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# Building Uncommon Community with a Common Book.

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Running head: BUILDING UNCOMMON COMMUNITY WITH A COMMON BOOK

Building Uncommon Community with a Common Book: the Role of Librarians as  
Collaborators and Contributors to Campus Reading Programs

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### Abstract

Library involvement with Campus Reading Experiences (CRE) at two community colleges and two four-year institutions are described. The case studies were chosen because each reflects a strong library presence in institutional level program planning and instructional development for deeper student learning related to the CRE. In particular, the case studies highlight the connections these programs create between librarians, student affairs, and academic affairs. Practical suggestions for how librarians can initiate this type of experience on their campus as well as advice for how librarians can take a more active role in getting involved with already existing reading programs are provided.

Building Uncommon Community with a Common Book: the Role of Librarians  
as Collaborators and Contributors to Campus Reading Programs

Public libraries and Oprah have become popular catalysts for book discussions in mainstream America, but isn't there an opportunity for academic libraries to become places for community-building reading opportunities on college campuses as well? This idea of reading-beyond-textbooks and discovering the sense of community that comes from discussing a book gets at the very essence of a liberal arts education. In some ways, college students are primed for this type of experience because of assigned summer reading lists throughout their high school years. Are academic librarians missing an obvious opportunity to collaborate with their campus colleagues to promote life-long reading literacy among college students?

Imagine this scenario: two students, one a biology major and the other an education major, in the hallway of a residence hall deeply engaged in a discussion about a book they have both read. Because of an increasingly popular movement on some campuses, this scenario really happens for many college students. Colleges and universities around the country are encouraging students to read beyond classroom textbooks by having entering first year students, or all students, read one book in common, regardless of their major. The names of these programs vary: Common Read, Core Book, Summer Read, One Book, etc. These programs typically are housed in either the provosts' office, or in the Student Affairs division. Librarians may or may not be invited to the table when it comes time for book selection and event planning.

Why does it make sense for librarians to get involved with Common Reading Experiences (CRE) or even take a lead role in developing one? The readers' advisory

expertise seems most apparent. If a librarian hasn't read it, he/she knows how to find credible reviews quickly. If committee members are at a loss for what to read, a librarian knows which tools to use to generate reading suggestions. The reference desk forces librarians to dabble in many different disciplines. Surprisingly, when faculty members and student affairs professionals from different areas come together, for some, it has been a long time since they have allowed themselves the luxury of reading outside of their disciplines or areas of professional expertise, thus they don't know where to begin. Librarians have much to contribute in this process.

Because of the detail-oriented processes and work that takes place in libraries, librarians tend to have experience in problem solving and project management. Librarians also tend to have experience with working by committee. We often control materials budgets, and so are in a good position to help purchase resources in support of student research around the issues in the selected book. Most importantly, participating in campus-wide initiatives works to raise the visibility of libraries and librarians on campus, and holding some of the book-related events in the library helps to reinforce the notion of "library as place."

#### Review of the Literature

Limited research exists to date on campus reading programs. We identified only one article that specifically related to academic libraries and CRE. Rodney (2004) detailed her library's experience at a small liberal arts university with their One Book, One Community program. The remaining articles we identified related to CRE did not make mention of the library. Straus and Daley (2002) provided a very useful step-by-step guide about how to build a Common Book program but no mention was made of the

library. Blau (1990) advocated for such a program as a vehicle to strengthen a Writing-Across the-Curriculum program at her institution. Gracie (1997) provided a case study of Miami University's Summer Reading Program but, once again, the library was never mentioned.

While there appears to be few articles in the scholarly literature related to CRE in higher education, there is some evidence to suggest the mounting enthusiasm for such programs at the college level. *The National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition* hosts a discussion list and has compiled a list of "institutions reporting First Year Summer Reading Programs" along with a list of book titles used in such programs.<sup>1</sup> Appalachian State University also has an active CRE discussion list.<sup>2</sup>

Initiated by the Washington Center for the Book in 1998, the Seattle Public Library began the first One Community, One Book project. Since then, similar programs have sprung up around the nation state-by-state. A detailed list of these programs is provided by the Library of Congress Center for the Book.<sup>3</sup> Though typically sponsored by public libraries, there are several joint efforts among colleges and communities such as the Same Book, Same Time program with Calhoun Community College and Wheeler Basin Regional Library in Alabama. In her Masters thesis, Hays (2004) examined public libraries' One Book programs with a web presence by using the Library of Congress Center for the Book web site. She emphasized the importance of developing a solid web presence as a means of promoting a reading selection to a community.

