

**Library of Things: Mary D. Pretlow Anchor Branch**

Kayleigh Pendrick

Department of STEM Education and Professional Studies, Old Dominion University

LIBS 658: Knowledge Resources: Planning, Selecting, & Managing Collections

Dr. Rea Simons

December 9, 2022

## Library of Things

These Library of Things kits were created with the intention to add them to the collection of Mary D. Pretlow Anchor Branch, a library in the Norfolk Public Library system. It is in the 23503 zip code in the West Ocean View area.

### Kit #1

- *Kit name:* A Taste of Home: Mexico (Tamales)
- *Items:* Measuring spoons, measuring cups, small saucepan, large saucepan, QR code for a video of a Mexican chef making tamales, a printout of the recipe that goes along with the video
- *Target audience:* **Mexican** or **Mexican American** members of the community
- *Brief justification:*

As I looked through library kit ideas, I found that there were many kits that offered baking pans and cooking supplies. For this kit, I wanted to incorporate cooking supplies with a specific recipe related to a marginalized community in Norfolk. 10% of the population of the 23503 zip code is Hispanic/Latinx (GHR Connects, 2022b). While looking at the library collections, I found that there is a dearth of Spanish language books. While this is one area where the library needs to improve, adding resources to the Library of Things can create a different change.

Food is an extremely important part of Latinx culture. For this specific kit, I chose to focus on Mexican food. In addition to just physical cooking supplies, I wanted to provide a recipe to follow for a popular Mexican food, tamales. In this example, I would link to a video of a Mexican or Mexican American chef making tamales. The included

print out of that recipe is for people who do not have internet access or have an easier time following written instructions. The goal is for Mexican and Mexican American patrons to experience a feeling of community and a sense of connection to their culture. In addition, patrons of other ethnicities can also check out this kit and learn more about Mexican food and culture.

## Kit #2

- *Kit name:* American Girl Doll: Kaya
- *Items:* Kaya doll, *Meet Kaya*, QR codes for two videos of Nez Perce women giving oral histories about their childhood (aimed at an elementary school level)
- *Target audience:* **Native American** youth ages 6-12 and their parents
- *Brief justification:*

The Kaya, or Kaya'aton'my, American Girl doll was released in 2002. She is a Nez Perce girl from the 1700s. American Girl collaborated with multiple Nez Perce tribe members in an attempt to portray Kaya's story as realistically and respectfully as possible (American Girl Wiki, 2022).

The 23503 area does not have a large population of Native American people, making up only 0.72% of residents (GHR Connects, 2022b). However, just because a population is small does not mean it should not be served. Having no resources about or for a minority community can make them feel unwelcome or unwanted in the library. It is detrimental to not respect and serve even small populations.

Many libraries offer American Girl doll kits. I think it would be a wonderful idea if, instead of just a doll and her first book, the kit also includes more related to the doll's

story. For Kaya's kit, there will be a QR code that links to the oral histories of two Nez Perce women talking about their childhoods. This will give Native American children and children of other ethnicities a chance to hear about the different childhoods of Nez Perce girls, from Kaya's in the 1700s to the oral histories of the 1900s. This is important for adding a more modern context that kids may have an easier time connecting to.

### **Kit #3**

- *Kit name:* Braille Game Night
- *Items:* Monopoly (Braille/large print), Uno (Braille/large print), playing cards (Braille/large print)
- *Target audience:* **people with visual impairments**
- *Brief Justification:*

8% of the American population have visual impairments, or "vision [that] cannot be corrected by ordinary glasses, contact lenses, medication, or surgery," ranging from poor vision to blindness (Health Policy Institute, 2022). Libraries generally have assistive technology to help people with visual impairments. However, I wanted this kit to be something that people could take home and use for a fun game night. The kit includes games and cards that can be used by both people with visual impairments and people without visual impairments. Game players have the option to read Braille or to read large print. Braille products can be extremely expensive for families or individuals. This kit gives people with visual impairments the chance to have a fun game night without spending any money.

