

ADULT PROGRAMMING

Some Basic Advice,
Program Timetable for Publicity
Introducing the Speaker
Traditional Library Program Themes
Resources

Amy Howlett
Library Development Consultant
Vermont Department of Libraries
amy.howlett@state.vt.us
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SOME BASIC ADVICE: STEPS TO CREATING A PROGRAM

EXAMINE GOALS

Browsing through this booklet will give librarians some ideas for activities that might attract community members. Before moving ahead, ask whether programming really fits in the library's mission and priorities. Is there a need in the community, and is the library the right organization to fill that need? Who are the most important audiences? What should programs accomplish for them? See what people want before selecting topics and formats for programs.

What are the overarching goals of programming at the library?

- To respond to community needs and interests
- To create social bonds and relieve isolation
- To attract new membership for the library
- To extend and complement the library's collection
- To showcase local talents and interests
- To reach people who don't read or have difficulty reading
- To highlight forgotten areas of the collection
- To offer information through a variety of formats
- To involve the library in the community
- To enhance the library's image as a useful, fun place

ASSESS AUDIENCE

When planning programming look at the audiences the library is targeting. Audience can be gauged in a variety of ways. Get a feel for the topics and materials that interest the town by considering what circulates most and what residents ask for. Think about reaching out to groups that don't use the library. Nancy Wilson in Bristol tells the story of seeing that the entire Yoga Class used the library. Then she noticed none of the Friday Fish Fry customers were library users, clearly a piece of the town she had missed attracting.

Don't be discouraged if the first programs reach a small audience. Often it takes a programming idea a few tries before it catches on with the greater community. Consider co-sponsoring programs with local organizations to build audiences. How about a bookstore, restaurant and library combo for a few months to promote an author or poet? Kimball Public Library in Randolph worked with the Three Stallion Inn for several years. The Randolph bookstore arranged for the author and sold books, the Inn provided a simple inexpensive supper, and the library did the publicity, handed out bookmarks, and made sure their readers knew about the program. The Village Square Bookstore in Bellows Falls brought diplomat Peter Galbraith to town, and turned to the Rockingham Free Public Library for the space to host the large group.

Why do people come to a program? According the Rand Survey quoted in **Cultural Programming for Libraries** (Deborah A. Robertson, Cultural Programming for Libraries, ALA, 2005):

- 90% come because of personal interest in the presentation
- 70% attend for the social interaction
- 60% want to learn
- 55% come with a friend or family member
- 55% attend for education or enrichment

ASSESS LIBRARY RESOURCES

Programming adds demands on library staff, facilities and budget. Consider who will be responsible for organizing and executing public programs. When library programs are successful, anticipate the need for more staff and energy. Some libraries have successfully drawn on a Friends group or dedicated volunteers.

Who will plan the programs? Is it the director, an identified staff member, the Friends, or a committee? A committee of 5-8 people with a defined assignment can work, but they will probably require staff guidance initially. Ideally, the committee will include individuals from the target audience for the programs. Don't underestimate the effort needed to publicize programs or set up space and clear up after the program ends.

SELECT A TIME FOR THE PROGRAM

Think about the primary audience, and schedule the program when the most people are likely to attend. Sometimes it is difficult to coordinate the library's open hours with the best times for the audience. See if the event coincides with other events in town. Have a sense of what's happening to ensure that the library doesn't schedule a program against a popular event for the same audience. Even in large towns it makes sense to know which night is high school graduation or another competing draw.

SELECT A SPACE FOR THE PROGRAM

The library is the best place for a library program. If the library does not have adequate space, programs may also be held in other places: the library lawn, a neighborhood park, town swimming pool, restaurant, community center, grange hall, school auditorium, town hall, or business meeting room.

For programs outside of the library, maintain the library connection by mentioning library sponsorship during introductions, setting up a display of related materials, arranging a bulletin board, or setting up a table with bookmarks, flyers, and other items related to the library. One Maine library gives the staff T-shirts with the library name to wear to their off-site events. If the space has wi-fi, consider a laptop to register new members and circulate materials.

Make sure the space has the basics: adequate lighting and electrical outlets to accommodate sound systems or other needs, toilets, parking, and staff support. Consider serving refreshments, but be aware of the challenge offering liquids and snacks creates for staff or volunteers.

FUNDING

Many programs require little or no funding. On the other hand, having a program budget allows libraries to hire outside talent. Understand that library resources like time and effort will be spent on programming. A speaker from out of town should be reimbursed for travel expenses, at the very least, and will perhaps ask for an honorarium. Agree on a fee when arrangements are made. Many Vermont libraries give at least a token gift to every free performer—cookies, flowers from a local garden, or a book coupon to an independent book store.

Can public libraries charge for programs or meeting rooms? If the library has received federal building or renovation funds, it may not charge for the use of the meeting room. Some libraries have charges based on security fees or non-library uses of the meeting room. The library may charge a materials fee to defray the cost of materials being used in program or workshop.