An additional resource worth noting, though public library focused, is the American Library Association's One Book, One Community resource CD which includes

planning guidance, reproducible digital art, budget assistance, and marketing materials.<sup>4</sup> For advice on effectively leading book discussions, library professionals would benefit from reading Balcom's (1992) work.

Although limited research exists about common reading programs, one could make the argument that CRE are beneficial because of the potential to increase the "engagement" of students in their college experiences. According to Kuh et al (2005) student engagement

...has two key components that contribute to student success. The first is that amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other activities that lead to the experiences and outcomes that constitute student success. The second is the ways the institution allocates resources and organizes learning opportunities and services to induce students to participate in and benefit from such activities.

(p. 9)

Properly developed CRE should contribute to student success, especially if appropriate institutional resources are committed to them. To the extent that experiences (such as a CRE) cause greater student effort and student engagement, according to Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), gains should be seen in students' knowledge acquisition and according to Kuh et al (2005), critical thinking, communication, and problem solving should also be developed.

CRE also often anchor, or are a part of, college orientations. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) have shown, no matter what their duration, student orientations have a positive indirect effect on student persistence. CRE also have potential to bring disparate disciplines and college departments together in ways that extend student learning and

engagement beyond the classroom. It could be argued that librarians are one group of natural “boundary spanners” Kuh et al (1984) speak of when they say:

Institutions with an ethos of learning are blessed with more than a few boundary spanners, people who move among the functional silos, articulating the institutions mission and vision with language that acknowledges and respects both classroom and out-of-class learning. To establish an ethos of learning, a multiple-year action plan is needed that brings together faculty members, student affairs staff, and academic administrators in collaborative, mutually supportive efforts. The goal is to extend the influence of academic programs beyond the boundaries of the classrooms, laboratories, studios, and faculty offices into residences, student organizations, and institutional facilities. (p. 64)

### Case Studies

In spring 2004 one of the authors posted the following message to ILI-L, a popular academic library instruction listserv:

Some colleges and universities have “summer reading programs” or a “common reading experience” for incoming first year students or sometimes for the entire campus community. Students typically read a particular book over the summer then, quite often, the author is invited to campus to interact with students during convocation activities. If a similar reading experience exists on your campus, are librarians involved in the selection and/or planning process?

Surprisingly, of the four responses received, only three librarians reported *significant* library involvement with this type of campus initiative. We posted the same



message again in fall 2005 and received responses from several more librarians indicating that their institution has a CRE and that the library is included in the program planning, book discussion, and / or selection process. As a result of a similar list serve query, Barbara Fister at Gustavus Adolphus College has compiled a lengthy list of links to universities that have this type of reading experience.<sup>5</sup> The degree to which the library or librarians are involved varies from not at all to actually having the common read housed in the library.

Making queries to list serves is, admittedly, a limited way to determine the extent to which librarians are involved with CRE around the country, but it is not our intent to provide such a comprehensive list. It does, however suggest the growing number of common reading programs. What follows are brief case studies in which we detail leadership roles taken by academic librarians to start or significantly contribute to college reading programs at two community colleges and two four-year institutions.

#### *Greenfield Community College*

Greenfield Community College (GCC) serves the most rural part of Massachusetts. Its student body is drawn from western Massachusetts, southern Vermont and New Hampshire. Approximately 3100 students enroll in credit courses in a calendar year in 40 associate degree programs and 15 certificate programs.

The success of municipalities in strengthening community spirit through reading a single book inspired the GCC Library to lay the groundwork on this campus for a program named Reading-Across-the-College.<sup>6</sup> The library staff wished to promote the role of the library and its resources in the college community. A member of the library staff and the library director wrote a proposal that received support from the President

and the Deans. Developing the sense of community at this commuter campus has been a component of the college's mission.

