Titanic Dinner

Washington Public Library

Adults

Titanic Dinner

Apr 30, 2025

$501-1000

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Byline

Tammy Valentine, Adult Services Librarian & Beth Swift, Tech Librarian, Washington (Iowa) Public Library

The Titanic Dinner had patrons do a blind drawing of a passenger's name and biography three weeks before the event. Two weeks before the event, we built a "Lego" Titanic ship. The actual event included a 30-minute social hour with live Irish music, the three classes of passengers dining together and two presentations.

Advanced Planning

Our goal was to attract as much interest as possible. We hoped for 20 people to register out of 30 spots.

We had two library staff as coordinators. Planning began with booking the caterer two months in advance. Other volunteers included a patron as the captain, our Children's Librarian as the Unsinkable Molly Brown, a young patron as a newsie, a local photographer, local musicians and our director as the waitstaff for the first-class table. We also had a family build the Lego knockoff Titanic ship.

We created a structure of all the elements (social hour, dinner, food, decor, marketing, display table, etc.) and checked those boxes when each item was completed.

We had no unexpected challenges because we met each week to review the details.

Marketing

Marketing included a radio spot, an article in the newspaper and all of the social media sites. We began marketing three weeks out, so it wasn't too early or too late.

It was very successful because we heard that people heard about the event through all the avenues used.

Budgeting

The total cost was around $650. This included the caterer, at $420, extra food and beverages that we provided and the tableware.

We ended up having 42 people attend. It was free to patrons.

Day-of-event Activity

Setting up for the event included the audiovisual equipment, the three classes of dining tables, three classes of food tables, the display table, the social hour seating, the social hour refreshments and the band set-up. Both program coordinators worked on the setup and cleanup, along with two additional library staff for the cleanup. The setup took at least three hours and the cleanup took a bit over an hour.

The cleanup was finished the next day.

Program Execution

The entire program was a grand success! All 30 spots were filled within 36 hours, and we had a waiting list of 13 people. A total of 42 people, including all of the volunteers, ended up attending. Only two people ended up cancelling. As for feedback, I saw a Facebook notification that our Titanic post had over 500 responses.

The display table included an actual 1912 newspaper with the Titanic tragedy as the headline, a first edition of "The Loss of the SS Titanic" by passenger survivor Lawrence Beesley, and the Lego knockoff Titanic ship.

Our newsie had a newspaper bag and copies of the 1912 newspaper to hand out.

The band played Irish music during the 30-minutes social hour. All passengers had simple cheese and crackers and small bottles of water available to snack on. With all the conversation and music it sounded like a cocktail party.

The captain greeted each passenger as they presented their "boarding pass." He also gave a welcome speech before the meal. We had an iMovie playing during the meal, and one of the program coordinators presented the second presentation, a PowerPoint focusing on Iowa people who were tied to the Titanic.

Our goal was certainly surpassed and we are already planning next year's Titanic dinner.

Advice

My advice would be to create a team, plan early and talk it out often to confirm that all the details are managed. Also, try to include as many local people to volunteer as possible. The night was truly grand with so many people contributing to our event.

My last bit of advice is to use all the resources you have available. I found the idea of the Titanic Dinner here on Programming Librarian several years ago. Whiting

Public Library's event was my inspiration.

When the library was given the 1912 newspaper with the headline "Titanic tragedy," I knew we had to do the dinner. I want to thank the Whiting Public Library for such great resources. The biographies they created are so well done, and it was a huge help to be able to use them.

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





Image





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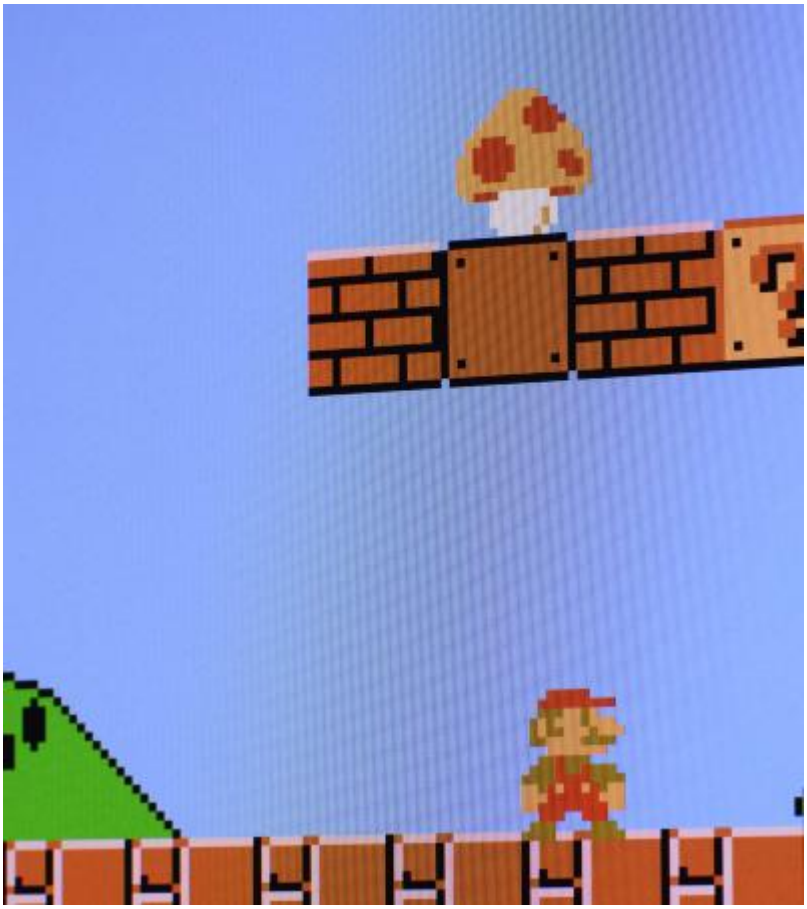
May 3, 2023
Children (9 and under)+ | $$
Image



Titanic Dinner at the Library

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational
Apr 3, 2023
Children (9 and under)+ | $$$
Image



Mario Day Party

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)
Teens (13-16)
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Feb 21, 2024
Teens (13-16)+ | $
Image



Percy Jackson Party

Audiences:

Teens (13-16)
Young Adult (17 - 20)