

2019 NASA @ My Library Project Report

NASA @ My Library Program Description:

The Montana State Library received a grant from the Space Science Institute for the Summer of 2019 to provide STEM/Space Science-themed kits to public libraries to help support the CSLP Summer Reading theme of Space: A Universe of Stories. Two STEM kits were given to MSL from SSI, one copy of Kit 1: Sun-Earth-Moon Connections, and two copies of Kit 2: Be a NASA Scientist. In partnership with the Museum of the Rockies, MSL created 55 copies of Kit 1: Sun-Earth-Moon Connections and distributed them to libraries across Montana.

Report Overview:

This report will discuss the following parts of the NaML program:

1. What activities MSL did under the NaML program
2. MSL Partnership with Museum of the Rockies to create copies of the NaML kits for public libraries
3. Challenges and Obstacles
4. Recommendations for MOR/MSL Partnership
5. Project Outcome Survey
6. Space Science Institute Librarian Survey

MSL NaML Program Overview:

The NaML program at the Montana State Library consisted of the following activities:

1. Purchasing materials in partnership with the Museum of the Rockies to create 55 copies of Kit 1 to give out to Montana public libraries
2. Organizing a joint webinar between MSL and MOR to discuss the NaML program, show the materials and activities included in the NaML kit, give information on how to apply for a NaML kit, as well as provide a comprehensive list of space and earth science resources in Montana for libraries to use during the summer.
3. Contacting various space and earth science organizations in Montana to provide additional resources for Montana librarians to use to supplement Summer Reading activities.
4. Encouraging librarians to use Project Outcome with the NaML Summer Reading Kit to gauge patron response to the program, as well as introduce a new evaluation tool to librarians.

MSL Partnership with the Museum of the Rockies:

MSL was fortunate to partner with the Museum of the Rockies to extend the reach of the NASA @ My Library grant with additional funding support from MOR. MOR purchased a significant portion of the kit materials, and was instrumental in creating the list of Space and Earth Science resources to give to librarians. They also offered use of their educational resources to librarians, such as the StarLab kits which many librarians took advantage of and loved.

Overall, the partnership with MOR for summer reading was wonderful and had significant positive impact, for both MSL and Montana public libraries.

Challenges and Obstacles:

There were a few challenges that emerged during the grant program. Due to the high volume of materials that MOR ordered from Amazon for the kits, the purchases were flagged as fraudulent by Amazon and cancelled multiple times. Although MOR was able to eventually sort things out, the purchasing timeline was significantly delayed. Originally, MSL planned to distribute kits in April at the Montana Library Association conference, but due to the delay in material purchasing, a much more adhoc distribution method was used. Hopefully this can be avoided next year by being more strategic about purchasing and spacing things out over a longer period of time.

Overall, most of the issues came from timing, which we are hoping to avoid this year. MSL and MOR are planning on starting Summer Reading preparation in October to give plenty of buffer time for logistics and potential delays.

Recommendations for MSL/MOR Partnership:

1. Continue to partner to create the Summer Reading kit. For 2020 Summer Reading, we are exploring the idea of using the CSLP manual activities to create the summer reading kit. We'd like to try and invite librarian input as to what activities are in the kit by asking Montana libraries to vote for their favorite CSLP activities from the manual.
2. Continue with the Intro Webinar in February to introduce what is in the kit, how to apply, and discuss relevant statewide resources to support the Summer Reading program.
3. Submitting a proposal for the 2020 MLA conference to host a hands-on unboxing session with librarians to show what is in the kit and how to facilitate the activities

Project Outcome Survey:

Survey Context and Purpose:

Project Outcome is a patron evaluation tool from the Public Library Association that seeks to help public libraries understand and measure the impact of their programs on their communities. The Montana State Library has been interested in testing this tool to see if it is an effective way of measuring program outcomes and to see if librarians enjoyed using it. MSL decided to ask the participating NaML libraries to test it out for the summer with the Summer Reading kit activities.

Project Outcome Trainings:

MSL invested significant time into training NaML libraries in using Project Outcome. Individual training sessions were scheduled with 47 of the 55 libraries, with 38 libraries using Project Outcome at least once over the summer.

Project Outcome Results from Patrons:

A total of 333 survey responses from patrons were collected. 91% of respondents learned something helpful, 81% intend to apply what they learned, 80% felt more confident about what they learned, and 76% were more aware of resources and services provided by the library. Two open response questions were included in the survey, but there were no responses entered from patrons.

