



Central Rappahannock Regional
Library
INSPIRING LIFELONG LEARNING

Launching a Civic Engagement Lab

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Central Rappahannock Regional Library



Today, we'll discuss:

- What is civic engagement and how does it align with library values?
- The Civic Lab at the Central Rappahannock Regional Library
- What's next for the Civic Lab?
- Launching civic engagement initiatives at your library



What is “civic engagement?”

Civic engagement refers to opportunities that promote and facilitate:

- A deeper, more critical understanding of how civic institutions operate;
- A broader, more empathetic knowledge of how issues, policies, and decisions affect lives; and
- An increased awareness of and confidence in one’s ability to take an active role in civic discourse and participate in community decision making.



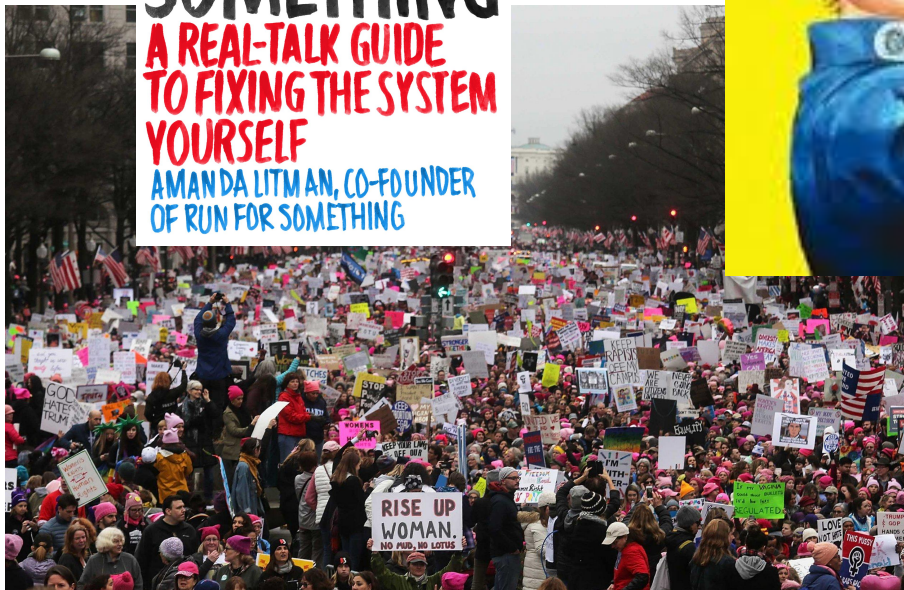
From Skokie Public Library Civic Lab, 2018 PLA presentation



DON'T JUST MARCH
**RUN FOR
SOMETHING**

**A REAL-TALK GUIDE
TO FIXING THE SYSTEM
YOURSELF**

AMANDA LITMAN, CO-FOUNDER
OF RUN FOR SOMETHING



Civic Engagement in Libraries

Code of Ethics of the American Library Association

"We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations."



Civic Engagement in Libraries

CRRL Mission: Inspiring lifelong learning for everyone in our community.

CRRL Vision: The Central Rappahannock Regional Library improves lives through the transformative power of information, learning, and ideas to meet the growing needs of our region.



Civic Engagement in Libraries

CRRL Strategic Plan: Informs our day-to-day operations and guides our future in these directions:

- **READ** – Encourage everyone in our region to read, view, and listen
- **LEARN** – Promote lifelong learning from birth to college and beyond
- **MEET** – Create thriving spaces where the community connects, accesses library resources, and shares their ideas and stories
- **INNOVATE** – Provide collections and services that aid in soliciting ideas, build skills, support lifelong learning, and spark creativity



Inspiration

- #LibrariesTransform - Libraries Transforming Communities, ALA initiative
- *Community Conversations* events at CRRL
- Skokie Public Library Civic Lab
<https://skokielibrary.info/resources/civic-lab/>



