

Below are answers to questions asked during the “Community Conversations Across Neighborhoods: Dialogue-Driven Programming” webinar that the presenters were unable to answer live, due to time.

Did you have community partners? If so, who?

- (Nancy) For Round 1, I worked with Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, a local nonprofit with whom the Jefferson Market Library has a long-standing relationship with. I also identified other groups within the neighborhood, a few of whom provided speakers at the first and second conference events, and have expressed interest in working with us in the future. For round 2 I did not work with a community partner.
- (Andrew) My community partners were the Educational Alliance (Round 1) and Chinatown Working Group (Round 2). The EA was a well-connected, well established organization in the neighborhood, and the CWG was much more “grassroots.” In my experience, working with the CWG was much more rewarding and impactful.

When you did cold calls on foot, did you have an information packet to hand out or were they casual conversations?

- (Nancy) While cold-calling, I brought the “in-reach” flyer with me, but kept it as casual and conversational as possible. Having the flyer was useful, because it allowed me to drop it off in case the business owner or manager was not present when I called. I did receive calls back from people after simply dropping off the flyer, and some businesses posted it in their window to help advertise the event.

What kind of strategy did you have for facilitators about handling the conflicts among the conversation group?

- (Nancy) Ground rules help to avoid conflict before it begins, to be sure, but occasionally a nasty comment will rear its head. In cases such as those, my approach is to call it out. If someone says something offensive or biased, the moderator should call it out immediately, and in as neutral language as possible, and then re-state the ground rule it violated. Otherwise, another participant might step in and call it out in less measured language and potentially escalate the situation. For example, a participant once shared a view that was racially biased against Native Americans in a conversation, and it left several other people in the room visibly shocked. At that time, I cut off the person speaking, and said thank you for sharing, but in the future we all need to be mindful about our language

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and avoid reinforcing negative racial stereotypes. If this happens again, you will be asked to leave the group.

- (Andrew) Always be prepared to place comments made in context. This is your job as a facilitator. Also, as Nancy pointed out, lay ground rules.

When you say "political content", what do you mean?

- (Andrew) Broadly speaking, "political content" is any content which focuses on the ways and means of governance or the rights within governance. The discussion of ins-and-outs of the doings and sayings of governance (legislation, executive power, etc.).

How did you promote these events?

- (Andrew) Flyers--there was also a small internet presence. Really though, partnering with organizations who are enthusiastic about the programming and getting the word out makes all the difference.

Do you provide refreshments during the current events cafe?

- (Nancy) Yes, I served food at the cafe, though I would say that is optional.

Did you have the same participants for each session?

- (Nancy) We did have many of the same participants after increasing from once to twice a month.
- (Andrew) For the Educational Alliance one, yes. For the Chinatown Working Group one, it varied. For the Article Discussion, we have a small dedicated group which comes and goes.

What do you mean by "flatten the space"?

- (Nancy) I mean reducing any assumptions of hierarchy within the group. No one is better than/knows more than/has more of a right to speak than anyone else in the room.

What day of the week were these programs?

- (Andrew) I held mine on Thursdays, just because that day we have late nights--I know a lot of patrons go to work 9-5, so I figured an evening program might be best. A couple of times we did Saturday events which were also successful.

Who led the second facilitation training you mentioned? Was it also Everyday Democracy?

- (Andrew) Everyday Democracy was one of our facilitator training groups.

What do you do if there are lulls in the conversation?

- (Andrew) Lulls can be helpful. Sometimes they're mental digestion spaces. We don't seem to have too many lulls though--it's politics!
- (Nancy) Agreed! Allowing space for silence in the room is a great tool to make the conversation richer. The silence never lasts too long!

Can you share an example of the open call flyer?

- (Nancy) Yes, please see below.

THE JEFFERSON MARKET UNIVERSITY

OPEN CALL FOR CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

Village Past, Present, and Future

Village Past, Present, and Future is a three-part conference slated to take place this autumn at the Jefferson Market branch of The New York Public Library. Located at the heart of Greenwich Village, Jefferson Market has a storied history of being a center for creativity, intellectualism, and civic engagement in its community. This conference seeks to celebrate that history by connecting a diverse array of Villagers in conversation about their experiences in the neighborhood. Structured like an academic conference, Village Past, Present, and Future seeks to encourage conversation and learning about local topics and experiences. From the AIDS crisis of the 1990s to the issues facing the PTA at the local public school, no topic is too big or too small. All are invited to participate in the discussion. Our goal for this conference is to foster intergenerational conversation, to boost community engagement, to raise awareness of Village issues and history, and to create new and fruitful connections among neighbors.

The Jefferson Market Library is seeking experts to make 5-10 minute presentations on one aspect of the Village with which they are intimately familiar. We are looking for small business owners, college students, teachers, artists, intellectuals, parents, historians, non-profit professionals, and other Villagers who are engaged with their community to frame a moderated, 1 hour discussion around their topic. The discussions will be open to the public, and facilitated by a trained moderator. As an expert, your job will be to share your knowledge, experience, and vision with your neighbors, as well as to participate in the conversation as an equal.

How to apply:

If you would like to volunteer as an expert for the Village Past, Present, and Future conference, please send a brief message (250 words or less) to nancyaravecz@nypl.org describing who you are, your area of expertise, and how an open discussion on the topic can benefit the community. The deadline for submissions is **September 8, 2017**.

Conference Dates:

- Village Past: Sunday, October 15
- Village Present: Sunday, November 19
- Village Future: Sunday, December 17

The Jefferson Market Library
425 Avenue of the Americas at 10th Street
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