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Welcome to the Living Library Projects webinar. We’ll begin at the top of the hour. Please indicate:

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Today’s Presenters

Rebecca Judd
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Bainbridge Island Branch
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Rachel Foyt
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Santa Monica Public Library

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Outline

• History
• Getting Started
• Sample Budget
• Sample Timeline
• Living Library, Event Day
• Reflections & Celebrations

• Questions!

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History

- European program, founded in 2000 by Danish organizer Ronni Abergel (pictured here)

- Most commonly in festival or public library settings

- Over 30 countries have hosted a Living Library – and in the U.S., eleven states.

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Getting Started: Why a Living Library?

• Public libraries as places of not only information but transformation.

• Humanities programming at the highest level.

• Be able to articulate why this program is important for your library and your community.

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You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it. -- Atticus Finch
The Living Library provides an opportunity to work with new partners.

This can be a difficult program for people to conceptualize. If you want different groups in your community to attend the program, involve them from the beginning!

Make new friends, personally and professionally.

Lessons Learned:

A general email didn’t generate enough interest. Phone and in-person meetings worked best.

If at first you don’t succeed: try, try again!

Recruit someone with publicity and press experience.

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$1000 from two grant sources:

• $500 catering
  Living Books orientation dinner. Breakfast and lunch for Living Books and organizers on day of event
• $100 Travel expenses
  Ferry tickets
• $100 photographer
  Pictures really do tell the story. Hire a professional or find a talented volunteer
• $200 Printing, graphic design, publicity.
• $100 Misc. supplies, photo development, and thank-you gifts

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Sample Timeline

Plan for at least six 90-minute meetings

Before the meeting:

• Read the Living Library Organizers’ Guide (living-library.org)

• Discuss purpose and intended outcomes with library boards, library administration, etc.

• Assemble core advisory group

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Sample Timeline

Meetings 1 and 2: General orientation to the Living Library program

• To Discuss: History of Living Library, how it works, reason for project.

• Finalizing the advisory group: who else should be involved?

• Set date, time, place for program. To consider:
  In library or another site?
  If in the library, is the library open or closed?
  General set-up, who will be where?

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Sample Timeline

Meetings 3, 4, and 5 (?) : The Books
• Living History – Living Library continuum
• Recruiting Living Books
  “Call for Living Books” flyer and press release
  Gmail Questionnaire
    What intrigued you about this program?
    In what ways have you felt stereotyped or misunderstood?
    Why do you want to become a Living Book?
    What would you be interested in reading at a Living Library?
  Individual recruitment of Living Books

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An African American Father’s perspective on Island Living
Anti-Violence Activist
Atheist: Your Friendly Neighborhood Heathen
Baha’i Faith Practitioner: A Reaction to Prejudice
“Be the Change”: Voluntary Simplicity
A Female Cop in Today’s World
Firearm Instructor
Islamic Center of Tacoma
Laughing in the Face of Cancer: Thriving in the Raw (raw foodist)
Libertarian
Liveaboard: From Living “by” the Water to Living “on” the Water
Looking Like the Enemy: Japanese American Internment Survivor
Marine/FBI Agent: “I Have Been Carrying the Flag”
The Parent of a Lesbian Daughter
Proudly South African
A Queer Minority
Quadriplegic: An Accidental Life
WWII Japanese Concentration Camp Survivor

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Living Books Orientation

Orientation Meeting 5 days before event (90 minutes)

• Dinner and informal introductions
• History of the Living Library
• Guidelines for Living Books (handout)
  How it will work, who does what
  Sample questions for Readers
• How to prepare
  Being a “Book” in the Living Library – some useful hints (handout)
• Catalog Titles and Entries
• Photograph and press release forms
• Questions

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Living Library Day

Time 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Set-up
Registration table
“Library cards” First Name, City, Age
Guidelines for Readers
Catalog
Check out desk
   Each catalog entry had one piece of paper with 30 minute time slots
Wayfinding (escorts)
Timekeeping
Evaluations (books and readers)

Looking Like the Enemy: Japanese American Internment Survivor

I was seven years old when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941. Our family was part of the group of Bainbridge Islanders who were the first to be exiled from their West Coast homes to desert concentration camps. As an adult, I realize I spent much of my adolescent years trying to “prove” I am an American by denying my cultural background and putting the WWII experience away. Today I am an open book.

