

Adult Programming Idea Guide

Running adult library programs can be a major challenge; often, it's not that people don't *want* to participate, but it can be difficult to find time in a busy schedule to do so. While this can discourage some libraries from wanting to host adult programs, we encourage you to give it a try, even if only occasionally. Great programming is core to establishing your library as a community hub, and with time, you may see interest and participation grow. Need inspiration? Read on for easy programming and display idea!

Event Programming

- **Adult Spelling Bee:** Spelling bees, trivia nights, and other events that allow your patrons to test their knowledge against other patrons (or library staff!) have become increasingly popular in the last few years. These programs are usually high interest and can be a fantastic way to gain new patrons and community engagement...not to mention an excellent fundraising opportunity!
 - [How to Organize a Spelling Bee](#)
 - [Organizing an Adult Spelling Bee Library Fundraiser](#)
- **Book Tasting:** Introduce your patrons to new genres and authors by hosting a “book tasting” event, where readers are able to sample different works, share their opinions, and -- hopefully -- find something new to love. Most of the guides on this topic are aimed at school-aged kids, but this program could be easily adapted to adults.
 - [Host a Book Tasting](#)
 - [5 Tips for a Fun Book Tasting](#)
- **Adult Library Lock-Ins:** If you've ever heard from adult patrons that they wish they could “live in the library”, an after-hours lock-in program could help make their dream come true. This event can be organized similarly to lock-in programs you may already host for teen patrons, with games, movies, crafts, and other activities -- an escape room would work especially well. This program would be a great way to reach those new adult patrons who are now too old for teen programs, but too young for your other adult offerings.
 - [Library Lock-Ins for Adults](#)
- **Escape Room:** A massively popular group activity over the last few years, you can create your own at the library relatively cheaply and easily. Hundreds of ideas and plans can be found on Pinterest if you would like to create your own, or borrow the Shortgrass Harry Potter-themed escape room programming kit for an even easier option.

- **Bad Art Night:** Everyone’s an artist. Some people are just worse artists than others. This event is for those people. The premise is simple: everyone has access to the same pile of art supplies (think construction paper, pipe cleaners, paint -- the same supplies used for kids’ crafts), and uses them to make art. At the end of the night, participants vote on the worst creations. Whoever is judged to be the worst is the winner! This program is another one that is especially great for reaching younger adults in your community.
 - [Bad Art Night Library Program Outline](#)
- **Amazing Race: Library Edition:** The eternally popular reality show translates well into a library event; if you have patrons who enjoy escape rooms, this program will attract a similar group. Challenges will be relatively cheap and easy to create (see the linked program guide or search Pinterest for inspiration), and the program could be run several times in different “slots” to accommodate a large number of participants.
 - [Amazing Race: Library Edition Program Guide](#)
- **Board Game Night:** Turn your library into a board game cafe for an afternoon or evening and provide a space for your patrons to spend time with their loved ones or make new connections with others in the community. Shortgrass has two board game programming kits you can borrow for the occasion.
- **“Cringe Nights”:** We all endured embarrassing adolescent drama and traumas...and many of us still have the records. Invite your bravest patrons to share the cringiest entries from their teenage diaries in front of a live audience. You may also wish to open it up to photos and -- for your younger adults -- old social media posts.
 - [Event inspiration: Mortified](#)
 - [Adults Unlock Their Teen Diaries Onstage](#)

Crafts/Making:

- **Rock Painting:** The hobby of painting - and hiding - beautiful, funny, or inspirational rocks in public places has exploded over the last few years as the number of “rockhounds” continues to grow. You may have seen these rocks in parks or along trails, and you may have even already borrowed the Shortgrass rock painting kit for kids’ programs. This program is also an excellent one for adults, who are often better at fine detail work or want something pretty to leave in their garden. Contact the Client Services Librarian to book the Rock Painting Kit.
- **Tile Art:** Another easy art project, this one also has very cheap supplies, a high degree of interest, and a lovely payoff. As with the rock painting, this would be a great program to offer adults and seniors who wanted something they could make and display in their

homes. It would also work well as a cross-generational program for grandparents and children.