The library staff invited participants to join the book committee. Initially the committee was composed of library staff, faculty, and professional staff who were familiar with book discussion groups or similar programs on other campuses. Committee members represented the English, Education, Criminal Justice and History departments, the Peer Tutoring Center and the GCC Library. No students have yet participated on the committee. The tasks at hand were to select the book and to develop the related programs and campus-wide book discussion schedules. The library staff added a link on the Library's web page, offering curriculum suggestions and related websites available to faculty, students, staff and community members. The first year of the Reading-Across-the-College program followed directly after the events of September 11, 2001. By coincidence, the books selected and the related campus programs have contained themes relevant to those events.

The book committee uses the following criteria for selection: Is the theme related to recent events?; Does the author provide a balanced perspective?; Does the author live in the New York/ New England region to facilitate campus visit?; and, is the book content approachable from many subject areas?

Each year the book committee announces the book selection by the middle of the semester prior to the target semester. The committee's goal is to provide time for faculty to become familiar with the work and to determine ways to incorporate the selection in their syllabi. A second goal is to provide a variety of points of access to the book for students who often have financial constraints. The GCC Foundation has provided

financial support for the purchase of copies that would be available from the library for the semester. Additional copies were available in the college store at a discounted price, also funded by the foundation. Faculty who incorporated the selection in their class assignments ordered sets of copies for their students. Library staff was instrumental in making all of these arrangements.

The Reading-Across-the-College website on the GCC Library web page has included the schedule of events for the semester, book reviews, transcripts of interviews with the author, information on related films selected for campus events, the schedule of book discussions hosted by members of the book committee, and speaker schedules. The authors have been invited to speak on campus and to interact with students in one or two classrooms.<sup>7</sup>

One of the Library's roles has been to prepare curriculum suggestions. These were developed to encourage faculty to add the chosen text to syllabi. The invitation to faculty to participate in Reading-Across-the-College incorporated a range of participation levels. Faculty could choose to use the entire book during the course of the semester, or use a selection from the book. Even if the chosen book was not a basic text for a course, faculty could encourage student participation in Reading-Across-the-College programs and discussions for additional course credit. During the first year, three instructors incorporated the book into their curricula, and individual students, faculty and staff participated in the campus-wide discussion groups on their own time. By the third year of the program, eight faculty members incorporated the selection into their courses; which ranged from economics to nursing, from early childhood education to criminal justice. These resources were promoted and made available through the library's web

page. Committee members hosted book discussions in various common spaces in the library and elsewhere on campus in order to include as many students, faculty, and staff, as possible.

The challenge for the book committee has been to plan more than a year ahead to increase the success rate in bringing the author to campus. In one year out of the three, the author visited classes and gave a college-wide lecture. That success was a motivating factor in the growth of college participation during the following year. The book committee has seriously considered adding the availability of the author to its selection criteria.

Funding for these programs has come from campus committees and programs. The library has provided support for access to the book each year by purchasing copies for students to check out for the semester. The college store has provided copies for purchase at a discounted price, the discount funded through support from the GCC Foundation. Another campus committee that supported the Reading-Across-the-College program has absorbed speaker honoraria. The campus participation has grown because of the continuity of purpose and the development of creative ideas for inclusion in courses across the curriculum.

At the end of the semester, the library sent out an assessment questionnaire, which asked the participating faculty for their feedback: What was successful for you in your classroom? What would be helpful in future Reading programs? Additional comments? The feedback has been positive and the suggestions helpful for future events.

The original idea for initiating the Reading-Across-the-College program was to promote the library and its resources in the college community. The library staff

contributed the energy and the hours toward organizing the schedule, selecting the events, and hosting the discussions. The faculty and staff participated in the selection of the book each year, and in hosting book discussions in their classrooms and for the college community. Their creativity in building ways to incorporate the book selection in their classrooms energized the continued effort. The program has been successful in highlighting the library and its resources as a partner in future collaborations.

### *Spokane Falls Community College*

Spokane Falls Community College is part of a district that serves students in six counties in northeastern Washington state. Approximately 5,900 students attend Spokane Falls each quarter, primarily in Associate of Arts transfer programs, as well as professional/technical programs.

The Core Book Group (CBG) at Spokane Falls Community College originated as an offshoot of the Outcomes Assessment group in 1994.<sup>8</sup> The Outcomes Assessment group wanted a big project that would energize and involve as many faculty as possible around the new outcomes assessment initiative on campus. An invitation was sent out to all faculty to join the new group, and faculty from many of the departments, including the library joined.

