GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

#54 – June 2015

A Best Practice: Enjoying and Sharing Books

In the age of technology at times we feel we've lost touch with the printed book. Yet, libraries and bookstores are filled each day with newly-published books. People still enjoy the feel and experience of the "real thing."

> Sorry E- books…
> These 9 Studies Show Why Print Is Better

Fabien Tepper and Signe Predmore wrote the following article, Love Your Books? 4 Ways to Share Them With Others, for How Cooperatives Are Driving the New Economy, the Spring 2013 issue of YES! Magazine.

It is reprinted here with permission. (YES! Magazine is a national, nonprofit media organization that fuses powerful ideas with practical actions.) Among many other realities, this practice reminds us that:

- There are many ways to provide adult faith formation; it's much more than "classes" at the parish.
- One of our roles is encouraging and equipping adults to learn on their own. As we peruse and enjoy the article, we'll pause to wonder and envision **how these ideas might be incorporated in our parishes and faith formation settings.**

> Always read something
> that will make you look good
> if you die in the middle of it.
> *- P. J. O'Rourke*

"1. Send your books on a journey

Books introduce us to fascinating strangers; they take us to places we would never visit alone. So why not send them out into the world, to share stories with new readers? Better yet, why not follow their adventures?

That's the idea behind BookCrossing. Put a tracking label on your book, leave it in a public place, and wait to see where it turns up next. The labels encourage new readers to release the books they find, and to enter where they found them on the website: train stations, park benches, and cafes across the globe.

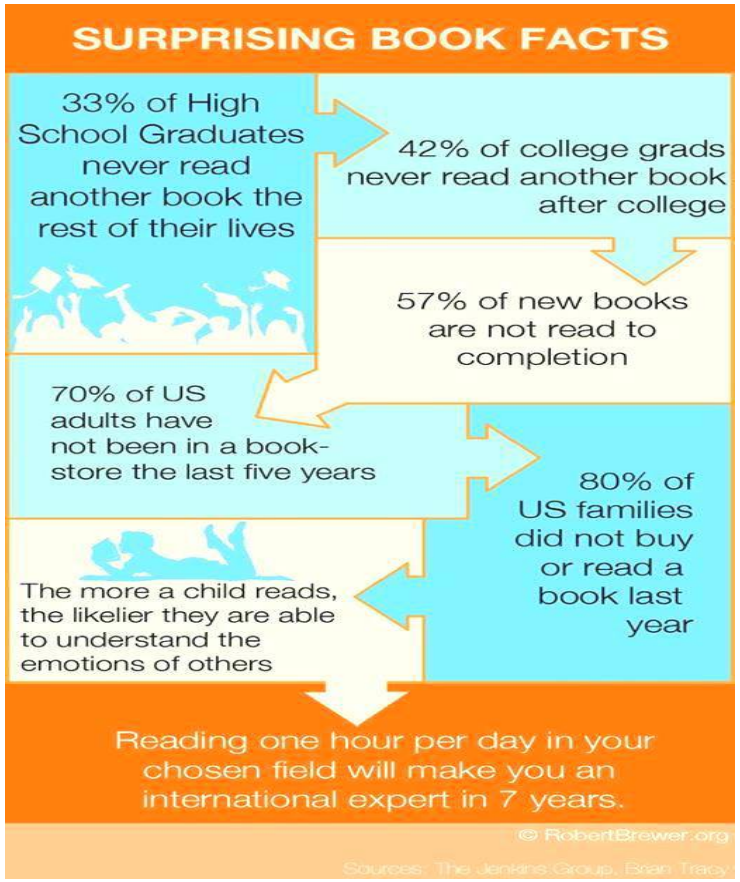
Part social networking, part world library, www.bookcrossing.com connects book lovers, anonymously, to the pleasure of sharing a good book with a stranger."

GEMS Suggestions

- Rather than following this particular process, parishes might suggest that parishioners leave copies of faith-related books in various places: doctors' offices, restaurants, auto-repair shops, secretary of state offices, beauty shops, etc. We'll never know who might be touched.

  Provide your parishioners with books to send on this journey by having a rack on the back of parish restroom doors. As they leave, they can choose a book from this rack which invites; "Take Me with You; Give Me Away."

- As you read the process on www.bookcrossing.com, could the parish set up its own tracking process – through the parish website, parish Facebook page? (If no ideas begin percolating for you, ask the youth from your parish for suggestions – they will probably have some immediately.)



"2. Make your library mobile

Most public libraries make a point of giving away books that have been withdrawn from circulation. But two Portland women have a new spin on library outreach with Street Books, their bicycle-powered mobile library. Using what looks like an ice cream cart, Street Books brings a fresh rotation of great books to people who live in Portland's streets and parks. Patrons do not need to provide an ID or proof of address, and they return their books on an honor system. Readers are invited to submit book reviews and share stories from the road on streetbooks.org.