## Kit #4

- *Kit name:* Memory Care Kit: Christmas
- *Items:* traditional Christmas carols CD, *It's a Wonderful Life* DVD, aquapaints with Christmas images, 35-piece wooden Christmas puzzle, set of 36 matching cards & 4 control mats (mats with 9 pictures each that match the cards)
- *Target audience:* **senior citizens with subjective cognitive decline** and their caretakers
- *Brief justification:*

In Norfolk, 11% of residents are over the age of 65 (United States Census Bureau, 2022). 1 in 9 of Americans in this age group have subjective cognitive decline (SCD), which includes dementia and Alzheimer's disease (Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program, 2022). This group is often overlooked and underserved. Seniors with SCD can make people uncomfortable and sad. However, people with this disability deserve to have positive programs that help with their memories without condescending to them.

Memory care kits are a part of the Library of Things in many libraries. I learned more about memory care kits from the Baltimore County Library's Library of Things (2022). This specific memory care kit is focuses on Christmas. It includes media that will hopefully connect to older memories, and physical and mental activities for seniors with SCD to complete with caretakers. Memory care kits are important for libraries to have, especially since senior populations tend to frequent libraries. They serve this under-acknowledged and often under-

respected demographic by providing mature and sensitive activities that not only help seniors, but also bring hope and joy to their caretakers.

## Kit #5

- *Kit name:* LGBTQ+ Teen Book Club
- *Items:* 8 copies of *Simon vs. The Homosapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli, *Love, Simon* DVD, a list of discussion questions, a list of other LGBTQ+ books featured at the library, 8 rainbow pins
- *Target audience:* **LGBTQ+ teens**
- *Brief justification:*

Most towns and cities do not have many places that express that they are a safe space for queer teens. Libraries, however, have the chance to show their support through an LGBTQ+ Teen Book Club kit. This is perfect for groups such as high school Gay-Straight Alliances or LGBTQ+ friends. Teens may not have read books who have characters like them. The goal of this kit is to show these teens that there are books about LGBTQ+ teens and LGBTQ+ love. In fact, the library has many LGBTQ+ books, which will be included on a list in the kit.

The first version of the kit will feature *Simon vs. The Homosapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli, which will be paired with the *Love, Simon* movie for the club to watch after discussing the book. Library staff will regularly change the books included, though, in case the same book club wants to continue their club with the library kit. I would like future kits to include more diverse queer books,

since as *Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender, which features a Latinx, trans, queer main character.

## Kit #6

- *Kit name:* Mental Health Help: Anxiety
- *Items:* lavender-scented therapy dough, variety of fidget toys, journal, adult coloring book, colored pencils, bubble wrap, a pamphlet about what anxiety is and how it works, *Practicing Mindfulness* by Matthew Sockolov
- *Target audience:* young adults/adults with anxiety
- *Brief justification:*

Recognition of anxiety and the effects that it has on one's life has increased in the last decade. The National Institute of Mental Health reports that "[a]n estimated 31.1% of U.S. adults experience any anxiety disorder at some time in their lives" (2022). This means that a significant amount of our patrons are experiencing or will experience an anxiety disorder. An anxiety kit serves the community by providing free access to materials that can help. Not everyone is able to afford fidget toys and therapy dough. Other patrons may choose to purchase some of these items once they try them out. Not all coping mechanisms work for everyone, and the kit can help some people find what works for them. It is important for the library to support community mental health.

## Kit #7

- *Kit name:* Running for Student Council 101
- *Items:* 2.25-inch button maker, 10 pieces of poster board, markers, glitter glue, QR code for video about speech-writing
- *Target audience:* high school students running for student council
- *Brief justification:*

There are five high schools in Norfolk (Norfolk Public Schools, 2022). Student council programs are common in all schools. There are usually 4-5 positions to run for per grade. Student council is a great opportunity for teens to develop leadership skills and make connections with their peers. Depending on the school, though, campaigning can require physical materials. It isn't fair if money, tools, or supplies are a barrier to campaigning. This kit serves the community's high school students by allowing them to be creative in their campaigning. They are able to make their own buttons and create their own posters with this kit. In addition to the visuals, the kit includes a QR code to a video on speechwriting in case speeches are a part of the campaign. This kit serves high school students by giving them a chance to be creative and work towards a great school opportunity for them.

