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INFO 254: Information Literacy and Learning
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Instruction Observation Report: Shelf-filling strategies for K-12 public and school libraries

Basic information

Library
Indiana State Library

Librarian's name
The session instructor was Laura Jones, the Northwest Regional Coordinator for the Indiana State Library. The host of this session was Christa Porter, a member of the Nebraska Library Commission. She only spoke at the very beginning to introduce Laura and at the end to share additional information about Nebraska Library Commission webinars.

Date and time of instruction session:
Session recorded on March 17, 2021 (time not stated). Session uploaded to Youtube on March 18th, 2021.

Content of instruction session:
This session is titled "Ways to fill your shelves without draining your budget." The title suits the session. The main topic is free and available opportunities to win books for K-12 readers, whether in a library, classroom or house. Laura covers opportunities to get free books that exist currently but are hard to find, including: giveaways, contests, and book review opportunities. When explaining each opportunity, Laura explains how to find these opportunities, how to act on them, and what kind of results a librarian can expect from them.

Audience for session:
Since this session was held virtually, audience members in attendance could not see each other, and there is no recorded audience count. However, Laura mentions that many groups stand to benefit from this content, including librarians, parents, teachers and readers. There was one live person who was seen in attendance: Christa Porter, the session host and Nebraska Library Commission member. She acted as the live audience and interacted with Laura.

Other details:
This session is available for the general public to view. This session was hosted virtually on the Nebraska Library Commission website, and was later uploaded to Youtube.

Pre-planning meeting with the librarian
I was not able to meet with this librarian prior to the webinar, but during the session she referenced her own preparation and I compiled a list of notes about her preparation.

Librarian's objectives for session:
Laura's objectives were to first share resources and opportunities for other librarians to explore and potentially win free books. Her second goal was to teach librarians and other viewers introductory book review writing skills and social media tips so that librarians can become connected with the larger book exchange community around them.

Librarian's preparation for the session:
Laura referred to previous instances where she's given the same session, showing that this isn't the first time that she has taught this material. Although she has extensive experience with the material and with leading a library session, the overall organization would have been improved with more preparation.

Laura Jones prepared for this session by organizing materials for viewers to keep handy while watching. This way, viewers did not have to take notes to retain the information she covered. I thought this was clever and thoughtful.

Instruction session
Details about physical space:
This session was a split-screen video. On one side, which was a narrow column, the viewer could see Laura Jones and Christa Porter on video. On the other side, which was much larger, the viewer could watch Laura's presentation slides. Laura included links, pictures and a QR code into the presentation slides with which viewers could interact. Live viewers also had a question form to submit if needed.

Details about librarian's manner:
This librarian was a casual session leader, which suited her topic and content. Her content was informative, and Laura always stayed professional, yet in this session she was more conversational than initially expected. She spoke with a similar tone that someone would use when speaking with a colleague or peer. This makes sense since other librarians are a part of her target audience. Upon reflection, Laura's relaxed manner complemented the overwhelming number of resources she shared. By staying positive, upbeat and conversational, it was easy to connect with her content. The only element that would benefit from formality is the overall organization. This session would benefit from more formal organization.

When students had questions, Christa would interrupt Laura to ask the question, and often would interject during Laura's answer to add her own thoughts. Laura handled this well by respecting Christa's points and promptly continuing the session.

Details about students' manner:
Students watched silently and submitted questions to the session host, who shared the questions with Laura. It is difficult to say any more about students' manner, since viewers could only see the session hosts and not one another.

Explanation of instructional events
Laura used a powerpoint presentation throughout this session. She first shared her website, blog, Goodreads account and Bookstagram account, all of which listed and discussed the opportunities she went on to explain throughout the session. She explained her own position first and how she became an expert on this topic. Laura stated that she wanted viewers to focus on listening, and to not feel pressure to take notes.

Before going through each method to get free books, she first explains how someone can get connected online, which is necessary to find these free book opportunities. Laura explains the importance of having a social media presence and lists important people to follow who are similarly involved in the book world as writers, illustrators, publishers, companies, websites, editors and librarians.

Once Laura explains the community in which free books are circulated, Laura discusses the different ways that someone can get a free book. Laura organizes her sets of opportunities from least to most effort:
- Book giveaways
- Book surveys
- Book reviews
- Book swaps
- Serving on a book-related committee
- Accessing pre-published books, digital copies, and audiobooks

The first opportunities she covers are giveaways where a person just has to sign up to become eligible for a prize. The second group of opportunities consists of sites which host giveaways for those who complete a book survey. The third group consists of sites and individual authors and publishers who are looking for book reviews and will exchange a free book for a book review. The fourth opportunity consists of book swapping platforms that connect users that want books with other users that have those books. It is a free book exchange system. The fifth opportunity is to join a committee dedicated to reading and book circulation projects, because they are able to obtain free books that aren't all distributed. This list of opportunities covers the first half of the session.

Throughout her explanation of these five opportunities, Laura provides her insider's perspective, which is invaluable to the viewer. Laura discusses which sites to avoid, which she prefers to use

and why, which newsletters and platforms are informative and worth subscribing to, and which sites are more popular and widely used. She discusses what can make surveys and book reviews tricky and how to overcome potential obstacles to writing them. Other useful information includes how frequently different sites offer giveaways and what a typical giveaway prize looks like.

