Historical Swordcraft

Rye Free Reading Room

Intergenerational

Historical Swordcraft

Jul 23, 2024

$101-250

$$
Byline

Sarah Prosser, Teen Librarian, Rye (N.Y.) Free Reading Room

Hear ye, hear ye! In collaboration with the Hudson Valley HEMA group (Historical European Martial Arts), program participants watched sword technique demonstrations and discussed the history behind the actions. A group of 8 - 10 participants ages 14+ were offered an introduction to longsword (and an alternate educational craft for those ineligible or unable), with time for Q&A!

Advanced Planning

We wanted to see if this kind of program could be implemented in our community after being inspired by another public library mentioned in the online March issue of American Libraries Magazine. Our programming goal for the year was for higher

adult and teen attendance, and this program met the bill in theory, and eventually in practice. Who doesn't love swords?

My coworker, Susan Aufrichtig, initially shared the aspirational article with me and double-checked liabilities and programming expectations as this was an event involving both our departments before we began putting anything on the library's official calendar. I did the research to find a local active chapter of a HEMA group. We made initial contacts in March for our June event, though we did have the flexibility to offer it through the summer months.

Ensuring we had a program that anyone could attend regardless of ability or eligibility for the hands-on portion. When the idea struck for making custom sword bookmarks out of shrinking plastic we had our answer! Parents of little ones or those who weren't feeling up to handling a sword came over and made the bookmarks with me.

Marketing

Our library utilizes a bi-weekly e-blast to those who have signed up. As we are pretty stringent about what events can be advertised, if any, at the front desk, we brought out a paper flyer to show off there that got people talking about the event. Additionally, directly chatting with patrons about the program, especially to the teen gamers and fantasy readers garnered additional interest for the event.

Budgeting

We were fortunate to have a flexible programming partner who agreed to be reimbursed for gas and lunch for the group, so then it was just getting the additional craft supplies that kept this program cost under $250.

Day-of-event Activity

Since we hosted this event outdoors, there wasn't too much setup required. We brought out a table and some tape for displaying the sword kits and offered chairs to

anyone who needed one. We also made sure to document as much of the event as possible and needed two staff total to make sure everything ran smoothly and that we captured the promotional shots to use for future events when we invite them back.

Program Execution

Overall, we had 54 people attend this event, including our target audience of teens and new adults in addition to some children and seniors. We had 18 people register ahead of time, and due to the outdoor nature of the event, many people walking by engaged with the event and stopped to watch and participate. Overall feedback from participants was positive, and I was notably asked if this was “really a library program?" Many patrons were impressed with how different and cool libraries were compared to how they had remembered perceiving them.

Since this was a special program we don’t typically tend to have formal evaluation criteria for those kinds of events aside from informal “how many people attended” and “did we get any feedback” and using that to inform if we will offer the program again.

Advice

We’re planning on inviting the group back again, but given the heat/humidity of late June in New York and all the heavy safety gear they wear as a part of their kits, we will be planning for the next one in April out of consideration for them.

Hosting this event outdoors is definitely the way to go, as the spectacle element of seeing people dueling on the front lawn absolutely drew passersby in to engage with the event. Additionally, libraries looking to implement this in their communities might have better luck with an SCA group as an alternative should there not be a HEMA group to contact – Renaissance Fairs are also good places to ask around and find those resources if their webpages are hard to find.

Ensure any hands-on portions are not done with steel, our group had hard plastic weighted swords to use!

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

Supporting Materials

Document
Historical Swordcraft flyer.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images





