



Brett W. Lear

Adult Programs in the Library

SECOND EDITION



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Adult Programs in the Library

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Still for Grandpa, and for Schreiber, too

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Preface

I wrote the first edition of this book in 2001, and it went to press in 2002. The World Wide Web was only a little over ten years old. Graphical web browsers had been around for just six years or so. We were only beginning to speak of the forthcoming wave of retiring boomers. Libraries were getting serious about providing a “sense of place” for their patrons. A Starbucks was opening on every corner, and we were becoming more familiar with terms such as *third place* as we observed that the residents in our communities were looking for that special place that was neither work nor home. And we developed programming that introduced our patrons to eBay, helped our boomers transition to empty nesters, and provided a comfortable place to learn something new or experience something beautiful through a workshop or live performance.

In 2013 many libraries are serving more patrons through their websites than they are through the doors of their physical buildings. Our patrons use the Internet to shop, communicate, collaborate, work, and learn. Many boomers are looking for opportunities to become even more engaged with their communities. We have experienced some hard economic times of late, and libraries and other community organizations have turned to each other seeking partnerships.

Libraries have always been exceptional at doing more with less. The recent tough economic times have affected our patrons and our library budgets. Many of us have developed programs to help our patrons make smart choices during these tough times while simultaneously watching our programming budgets shrink due to budget cuts. We have seen our endowments dwindle to nearly nothing. So it’s no surprise that when I asked my peers what they would like to see in a revised edition of this book, they told me to show steps that libraries can take to ensure that their programming aligns well with their mission and priorities. They asked for tips on how to say no to potential performers who

want to partner with us, but either charge too much or offer something that doesn't fit within our priorities or possess a talent that just won't draw the crowds to fill the room (either physical or virtual). Library staff told me that they wanted tips for evaluating programs and that these evaluations should be outcome-based and measure whether the attendee learned something new or felt more connected to her community because of the program. I've addressed these requests in the chapters that follow.

The technology now exists to help us with the planning, promoting, producing, and evaluating of our programs. This edition has a new chapter dedicated to technology. I've also added or expanded sections that reflect the issues that libraries are facing today: the need for our patrons to feel engaged with their communities and the programming that we can offer to foster this civic engagement; the desire our patrons have to volunteer their time to help us, and our need to take them up on that offer; the creativity and exceptional programs that can come out of partnerships; the niche populations that we want to serve if only we could hit on the right topic, served up in the right format, hosted in the right venue at the right time . . .

Technology, trends, library services, and our patrons have all changed in the last ten years. And yet many things have endured. People still look for opportunities to learn, share, listen, collaborate, and have fun. Whether online or in person, library programs offer these opportunities to our patrons. I wrote much of this revision while working for Multnomah County Library (MCL). (I worked for MCL from 2008 to 2011—hence all the MCL examples contained within this book!) MCL's mission is to “enrich lives by fostering diverse opportunities for all people

to read, learn and connect.” By providing information and recreational programs on a variety of topics, libraries play a key role in creating a place where our patrons gather to connect socially and intellectually with others. And that's pretty cool.

Libraries are not just for reading in, but for sociable thinking, exploring, exchanging ideas and falling in love. They were never silent. Technology will not change that, for even in the starchiest heyday of Victorian self-improvement, libraries were intended to be meeting places of the mind, recreational as well as educational.

—Ben Macintyre, “Paradise Is Paper, Vellum, and Dust”¹

P.S.

Something that I quickly discovered as I wrote this book was that many of the resources I consulted are no longer in print. I imagine this is because few books that cover library services make the *New York Times* best-sellers list. Unless these books get updated and republished in a revised edition, they tend to go out of print. However, libraries throughout the United States do have these titles in their collections. These libraries were kind enough to allow me to borrow many of these titles via interlibrary loan. I promise you that I looked through a copy of each of the books cited in the Resource Directory.

