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Arts à la Carte

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Arts à la Carte

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PURPOSE

This series of events brings music, art, creative writing, and dance into the library, fostering an open, dynamic, and creatively charged library atmosphere.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Campus community

INGREDIENTS

- Small group of library staff
- Space. Almost any space will do, such as
 - ◊ atrium with great acoustics;
 - ◊ large carpeted area perfect for dancing;
 - ◊ learning commons; or
 - ◊ dedicated event/lecture room.
- Talent
 - ◊ Dancers, musicians, artists, writers
 - ◊ Anyone in the performing, visual, or language arts that would like to be included
 - ◊ Use fresh, locally sourced ingredients as available.
- Communications point-person with social media savvy
- Online platform for posting the schedule. We used LibGuides.
- Utensils
 - ◊ Props and signs for DIY photo booth

- ◊ Copyright-free coloring pages and buckets of crayons, markers, and colored pencils
- ◊ Chairs and music stands
- ◊ Portable PA system for readings (as needed)
- ◊ Display stands for signage and posters

INSTRUCTIONS

1. About a year prior to programming, recruit a small working group of interested staff or faculty.
2. Pick a time period, up to a month, in which programming will take place.
3. Brainstorm combinations of performers and library locations: one-act plays in the stacks, jazz ensemble in the rare book room, choirs in the atrium, dancers near the popular reading section, or whatever performers and locations you may have on campus.
4. Communicate with colleagues and administrators to increase awareness and avoid scheduling conflicts.
5. Get approval for anything that might be a bit more out-of-the-box than usual.
6. Reach out across campus, especially to the faculty and student leaders of campus arts groups, literary journals, and music ensembles.

7. Spreadsheet the schedule: who, what, where, when.
8. Develop a theme, logo, and name for the programming.
9. About a month prior, disseminate the schedule in paper and online.
10. Two weeks prior, publicize the more traditional events like readings and lectures by creating a Facebook event and individual event fliers to post and share.
11. During the week of the events, publicize internally and through social media outlets.
12. Start of the programming period, set up coloring tables and photo booth.
13. On the day of the pop-up events, send a reminder email to library staff and posts to social media.
14. Designate a representative to set up the space and greet performers, inform nearby patrons about activity, facilitate the event, pass out surveys, and clean up.
15. Share! Post videos and pictures on library social media using a short hashtag.

CAUTIONS/ADVICE

Don't overbook. Campuses already have a lot of events, so try not to conflict with your own offerings. You can also wear out your committee.

If your programming falls at semester's end, stressed-out students might not want to hear a string quartet while they prepare for finals, so schedule your "loud" events carefully and keep them short.

Be ready to take risks and accept criticism. Knowing what went wrong (too loud, wrong time of day or location) can be as important as knowing what went right.

Spread the work. With many events, even small ones, burnout is a real possibility. When possible, recruit talent who will self-organize. Have everyone responsible for facilitating and posting about events.

Variety is important. Have both participatory and static events. Include visual, performing, and language arts. Balance a lecture on *Beowulf* with a pop-up performance of a string quartet. Have a seven-piece jazz group at a poetry reading. Don't be afraid of an unusual mash-up.

ASSESSMENT

Solicit feedback through a survey online and on paper. Link to a survey form from an online schedule or through a QR code on print publicity. Use whatever is convenient and simple. Track attendance, participation, and favorability in order to influence future events.

REFLECTION

Pop-up performances and readings may not draw crowds as large as the scheduled, more traditional events, but they will have the most diverse attendance. Campus tours might come through the library and witness a choral performance, or students arriving for group study may stop to watch dancers. Even the president of the university might make a quick stop to read a few poems. In our experience, some of the most enthusiastic responses come from audiences who did not expect to encounter a performance or event.