## **Kit #8**

- *Kit name:* Dungeons & Dragons for Beginners
- *Items:* *D&D Player's Handbook*, *D&D Dungeon Master's Guide*, *D&D Monster Manual*, 8 sets of 7 dice, 8 character sheets, 1 dungeon master screen

- *Target audience:* young adults/adults who want to learn a new game and build storytelling skills
- *Brief justification:*

Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) is a tabletop game that focuses on creative skills, such as storytelling, improv, and character creation. I have talked to many people who said they want to play D&D, but they don't know where to start. D&D can eventually be a relatively cheap game, with players only needing a set of dice. However, the three most important D&D books, listed above, are fairly essential for new dungeon masters and players who are learning the game from scratch or who are playing as relative novices. Those three books can run about \$60 total when purchased off Amazon, though.

This serves our library community by offering the chance for patrons to learn a new game, and through the game, new skill sets. There has been a renewed interest in the game due to its role on the show *Stranger Things*, so the kit would be current.

## **Kit #9**

- *Kit name:* A Night at the Theater
- *Items:* four free balcony tickets for a musical at Chrysler Hall, an adult-appropriate book related to a topic in the musical, a child-appropriate book related to a topic in the musical
- *Target audience:* families who enjoy musicals and/or live theater
- *Brief justification:*

In Norfolk, there are people of all ages who love musicals. However, in a city in which the median income is \$58,750, not many families are able to afford trips to Broadway (GHR Connects, 2022a). Norfolk's Chrysler Hall hosts musicals performed by Broadway touring companies every year. However, ticket prices still range from \$35-\$75 (Broadway in Norfolk, 2022). This kit gives families or friends the opportunity to enjoy musicals in their city. In addition to the musical, companion books will be provided to continue patrons' interests. For example, before or after seeing *Hamilton* in April 2023, adult musical goers will have the opportunity to read Ron Chernow's *Alexander Hamilton*. Young musical enthusiasts can read *Who Was Alexander Hamilton?*, a part of the *Who Was?* Series.

It can be frustrating to have an interest that you cannot afford. This kit gives patrons the opportunity to watch and listen to live stories, which can whet their interest for other related library materials.

## Kit #10

- *Kit name:* Typewriter Kit
- *Items:* typewriter, typewriter case, Wite-Out correction tape, white paper, additional ribbon, QR code for a typewriter how-to video
- *Target audience:* young adult/adults who are aspiring writers or interested in older technology
- *Brief justification:*

While libraries currently focus on a plethora of interesting new technologies, older technology can also be of interest. Typewriters can hold a nostalgia for older patrons and a curiosity for younger patrons. Using a typewriter gives patrons a chance to interact with different technology than they usually do. It is a different medium that can encourage writing, and it is also something that can require learning old tips and tricks. With a link to a how-to video for new users, young writers can practice on a typewriter to see if they are interested in purchasing one or just have a fun experience writing with something new.

A typewriter is very different from newer technologies that may feel overwhelming. Older patrons may enjoy borrowing a typewriter to reconnect with the technology of their pasts. Younger patrons who have romanticized typewriters will have the chance to stretch their creativity. Typewriter kits encourage patrons to write, which in turn inspires them to read.

## Reflection

This project was an interesting way for me to think creatively about collections development. The main criterion for every kit was a simple question: “Does this serve the community?” I tried to create kits to serve as many different populations as I could, whether it was a marginalized or underserved population or high schoolers who are interested in school politics. I also built each kit using the “CRAPP” (currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose) selection principles. I believe that currency can be seen through all ten kits. I wanted kits that would serve current needs that the community had. This also relates to relevance. Authority and accuracy were especially important for kits that are geared toward marginalized/underserved populations.

