Facilitating Civic Engagement with Pop-Up Programming

An Infopeople Webinar
November 6, 2019

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Collection Development Librarian

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Experiential Learning Supervisor
Today’s Agenda

• Starting premise and background of the Civic Lab
• Current operations of the Civic Lab
• Staffing logistics and roles
• Types of pop-ups
• Lessons learned
• Questions and reflection
Has the Black Lives Matter movement challenged you to think about racism in Skokie?

**YES**

**NO**

Libraries aren’t neutral.
• The Public Library as Convener of Civic Engagement
How do we define “civic engagement?”

Civic engagement refers to the programs and opportunities that promote and facilitate:

• a deeper, more critical understanding of how civic institutions operate;
• a broader, more empathic knowledge of how issues, policies, and decisions affect lives; and
• an increased awareness of and confidence in one’s ability to take an active role in civic discourse and participate in community decision-making.
What do we hope to achieve?

As a result of participating in civic engagement opportunities at the library, patrons will be able to make up their minds on issues based on credible information and critical reflection.
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As a result of participating in civic engagement opportunities at the library, patrons will be able to make up their minds on issues based on credible information and critical reflection.

As one patron put it:
“‘You need to have good information in order to make up your own mind. If you have bad information, someone else is making up your mind for you.’”
Applying a Civic Engagement Lens

We consider how civic engagement does or could impact every aspect of our programs and learning experiences, regardless of audience age, program format, or staffing.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge-building Opportunities (e.g., learn something)</th>
<th>Youth Ages 0-5</th>
<th>Elementary-Age Youth</th>
<th>Junior High Youth</th>
<th>High School Youth</th>
<th>Adults</th>
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<tr>
<td>Specific-themed storytimes</td>
<td>Adventure Club, BOOMbox drop-in discussions/micro workshops, BOOMbox drop-in discussions/micro workshops, Great Debate Club; Break the Election</td>
<td>Know Your Rights Clinics</td>
<td>Understanding the Village Building Permit Process, Money, Politics, and Democracy, Making Sense of the News; Chinese-ness: How Chinese American Mobilize Politically; Says Who? Evaluating Sources in the News; Media Literacy 101, Listen with Intent: Retelling the Civil Rights Movement</td>
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<th>Skills-building Opportunities (e.g., acquire a skill)</th>
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<td>Socio-emotional skills focus in storytimes</td>
<td>Voting activity at youth desk</td>
<td>Neutral Zone; JH Council; Great Debate Club; Community Activist Volunteers; Community Tech Volunteers; SkokieWiki Volunteers</td>
<td>Neutral Zone; HS Council; Community Activist Volunteers; Community Tech Volunteers; SkokieWiki Volunteers</td>
<td>Oakton Citizenship Education Classes</td>
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<th>Pop-up Events</th>
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<td>Civic Lab-related pop-up storytimes</td>
<td>Civic Lab</td>
<td>Civic Lab; JHZ afterschool activities</td>
<td>Civic Lab</td>
<td>Civic Lab; Voter Registration</td>
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<th>Passive Experiences</th>
<th>Youth Ages 0-5</th>
<th>Elementary-Age Youth</th>
<th>Junior High Youth</th>
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<td>Citizen Science-related programs like Be the Scientist</td>
<td>HSL Whiteboard Questions</td>
<td>Together at the Table; Neutral Zone; Friend Squad</td>
<td>Together at the Table; Neutral Zone; Friend Squad</td>
<td>Together at the Table; What Every American Should Know; Great Decisions Discussion Groups; Pages Through History; Friday Night with TED; Let’s Talk at Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<th>Access to Curated Materials</th>
<th>Youth Ages 0-5</th>
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<td>Knit and crochet-a-thon, 1 on 1 volunteers</td>
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Background of the Civic Lab
• The Civic Lab:
• An Origin Story
• The Civic Lab Boutique
• Prompt Cube

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Do Black lives matter in Skokie? What barriers or inequalities exist locally?
The CIVIC LAB at Skokie Public Library aims to support dialogue and engagement on issues that affect our community. We offer thought-provoking activities that start with the belief that others’ intentions are good and that we can learn and grow in open conversations with one another.
Has the Black Lives Matter movement challenged you to think about racism in Skokie?

