to take all practical steps to deliver a volunteer program that generates a high level of volunteer satisfaction by:

- Being reliable in our dealings with you
- Building rosters that are balanced
- Providing useful information and training
- Giving you clear instructions in a friendly and respectful way
- Supporting you with experienced and reliable supervisors
- Giving you a clear identity as members of a valued group
- Providing you with a safe working environment
- Recognising your effort
- Respecting your feedback

Section 2: Volunteer roles and main tasks

The Sydney Writers' Festival Volunteer roles are:

- 'Greeter'
- Information Booth assistant
- Patrons with disabilities assistant
- Research assistant
- Book-signing queue manager – Walsh Bay bookshops
- Usher and queue manager – Walsh Bay venues
- Usher and queue manager – other venues
- Writer and guest guide – Walsh Bay venues
- Walsh Bay Writers' Green Room assistant

- Sydney Theatre Writers' Green Room assistant
- Media room assistant
- Workshop assistant
- 'Floater'/Reserve
- Supervisor

'Greeter'

'Greeters' are positioned at the main entrances to the Walsh Bay piers. Their purpose is to warmly welcome Festival patrons and provide directions in relation to the layout of the Walsh Bay precinct. Very often, 'Greeters' will offer patrons copies of the daily program sheet. Depending on how busy things are, complicated questions from patrons about the specific details of events will be referred to the volunteers in the Information Booth.

Information Booth assistant

The Information Booth is located near the main entrance to Pier 4/5. It is a major thoroughfare and just near the café and bookshop. The purpose of assistants working in the Information Booth is to answer the hundreds of questions raised by Festival patrons. They also manage a large whiteboard outlining last-minute changes to the advertised program. These roles are among the busiest of all of the volunteer roles and best suit experienced volunteers who are familiar with the Walsh Bay precinct and how the Festival works. A walkie-talkie is located in the Information Booth to facilitate communication with the venues and staff in other locations.

Patrons with disabilities assistant

This position is located at the Information Booth. The purpose of the role is to provide advice and support to Festival patrons with disabilities. This can include guiding a visually impaired patron to a venue or making special entry arrangements for a patron with impaired mobility.

Research assistant

New in 2012, Sydney Writers' Festival will be conducting a customer-research project with support from well-known specialists Woolcott Research. SWF volunteers will speak with Festival patrons waiting in queues and foyers to complete short questionnaires. Woolcott has experience with this form of research through conducting similar research at several other major festivals in Sydney. They will provide brief training for the volunteers assisting with the project.

Book-signing queue manager – Walsh Bay bookshops

This role is located at the various book-signing areas in the Walsh Bay precinct. The main task is to liaise with the bookshop staff in managing the queues of patrons wanting to get their books signed by the writers. You will need tact and resilience to ensure that queues move smoothly and without disruption.

Usher and queue manager – Walsh Bay venues

These are very busy and challenging roles. They involve managing queues for all of the Festival's free and some of its ticketed events at Walsh Bay, as well as entry and exit to and from those venues. During busy times, particularly at the weekend, there are often more people wanting to see the free events than can safely and legally fit in venues. You will be required to demonstrate both resilience and tact in managing the queues and the expectations of those queuing for those events. You are supported in this work by the close supervision and leadership of an experienced volunteer supervisor.

Usher and queue manager – other venues

There are a small number of events at venues other than Walsh Bay managed by professional Festival staff or venue staff. Volunteers assigned to shifts at such venues are to assist the professional staff with queue management and ushering as directed.

Writer and guest guide - Walsh Bay venues

A writer and guest guide is assigned to each of the seven Festival venues at Walsh Bay. The purpose of these roles is to collect parties of writers and other guests from the Writers' Green Room at Walsh Bay at least 15 minutes before the start of the event and lead the party to the guide's assigned venue. At the conclusion of the event, the guide takes the writers to the appropriate book-signing venue.

Walsh Bay Writers' Green Room assistant

The Writers' Green Room at Walsh Bay is one of the vital organisational hubs of the Festival. Writers, their publicists and event facilitators are asked to check into the Green Room at least 45 minutes before the start of their event. The Green Room assistants ensure the Festival guests are despatched to the correct venues with a Writer and Guest Guide volunteer at least 15 minutes before the event begins. Green Room assistants also manage the hospitality (light refreshments) provided in the Writers' Green Room.

