

# **The Millennium Project for Public Libraries**

*A National Grant Initiative*

## **ONLINE RESOURCE GUIDE**

Funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.  
A partnership of the National Endowment for the Humanities,  
The Library of America and the American Library Association.

This online resource guide provides programming and promotion ideas as well as background information for libraries participating in *The Millennium Project*. It also includes sample promotional pieces that can be adapted for local use.

*The Millennium Project* programming questions should be addressed to the ALA Public Programs Office at [publicprograms@ala.org](mailto:publicprograms@ala.org) or (312) 280-5045.

## Getting Started

Now that your library has been selected to receive *The Millennium Project* grant, it's time to start developing a program or event using The Library of America volumes. Before you start planning, think about why you want to host a *Millennium Project* program. You probably already gave this some thought when you applied for the grant, but it's important to revisit your reasoning as you begin the program development. Think about what you want the program to accomplish using the following checklist to help organize your ideas:

- Audience Goals
  - Who will be served (ages, demographics, library use)?
  - How many (size of target population, % you want to attract)?
  - Why this audience?
  - What interests this audience?
- Collection/Thematic Goals
  - Is there an area of the collection that you want to emphasize or build?
  - Themes that relate to other library or community programming?
- Community Goals
  - What issues/agendas are primary in your community?
  - What partner organizations share some of your goals?
- Program Goals
  - What do you want the program to accomplish?
  - How will your library benefit?
  - How will you be able to continue/maintain the programs?

Look for connections and relationships between the four areas above. Identify some priorities from your list of goals and choose at least three specific things you would like to be different after the completion of the program. It could be higher circulation of certain types of literature, more use of the library by certain groups of people, or just having the lights on in the library meeting room on Tuesday nights.

## **Planning Your Program**

Planning is the key to any successful program. At its most basic, planning your program will consist of three steps:

- Decide what you want to accomplish
- Do something to make it happen
- Decide whether what you did worked

Once you've decided what you want to accomplish, you can start to make decisions about specific programming ideas (a few thought starters appear below), when to hold the program, how to promote it, and what you need to do to make it happen.

## Programming Themes

The following are suggestions for library programs and/or events to introduce The Library of America volumes to library patrons. These are to be used as guidelines or thought starters for developing your own program. Some ideas include:

### Discussions:

- Reading and discussion on a theme or on the works of one author from the set. Such as:
  - *From Sonnet to Song Lyric: The Forms of American Poetry from Longfellow, Whitman and Dickinson to W.C. Handy and Woodie Guthrie\**
  - *The Sense of Place in 20th Century American Fiction: Stories and Novels by Raymond Chandler, William Faulkner, Zora Neale Hurston, Eudora Welty and Nathaniel West\**
  - *The Writings of Presidents and Patriots from Paine, Washington, Hamilton and Madison to Patrick Henry and Frederick Douglass: Defining - and Protecting - a Common Cause\**

(\*Available at the ALA Public Programs Office's Online Resource Center for Cultural Programming – [www.ala.org/publicprograms/orc](http://www.ala.org/publicprograms/orc))

If you use one of these essays, you may want to hire a scholar from a local college or university, museum or cultural group to lead the discussion. Or you may want to consider buying multiple copies of the works examined in your program for participants to read before the discussion. If purchasing multiple copies is not in your budget, consider reading aloud short excerpts from each piece during the program. You can also photocopy selections from the works as long as you abide by fair use guidelines.

### Presentations or Performances:

- Program of readings from selected LOA volumes focusing on poetry, history, slave narratives, women writers, nature writing, the Vietnam War, or works of an author.
- Panel presentation or lecture by a humanities scholar or other special guest (veteran, newspaper reporter or columnist, local historian, teacher, legislator, author, or member of the clergy) on a topic from the LOA volumes.
- Reenactment of scenes from LOA volumes by an adult or school drama group.
- Special event that uses costumes, music and displays to recreate a historical era and highlight selected LOA volumes – America in the Revolutionary period, Paris in the 1920s, 1940s-50s noir fiction and films.

