

CALENDAR PROMOTES READING AND THE RURAL LIBRARY

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As a major Public Relations effort this past fall, our library system produced the Corn Belt Library System Family Calendar 1983. Its purpose is not only to promote family reading and to attract more patrons into the library on a regular basis, but also to provide member libraries, most of them small and rural, with a twelve-month set of ideas and resources for programs, displays, story hours and the like.

To make our calendar different from the large number of others available, we decided to include dates of community and cultural events as well as dates of library activities. Each library in the System received a sheet early in September asking for next year's dates for both library and community happenings and celebrations. Although some had trouble getting firm dates a year in advance (my absolute deadline for collecting materials was October 15), most towns have annual fairs, sales and activities and at least a 'ball-park' date like "the last weekend in September" could be provided. Music, art and drama departments of our two universities were also contacted as were art associations, drama groups and other non-profit organizations in the System's service area. The response was generally good and almost every library community is represented.

I used Chases' Calendar of Annual Events (with the editor's permission) to find dates for library or book related anniversaries or for other events

that might lead to display and program ideas. I also consulted Gale's Literary Calendar from several years ago (it is no longer printed annually) for famous authors' birthdays. We used about six authors each month, highlighting particularly Illinois authors and authors well known generally.

To illustrate the calendar, we used pictures of children in library situations. One 5" X 7" photograph was used for each month and eleven libraries were represented. The cover photograph is of a little girl holding up a treasure chest that she had just discovered at a 'treasure hunt' story hour. We used the slogan, "Our greatest treasure is each other," to go along with the picture and the family theme.

To further encourage family reading, we selected a 'family read-together theme' for each month and included a brief bibliography of fiction and non-fiction books and their call numbers that families could enjoy together. We tried to tie the theme to the month somehow. For example January's theme was 'Fairytale and Fantasy' since a great many fairtale and fantasy authors are born during that month.

Information from the Illinois Bureau of Tourism was used throughout the calendar to suggest family trips and possible tours within and near the Corn Belt Library System service area. Tours of the Maple Sugar Plant in Funks Grove were scheduled by several libraries for spring. Zoos are included in May coinciding with the 'Animals' theme. The Lincoln home in Springfield and the David Davis mansion in Bloomington are suggested during August as examples of how 'Famous Families' lived.

On the final double page of the calendar, we included information about the System itself: interlibrary loan procedures, the variety of materials available to patrons and a list of member libraries where a patron's card is

good. On the bottom of the page we printed a coupon that patrons could fill in with ideas for themes, reading suggestions, other items they would like to see included in a calendar of this type and general impressions. We printed 4,000 calendars in the first run and sent them to member libraries to distribute free of charge to patrons.

∞ The response so far has been favorable. Hopefully the calendar really will encourage more parents to spend more time reading to their children and taking them to the library. Hopefully also, it will provide a continuous resource for libraries themselves. "Our greatest treasure is each other" is obviously true of the family unit, but it is also true of the larger interchange that takes place in and through the local public library.