While it is helpful to know that a majority of patrons who participated in the program viewed it positively, Project Outcome did not give particularly useful information from the multiple-choice data alone. One possible area for improvement would be to better publicize library resources and services to the public, as only 76% of patrons indicated that they were more aware of what the library had to offer. However, it's hard to take action without knowing exactly what people were referring to when answering the question.

Librarian Opinions on Project Outcome:

We have not done a formal assessment of Project Outcome from the librarians, but some recurring comments were as follows:

- The surveys were difficult for children to fill out, especially young children. It seemed better suited for elementary school aged children and older
- It was difficult to get people to fill out the survey
- The Project Outcome website was very slow, and difficult to input data into

A few libraries are continuing to use Project Outcome beyond the NASA @ My Library program, so it does seem to be useful for some people.

Space Science Institute Survey:

Survey Context and Purpose:

The Space Science Institute survey was sent to libraries who received the kit to get feedback on the program and ask for suggestions for the future. Libraries were asked to fill out the survey EACH TIME they used the kit. Some libraries filled out the survey multiple times, some filled out the survey once, and others did not fill out the survey at all. As MSL created copies of Kit 1 only, there were no responses regarding Kit 2 from Montana librarians.

Survey Overview:

50 responses total from 41 libraries, with 14 libraries not giving feedback at all

Response Summaries:

1. How did you learn about the kit program?
 - a. 26 respondents selected Promotional Materials from the State Library
 - b. 19 respondents selected State Library website
 - c. 6 respondents selected Regional Conferences or Meetings
 - d. 6 respondents selected "Other" (List serv email and webinars mentioned)
 - e. 5 respondents selected Word of Mouth
2. Total Number of People in Attendance:
 - a. Total: 2716 participants
3. Attendance Breakdowns:
 - a. Early and Upper Elementary age groups were the most frequent attendees of the NaML programs
 - b. Seniors and Teens were the least frequent attendees
 - c. 72% of programs had families attend
 - d. Top 3 Underserved Audiences Targeted: Rural Audiences (29 responses), Economically Disadvantaged (12 responses), None (11 responses)
4. Who led the kit programs?
 - a. 43 respondents selected Library Staff
 - b. 16 respondents selected Library volunteers
 - c. 4 respondents selected Local Science Experts
 - d. 3 respondents selected "Other" (out-of-town science experts)
5. Kit Programs Used:
 - a. 35 respondents selected UV Kid
 - b. 23 respondents selected the Books from the Kit

- c. 21 respondents selected the Sorting Games activity
 - d. 17 respondents selected Jump to Jupiter
 - e. 16 respondents selected Modeling Meaningful Eclipses
 - f. 16 respondents selected Sunoculars for Solar Viewing
6. Other Materials Used:
- a. 18 respondents selected the STAR Net STEM Activity Clearinghouse
 - b. 16 respondents selected their own creations
 - c. 12 respondents selected other professionally created materials/programs
 - d. 12 respondents selected "Other"
 - e. 5 respondents selected "None"
7. Other Notes About the NASA @ My Library Program
- a. Many libraries commented on how appreciated the kit was, how helpful it was for planning programming, and what a great supplement it was to their summer reading program.
 - b. Many libraries mentioned that the most popular activities were the UV Kid and Sorting Cards activities.
 - c. Some libraries mentioned that it was difficult to find experts and professionals in rural areas and were not able to make that connection in time for the summer reading program.
 - d. Some libraries also mentioned that the instructions accompanying the kit were unclear and/or not well-written
 - e. Some libraries also mentioned that the materials/information were not age appropriate for young children, particularly aged 0 – 5.

Overall Program Assessment

From both the public librarian and state library perspective, this program was a very positive one. Public librarians greatly appreciated the activities chosen and reported feeling happy with how helpful and accessible the kits were. On the state library side, the support and assistance provided by the Space Science Institute was extensive and extremely helpful. The parameters of the program and grant were structured enough to provide assistance and support to our end users, but flexible enough that we could adapt things to fit our needs which was greatly appreciated.

Additionally, this program was a good confidence booster, for both public librarians and Amelea Kim, the Lifelong Learning Librarian. Some librarians expressed feeling more confident in facilitating STEM/STEAM programming, and especially since there is a lot of demand in their communities for STEM/STEAM activities, they were happy to be able to provide that to their patrons. Similarly, Amelea had not facilitated much STEM programming before – working with SSI and NASA gave her a much better idea of how to better support librarians in this work, as well as gain an understanding in what kinds of activities and resources are most helpful.

In the future, if SSI creates similar opportunities, I would highly recommend MSL to take advantage of them.