

# The Magic of Library Programming: Thriving in an Era of Change

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JAMES RIVER VALLEY  

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LIBRARY SYSTEM



# Why Programming?

- **Challenges**

- Internet & smartphones
  - E-books
  - Streaming services for movies, TV, music
  - Social Media
- Fewer people are reading physical books, mags, and newspapers
- Some people perceive libraries as stuffy book repositories

- **Opportunities**

- Libraries are integral to our communities
- People are hungry to learn new things
- People feel isolated and crave personal connection

- **Library visits will decline unless we give people a reason to come!**



# How Does Programming Help?

- Provides a reason for people to visit your library
- Increases awareness of library services
- Hopefully brings higher numbers of checkouts
- Promotes lifelong learning for children & adults
- Represents a reimagining of library services
- Appeals to groups that may be vulnerable in other settings—libraries are safe spaces!
- Creates new library stakeholders



# JRVLS Programming Story

## 2012

- Story time; kids' crafts, SumRdg
- \$500 budget
- In 2012–204 progs, 3,716 attend

## 2024

- Most staff members participate
- Daily afterschool progs at both libraries
- Programs for all ages
- \$15K budget
- In 2024–451 progs, 6,916 attend





# Becoming ProgramCentric Libraries

- Who do you hire?
  - Creative selfstarters
  - Teamoriented people who connect well with others
  - Experience working with people
- How do you train employees?
  - Allow for mistakes resulting in growth
  - Professional dev books at desks (reading encouraged)
- What do you reward?
  - Commendations for program work on yearly evaluations
  - More hours & promotions



# Employee Buy-in

- **Everyone has special talents especially librarians!**
  - Planning & organization
  - Creative ideas
  - Crafting
  - Art & design
  - Technical skills
  - Personal contacts
- **Staff enjoy using their talents & being praised afterwards**
- **Appeal of teamwork**
- **Staying busy makes the work day much more enjoyable**



# There Must be 50 Ways to Help with Programs

- Helping with planning
- Contacting expert presenters
- Social media & advertising
- Creating props and samples while working at desks
- Costumes—very important for some programs
- Food
- Setup & tear down
- Serving at stations during large programs, including greeting
- Technical work & satisfaction survey
- Leading the program



# Library “Stars” Make It Happen

- Assistant Director is also Outreach Coordinator
  - Approves most purchases
- Children’s librarians
- Teen librarian
- My programs don’t do as well as theirs!
- Any employee can propose a program
  - Chess club
  - Pokemon
  - D&D





# Ideas for Programs

- “Big-tent” brainstorming
  - Sweetheart Dance
- Library blogs
- Instagram
- Pinterest
  - Craft ideas
- Facebook
  - “Programming Librarian”
  - Follow crafters & other libraries



# Money, Money, Money!

- Budget for your priorities
- Grants
- Friends of the Library
- Community donations



# Getting the Word Out

- Website
- Facebook; Instagram
- Flyers posted to public bulletin boards
- Press releases & PSAs
- Chamber of Commerce
- City/County employee calendars
- Library signs (physical & digital)
- External scrolling sign
- Radio interviews
- Library newsletter
- Fundraising program (e mail list)
- Friends of the Library

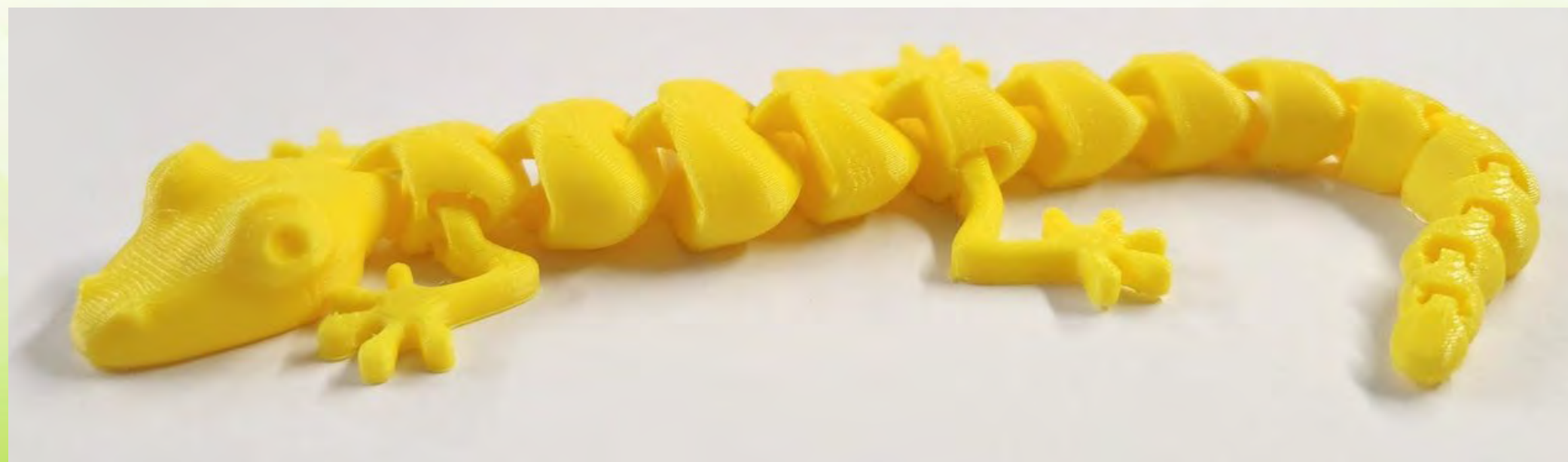


# Attracting Busy People

- Video ads (5 second “hook” for young people)
- Social media sneak peek pictures
- Games
- Prizes
- Food
- Crafts
- Opportunities to dress in costumes
- Word of mouth recommendations for next year



