



Engaging the Bookend Generations: Library Activities

Libraries – known for being welcoming, supportive and full of all types of resources – can serve as an ideal setting for building intergenerational bridges. Take a look at these ways to create intergenerational (IG) programming in your library.

Book Club

Not surprisingly, libraries are full of books and book lovers! So what better way to foster intergenerational relationships and learning than running an intergenerational book club? Because books provide a wonderful way to explore meaningful themes, the discussions can be fruitful to both young and old. In Massachusetts, Arlington High School students meet up with participants from the local Council on Aging to discuss books such as *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker.

Bridges Programs

The Bridges Program Curricula Suite has something for everyone! Presently, we have a curriculum for early readers, elementary schoolers, middle schoolers – and the high school curriculum is on the way! If you'd like to learn more about a turnkey, off-the-shelf program for children and older adults, check out the descriptions of our curricula online: bridgestogether.org/programs/ Even better, watch Bridges: Our Smarts in action at a library! bridgestogether.org/news-2/videos/

Flat Stanley



Flat Stanley, a compact book written by Jeff Brown in 1964 about a boy who travels to California by being “flattened” and mailed in an envelope, has spawned a spinoff activity that thousands of elementary-aged children have participated in. In case Flat Stanley hasn't touched your life, here is how the project works: A child decorates his or her own “Flat Stanley” and sends it to a friend or family member to “live” for a defined period of time. Stanley then writes back about his time in a new place and hopefully provides a picture or two as well! FlatStanley.com has loads of ideas about how to use the project for children to connect with their grandparents, great-aunts and -uncles and for seniors to connect with their grandchildren or other special youngsters in their lives.

Handicraft Program

Older adults often comment that they want to see younger generations continue the craft traditions that they enjoy. From knitting to silk screening to whittling, handicrafts offer the opportunity for older adults to share their skills and hobbies to an eager group of learners: children! Likewise, children are learning fun hobbies such as origami and finger knitting that they can teach to adults. Libraries often house community rooms that groups can reserve, and voilà – you’ve got a handicraft studio!



Intergenerational Art Festival

Because libraries love to house rotating exhibits and collections of art work, why not display paintings and pieces that older adults and children have created side by side? Libraries can offer a one-time art session or an ongoing class where art lovers can meet and learn. Another option would be to create a collaborative art piece – such as a quilt – that participants can auction off for charity. An art exhibit opening for families of all ages would be a nice way to cap off this project.

Intergenerational Books Display in September

September is Intergenerational Month, and since there are some fantastic books with intergenerational themes, libraries can take advantage of this special month to draw patrons' attention to them! A few that spring to mind include *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco, *These Hands* by Margaret H. Mason and *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. However, we have a whole page on our website dedicated to book with IG themes: bridgestogether.org/resources/books/

Intergenerational Movies

Who doesn't love a good film? Utilize equipment and space at the library to plan a fun movie night followed by discussion questions. Some good movies for younger children with intergenerational themes include *UP* and *The Lorax*. In fact, we have created a Recipe for Intergenerational Success all about the movie *UP*: <http://www.bridgestogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/UP-Planning-an-IG-Movie-Night.pdf> You can check out Bridges Together's Movie Resource Page here: bridgestogether.org/resources/movies/

Project READ

One of Bridges Together's advisors, Dr. Ed Klugman, has been an integral part of developing Project READ, a literacy-based intergenerational program at Nauset Regional Middle School on Cape Cod. Created in conjunction with the Intergenerational Experience, local older adults sit in on middle school classes and read the short story *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson and then *The Giver* by Lois Lowry and *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley. The volunteers and students complete the same "homework" and review in small groups. It is a powerful experience for people of all ages to realize that they may share the same "favorite line" or character!

Story Hour for Grandparents/Grandfriends and Tots

Story times are nothing new for libraries, but consider hosting one for young children and a special older person in their lives. These story hours provide a great way for generations to interact through music, movement and books and allow these older adults a glimpse into what is a common activity for many toddlers and preschoolers. Additionally, it's a nice opportunity for older adults to network with and have time with their same-aged peers.

Teen Tech



Teens love their technology! So take advantage of that skill set and create an opportunity for them to teach older adults about their favorite apps and software. But no need to stop there: Have intergenerational groups create projects using digital storytelling tools (storycenter.org) or the StoryCorps (storycorps.org) app that allows people to record their own personal histories.

Story Walks

We know how librarians hate torn and tattered books! But what if a book is “torn” for a great intergenerational program? Take a picture book, cut each page out and then laminate them. Next, post these weather-proof pages around a determined walk and allow patrons to follow the path and read aloud as they walk. (Ideally, this happens outdoors, but depending on your facility, this could be an indoor activity too.) Can anything beat curling up on a comfy chair to read? Perhaps stepping into nature and reading with someone from a different generation can!