Supporting Civic Engagement in the Library
The Skokie Civic Lab Model

Amy Koester
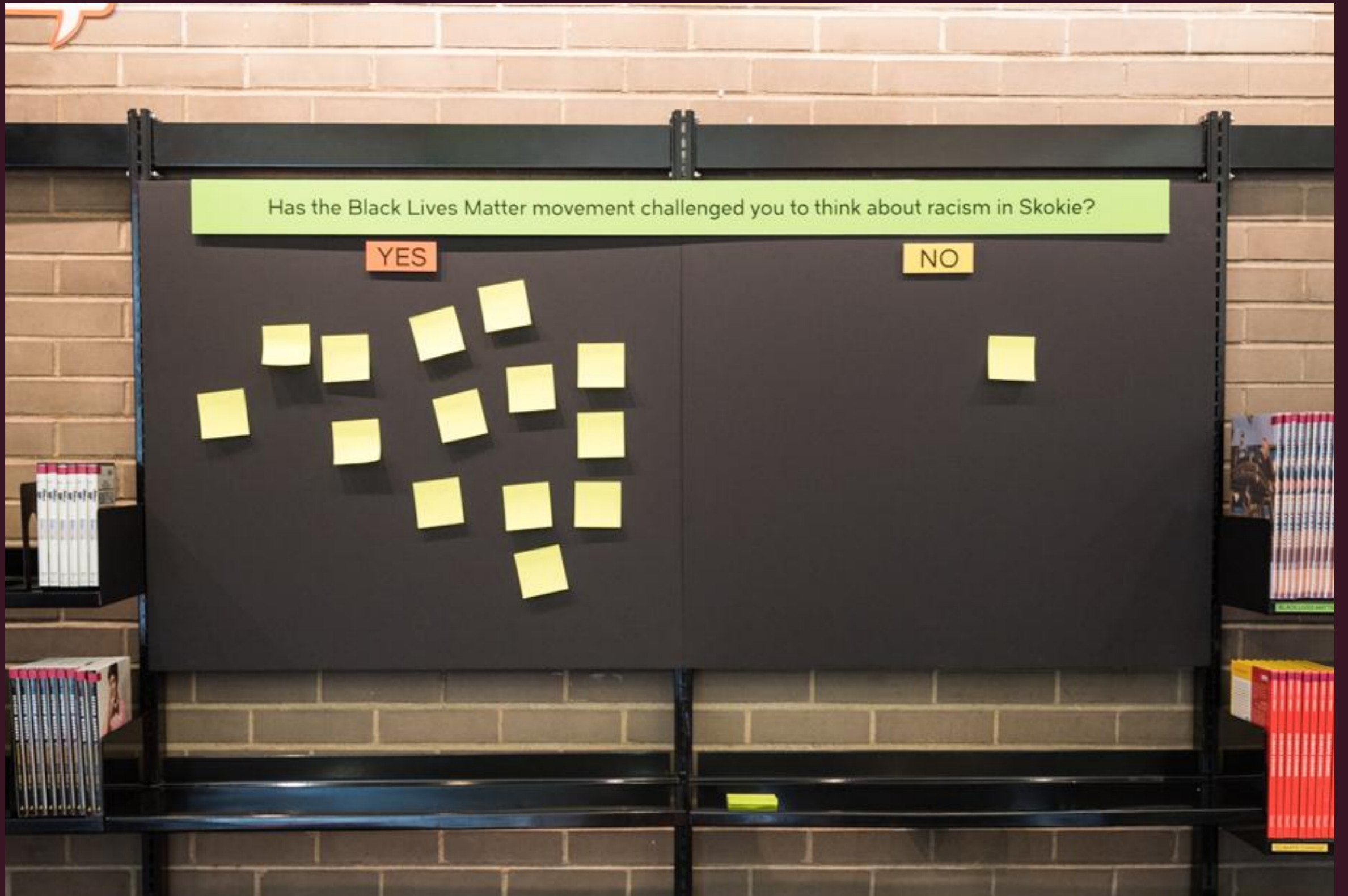Skokie Public Library

Hi there!

I'm Amy Koester, and I'm the Learning Experiences Manager at the Skokie Public Library.

On Our Agenda Today

1. Libraries & Civic Engagement

2. The Civic Lab at Skokie Public Library

3. Choosing Topics for Civic Engagement

4. Designing Civic Engagement Opportunities

5. Engaging Staff & the Community

6. Time for Final Questions

Libraries & Civic Engagement

Has the Black Lives Matter movement challenged you to think about racism in Skokie?

YES

NO

Libraries aren't neutral.

How do we define "civic engagement"?

Civic engagement refers to the programs and opportunities that promote and facilitate:

How do we define "civic engagement"?

Civic engagement refers to the programs and opportunities that promote and facilitate:

- a deeper, more critical understanding of how civic institutions operate;

How do we define "civic engagement"?

Civic engagement refers to the programs and opportunities that promote and facilitate:

- a deeper, more critical understanding of how civic institutions operate;

- a broader, more empathic knowledge of how issues, policies, and decisions affect lives; and

How do we define "civic engagement"?

Civic engagement refers to the programs and opportunities that promote and facilitate:

- a deeper, more critical understanding of how civic institutions operate;

- a broader, more empathic 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.

What do we hope to achieve with civic engagement?

Patrons will be able to make up their minds on issues based on:

What do we hope to achieve with civic engagement?