# 3D Printed Prizes are Great





# Expanding Your Audience

- Try livestreaming for hybrid programming
  - Facebook, YouTube, Zoom
- Maintain recorded programs on YouTube
- Social Media video-recap to expand interest for next year



# Event Surveys (with Prizes)

- QR code for online survey (paper option better for seniors)
- Rate satisfaction
- Ideas for future programs
- Would you like to be notified of future events?
- Prize for completion awarded randomly
- We want happy patrons to attend more programs



# Program Ideas- Fun for All Ages





# Fantasy Faire





# Fantasy Faire Prizes





# Fantasy Faire They Made it Happen!





# Bingo for School Supplies

- After bookmobile takes part in city parade advertising banner
- \$600 of supplies donated by Friends of the Library
- Based on teacher lists
- Giveaways other than teacher supplies
  - 48 backpacks
  - Headphones
  - Trapper keepers
  - Gift cards



# Crafternoon





# Crafternoon Details

- Fall event
- Friday afternoon when school was on break
- Come-and-go
- Pick your own craft with instructions
- 200 attendees of all ages



# Tiny Art Show

- All ages
- Takeand-Make
- 3x3 canvas with paints
- Easels for library display
- Prizes for age groups based on people's choice vote
- Reception with tiny treats
- 130 participants returned artwork in 2025



Library Lovers' Month  
2024 Tiny Art Show



# Puzzle Competition

- Free to enter
- Family event
- 20 teams
- 76 participants in 2024
- First—third place prizes





# Local Author Fair



- 20 authors
- Selling, signing, talking “shop”
- 150 attendees of all ages



# Holiday Open House

- Fun for all ages
- Local author's Christmas book reading
- Story time
- Pictures with Santa
- Food
- Crafts
- Games
- Christmas caroling
- Christmas concert
- Great decorations
- 75 attendees in 2024





# Story Time @ Holiday Open House





# Thanks, Santa!





# Fantasy Football Extravaganza



- Joe's "liveandlearn" event
- 4 attendees in 2024
- Better marketingplanned
- Food, Trivia & prizes
  - \$50 football
  - League trophy
  - Football board games
  - Packs of NFLcards
  - Squeezy football keychains for all



# Sweetheart Dance- Valentine's Day 2025

- Comeand-go event
- Special appeal to young families & early teens
- 150 attendance
- Local DJ





# Program Ideas- Children & Teen





# After-School Programs

- Program/activity/snacks at each library after every school day
- Average 30/day @ ADP £ 7/day @ SCL
- Snacks funded by donations
- Importance of clear expectations at beginning of year
- Activities
  - Crafts
  - Games
  - Videos
  - STEAM cart
  - Homework help
  - Making Valentine cards for kids at Anne Carlson Center



# After-School Crowd Arriving....





# Glow Party

- 2-day event
- Blocked windows for darkness
- Come-and-go event
- Art & face painting
- 200 attendees





# Film Club– Video Animation Program

- Tablets provided by Bayer grant
- Kids make animated videos using clay, Legos, etc.
- Video screening for the parents at the end





# Mad Scientist & Insect Workshops



- Multiple stations inside & outside the library
- Outside experts
- Hands-on learning
- Crafts
- 90 attendees



# Bird-Watching Tour

- Trip to Arrowwood National Wildlife Refuge
- Bus provided by Farmers' Union
- Expert tour leaders
- Binoculars donated as prizes
- Birding books
- Snacks
- Kid + adult activity
- Demand exceeded avail





# STEAM @ Home Program with Lib of Things



- Friends fundraising letter
- Community donations
- LoTgrant
- Program teaching parents to use STEAM educational items with their children
  - Telescope
  - Digital microscope
  - Coding robot, etc.



# Seed Library Opening

- Jamestown Community Gardens sponsors
- NDSU Extension provides an annual program for grand opening





# Program Ideas- Bookmobile Outreach





# Stutsman County Fair

- Interact with large numbers of people
- Library survey opportunity
- Tour bookmobile
- Face painting
- Taken-make crafts





# Bookmobile StoryWalk



- Repeatable summer program @parks
- Laminated pages from books
- 2 copies of each book



# North American Bison Discovery Center

## Story Time & Meet the Bison



- Native American & bison-themed stories with free museum entry
- Field tour to meet the bison



# Dr. Dawn's Dairy Day



- Story time throughout the day
- Tour bookmobile
- Feature age-related books for checkout



# Thanks for Your Interest!



Questions?  
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