- Filmed interview or documentary about an author from the set, and reading and discussion of his/her works with a humanities scholar.
- Host a poetry slam or open mic event featuring poets from the LOA volumes.
- Host an open reading night of LOA authors/poets for local authors and aspiring writers.
- Invite a local or nationally known poet/author to talk about the authors included the volumes and the influence on their work.

### **Library Events:**

- “Welcome Library of America” book fair/celebration with a display of LOA volumes, prizes, readers’ guides to selected topics in the set, bookmarks, and readings from the volumes.
- Host a writing workshop for junior or senior high school students, college students, local adult writing groups, winners of local writing contest and other audiences emphasizing the works of LOA authors/poets. Offer special prizes.
- Host a mini library favorite poem/author project – ask local celebrities to record, audio or video and tell why they selected a certain work.
- Use other library services to spotlight the volumes – Dial a poem, Call a story/review. Tie-in a LOA program during National Library Week in April.

### **Partnerships with Other Community Groups:**

- Work with teachers and/or school administrators to prepare a special curriculum with the LOA volumes for high school, college and/or university students.
- Ask the local newspaper, local cable access television station, or radio station to feature a story or editorial about humanities programming and supporting the local library. Be sure to contact book editors as well as new and feature editors.

## **What Else Does Your Program Need?**

### **Support from library staff and administration**

Involve library staff members at all levels of program planning. Staff involvement pays off not only in new ideas, but also in support and enthusiasm. One way to help staff become involved is to hold a mini-workshop or brainstorming session. At this session:

- Emphasize the potential for recruiting new users and building support for the library.
- Communicate the goals for your program – what you want to accomplish, how to continue any program partnerships.
- Assign staff with various talents/interests to work in small groups to carry out established goals.
- Share your program plans with the library director, board, Friends and other library support groups.
- Invite their ideas and cooperation.

### **Resources**

While you have received a grant for this program, you will need additional resources to cover likely expenses such as:

- Promotional materials, publicity
- Library staff time
- Honoraria, if a scholar or discussion leader is used
- Meeting room or facilities, if not free
- Refreshments

Once you have budgeted your projected program costs, you can seek support from Friends, local businesses, your state humanities council, foundations and other donors. Think about in kind gifts, as well as cash, which could cover costs for refreshments, facilities or printing.

### **Meeting space**

If your program requires meeting space, this is a consideration. Whether you meet at the library or somewhere else will be determined both by available space and your program goals and objectives. If you want to build traffic and awareness of the library, a meeting room or other quiet, comfortable space at the library is ideal. If you want to reach a group that is unlikely to come to the library - either because transportation is difficult or they find it unfamiliar - holding the series off site makes sense. The most important ingredients are finding space that encourages participation and one that helps participants feel at ease.

**Schedule/Date**

Chose a date(s) that accommodate the library's needs and the lifestyles of your target audience. Successful events can be held at lunchtime, in the evening, weekday or weekend mornings or afternoons - it all depends on the types of events, audience and locations.

**Lead time**

Don't decide to start a program next week, or even next month. Give yourself enough lead time to get all the materials, recruit a scholar/special guests/etc., and adequately promote the program to the audience you want to reach. This will vary from library to library - some libraries who have an active programming base could easily launch a program to begin in a couple months, while others should plan further in advance.



## Promotional Tips

All libraries are expected to plan and implement effective publicity programs designed to draw the maximum audience to and create awareness of *The Millennium Project for Public Libraries*.

**All promotional materials must feature the project credit line - “Funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. A partnership of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Library of America and the American Library Association” - along with the appropriate logos. Logos are available upon request through the ALA Public Programs Office – [publicprograms@ala.org](mailto:publicprograms@ala.org).**

The following guidelines are intended to help participating libraries launch a successful campaign.

### Reach out to Target Audiences

Promotional materials such as flyers, posters and advertisements are great vehicles for reaching a general audience of mixed ages and backgrounds. However, there are probably several groups in your community that will be very interested in the *Millennium Project* program you develop. Contact these groups directly via a personalized letter or a phone call to let them know about the program.

