Pokémon Go Walking Tour

Prince George Public Library

Children

|

Tweens (10-12)

|

Young Adult

|

Adults

Pokémon Go Walking Tour

Sep 21, 2016

Free

Byline
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The Pokémon Go walking tour provides the opportunity to meet up with other Pokémon trainers for a guided tour of Pokéstops and downtown Prince George landmarks. The tour route takes the group through downtown Prince George, stopping at historical locations, Pokéstops and gyms.

The group walks and plays Pokémon together, and when gyms are encountered, the group battles together. Eggs are hatched and experience is gained on this educational tour with a twist. Learn more about Pokéstops, eggs and gyms.

We offered the tour on Wednesday evenings from 8 to 9 p.m. for five consecutive weeks (July 27 to Aug. 24, 2016).

Advanced Planning

For the past 10 years, the Prince George Public Library (PGPL) has been hosting historic downtown walking tours. Starting at the library, the tour takes the group on a one-hour walk of historic sites, stopping at each location to share its history. There are heritage signs placed at each stop containing a write-up and old photographs of the site. Not only is the library a Pokéstop, but many of the stops on the tour are as well.

With the popularity surrounding Pokémon Go, we decided to merge the historic walking tour with the game. Our intended outcome was to reach out to our underserved young adult population because it has been challenging to draw in this demographic. Planning this event was simple, since we already had the foundation of the historic walking tour in place. It took us less than one week to organize and implement the Pokémon aspect into the walking tour.

The Pokémon tour leads a group of trainers through downtown, stopping to share local history information, battle gyms and catch Pokémon. The original walking tour was created through partnerships with the Exploration Place (our museum) and the Prince George Heritage Commission, a local community group.

Marketing

Our marketing team created a poster and handbill for the tour by modifying the one that we use for the historic downtown walking tour. **(View examples of the original and modified poster under Attachments at right.)** We sent out a media release two days before the first tour, and it was instantly picked up by the media. I did interviews for four radio stations and the newspaper, and we made it on the local television news a few times. You can see the articles and news clip from these interviews at Prince George Citizen, My Prince George Now and CKPG TV.

In Pokémon Go, players can choose to join either team Mystic, Valor or Instinct. PGPL has a button maker that we used to create the three Pokémon team buttons. This allowed participants to easily identify their allies or opponents when we encountered a gym. Homemade maps with gyms and Pokéstops were also handed out.

The time between thinking of this idea and doing the first tour was only about one week. We acted quickly because we wanted to take advantage of the Pokémon craze. Having the historic tour already in place made it simple to adapt. The marketing was extremely successful, largely due to the timing and efforts of staff to help push the event forward as quickly as possible.

Budgeting

There were no costs associated with this particular Pokémon event. We were able to use in-house supplies for everything we produced for the program. An event like this could easily be replicated for under $50, but the local history research component could be quite time-consuming.

Day-of-event Activity

On tour days, we gave the program a marketing boost through our social media accounts and made sure that we had copies of the Pokéstop map and enough buttons to hand out. The tours ran Wednesdays from 8 to 9 p.m., so we worked our normal day shifts, then came in just before the tour. There were two main staff members leading the tour, with library security in plain clothes as backup. Occasionally, our marketing team would come out to take photographs.

Program Execution

The number of participants for the five tours we led was 30, 35, 30, 13 and 15. We expected the numbers to drop off as the novelty of Pokémon Go wore off, but even the lower numbers were hugely successful in terms of an evening weekday walking tour.

We created a feedback survey that was handed out after the tour with a QR code that could be scanned with a smartphone. Unfortunately, no one filled it out. However, we did receive quite a bit of verbal feedback from participants and it was always positive.

Programs like this one are helping to revitalize our downtown area and make it safer. Historically, our downtown has had a reputation of being unsafe, but we were able to bring together a crowd of over 30 people, on a weeknight, who walked boldly and proudly with us, the library, learning about the history and bringing life to community landmarks. It was a great way for us to be actively relevant in our community and build connections between the library and other downtown spaces.

Advice

If you're looking to start a similar tour, my advice is:

Have a solid plan and route, **but be flexible.** This program can change depending on the demographic of the group and weather conditions. Some people wanted to hear the history of the stops while others just wanted to play Pokémon with a large group.

Be attentive to the needs of those who came for the history. In some families, the parents were interested in the history, and the children used their devices to play during the tour.

Make sure staff know how to play the game! Many of the younger children came to be shown how to play, which we had not been expecting.

Ensure all staff can speak to the history. With a large group it was challenging for everyone to hear the speaker at times. If they couldn't hear, people would ask the nearest staff person to repeat the story.

Bring along security, if you can. We didn't encounter many issues but it was nice to have the presence. We had security with us since management had reservations about sending two young female staff members out with a large group in the evenings downtown. Even this conversation revealed the anxiety about downtown safety, evidencing the need for a positive, visible presence of community in our downtown area.

Use your community connections. The historical tour would not be possible without the assistance from our community partners. It was the historical aspect of the tour that added the extra flair to the Pokémon tours.

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

Supporting Materials

Document
original_tour_poster.pdf
Document
pokemon_tour_poster.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

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