



The Big Event: Creating dynamic programs that bring in the crowds

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Powerpoint & handout available at zen-teen.com/?p=915

Here's why you should host a 'big event' at your library:

- Teens love them, especially when they're about something they're excited about!
- It's a great way to get NEW teens into the library as opposed to just that anime crowd that comes to your gaming night (& book club as well)
- It doesn't have to be expensive!
- You can easily have 20-75+ teens at ONE event!

The steps you need: inspiration, planning, creation, marketing, presenting

The most important thing to take away from this? Big events aren't scary. But don't be afraid to ask for help!

INSPIRATION

Do your research!

- What are YOUR teens into? What's popular right now, & will still be by the time you do the program?
- What can your library offer teens that they don't have access to regularly?
- Seasonal programs, Annual events, One-time-only special events

Where to find it:

- Talk to YOUR teens
- Check IMDB for upcoming movie releases
- Pay attention to what's going out at YOUR library – Teen Advisory Board, high circ-ing titles, surveys...
- Listservs, workshops, etc; your librarian friends
- TUMBLR
- Make Hot Topic & HotTopic.com a frequent stop for research!

DON'T FORGET THE GUYS! If you continually offer mostly girl-centric programs, they might not even bother to see if you ARE offering something they'd like!

What we do:

- Annual Events: Love Stinks Chocolate Fest, TRW Extravaganza, Nightmare on Mahoning Ave
- Movie premieres: Twilight, Hunger Games, Survival Challenge, Divergent, The Fault in Our Stars
- Fandom: Doctor Who, SuperWhoLock, Nerdfighteria, Harry Potter, Big Bang Theory
- Other: Silent Library, Fear Factor

PLANNING

When are you going to have your event?

- Check with school schedules & other calendars – Teen Read Week is at a bad time for us!
- Don't cram too many events, no matter how small, into a short span of time
- Audience? Registration?

- Look at the big picture! Create a spreadsheet/table in word/notebook for future planning purposes

Looking at the big picture:

- Helps with budgeting!
- Avoids that cramming issue (mostly)
- Is VERY flexible!
- Does require you to stay on top of trends, & make changes as needed.
- Enables you to schedule rooms & get marketing materials in time!
- Makes CREATION a breeze

CREATION

You've decided to do an event. Now what?

- Keep a notebook, create a Pinterest board, have a file open to throw your ideas in when they strike.
- Plan big, then edit down.
- How long will the event last? Better to over-plan & not get to something, then to suddenly have an hour to fill!
- *Never promise anything!* (learn from my mistakes!)

Activities:

- What do you want to be doing during the actual event?
- Authors/performers are costly! Alternatives?
- Who is the audience for this event?
- Several options for finicky/socially awkward teens – trivia sheets, crafts
- Don't lecture at them! Sneak in the educational stuff!
- Could this become an annual event?
- Can you invest in something for this & other events?
- Photo ops & decorations are easily made from cardboard!

Crafts:

- Need to be practical!
- Don't forget the guys, & your non-girly girls!
- Plan crafts with materials that can be used in other crafts – saves money!
- Always provide a sample – and expect it to disappear.
- Watch the projects that require lots of scissor work!

Games:

- Try to do something different!
- My teens adore thematic games from their younger days, like Hanklerfish Hot Potato & Cyberman Says
- Jeopardy-style games take at least ½ hour

Some final thoughts:

- How much staff will you need?
- Multimedia is a definite must-have
- Food: think beyond pizza! Don't forget about COMMON ALLERGENS
- Favors & prizes – use your book donations!

- Make your teens help with any & all prep!
- Staff t-shirts

MARKETING

Flyer creation:

- Always market up
- If you can, print in full color
- Be vague: "CRAFTS! GAMES! PRIZES! MORE!"
- Determine who the flyer is for – parents? Teens?
- Which format/size? Bookmarks, half-sheet?
- Fonts – don't overdo it!
- Lots of free resources for graphics!

Getting the word out, inside the library:

- Library staff
- Make teen area your prep station
- Create book displays just for the event
- Make sure all the teens in the library know!
- Hold a passive program that coincides with the event – movie or music choice, art contest, count the candy, favorite characters, etc

Getting the word out, outside the library:

- Any & all of your library social networks!
- Take photos of prep & post it to Instagram
- Create Facebook events, and use that banner!
- Post hi-res images of flyers to Tumblr, Facebook, & Instagram – they'll get reblogged & liked!
 - To create images of your flyers created in Publisher: File >> Save & Send >> Change File Type >> PNG Portable Network Graphics (best quality; will preserve your colors)
- Local hang-outs, like Starbucks & Hot Topic
- Email teachers, school administrators, & other local youth organizations.
- Use your TAB members!
- Use your PR department, or become your own!

PRESENTING

In the week or so leading up to the event...

- Lock down everything you'll be doing
- Write down a schedule of events.
- Double check any shopping, ordering, etc.
- Make sure staff can answer basic questions
- Gather crafts & other supplies
- Finish your prep before the day-of. If you didn't get to it, just save it for another event.
- Make photocopies!

The day of the event is here!

Let's talk set-up – don't forget to schedule this!

- Keep a clipboard with paper & pen with you
- Ask your responsible teens to come early
- Put signs on doors early in the day – one last push for marketing!
- Wear comfortable shoes
- Microphone!
- Test everything – something will inevitably not work correctly.
- Is there a safe place for their stuff?
- Put down tablecloth for easy clean-up!

Leading up to the door opening...

- Choose a time when the door will open, & stick to it!
- Change clothes and shoes if you're going to!
- Double-check signage, supplies – did you remember scissors? Glue sticks? Pencils?
- Turn on media before you open the door
- Put a sign on the door stating when program is over & when the library closes
- Ask for help if you need it!
- Plan your food prep!

During the event:

- Only allow teens to put one entry into drawings!
- Mingle with all the teens, especially new ones!
- Help with crafts – no one reads directions!
- Monitor behavior – we all have a problem child
- Stick to your schedule, but be flexible
- Make announcements throughout the night about drawings, games, food, library closing, etc.
- Hold prize drawings long before the end of the night – some kids need to leave early.

CLEAN-UP!

- Sometimes, you just have to (gently) kick them out!
- If you can, ask some responsible teens to stay behind to help
- Do only what you have to – leave the rest for tomorrow
- Do what you can for maintenance!

Assess:

- What worked? What didn't? Why?
- How can you make the next one even better?
- What supplies are left?

How does your library define success for a program? (It's not just about how many kids attended!)