Sydney Theatre Writers' Green Room assistant

This position works closely with the Festival's Sydney Theatre venue manager, assisting with getting writers, their publicists and event facilitators into the backstage Green Room at the Sydney Theatre.

Media Room assistant

The Festival operates a Media Room at Walsh Bay during the Festival for the media to conduct interviews with writers and guests. The Media Room assistant manages the venue to ensure it is suitable for this purpose.

Workshop assistant

The Festival runs an extensive workshop program. Festival staff check in at the venue from time to time, but volunteers in this role assume some responsibility for the smooth running of this part of the Festival. The role involves helping at the start of the workshops by ensuring that the rooms are provisioned with supplies. Additionally, the assistants register workshop participants when they arrive and, at the conclusion of workshops, ensure that the rooms are tidy and prepared for the following morning's workshops.

'Floater'/Reserve

Volunteers assigned to these roles are not 'spare'. They cover for other volunteers who do not make their shifts and to assist in other roles at peak times. If you are assigned to this role, rest assured you will be usefully deployed on important tasks on the day.

Supervisor

Supervisor roles are open to experienced Festival volunteers and require an interview with the Volunteer Coordinator. You can flag your interest in becoming a supervisor now by using the [contact form](#) on our website.

Section 3: Volunteer Orientation

The **compulsory** volunteer orientation session occurs on Saturday 5 May between 10.00am and 12.30pm. (Experienced volunteers will be able to leave a little earlier than 12.30pm). The orientation session will be held in the Bangarra Theatre on Pier 4/5 in Walsh Bay.

At the orientation, volunteers will be registered, given their ID, their 2012 T-shirt and welcome kit.

Volunteers will then be provided with general information as well as specific training and a tour of the precinct. As with the process last year, experienced volunteers will receive refresher training while new volunteers will get a more intensive and extensive experience.

Please note: if volunteers do not attend the orientation on 5 May, they will not be permitted to volunteer with the Festival. If emergencies or unexpected events prevent a prospective volunteer from attending the orientation, their participation in the Festival will be at the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator.

Section 4: Shifts and rosters

Shift length and times

There are three shifts per day with each shift being four and a half hours in duration. The shifts are as follows:

AM shift	8.30am until 1.00pm
PM shift	12.30pm until 5.00pm
EVE shift	4.30pm until 9.00pm*

* There are a few events that conclude at 10.30pm. Your agreement will be sought before being rostered to work at any of these types of events.

Building shift rosters

The shift rosters are built once applications close on Good Friday 6 April 2012. We cannot guarantee that all applicants will be rostered. We will try to give everyone at least one shift but sometimes even this is not possible. You stand a better chance of success if you are available for shifts between Thursday 17 May and Sunday 20 May as there are only a few shifts available earlier than these dates.

Minimum number of shifts

We ask all volunteers to make themselves available for at least two shifts, one of which must be between Thursday 17 May and Sunday 20 May so as to coincide with the peak need for volunteer help.

Getting your roster

Rosters will be emailed to successful applicants starting on 27 April. Some people's availability may change between submitting the application and receiving their roster. If you are no longer able to do the shifts you have been allocated, you must let the Volunteer Coordinator know as soon as possible.

Reporting at the start of your shift

For shifts at Walsh Bay venues, volunteers are to sign-in in the Volunteer Green Room at the start of their shift. For shifts at venues other than Walsh Bay, volunteers should report to a Festival staff member or designated volunteer supervisor. If you cannot make your shift, you must call the Volunteer Coordinator so a replacement can be found for you.

Consecutive shifts

Volunteers working consecutive shifts at Walsh Bay will get a meal voucher redeemable at one of the cafés in Walsh Bay.

Section 5: Pre-Festival volunteering

There are a small number of opportunities available for pre-Festival volunteering in the Festival office. The tasks and approximate dates of when help is needed are:

- Assisting with the preparation of Festival packs (mid to late March)
- Sorting competition entries (mid to late April)
- Putting together volunteer packs (first week of May)
- Putting together Festival guest packs (second week of May)
- Helping judge the 'SMH Young Writer Years 7-9' writing competition

If you are interested in helping with these tasks, please use the contact form on the website to let the Volunteer Coordinator know of your interest and availability.

Further questions?

If you have further questions, please use the contact form on the website. The Volunteer Coordinator works part-time so it may take several days for a reply to be provided to you.