NOTE

1. Ben Macintyre, “Paradise Is Paper, Vellum, and Dust.” *Times Online*, December 18, 2004.

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Many people helped me during the year that I wrote the first edition of this book. I want to thank all those people once again. I turned to my peers this time too, and I asked for their insights and ideas many, many times during the eighteen months that I spent working on this new edition. Thanks to Amber Fisher, Larry Domingues, and Cindy Phillips of Jefferson County Public Library (CO); Linda Mulford of Arlington Heights Memorial Library (IL); Amita Lonial of Skokie Public Library (IL); Bobbie Wrinkle of McCracken County Public Library (KY); Liz Goodrich of Deschutes Public Library (OR); Laura Raphael of Tulsa City-County Library (OK); Liz Dannenbaum of Middleton Public Library (WI); Cari Dubiel of Twinsburg Public Library (OH); Rachel Smith of St. Louis Public Library (MO); Jennifer Baker of St. Helena Public Library (CA); Uma Hiremath and Madeline Miele Holt of Ames Free Library (MA); Lori M. Crowe of Norfolk Public Library (VA); Mary Hurlbert Stein of East Baton Rouge Parish Library (LA); Rosalind Kutler of Redwood City Public Library (CA); Deborah Dowley Preiser of Oak Park Public Library (IL); Laurel Shelley-Reuss of Laramie County Library System (WY); Leslie Burke of Northwest Reno Library (NV); Kris Chipps of Arapahoe Library District (CO); Carol Ann Carter of Lake Bluff Public Library (IL); Lisa Newman of Salina Public Library (KS); Ryan P. Donovan of New York Public Library (NY); Karen L. Gill of Newport News Public Library System (VA); Barbara Eichman of Broward County Library (FL); Deborah Prozzo of Manross Library (CT); Melissa Bittinger of Hershey Public Library (PA); Afton Seal of Guilford Smith Memorial Library (CT); Kelly Ireland Rembert of Southfield Public Library (MI); Marlena Boggs of Mid-Continent Public Library (MO); Kathy Shields of Palo Alto City Library (CA); Lesley Williams of Evanston Public Library (IL); Linda Holtslander of Loudoun

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And the biggest thanks—THANKS!—goes to Marjorie for all of the editing, proofreading, bibliography writing, and so much more. I'll do the dishes for the next year at least.

WHO INVENTED THE PROGRAM?

I figured that a good place to start a book on programming is at the beginning. That seems to be where most books begin, so here goes. The first examples of library programming in the United States and England began appearing in the late 1800s. Like now, back in the 1890s the average library patron seemed to favor fiction over nonfiction. Some librarians of the day thought this was because the public needed a bit more guidance. A form of readers' advisory was born. Librarians would ask the public to stop reading and listen to lectures on what they should be reading and reminders of the proper uses and potential abuses of fiction books. The lecture series was born.

Thankfully, librarians moved on from captive-audience lectures to exhibits and displays. The librarian Charles A. Cutter believed that exhibits would bring people to the library who might not otherwise come. Photography was still a relatively new medium in 1900 America, and Charles was certain that photography displays would attract an audience. By the early 1900s, libraries had also learned that they could tie a display to the books in the library. For example, Native American rugs could be placed on display along with a table full of books about Native Americans.¹ Another step forward.

It turns out that the idea of the library as a social or entertainment center has roots in the past, too. By the early 1800s, societies were offering balls and concerts with the intent of enlightening people to the wonders of art. Social settlements sprang up during this period, offering workshops in the arts and sciences to the working poor. Clubs, such as men's clubs, appeared in the latter part of the nineteenth century and offered concerts, lectures, and games such

as billiards. As American and English libraries came of age during this time, many of them began offering games, lectures, visits to poor neighborhoods, and festivals for ethnic groups.²

WHAT IS PROGRAMMING?

As you can see, we can trace the inception of library programming back to the nineteenth century. Many of the types of programs (lectures, workshops, and concerts) we host in our libraries today were being held in libraries more than a hundred years ago. Let's now shift our gaze from the past to the present. What types of programs are being produced in libraries today? Why do libraries sponsor programs? Perhaps we should first attempt to define what we mean by "programming."

When I began writing this book I realized that I would have to change my life. For the next year I knew that I'd be very, very busy. I'd say to people, "I'm writing this book on adult programming and I'm going to have to really knuckle down . . ." Fellow library staff had a pretty good idea of what I was up to. But my friends outside the library didn't really get what I was writing *about*. Adult *programming*? Perhaps they thought I was writing about programmers of adult computer software. Sometimes I'd say I was writing a book on adult *programs*. I received the same blank stare. Perhaps they thought I was creating a book on how to create a newsletter for adults—sort of like the program they sell you at the horse races, but different. Their confusion led to my confusion. What is a *library program*? The term itself isn't very attractive. It doesn't grab your attention. If someone walked up to someone who'd never been in a library before and said to that individual, "Hey, guess what? The library down the street is really big into library programs," what would the response be? I suspect the person would offer a quizzical look and say something like, "Hmm. Really." Why don't we call library programs *library events*, or *library classes*, or *library*

spectaculars? We do use some of these terms. But we frequently use the words *program* and *programming*.