Mobile libraries vary according to the countries they're found in. The coastal town of Port Philip, Australia, keeps a lending wheelbarrow traveling down its beach during summer months. In Colombia, grade school teacher Luis Soriano brings a children's library to remote villages on the backs of his two donkeys, Alfa and Beto. His Biblioburro project serves children inland from the Caribbean coast, and the idea has been adopted in other regions of Colombia."

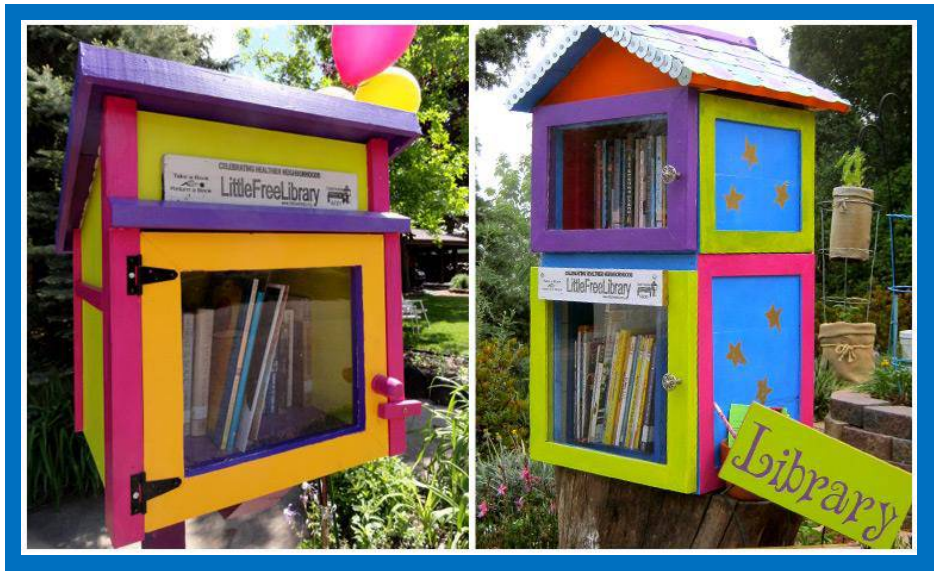
GEMS Suggestions

- When your local area has a craft fair, a festival, a special event, might the parish rent a table with give-away books? (Design the "table" in the same theme as the event or locale, e.g. a sailboat.)
- Might you take a mobile library to rehab facilities and senior citizen and assisted living facilities?
- Invite the parish evangelization committee to brainstorm ways to make books mobile throughout the community.
- At the beginning of Advent and Lent, many publishers provide us with meaningful reflection booklets for the season. Parishes could purchase twice the number needed. Invite parishioners to mail their second copy to a relative or friend who would welcome it.
- In addition to making these seasonal booklets available for parishioners, invite a group of parishioners to become a Mobile Library Team and take copies of these booklets to various people and locales in the community.

> It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you will be when you can't help it.
> – *Oscar Wilde*

"3. Build a tiny library

The Little Free Library movement inspires bibliophiles to plant bookshelves in unexpected places: on front lawns, city sidewalks, against tree trunks and beside bus shelters. These colorful handmade libraries, as small as mailboxes or as large as vending machines, invite neighbors and passersby to browse and borrow, lend, and linger. Some of the boxes are rustic, while others are whimsical. Some repurpose containers like newspaper dispensers or reuse materials like old license plates. Many are supplied with a reading bench, and all are free to anyone. No check-outs required.



Todd Bol built the first of these libraries in Wisconsin as a tribute to his late mother, a librarian. People loved it, so Bol and a friend started a web site, www.littlefreelibrary.org, to help people build their own libraries. Aspirants can find instructions on building, weatherproofing, and mounting libraries. They can also read about the movement's goals: to promote literacy, the love of reading, and a sense of community. And to build more than 2,510 (tiny) libraries around the world—more than Andrew Carnegie!"

GEMS Suggestions

- Invite the woodworkers and crafters in your parish to build Little Free Libraries for placement throughout your region.

- Might you use decorated newspaper dispensers – and place them throughout your community – to distribute your parish (or vicariate – deanery – regional) bulletins?

> Books are the plane, and the train,
> and the road.
> They are the destination, and the journey.
> They are home.
>
> – *Anna Quindlen*

"4. Have a book exchange party

Introduce friends to good books, and each other, by throwing a book exchange party. Set the tone with party decorations and treats on a literary theme: giant letters, book banners, quotation cakes. Ask guests to bring a wrapped book to exchange. The names of givers and recipients are picked out of a hat, and the book swap, which can involve several exchanges, begins.

