

Question of the Week

[Harrisburg Community Library](#)

Intergenerational

Question of the Week

May 20, 2025

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Byline

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In an effort to engage patrons and create community in person and online, the Harrisburg Community Library began putting up a Question of the Week for patrons to answer. The question is posted on an easel whiteboard and on the library's social media, and patrons can answer with Post-It notes or with comments online.

Advanced Planning

One of our library's biggest challenges is visibility. While the library has been in its current location since 2010 and has existed for decades before that, because we are located in a school district-owned building, we have found that many of our community members either don't realize the city has a public library or they think

we are a children's or school library. Since hiring our first full-time staff members at the end of 2023, we have made it one of our top priorities to shift this narrative and increase the visibility of the library and our programs and services.

The goal of our Question of the Week was to engage our current and potential patrons both in person and online. We hoped that by posing fun, library-related questions, we could increase our online presence and thus overall community awareness of the library. We also hoped that our community members would feel a sense of community both in the library and online by sharing answers and seeing what other people added to our board.

Marketing

Because this is a weekly question, we keep our marketing relatively simple. We have the physical whiteboard placed next to the circulation desk, so everyone who checks out a material walks by it. We change the question at the beginning of every week (Monday). We also post the question online with a picture of the whiteboard. This is typically posted in the middle of the week, so the picture includes some Post-It note responses.

Budgeting

We had three main purchases for the Question of the Week - our [easel whiteboard](#), dry-erase markers and Post-It notes. We also utilized some extra pens we had available around the library. While a bit more expensive, we went with the easel whiteboard because it is easy to move around the library, it's height adjustable, we can bring it to tabling events, and we thought we could easily repurpose it in the future if need be. We also went with name-brand Post-It notes rather than generic sticky notes, because we found that Post-It notes tended to stick for the entire week, while some generic brands did not.

If a library wanted to do a similar program at a lower cost, they could instead purchase a roll of [kraft paper](#), tear off a long strip, post that paper somewhere accessible with the question written on it, and then have people write their answers directly on the paper. This would cut the cost of both the easel whiteboard and the

Post-It notes.

Day-of-event Activity

The most time-consuming parts of setting up the Question of the Week were putting together the easel whiteboard and coming up with literary- and library-related questions, both of which only took about 15 minutes. Once that was done, I chose my first question, wrote in on the top of the whiteboard, set out the Post-It notes and pens, and waited for patrons to fill out their answers!

I also always put my answer on the board right away to demonstrate how the board works (and to encourage any of our more shy patrons or staff members to participate!). I posted the question with a picture of the board and answers to our social media accounts later that week.

Program Execution

The response from all of our patrons has been positive, but we were surprised by how much the children really seemed engaged with the whiteboard. Our younger patrons take the questions and their responses - and the responses of others! - very seriously. It has been a great way for us to get to know these younger patrons better and for them to feel a sense of ownership and belonging when it comes to the library and one of our passive programs.

Many of our regulars make a point to answer the question every time they come in. Because the board is next to the circulation desk, it has been a good conversation-starter for our staff and patrons.

We track the number of in-person and online responses that we receive on our questions each week, along with what questions we asked that week. The number of responses we have gotten varies widely - from just a few responses to over 50 (definitely maxing out our whiteboard space)! We haven't found that any particular type of question gets more responses than others.

What we have found interesting is that some of the questions that get a lot of in-person responses get very few responses online, and those that do well online tend

to get fewer in person. We think this is because more families and children tend to answer the in-person question, while more adults tend to answer on social media.

Advice

What I love about the Question of the Week is that it can be scaled up or down depending on the library or the week! I would encourage libraries that are interested to post the question both in the library and online, as you end up reaching very different audiences that way. I would also encourage libraries not to get discouraged if some weeks are slower than others on responses—I can never guess what's going to be a popular question or not!

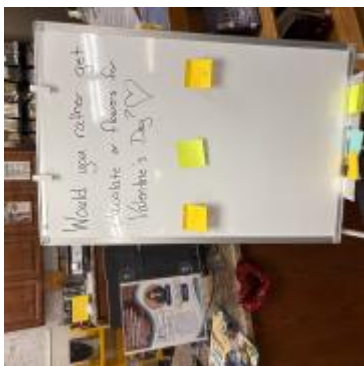
I also think that the Question of the Week can be a great way to get casual feedback. You can ask about future programs patrons would like to see, what people enjoy about the library or what materials or resources they'd like to see added. We have used it to decide some of our movie nights that we show at the library, for example.

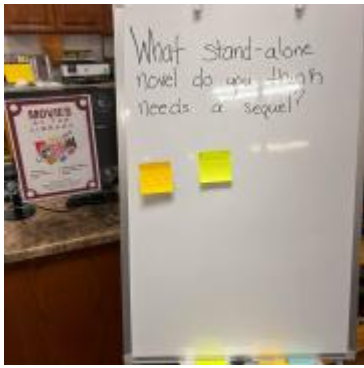
Supporting Materials

[Download this Program as a PDF](#)

- Feedback (Coming Soon!)
- [Programming Librarian Facebook Group](#)

Slideshow Images





More Programs

Aug 21, 2024

Intergenerational+ | \$

[Image](#)



Community Puzzle

Audiences:

Intergenerational

Feb 8, 2024

Adults (21 and up)+ | ☐☐

[Image](#)



Love Birds Scavenger Hunt

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)

Children (9 and under)

Aug 24, 2023

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[Image](#)



1000 Paper Cranes

Audiences:

Intergenerational