The Book Crawl

Prince George's County Memorial Library System

Young Adult

|

Adults

The Book Crawl

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$251-500

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Byline

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Prince George’s County Memorial Library System’s Book Crawl is a series of pop-up outreach programs created to engage the adult population, local businesses and community partners in Prince George’s County.

This brought drag bingo to breweries, crafting to coffee shops, and Name That Tune to bars to create new library users, advocates and partnerships.

Advanced Planning

This program series aimed to engage adults often overlooked by traditional library offerings. Our strategy involved capturing the interest of millennials and younger adults and revitalizing awareness of library services and programs. Additionally, fostering community bonds was a priority through collaboration with local, minority-owned businesses.

The planning team, comprising the Outreach and Partnership Specialist, Adult and Senior Services Specialist, and Teen Services Specialist, initiated discussions on series expectations in January. By early March, outreach to past partners and exploration of new venues commenced, to finalize all Book Crawl events by mid-April. Event specifics, like trivia questions and bingo sheets, were fine-tuned 2 - 3 weeks before each occasion.

To ensure seamless execution, branch staff, PR/marketing and graphic design teams joined forces. Collaborating with community leaders and local businesses bolstered event promotion. Lessons we encountered included overcoming technology gaps and strategically integrating into existing partner programs. Variable program success rates and timing for limited-seat event registrations posed additional considerations.

Marketing

Promotional materials were wrapped up in early April, ready to complement the programs listed in our public calendar. Individual program promotion kicked off 1 - 2 weeks before each event, employing both traditional email marketing and social media outreach. Flyers were distributed in our branches and among the local businesses we partnered with, amplifying our reach. EventBrite served as our ticketing platform, doubling as a tool to attract a broader, non-library-specific audience.

Our success trajectory shows a positive trend year over year. In the inaugural year, we averaged 38 attendees per event, which increased to 49 in the second year. Returning participants, drawn by the enjoyment factor, brought along friends. Notably, four out of seven events in 2023 reached full capacity. When attendees were surveyed on how they found out about our events, many credited library marketing, while others discovered them through our business partners, validating

the effectiveness of our flyers.

Budgeting

- $150 — $200 = drag king/queen
- $200 —$250 = art and craft supplies

We purchased paint, canvases, easels, palettes, paint knives and three types of paintbrushes. To cut costs, it's possible to streamline this to just paint, one type of brush and canvases.

Hosting events can be managed using in-house performers and talent. While the drag performers added fun, they aren't essential for hosting bingo.

Day-of-event Activity

We host a variety of events throughout the summer. We currently host Trivia, Name That Tune, Bingo and Sip and Paint. We have also hosted Lego Night, Craft and Create, VR programs and Open Mic Night.

Here are two examples of our day-of-event structure:

Trivia: We prepared multiple rounds of trivia that can be played in teams. We ask questions about books, movies/TV, and music. These are all things that you can check out from the library. We prepared commercials to be read between rounds promoting library services, such as Beanstack, Libby, and Books from Birth. We had 4-5 staff at these events, including a host, scorekeeper, someone doing library card sign-up and 1 - 2 assistants to help collect answer slips. After the scores were added up, we gave prizes to the top three teams. These prizes consisted of tickets to local museums and events.

Name That Tune: We prepare multiple rounds of music trivia where snippets of songs from the 70s-today play and participants guess the song and artist for points. Each round gets harder as the music becomes more obscure and the length of the snippet is shorter. For this event, it requires an ample sound system that can be heard everywhere. For staffing, we had a host, two scorekeepers, someone to run

the tracks, and 1 - 2 assistants to help with answer slips and library card sign-ups. We gave prizes to the top three teams. Those prizes included shirts, tote bags and tickets to local museums and events.

Program Execution

In 2022, we hosted nine programs. Out of those nine events, our most successful program was Drag Bingo (62 attendees). Name That Tune (40 attendees) was also very popular. Open Mic Night (47 attendees) was well-attended, primarily by supporting local staff. Other programs included Craft and Create (27 attendees), Trivia (17 attendees), Lego Night (22 attendees), and VR Sip and Paint (20). Additionally, we hosted a Meet Your Librarian event at the National Harbor, a popular tourist spot, which attracted 35 attendees. Excited about the first year's success, we gathered valuable lessons for the second year.

In 2023, we hosted two Trivia Nights (51 and 32 attendees), two Name That Tunes (58 and 72 attendees), Sip and Paint (20 attendees), Bingo (71 attendees), and Craft and Create (42 attendees). This year featured numerous "sold-out" events, prompting us to consider expansion or simply revel in our popularity and success.

We believe our goals for both years were achieved. We established relationships with local businesses, fostering more regular collaboration, and successfully engaged adults in a different manner.

First and foremost, we've increased our visibility in the community beyond the library walls. A dedicated following attends multiple summer programs, extending to branch-based library events. Establishing a first-name basis with business owners and customers has been instrumental. These events led to a surge in summer library card registrations, with 5 -15 people obtaining cards for the first time or after a long hiatus. Notably, this fostered new connections among staff, breaking the tendency to exclusively collaborate within their branches.

While we didn't use formative evaluation, we prioritized engaging in full conversations with each table at every event. This allowed us to understand how attendees learned about us, their interest in the program and potential future attendance. The impact is tangible as we witness real-time engagement, with people capturing moments through pictures, dancing, laughter, stage performances and an

overall expression of pure joy.

Advice

To start, prioritize working according to your community partners' needs. Embed yourself in their existing programs, whether by hosting their trivia night or taking over their sip and paint. This not only makes it an easier sell but also provides a built-in audience to grow your library's following.

Ensure that staff fully understand the expectations of their roles. In our first year, some staff members were unsure of their responsibilities, making it feel like work. In the second year, we handpicked staff with strong ties to the program or community, transforming the process into a fun and collaborative event.

Exercise caution when releasing tickets. We learned from the mistake of releasing sip and paint tickets two months ahead on EventBrite, resulting in a "sold-out" scenario within a week or two. However, many ticket holders had changes in plans and did not release their tickets, leading to 30 no-shows. Opt for releasing tickets 2-3 weeks before the event, allowing attendees sufficient time to plan accordingly.

Finally, prioritize enjoyment in planning. Create events that resonate with people like you. While we may not love painting or singing, we ensured that we would have fun with the people in the room, a crucial element in planning community-building events.

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

Supporting Materials

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Image









More Programs

Oct 31, 2019
Adults (21 and up)+ | □□

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Shorts & Stouts

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)
Oct 3, 2023
Intergenerational+ | □□
Image



Community Displays

Audiences:

Intergenerational
Feb 5, 2024
Intergenerational+ | □□
Image



Jigsaw Puzzle Swap

Audiences:

Intergenerational