Enchanted Library: A Fairy Ball

Chillicothe & Ross County Public Library

Adults

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$51-100

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Byline

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The Enchanted Library Fairy Ball was an after-hours, adults-only celebration of fantasy, folklore and whimsy. Patrons explored a transformed library filled with twinkle lights, hidden fairy doors and Renaissance-inspired decor while enjoying themed crafts, music and immersive activities. Designed to spark nostalgia and imagination, the event offered a magical escape for grown-up patrons.

Advanced Planning

This event was pulled together with a lot of collaboration. Most of the decor and supplies used were repurposed or borrowed. Borrowing or DIYing more could cut the cost way down. One such cost cutter and time saver was using wintry holiday decorations from December. Rather than put those items away after the holiday season, we left them up to create a woodsy whimsical space.

Planning began about eight weeks in advance, but could be done on a much shorter timeframe. I coordinated with the marketing team to make interesting graphics and social media posts. They used the graphics to make posters to advertise ahead. I shared a list of ISO (in search of) items to share with all staff—things like string lights, fabric tablecloths, LED candles. I also measured interest and created an email list of staff wanting to help prepare or help at the event itself. Our graphic designer began working on a set of free standing fairy wings for a photo op.

At the four-week mark, we used our laser cutting machine to cut out fairy doors. These were then painted by staff. Printed fairy doors could also work well for the Fairy Door Scavenger Hunt. At this point, I made sure the staff were on schedule to help if they wanted to help during the event. Our book display team collaborated on displays that would fit the theme from romantasy to kitchen witchery to woodland animals, so all of the end cap displays were already decorated and ready for the event.

At the two-week mark, I had the station layout set. I also made signs for each station. These could just be printed on regular paper; we have freestanding sign holders that worked well. I installed games on our VR Headset. I gathered supplies for crafting stations. I created a Bookish Tarot card set. I curated fantasy book lists from our shelves. A fantasy-themed trivia game was made ahead of time and then not used.

To make the setup day easy, I put up some decorations ahead of time. The fair doors could be put up the week of, so long as they were out of reach from littles. Some decorations, like borrowed swags and sashes, were put up as well. The party lights were set up the night before and 3m stripped into place, so that we could check the lighting at dark. The crafts and station supplies were gathered and separated by station, so they could just be placed directly on the tables. Live greenery collected by a staff member from their property was placed on top of bookshelves. Star projectors were also put up early and out of reach, tested after dark, ahead of time.

Marketing

30 days before, marketing had posters up at locations and a Facebook event. One week before, a Facebook and Instagram post was made. The event was the last week of our current quarter's brochure, so it had also been in literature and on our events calendar page for almost three months.

Budgeting

The cost for snacks was about $25. We made punch and bought a tray of cookies from a big box store. The drink was made during the one-hour prep time. In the future, it would be better to make it earlier that day and go with a simpler drink like lemonade mix.

<$10 for fairy stickers.

Day-of-event Activity

The day of, we had one hour between library closing and set up. We spent the time turning out lights, turning party lights on, spreading LED candles around the space, moving the tables out of the genealogy room to create a dance floor, decorating one space for the Bookish Tarot, setting up the VR Headset, setting up the crafts, putting up the photo backdrop and making the snack area. Fabric tablecloths were used to quickly cover computers and desks.

Some challenges were setting up in under an hour. More time would be beneficial in the future.

Program Execution

This was a very entertaining and uplifting program to have just before the cold of winter and before the winter blues. The Renaissance Fair nearest our area isn't very accessible, so this also offered an opportunity for adults who otherwise wouldn't be able to attend such an event to come out for a night of fun. It worked wonderfully, only because of the number of staff and helpers available during the program.

The doors were opened at 6 pm (we close at 5 pm). Adults entered the main entrance and were greeted by a photo backdrop and a snack table run by one staff member. Upstairs, they could visit several different areas for different types of fun. Our teen room area has a TV, so we called it Knight Training and set up a VR Headset with Beat Saber.

We removed the study tables from our genealogy room and moved them to the children's room instead. In there, each table was a station: button making, map making (beans, colored pencils, resume paper), potion making (tiny glass bottles, water, glitter). All of these materials were leftovers from previous programs.

The genealogy room, now cleared, had party lights on and a portable speaker playing a curated playlist of medieval-style popular music (similar to the Bridgerton soundtrack).

Our microfilm room was decorated as a Bookish Tarot station. Patrons lined up for this! Their cards were drawn similarly to tarot cards, but each card corresponded with a Fantasy genre book recommendation.

We also had freestanding fairy wings as a photo op and another photo backdrop hanging for a photo op. Glow sticks and stickers were handed out by staff as they greeted patrons.

Advice

Borrow! Borrow! Borrow! You don't need to go broke to create your own fairy ball, especially if you lean into the woodland aesthetic.

Trivia would be good to add to the fun, whether as a passive or as a directed activity.

A costume parade would be fun to add. Several people came in cosplay and would have loved to be introduced as their character.

Give yourself time to coordinate and ask for help. It really helped me to have several people help on the day of, but it's possible to do it with less, especially if you don't have three floors to deal with.

I highly recommend sticking to winter. One thing about the Ren Faire season near us is that it's hot. Winter was a nice change to wear heavy costumes and not deal with the heat. It was also nice because the event began at sunset, so the lighting improved as the evening went on.

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

Supporting Materials

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- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

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Image









Image







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Audiences:

Intergenerational
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Percy Jackson Party

Audiences:

Teens (13-16)
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Image



Titanic Dinner

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)