Silent Disco

Yukon Public Libraries

Intergenerational

Silent Disco

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$501-1000

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Byline

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We teamed up with a local business/DJ (Boreal Boogie) who provides headsets and curates a playlist for dance experiences in unusual places in order to create a Silent Disco in the library. Participants received a headset and were then able to listen to music and dance among the stacks in the library. We thought people would enjoy and get a kick out of dancing freely and listening to music as a group in a place that is stereotypically associated with silence (they did!).

Advanced Planning

We ran this as a special event for Library Month (October). We wanted to run an event that was fun and unique, and that would bring a potentially new audience to

the library.

The idea of a Silent Disco and the partnership with the local headset dance party purveyor had been pitched to me by another staff member some months before. I liked the idea, but I didn't know when we would be able to make it happen or the justification (beyond just something fun to do). When the time came to think of activities for Library Month, this was present in my mind.

We started planning about six weeks ahead of the event. It did not take much planning: some phone discussions with the DJ who would be facilitating to outline expectations on both our ends and brainstorming ways to address any potential issues we could see coming up and a discussion with the Library Management Team to gauge everyone's thoughts on feasibility and to catch any concerns or potential issues not previously thought of. The DJ runs silent discos (though never before in a library) fairly regularly, so they were already a well-oiled machine and knew what sort of challenges to be aware of (keeping track of headsets and making sure they all get returned) and had systems in place.

We set up registration through our event's webpage. The library staff's concern was ensuring that regular patrons, as well as those not dancing, were not perturbed by the dancers, and that the dancers were not harassed by regular patrons.

We hosted the event on a Monday night (generally not a busy time at the library), we put posters up in the library both to promote the event for regular patrons, but also to give regular patrons a head's up that this was happening, and when each dancer checked in to receive their headset a library staff gave them a quick spiel about giving some space to patrons if they seem to want something near where they might be dancing.

We also sent an email to everyone registered a day ahead of the event to set out these expectations as well. In the end, there were very few patrons in the library who were not a part of the Disco, and the few who were there seemed unbothered.

Marketing

We promoted the event through postering, through local arts events online pages and email mailing lists. We promoted on social media. The DJ also promoted the event through their own email lists.

The max number of participants that we could have had was 80 because that was the number of headsets available. From the library's perspective, we thought that if 20 people came out, we would consider it a success. 53 people registered, and 42 attended.

We also gave headsets to the three staff who were working on the floor that night, so 45 total. There were regular patrons who attended, as well as people who had not been to the library recently or ever, who came for the dance experience. New library cards were made and accounts renewed. People danced while reading or doing the community puzzle. We very much considered it a success.

Budgeting

The budget was entirely for the DJ's fee and headset rental ($525 for an hour and a half), but if any of the headsets had gone missing during the event, we would have had to cover the replacement cost. We were prepared to do that, but everyone returned their headsets at the end of the evening as instructed. When I suggested this event to our director, I was informed that we did not have any budget, but there is a not-for-profit associated with the library, Friends of the Whitehorse Library (FOWL), who has its own budget to help the library for instances such as this, and my director suggested we go to them. I asked FOWL and they were happy to provide those funds.

Day-of-event Activity

The setup went smoothly, and we did not require any extra staff. I met with the DJ/facilitator about an hour ahead of the event and helped her set up. She also came with her own volunteer/friend who has helped her with her events in the past. We had picked a corner of the library that just has seating (no materials) to set up her DJ station and a "check in" point for all the participants.

About 30 minutes before the event, I did a walk around the library to inform any patrons of what was going on and to invite them to participate if they wished. The volunteer and I were busy for the first half hour of the event, getting the participants checked in, giving them their headset, making sure they understood the expectations, taking a piece of ID or a set of keys as collateral/ incentive to return the headsets at the end of the event. The DJ already had this protocol and had an alphabetized filing box for us to use.

Once all the participants had arrived and checked in, I would do regular walk arounds the library and check ins with the DJ. At the end of the night, I helped with the return of the headsets and the return of participants' IDs and keys. I assisted with the take-down, and one of the other regularly scheduled staff members helped us carry the equipment to the DJ’s car.

The end of the event coincided with closing time, so the regularly scheduled staff were available to help with take-down.

The DJ was able to communicate with all the participants through the headsets, so she gave everyone a 10-minute warning before closing. All the participants started getting themselves ready to leave ahead of time, and everyone left the building at closing time.

Program Execution

The program played out exactly as we hoped it would. 42 people (not counting staff) attended. It was multigenerational. They spread out all over the library and danced while reading, danced while doing the library puzzle, danced while browsing the collection, little kids danced while doing colouring sheets, or they just danced.

The library felt vibrant with people. It felt so positive. Many of the participants were not regular library users, and they expressed joy at seeing all the library had to offer. New cards were made and renewed that night.

An email that we received after the event read: “A friend and I attended the Silent Disco last night at the Whitehorse Public Library. I have to say, it was an inspired idea! I have not been to the library in years and have never done a silent disco. My friend and I had a wonderful time, and we would love to know if the Library will be

doing it again. If so, we'll bring more friends. It was so much fun and it was an inspired idea to get people into the library who may not otherwise go. Now that I'm retired (3.5 weeks now), I will be getting my library card back. I have missed the library. Well done to all who thought up this idea! I truly hope you consider doing it again."

The goal was to have a fun, positive, and unique event that made people excited to be in the library. I would say we achieved that.

Advice

Pair up with a local business that curates dance parties with headsets if you can.

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

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Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | □□
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Regency Dance Class

Audiences:

Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
May 8, 2025
Adults (21 and up)+ | $
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Enchanted Library: A Fairy Ball

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)
Apr 30, 2025
Adults (21 and up)+ | $$$
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Titanic Dinner

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)