

adults

**just wanna
have**

fun

AUDREY BARBAKOFF

programs for emerging adults



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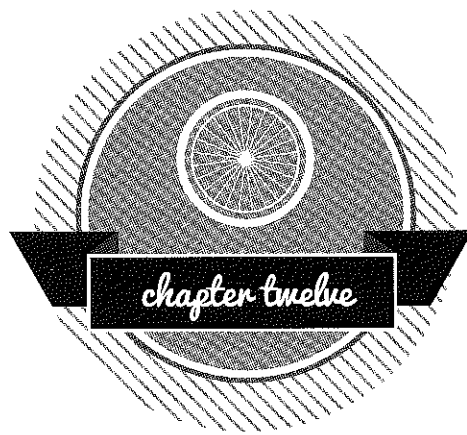
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Book Bike

Spoke & Word

THIS BIKE AND trailer combination “pops up” in events around the community, where sources agree—it’s even cooler than the ice cream cart.

Community Need

Even with twenty-eight locations and four bookmobiles, San Francisco Public Library staff knew they were not reaching everyone in their community. In a concern familiar to public libraries of all sizes, many people still don’t realize how much the library has to offer them. So the librarians found a new way to spread the word: on two wheels. The book bike puts the library “where people naturally gather,” from farmers’ markets to baseball games to the Pride Parade, says Christy Estrovitz, SFPL youth services manager and book bike coordinator.

Pedal-powering their resources is a fantastic way to heighten the library's visibility. A bike can go places a large bookmobile can't easily access, especially with San Francisco's topography and parking challenges. The eye-catching trailer is a conversation starter for library users and nonusers alike. And it's a perfect medium for featuring the digital books, magazines, and movies that may appeal to people who don't visit a physical library. City Librarian Luis Herrera reflects, "What a joy ride for our staff to ably serve our community on the go—from neighborhood fairs, to parks and festivals, Spoke & Word is a marketing and outreach sensation!"

The book bike appeals to a variety of ages, but some pop-up events are tailored specifically to twentysomethings and thirtysomethings. For example, librarians recently brought the bike to Chronicle Books headquarters, where many young professionals work. They combined a celebration of a recent partnership with a library card registration drive. Thirty adults signed up for new cards, and Chronicle employees got to meet their local branch librarian. The librarians followed up the visit with an online connection, posting pictures to Twitter and Instagram.

Next up: a visit to Nerd Night at an area bar. The self-identified nerdy young professionals who attend "might not be library users because they still think of the library as only being books," says SFPL employee Tim Lucas. They "don't know all of the other amazing things the library has to offer them from the comfort of their own homes."

At least, not until the book bike rolls up to show them.

PROGRAM LENGTH

1–2 hours

STAFF NEEDED

- 1–3 people
 - 1 coordinator to handle scheduling, training, and maintenance
 - 1 person on the bike, such as the local librarian (may be the same as the coordinator)
 - 1 additional person accompanying the rider for support and safety at the event (optional)

PREPARATION TIME

- 1-3 hours
 - 2 hours for training for new users
 - 1 hour rules of the road training
 - 1 hour to review the user guide to learn how the bike and trailer work
 - 1 hour prep for specific event

MATERIALS

- Bike (with electric assist, if possible)
- Trailer
- Wi-Fi hotspot
- Laptop
- Barcode scanner
- Books, circulating and/or giveaway
- PR materials and handouts
- Bubble machine

DIRECT COST

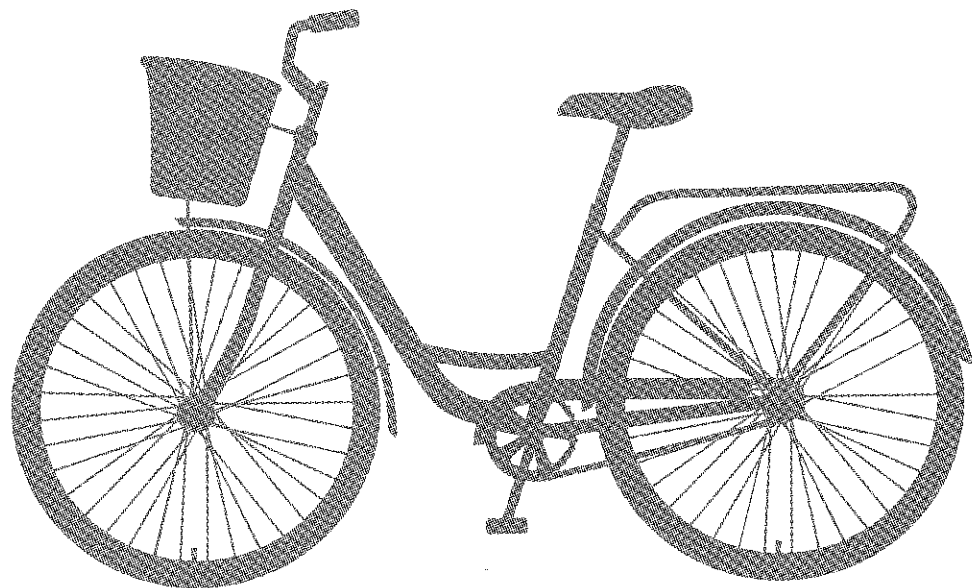
- \$5,000-\$15,000
- SFPL's bike and trailer are highly custom, designed by Burgeon Group to look like a "mini airstream." The product that came from this collaboration, and others like it, can run up to \$10,000. You may be able to find a grant to help subsidize this cost—look around!
- Local craftspeople might be able to help you create something similar for significantly less. If you are considering building your own solution, Christy recommends keeping a few considerations in mind. Make sure the trailer is aerodynamic and light enough to be moved easily on a bike, and that it will still stand up when detached. It needs to fit inside one of your library's vehicles, and through doorways. Also, the electric assist bike is a significant expense, and one you may be able to skip if you live in a flat area. Christy estimates that this could be done for about half the price of the commercially purchased trailer.
- One place not to skimp? The bubble machine! Adding one on is inexpensive, and it draws a lot of interest to the book bike.