- Voting Element
Current Civic Engagement Practices
Rapid Response Pop-Ups
• Some Thoughts on Intended Audience
Staffing Logistics and Roles
# Staffing Roles Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Run Meeting</th>
<th>Coordinate Pop-Ups</th>
<th>Lead Scheduled Pop-Ups</th>
<th>Pop-Up Topics</th>
<th>Rapid Response Pop-Ups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan-16</td>
<td>Amy H.</td>
<td>Mimosa &amp; Christine</td>
<td>Endangered Species</td>
<td>Amy K.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb-18</td>
<td>Amy H. (2/26/18)</td>
<td>Lynnanne &amp; Becky</td>
<td>How a Bill Becomes a Law</td>
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<td>Mar-18</td>
<td>Amy H.</td>
<td>Amy H.</td>
<td>Social Media &amp; Viral News</td>
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<td>Net Neutrality</td>
<td>Mimosa</td>
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<td>Apr-18</td>
<td>Amy K.</td>
<td>Kathy &amp; Allyson</td>
<td>Can you separate an abuser from their art?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Amy K. &amp; Amy H.</td>
<td>What is Journalism? (And What Isn’t?)</td>
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<td>Chris &amp; Mick</td>
<td>Taxes!</td>
<td>Leah</td>
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<tr>
<td>May-18</td>
<td>Mimosa</td>
<td>Linnanne</td>
<td>International Fact Checking Day 4/2</td>
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<td>Mimosa &amp; Chris</td>
<td>Attempted Nazi March</td>
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<td>Mimosa &amp; Amy K.</td>
<td>Stand Against Racism</td>
<td>Christine</td>
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<td>Amy H.</td>
<td>Narratives of gun violence</td>
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<td>Amy K.</td>
<td>Privacy in America</td>
<td>Laurel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun-18</td>
<td>Christine</td>
<td>Christine &amp; Mimosa</td>
<td>Who Writes History?</td>
<td>Jenny</td>
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<td>(6/20/18)</td>
<td>Mimosa &amp; Amy K.</td>
<td>What is Pride Month?</td>
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<td>Jul-18</td>
<td>Christine</td>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>Cultural History of Skokie</td>
<td>Amy H.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug-18</td>
<td>Leah (8/20/18)</td>
<td>Amy K.</td>
<td>Talking About Suicide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep-18</td>
<td>Leah</td>
<td>Mimosa</td>
<td>What Does It Mean to Gentrify?</td>
<td>Chris A.</td>
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**But what does it all mean?!!?**

- **Run Meeting** - You're in charge of creating the meeting agenda, sending it out before the meeting, and leading the meeting.

- **Coordinate Pop-Ups** - You're in charge of making sure all pop-up logistics are confirmed, including in Communico, handout ready for proofreading at least 1 week before the event, etc.

- **Lead Scheduled Pop-Ups** - You're in charge of making a pop-up happen during that month, from choosing the topic, to soliciting additional staff to co-facilitate, to creating the handout, to staffing the pop-up, to writing a recap in Basecamp after the pop-ups.

- **Rapid Response Pop-Ups** - You're in charge of blocking off time 2-4 times during the month during which you'll pop up in the library to talk about a topic in the news. You'll use the standard handout for information seeking (in development).
How do you activate staff?

• Take into account personal experiences
• Make it easy to bring an idea from another program into a civic engagement setting
• Think about how library jobs relate—e.g., collection specialists, reference staff
• Intentionally create a cross-departmental team
Preparing Staff for Civic Engagement

• Provide clear goals about staff participation expectations

• Establish understanding of how to differentiate between breaking news vs. analysis vs. opinion

• Have discussions before programs about personal and news bias, and how to redirect these interactions
What it Takes to Pop-Up

- Facilitation
- Handout of curated resources
- Interactive component
- Visual display
- Patron calendar entry
- Documentation
• Facilitation Practices
Handouts

• Include a variety of formats (i.e. long and short articles, audiobooks, podcasts, visual documentaries, YouTube videos, etc.)
• Discussion questions
• Definitions
• Include different viewpoints
• Accessible to a wide age range
What is the Department of Energy?

The mission of the Department of Energy is to ensure our security and prosperity by addressing its energy, environmental, and nuclear challenges through transformative science and technology solutions.1

Conversation Questions
1. What is our responsibility as individuals to understand the specific roles and inner workings of large government institutions?
2. How is energy – use, storage, type – related to national security?
3. To what extent should a new administration change the priorities of a federal agency?

Core Resources
- Organizational Chart, https://www.energy.gov/leadership/organization-chart

Listen

*Direct Current* by the Energy.gov Digital Team

Take a deep dive into the Energy Department with their podcast. In its third season, this podcast answers questions about different energy sources and shares insight about the people in the department.
Read

*The Fifth Risk* by Michael Lewis

Michael Lewis's latest novel describes what is happening now in our government institutions, where key positions in departments (including the DOE) are not being filled. He attempts to determine what happens when the nation does not know what is not being done by our government.

Explore

*What Exactly Does the Energy Department Do?*
by Reena Flores
https://cbsn.ws/2Eo3YiL

This article explains recent and historical workings of the DOE while predicting how the agency will move forward under new leadership.