If extra funds are needed for programming, consider these sources: Friends of the Library, proceeds from book sales, tote bags, coffee mugs, annual fundraising letters, Community Service club sponsorship, local merchant support, or grants. Contributors will want specific details about the programs the library would like them to underwrite. Explain what the benefit will be to participants, why there is a need, and how the program will be implemented.

Vermont libraries write grants to receive programming funds. The Vermont Humanities Council (<http://vermonthumanities.org/>), Vermont Arts Council (<http://www.vermontartscouncil.org/>) and the Vermont Council on Aging are possible

sources. Carrying out grants involves a great deal of time and energy; start with a small project if the library hasn't tried this route before.

PUBLICITY

Publicity is crucial to a program's success and to public attendance. Advance publicity can take many forms: the library blog or web site, press releases, community or library calendars, flyers, posters, postcards, invitations, newsletters, radio spots, cable TV calendars, bookmarks, newspapers, and church and club bulletins. Sue Webster at the Georgia Public Library is gradually seeing programs grow as she expands the e-mail newsletter to inform the community of library events. Larger libraries may prefer using a commercial vendor to manage email, subscriptions, and a clean format. Subscribe to the newsletters at Fletcher Free Library (Burlington) or Brooks Memorial Library (Brattleboro) to see an example.

Word of mouth is the best publicity. Well-informed library staff, trustees, and Friends of the Library have many opportunities to spread the word to patrons and community members. Don't forget the B's of publicity: barbers, bars, and beauticians; these are classic ways to get the word out. Make sure to announce the next program whenever the library holds an event.

There are many library resources to help publicize library programs. Borrow books on library promotion and publicity through interlibrary loan from the Department of Library's Library Science Collection.

A few publicity tips:

- Use e-mail—use a distribution list to keep the press informed. Get to know someone at the newspaper or radio station; things will go wrong, and an ally who knows the library will help. Stay on top of each contact's deadlines.
- Put up posters and flyers in prominent places at local hangouts and businesses; don't forget the library bulletin board. A big sandwich board outside works if the library is centrally located. If the library is off the main road, consider an event signal like a billboard somewhere in town where people will notice.
- Tell everyone at the library about the program.
- Publicize the next program at each library event
- Record information about upcoming programs on the answering machine as part of the greeting; use social networks like Facebook and twitter if the audience matches them
- Keep an attractive list of upcoming library programs at the circulation desk. Consider bookmarks, a brochure or flyer. The high tech library might have a big screen TV with a PowerPoint on replay
- Always mention the day, date, and year of the program in written publicity. Nothing is more frustrating than finding out that the program advertised on a flyer somewhere occurred the *previous* April 12th. Including the year in publicity will also help future library workers archive the activities of the library.

ACCESSIBILITY

Increase the potential audience by considering factors of universal design.

- Make sure paper flyers advertising the program are in large print.
- Have speakers use a microphone.
- Use window shades and experiment with lighting to combat glare in the meeting room.
- If a video or PowerPoint presentation will be used, minimize drastic changes in lighting; try to avoid having the room go from totally dark to bright light.

WHERE TO FIND SPEAKERS

Many groups and individuals have useful information to share. Make contact with local agencies, clubs, organizations, and governing bodies for speakers, demonstrators, exhibitors, and performers. Look outside the town if no one local has what the community needs.

Make contact with the speaker ahead of time. Be clear about program expectations. Supply the speaker with information about the audience, the length of the performance, what the space is like, and when the presentation will be. Know what the library can afford when negotiating the speaker fee. After meeting with the speaker, send a letter confirming all of the details. Save a copy. Larger libraries use real contracts.

Some librarians offer speaker service to town and area agencies. Sherry Tolle of the Barnet Library takes her message to the service clubs in her town and beyond. Her fifteen minute talk emphasizes technology, library services, statistics and the distance the library has traveled from its stereotype. Most libraries have a similar message to carry to local and area organizations. Consider representing the library as a public service to the community.

EVALUATION

Informal evaluation of each program from observers and library staff will help plan future programs. Take a few minutes after the program to note impressions, who came, and what worked. Document any problems. If attendance was low, speculate about the reasons—weather, conflicts, topic? Try a short clipboard survey passed around to members of the audience at a program. Bixby Memorial gained insights to their community without a bulky, time-consuming process.

PROGRAM TIMETABLE FOR PUBLICITY

6 weeks before an event:

finalize plans

- speakers
- topics
- activities
- location
- date and time
- publicity methods
- contingencies – weather, sickness, etc.
- alert staff, trustees, friends
- create shopping and equipment list
- order unusual supplies

5 weeks before:

- make up booklists
- design related displays
- develop flyers, bookmarks, and other handouts
- arrange printing, duplicating

4 weeks before:

- begin making posters
- talk to speakers about plans – confirm date/time

3 weeks before:

- get biographical information about speakers
- continue to mention event to any interested people
- write out and mail press releases to papers, radio, tv, cable tv station

2 weeks before:

- make contacts for other publicity
- hang posters
- hand out and hang up flyers
- continue talking up program with everyone
- follow up on previously sent publicity to make sure it appears

1 week before:

- Call speakers for last-minute details, ideas changes, room set up
- continue to step up publicity
- call or email the interested, trustees, friends, regulars?