As I wrote the second edition of this book, the words that we use in our profession were becoming critical to how the public perceived us. Valerie J. Gross of Howard County (Maryland) Library wrote a great article for *Public Libraries* called "Transforming Our Image Through Words That Work: Perception Is Everything."³ She makes a good case that the words we use to describe the work we do influence how people perceive us and the image of libraries. Howard County Library uses terms such as *classes*, *seminars*, and *workshops* rather than *programs*. Many libraries *present events* rather than *hold programs*. Rather than using the word *performer* or *programmer*, words such as *instructor*, *teacher*, and *facilitator* are working their way into public libraries. I find that I use the word *event* when I speak to a neighbor or friend who doesn't work in libraries; I just assume that this will be a more meaningful word for him or her. Although I *will* use the terms *program* and *programming* and *performer* in this book, words do matter, and you should use whatever terminology you feel will resonate most strongly with your patrons.

So let's agree that the word *program* for us encompasses lectures, classes, panel discussions, workshops, and more. But what does that word *really* mean? How do we define a library program?

"IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER, LOOK IT UP"

I checked my (old!) 1965 edition of *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* and it said that the word *program* means "a public notice." That seemed relevant. When I organize a program, part of the process involves giving public notice, generating publicity. The dictionary also said that a program is a "brief outline of the order to be pursued or the subjects embraced."⁴ That's part of programming, too. I might ask a performer to submit an outline to me of her

program, specifying what topics she will cover. This outline is then brought before a program committee, and if the concept is approved, the outline helps the marketing office in generating publicity. The dictionary then told me that a program is “the performance of a program.” It also defines a program as a plan or procedure. This definition reminded me of a programming policy and the various internal documents that libraries develop over the years to address such things as authors selling their books after a program or the use of live animals in programs. A program is, according to *Webster’s*, a proposed project or scheme. This must be the planning part of programming. Someone on staff gets an idea for a program and he becomes the program’s coordinator, working out the details of who will perform the program, what topics will be covered, which branches will offer the program, and so forth. *Webster’s* says a program is a comprehensive schedule, and that’s also true. Our libraries’ program committees spend a great deal of time with scheduling. We try to tie programs into monthly celebrations, such as Cinco de Mayo. We try to book only a certain number of programs each month, to ensure that each program will get adequate coverage in our newsletters and the local newspapers. We track who has booked our meeting rooms and when. The dictionary also defines *program* as a “printed bill, card, or booklet giving a program.” That sounds like a newsletter!

But programming is more than the sum of its parts. Programming can be a central ingredient of your library’s mission. In 1979 the Public Library Association (PLA) produced *The Public Library Mission Statement and Its Imperatives for Service*. Information is defined as “not only the sum total of recorded human experiences—factual, imaginative, scientific, and humanistic—but also the unrecorded experience which is available only from human resources to which library users may be referred.”⁵ This definition places people and books on equal footing as information resources. Programming can become an extension of your library’s collection and resources. Through programming, you can fulfill your mission of meet-

ing the informational, educational, and recreational needs of your patrons. By combining PLA’s definition of *information* with a typical mission statement, we can create a good definition of programming. Let’s try it: “Programming is a process by which the informational, educational, and recreational needs of your patrons are met by bringing patrons into contact with the human resources best able to meet those needs.” It’s a bit long-winded, but it establishes programming as an essential library service that fits snugly within your library’s mission.

TO PROGRAM OR NOT TO PROGRAM?

If programming is so complicated, why do it? This is a good question. Many libraries justifiably feel that it’s all they can do to keep their information desks adequately staffed while also attending to the various off-desk tasks that need to be completed each day. The actual direct cost of a program can be very minimal. It’s fairly easy to find a knowledgeable speaker who will appear at your library free of charge. The staff member planning the program can usually coordinate the program and negotiate the arrangements with the performer in a short amount of time. For example, I’ve gotten an idea for a program, located a performer, and selected dates and locations—all in less than two hours. It would seem as if the program’s total costs (if the performer does not charge a fee) would be the two hours I invested in planning the program. It’s not quite that simple.

