Faculty Scholarship   Ina Dillard Russell Library

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Ready Player Ready Research: A Common Reader Caper

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Ready Player, Ready Research:
A Common Reader Caper

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NUTRITION INFORMATION

First-year students at Georgia College are expected to read a "common book" prior to arriving to campus for the Week of Welcome during the beginning of Fall semester. Ideally, the book serves as a touchstone for first-year students. Students are expected to discuss the book during Fall Convocation activities, prior to the start of the classes. The Ina Dillard Russell Library has been involved in many facets of the Common Reader program for several years and to varying degrees, including but not limited to: serving on the book selection committee, ordering and disseminating books on campus, and leading groups of students in book discussion circles.

One weakness of the Common Reader program at Georgia College is very little curricular integration of the book beyond the discussions that take place during Week of Welcome. This recipe was created to provide a fun and engaging outreach activity for first-year students while extending discussion of the text and highlighting library resources and services. The scavenger hunt activity was developed by librarians in the Instruction and Research Services Department for the 2014 Common Book selection, *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline.

COOKING TIME

Varies. Our program took place over the course of three days. Activities within the program could be completed synchronously or asynchronously.

DIETARY GUIDELINES

- The recipe is designed primarily to extend discussions about the Common Reader and its themes through the lens of library resources and services.
- The recipe is also designed to quell library anxiety of new incoming students by promoting an atmosphere of fun in the library.
- Although the Common Reader program is geared toward first-year students, this outreach activity was open to any student who wished to participate.
- Successful completion of the activity requires nonlinear thinking and a variety of investigative methods.

ACRL FRAMEWORKS ADDRESSED

- Search as Strategic Exploration
- Research as Inquiry

MAIN INGREDIENTS

- ☐ Common Reader text/book
- ☐ Library databases or resources you wish to highlight

- ☐ Social media accounts (we used Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter)
- ☐ LibGuides and LibAnswers

PREPARATION

Librarians who read the book were invited to generate clues. Clues were also tested with willing library staff and student workers to make sure the clues were not too obscure or difficult. Because *Ready Player One* is suffused with pop culture and video game references from the 1980s, we were able to create fun, unexpected activities within the scavenger hunt, such as playing a video game for a high score on a vintage Nintendo game console (donated by a library staff member) in a library study room decorated to resemble a dorm room/basement hangout from the 1980s. We tried to create an atmosphere of playfulness that alluded to the book in ways that also highlighted library collections. For example, librarians in our Collection and Resource Services department worked with staff in Access Services to generate a display of DVDs/films referenced in the novel. We also created a large PacMan out of post-it notes and had other displays of 1980s memorabilia.

MAIN COOKING TECHNIQUE

1. Prep clues or activities that allude to your Common Reader text. Some of

our clues required students to physically explore an area of the library, while others highlighted library databases and relied on students using the appropriate keyword or phrase to access the next clue. Don't be afraid to get creative!

2. Enlist help of other librarians, library staff, or FYE program coordinators to test clues, activities, and otherwise support the hunt.

3. Set up or otherwise prepare social media accounts and LibApps (Springshare makes social media integration easy). In our activity, clues were released each day via our LibAnswers "Text a Librarian" service. We also used LibGuides to create and maintain a leaderboard (another allusion of *Ready Player One*).

4. Set dates for the activity and recruit students to participate. We put a "secret" starter clue in a box at our circulation desk prior to the official start of the scavenger hunt. Our student workers also recruited several friends to participate. Some instructors for First-Year Seminars offered students extra credit for participating in the activity.

5. Use social media to advertise, track, and support the activity. Participants were required to use the hashtag #gcready to document their scores and completion of activities.

6. Celebrate your winners! Our activity culminated in a pizza/cake party/'80s DJ party, where library staff and librarians dressed in their finest '80s attire and


FIGURE 1. PROMOTIONAL FLIER

announced the winners, along with the grand prize: a reserved study room for midterms and finals. Other participants were given parting gifts of library/Georgia College swag.

ALLERGY WARNINGS

As the "hunt" progresses, you may find students will drop out of the activity, especially if they see the leaderboard and perceive a lead as insurmountable. Using an assortment of clues and tasks within the hunt, so as to appeal to a variety of abilities and interests, will ease student drop-out.

CHEF'S NOTE

This type of activity may be best suited for a contemporary work of fiction. Although the activity we created was geared toward the first-year students by alluding to the Common Reader text, many upper-class students were driven to participate by the allure of the private study room during finals.
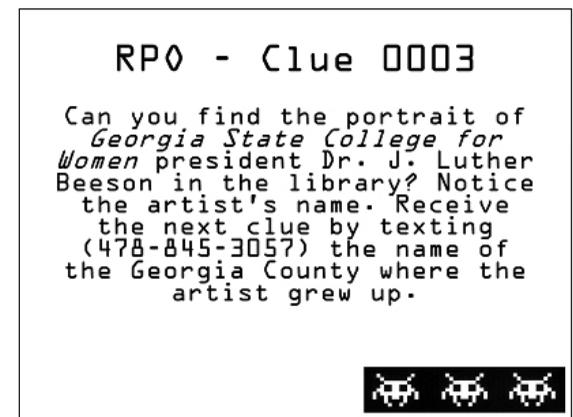
FIGURES 2 AND 3. EXAMPLES OF CLUE TEXTS

FIGURES 4 AND 5. SOCIAL MEDIA EXAMPLES