



CROOK COUNTY LIBRARY

Jane Scheppke, Assistant Director · Prineville, OR

Crook County Library partners with an outside organization (**OREGON HUMANITIES**) for programs and facilitators—this partnership helps the library to identify topics, brings in outside experts that are trained in facilitation, and provides supplemental materials. Difficult conversations (“**GUNS IN AMERICA**” event) made them think critically about intentional marketing for programs, such as the importance of having a complete media strategy with prepared talking points for media inquiries that is specific about discussion goals, and reframing press releases (provided by outside organization) to reference local people, institutions, and issues (and using photos from the community instead of provided stock images). When bringing in outside speakers, having them come to the library early and acclimating them to the community in advance (for example, by sending local relevant news stories that they can reference) has led to better conversations.



GUTHRIE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Suzette V. Chang, Executive Director · Guthrie, OK

To recruit underrepresented populations, go out to spaces they are comfortable in and build sustainable relationships. For programs, such as summer reading programs, create intergenerational opportunities and follow up on the interests of participants. For an ice breaker for a book discussion, use a question, like “what did you do to get ready to get here today?,” that can emphasize differences in a safe space, and share your response first in a humorous way. Have participants contribute to building ground rules—a lot of times they haven’t been asked. Sit with the audience, do not use nonverbal cues that suggest hierarchy.



FIRST REGIONAL LIBRARY

Hanna Lee, Youth Services Coordinator · Hernando, MS

When working with youth, spending time building rapport (half the time on icebreakers and fun activities planned in advance) can create a safe space for difficult conversations (discussing violence and racism in a book through the **GREAT STORIES CLUB** partnership). Establish ground rules together (for example, a group non-verbal cue to indicate agreement) and use physical icebreakers (move to a spot in the room based on a response to a question). Be comfortable with wait time. Understand biological and development differences but approach the conversation with respect as you would for an adult. For decision making, come to a group consensus (use example strategies from **SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES ROUND TABLE**).



ESTES VALLEY LIBRARY

*Diana Laughlin, Program Services Supervisor & Karen Randinitis, Program & Outreach Librarian
Estes Park, CO*

For potentially controversial topics in their civic engagement program, such as their “411 on 420” event, it was important to start by setting clear ground rules (ex: question asking format) and relating the topic to the library mission of becoming more informed and engaged. Strategies they have used to aid facilitation are having participants write questions on index cards (and selecting which to ask based on presenter’s expertise), having participants start question with “My question is…” (to stay focused on a question and not anecdotes and opinions), and using a microphone (but having the moderator hold on to it instead of passing it around). For potentially controversial topics, they felt it may have been more effective to have a panel with multiple viewpoints instead of separate discussions because participants would self-select events to attend based on their interests. To prepare for a program, research the presenter and national news, attend similar town halls or forums by other agencies, read social media posts by community groups, and review the list of registrants so you can be more intentional with audience management.



LOS ALAMOS PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

Eileen Sullivan, Library Manager · Los Alamos, NM

Go out in the community in order to determine what programs are of interest to patrons (with your staff divide and conquer attendance at community meetings). At Silver City, they recognized a need for more outreach and began to focus on community economic development through programs around workplace development and computer skills, as well as community enrichment through partnerships related to arts and tourism (such as the **CLAY FESTIVAL**). A facilitation exercise that was effective was having staff draw their vision for the library at a rebranding meeting—it started the conversation off with creativity. As an ice breaker, she likes to ask “What is the scariest thing you’ve ever done for fun?” because it encourages energy but also vulnerability, which can help people connect. Try to balance preparation with open-mindedness; be present and not distracted (don’t try to take minutes and facilitate at same time).



BOONE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Adriana Silva, Youth Services Associate · Burlington, KY

Partnerships with other community organizations, especially schools is key. Meeting parents and students before and after sessions can help develop relationships and encourage them to come to the library; responding to invitations from outside organizations—even if they are not directly relevant—can help build new relationships. For librarians developing new partnerships with schools, reaching out to summer camp coordinators can be a good place to start. Good preparation will take away potential challenges in a conversation—write an outline (especially key words) and practice beforehand; having visuals (ex: PowerPoint) can help provide structure and make the topic relatable.



SMITHVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Judy Bergeron, Library Director · Smithville, TX

Partnerships can be used to enhance programs like **BOOK CLUBS**. Smithville formed partnerships with scientists through the **RURAL GATEWAYS GRANT** to lend expertise to book and video discussions about STEM topics. For a potential controversial discussion (Muslim Journeys: Points of View through **LET'S TALK ABOUT IT** program model), they brought in a university scholar from Libya to do a presentation. Judy's advice is to have questions ready in case the conversation dies out, but to employ active listening – don't think about your next question.



ALLEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Heather VanDyne, Library Support Specialist · Iola, KS

Familiarizing yourself with the community and its needs and what patrons are requesting can help you determine target programming (ex: the Spanish-speaking community was not attending programs at her previous library, so Heather developed Spanish-Bilingual Services including an expanded, grant-funded Spanish collection and Spanish storytime in partnership with schools). Create a comfortable environment and bring snacks; if you are enjoying yourself, patrons will too. In collaborating with community partners, frame it as a mutual benefit; do not put too much work on them.



TULARE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

Veronica Casanova, Librarian IV · Exeter, CA

Knowing your community, adapting to their needs, and choosing topics based on their interests leads to better programs and more trust. Community relationships can also help secure marketing opportunities. With controversial topics (ex: when their Book Club discussed immigration through their **BOOKS TO ACTION** grant project), it helped to keep the conversation focused on the book and the author herself and to maintain a neutral tone and calm body language while facilitating.



MINOT-SLEEPER LIBRARY

Brittany Overton, Library Director · Bristol, NH

Programs, like candidate forums, were based on a need identified in the community. New facilitators can reach out to local organizations that host discussions and ask if they can share ground rules they use or use the **ALA LTC WEBSITE** to identify prompts. For facilitating **BOOK CLUB** discussions, a course on the reference interview helped with developing active listening skills. To develop staff skills, you can do practice activities—for example, pair staff members and have them take turns filling up three minutes by asking follow-up questions.