PROCESS

Spoke & Word is a trailer connected to an electric assist bike. Bright and attention-grabbing, the trailer is equal parts PR piece and mobile service point. When parked, both sides open out to create display shelving. SFPL uses this space primarily to let people know about their digital offerings, such as downloadable magazines through Zinio, streaming video through Hoopla, and their Biblio-commons app. They may also add books or other content tailored to a specific event or audience. Inside, the trailer contains a WiFi hotspot, two USB docking stations, space to safely carry a laptop and barcode scanner, book and material storage, and even a bubble machine. An external holder supports a large, brightly colored umbrella. Underneath it, librarians spread out folding furniture and blankets to create a reading nook.

The entire assembly is stored at the Central library, but any trained staff member in the system can reserve it. This shared model allows the book bike to reach the broadest possible variety of events and communities. A coordinator oversees its schedule and upkeep. Christy spends about 5 percent of her time in this role. She answers questions and provides support to staff using the bike, runs monthly maintenance checks, and handles check-in and cleaning after events. More generally, she talks with staff to make sure the bike continues to meet library and community needs.

Partnerships are crucial to the success of the book bike. They allow it to accomplish its mission of reaching people where they already gather. Often this means visiting existing events and community spaces. But it can also mean leading



events and inviting partners in. For example, the book bike inspired the library to take the lead in a Family Biking Showcase. Various organizations brought interesting and unusual bikes for visitors to try out. The bike enthusiasts this event attracted were a population that might not otherwise seek out the library.

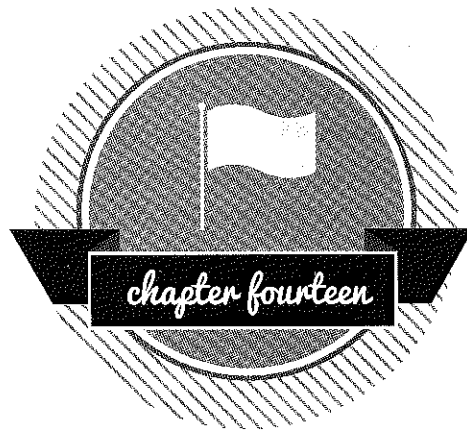
The nimble nature of the bike lets the library take advantage of serendipitous connections. While out on Spoke & Word, one staff member noticed a large crowd gathered at a nearby school for an outdoor event. On the spot, the staff member brought the bike over and stayed for a forty-five-minute pop-up. These spontaneous interactions can also be one-on-one. Christy loves to bike by coffee shops, bike paths, and other public places where people stop her to ask questions. This leads to “candid conversations I would never have on my own bike,” she says, and the “natural joy of having those conversations on the street, and bringing people back to the library.”

Moving forward, SFPL will be considering ways to staff the bike more efficiently. Although they worked hard to get buy-in before debuting the bike, even the most invested employee’s time is limited. They have already shifted from utilizing only their mobile services department staff to allowing any employee to train to use the bike. But are there creative solutions that could make even better use of valuable staff time? Would interns or volunteers help? SFPL’s staffing model is still evolving, and Christy recommends thinking seriously about your staffing capacity for the bike from the very beginning.

Despite the expense and time, this immediately successful project was worth the investment at SFPL. “There’s no better way to start the work day,” Christy says. “It’s one of my favorite projects of the last few years.”

Further Reading

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Nerf Capture the Flag

Foam Dart Blaster Battle!

Community Need

Andrew Fuerste-Henry and Sarah Smith first heard about Nerf Capture the Flag as a program for kids. When they started their own monthly event for adults, they didn't have a proven community need in mind. They didn't know any adults who had Nerf guns or played this kind of game. But they did know one thing for sure: it sounded like a blast.

Once the program got going, the demand for social, physical play for adults quickly became clear. Within the first few months, the game developed a devoted core following. Those players brought their friends, and soon the events had a large and enthusiastic audience. Today, a few people even travel from out of state to play. Nerf gamers who had previously never set foot in the library now regularly attend programs and use library resources.

