Lisa Thornell, *Student Engagement & Outreach Librarian*, Fairfield University

“Engagement, Motivation, & Collaboration through a Summer Reading Challenge”

August 2020

PechaKucha transcript and image alt text

Slide #1- Image of the DiMenna-Nyselius Library and presenter name and title of presentation

Hi, my name is Lisa Thornell and I am the Student Engagement & Outreach Librarian at the DiMenna-Nyselius Library at Fairfield University. This presentation is called Engagement, Motivation, & Collaboration through a Summer Reading Challenge. Public libraries have long offered summer reading programs as a way to motivate patrons to read but this summer was the first time we offered a reading challenge for the campus.

Slide #2- Image of person wearing mask looking at laptop screen

Campus shut down in March due to COVID-19 and we were all a little burnt out from remote learning, watching too much television, and keeping up with the news which was telling us to stay home. I know I needed some motivation to shut off technology and pick up a book but also I was wanting to connect with colleagues about something other than the pandemic.

Slide #3-Summer Reading Challenge logo of beach with books stacked in foreground

The Summer Reading Challenge started May 26th and will run until August 20th and is open to students, faculty, and staff to join at any time. We invited the campus Health & Wellness committee and the University’s downtown bookstore. Collaborating with other departments is also helpful when you need to come up with prizes.

Slide #4-Image of arcade prize machines

The Health & Wellness committee provided branded University swag and funds to purchase mini book lights. The bookstore will curate a selection of advanced reader copies for the winner, based on the books they have read this summer. For each book logged participants are entered into the raffle ti wine these prizes.

Slide #5- Screenshot of Quip page (and logo) depicting an example of a reader spreadsheet where books are logged

We used Quip, a collaborative web tool that our University provides access to, similar to Google Docs. Only those with a University NetID could access the portal. Challengers would add their name, pick a goal # of books to read and then copy and paste a spreadsheet, add their book titles, author, genre, and any thoughts they had about the book. Other challengers could use the comment feature, which has been fun to see people engaging.

Slide #6- Office Space meme of man in glasses holding a coffee cup that says “Yeah, if you could sign up for the Summer Reading Challenge, that’d be great”

To get people to sign-up I started by emailing the portal link to people I know on campus that liked to read, and the library staff. This way when I officially advertised if the portal had a bunch of names and books. Social media, university internal news posts, and word of mouth helped too.

Slide #7-Screenshot of the library’s blog, The DNL Report, showing blog header and the title of the blog post about the Summer Reading Challenge

Our Wordpress blog, The DNL Report, was how I communicated the background on the Challenge and also shared how to find books since our library, and most others in the state, were closed when the challenge started. The University bookstore sponsor was promoted here as well as little free libraries and public libraries eBook collections. Readers advisory and news sites were also promoted such as GoodReads and Book Riot.

Slide #8- Image advertisement of the first Lattes with Librarians virtual event themed as the Summer Reading Challenge kickoff with descriptive text and image of cup of coffee and books.

Lattes with Librarians, a virtual event series we started at the beginning of the pandemic, took on new branding and we hosted a Summer Reading Challenge kickoff for everyone to not only talk about what they were reading, but how they usually find their books, and their favorite authors and genres. The concept was to bring your morning coffee and listen in for everyone’s book suggestions and to talk about what you are reading.

Slide #9- Image advertisement of the second Lattes with Librarians virtual event themed for the Summer Reading Challenge with descriptive text and image of the beach and stack of books (same image from logo)

The second Lattes event had a similar focus with each person on the Zoom getting a few minutes to talk. A library student worker took notes on book titles mentioned and she created a spreadsheet on Quip so everyone could refer back to the list later.

Slide #10- Partial screenshot of book recommendation Quip spreadsheet, with links, created by student workers

It included links to GoodReads, WorldCat and our catalog if we had the book.

Slide #11- Image advertisement for upcoming and final Lattes with Librarians virtual event themed to the Summer Reading Challenge, depicting cup of coffee on top of a book and descriptive text

The third Lattes will be held soon, before the Challenge ends, and to change things up we invited 2 librarians from the local public library because they give the best reader’s advisory and are plugged into book coming out soon. We are marketing the event as “book recommendations and insider info.”