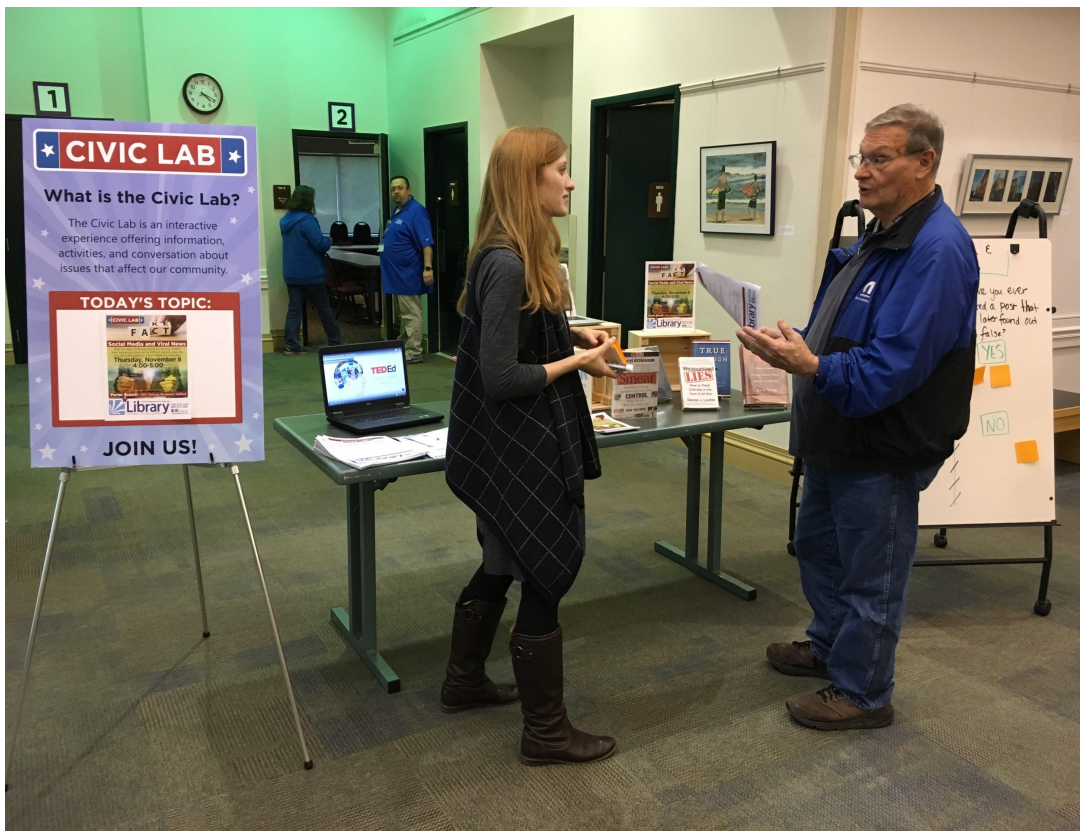


What is the Civic Lab?

The Civic Lab is a casual, drop-in, and interactive program offering information, activities, and conversation about issues that affect our community.

- Relevant topics promoting direct conversation and civic engagement
- Facilitator encourages critical inquiry with questions and activities
- Starts with the belief that everyone in our community can learn and grow in open conversation with one another





*Social Media & Viral News,
November 2018*



What Makes a Civic Lab: Components

- Relevant topic that affects your service area
- Thought-provoking, open-ended activities for all ages
- Design: location, collaboration, replication
- Direct facilitation
- Curated resources
- Handout





Component: Choosing a Relevant Topic

- Topics in the news - *ex. Space Exploration*
- Civic literacy - *ex. Getting Ready for Election Day*
- News literacy - *ex. Social Media & Viral News*
- Timely topics - *ex. Let's Talk Taxes*

"A Civic Initiative About Information: The Civic Lab At Skokie Public Library"
by Amy Koester, Public Libraries Magazine

WHAT IS SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY?

Getting Ready for Election Day

2020 Census

WHO WRITES HISTORY?

Let's Talk Taxes

SOCIAL MEDIA & VIRAL NEWS



Component: Activities & Discussion

- Conversation Questions
 - *What is our responsibility... How do we decide... What does ___ mean to you...*
 - Whiteboard questions: *How do you decide who to vote for?*
- Watch: videos
- Listen: podcasts, oral history
- Featured websites
- Books, DVDs
- Post-It Note Polls, eg. *Will you vote in November 2018?*
- Interactive activities: games, writing letters



BAD NEWS

From fake news to chaos! How bad are you? Get as many followers as you can.

OBSCURE

PLAY THE GAME

Info & other languages

For educators

Challenge your friends

ATTACK .IE

INVENT

Social Media & VIRAL NEWS

Where do you get your news?

Fox
BBC
NPR
AP
David Muir
ABC?
NPR
Potomac Local
InsideNova

DAD, NY

CNN

federal news network
TheSkimm

Freelance Star

Have you ever shared a post that you later found out was false?