The CBG is an ad hoc committee so any interested faculty member can participate.<sup>9</sup> Faculty meet early spring quarter to select a short list of books to consider for the following year. Over the next few weeks they read the books and reviews, and by the end of spring quarter they meet again to make their choice for the following fall. The Core Book Selection Criteria are; applicability to various disciplines, readability, length, universality, timeliness, and literary, historical and cultural merit.

Librarians have not only been part of the selection of the book, but they have supported this group's mission in other ways. They have found and distributed reviews of the short-listed titles, purchased materials in support of student research, created bibliographies and web pages of information related to the books' themes, created reserves and electronic reserves of books and journal articles, and helped faculty with research related to their individual interest in the books.<sup>10</sup> They have also been panel participants in debates, forums, and Chautauquas.

Many faculty choose to include the Core Book in their syllabus for the new year, either as a required text or as one option on a reading list. Because faculty from many departments are part of the selection process, and because of the high visibility of many of the events that surround the core book, participation, although voluntary, is good. The increase in reading across the curriculum has also increased the number of library instruction sessions taught to students. The Core Book Project has been successful to a great degree in raising the profile of the college's four college-wide "Abilities" (Communications, World View, Responsibility, and Analysis, Problem Solving & Information Literacy). The themes of the books often address the World View's outcomes of understanding and appreciating diversity, and Responsibility's outcomes of ethics and personal ownership of actions. And of particular importance to librarians, the Core Book Project has encouraged faculty from many disciplines to include information literacy related assignments into their classes, and to assess for students learning of these skills.<sup>11</sup>

Being an ad hoc committee, the CBG has no funding of its own, but this hasn't stopped it from flourishing. Many of the CBG's members also sit on other committees

(such as the campus Outcomes Assessment Committee), and they support the group not only with funds, but also with their expertise. CBG members also advise many of the student organizations on campus and regularly partner with them, or the Student Senate, to fund events related to the core book's themes.<sup>12</sup> Engaging student groups, the Student Activities Board, and the Student Senate has helped fund the events related to the Core Book, but it has also helped create student interest and buy-in as well.

In 2001 the CBG became integrated into a new movement on campus – the Campus-Wide Theme. The Theme Committee is comprised of representatives from the Student Senate, Student Funded Programs, and Student Activities as well as faculty from many disciplines and a librarian. A theme is chosen for the year, such as “Human Rights”, or “Responsibility: Global, Civic, Personal”. After the theme is set, the Core Book Group meets and considers books with a message that resonates with this theme. Because the themes are broad and campus-wide participation is desired, on occasion, instead of one core book, two or three books have been chosen as “core readings”. The two groups working together have created a synergy that has cultivated even more energy and community events around reading, investigation, critical thinking and reflection.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Appalachian State University*

Appalachian State University is located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina. It is a public comprehensive university with an enrollment of approximately 14,000 students offering degree programs at the baccalaureate, masters, specialist, and doctoral levels.

The concept of Appalachian's Summer Reading Program (SRP) emerged from a faculty retreat in the spring of 1996. Senior administrators from student development and

enrollment services were also at this retreat. Attendees at the retreat were charged with enhancing the University's first year program in order to build a sense of community for the students. Growth at the university had been immense; during the years 1960 to 1995, Appalachian's student enrollment soared from approximately 2,600 to almost 12,500 in the fall of 1995. Two faculty members, Nancy Spann in General Studies and Jimmy Smith in the Math Department, came up with the idea of a SRP for first year students. They also envisioned the idea of discussion groups taking place as part of the students' first year orientation experience.

Spann and Smith, with the support of the university administration, selected representatives from the following areas to serve on the initial SRP committee: the library, each college, student development, the news bureau, and the bookstore. The program was launched in 1997 with Julia Alvarez's book, *In the Time of the Butterflies*, a novel based on the true story of the Mirabel sisters who were martyred under the Dominican Republic's Trujillo dictatorship in 1960. Over the summer, books were given to each incoming first year student during Phase One Orientation (paid for by orientation fees). Discussion groups led by university faculty and staff, were held during the Phase Two Orientation (an orientation led by the Center for Student Involvement and Leadership and devoted entirely to introducing student services on campus). The highlight of the initial program was having the author, along with the surviving sister from the book, come to speak at convocation. With such a strong beginning, a tradition was launched, and the summer reading program blossomed to become a perennial favorite for members of the Appalachian community.<sup>14</sup> Every year, Appalachian has been



fortunate to have either the author or main character of the book as the featured speaker for convocation.