- [Programming Librarian: Tile Art Program Guide](#)
- **Recycled Book Crafts:** From [pumpkins](#) to [roses](#) to [Christmas trees](#) to [wreaths](#) to [vases](#), the number of crafts you can do with your discard pile is truly unlimited. Pinterest is an especially great resource for easy inspiration.
- **Upcycled Jewelry Making:** Everything old is cool again! Patrons can breathe new life into old and gaudy jewelry by breaking them down and using the pieces to create new bracelets and necklaces. Basic jewelry-making supplies (fishing line, clasps, and jewelry pliers) can be purchased at dollar stores and craft stores, and costume jewelry can be thrifted very cheaply. You may also ask patrons to bring their own pieces to upcycle.
 - [Programming Librarian: Creating an Upcycled Jewelry Program](#)

Ongoing/Clubs

- **Cookbook Club:** A cross between a book club and a supper club, cookbook clubs are a fantastic opportunity for socializing, community building, and of course...eating delicious things! While most of the how-to guides on the subject suggest that participants all work with the same cookbook, the idea could easily be adapted to libraries (and limited copies of a title) by cooking from different titles about the same dish or cuisine (e.g. Italian, appetizers, vegetarian cookbooks, etc.)
 - [10 Tips for Starting Your Own Cookbook Club](#)
 - [How to Start a Cookbook Club](#)
- **Remember When? Seniors Storytime:** An interactive storytime format for older adults designed to engage them in sharing their own stories and memories. Every event is based on a certain theme -- fashion, school, major world events -- and can include memory-jogging props, photos, and music to assist participants in remembering their own stories. This could also work as an intergenerational event for seniors and youth!
 - [Programming Librarian: Remember When? Storytime Guide](#)
- **“No-Pressure” Book Club:** A book club for your patrons who are unable to (or don't want to) commit to a regular book club, the no pressure book club has no required reading, no minimum participation requirement, and no rigid structure. Patrons are able to talk about the books they're reading, trade recommendations, and connect with other readers in a casual, unstructured book club environment. If you have been wanting to start a book club at your library but are unsure if you'll have adequate patron engagement, this may be a good starting place.
 - [No Pressure Book Club Guide](#)

Seasonal

- **Spring Seed Swap:** Your green-thumbed patrons will appreciate the opportunity to share their gardening expertise and seeds with others, and newbie gardeners may appreciate the opportunity to learn from more experienced people. “Seedy Saturday” events can best be described as “like a potluck, but for seeds”, where each participant brings one or two varieties of seeds to share and leaves with many more. Hold this in March or April, when people are still planning their summer gardens.
 - [How to Organize a Seed Swap](#)
 - [How to Host a Seed Swap](#)
 - [Programming Librarian: Seed Swap Program](#)
- **Seasonal Crafts:** There are thousands of potential craft options for every season, many of which will use supplies that can be cheaply acquired or that you may already have on hand. Pick projects that can be easily completed in an hour or two and won't look childish when completed: home decor projects wreaths, vases, votives, and centrepieces are all excellent options.
 - [Spring: 30 Bright and Cheery Spring Crafts](#)
 - [Summer: 47 Summer Crafts for Adults](#)
 - [Autumn: 100 Best Fall Crafts](#)
 - [Winter: 150 Handmade Ideas](#)

Display Ideas

- **Interactive “Books We Hated” display:** Have patrons add copies of titles they loathed to a display. After all, one person's trash is another person's treasure, so one person's worst book ever might be...someone's new favourite?
 - [Books We Hated](#)
- **Interactive “Library Book Scrabble”:** Library books wrapped in brown paper bags are transformed into Scrabble tiles that patrons can use to play new words. (Books should also have a description attached so patrons can check out the tiles). A record should be kept of words -- and their point totals -- so that a prize can be given to the winner at the end.
 - [Library Scrabble Display](#)
- **Don't Judge a Book by Its Terrible Cover:** Great books sometimes come in really ugly packages. This display helps those books out by putting a descriptive, eye-catching label over the offending content.

- [Ignore This Terrible Cover](#)
- **Interactive Patron Recommendations Display:** A nicer spin on the “Books We Hated” display, ask patrons to fill out a card (or even a post-it note!) to attach to a book they’d love to recommend to others.