Groups in your area who may be interested in a Millennium Project program include:

- Local historical societies, groups
- Museums and arts councils
- Local high school, college and university organizations/classes
- Lifelong learning societies
- Councils on aging and senior centers
- Literary centers
- Book clubs
- Writers groups

### Develop an Audience Profile

In addition to contacting specific groups; you will need to reach out to members of the general public. While you will want to reach a broad base of people, determining who may be most interested in the program and/or who you would like to attend the program will help you focus your outreach efforts. To do this, develop a profile of your target audience by asking yourself the following questions:

- Where do they work?
- What restaurants do they eat in?
- Where do they spend their leisure time?
- What other community activities do they take part in?

- What social, religious, professional, civic organizations do they belong to?
- What educational institutions do they use?
- What special arrangements do they require?
- Is a particular time of day best for programs?
- Do they need childcare?
- Do they need transportation?
- Do they need access/space for wheelchairs?
- Do you need to provide signing for deaf/hard of hearing?
- If your program is outside the library, is parking available, public transportation?
- Other physical/space/time considerations?

### **The Most Common (and Often Most Effective) Publicity Vehicles**

Once you have determined who you want to reach through your publicity efforts, its time to start thinking about which vehicles will be most effective in reaching these audiences. Following are a few of the most common and often most effective publicity vehicles:

- **Personal contact:** word of mouth, public speaking, telephone
  - *Meetings and Calls:* One-on-one personal contact can be one of your most effective means of communicating the concept and enthusiasm for your program/event. Make a list of influential individuals in your community - the mayor, city council members, business leaders, legislators and their staff members. Set up meetings with these individuals or call them to let them know about this project and invite them to visit the library for this and other events.
  - *Public Speaking Engagements:* Speaking to community groups is another direct, inexpensive, and very effective way to publicize your program. Introduce yourself and your topic in the same manner as with influential individuals and ask for an opportunity to speak to the membership or key group leaders. At the meeting, outline your overall series plan and present convincing reasons why they should support library projects. Bring along flyers, bookmarks or booklists - some kind of handout to reinforce your speech.
- **Promotional materials:** program flyers, posters, advertisements, public service announcements, graphics, Web sites
  - *Promotional Flyers:* Create flyers to mail or post throughout the library and at community centers, restaurants, stores or anywhere else your audience may see them. Flyers should be "skimable" - easy to read and simple. Include times, dates, place, guest speakers' names and proper acknowledgments.
  - *Graphics:* Develop simple, cost effective bookmarks to hand out at schools, community group meetings or other locations as a useful advertisement of the program. You can also develop displays and posters to post in the library or around town. Ask Friends and trustees to post flyers and posters and/or hand out bookmarks to their friends and others.
  - *Advertising/Public Service Announcements:* Before considering paid advertising, first approach local newspapers, radio and television stations

regarding public service announcements. Many outlets are willing to run an advertisement at no cost, however, these are included "as space permits" and often the outlets can not guarantee whether it will run or when. Once you've exhausted all of your "free" sources, try asking your Friends group or other sources to underwrite advertising costs.

- *Mailings*: In addition to meeting or calling community leaders, send them a letter and information about the program. Including other written materials, such as the fact sheet, press release and/or flyer to get their attention.
- **Media outreach**: news releases, press kits, newspaper articles, television/radio interview programs
  - *News Releases*: To notify your local newspapers, television and radio stations about the program, you should develop a news release to distribute a few weeks before it starts. For local magazines or others, you will need to distribute information a few months ahead of time as they usually have longer lead times. Direct releases to your print and broadcast outlets' Calendar Editors and/or Public Service Directors. Below is a sample news release that can be adapted for your local media.
  - *Fact Sheets*: For the press kits, mailings and other outreach, you may want to consider developing a brief fact sheet in addition to the press release. This can be in a simple Who, What, When ... format and should contain information about the key participants, special guests, community partners, program dates/times, location(s) and a contact name and phone number.
  - *Press Kits*: You may want to create a press kit that contains the news release, fact sheet, photographs and biographies of key participants and other information to distribute at the event. As you distribute press kits to reporters who attend, offer story ideas and ask them if they would like to interview special guests and partner representatives in attendance.
  - *Broadcast Coverage*: Besides sending a news release to media outlets a few weeks before your event, here are a few tips to help secure broadcast coverage:
    - Arrange radio, TV (including cable stations) interviews with the scholar, community representatives involved in the project, and the librarian.
    - Send additional information on Millennium Project programs/events on programs dealing with library issues with the news release to Community News Reporters, Book Reviewers or reporters with a specific interest in the library.
    - Ask public service directors of radio and television stations about airing messages. Find out whether they prefer typed copy – to be read live on the air – or taped spots.