Librarians have been deeply involved with the SRP since its inception. As members of the SRP Committee, librarians are involved in selecting the books, developing printed materials, and training discussion group leaders. Usually two librarians serve on this committee and they keep the library informed about SRP news.

After book selections are made, the reference team forms a task force to develop a summer reading program web page. This list of resources is heavily used by professors and students in their courses.

Each year, the Library Display Committee offers a display during convocation week based on a theme of the book. One outstanding example of this was in 2002 when Tim O'Brien came to speak about his book, *The Things They Carried*. For that display, the University Librarian sent out an email to the university faculty and staff inviting members of the Appalachian community to lend items that were actually carried during the Vietnam War. The result was a very powerful display that gave tangible evidence to the reality of that war.

During Phase Two Orientation that takes place just before the fall semester begins, Library faculty and staff (along with campus-wide volunteers) serve as small-group discussion leaders. To prepare for this discussion, volunteer leaders attend a one-hour training session led by members of the SRP Committee. In the training, teaching tips and handouts are offered that facilitate group participation among the students. Evaluation forms are included with the packet of information given to the discussion

leaders. During convocation week, small group discussion leaders are invited to attend an appreciation luncheon or breakfast with the convocation speaker.

In 2001, Appalachian expanded its SRP to include all of Watauga County. The public library, community college, and high school joined the University in the promotion of the book. Based on the Seattle model, the slogan became “If All of Watauga Read the Same Book.” During the week of convocation, events are held throughout the county related to the Summer Reading book.

Funding for the Program comes from a variety of sources. Students are charged the full price for the book as part of their orientation fee. The bookstore buys the book at a discount and they use the profit to purchase copies of the book and support materials for the small-group discussion leaders. Watauga County Public Library’s Friends of the Library organization pays for brochures and posters. The convocation speaker is paid by the University.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Bowling Green State University*

Initiated as a pilot in 2001 with 450 participating students, the Common Reading Experience at Bowling Green State University (BGSU), a mid-sized, doctoral granting institution, has since grown to include the entire entering class of approximately 3800 students. Though originally intended as a program for first-year students, the CRE selection is catching on with upper-class students, local community members, and area high school students.

All first year students are expected to read the book over the summer in preparation for small group book discussions during a welcome orientation the week before fall semester begins. Discussions are lead by teams of faculty and peer

facilitators. Some first year programs elect to integrate the CRE into the fall semester curriculum. For example, the common reading selection is typically the primary book required of students enrolled in BGSU's *University Success* course. Several sections of the English composition course also integrate the CRE into the semester-long curriculum.

The CRE at BGSU came about at a grass roots level. BGSU has a First-Year Experience (FYE) Librarian whose responsibility is to focus on first-year student initiatives. As a result of this position, professional relationships among the Library, the First-Year Experience office on campus, and many other first-year initiatives on campus have been fostered. Though the committee has been chaired by the FYE Librarian since its inception, the committee consists of faculty, administrators, staff and students from a variety of areas on campus including several of the academic departments, the bookstore, academic advising, residence life, alumni affairs, multicultural initiatives, the learning communities, and the FYE office. Until recently, the committee has not been endorsed or housed by any one area or department. The most defining factor for the CRE committee is that all members are passionately committed to fostering in our students the sense of reading for purposes of pleasure and community building.

In addition to historically not being rooted in any one area, the committee has never had a budget. Committee representatives have graciously contributed funds for the project from their respective budgets or by donor gifts. In an effort to formalize the program, the University Libraries has now become the permanent home to the Common Reading Experience initiative.

For the first few years, the committee began reviewing and reading books in December with a deadline of March to make their decision. Currently, the committee is beginning the reading and reviewing process a year in advance with the hope that a decision will be made by December. This enables the committee to get the word out to the community and begin program planning during spring semester rather than over the summer months.

