

Peate - Lightning Talk

## **Adult Summer Reading: What a Bingo Game Can Tell Us About Reference Services**

Hello -- This session is about Adult Summer Reading and what it can tell us about our library's reference services. I'm Nancy and I'm a librarian at the Central Library in downtown Portland.

### **Bingo Game Card**

Here's last year's Summer Reading game card. You probably can't read the squares, so let me choose a couple at random. The game card is modeled after a regular Bingo card, in that you have to complete a row of 5, and there's a free square in the middle.

The Bingo idea is not original -- we've seen similar cards at Seattle Public Library and San Rafael Public Library, but there is something original on the card (I'm pretty sure) and I'll tell you about it in just a minute.

To be eligible for a prize drawing, you read 3 books and complete one online or physical component, like attending a library event

There's also a bonus path or, if you're serious about Bingo, a black-out.

### **Goals of Adult Summer Reading**

Our sponsor for the program, including prizes, is our Friends of the Library. Here are the goals we presented to them (advocate for reading, family participation, promote programs and services) . Remember this list as it will show up again.

### **Reference Services**

Throughout the summer, our reference staff make reading lists, create displays. It's a whole library experience that involves fiction and non-fiction reader's advisory, programming, and our Spanish language staff. We promote summer reading, and therefore, our reference services on Facebook and Twitter, and at citywide outreach events.

### **Turned-in card**

The program ends the last day of August and patrons turn their completed card (some decorate, some make a quick scribble) in for prize drawings. I'm not going to talk about prizes today with limited time but I can tell you 1) prizes matter and 2) we still haven't gotten it right, and I'd be glad to talk with you more after my 5 minutes.

### **Stealth User Data**

So here's the beauty of the patrons turning their actual cards in for prizes. We know the activities our patrons chose, both individually and in aggregate, and we can try to extrapolate some trends from what we see. (477 patrons asked staff for a book suggestion but only 62 read one of our Library Writer's Project ebook. 616 read a book by a new author but 491, almost as many, watched a movie.)

### **Output measures**

Remember I said I'd come back to the goals? On the back, we ask directly about them, which is the part that I think might be unique. We use a Likert scale from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree" to quantify the responses -- to turn experiences into numbers -- and now we can directly measure the effect our program produces on the people we serve.

### **What the data tells us**

Here's that data aggregated. It tells a powerful story about the numbers of participants who agree that the program meets its goals. When you combine the "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" folks, 565 people said that the game made them more aware of library services. Balancing that out, 5 people said that summer reading did not make them more aware of library services.

### **Patron Comments**

Remember how I said this program is a "whole library" experience? Here in the patron comments is where we hear about all the services and resources a patron tried. We get comments like "I loved learning about maps." Or "I never knew about the Title Wave used bookstore."

### **3 things we learned**

1. The number #1 activity completed was "Read with a child, or read a children's book."
2. We get lots of comments that say "I learned something new about the library," so we're succeeding at raising awareness of library resources.
3. Other common comments, besides "Good" and "Fun," were "I had more reading options," and the always welcome, "I love my library."

### **So, what can a bingo game tell us about reference services?**

- 1) It can keep us informed about trends such as how many people are still reading print
- 2) It can help us understand our patrons' interests better.
- 3) It can tell us if patrons are trying out our services, and what they think of them.

In other words -- summer reading Bingo is a game you can call out.

### **Contact Information**

Nancy Peate  
nancyp@multcolib.org