YES

NO

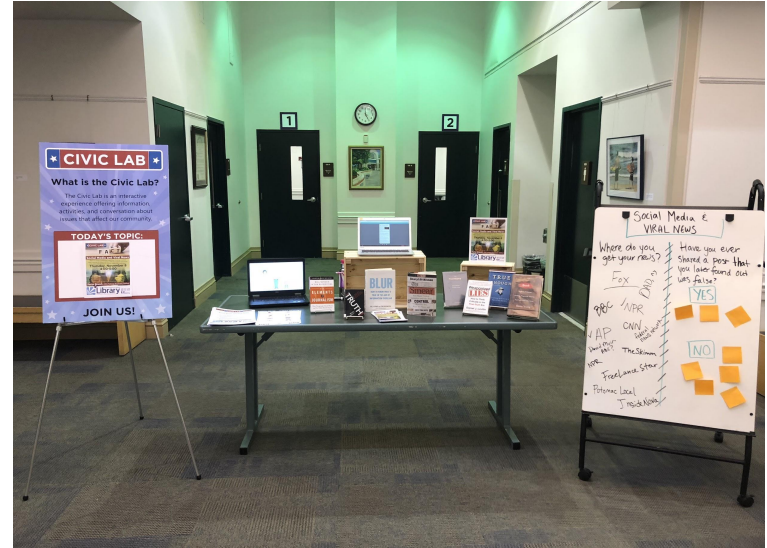
Your Plan, Your Planet

Discover how to reduce food, water, and energy waste, and learn about the [Circular Economy](#) to extend the life of your stuff.



Component: Design

- Location - central, open, accessible
- Replication
- Collaboration
 - Community partners
 - Staff teams as co-presenters, co-planners
 - Buy-in from every department at your branch



Community Partners



Components: Facilitator

Strong listening skills

- Active listening
- Let go of your own agenda

Personal awareness and authenticity

- Ability to be honest about one's own limitations (what one is and isn't capable of)
- Willingness to hand over a process to participants when they are ready

(adapted from *Mapping Dialogue: Essential Tools for Social Change*)



Components: Facilitator: Asking good questions

Asking good questions will:

- Wake participants up,
- Link into what they care deeply about,
- Make visible their *interdependence* in finding the answers.

Examples:

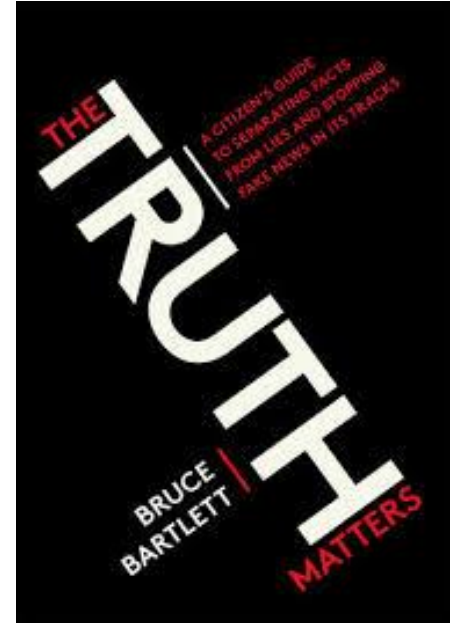
- How can we improve mental health in our community? (*Talking About Mental Health*)
- What can I do in my daily life to limit food waste? (*Reducing Food Waste*)
- Who is responsible for sharing history? (*Who Writes History?*)



Component: Curated Resources

Resources should be:

- Current
 - Most recent news articles
 - Regularly updated websites/databases
- Credible
 - Aim for objectivity, avoid opinion
- Accessible
 - Easy to understand
 - Available at no cost



Component: Handout



Event Topic

Topic description - 2-3 sentences

Conversation Questions

1. (--)
2. (--)
3. (--)

Key Definitions (from XXXX)

- (--)
- (--)

Listen & Watch

(space for multiple resources, including titles, links, and descriptions)

Read

(space for multiple resources, including titles, links, and descriptions)

Explore

(space for multiple resources, including titles, links, and descriptions)





Getting Ready for Election Day

Share resources, register to vote, and join a discussion on ways to stay informed for Election Day. In partnership with The League of Women Voters.

Conversation Questions

1. Are you planning to vote on November 6? Why or why not?
2. What sources do you use to be an informed voter?
3. How can we encourage more people to vote?

Key Definitions (from Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary)

- **Election** - the act or process of choosing someone for a public office by voting
- **Vote** - to make an official choice for or against someone or something by casting a ballot, raising your hand, speaking your choice aloud, etc.


Where can you find information about the issues and candidates on your ballot?

BallotReady.org

For nonpartisan information about every issue and candidate on your ballot, visit this website and enter your address to see an item-by-item breakdown of your ballot. Each candidate profile includes a biography, information on their stances on policy issues, their endorsements, and up-to-date news stories. *BallotReady.org* is a project of the National Science Foundation, the Knight Foundation, and the University of Chicago Institute of Politics.