The objectives of the CRE at BGSU are to create a foundation for students to explore values and ethics; to raise awareness and tolerance of intergenerational and cultural likenesses and differences; to encourage students to read beyond textbooks; to promote academic discourse and critical thinking; to provide an introduction to the expectations of higher education; to create a sense of community by increasing student-to-student interaction and student-to-instructor interaction; and to integrate an academic and social experience into the campus community. In addition to establishing objectives early on, the committee has also established selection criteria. To be considered by the committee, a book must be readable and engaging, interdisciplinary, thematically rich, appealing to men and women, well written, and recently published. Programming potential is a consideration as well.

At the conclusion of fall semester each year, attempts are made to garner student and faculty feedback about the CRE. This has been an important component of the program because it helps the committee improve and modify the program for the following year. For example, one year a significant number of students revealed that they were not aware of the CRE program and came to school unprepared. As a result of this feedback, the committee focused on promoting the program better the following year. <sup>16</sup>

### Recommendations

There are several ways to get involved with an already established CRE program. Begin by identifying who is in charge of the selection committee and ask if you can join. If you get turned down, ask how you can support student learning related to the book selection. For example, is there a lecture series that the library hosts in which you could bring in a speaker that relates to a particular theme in the book? Perhaps the library could create a special display of items students could use in their research about the book selection. Would someone be willing to develop a relevant webliography of library sources and web sites? You may even want to send periodic book title suggestions to the chair of the committee. The point is, whatever you decide to put together in the library, make sure to communicate it to the chair of the planning and selection committee so they can in turn communicate the information.

Interested in taking a lead role in establishing a CRE on your campus? Here are some pointers:

#### *Establish a committee*

Do you want to take a top down approach or a grassroots approach? Several of these programs are run by the Provost's office or the First-Year Experience office. Some reside in student affairs and some have a home in the academic house. It is up to you to determine where the fit is for your campus situation. Maybe the library is a logical place. The committee should be broadly representative, including members from student affairs and academic affairs as well as student representatives. It is also important to have as many academic disciplines represented as possible (i.e. Science, English, Sociology, Business, Education, etc.) Include representatives from as many "allied" initiatives as

possible, in order to dovetail with their goals, and tap into funding sources. Examples of natural partners are groups involved in outcomes or assessment work, writing across the curriculum, or student groups looking to bring speakers to campus.

*Establish learning outcomes and selection criteria*

It is important to establish learning objectives. Each institution will have different learning outcomes for their CRE, and librarians will relate to them in diverse ways. Many CRE programs are associated with first-year orientations, others with the first-year experience, while others may be part of a senior capstone experience. The learning outcomes of any particular CRE should arise organically in the development of the CRE. The CRE program designers need to ask themselves the question, "Why are we having the students engage in this CRE?" From the answer to that question the outcomes will develop. Each CRE will have its particular set of outcomes, and hopefully these outcomes will be tied to other campus or department outcomes, and ultimately to the mission and goals of the university. Assessment methods will also vary for each institution's outcomes, but it is important to realize that the outcomes of a CRE should be assessed, and the impact on students and their learning measured.

It is also important for the committee to establish selection criteria to help guide the group. Your committee will never please everyone with the book they select. If the committee uses the objectives and selection criteria effectively when selecting a title, they will have backing if the book the committee selects is criticized. When establishing selection criteria, there are several elements to consider. Would the group be willing to consider plays, short stories, fiction, non-fiction? Is there a page limit or a date

restriction the group would like to set? Will the selection be contingent upon author availability and program opportunities? Does the author need to be from the region? As part of the selection process, require supporters of each book to demonstrate how other disciplines could use the themes in the suggested book. Consider the possibility of sometimes enlarging your mission to a campus-wide theme, and include two or three core readings if applicable.

#### *Establish a timeline*

If securing the author for a visit is desired, planning needs to take place at least a year in advance. For example, one approach may be: (a) fall term—make selection and secure author visit for following fall; (b) spring term—get the word out on campus, and; (c) summer term—training sessions and/or book discussions with faculty.

