Hot Button Issue: Votes for Women!

Teens

|

Young Adult

|

Adults

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Oct 21, 2022
Byline

Teaching with Primary Sources: Women's Suffrage & Libraries Advisors

This hands-on button-making program for teens or adults uses primary sources to explore photographs, slogans and political ephemera of the women’s suffrage movement. Attendees will view examples of historical women’s suffrage buttons and discuss how they were used as marketing pieces.

After learning the basics of fair use and copyright, attendees will use sources printed from the Library of Congress digital collections and contemporary media (e.g., magazines, newspapers) to create their own buttons.

This program is adapted from the "Programming with Primary Sources: Women's Suffrage" programming guide.

Advanced Planning

Take some time to get acquainted with the Library of Congress digital collection. Print out some of your favorite photographs, cartoons and other images that fit within the theme of women's suffrage or a topic of your choosing. With a button maker, create several examples using your printed images. Here are some recommended primary sources and examples for the theme of women's suffrage:

- Eddy, Sarah J, photographer. Collection of “votes for women” buttons made by Mrs. Alice Park of Palo Alto, Calif. Photograph. The Library of Congress.
- “New Tactics for a New Generation, 1890–1915: The Marketing of the Movement: Pin It! and Show Your Colors!” Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote, Exhibitions at the Library of Congress, The Library of Congress, 2021.

Marketing

You can market this program on your library's social media pages, newsletter and through any outlet your library typically utilizes when promoting programs to patrons.

Budgeting

Button makers can be purchased online. Prices range from $250 to the higher end of $500. Printing costs will vary.

Day-of-event Activity

Set up the button makers and printed materials ahead of time. Display your example buttons on tables to show attendees as they arrive.

Program Execution

The program follows this outline:

1. Facilitator introduces the Library of Congress Women's Suffrage Primary Source Set and briefly discusses fair use and copyright, explaining how participants can determine what they can print and use from the Library website for the button project.
2. Facilitator discusses why women's suffrage was a "hot button issue" and discusses the impact that women's suffrage had on other hot button issues of the day.
3. Facilitator discusses slogans and colors from the women's suffrage campaign and how the movement was marketed to the public using buttons, posters and more.
4. Facilitator explains and demonstrates the process for adapting a primary source image into the button design size and how to print and create the button using the button maker.
5. Attendees work hands-on to create their own buttons. Facilitator and other library staff assist and troubleshoot issues as needed.
6. Attendees share their button creations and discuss why they chose their primary source for their button.
7. Facilitator wraps up.

Upon completion of this program, attendees will be able to understand the suffragists' use of buttons and other political memorabilia and draw connections to how these items are used today and identify some of the slogans used for the women's suffrage campaign and discuss their provenance.

This program will also help participants to effectively navigate Library of Congress digital collections and understand the basics of fair use and copyright.

Advice

This program can be altered to a variety of themes, not just women's suffrage. The Library of Congress Digital Collections are a treasure trove of free access to primary sources with millions of books, recordings, photographs, newspapers, maps and manuscripts.

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

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