

Summer Reading Program

Tips for Librarians

Nuts and Bolts

Five Months Before

- Decide on the dates and times of your programs. Using a calendar, first block off the times programs may not be held, then begin filling in the calendar. Programs for young children should be held at the same time each week, as young children like routines. Pencil in programs targeted for elementary children and teens.
- Contact artists for special programs. Follow up all agreements in writing. Include W-9 forms and directions to your library and unloading area. Keep copies for your records.
- Reserve program rooms and equipment. Allow time for set up and take down.
- Create a sign-up sheet if you require registration.

Four Months Before

- Order additional prizes.
- Order materials for programs.
- Create promotional materials:
 - Brochure of programs
 - Community calendars
 - Web sites
- Make arrangements for:
 - Broadcasting public service announcements
 - Broadcasting on local cable station or other television stations
 - Newspaper advertisements

Three Months Before

- Contact schools to promote the reading program. Send a letter outlining what you want to do. Follow up the letter with a phone call.
- If you are wearing a costume for your school visits, contact a costume shop to reserve your costume or begin gathering the costume materials.
- Practice your school presentation.

Two Months Before

- Create flyers.
- Write news releases.
- Decide on registration and tracking procedures.

One Month Before

- Put up posters announcing summer reading program. Decorate the library.
- Visit schools. Follow up visits with a thank-you note.
- Follow up on arrangements for promotion via radio, television, or newspaper.
- Do as much preparation as you can for programs. This may include:
 - Gathering books and other items
 - Creating samples of crafts and writing up directions
 - Assembling items

Two Weeks Before

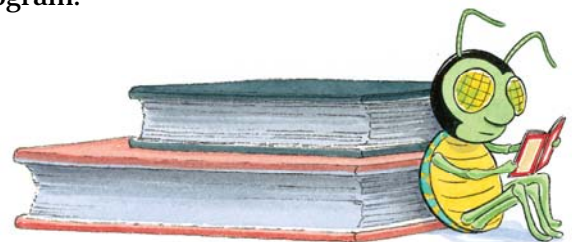
- Send news release to local paper—just remember to meet deadlines for submitting. Check ways to submit news releases—by paper, e-mail, or fax.
- Pictures may be submitted, but check on format: black and white photos, color photos, JPEG files. If patrons are included in photos, have them sign a release form.

One Week Before

- Gather materials for registration.
- Create a registration area—make sure you have plenty of pencils or pens.
- Double check supplies.
- Do any unfinished tasks.

Day of Program

- Greet people as they sign up for the reading program.



Promoting

In its simplest form, promoting a library service or program is like offering a gift of information to family, friends, neighbors and community. Yet with all the other things vying for people's attention, sometimes you need to toot your own horn—sometimes loudly—to be noticed.

Promoting the library program is like offering a gift of information to your community.



News releases

Newspapers have deadlines for listing events. If you can get the information to the newspaper in advance of the deadline, it is appreciated. Present the information in the format that is most helpful to them. Most news releases are double-spaced with contact information and suggested release date. Ask how the newsroom prefers news releases to be submitted—via e-mail, fax, or paper copy. More information on news releases can be found at <http://toolkit.prnewswire.com/Yahoo/index.shtml/>.

Posters



Posters are designed to be seen from a distance (think small billboard). Use simple, bold graphics with a minimum of words that are big, bold, and in upper and lower case. A good rule to follow is no more than two fonts in the same document.

Flyers

Flyers or brochures are designed to be seen up close. Graphics should complement the message. Black ink on white paper provides the most contrast and is easiest to read. Black ink on dark paper (dark red, navy blue, forest green) provides the least contrast and is difficult to read. Yet color adds interest and appeal. Warm colors (reds, yellows, and oranges) radiate. Cool colors (blues and purple) recede.

Radio

Radio is all about sound. A radio announcement should create a picture with words. Time is also a factor. Keep it short. If you are announcing, have talking points. Smile—your voice will sound nicer. Use expression and other storytelling skills.



Photos

It is best to get permission before displaying or using a photo of someone.



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Television

Television is about pictures. Before stepping in front of the camera, check your image. Solid-colored clothing is best. It may be difficult to look into a camera and talk. If your answers are directed to a person stationed just to the left or right of the camera, your comfort level will rise and you'll appear more relaxed. If that is not possible, consider using props.

