

Project Name: Games in Libraries Conference

Lead Organization: McIntyre Library

On May 31, 2019, the library hosted a one-day conference on games (board, card, video, etc.) in libraries in which Wisconsin public and academic librarians as well as attendees from around the country learned and shared about their use in libraries of all types. Paul Welchli of UW-Whitewater presented the conference keynote, "From Fluxx to Fortnite: Lifelong Learning through Good Gaming." Link to conference program: https://libguides.uwec.edu/ld.php?content_id=47220885

Project Evolution

There were a few big changes that happened to the Games in Libraries Conference. The first change was that one of the three people working on this project left for an out of state job. Although this made it a little bit more difficult to staff the event itself, it was not an insurmountable challenge. A second big change was that we moved the conference location away from having it in one UW-Eau Claire's academic buildings and into McIntyre Library. The reason we did this was because it was much more expensive than we anticipated to host the games conference elsewhere on campus and this allowed us to keep the conference costs (including registration and lunch) free for attendees. Additionally, since the conference was about games and libraries it made sense to host it in McIntyre Library so that people could see the library's collection and play games on their breaks. Lastly, we increased the maximum number of attendees 50% after we got more interest than we initially anticipated, which was a pleasant surprise.

Audience

The project reached a variety of librarians (academic, public, special) throughout the state, and even around the country. Additionally, it got the notice of at least two presenters who weren't affiliated with a library – one from an academic research lab that develops educational games and one from public television that led the development of an educational game.

Reaching people for this conference was primarily done through two different channels – email and social media. We were able to use an email list that we had developed from an earlier solicitation of interest in the games in libraries conference and the WiLS email list. These lists were major reasons we had more people who wanted to attend than what we had room for. Additionally, the American Library Association has a gaming social media group where we posted information about the conference. That's how we were able to get on the radar of people from outside of Wisconsin which resulted in presenters from Texas, Tennessee, and Indiana.

Impacts

The practical advice aspect was what attendees appreciated the most and the vast majority of attendees indicated that they would be using some aspect of what they had learned in their workplace. Specifically, feedback indicated that people learned of various games that they could incorporate into their collections, the small steps that are necessary to start a collection, or ways to start a gaming collection on a small or nonexistent budget.

Advice

The most important piece of advice we would give is to start early when planning a conference. This project is something that we started well before the WiLS grant and only became a reality because of that grant. There are a lot of moving pieces and parts when trying to coordinate presenters, technology, programs, and making the experience a meaningful one for attendees. Careful planning takes time so be sure to give yourself enough time to work through all the details.