Slide #12- Two images on this slide. One image of the library with a rainbow hue and hear that says “Pride Month”. The other image is a screenshot of the library’s new libguide, An Antiracist Resource Guide

To advertise these I email everyone who signed up for the Challenge and also give links to book recommendations like our recent blog post for Pride Month in June, encouraging everyone to read a book at a LGBTQ author, and our new Antiracist Resource Guide –once again highlighting reading more diversely this summer.

Slide #13- Image advertisement for the library’s contact-free pickup service to promote physical item borrowing.

I also promoted our new contact-free pickup service when we were once again able to permit physical item borrowing. We figured that Summer Reading Challengers were avid readers of print and would take advantage of this service.

Slide #14- Book shelf with three shelves of some of the books read during the Challenge. First shelf with book covers for The Vanishing Half, The Tattooist of Auschwitz, White Fragility. Second shelf with book covers for The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes, Normal People, Where the Crawdads Sing. Third book shelf with covers for William Shakespeare’s plays, I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell, and The Sound of Distant Thunder.

Scrolling through the Quip document has been exiting, to see all the updates and interaction. It has also been interesting to see many of us reading the same books. I was refreshing to see some students reading Shakespeare and other serious titles, or reading books I read in college that I didn’t know were still relevant. Also refreshing to see faculty reading light beach reads and learning fun things about them, like for example one faculty member has a fascination with Amish fiction!

Slide #15- Image of a book display table in the Fairfield University Bookstore

At the end of the summer the Bookstore will put up a display of some of the books we read and feature the staff, student, or faculty member’s first name and job title as a bookmark sticking out of the book. We may do the same for a display in our library building too, of at least publish and promote another blog post with some of the top read books.

Slide #16- Image of stack of books with text about “Who did we reach?” Figure discussed below.

There are 63 participants. 13 staff, 15 faculty, 34 staff from 29 different campus departments and we collectively pledged around 440 books. There were 13-18 people that attended each Lattes with librarians, which was a good number, giving everyone a few minutes to be able to speak. Quip also can show you who opens your document so I was able to see that only 4 didn’t sign up who looked at it.

Slide #17 Text slide with Assessment questions we will ask participants. Some questions discussed below.

A post challenge assessment will be sent so we can find out if we met our goals. Did it help motivate everyone to tread? Did it help us feel more connected to one another? How was it using Quip or should we try another tool? I am also interested to know if folks would do it again, or if we offered another version of this during winter break or when the campus returns to remote learning after Thanksgiving.

Slide #18- Image of three people sitting at a picnic table looking at books and writing in a notebook.

One idea could be as simple as offering a list of genres to read and check off a list, promoting reading broadly and diversely, similar to Book Riot’s annual Read Harder Challenge. Another idea could be offering smaller challenges for each class year, or one for alumni.

Slide #19-Image of two hands touching and text that covers “Why you should consider starting a Reading Challenge” with text in bullet points discussed below.

Ultimately offering the Challenge has fostered a lot of goodwill and we have received a lot of kind messages thanking us. There is a sense of connection to our colleagues, bringing together staff, faculty and students; Highlights the library staff, books, and services (and other sponsors); Reading motivation through goal setting and book recommendations; Engages people that had possibly not been engaged through library programs before; and there could be a connection to virtual programming

Slide #20- Image of book and text that says “Thank you!” and the presenter’s email address (lthornell@fairfield.edu), library website url (fairfield.edu/library), blog url (thednlreport.fairfield.edu), and the library’s Instagram handle (@fairfieldulib).

If you are interested in seeing the infographic we create and the wrap-up blog post that we will publish at the end of August please checkout our blog , thednlreport.fairfield.edu You can also contact me at [lthornell@fairfield.edu](mailto:lthornell@fairfield.edu) . Thank you for listening to this presentation.

Slide #21- Image bibliography in APA format. *Other images were created by the presenter with the exception of the book covers*

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