

Programming Survey

In February of 2009, Gail Craig, Executive Assistant for the High Plains Library District, posted questions regarding programming to the Libnet listserv. Five public library staff responded to the following questions:

1. How do you measure the success of a program and does the measure vary depending on the different ages the program serves?
2. Do you have attendance requirements to continue a program? How do you decide which to cut or keep?
3. What is your most successful program that requires people to come to the library? What is your most successful program that gets people in your doors?
4. What is your most successful online program?
5. How do you manage and promote programs in a district with multiple locations? Do you try to keep names consistent (such as "Tales for Tots") between locations?
6. How do you determine whether a program is right for your community?
7. What strategies are used for choosing the best days and times for programs?
8. What do you consider as your most progressive and innovative program?
9. What advertising is most successful for you? What is your WOW factor to bring people in?
10. Who is in charge of planning programming? Is it done by district team, branch, or individuals?

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1. How do you measure the success of a program and does the measure vary depending on the different ages the program serves?

- Our director seeks quantity. My colleague and I, being the children's librarians, seek both qualitative and quantitative feedback. I prefer to observe how many patrons are interested in the program, asking about it, enjoying it, etc.
- We don't judge it by a huge turn out, but rather how many people get excited and tell us how much they loved it.
- We ask our staff to set a benchmark goal for each program. The goal has to be measurable and distinct from an attendance goal. Goals vary from "50% of attendees are male" to "Circulation of classical music will increase by 3% in the month following the program."

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2. Do you have attendance requirements to continue a program? How do you decide which to cut or keep?

- We do not. We are of the thought that it takes a long time to get a program that is regularly scheduled off and running. For instance, I began a Tuesday night story time when I began working there. My colleague did not believe that it would work. They have grossed to average about 12 children per evening story time...but it has taken a year. So...I guess I believe it would depend on your level of commitment to the program.
 - If people don't show up, we don't do it again.
 - We encourage staff to measure the success of their programs on areas other than attendance. Our staff determine the success based on their evaluation of the program. Many programs are not repeated from year to year because our patrons are often asking for new programming.
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3. What is your most successful program that requires people to come to the library?
What is your most successful program that gets people in your doors?

- Hands down, summer reading kick off party. We had over 600 kids at ours last year. We do not do the state offered program, however. We design our own summer reading program. If you would like more information on this, I would be happy to provide it. Just let me know.
 - A quick answer to #3. We recently co-sponsored a Wi\$eUp series of classes and had over 50 women sign up for the class and about 30 waiting for the next session.
 - In our Money Talks series the biggest draw was Estate Planning - had to turn people away when more than 60 showed up.
 - Story time, Science and Yoga in that order. We treat every story time like a performance and people love it.
 - Since success is not necessarily tied to attendance this question is difficult to answer. Our storytimes are very well attended. We have a very popular science program, Ooey Gooey Science, that is always full. Our writing groups for elementary age children are also popular. We also offer current issues programs for adults (e.g. Great Decisions) that are well attended. Some of our major events such as An Evening with Dave Barry and our Shakespeare Festival also draw crowds from 500-1000 people.
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4. What is your most successful online program?

- We don't have one at this time in the kids area.
 - We do not offer any online programming.
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5. How do you manage and promote programs in a district with multiple locations? Do you try to keep names consistent (such as "Tales for Tots") between locations?

- One method we use to promote our library programs (with only some success) is printing up color flyers listing programs for K-2 for the primary school and Grades 3-5 for the intermediate school, with some pictures illustrating a craft to be done, etc.
 - We are a singular location in a larger consortium, so I have no professional experience to answer this question with.
 - We only have one location.
 - We offer district wide programs that occur at all five libraries that we promote together. Otherwise we promote branch programming at the branch hosting the program but we are exploring additional cross-promotion between branches this year. For the most part, we keep program names consistent from branch to branch.
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6. How do you determine whether a program is right for your community?

- We give it a try :). Make sure to be aware of your age range, and predict how the time and theme will be accepted by your community. Make sure to limit attendance if the program will be too popular among your service community.
- We don't deliberate too much; we just plan the best event possible and then put it out there. We also look at what the community really enjoys and take it from there. Sometimes that means that the event may not initially seem like a "library" event. Yoga and Brain Gym are to good examples of that. I think our role in the community is so broad that we shouldn't just limit ourselves to what we think library programming should be.
- We conduct an annual survey of our patrons asking them to determine the program topics they would like to see us offer during the following

year. We also look to see if our programs "fill a void" in the community or are being offered anywhere else. We find that in some cases we are not the best place to offer a particular type of programming such as cooking classes.

7. What strategies are used for choosing the best days and times for programs?

- For us, it is experience. We know that Saturdays are not good for us, and Fridays have not proven too hot. However, I applied for a job recently that only offers Friday story times, so it depends on your community. Trial and error or surveys may be best.
 - If we introduce something new, sometimes we will try it a two different times to see what will garner the best attendance. We also take events to groups or put them in public places (like our farmer's market).
 - We currently do not have any strategies in place for choosing days and times. We do our best to make an educated guess.
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8. What do you consider as your most progressive and innovative program?

- We do a lot of interesting small programs. We had a Fancy Nancy Tea Party, and a Gingerbread Cookie decorating program. In my experience, if the program is quality and done enough, it will attract a good number of people.
 - I don't know how innovative we are, but we take story time to all of our area preschools each week. We also do a lot of programming directed to parents on subjects like emotional intelligence, brain development, and diagnosing learning styles.
 - Overall - our annual Page to Stage Children's Theatre Tour that visits schools throughout the county each spring. Each year we have many new and innovative programs that it is hard to identify just a few.
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9. What advertising is most successful for you? What is your WOW factor to bring people in?

- Our advertising is mostly in house (via signage, displays, and posters). We also display all programs on our library's website. For large programs we contact the local papers and new agencies for increased publicity.

- Handbills 3"x5", very bright and catchy, we pass them out to everyone.
 - What is successful depends on the program and the audience. Overall, our bi-annual magazine is a great tool for promoting a large number of programs. We receive quite a bit of traffic from website listings as well as our creative posters. Our WOW factor tends to be the type of program we are offering rather than how it is promoted.
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10. Who is in charge of planning programming? Is it done by district team, branch, or individuals?

- We do it as a team. One of us will create the idea and we both roll with it.
- In my department it is myself and my staff, but we also have a program coordinator who can give us a hand when needed.
- We have a District Program and Events coordinator who plans programs that occur district wide and major events. We have a Reading Program Coordinator who plans our 5 reading programs each year. We also have staff at each branch that plan programs in coordination with the Program & Events Coordinator.