The *A Taste of Home: Mexico (Tamales)* kit is mainly for Mexican or Mexican American members of the community. About 10% of the population around Mary D. Pretlow Anchor Branch is Hispanic/Latinx, so this kit is relevant for the community (GHR Connects, 2022b). Cooking traditional Mexican food is always current for Mexican families. Food is a huge part of how they connect to their culture. The purpose of the kit is to provide families with the kitchen tools needed to make tamales. There is also a printed recipe supplied. Authority and accuracy are involved when it comes to the recipe. The video and recipe will be by a Mexican chef. This way the food will be presented by someone who is an expert in Mexican cooking and who is Mexican themselves.

I created the *American Girl: Kaya* kit for Native American youth and their families. This kit was also inspired by the fact that I grew up reading Kaya’s books, and

I loved everything I learned. The purpose of the kit is to entertain and teach Kaya's story. For Native American youth specifically, though, the purpose is also to share a sense of community. The QR code that links to oral histories by Nez Perce women, though, brings the kit more currency. The stories may be from the late 1900s, but in this case, they would be more recently recorded. The kit is extremely relevant for the intended audience of 6-12 year olds. *Meet Kaya* is intended for readers ages 8+ (American Girl, 2022), but youth who are not ready for the reading level can read with their parents. The oral histories are also aimed at elementary schoolers, so the content will be understandable and age appropriate. The Nez Perce women sharing their true experiences lends the kit authority and accuracy. American Girl partnered with two Nez Perce tribal elders, a language assistant, a cultural arts director, and a cultural interpreter in order to use the authority of members of the Nez Perce tribe to try to portray Kaya's life as accurately as possible (American Girl Wiki, 2022).

Creating the kits was sometimes a challenge. I usually looked to examples from other libraries and then tried to tweak them to make them my own. It seemed easy to do something like give musical tickets. However, it was important to me to include something outside the musical to continue the connection to the event. I had the most difficulty putting together the *Memory Care Kit: Christmas*. I was passionate about making a memory care kit, as they are so important for seniors with subjective cognitive decline. My grandmother had dementia, and my mother was her caretaker. I focused on examples from memory kits to create a Christmas one that made me think of my grandmother, who passed earlier this year. This kit took me the longest to create and needed the most research, and I really appreciated learning about these kits. This

project was sometimes challenging and research- and imagination-intensive, but I feel like I have learned so much about library kits because of this. I appreciate the Library of Things and its role in libraries even more.

## References

Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program. (2022). *Subjective cognitive decline – A public health issue*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<https://www.cdc.gov/aging/aginginfo/subjective-cognitive-decline-brief.html>

American Girl. (2022). *Books for 8 years+*.

<https://www.americangirl.com/collections/books-for-8-year-olds>

American Girl Wiki. (2022). *Kaya'aton'my*.

<https://americangirl.fandom.com/wiki/Kaya%27aton%27my>

Baltimore County Library. (2022). *Library of Things*.

<https://www.bcpl.info/books-and-more/library-of-things.html>

Broadway in Norfolk. (2022). *Broadway in Norfolk*. <https://broadwayinnorfolk.com/>

GHR Connects. (2022a). *Summary data for county: Norfolk City, VA*.

<https://www.ghrconnects.org/demographicdata?id=2991>

GHR Connects. (2022b). *Summary data for zip code: 23503*.

<https://www.ghrconnects.org/demographicdata?id=41718>

Health Policy Institute. (2022). *Visual impairments*. Georgetown University.

<https://hpi.georgetown.edu/visual/>

National Institute of Mental Health. (2022). *Any anxiety disorder*.

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/any-anxiety-disorder>

Norfolk Public Schools. (2022). *School list management*.

<https://www.npsk12.com/site/default.aspx?PageType=12&DomainId=4&ModuleInstancelId=12869>

United States Census Bureau. (2022). *Quick facts: Norfolk city, Virginia*.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/norfolkcityvirginia>