FactCheck.org

A nonprofit organization, *FactCheck.org* provides nonpartisan information and monitors factual accuracy of major political candidates' media appearances and statements. *FactCheck.org* is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.



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  /crrlnews
librarypoint.org



Vote411.org

Vote411.org provides nonpartisan information, including both a voting guide to compare candidates' positions and an option to print a mock ballot to take with you to the polls. *Vote411.org* is from the League of Women Voters Education Fund and makes it easy to get personalized voter information based on your address.

VoteSmart.org

VoteSmart.org provides extensive factual and unbiased information about every candidate and elected official nationwide, including biographies, past votes, positions on issues, speeches, and funding.

Explore

Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids: Election Process

<https://bensguide.gpo.gov/>

A straightforward guide to U.S. election, written for children and created by the Government Publishing Office.

Video: Guide for the New Voter (from USA.gov)

<https://youtu.be/JA19vuvCads>

This short video goes over the basic requirements for voting in the U.S.

Virginia Department of Elections


<https://www.elections.virginia.gov/>

Virginia's Department of Elections' website provides information about voter eligibility, accessible voting, where to vote, military and overseas voting, student voting, ways to vote, and what to expect at the polls.

Voting Answers on librarypoint.org



<https://www.librarypoint.org/voting-answers>

A guide to accessing voting information online, from the Central Rappahannock Regional Library.



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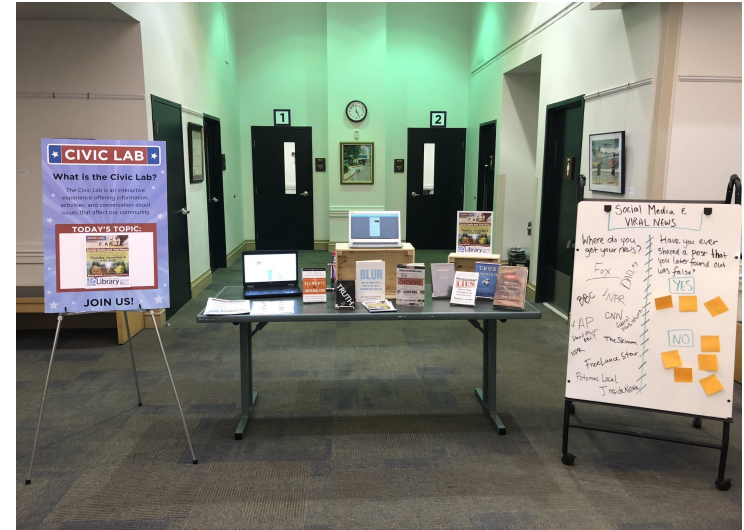
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Day-Of-Event

- Set-up, ~30 min
- 1.5 hours, 10-50 attendees
- Materials
 - Civic Lab Poster & Handout
 - Whiteboards for activity
 - Post-it notes, etc. for activity
 - 2+ tables (includes table for partner)
 - Laptop, tv monitor
 - Books for Display



Discussion advice

- Scaffold opportunities for interaction.
 - Handouts → Voting → Conversation
- Fall back on the discussion questions from the handout
- Focus on news sources and point to resources that suggest alternate viewpoints
- Plan your “exit strategy” from difficult conversations
 - “The Pivot”
- Goal is to promote credible information, not a particular viewpoint



What We've Learned

- Facilitators are vital
- Collaboration is key
- Buy-in takes time, embrace reiteration
- Importance of targeted marketing & branding
- Embrace the learning curve

CIVIC LAB

Getting Ready for Election Day

What sources do you use to be an informed voter? Share your favorite resources, register to vote, and join a discussion on ways to stay informed for Election Day.

Monday, October 1
5:00-6:00

Porter Branch
2001 Parkway Boulevard, Stafford

In partnership with The League of Women Voters.

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CIVIC LAB

FACTS

Social Media and Viral News

With so many conflicting headlines, finding credible news sources to share can be difficult. Explore resources and join a discussion on social media and viral news.

Thursday, November 8
4:00-5:00

Porter Branch • 2001 Parkway Boulevard, Stafford

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What's next



- Phase II:
 - Training additional staff
 - Expanding to other CRRL branches
- Info Lab



Trying Civic Labs at Your Library

Core questions (*borrowed from Skokie*):

- What type of engagement is right for your community?
- How do you get staff (& admin) buy-in?
Community buy-in?
- What topics are timely?
- How can you learn as you go?



Questions? Thanks!

<http://librarypoint.org>

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