Patrons will be able to make up their minds on issues based on:

- credible information

What do we hope to achieve with civic engagement?

Patrons will be able to make up their minds on issues based on:

- credible information

- critical reflection

What do we hope to achieve with civic engagement?

As one patron put it:

"You need to have good information in order to make up your own mind. If you have bad information, someone else is making up your mind for you."

We apply a civic engagement lens to our work

	Youth Ages 0-5	Elementary-Age Youth	Junior High Youth	High School Youth	Adults
Knowledge-building Opportunities (e.g., learn something)	Specific-themed storytimes	Adventure Club, BOOMbox drop-in discussions/micro workshops,	BOOMbox drop-in discussions/micro workshops; Great Debate Club; Break the Election	Know Your Rights Clinics	Understanding the Village Building Permit Process; Money, Politics, and Democracy; Making Sense of the News; Chinese-ness: How Chinese American Mobilize Politically; Says Who? Evaluating Sources in the News; Media Literacy 101; Listen with Intent: Retelling the Civil Rights Movement
Skills-building Opportunities (e.g., acquire a skill)	Socio-emotional skills focus in storytimes	Voting activity at youth desk	Neutral Zone; JH Council; Great Debate Club; Community Tech Volunteers; SkokieWiki Volunteers	Neutral Zone; HS Council; Community Activist Volunteers; Community Tech Volunteers; SkokieWiki Volunteers	Oakton Citizenship Education Classes
Pop-up Events	Civic Lab-related pop-up storytimes	Civic Lab	Civic Lab; JHZ afterschool activities	Civic Lab	Civic Lab; Voter Registration
Passive Experiences				HSL Whiteboard Questions	Civic Lab Boutique; Exploring Human Origins exhibit
Service Opportunities	■	Citizen Science-related programs like Be the Scientist	Teen volunteer program; Friend Squad; Junior High Council	Teen volunteer program; Friend Squad; High School Council	Knit and crochet-a-thon; 1 on 1 volunteers
Community-building Opportunities (e.g., discussion)		Together at the Table	Together at the Table; Neutral Zone; Friend Squad	Together at the Table; Neutral Zone; Friend Squad	Together at the Table; What Every American Should Know; Great Decisions Discussion Groups; Pages Through History; Friday Night with TED; Let's Talk at Lunch
Access to Curated Materials	Themed displays; Reading lists	Themed displays; Reading lists	Reading Lists	Reading Lists	Reading lists

Poll:
For what audiences do you currently offer civic engagement opportunities?

The Civic Lab at Skokie Public Library

The Civic Lab

Together at the Table

News Discussion Groups

Choosing Topics for Civic Engagement

What's relevant to your community?

What's relevant to your community?

- Check in with patrons

What's relevant to your community?

- Check in with patrons

- Connect with your colleagues

What's relevant to your community?

- Check in with patrons

- Connect with your colleagues

- Consider what's happening locally

How do you stay informed?

How do you stay informed?

- Differentiate types of news

How do you stay informed?

- Differentiate types of news

- Try different formats

How do you stay informed?

- Differentiate types of news

- Try different formats

- Consider international outlets

How do you stay informed?

- Differentiate types of news

- Try different formats

- Consider international outlets

- Recognize systemic bias in coverage

How Civic Lab Topics Have Come to Be

How Civic Lab Topics Have Come to Be

Timely Topics	International Fact-Checking Day Talking About Taxes Actually, She Did That

How Civic Lab Topics Have Come to Be

Timely Topics	International Fact-Checking Day Talking About Taxes Actually, She Did That
Civic Literacy	How Does the Supreme Court Work? What is the EPA?

How Civic Lab Topics Have Come to Be

Timely Topics	International Fact-Checking Day Talking About Taxes Actually, She Did That
Civic Literacy	How Does the Supreme Court Work? What is the EPA?
Issues in the News	Narratives of Gun Violence Talking About Suicide

How Civic Lab Topics Have Come to Be

Timely Topics	International Fact-Checking Day Talking About Taxes Actually, She Did That
Civic Literacy	How Does the Supreme Court Work? What is the EPA?
Issues in the News	Narratives of Gun Violence Talking About Suicide
News Literacy	What is Journalism? (And What Isn't?) Social Media & Viral News

Question:
What's a current topic of interest in your community that could be addressed through civic engagement programming?

Designing Civic Engagement Opportunities

How do you structure dialogue & exploration?

What do developmentally appropriate activities look like?

Engaging Staff & the Community

How do you support staff to engage in civic conversations?

How do you activate staff?

How do you activate staff?

- Consider personal experiences

How do you activate staff?

- Consider personal experiences

- Transfer ideas from programs

How do you activate staff?

- Consider personal experiences

- Transfer ideas from programs

- Consider all staff roles

How do you activate staff?

- Consider personal experiences

- Transfer ideas from programs

- Consider all staff roles

- Create a cross-departmental team

How do you involve the community?

How do you involve the community?

- Respond to patron suggestions

How do you involve the community?

- Respond to patron suggestions

- Pop up in community spaces

How do you involve the community?

- Respond to patron suggestions

- Pop up in community spaces

- Share with local institutions

Poll:
What are your next steps with what you're learning today?

Let's wrap it up.

What are your questions?

Consider me a resource:

amy.e.koester@gmail.com

Find all Civic Lab handouts:

https://skokielibrary.info/
resources/civic-lab/