Day before:

- gather necessary materials, shop for perishables
- set up room as much as possible
- arrange displays
- make last minute phone calls
- write out introduction

Hours before:

complete set up of room

During the program:

welcome people as they arrive
introduce program
 refer to displays and booklist
 mention upcoming related programs
 mention sponsorship of program
 give speaker's background and qualifications
 thank people for coming

Day after:

write thank-you notes
evaluate program, attendance, publicity
plan follow-up, if warranted

INTRODUCING THE SPEAKER

A good introduction takes time to prepare. Write out remarks ahead of time and become familiar with the major details to make delivery easier. Read the notes if necessary—try to make eye contact with the audience during the introduction.

Usually the program begins with thanks to everyone appropriate. Thank the participants, the funders, the partnering agencies, the library board and staff, and others who need recognition. Since the group will be focused on the presenter, keep this part brief.

Pat Bates, who pioneered scholar-led reading discussions in Vermont public libraries, used this formula for the introduction of a speaker:

1. Give the title of the speech. (First words out of your mouth.)
2. Connect the audience to the speech—tell them why the topic is important to them.
3. Give the speaker's credentials. Don't tell the audience more than they need to know. Stick to the speaker's qualifications to address this topic.
4. Give the speaker's name—the last words you speak, after which you turn to the speaker and start applauding.

Remember—take some time to prepare the introduction. It is an honor to introduce someone, to give them a good beginning to an important opportunity for them and for the library. The speaker is the star here, not the person making the introduction. After the introduction, wait for the speaker to reach the podium or lectern before leaving it.

After the presentation, the program director usually concludes the presentation by speaking again. The director may offer two or three summary comments; pitch the next program at the library or in the series, if the presenter is part of a series. He or she might

describe any logistics for autographing, refreshments or purchases. The director thanks the presenter, funders, and the audience once more.

Traditional Library Program Themes

MARCH	Teen Tech Week	http://teentechweek.ning.com/
APRIL	National Library Week	http://www.ala.org/nlw
	National Poetry Month	http://www.poets.org/npw
MAY	Children's Book Week	http://www.cbcbooks.org/cbw/
SEPTEMBER	Banned Books Week	http://www.ala.org/bbooks/
	Library Card Sign-up Month	http://www.ala.org/librarycardsignup
OCTOBER	Teen Read Week	http://teenreadweek.ning.com/

For other commemorative months, see: Wikipedia's list at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_commemorative_months.

Resources from the VTLIB Library Science Collection

Honnold, RoseMary, and Mesaros, Saralyn A. **Serving Seniors: A How-to-Do-It Manual for Librarians.** Neal-Schuman, 2004. LS 027.6 HONNOLD. Includes programming

Karp, Rashelle S. **Powerful Public Relations: a How-To-Guide for Libraries.** American Library Association, 2002. LS 021.7 POWERFUL. Useful up-to-date information on public relations and marketing library services. Also covers writing news releases, PSAs, web-based public relations, library exhibits and planning.

Lear, Brett W. **Adult Programs in the Library.** American Library Association, 2002. LS 027.62 LEAR. Good basic text on programming. Appendix of excellent programs with notes on promoting, and producing. Feng Shui, adult summer reading program, Music. Includes sample policies and checklists, helpful but designed for larger libraries.

Mates, Barbara T. **5-Star Programming and Services for your 55+ Library Customers.** American Library Association, 2003 LS 027.622 MATES. Terrific resource for librarians interested in serving senior populations. Detailed instructions, lists, inspiration to connect seniors with libraries.

Ranier, Raymond **Programming for Adults.** Scarecrow Press, 2005. LS 027.6 RANIER. Aimed at small to medium libraries, a serious look from assessing the community to planning advice for gardening, crafts, educational and other programs.

Robertson, Deborah A. **Cultural Programming for Libraries: Linking Libraries, Communities, and Culture.** American Library Association, 2005. LS 021.2 ROBERTSON. Building audiences, finding themes, asking talent to appear, and historical overview.

Schull, Diantha Dow. **50+ Library Services: Innovation in Action.** American Library Association, 2013. LS 027.62 SCHULL. 50+ as in age, not number of ideas. Addresses a number of subjects and programs that could attract older adults to the library.

Wolfe, Lisa A. **Library Public Relations, Promotions, and Communications.** Neal Schumann, 2005. LS 021.7 WOLFE. Putting the public relations thing together, from library mission to checklists and releases. Lots of real life examples and strong web emphasis.