Presentations

Speaking to an organization is another way to promote library service. Here is a quick presentation that works for any subject—a “planned interview.” Before the presentation create about 10 questions for the audience to ask. Type or write the questions on index cards. Hand out the cards with a chocolate treat to people in the audience and have them ask you the questions. Don't hide the fact that you have planted the questions—but have fun with it. Before answering a question say, “That's a good question!”



Web sites

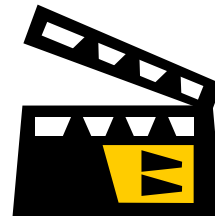


Promoting the library through Web sites can be a challenge. Creating a well-designed, usable Web site requires a lot of skill. A good Web site is visually appealing, provides updated information, and is accessible to everyone in the community. Wikis are a good starting place for learning about Web site design. An example of a wiki is Wikipedia. If you are interested in creating a wiki, visit these free sites that host wikis (<http://www.wiki.com/>, <http://www.wetpaint.com/>, and <http://pbwiki.com/>).

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Movies

YouTube is a popular site for posting video clips on the internet—and it has a nonprofit program. Another option is to work with local movie theaters to post your video clip or message on the large screen prior to the featured presentation.



Tips

Learn the names of the people receiving your information. Say “thank you” and say it often and in a variety of ways. At some point you will miss a deadline or mess up on something. It's helpful to have some goodwill stored up when you call requesting a favor!

Points to Ponder

Who is the program for?

What do you wish to accomplish?

How will you know that you did what you set out to do?

LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA



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School Visits

Visiting a school to promote the summer reading program is a great way to reach a targeted audience. There are hoops to jump through in order to reach your audience.

Hoop one – get permission to present at the schools. Presenting to a small group is preferred over a large group. The ideal is to give a short presentation in each classroom. This does take more time, but your efforts will pay off. Contact the principal by name and in writing requesting permission to promote the summer reading program. Remember that this is also a good time to promote applying for a library card. Include any handouts you wish to distribute that day and describe how long your presentation will be. Follow up the letter with a phone call. Follow up the phone call with a letter confirming the date and time. You might also include a poster with the same information that may be used as a notice to give to teachers.

Hoop two – arrive a few minutes early. Greet the school secretary by name before going to the classrooms. If the school has a schedule to follow, thank them. If they let you wonder the halls, thank them. Before you leave, thank the secretary again. Follow up the visit with a thank-you letter.

Hoop three – children and teachers are bombarded with lots of information. Your presentation needs to stand out or it will get lost. Wearing an over-the-top costume will get their attention. Humor used in a respectful way also gets your message across and remembered. Bringing visuals (prizes) and leaving a poster for the classroom and handouts for students to take home also helps ensure the information is received.

Hoop four – getting invited back next year is your final hoop. To do this, follow a few rules.

- What happens in the schools stays in the school; this includes any conversations overheard.
- Keep to your time table.
- Follow up the visit with a thank-you letter.



Accessibility



Making library service welcoming to all people is not only good service, it's required by law. The library should be accessible to people in wheelchairs. The building codes for the state of Virginia are referenced in ICC/ANSI A117.1-2003 and may be found in the Virginia ADA Manual put out by the International Code Council.

If an interpreter is requested for a person with hearing difficulties, one must be provided. The person requesting the services of an interpreter needs to provide the library with a reasonable amount of time to contract with one. Licensed interpreters usually work in two- to three-hour shifts and may include travel time. A registry of interpreters may be found at the Web site "Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf" at <http://www.rid.org/>.

Print materials should be made available in large print and alternative formats upon request. The Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired suggests following the guidelines created by the American Printing House for the Blind, which recommends using large print at 18 points or larger. Font and color also play a part in readability. Fancy, curly script is difficult to read. American Printing House for the Blind recommends using APHont font. Print materials are easiest to read in black lettering on white paper. Colors may be used, but pick those with high contrast.

More information may be found at
Large Print: Guidelines for Optimal Readability and APHont: a font for low vision by J. Elaine Kitchel
at <http://www.aph.org/edresearch/lpguide.htm/>