#### *Create a web site*

A web site is crucial to the success of a reading program. A CRE web site can: (a) document the history of the reading program; (b) publicly acknowledge selection/planning committee; (c) provide a statement of purpose for overall reading program; (d) provide a statement of purpose for selected read; (e) include a list of sponsors; (f) announce events related to the book; (g) offer contact information; (h) link to sources and methods of research related to the issues and themes of the books, as well as to bibliographies and webliographies of relevant sources.

#### *Ways to approach this:*

There are several ways to approach the establishment of a reading program. One way is to approach the provost for endorsement and support support. This may be seen as a top down approach, but there may also be an opportunity for a budget. Another

approach is to call a meeting of interested parties and begin at a grass roots level, perhaps with a pilot. Once the committee is established, the responsibility could become shared and each year a different department or college could take a turn selecting, planning, and implementing the CRE.

### Conclusion

Librarians and libraries regularly contribute to student learning both in and out of the classroom and to campus community building. Opportunities exist for librarians to more directly connect the library with student learning by significantly contributing to or even initiating a Common Reading Experience. Organized events and programs related to the themes of a CRE position the library to draw large crowds and increase the awareness of campus administrators' and students that the library is more than a warehouse of collections. Academic libraries are already seen as neutral and interdisciplinary places on college campuses. Encouraging and sponsoring events around Common Reading Experiences are natural extensions of our centrality to the university. Not only do such events build community among students, they also build bridges from the library to the rest of the university.



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## Footnotes

1. See the National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transitions website at <http://www.sc.edu/fye/resources/fyr/>.
2. Appalachian State University provides a list of several institutions hosting campus/community reading programs and provides details about subscribing to a Summer Reading listserv at <http://www.fpext.appstate.edu/gstudies/srp/programs.htm>.
3. See the The Center for the Book hosted by the Library of Congress at <http://www.loc.gov/cfbook/one-book.html>.
4. Go to the American Library Associations eStore at <http://www.alastore.ala.org/> and search for “One Book One Community Resource Disc.”
5. Barbara Fister’s “One Book, One College: Common Reading Programs” website is at <http://homepages.gac.edu/~fister/onebook.html> .
6. An overview of the Reading-Across-the-College program at GCC is available at <http://www.gcc.mass.edu/library/Read/Across.html>.
7. For an example of program events related to the 2004 reading program at GCC, go to [http://www.gcc.mass.edu/info/press/2004\\_0212book.html](http://www.gcc.mass.edu/info/press/2004_0212book.html).
8. See the Spokane Falls Community College Outcomes Assessment Committee web page at <http://www.sfcc.spokane.cc.wa.us/College/Outcomes/default.asp?page=Home>.
9. See the SFCC Core Book page at <http://www.sfcc.spokane.cc.wa.us/College/Theme/default.asp?page=CoreBook>.
10. See the librarian-created Core Book web pages at <http://library.spokanefalls.edu/EventResources.stm>.

11. See the SFCC Analysis, Problem Solving and information Literacy ability and related student learning outcomes at <http://www.sfcc.spokane.cc.wa.us/College/Outcomes/default.asp?menu=1&page=OutComeSolve>.
12. An example is in 2002 when *The Smell of Apples* was the core book. The author's visit was funded from a variety of sources, and he spoke at a number of scheduled events including, a faculty dinner, lectures in writing and literature classes, a campus reading, a meeting with the Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Trans- Gendered student group, as well as a campus reception.
13. See the College-Wide Theme web page at <http://www.sfcc.spokane.cc.wa.us/College/Theme/Default.asp>.
14. Other books that have been used through the years include: *Night*, by Elie Wiesel (1998); *Oral History*, by Lee Smith (1999); *And the Waters Turned to Blood*, by Rodney Barker (2000); *A Lesson Before Dying*, by Ernest Gaines (2001); *The Things They Carried*, by Tim O'Brien (2002); *Nickel and Dimed*, by Barbara Ehrenreich (2003); *A Hope in the Unseen: an American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League*, by Ron Suskind (2004); and *Iron and Silk*, by Mark Salzman (2005).
15. For more information about Appalachian State University's Summer Reading Program, go to their site at <http://www.summerreading.appstate.edu/>.
16. For additional information about Bowling Green State University's Common Reading Experience, go to <http://www.bgsu.edu/colleges/library/infosrv/cre/>.