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Continuing a love affair after a separation

Ways to promote books for World Book and Copyright Day

Perhaps for the first time since the founding of American libraries, most librarians were divorced from their physical collections as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although college and research libraries are negotiating various service models, including remote, hybrid, and online, librarians continue to serve their communities while access to physical spaces and materials is limited. While some suggest that libraries are better positioned to provide virtual services than ever before,¹ communities continue to ask for physical books.

Questions from professors and students alike pour in: When will the library fully reopen? Can I please pick up my holds? I desperately need access to one more book for my publication. These inquiries reinforce how dependent our community members are on physical books. Notably, the pandemic has brought to light for many of our constituents the realization that not all print books have an electronic (e-book) counterpart. There are simply some publications that are restricted to the print format, no matter how much we strive to provide e-access. Physical books remain a critical component of the research landscape across disciplines and, perhaps, this lack of access can serve as a teachable moment for post-pandemic conversations. Although the future is uncertain, librarians can look ahead to events such as World Book and Copyright Day to celebrate the value and significance of the book annually on April 23.

While COVID-19 restrictions may have renewed our communities' appreciation for physical books, Americans as a collective group have held books in high regard for generations.² For almost 150 years, ALA's membership has played an integral part in growing the positive reputation of books through literacy programs as well as preservation initiatives.³ Some even argue that Americans' love for and engagement with books has been the binding agent of our democracy.⁴

Americans aren't alone in seeing the significance of books. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has seen literacy and the preservation of books as essential to international peace. In fact, in 1995 UNESCO declared April 23 as World Book and Copyright Day (WBCD).⁵ Their declaration formalized their collective belief that:

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- books have historically been the strongest, most successful way to share and preserve knowledge;

- book days foster high regard for books as well as present ways to distribute them through programming, exhibits, and fairs; and

- advertising and advocating for books encourages and positively influences openness, especially among youth, on an international stage.

These tenets of WBCD embody our democratic values as librarians. World Book Day is celebrated on all continents and engages millions of people, and most of the events are held outside of the United States (United Nations).⁶

Background

Indiana University Libraries celebrated WBCD in the Education Library, a campus branch library housed in the School of Education (SoE). The branch supports the preparation of future teachers, administrators, school counselors, and school technologists by modeling best practices in literacy, teaching, and technology. We prioritized the promotion of WBCD in this campus library in 2018 and 2019 in hopes that our community would embrace the role that books play in a society's "understanding, tolerance, and dialogue."⁷ Ultimately, we hope that these future school professionals will adopt and adapt our programming for their school campuses. For the purposes of this article, we focus on successful outreach strategies that we implemented in 2018.

Strategy #1: Encouraging admiration for the

book as an artform.

WBCD was a strategic opportunity to emphasize the unbounded opportunity for creativity that the physical book format presents. Sarah Carter, art, architecture, and design librarian, featured the Wells Library's Artists' Books Collection, which includes more than 2,500 examples from around the globe, in formats and materials that are completely unexpected. Artists incorporated materials not traditionally used in bookmaking, as well as embraced unique, sculptural, or historic bookbinding techniques, which inspire awe. The exploration between content and visuals within artists' books often contributes to create a visually stunning artwork, which would not be possible in a commercially produced book. Overall, these works are highly engaging for viewers of all ages and provoke many questions for inquiry-driven experiences.

As a part of our WBCD programming, we gave future school professionals an opportunity to handle these unique pieces of art. Our team set up a viewing table in a common area to give users access to special collections. Attendees reacted with astonishment, wonder, and admiration when they encountered these works. This interaction allowed us to share with each visitor the history and techniques used by book artists, and provide a handout that explains how to locate other artists' books collections in the Midwest. We encourage you to think about unexpected resources your library may have that invoke a sense of wonder or surprise in your audience.



Handmade books. © IU Libraries.



Leanne Nay talking and designing with a community member, photographed by Ashley Hosbach.

environment for folks to share their favorite books or seek reading recommendations. This type of engagement happened organically through our embroidered picture book activity led by Leanne Nay, librarian and manager of the Wells Library Mini Makerspace.

We curated dust jackets from picture books that were no longer circulating and also printed public domain images from children's literature.⁸ Designed as

Librarians should work to provide opportunities for hands-on or up-close examination, which give users a sense of the inherent craftsmanship and artistry found in books.

Strategy #2: Creating conversations about books.

Whether it's book clubs or author events, librarians are well versed in talking about books.

WBCD is an excellent opportunity to experiment with new approaches for sparking conversation as a form of advocacy. Simple hands-on activities are one way to create a low-stakes

a drop-in event, we laid out supplies so that anyone who wandered by could participate. Attendees were encouraged to add simple

stitches to their selected covers or images using a sewing needle and embroidery thread. As attendees looked through the book covers, they shared memories about

familiar titles and asked questions about new ones. Once they started embroidering, participants and librarians formed social connections as individuals discussed why



Elise Calvi uses visuals to enhance participants engagement; photographed by Noel Photos, © IU Libraries.

they chose a particular book. This flexible structure, along with librarians jump-starting conversations about literacy experiences, encouraged people to hang out and talk with one another. A variety of paper crafts or sewing activities could be used in a similar way to create a casual and welcoming environment to celebrate books.