- A staff member—probably you—begins coordinating the program by contacting the performer and submitting the forms needed for publicity, meeting rooms, and extra equipment (chairs, computer equipment, etc.).
- A program committee may exist to approve the idea, performer, and cost and to ensure that the program is consistent with the library’s mission.

- Other staff in other branches may be notified of the program to see if they would like to host the program in their branches as well.
- Meeting rooms may have to be booked in various branches. Some libraries will have an administrative assistant who organizes the meeting room reservations from a central location.
- Someone in administration or the programming office (if you are lucky enough to have one!) drafts and mails a contract to the performer.
- The people in your public relations or marketing office write news releases and distribute them to the local media. They also write the content for the newsletter and flyers.
- Your graphics staff create the flyers and include the program description in the library newsletter.
- Your marketing staff mail some of these flyers and newsletters to organizations and individuals within the community.
- Some of your building services staff may need to bring extra chairs and equipment to your meeting room and help you set them up.
- As the program approaches, the coordinating staff member confirms with the performer, pulls together materials (related books, videos, bibliographies, etc.) to display during the program, introduces the performer, watches the program and writes an evaluation, compiles the patrons' evaluations, and, later, writes a thank-you note to the performer.
- Building services staff remove the equipment and chairs.

The indirect costs of a program can be significant. You want to produce high-quality, well-attended programs, but do you have the resources necessary to pull off? Should you offer adult programs at your library?

The answer is yes if (1) you've worked programming into your library's mission and (2) you've either

confirmed that you have the staff and other resources necessary to complete the tasks just listed, or you've found ways to eliminate many of these tasks and still produce quality programs that draw an audience. If you answered yes to both these questions, then you are ready to proceed. Here are some reasons to say yes to programming:

- Programs can promote your collection. Have a performer give a talk on the Holocaust and create a display of books and videos to accentuate the performance.
- Programs can be the best way to present certain types of information. For example, a presentation on the ten best business-related Internet sites ensures that the information is current. Or experiencing a live musical performance can be much more meaningful than listening to a song downloaded from iTunes.
- Programs can get people into your library who might not otherwise visit. Free English as a New Language classes would be a good way to attract some of your non-English-speaking community members into the library.
- If your library is in a community that doesn't have much access to the theater or to nationally known authors or orchestras, then the library may be the perfect community center to host these artists and events.
- Programs are ideal for those who can't afford or choose not to pay for certain types of information. Just as someone may choose to use your library instead of buying the e-book online, some people will choose to attend a program on selecting a home computer instead of paying for a similar workshop at a community college.
- Programming can establish goodwill between your library and other local agencies. For example, many agencies have information

to share with the community, but they don't have the facilities. You can invite these groups into your library and publicize their lecture or workshop as a library program.

- Programming increases your library's visibility in the community through news releases, flyers, Facebook and Twitter announcements, and the positive word-of-mouth of satisfied patrons.
- And, like most things, programming gets easier the more you do it. The process becomes streamlined and second nature, performers start coming to you asking for permission to perform, patrons get excited and begin offering suggestions, and the staff can directly see the benefits of their time and effort.

Perhaps your library is not currently offering adult programs, but you intend to change that. Some people will read this (or parts of this) book because they are just beginning to offer programming in their library or organization. It is my hope that this book will help.

GETTING ADMINISTRATION ON BOARD

Perhaps your director or administration or both aren't outright opposed to the idea of adult programming, but they just aren't nearly as enthusiastic as you are at the prospect of bringing in someone to do some artsy thing for ninety minutes at \$100 an hour. Although most libraries offer some type of adult programs, many do not see programming as central to their mission. Approximately half of the libraries that offer adult programming feel it is central to their mission; the other half say it isn't.⁶ Your patrons might feel a bit more passionately about library programs. According to the ALA report *The State of America's Libraries, 2011*, "Eighty-four percent of adults consider it very or somewhat important that the library serves as a community center, is a source of cultural programs and activities (83 percent, up four percentage points

from a year earlier) and provides computer access, training and support (83 percent, up seven percentage points)."⁷

If your library has not yet embraced programming for adults, there are a few strategies you can pursue to help get folks on board. Administrators are managers, and managers are usually convinced to go in new directions through proposals and studies. If you are in a position of some influence, such as a library manager, perhaps you can present a proposal to a director or a coordinator of adult services. If you work for a system that is largely decentralized, perhaps you only need to get your branch manager involved. If you don't have a good feel for your library's hierarchy and culture, work with your supervisor or your mentor or a knowledgeable peer and learn how things get done in your library system. Eventually, programming will get a yes.

