Have Your Cake and Eat it Too:

Throw a Public Domain Party and Engage Students in Discussions About Copyright

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NUTRITION INFORMATION

Following a twenty-year hiatus, on January 1, 2019, hundreds of thousands of books, music, movies, and art that were first published in 1923 finally entered the public domain. They are now free of copyright restrictions, and anyone can use or remix them for any purpose. The release of new public domain materials will continue to occur each year on January 1 until 2073. Each annual release is an opportunity to engage students, making them aware of the importance of public domain in the context of their own creative endeavors while providing the library an opportunity to host an event and collaborate with new partners.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Students will have the opportunity to discuss the value of public domain materials in society and in relation to their own lives.
- Students will have the opportunity to design and create content (e.g., zines, buttons, GIFs, etc.) using materials in the public domain.

NUMBER SERVED

Variable based on the size of available event space(s) in the library or on campus

COOKING TIME

- Prep time: Preparation time will vary depending on the size of the event planning team, number of chosen activities, and availability of ingredients and equipment.
- Activity time: 1–4 hours for the event, depending on the number of planned activities.

DIETARY GUIDELINES

Engage students in discussions around copyright through an interactive, fun event rather than a standard, woefully attended drop-in workshop. A public domain party enables students to experience the relevance of the public domain in their lives as both consumers and creators of information.

ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* addressed: Information Has Value and Information Creation as a Process

INGREDIENTS & EQUIPMENT

Ingredients:

- Public domain content in desired media (e.g., photos, films, music, artistic works, coloring pages, texts, etc.). Optional: choose content from your local area, state, and/or special collections.
- Handout with additional information as well as a list of websites where students can find public domain materials online
- Short quiz so that students can check their understanding of the public domain
- Space for event. Optional: consider a mixture of lecture-style spaces and workshop-style spaces to accommodate different activities.
- Decorations. Optional: consider themes focused on year or decade, printed and framed artwork/photography newly entered in the public domain, or a photo booth station with accompanying props.
- Food and beverages

Equipment (dependent upon chosen activities):

- Film screening: projector, screen
- Audio performance: musicians and instruments for a live musical perfor-

mance, speakers for a recorded performance
- Zine-making: scissors, construction paper, stickers, glue sticks and/or adhesive tape, staplers, pipe cleaners
- GIF-making: desktop workstations and/or laptops, Giphy's GIF Making Tool, GIMP image editor
- Button-making: button maker kit (button machine, punch cutter, button shell, clear mylar, and pinback), scissors
- Coloring: coloring content shared via #ColorOurCollections, colored pencils, markers, crayons, paints, etc.

PREPARATION
- Select a theme for the event—for example, a 1920s theme when public domain materials from the 1920s are being released.
- Choose a date and reserve a location in the library or elsewhere on campus.
- Identify the number and kinds of activities you wish to incorporate during the event.
- Make this a collaborative event by asking appropriate subject liaisons to be involved. For example, the music librarian can organize a performance, the media librarian can select a film, or the art librarian can lead the session on zine-making, etc.
- Order catering and obtain glasses, plates, utensils, etc. for food and beverages.
- Create a simple handout with information about the public domain as well as a list of websites where students can find public domain materials online for distribution during the event.
- Design marketing materials for distribution—for example, relevant social media posts, email blasts, flyers, table tents, etc.
- Identify relevant faculty, courses—for example, art, public history, media studies, etc., and student groups for targeted outreach.
- Add an event listing to library/university calendars.
- Promote via social media and through targeted emails.

COOKING METHOD
1. Set up stations for chosen creative activities. Staff running stations should offer guidance to attendees on how to use the provided public domain materials and equipment for each activity (figure 1).

Figure 1. Attendee makes buttons at button-making station. Photograph by Brae Howard. © Temple University 2019-2021.

2. Decorate the event space with public domain visuals to create a festive atmosphere.
3. Set up catering (figure 2).

Figure 2. A 1920s themed cake. Photograph by Brae Howard. © Temple University 2019-2021.

4. Welcome attendees and provide background on the importance of the public domain.
5. Introduce audio performances and/or film screenings, which can play in the background while other activities are ongoing.
6. Sample schedule of events:
   - 12:00–1:00 pm — Performance of Arnold Bax Viola Sonata (1923) by students
   - 1:00–2:00 pm — Make your own buttons and zines using public domain materials
   - 2:00–3:15 pm — Screening of *Safety Last!* (1923)
   - 3:15–4:00 pm — Learn how to make a GIF with public domain materials

ALLERGY WARNING

Make sure to schedule adequate time between activities to account for different setup needs in your event space. For example, we used lecture-style seating for the musical performance but then switched to round tables for the hands-on activities. Also, make sure you have enough equipment for each activity. We only had one button-maker, which meant it took students considerably longer to complete the activity.

CLEAN-UP

Assess the success of the event using some of these suggestions:

- Track the number of attendees for various activities, in addition to the number of individual items created.
- Design a post-event survey (e.g., How did you hear about this event? Would you recommend this event to a friend?).
- Develop a brief survey to assess attendees' awareness and knowledge of copyright, public domain, and related concepts (e.g., List one source where you can find public domain materials. Describe how the public domain impacts your everyday life.).

CHEF'S NOTES

We had around 70 attendees at our four-hour event. We found that while a few participants stayed for the entire event, the vast majority came for one or two activities. The hands-on activities, such as button-making, were the most popular.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Giphy's GIF Making Tool. https://giphy.com/create/gifmaker
- GIMP image-editor. https://www.gimp.org/
- #ColorOurCollections. http://library.nyam.org/colorourcollections/
- Public Domain Review. https://public-domainreview.org/