*The Department of Energy Is Failing to Do Its Job*
by David B. Goldstein
https://on.nrdc.org/2ufMvzt

This blog explains how the DOE was established by Public Law 95-91, which mandates that it operate under congressional goals and priorities, and how the current administration is failing to follow this law.
Interactive Components

• Voting
• Discussion prompts
• Matching games
What history is in the making?

- **Fiasco of presidency**
  - THE DAMAGE DONE by “HUMAN TRAFFICKERS”

- Supreme Court Shift in Ideology
  - Growing inequality
  - Theory of Evolution

- Changing of the landscape
  - Environmental refugees due to climate change
  - Presidential Tweets

What events in history do you think everyone should know?

- Holocaust
- Women’s suffrage
- NAACP defending women of color in rape cases (Rosa Parks was an activist for many years before the bus boycott)

- American Revolution and the evolution of the early republic
- Civil Rights Movement
- Labor
- World War not just US
- Moon landing
Visual Displays

• Helps delineate the space
• Great way to promote many facets of the library’s physical collection
Visual Displays
Program Promotion

• Patrons can view on our website when and where Civic Labs are happening
• Access to handouts
• Links to previous Civic Lab topics and materials
CIVIC LAB

Civic Lab offers information, activities, and discussion on issues facing our community. The Civic Lab pops up at the library around different events and topics. Check out upcoming Civic Lab appearances below. If you’re interested in learning more about a previous topic, click on past events below.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Civic Lab: Built for Whom?
Tuesday, October 22, 2019, 11:00 am

HANDOUTS

Curious to learn more about any of the topics that we've explored in the Civic Lab? Each event includes a handout with resources to read, listen to, and watch in order to explore the topic and its implications. Click on any of the past events below to access the handouts.

We also create handouts with more general information:

Go-To News Sources

PAST EVENTS

Civic Lab Prison Connections: The Power of Second Chances, Hope, and Human Contact
Saturday, September 21, 2019, 12:30 pm

Civic Lab Prison Connections: The Power of Second Chances, Hope, and Human Contact
Civic Lab: Built for Whom?

Tuesday, October 22, 2019
11:00 am - 12:30 pm
Central Lobby

What do default thermostat settings, crash test dummies, and pricing for personal goods have in common? They’ve all been designed with men in mind.

Explore resources and join discussion on gender discrimination and the ways it has been baked into society.
Documentation

• Post pop-up summary
• Succinct way to share patron feedback and experiences
• Great opportunity to reflect
Responses
To PostIt Question:
"Climate Change"
"Duh?? Climate Change? People? Cutting down too many trees?"
"Because human beings behave as if the planet is ours alone & have not cared for the environment & the earth's creatures."
"Overpopulation"
"Overhunting"
"Deforestation"
"Habitat Being Destroyed"
"Humans not caring for the environment, not protecting it"
"Humans"

- A retired teacher took a printed copy of the Outside Magazine article and read it, then returned to speak with us about the complex reasons for endangered species. We talked about the challenges of balancing human needs with the encroachment upon species' habitats.
- A young boy and his caregiver stopped by the display and told us, without missing a beat, about the main reason for the dying out of the Asian elephant: "Well, overhunting of course."
- We had less turnout and engagement overall than we anticipated due to the slowness of January programming.
Types of Pop-Ups
Four Main Areas

• Timely topics to put the news into context
• Civic literacy
• Issues in the news
• News literacy
Timely Topics

- What is FEMA?
- Talking About Taxes
- Actually, She Did That
Civic Literacy

• How a Bill Becomes a Law
• What is the EPA?
• How Does the Supreme Court Work?
Issues in the News

- Genetic Editing (CRISPR)
- Narratives of Gun Violence
News Literacy

- What is Journalism? (And What Isn’t?)
- Social Media & Viral News
Strategies for Finding Relevant Civic Engagement Topics

• Check in with patrons at the desk.
• Connect with your colleagues about what feedback they’re getting.
• Consider what’s happening in your town, county, school district, or state.
Lessons Learned
Best Practices

• Patrons need to see a clear facilitator before they are willing to engage in discussion
• It’s best to have at minimum 2 staff members present for each pop-up
• Wear your Civic Lab t-shirt!
Best Practices

• Approach matters – welcome patrons into the pop-up by
  – Offering to share information about the topic
  – Asking a question
• For staff, focusing on one topic at a time is preferable and more manageable
  – Deep dive research
  – More comfortable fielding questions
Questions?
Thank you!

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Amy Holcomb | aholcomb@skokielibrary.info

https://skokielibrary.info/resources/civic-lab/