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THE COLLEGE CONNECTION

Think Warm Thoughts: Plan Ahead for Summertime Information Literacy Programs!

Introduction

It's winter! While *is* it frosty outside, you can at least think warm thoughts by starting now to plan ahead for your summer information literacy programs. This article is designed to give you some ideas for planning next summer's reading, sleuthing, and research programs. It features a variety of programs organized by academic librarians this past summer, often in collaboration with other partners. For many instruction librarians, summer presents an exciting time to work with special groups on campus and in the local K-12 community to teach information literacy and other critical thinking skills. Here are ideas that are sure to warm you up this chilly winter.

Programs for K-12 Students

Middle School Students as Investigators and Archaeologists



For the second year in a row, State University of New York (SUNY) at Geneseo hosted a special camp focused on creative problem-solving activities for incoming 7th and 8th graders from the neighboring Rochester City School District, where high school graduation rates are extremely low. The Rochester Young Scholars Academy at SUNY Geneseo (RYSAG) (<http://rysag.geneseo.edu/>) is a collaborative partnership between SUNY Geneseo, Rochester After School Academy (RASA) and Rochester City School District (RCSD). The RYSAG summer camp is designed to help at risk students focus on

learning and introduce them to a college environment (Hoffman and Norman, 2008).

The 2007 camp theme was Crime Scene Investigation (CSI). Throughout the two-week period, students worked in teams to solve a "crime" involving stolen art work. Through workshops, the students gained necessary skills such as research, public speaking, interviewing, and digital photography. Kim Davies Hoffman, Reference/Instruction Librarian, worked with others at SUNY Geneseo to design the program. Hoffman and a Sociology professor co-taught the course Critical Thinking Unit (CTU), which focused on information gathering through historical research and interviewing as well as evaluating information; the course also addressed technology training including using blogs to communicate with team members during the camp experience. Geneseo's Milne and Fraser Libraries served as key locations during the camp, housing two of the crime scenes and hosting headquarters for two of the teams. Some library staff, along with other individuals on campus, volunteered to serve as suspects and witnesses, allowing the students to interrogate them (personal communication, K. Hoffman, June 15, 2008).

In the summer of 2008, the camp focused on an archaeological dig of a local Native American site. Students researched Native American history using library resources and learned other skills relevant to the theme such as excavation and GPS mapping (Hoffman, 2007). For more information on the 2007 camp, see the presentation entitled "Summer Sleuths in the Library" from the LOEX 2008 Conference Web Site:

<http://www.loexconference.org/2008/sessions.htm#b>



High School Students Sharpen Presentation and Public Speaking Skills

Wingate University and North Carolina State University offered a 12-day Reproductive

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Biology Summer Science Program for high school students June 16-27, 2008, at Wingate University. The Wingate University biology department worked closely with the Ethel K. Smith Library to develop information literacy instruction for the students in this program. As a final project, the students created posters presenting scientific data to share with their parents and classmates in their high schools. The library offered instruction on finding images on the web, evaluating web sites, and copyright issues related to using web images, as well as general skills necessary to navigate an academic library such as using the catalog and databases, understanding peer-reviewed sources, citing sources, and plagiarism (G. Wood, personal communication, June 4, 2008).



In August 2008, Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN offered its Second Annual Gustavus Speech Institute, a one-week program for high school students from Minnesota, North Dakota, and Iowa. Students learned to prepare different types of speeches for competition (from creative expression to informative). Librarian Michelle Twait provided instruction on researching information for their speeches and offered reference assistance throughout the week. Twait has also developed a comprehensive library resource page for the program, guiding students through the research process from selecting a topic to finding information and citing their sources: <http://gustavus.edu/academics/library/GACSSI.html>

Programs for College Students

A Jumpstart for Incoming Freshmen

Syracuse University's SummerStart Program (summerstart.syr.edu) offers an opportunity for interested pre-freshmen to earn some credits and become acclimated to college life before the beginning of fall semester. Each year, SummerStart coordinators incorporate sessions at Syracuse University Library to offer students an introduction to the library and its resources. Librarians have recently redesigned the library component to involve more hands-on activities and less instructor presentation. A set of activities, called "SummerStart Library Adventure," guides groups of students in using the online catalog and databases to find books, journal articles and non-print media. This year, students also answered questions about basic library services, such as purchasing a copy card and checking out books on course reserve.

Summer Reading Club in the Middle East



Virginia Commonwealth University in Doha, Qatar has established a summer reading club to encourage its students to practice their English language and critical thinking skills over the summer break. Most students are from surrounding Middle Eastern countries and about 60% of them are from Qatar. In addition to developing English skills, the program also introduces

students to the idea of storytelling through books, as Arab culture is so strongly rooted in oral tradition (N. Fawley, personal communication, May 27, 2008).

The reading program, which began more than two years ago, has been extremely popular. Each book draws about 25-30 students with most of them participating in the discussions. Students have even requested reading clubs over winter break as well. The group read Twyla Tharp's *The Creative Habit* in December 2007; when Tharp visited campus recently, students in the reading club had the opportunity to meet her at a private tea to discuss the book (N. Fawley, personal communication, May 27, 2008).

Up until summer 2008, the books were limited to juvenile fiction, because the students were unable to read English at a college level (many only speak English at the university). As the program evolved, students read their first adult novel: *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri. According to reference librarian, Nancy Fawley, the club has inspired other campus departments to develop reading programs, including a shared reading for incoming first-year students. This year, all freshmen read *The Creative Habit*, and upper classmen from the reading club lead book discussions during orientation (N. Fawley, personal communication, May 27, 2008).

Conclusion

Whether teaching middle school students to solve crimes, encouraging non-native

English-speaking college students to read and discuss English-language literature, or organizing countless other types of summer programs, many academic librarians spend their summers promoting information literacy through special programs. Collaborative relationships with other campus departments, community organizations, and local high schools can open the door to a wide variety of exciting and creative opportunities that can make a positive impact in students' academic and social lives.

So, when you feel that wintry chill, turn it into a warm glow by thinking of the great summer reading and research programs you'll soon have underway.

Contributors

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