

What Just Happened? A Postgame Pep Talk

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So. Summer 2020. Where to even begin?

With gratitude and proper respect. Thank you for your adaptability, creativity, and persistence in providing enriching library services to your community this summer.

It was likely difficult. If you coordinated a reading challenge, your registration, completion, and event attendance numbers may be way down from usual. But – you did this amid a PANDEMIC. How amazing is that?

I'm a state youth services consultant and CSLP state rep. My peers at other state libraries and I are finding that, nationwide, participation in the summer library program is significantly down.

If you're looking at your 2020 numbers and then glance back at your 2019 numbers, you may feel dread and dismay. Please stop!

First, we're all in this together. What you're seeing is true from coast to coast.

Second, we can't compare 2019 to 2020 as apples to apples when it's more like apples to apocalypse. This year is just different. It will always have an asterisk. Instead of being disappointed (and fearful that funders and decision makers will look at the numbers and think the library was ineffective), tell your story about how, even in the pandemic, your library reliably provided engaging experiences that positively impacted youth, families, adults, and communities. How you developed creative ways, from grab-and-go activities to online storytimes, to provide service under unprecedented constraints.

If your state library conducts an end-of-summer survey, please complete it so we can all document, share, and discuss this one-of-a-kind summer. These surveys allow your state library to show stakeholders and decision-makers how summer library programs benefit communities. This year, the end-of-summer surveys will also let us learn from the unique experience of summer 2020.

Share your stories! Tell your community, your administration and Board, your state library, and yourself about the ways you helped specific people learn, explore, and feel safer, happier, and less isolated during this challenging summer. Know that you have a tremendous impact – beyond what the statistics can show.