

# BRIDGING PROGRAMS TO THE LIBRARY: BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF READERS

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UTK Campus Pedwalk Bridge - <https://brand.utk.edu/standards/photography/>

# AGENDA

- Book Clubs in Academia
- Planning
- How it works
- This program's uniqueness
- Successes / Challenges
- Contributions to Success
- Conclusion



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# BOOK CLUBS IN ACADEMIA - CURRENT



- Not commonly found compared to public libraries
  - 4 fiction-based groups out of 142 universities
- Utilitarian reading is a common challenge
- Usually have a theme or academic and/or professional objective
- Student retention especially after COVID-19
  - Providing more opportunities for community-building
- Providing free copies of the book as an incentive

Photo by z f from Pexels: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/open-books-and-a-cup-of-coffee-8384952/>

# WHY BOOK CLUBS IN ACADEMIA

- Library anxiety
- Creating a space for peer interactions /  
De-stress from school-work
- Bring students into the library space
- Bring back the promotion of recreational reading
  - Historically, academic libraries did until the 1950's/1960's



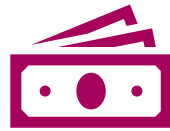
Photo by Helin Gezer: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/quiet-study-session-in-a-library-aisle-28479736/>

# PLANNING & CONSIDERATIONS



## Community

Sense of belonging and community to large campus



## Accessibility

Financial constraints on students  
Availability of specific items



## Student success through literacy

Reading for fun = increase literacy + increase student success



## Connect students to leisure reading

Promote collections with new and trending titles  
Libby App

# HOW IT WORKS



Photo by cottonbro studio from Pexels: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/person-in-gray-jacket-holding-white-paper-4861364/>

- Frequency of meetings
- Themes instead of specific books
  - Questions
    - Time of the year
    - Current events (both real world and book world or both)
    - Get feedback on recent displays and/or events like Blind Date with a Book (sneak peeks)
  - How to engage
    - Answer the questions yourself to break the ice
  - Facilitating instead of leading
    - This is their space
  - Provide an activity
    - And snacks!

# WHAT MAKES THIS BOOK CLUB UNIQUE

- Themes instead of one title for the semester
- Creating the 3rd space for students
  - 3rd space - neutral space from home and work where we build connections and have a good time
- Interactive - not just book talks
- No specific author talks - yet
- No specific group of students, all welcome
  - Undergraduate and Graduate / traditional and non-traditional students



Photo by Guillermo Berlin: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/casual-gatherings-friends-enjoying-leisure-time-34967297/>

# SUCSESSES

- Community
  - Students have their own GroupMe
- Attendance
  - 5-20 each meeting
- Return patrons - even on snow days!
- Snacks were a big hit

# CHALLENGES

- Mostly public library associated with book clubs
  - Students read for fun too!
- Admin buy in
  - Tying to strategic visions/plans
  - Interest survey to show interest
  - Consistent number keeping
- Create space while being professional in the room
  - Facilitating instead of leading
- Scheduling
  - Different semester = different availability
- Budget, staff time, and space



Photo by Brett Jordan: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/arranged-letter-tiles-5978426/>

# CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUCCESS - GETTING THE WORD OUT



Photo by Min An: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/sticky-note-lot-1629212/>

- Survey to find interest
  - Over 80 responses of interest
  - Which also gave us all the emails to reach out to those interested
- Signage and Distribution
  - Digital signs
  - Flyers – in library and across campus
  - Events Calendar
- Mailchimp
  - Allow students to subscribe to emails and find out when events will happen
  - Currently have 239 subscribers

# CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUCCESS - STUDENT'S INPUT

- Constantly asked for feedback
  - Snacks
  - Book topics
  - Activities
- Ask questions to make them involved
  - What would you like to see from this book club?
  - If you could tell admin one thing you like about this program, what would you tell them?
- Allowed them to control the conversation - to an extent



Photo by Xhemi Photo : <https://www.pexels.com/photo/people-cooperate-around-book-15017187/>

# CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUCCESS - COMMUNITY CENTERED



Photo by Yan Krukau: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/people-inside-the-library-gathered-together-8199607/>

- Students were encouraged to build the community they want within the club
  - How to talk outside the club
  - How much they interact during club
- Students encouraged to voice their personal interests/genres
  - Added to other's TBR list
  - Exposed to diverse genres

# CONCLUSION

- Unique model for an academic book club
- Bring sense of community on large campus
- If you bring snacks, they will come
- Bringing back academic libraries promoting lifelong love of reading



Photo by Andy Barbour: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/man-holding-a-book-6684500/>

# REFERENCES

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- Lackner, Jacob, Luxmore, Rebecca, & Kneedler-Shorten, Xavier. (2023). Book clubs as means of reducing library anxiety. *Journal of New Librarianship*, 8(1), 20-40.

# PHOTO REFERENCE PAGE

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- Slide 15 - Photo of book club end of year bookmark making craft

# THANK YOU & QUESTIONS

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Photo of book club end of year bookmark making craft