Talking about books provides an icebreaker at parties for adults. And a simple book exchange for children (bring one, take one) is a break from the usual emphasis on presents and party favors."

GEMS Suggestions

- Invite the recipients, as they read, to write their notes, comments, feelings and questions in the margins of the book. After several weeks host another book exchange party, this time inviting each person to wrap the book they have just read. A new person will receive the book along with the profound thoughts of the previous reader.

- In addition to these parties (at the parish or in homes), can parishes highlight books in their bulletin and/or on their website?

- Have a book exchange party in which the guests also bring books to donate to a local women's shelter or homeless shelter.

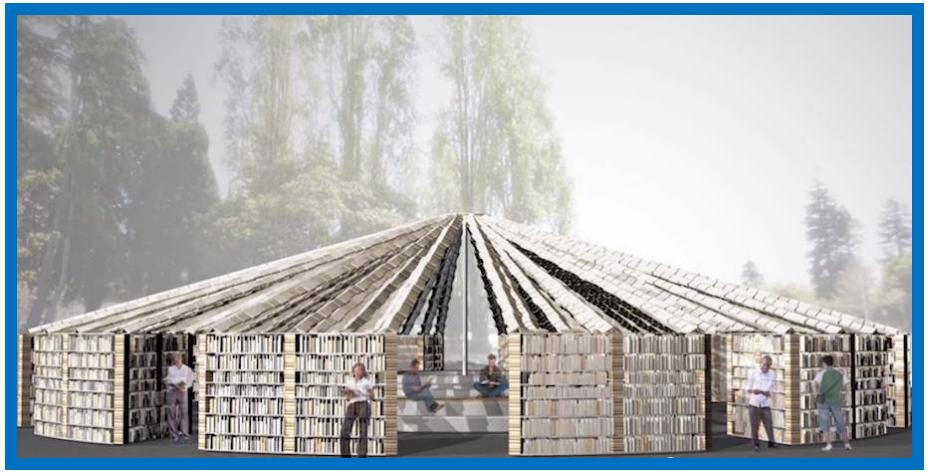
Two Related Ideas

This article, Beach Libraries, relates a growing trend from around the world.

Beachfront libraries are popping up on shorelines throughout the world. Forget your book? Go grab a replacement. Finished your latest read? No worries, many choices await you.

As you read this article (Lacuna: a Pop-Up Library Made From Books), dream:

- How might you do something like this (perhaps on a smaller basis) at your parish?
- Might you encourage your library or local organization in the community to do something like this?



Some Resources

As you dream and vision the various ways of suggesting/using/providing books for your parishioners, a few resources that might help:

- America Magazine provides book reviews throughout the year.

- US Catholic provides reviews in the magazine and online, often choosing a book of month for book club discussions.

- Often NCR provides suggestions for summer reading.

- Each year Spirituality & Practice suggests the best spiritually literate books of that year.

An Accompanying GEMS Suggestion

Place the links (those that are at the bottom of page 4) to these resources in your Sunday bulletin and on your parish website for all parishioners to peruse.

An Ending Question and Two Suggestions

- As we're talking about sharing books, parish bulletins, etc. what are the ways you that you do share – or could share – the GEMS newsletters that come each month?

- You might also be interested in reading: What Books Do for the Human Soul and Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World.

- Another fascinating article – and pictures - about books and libraries is 'Improbable Libraries' Beautifully Depicts The Fun Side Of Libraries.

Golden Nuggets from You

"I just read the September 2015 issue of GEMS - WOW! Great ideas on prayer. I am excited about the information. Blessings to you and all who are working to make a difference in adult faith formation."

- *Nancy Cunningham, Pastoral Associate for Catechesis, Sts. Simon & Jude Catholic Church, Huntington Beach, CA*

"Bravo, Janet, for compiling so many excellent resources, insights, questions and suggestions into one issue, GEMS #33. This surely could be a template or a 5-day workshop! Thank you."

- *Judy Holmes, Director – John Cardinal Dearden Legacy Project*

"I LOVE this idea (GEMS #37)! I already have an email in to our music minister to see if this is something in which we can collaborate. To extend the experience, I'm wondering if we could put the PowerPoint on our website too with the words to the Stations. There might be a way for folks to reflect on it at home if they can't make it out that night."

- *Kris Rooney, Pastoral Associate for Adult Faith Formation, St. Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Schenectady, NY*

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Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at www.janetschaeffler.com

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices:

- http://www.ecatechist.com/ebooks/
  Scroll down for *40 Tips: Getting Started in Adult Faith Formation*

- http://store.pastoralplanning.com/iboplbeprfor.html
  for *Parish Leadership for Improved Adult Catechesis*