We librarians are a creative bunch, so I know you have plenty of ideas. And you finally have the go-ahead to make these ideas *happen*. But—you guessed it—I'm going to advise you to take a breath and read on before you call the local raptors society to give a talk on the American bald eagle. There's more you need to know.

NOTES

1. D. W. Davies, *Public Libraries as Culture and Social Centers: The Origin of the Concept* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1974), 64–65.
2. *Ibid.*, 97, 100, 104–5.
3. Valerie J. Gross, "Transforming Our Image Through Words That Work: Perception Is Everything," *Public Libraries* 48, no. 5 (September–October 2009): 24–32.
4. *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G&C Merriam Company, 1965), 680.
5. *The Public Library Mission Statement and Its Imperatives for Service* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1979), 5.

6. Debra Wilcox Johnson, *Cultural Programs for Adults in Public Libraries: A Survey Report* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1999), v.
7. *The State of America's Libraries: A Report from the American Library Association* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2011), 18.



Building a Framework for Success



Tying Programming to Your Library's Mission

When an institution first considers offering adult programs, the following questions will arise, in one form or another: What are we trying to do here? Will programs be offered as a way to get people into our building? Will they closely reflect our library's collection? Will they be used to fill a cultural or informational gap in our community? Is programming really a service that aligns with our mission?

As libraries continue to face difficult financial times, many of our libraries have had to look very closely at the services that we deliver and how we deliver them. We have become extremely strategic in how we deliver services. Mission statements have been rewritten. Priorities have been fine-tuned to optimize diminishing resources. As door counts and online visits have increased during these tough times, a few trends have emerged that may actually result in some increased staffing capacities. One such trend is the dwindling number of ready reference questions that library staff answer day-to-day. Many of our patrons now find answers to basic questions such as, "How long is the Mississippi River?" by turning to Google first. Yes, we still answer these questions, but almost every public library has seen its ready reference statistics drop in the past decade. Rather than chase after a train that has already left the station (by trying to entice our patrons to come to us for answers that they readily now find themselves), we might be wiser to look at ways in which we can better align our library services with the current needs of our communities.

The mission statement is a place to start. Mission statements and value statements now contain words such as *connect* and *synergy*. For example, one of the core values of New York Public Library is to "bring people together to spark creative synergies and learn from each other." We see priorities that describe the importance of civic engagement and services to immigrants. As

libraries revise and perhaps streamline their mission statements and priorities, each of us should take the opportunity to explore the role that programming can play in carrying out the mission of our library. A Google search of “trends in libraries” will result in as many mentions of “connecting people with people” as “connecting people with materials.” Although we may have fewer patrons turning to us with their ready reference questions, we do have patrons asking for our help with learning English, asking whether we offer help with developing a new set of job skills, and asking for opportunities to connect and share ideas with and learn from other residents in our communities. And a library program can be one of the best approaches to meeting these needs of our patrons. A library program called “Talk Time” that brings speakers of various languages together to practice their English can be a very effective way for patrons to improve their English while also connecting them to others in the community who may share similar life situations. If civic engagement is one of your stated priorities, then programs such as the Great Decisions series (www.fpa.org) beautifully align with that priority. Sometimes the best way to meet the informational or recreational need of a patron is to connect him or her with another person who has the right knowledge and talent. And library programming does just that.

So how do you ensure that any programs that you offer align with your mission and priorities? Developing a programming policy is a good place to start. Frequently, the first sentence of your programming policy and the first sentence of your mission statement will be nearly identical. For example, the mission of the Martin County (Florida) Library System is to: “Enhance the lifelong learning of our diverse community through education, recreation, cultural immersion and intellectual stimulation.” This statement is very similar to the opening sentence of Merrimack (New Hampshire) Public Library’s programming policy. Their policy states: “The Merrimack Public Library will present

programs that offer information, education, and recreation to the citizens of Merrimack.”