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Lessons Learned

Care and Feeding of Living Books

Longer time period? 45 minutes instead of 30 minutes?

More interactive check-out

Most common advice from Books to Readers:
  Be yourself, be open
  Don’t worry about “prying”; don’t be afraid to ask challenging questions

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Reflections

“There is too much to write – or even fully know yet. Many hours of thought will go into my absorption of this experience”

“The conversations changed assumptions I didn’t even know I had”

“I’ll see the landscape that I drive daily differently / personally”

“Old lesson reinforced: to listen is to know”

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Celebrations

Feature article in regional *Kitsap Sun*

Letters to the Editor in the *Bainbridge Review*

Mentions in *Library Journal* and on WebJunction (thank you!)

Celebratory lunch with Organizing group

Thank you note and photograph to each Living Book

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Thank You!

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“Our mission is to bridge the barriers to learning by providing open, affordable, online learning communities. Our members take courses, attend events, share knowledge, and network with others – all in an environment that fosters collaboration and mutual support.”
Santa Monica’s Living Library

Presented by:

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July 2009

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What is a Living Library?

• Concept – personal conversations can foster mutual understanding; connect strangers who might not normally have an opportunity to meet

• The event works like a regular library – except that people are checked out

• “Living Books” are available for 30 minute personal conversations

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Benefits for Your Library

• Raise awareness of your library
• Show you are more than just books; change your community’s perception
• Demonstrate that you are a leader in the library industry
• Be a gathering place for the community; offer unique and challenging events
• Present an amazing program that seeks to reduce prejudices and stereotypes
Collection Development

- Sought Living Books that are specific to the needs of our community
- Worked with personal connections and organizations that we’ve partnered with before
- Wanted personal recommendations

In October 2008, our first collection included a nudist, a raw foodist, and a formerly homeless person.
Personal Stories

- Our community wanted personal stories
- Used personal stories to connect people and fight prejudices

An ex-gang member answers questions from a community member

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Training

- Lasted 90 minutes
- An opportunity for the Living Books to meet and practice
- Covered
  - Effective communication techniques
  - Getting the conversation started
  - Diffusing negativity and answering challenging questions
  - Importance of self-evaluation and reflection

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Resources

Two full-time staff members
• Met every 2 weeks in the beginning
• Began to meet weekly about 2 months before the event
• Met every day as the event approached
• Divided up portions of the responsibilities
  • Rachel handled the media
  • Julie handled the budget
Budget

• $2,000 grant from the Friends of the Santa Monica Public Library
  • Training sessions
  • Food for Living Books Greenroom
  • Decorations for event
  • Thank you lunch and evaluation
  • Ads in local papers

• $14000 from the library budget
  • T-shirts
  • Photographer

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Media Plan

- Target Audience
- Media talking points
- Elevator speech
- Press Releases
- Photographer
- Ads
- Photo release waivers
Public Relations Tactics

• Develop a media kit
• Develop a speaker’s series to talk to neighborhood and community organizations
• Involve local service organizations as partners
• Use social networking
The Event

Logistics
• Festival setting
• Spreadsheet schedule
• Info cards and clocks on tables
• Staffing and volunteers
• Greenroom

Gave Readers
• Event guidelines
• Sample questions
• Reservation card
• Catalog
• Escorts to tables
Reflection & Evaluation

• Evaluate
  • Number of Readers
  • Number of checkouts
  • Who were the most popular and least popular Living Books
  • Press coverage

• Reflect with
  • Thank you brunch
  • Patron surveys
What We Learned

• Four hours was enough
• Have Living Books in one space
• Be prepared for the media
• Have sample questions with the Books
• Personally hand out surveys
• Never too soon to start recruiting
• People want the date of the next Living Library!
Thank You!

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