**Question 1: What challenges are you facing in producing programs for children ages 6-12?**

- Rethinking our benchmarks for success - the ones we previously had “are not a thing anymore.”
- Changing phases in library service; transitioning from virtual-only to curbside or curbside to open hours
- One library can’t offer their kits through curbside pickup
- Limited number of Zoom accounts because they are pricey, so scheduling is tough
- Knowing which platforms to use to reach patrons
- How to make sure patrons can access content and services
- Lack of administration support
- Lack of supplies
- Families don’t have internet at home; producing lots of digital content but some families can’t access
- Crowd control for Zoom meetings of 5 year olds (or teens, or really any age)
- Competition: Museums, zoos, etc. are doing virtual programs too
- Fatigue (screen and otherwise)
- How to differentiate library programs from schoolwork
- Burnout
  - The same people are consistently leading programs because they have the know-how and technical ability to do this virtual work; this leads to burnout
- Not wanting to duplicate content/programs being done by others (and sometimes done better, like coding and other STEM programs)
- Kids know and miss us, so how do we interact with them instead of just having them watch us?
- Library based communications and IT departments overwhelmed by too much digital content to post
- It’s harder to perform on screen without an audience
- Connectivity issues that staff are having
  - Problem with staff internet connections at home
  - Having someone to film staff members for programs
  - Staff members who are less comfortable with new digital platforms
- Patron privacy and security in digital platforms
- Getting the word out about programs without schools open and without library buildings open is proving a new challenge
- Sustainability
  - New offerings are popular, so how will they bring old things back? For instance, people love curbside, but they can’t handle both curbside and regular services
  - ALSC blog by Heather Beverley addresses this: [https://www.alsc.ala.org/blog/2020/05/is-it-enough/](https://www.alsc.ala.org/blog/2020/05/is-it-enough/)
Question 2: How are you overcoming challenges in producing programs?

- Ideas for preventing screen fatigue
  - Creating storytime rhymes/activity videos so patrons can watch them at their convenience and then perform the rhymes/activities with their kids later without having to have the kids sit in front of a screen
  - Recommend audiobooks as an off-screen activity. Families can listen together while doing chores, etc.

- Encouraging the community to engage with the library
  - Sign project: Kids work on parts of the sign and send them back to the library to put the whole thing together in the windows so people walking/driving by can see
  - Patrons write to the library system’s mascot, Spoticus (a spotted dog) and he “responds”
  - Librarian pen pal program called “Sincerely, A Librarian”

- To prevent library staffs’ home connectivity issues, work together as a county/district/etc. to share prerecorded programs and help edit and upload them

- To record programs effectively
  - Purchase a tripod to record programs from home
  - Purchase phone holsters so staff can have the camera close to the mouth for sound and keep hands free
  - Staff may go into closed library buildings to record programs

- Ideas for preventing staff burnout
  - Librarians run programs on a rotation schedule: crafts, storytime, chapter book reading, etc.
  - Signup sheet with program slots for storytime, school age programs, and teen programs. Staff can sign up to run the program or act as a program monitor.
  - Ask staff who aren’t traditionally in programming roles (circulation staff, technology staff, etc.) to contribute; and support their interests

- Patron privacy and security during virtual programs
  - Question: Do you have parents of minors sign a waiver to be on screen with others?
    - No one replied yes
    - Justification: The programs are never recorded, and they do not save or share data from the programs
  - One library won’t let staff do interactive virtual meetings with folks under 18 for legal reasons

- How to get the word out about virtual program offerings
  - Website, cross-promoting via social media platforms
    - Teens tend to engage more with Instagram and YouTube
    - Parents and grandparents tend to like Facebook
  - Pass out weekly program calendar with curbside pickups
  - Can stream from Zoom to Facebook Live, for cross-platform engagement
  - Libraries’ multiple Facebook accounts
  - Branches can use their individual branch accounts for programs, then link to the library’s main account
  - Automated texting
    - They would have to opt in because the library can’t access the ILS to access patron phone numbers
➢ Point patrons toward programs
➢ Can also share other info, like early literacy tips
  o Peach Jar

**Question 3: Share your most successful virtual or quarantine program for school-aged kids.**

- **Book Clubs**
  - “Harry Potter & the Social Distancing” book club
    ➢ Scavenger hunt: find an item in the house that is your patronus, etc.
    ➢ Book discussion in breakout rooms in Zoom
    ➢ One staff member has a dry erase board so they do HP pictionary
    ➢ HP charades
    ➢ Public domain book club or Hoopla
  - Graphic novel book club - instead of a new title, pick old favorites like Smile by Raina Telgemeier. Most of the attendees have already read it (and/or have it in their homes) and are happy to discuss it.

- Run and Move program
- Virtual class visits
- Weekly YouTube tutorial of recycled craft using items you can find around the house
- Climate Reality Storytime series
- Take and make crafts: put together bags that contain everything you need for a particular craft
  - Keep it cheap! Don’t give an entire bottle of glue; simply cut out the number of glue dots needed for the craft
  - Use items you already have extras of in your library
  - Take and make crafts will be available through curbside pickup

- **Dial-in services**
  - “Preschool Storyline” and “First Chapters” - patrons call the number, and the first chapter of a book, prerecorded by library staff, is read to them.
  - They are then encouraged to finish the book by checking it out as an ebook through Hoopla, or pick up a copy through curbside
  - Work together as a county/district/etc. to share prerecorded programs and help edit and upload them

- **Battle of the Books**
  - Trivia quizzes run on Kahoot
  - Screenshare the quiz to Zoom

- **Children reading to dogs program via Zoom**
  - Break out rooms for dog team, child, and library staff member to monitor
Question 4: Which platforms work best for your virtual programs?

- **Zoom**
  - Free version only allows ~40 minutes
  - Some libraries purchase multiple accounts
  - Allows interaction with attendees
  - Webinar format for Zooms allows more attendees; all attendees are muted and their video is not shown

- **YouTube**
  - Some library systems are not allowed to use it
  - Can do live video or prerecorded programs

- **Crowdcast**
  - Used webinar-style for author chats

- **Google Meet**
  - Similar to Zoom, but free

- **Discord**
  - Popular among teenagers

- **Roll20**
  - Designed for Dungeons & Dragons online play

- **Facebook Live**
  - Good for livestreaming
  - Facebook is less popular among kids and teens

- **Instagram Live**
  - Someone has to film you
  - One library hired a music performer to do Instagram Live musical storytime via their library Instagram again

- **Microsoft Teams**

Regardless of platform, consider creating a content calendar model

- One library uses an Excel spreadsheet
- One library’s marketing department handles it
- Keep a tight limit on how many recurring/repetitive posts you offer to not be overwhelming
- Don’t create simultaneous content/programs. Think of it as, “The virtual branch only has one meeting room.”
- Sprout Social is a site that does content scheduling for ~ $100 per month
- Create promotional templates for virtual programming specifically
  - One library uses Lucidpress
  - Some use Canva

- Live versus asynchronous - asynchronous works well with families because they can watch on their own time, which also helps manage families’ screen time

**Additional resources:**
- Heather Beverly’s blog post 5/23: https://www.alsc.ala.org/blog/2020/05/is-it-enough/
- https://www.alsc.ala.org/blog/2020/04/virtual-programming-and-patron-privacy/
- https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-create-a-social-media-content-calendar/