Both the mission statement and the programming policy just quoted contain the word *recreation*. Your mission statement and your programming policy are your guides. Be sure they say what you want and intend to do. If you include the word *recreation* in your policy, then the types of programs you can offer become very broad indeed. Libraries with such broad policies can offer programs such as singles mixers, consisting of music, dancing, and light refreshments. Such a function would probably be well attended, and it might bring people into the library for the first time. If your library would be reluctant to offer purely recreational programming, then you might want to omit this word from your mission statement and programming policy, or you might want to add a sentence defining what you mean by *recreational*.

Some mission statements say that the library provides informational and cultural materials and services. The programming policy can then be written to state that the library provides informational and cultural programs. You may also want to mention in your programming policy that the programs offered are consistent with materials that your library collects. This assertion then gives your library quite a bit of flexibility, even if the word *recreational* is not included in the policy. Think of a programming topic. Now go to your library’s catalog and do a search on that topic. You will probably have to be really creative to think of a programming topic that is not addressed in a book in your print and electronic collections. If you decide to pursue programming that is informational and cultural—but not recreational—in content, then your library might choose to offer a program on how to start a singles club or how to locate singles clubs in your community. But, hosting a singles dance party will probably not fit within your mission.

Now that you’ve decided on the type (recreational, informational, cultural, etc.) of programming you will

offer, you are ready to get into the finer details. Here are some other questions you might want to address in your policy:

- Will you produce programs on topics that are already covered by other agencies? For example, will you ask a local doctor to present a lecture on high blood pressure, or will you invite the American Heart Association into your library to present a program on that topic?
- Will you charge an admission fee to your programs? Will you charge a materials fee at some of your programs? For example, if you get someone to offer a workshop on calligraphy and each patron needs paper and pens for the workshop, will your library purchase the materials, and will you then pass this expense on to the patron?
- Who selects the performers—someone in your adult services or programming office, a centralized committee, individuals in the branches, the library director, your Friends group?
- Can for-profit groups and individuals present programs or will you limit performers to those people who are members of nonprofit organizations and associations? If you permit for-profit groups, will these groups be allowed to promote their products or services during the program? Can they at least mention their products or services and offer their business cards to patrons?
- Can performers sell products during or after the program? If not, do you want to make an exception for authors selling their books?
- How will you ensure that the content of a program is accurate? Will you evaluate the performer's PowerPoint slides and handouts before the program? Will you ask for and check references? Will you interview other agencies that have hosted the performer?

Figure 1.1 is an example of a programming policy that addresses some of the preceding questions and issues.

Your programming policy will be the compass that keeps you on the right path. If you want to offer programs that will supplement or enhance your library's collection, say this in your policy. Sometimes, the best way to convey information is through human interaction. For example, the best way to convey information on learning English might be through literacy classes and ENL (English as a New Language) classes. If your library intends to offer these programs even though the collection does not contain ENL materials, don't craft your programming policy to state that your programs will be limited to topics that are represented in your materials collection. Other topics for programs might include a class on how to use your library's web page or a workshop instructing people on how to fill out their census form. These topics are not going to be covered in books within the library. If you want to offer these programs, state in your policy that you offer programming to provide information that is best transmitted by human interaction.

Last, consider adding a line to your programming policy that states where the buck stops regarding decision making and programming. Some policies will state that this authority resides with the director, but if responsibility resides with you or the library manager or a programming coordinator, then state in the policy which position has final decision-making authority. The line within the policy can be as simple as this: "The Library Director/Programming Coordinator/Library Manager has final approval over which programs are produced within the library."

The American Library Association (ALA) created a document called "Library-Initiated Programs as a Resource: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*."¹ This document fits library programming within the context of the *Library Bill of Rights*.² It also serves as a good model when drafting a program-

Adult Programming Statement of Policy for Library-Initiated Programs

A library program is an event that promotes the use of library materials, facilities, or services and/or offers the community an informational, entertaining or cultural experience. Programs are planned for the interest and enlightenment of all the people of the community.

MCPL [McCracken County Public Library] strives to offer a variety of programs that support the mission of the library and reflect the broad range of community interests. These programs will often be presented in cooperation with other agencies and institutions as well as other public and private resources.

Selection of library program topics, speakers, presentations, and resource materials will be made by library staff on the basis of the interests and needs of library users and the community.