Image





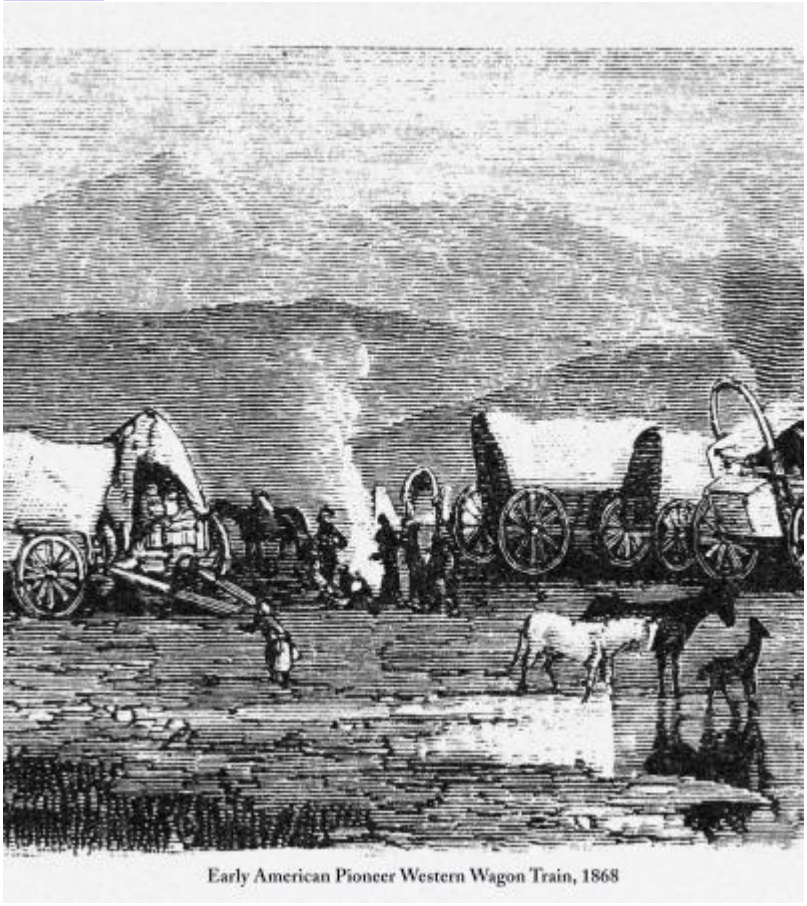




More Programs

Aug 30, 2023
Teens (13-16)+ | $

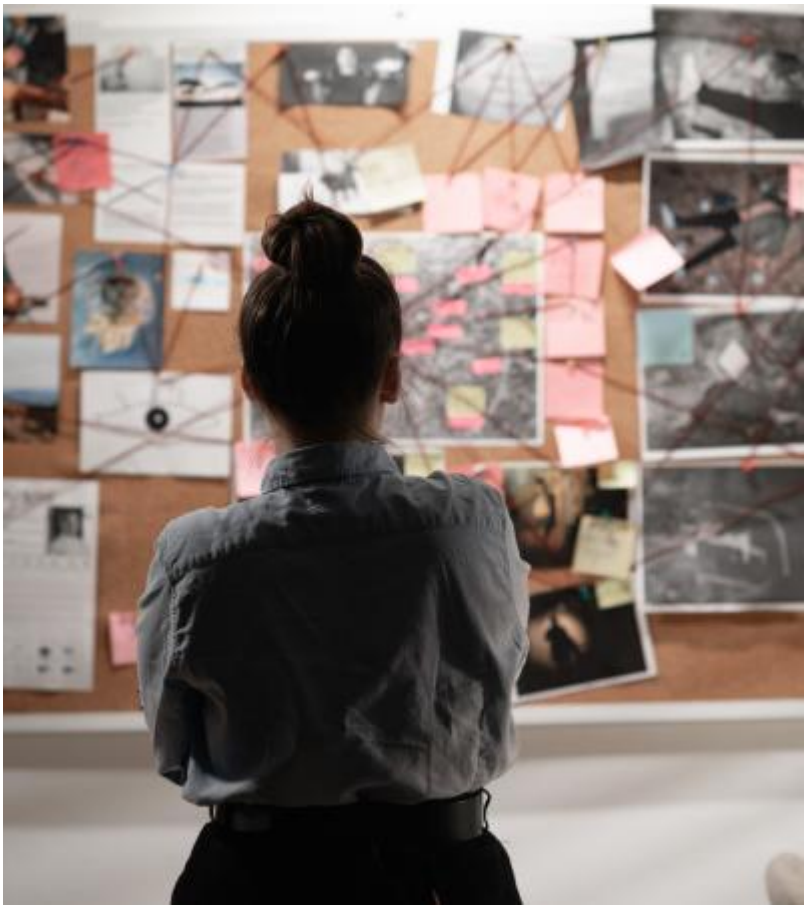
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Oregon Trail Live-Action Simulation

Audiences:

Teens (13-16)
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Apr 3, 2024
Adults (21 and up)+ | $$
Image



Crime Scene Investigation: Deadly Disinformation

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)
May 3, 2023
Children (9 and under)+ | $$
Image



Titanic Dinner at the Library

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational