Comics Drawing Battle

Baltimore County Public Library

Intergenerational

Comics Drawing Battle

Mar 21, 2025

$251-500

$$
Byline

Elizabeth Brown, Baltimore County (Md.) Library

To celebrate Free Comic Book Day (held the first Saturday of every May), BCPL hosted Super Art Fight! A collaborative of local artists who put on an interactive show that’s part Pictionary, part pro-wrestling.

Artists face off with markers on a large drawing surface. They are given prompts, usually ascribed with pop culture references ("villainous Muppets," "CSI: Flavortown," "unhappy little trees"), on what to draw in a set amount of time (5 - 15 minutes.) They must not only draw the prompt but also try to find ways for their drawings to interact with the other artist’s drawings. Audiences are encouraged to provide prompts in advance of the show, and a referee uses a cheer-meter to determine whose drawing has won each battle.

This is a great program to celebrate National Library Week 2025's theme of "Drawn to the Library."

Advanced Planning

Our goal for the program was to provide a new and engaging way for our patrons to celebrate Free Comic Book Day beyond the free comics that we provide year-round.

We reached out to Super Art Fight (SAF) about 3 months before the program was to be held. Advance timing was helpful as it took a while for the group to communicate with all of their members on timing and availability. SAF was great to work with- they had experience working with libraries in the past and were flexible in working with the constraints we had. We also requested that they adapt their show, often held in bars and at comic conventions, for a family-friendly audience. They were very accommodating, renaming their drawing prompt machine from ”Wheel of Death” to ”Wheel of Doom” and filtering out the more mature prompts.

Marketing

We marketed this event through the library’s social media and events calendar. We cross-promoted by sharing graphics with SAF on their platforms and by promoting at our local comic book store, which was also planning its own celebration for the day. Through word of mouth, we learned that there was a fair amount of cross-over between people who started at the comic book store to pick up their free comics and then came over to the library to check out our event and vice versa.

Budgeting

SAF charged $500 for their performance. Considering the amount of labor and coordination that went into the event, they definitely gave us the library discount. One thing that helped make coordination a little easier is that the artists were all local to the area, so we minimized travel time and costs.

Day-of-event Activity

We held this event in our meeting room, which comfortably seats 150 people. We established a ”stage” area by putting down tape to demarcate where the artists were performing. We set up a microphone for SAF’s emcee, then put down our storytime rug for our younger attendees and chairs for the adults. SAF provided all of their own materials, including a large drawing surface (about 10 x 5 feet) with multiple layers of paper. They have been running their shows at bars and comic conventions for several years, so they had set up down to a science.

Program Execution

This was a thoroughly engaging event that broke down a lot of stereotypes that libraries are only quiet spaces for studious contemplation. It took a little coaxing to help our audience, primarily families with elementary and middle school children, understand the concept and encourage them to participate but by the end of the show they were on their feet with applause.

”Planting” our more obstreperous staff members in the crowd helped increase engagement. After the show was over, we hung the drawings from the event in the hallway that led to the meeting room, which inspired much interest from patrons who were unable to attend.

Advice

Super Art Fight is active in the Maryland – Washington DC area. However, you can search your area to see if artists are organizing similar events, as the idea has been spreading since we hosted this program at our library. You can also organize your own drawing battles among your artistic users. This could also be adapted into an outreach activity if you are looking to hold pop-up programming at bars and other locations.

There are also outreach opportunities in polling users for drawing prompts leading up to the event- SAF regularly refreshes their prompts from surveys on social media.

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

Supporting Materials

Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images



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Audiences:

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Audiences:

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Adults (21 and up)
Jul 9, 2020
Children (9 and under)+ |
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Audiences:

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Tweens (10-12)
Teens (13-16)
Adults (21 and up)