

They've taken the Library: Working with Fandoms

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Abstract: A brief discussion of the ways in which fandoms can enrich a library's programming and foster creativity and inclusion in the library

Libraries have long been a haven for those who seek to escape into a different world or explore a new idea. A reader's ability to become completely wrapped up in a story or topic is seen as evidence of a mind ready to embrace the knowledge of the world, and in this fertile ground, new ideas will take root. It is this potential for growth and innovation that libraries are tapping into when they invite fandoms into their spaces.

It has been said that reading novels makes people more sympathetic (Leung, 2014), so imagine what *being* a character can do for an individual's empathetic faculties. Furthermore, members of fandoms tend to be incredibly creative individuals, as they attempt to re-write plot lines, come up with complex theories regarding the origins or miraculous un-death of their favourite character, or create accurate costumes with items found around the house. And isn't this the sort of ingenuity we want to encourage in our young people?

Despite the many positive aspects of fandoms, there remains in some libraries a reluctance to become involved with fanfiction. Maybe it's the somewhat juvenile titles of fangirl and fanboy, or perceived rivalries between or within fandoms ("are you Team This, or Team That?"). Perhaps it's simply that talking to people who are so passionate about a particular topic that they will argue about minute details can be intimidating. To be fair, each fandom has its own specialized etiquette, rules and vocabulary, so outsiders might understandably be hesitant to become involved when they are new to the fandom. Whatever the reason, libraries are proving themselves to be excellent allies, introducing their communities to fandoms in ways that are both accessible and fun.

From fandom showdowns to multi-fandom parties, libraries are exploring many different angles of the world of fandoms. In the process, they are providing teens with a safe, fun, and non-judgmental space in which to fully inhabit the stories that have fired their imaginations.

Here are just a few great ways in which libraries are incorporating fandoms into their teen programming:

1. Fanfiction/fanart contests – as seen at Southern Oaks Library in Oklahoma
2. Weekly fandom meetings – as seen at Fairfield Public Library in Fairfield, Connecticut
3. Hosting fandom-themed parties – as seen at the Sequoyah Regional Library System in Georgia
4. Friendly fandom trivia competitions – as seen at L.E. Philips Memorial Library in Eau Claire, Wisconsin

For further inspiration, check out some of the following links.

1. A quick rundown of some of the largest fandoms can be found over at [Buzzfeed.com](http://www.buzzfeed.com):

Enderle, A. (2013, June 14). The 20 craziest fandoms On Tumblr [Blog post]. Retrieved from http://www.buzzfeed.com/alwaysadrienne/the-20-craziest-tumblr-fandoms-a08n?sub=2330836_1272485#.gkbwLXYvz

2. Bridgeton Public Library (New Jersey) has lots of great Pinterest boards devoted to various fandoms and library-friendly fandom activities:

Bridgeton Public Library. (n.d.) Profile. Retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.com/bridgetonpl/>

3. Carnegie Public Library's teen services Tumblr account is a great example of an easy way to let fandoms know they are welcome at the library. Posting appropriate fanart and fandom-related news keeps both the library and fans up-to-date:

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh - Teen Services. (n.d.) Homepage. Retrieved from <http://clpteens.tumblr.com/>

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