Programs will not be allowed to serve as a platform for generating income for any sponsoring group or individual, except funds to support the library. Library programs must be noncommercial in nature. Although a businessperson or other professional

expert may present a program, no solicitation of business is permitted.

The sale of products at an adult library program is not allowed. There are two exceptions:

1. Writers, performers, and artists may sell their own works at the library following library programs.
2. The Friends of the Library may sell items at library programs they sponsor.

Library sponsorship of a program does not constitute an endorsement of the content of the program or the views expressed by the participants.

Attendance at library sponsored programs is open to the public and shall not be restricted because of gender, race, background or beliefs. *Article V of the Library Bill of Rights*

McCracken County Public Library
555 Washington Street
Paducah, KY 42003

Source: McCracken County (Kentucky) Public Library

ming policy. The document is available online and is included in figure 1.2.

This next point may be obvious, but once you have drafted a programming policy, you will want it to become an official document within your organization. It should be as official as your mission statement and collection development policy. This may mean that the director or even your library board will need to sign off on the policy. If you are the director, you

are well on your way. But if you are a member of a subcommittee that is drafting this document as an initial step in offering adult programming, be sure to use your supervisor to help you steer the policy through the proper channels.

It is sometimes a good idea to ask around and get an idea of what seems possible before you even begin writing. If possible, speak with those people who have a good feel for how your administration thinks.

An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

Library-initiated programs support the mission of the library by providing users with additional opportunities for information, education, and recreation. Article I of the *Library Bill of Rights* states: “Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves.”

Library-initiated programs take advantage of library staff expertise, collections, services and facilities to increase access to information and information resources. Library-initiated programs introduce users and potential users to the resources of the library and to the library’s primary function as a facilitator of information access. The library may participate in cooperative or joint programs with other agencies, organizations, institutions, or individuals as part of its own effort to address information needs and to facilitate information access in the community the library serves.

Library-initiated programs on site and in other locations include, but are not limited to, speeches, community forums, discussion groups, demonstrations, displays, and live or media presentations.

Libraries serving multilingual or multicultural communities should make efforts to accommodate the information needs of those for whom English is a second language. Library-initiated programs that cross language and cultural barriers introduce otherwise underserved populations to the resources of the library and provide access to information.

Library-initiated programs “should not be proscribed or removed [or canceled] because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval” of the contents of the program or the views expressed by the participants, as stated in Article II of the *Library Bill of Rights*.

Library sponsorship of a program does not constitute an endorsement of the content of the program or the views expressed by the participants, any more than the purchase of material for the library collection constitutes an endorsement of the contents of the material or the views of its creator.

Library-initiated programs are a library resource, and, as such, are developed in accordance with written guidelines, as approved and adopted by the library’s policy-making body. These guidelines should include an endorsement of the *Library Bill of Rights* and set forth the library’s commitment to free and open access to information and ideas for all users.

Library staff select topics, speakers and resource materials for library-initiated programs based on the interests and information needs of the community. Topics, speakers and resource materials are not excluded from library-initiated programs because of possible controversy. Concerns, questions or complaints about library-initiated programs are handled according to the same written policy and procedures that govern reconsiderations of other library resources.

Library-initiated programs are offered free of charge and are open to all. Article V of the *Library Bill of Rights* states: “A person’s right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.”

The “right to use a library” encompasses all the resources the library offers, including the right to attend library-initiated programs. Libraries do not deny or abridge access to library resources, including library-initiated programs, based on an individual’s economic background or ability to pay.

Adopted January 27, 1982, by the ALA Council; amended June 26, 1990; July 12, 2000. [ISBN 8389-6528-8]

Source: American Library Association, “Library-Initiated Programs as a Resource: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*” (Chicago: American Library Association, 2000), www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/libraryinitiated.cfm.

Even if administration asked you to frame the policy, it doesn't hurt to ask them what they have in mind before you begin. Communication along the way can increase the chances of getting your initial draft approved without major changes. This saves time, which means you will be that much closer to offering programs to your patrons. You can always propose to expand or alter the policy at a later time.

Once your approved programming policy is in place, you have established *what* your programming focus will be. Now you are ready to begin sketching *how* you will translate your policy into programming.

NOTES

1. American Library Association, "Library-Initiated Programs as a Resource: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*" (Chicago: American Library Association, 2000).
2. American Library Association, *Library Bill of Rights* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1996).

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