

True Crime Book Club

[Alfred Box of Books Library](#)

Adults

True Crime Book Club

Jan 24, 2023

\$51-100

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Byline

Melanie Miller, Library Director, Alfred (N.Y.) Box of Books Library

The true crime genre is very popular with podcasts, documentaries, and of course, books! True Crime Book Club uses true crime non-fiction to explore social issues such as mental health, racism and substance abuse.

Advanced Planning

Our goals for this program were:

1. Provide engaging programming for adults within the community, an area we knew we wanted to grow and develop.
2. Find a way to discuss larger societal issues in the context of a popular genre.

We started preparing in Summer 2019, by creating a list of books we would like to read. We also reached out to our local coffeehouse to see if we could meet there. We began by advertising and collecting registrations for people who were interested and created an email mailing list so that we could contact participants. We met for the first time in November 2019.

We tend to avoid focusing on only one particular crime, so our discussions stay new and engaging. We look for books that are available in paperback (to keep costs lower). We now use the email list to maintain contact throughout the month. Our major challenge was when the pandemic hit and the library closed. We used our mailing list to gauge interest in moving the club to Zoom meetings and the book club participants were up for this challenge.

Marketing

We promoted the program leading up to our November 2019 meeting on social media (Facebook and Instagram), through our weekly column in a local newspaper and the coffeehouse shared the information on their social media platforms as well. Word of mouth has been most successful, with current members inviting friends and family to participate.

We continue to promote the program on social media and in the local newspaper.

Budgeting

We budget roughly \$2,000 a year for this program. We purchase paperback copies of the books for participants. While meeting at the coffeehouse, we purchase beverages, to support local businesses and to incentivize participation. After the book club meets, copies are donated to the library and to the coffeehouse. This helps build our collection and helps the coffeehouse promote the program, too.

Day-of-event Activity

The book club is led by library director, Melanie Miller. It's important to prep discussion questions ahead of time. Some books have discussion questions available online, but many don't.

Being prepared before the day of the event is so important for running a smooth meeting. There have been times when participants have stepped in to run a meeting if the library director is unavailable. With the questions prepared, someone else can step in and seamlessly run the book club. If meeting via Zoom, we email a reminder with the Zoom link the morning of the meeting. We get to the coffeehouse about 15 minutes early to set up a tab so participants can come in and order drinks.

Program Execution

We consistently have ten participants in the book club. This is a good turnout for an adult program for our small, rural library. We've had new participants join, and others leave, but ten is our average attendance.

The feedback we've heard is that people enjoy the book club because our discussions focus on major issues, not simply murder and mayhem. While crimes feature in our reading, we tend to focus on larger issues. People have also shared that it brings together so many different people from younger adults to seniors, from many different backgrounds. Especially during the pandemic, it provided normalcy and connection during a time of upheaval.

We have not conducted any formal evaluation, but we have seen many new patrons as a result of the book club. People who didn't use the library, but joined the book club are now using the library. We were able to establish a strong partnership with the local coffeehouse, which has provided us with space for other events outside of book club. Our goals were to provide programming to adults and to discuss major issues through this genre. True Crime Book Club is our most popular program for adults, and we are able to have really meaningful discussions.

Advice

True crime is a popular genre right now, and it lends itself to discussing many larger issues that are relevant today. It's a great program for small libraries with few staff members. Prepare a list of books so you always know the next book, and prepare questions ahead of time!

Supporting Materials

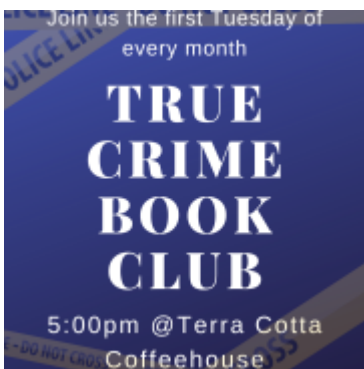
Document

[true_crime_book_list.pdf](#)

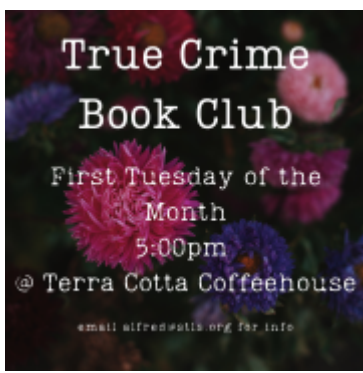
[Download this Program as a PDF](#)

- Feedback (Coming Soon!)
- [Programming Librarian Facebook Group](#)

Slideshow Images



Image

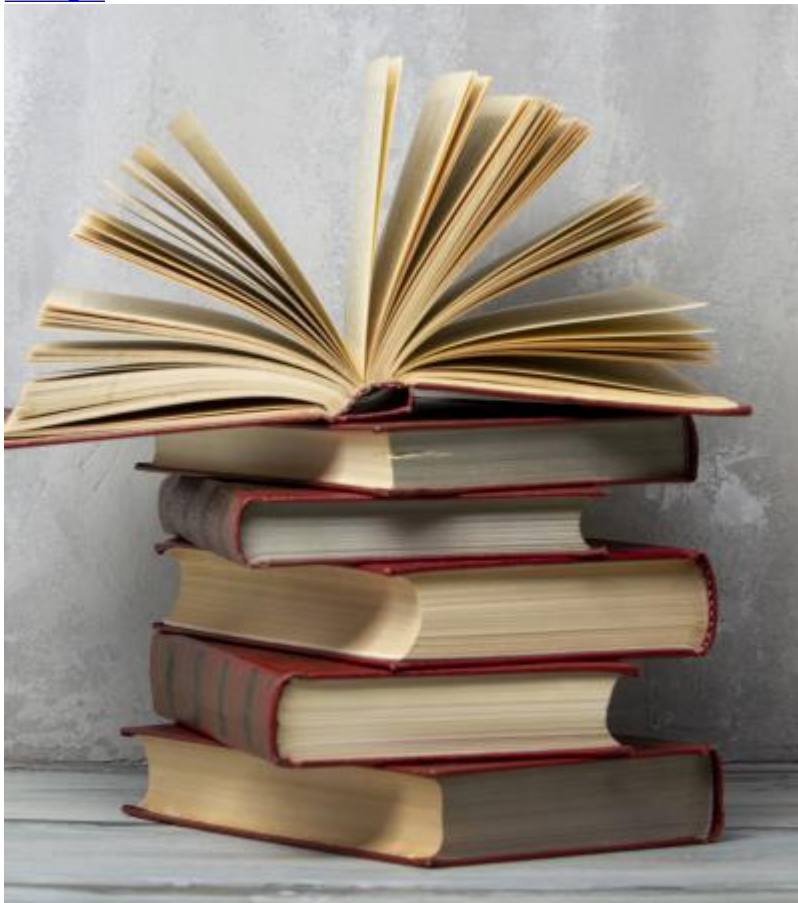


More Programs

Sep 10, 2020

Teens (13-16)+ | \$\$\$

[Image](#)



[BookFix](#)

Audiences:

Teens (13-16)

Young Adult (17 - 20)

Jun 1, 2021

Teens (13-16)+ | \$

[Image](#)



Books & Looks

Audiences:

Teens (13-16)

Young Adult (17 - 20)

Adults (21 and up)

Dec 9, 2022

Intergenerational+ |

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Green Book Community Read

Audiences:

Intergenerational