While many of the programs in this book grew out of an established community need, there's still an important place for intuition and a sense of experimentation and fun. And after all, if you would love to go to an event, and your colleagues would love to go, and your friends—well, chances are you're not alone. Don't forget to make some space for your own sense of play!

PROGRAM LENGTH	PREPARATION TIME
2 hours	1 hour for set up and clean up

STAFF NEEDED

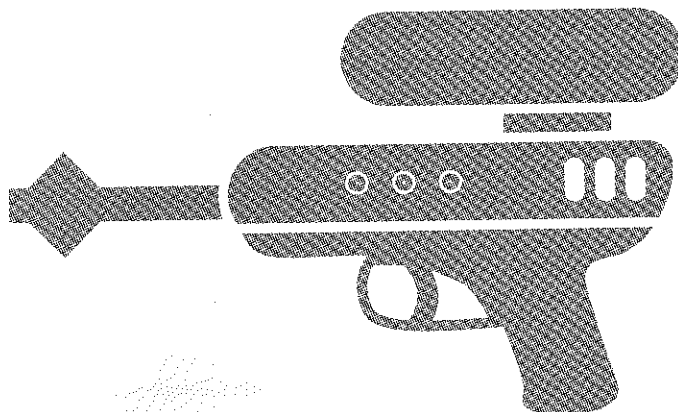
- 1-2 people (only 1 required for play; some libraries may prefer 2 for safety reasons)

MATERIALS

- 75 darts every other month
- 30 colored bandanas for team identification
- 1-2 spare blasters (Participants should bring their own.)
- Flags and bases. These don't have to be fancy—Andrew and Sarah made their flags from dowel rods and duct tape, and held them in bases made from traffic cones.

DIRECT COST

- Initial setup cost (bandanas, flags, bases): \$100-\$150
- Ongoing cost (darts): \$20 every other month



PROCESS

“We all know bookshelves are great for holding books, but did you know they’re also very effective cover in a game of capture the flag?” asks the Carnegie-Stout Public Library’s events calendar. Get ready for people to see your bookshelves—and your library—in a whole new way.

First, schedule this program after-hours, or on a day when the library is closed. It’s going to be loud, messy, and fun!

Next, define the playing field. You can limit play to a specific (large) area of the library, with other spots out of bounds. For example, the reference desk, a second floor, or staff areas can be off-limits. Carnegie-Stout library also has a limited-play area—a mezzanine where each team is allowed to send a single “sniper.”

On the field, place each team’s flag in a spot that will be equally difficult to capture. Off the field, designate an area for players who are out or waiting their turn. Move tripping hazards or fragile items out of the way whenever possible, though you should ask players to be respectful and careful as well. Andrew has found it effective to remind his players that “if we break something or someone gets hurt, they’ll never let us do this again.”

Players arrive, bringing their own blasters (though it’s not a bad idea to have a couple spares on hand at the library). Andrew and Sarah discovered that not only did many people already own blasters, they had customized them. Modifications that increase the range, power, or rate of fire are not allowed, but cosmetic upgrades are encouraged. Though players may bring their own unmodified darts, the library also supplies a communal pool. Any dart may be picked up and used by anyone during play.

Break the group into two opposing teams, and give each person a colored bandana indicating their team alliance. Each team begins with five players on the field; any additional players wait in the out-of-play area. Make sure all players are familiar with the rules and expectations before the game begins. Identify the staff person or volunteer serving as referee.

Start playing! Rounds last ten minutes each. Each team begins the round at their own base where their flag is held. A team scores one point when they have both flags (their own and the opposing team’s) in their own base. When a team scores, someone from that team yells “Point!” The referee pauses the timer, verifies the score, and returns the flags to their starting locations. She waits at least thirty seconds for all players to return spent darts to the collective pot and go back to their bases before restarting play.

Of course, scoring points is just half the fun. Let’s talk about blasters! Any person hit in the body (not the face or head and not on their blaster) by an opposing team member’s dart is temporarily out. Holding their blaster above

their head, they go to the designated out-of-play spot. There, they can tag in a waiting or previously shot team member. If someone is shot while carrying a flag, they drop the flag at the spot where they were tagged out.

In the last ninety seconds of the round, the referee announces “perma-death.” At that point, any person shot remains out for the remainder of the round and no new players are tagged in. If all players on one team are eliminated, the opposing team scores a point.

Although this is a game with winners and losers, it is meant to be more fun than competitive. You will need to rely on the players to be honest and show good sportsmanship. Make sure that this is a clear expectation from the beginning, and be ready to work with the players to adjust the rules and play so that the game stays fair and fun for everyone.

Capture the Flag is just one possible game to play with blasters, and it may not be the right one for every library. It works best with a minimum of ten players in a space that is mostly symmetrical. If your space isn’t ideal, your crowd is small, or you just have a group that wants to branch out, there are lots of other foam blaster games to try. Experiment with an all-out battle without the structure of the flags, try a last man standing death match, take inspiration from a first-person-shooter video game, or just make up your own!

Further Reading

Carnegie-Stout Public Library. Nerf Capture the Flag Rules. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NPQPkOiCAjfLIUOiVT9KfV9317_3aBSJ-88-FEUnT0/edit?pli=1.

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