In the second half of the session, Laura explains other benefits of connecting with this book circulation community and teaches the skills that benefit those who want to be part of this community. For librarians, watching and interacting with authors, publishers, companies and online platforms leads to increased communication and awareness with their library institution. Laura discusses easy to become confident at blogging and sharing information on social media. She shares blog and social media platforms that viewers can use to create content. Other benefits are for the librarian themselves. Not only can people write reviews in exchange for books, they can get paid to publish reviews in magazines, journals and websites.

Student attention and engagement details:
Viewers (consisting of students, librarians and teachers) asked a couple of questions during the session but the session was not focused on active viewer engagement. Laura Jones led a lecture-style session where viewers were expected to listen during the hour, and ask questions at the end. Because viewers were not visible to each other but only to the session hosts, it is difficult to tell how attentive and engaged they were.

AASL standards or ACRL frames that you noticed:
This session suits the AASL standards and ACRL frames well because it is centered around participation within a community. Because this session focuses on K-12 books, it better fits the AASL frames than the ACRL standards. The AASL shared foundations serve as a map by which members of this community interact.

Laura Jones's teaching points follow the four AASL domains. By showing viewers how they can create social media and blog content, and share this information within the book exchange community, viewers learn how their learning process can become something meaningful to others. Additionally, viewers are taught how to create their own content to share in exchange for books. In the process of creating book reviews, surveys and posts to reach out to book-sharing groups, viewers are sharing new content with others. Laura Jones also encourages young viewers in K-12 institutions to try to win books by writing reviews and completing surveys as well. By pursuing opportunities like this, children and teens see how they can benefit by exploring and creating content. This is a great way to help children and teens gain information literacy. This session encourages collaboration among platforms, the authors and publishers who want to share books, and the readers and librarians wanting to earn books.

Over the course of this session, viewers are taught each shared AASL foundation: first, how and where to ask for books, then what platforms to engage with, which opportunities to explore, next how to organize these opportunities into sustainable patterns, then how to work together with publishers and authors who want to give books away, and finally how to include their own institution into this larger community by creating content.

Instructional strategies employed:
Because this session included a wide range of viewers, and was more informative than actively engaging, it was unclear which instructional strategies were employed. Laura Jones spoke for the full hour without engaging with the viewers directly. I would call this instructional strategy the "lecture."

Another instructional strategy I observed was that Laura was teaching by example. She was teaching viewers to follow in her footsteps and was able to share her hard work with us. This instructional strategy was likely unintentional but still important. In order to teach information literacy sessions, it is important to have information literacy or to at least be familiar with what information literacy looks like.

<u>Post-teaching meeting with the librarian (if this occurred)</u>
This did not occur. I was not able to meet with the librarian after the session ended.

<u>Reflection</u>
Laura Jones led a great session on methods a person can use to connect with the book exchange community and win free materials. In her session, I observed three noteworthy practices: sharing information and resources upfront, speaking without direct engagement with viewers, and choosing a topic of which she is an active participant. These three practices have informed my own teaching.

First, Laura shares content and resources upfront with her audience. She makes clear in the beginning that viewers don't need to worry about note taking unless they want to, since she is more than willing to send them a copy of the presentation she covers. This tactic is important because it allows the viewer to focus on more than rote memorization. Without the pressure of potentially missing vital information, viewers can drum up questions, visit the sites she discusses and stay present. This tactic is supported by Niemic & Ryan (2009), who argue that people have a drive toward curiosity that can motivate them to continue learning (p. 133). By sharing additional resources for users to pursue at their leisure, Laura puts self-determination theory to practice. The potential to explore the opportunities they're interested in gives viewers a reason to listen to Laura's session, and a reason to retain the information she covers after the session is over. I plan to use this in my own teaching. I will ensure my students see the informational session as one step in an exciting learning journey they should be curious to pursue.

Second, Laura speakers continuously without engaging her viewers. This is not a tactic I plan to employ in my own teaching. There should be a clear difference between live webinars and recorded ones. Live webinars should provide viewers the opportunity to actively engage with the session host at appropriate times. This session did offer viewers the chance to submit questions for Laura to answer, and did have a questions section at the end, but both of these engagement methods I feel are not engaging enough and aren't frequent enough. Ruffini (2012) discusses how important it is have student-centered sessions, and this was not centered around the student (2012).

Third, in teaching this session, Laura relied on her insider's perspective founded upon her years of active experience. This is where Laura's session shines–she provides important insight for viewers that makes the process of earning free books that much easier for the beginner. Additionally, she displays her own information literacy through sharing her insider's perspective, which allows her to teach by example. By listening and watching Laura, viewers can visualize their own progress and potential. Grassian discusses "lifelong learning," which is a useful way to consider sharing experience (2017, p. 234). While teaching information literacy skills to a wide-ranging group is "daunting" as Grassian states, Laura narrows her teaching scope into something manageable by giving this wide-ranging group her own experience as an example to learn from (2017, p. 235). Laura's experience is clear from the amount of content she chooses to share as well as the way she organizes her session. She covers whether a particular book-earning opportunity is easy or hard, if it is likely to result in a prize or not, how many books could be won through the opportunity, and how the book-donors interact with those who want free books. In my own teaching, I will prioritize the insider's perspective as Laura has here. This way, I can teach by example. This doesn't mean that I have to be an expert in every teaching subject, but that I should actively try each practice or tactic I teach.

Watching Laura Jones's session was a great experience. In the process of finding, watching and analyzing her teaching session, I learned how large the virtual webinar community is. I also saw how different information literacy standards can be applied to a variety of viewers–youth, teens, teachers, librarians and general adults. Laura's engaging and informative session is a great example of teaching information literacy.

References

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