## **Determining Which Publicity Vehicles To Use**

There are a dozens of different ways to get the word out about your *Millennium Project* program. Before you start publicizing, your next step should be determining which vehicles work best in your community and which ones will best reach your target audience. A few tips that will help you determine which publicity vehicles to use:

- Include members of your target audience on your programming planning committee.
- Go to meetings of the groups your audience belongs to and talk about the program.
- Call or meet with community leaders or others who deal with your target audience – ask them what publicity methods work best.
- Explore new publicity outlets – placemats or tent signs in restaurants, flyers in grocery bags, newspaper inserts, information included in city or town mailings to residents such as utility bills, information leaflets.

**Sample News Release**  
(print on library stationary)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DATE

Contact: NAME, (XXX) XXX-XXXX  
E-MAIL ADDRESS

**(Name of Library) to Host (Name of Event) to Introduce  
50-volume Great American Writing Collection**

CITY NAME, State – (Name of library) invites all residents to attend (insert name of program), a free program discussing (insert phrase describing the program). The (insert name) program features (insert program/reception details here). The program will be held on (insert date and time) at (insert location and address).

This program is made possible by a major gift awarded to the library through a national competition titled *The Millennium Project for Public Libraries*. Through this project, funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the library received a 50-volume Great American writing collection and funding to develop this program introducing the collection to the community. The collection is published by The Library of America, a nonprofit publisher dedicated to preserving the nation's cultural heritage by publishing America's best and most significant writings in durable and authoritative editions. The retail value of the collection is nearly \$1,800. Funding for this program was also provided by (Insert names of local donors).

The 50 volumes span three centuries of notable American writing, including works of Robert Frost, Henry James, James Madison, James Baldwin, Zora Neale Hurston, William Faulkner, and others, and collections of 19th and 20th century American poetry and American journalism from World War II and the Vietnam War.

*The Millennium Project* is a partnership of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), The Library of America (LOA), and the American Library Association (ALA).

For more information, contact (name of library contact, telephone number, e-mail address). Or visit (insert Website address if you have posted information about this program on your site).

(If necessary, include a short list of directions or map to the event at the bottom of your release.)

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## Sample letter to legislators and community leaders/groups

(NOTE: In mailings to legislators, key community leaders and community groups, include announcements and flyers of related library programs. You may wish to also enclose a special invitation or send separate invitations to special guests. Be sure to include an RSVP card and stamped return address envelope so you can prepare for their attendance.)

(DATE)

Dear Library Friend: (Use a personalized greeting whenever possible)

The (name of library) is pleased to invite you to (brief description of program or event) as part of *The Millennium Project for Public Libraries* national grant initiative.

Our library is one of 800 libraries nationwide selected to receive a 50-volume Library of America set published between 1992 and 2000. The Library of America volumes are designed to help libraries enrich their core collections of American literature. The project is a partnership of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), The Library of America (LOA) and the American Library Association, and is funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

(Name(s) of speakers or guests) will visit the library (be specific about location) on (day, date) to (details of program/event).

The attached materials will provide additional details about the program/event. We encourage you to visit the library to browse related displays and to peruse the latest edition to our expanding collection.

If you would like more information about this or other library programming, please contact me at (telephone number, e-mail).

Sincerely,

(name and title)

## **A Note on Libraries and Public Programming**

Libraries are many things to their communities. They offer the practical information people need to improve their quality of life and to increase individual options in a complex society - information about health, education, business, child care, computers, the environment, job opportunities . . . and much more.

Libraries also give their communities something less tangible, yet just as essential to a satisfying and productive life - nourishment for the spirit. Programs in the humanities and the arts that encourage people to think and talk about ethics and values, history, art, poetry, and other cultures are integral to the library's mission.

Such programs help to illuminate the experiences, beliefs and values that unite us as human beings. They stimulate us to make connections where we noticed none before - between our ancestors and ourselves, between one culture and another, between the community and the individual.