Strategy #3: Making preservation visible.

Sharing and preserving knowledge is a driving force behind a library's operations. With the rise in off-campus storage facilities, preservation of academic library materials sees national coverage and conversation.⁹ But most of our students are unintentionally excluded from this important component, and preservation experts rarely get the opportunity to interact with the community members who benefit from their expertise. WBCD gave us the unique opportunity to highlight their work and put them in direct

contact with our constituents. We enlisted the expertise of our Head of General Collections Conservation and Preservation Elise Calvi to teach others how to create writing journals based on centuries-old methods of bookbinding.

This workshop centered making and preservation as a dual conversation. Our attendees left with an appreciation for the tactile experience behind a book's creation and lifespan. Calvi's lesson tied the social connections of creation to the preservation process and encouraged our community to share their new skillset beyond

the university. This is a simple, low-cost activity to replicate at your institutions and offers an opportunity to collaborate across library departments. Although we held our workshop in the SoE, this activity would also be of interest across disciplines in the arts, humanities, and sciences.

Strategy #4: Demystifying author rights and open resources.

Librarians' approach to copyright education has changed a great deal since UNESCO began promoting WBCD. Historically we centered the publishers' rights in knowledge-sharing, and now copyright librarians also educate faculty on the preservation of their own rights as authors.¹⁰ Thus, we used WBCD as an opportunity to connect SoE faculty with the IU Libraries Head of Copyright Nazareth Pantaloni III. Although Pantaloni prepared a formal presentation on open access (OA), SoE faculty members came to his session with their book and journal con-

tracts seeking his personalized input and legal advice. Faculty wanted to know how to retain their rights to their books and journals for their individual classroom use. Consequently, Pantaloni shifted the structure of his WBCD session into one-on-one faculty consultations in order to meet the immediate interests and needs of faculty.

We learned that while WBCD may present opportunities to educate faculty about OA principles and Big Deal agreements, those were not topics that drew an engaged crowd. Rather, it was having an expert available for contract consultation



A participant uses technique to bind her writing journal, photographed by Noel Photos, © IU Libraries.

in or near their offices that was compelling to them. WBCD presented an opportunity for us to build trust and strengthen relationships with our faculty during their pre-publishing process, and we believe our future advocacy efforts for OA and alternative publishing agreements will be much more effective. If you have copyright expertise in areas such as image licensing, OA, or publisher agreements, consider hosting a copyright consultation open house wherever your faculty congregate.

Like many social institutions, libraries will continue to make difficult decisions about how to minimize risk to community members and employees during the ongoing pandemic. Therefore, the extent of our interactions with physical collections and library spaces must remain flexible.

We still believe that librarians can engage with collections virtually to spotlight the power of books to record and share knowledge—this is vital work to continue our community’s love affair with books. We have identified below a few WBCD outreach strategies, no matter your campus model.

Strategy #1: Encouraging admiration for the book as an artform

- In-person: We showcased our artists’ books collection in a highly trafficked area in front of the Education Library.
- Virtual: Post images/videos of rare books from your collection on social media in order to reach your audience. For example, consider the popular Bookstagram trend on Instagram.

Strategy #2: Creating conversations about books

- In-person: We set up an embroidery activity where participants engaged in conversations about books.
- Virtual: Consider hosting a “stitch and chat” book club online. Attendees can embroider book covers from their home

libraries or print images from the public domain.

Strategy #3: Making preservation visible

- In-person: We collaborated with our preservation department and offered a hands-on journal-making workshop.
- Virtual: Team up with preservation colleagues to create maker-inspired videos to enlighten your users’ about preserving library collections.
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Strategy #4: Demystifying author rights and open resources

- In-person: We encouraged our faculty to explore their author’s rights and discuss publishing needs.
- Virtual: As always, promote your colleagues’ expertise. Advertise virtual office hours with your resident copyright expert to faculty, staff, and students.

Our experience hosting WBCD in the Education Library has demonstrated that students and faculty are eager to engage with the power of the book form through multiple outreach activities. Access to information, regardless of format, is an essential right. Low investment, high-impact programming can serve as a scaffold to strengthen our community’s engagement in democratic life. Let’s mark our calendars, and plan to celebrate World Book and Copyright Day on April 23, 2021.

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Notes

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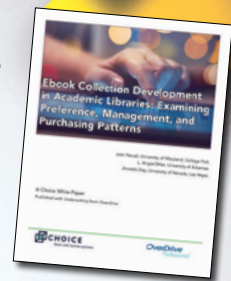
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