

Swaps: A Kaleidoscope of Variables - 1 to 5 Scales

Instructions:

You can use this first sheet to determine where your library's situation lies on a 1 to 5 scale. Then, jump to each section to get suggestions based on your needs! Feel free to write your ideas down in the blank spaces and on the back of each sheet.

Space:

- 1: Our library doesn't even have a physical location.
- 2: We don't have a programming or event space.
- 3: We don't have anywhere to store supplies.
- 4: We have enough space to store supplies and run a program.
- 5: We have so much space we don't know what to do with it!

Time:

- 1: I need to run a Swap TODAY.
- 2: I have no extra time to prepare, but the event is not today or tomorrow.
- 3: I have some time to prepare, but it's not a library priority.
- 4: I have plenty of time to prepare.
- 5: Our director hired me as the Swap Coordinator.

Budget:

- 1: The library is running solely on hopes and dreams/No money for programs.
- 2: Small budget (<\$50)
- 3: Medium budget (\$50-\$500)
- 4: Large budget (>\$500, but there's still a limit.)
- 5: Money is not an object.

Staff:

- 1: We're entirely volunteer-run.
- 2: I'm the only paid staff at the library.
- 3: I'm the only staffer who will be working a Swap.
- 4: We have plenty of staff to help with Swaps.
- 5: We're hiring an entire Swap Team.

Some suggestions for each level:

Space:

1. Find another library or organization with space that is interested in working on swaps and create a partnership. Best if they need something you can provide, whether that's time, budget, or staff.
2. You might run a Swap Station (like a little free library) if you have a small amount of space for use. You could also run a Swap outside—whether it's still on library property or working with your town, village, city, or township to make use of park space. You might decide to partner with another library or organization that does have dedicated programming space. Or, if possible, you could host the Swap during hours that the Library is not normally open, so you can make use of what space you do have.
3. You don't need storage to run a Swap. Ask attendees to take back what's theirs if nobody else takes it by the time they have to leave, or arrange with a thrift store or local waste-reduction organization beforehand to donate leftover materials.
4. Consider running recurring Swaps to make the most of leftover supplies. While you may have available storage, you don't want it to be swamped with only Swap supplies, so make sure you're finding ways to continue the reuse cycle where you can. Again, thrift stores and waste-reduction organizations are great resources.
5. Consider partnering with another library organization to provide them space for their Swaps. Building an inter-library community is an important aspect of our work, as evidenced by this conference. No library can stand alone!

Write your ideas here:

Time:

1. Time to blast the surprise Swap on all of your Library's socials! Highly recommend a general item swap in this situation. Ask your community to come in with clean and still-functional items to trade with others, and make sure attendees know that they need to take their stuff with them if nobody else takes it!
2. This is another situation for a one-off Swap where attendees are responsible for their own items. If you're familiar with your community's general trends, you might consider theming the Swap around something like puzzles, games, or craft supplies. If you're not, a general item swap (emphasizing that items should be clean and functional) will work.
3. If your boss keeps assigning you to other tasks and deprioritizes the Swap, consider pitching a Swap Station instead. They require far less dedicated time to create and maintain, while still serving the community.
4. Consider spending some time to market your Swap. Talk it up with local organizations; let the local school media specialists or librarians know what's happening. If you build a regular audience, recurring Swaps are a great way to keep your community engaged.
5. So, your job title is now Swap-related? Congratulations! Sorting supplies, coming up with new topics, planning dates, making marketing material, coordinating donations, working with other orgs—all of this is theoretically stuff one can do on their own, but if it is part of the usual library work, it's a lot more sustainable, which is likely why they hired you into the role. Find ways to integrate Swap work into the system.

Write your ideas here:

Budget:

1. If your system has no programming money, but has just a LITTLE bit of space, a Swap Station can literally be a box near the front desk with a “Take one, leave one” sign. One-off swaps may also be doable if you have the space for events - you don’t need to buy any supplies for a Swap. If you build it, they will come – provided you do some marketing/outreach.
2. If you have just a little money to spare on a Swap, consider seeding your supply with a few items that are likely to interest attendees. You can also do this by rounding up personal items that you no longer use in your home.
3. If you have some money to spend and want to spend it on Swaps, you might consider some basic infrastructure. You could make a nice looking Swap Station by creating official signage and providing a dedicated location as opposed to just a take one, leave one box. If you’re running one-off swaps, buying some dedicated, heavy-duty bins to help you take leftovers to donate is a good use of funds.
4. If you’ve got a lot of money to spend on Swaps and have some space, creating a storage area for Swap supplies means you can run Swaps more regularly and accept Swap supply year-round. This is something that the AADL did once Swaps proved to be extremely popular, and the public have really appreciated having an easy place to drop off items, rather than trying to find a thrift shop that’s open and accepting donations. It’s an investment that might be worth it, depending on how the community response has been!
5. If you’re somehow in this situation, you could hire a team who works solely on Swaps, spend your money making an entirely new space for your Swaps, or share your wealth with other libraries!

Write your ideas here:

Staff:

1. Place a box in your library to create an impromptu Swap Station, or gather more volunteers for one-off Swap. Finding a partnership might be hard as a volunteer-run library, but if you're personally interested in doing more volunteer work, other libraries might be looking for help.
2. The most effective solution would be a Swap Station, as you are likely busy keeping up with all of your duties. If you're intent on running a one-off Swap, find volunteers or partner with another organization or library.
3. Make sure you have dedicated time to work on setup and cleanup of your Swap. As the only person working a Swap, it's best to run a one-off where attendees are responsible for their items. If you have to work a Swap where you're dealing with leftovers by yourself, get extra time so you can arrange donations with thrift shops, as they often have odd hours and you may have too much other work to handle on the day of the event.
4. This is highly dependent on your community turnout, but with 100+ attendees at most of our Swaps, we've found that having 3-4 staff on hand to set up and clean up supply for our recurring swaps is a good number, and that during the event, you really only need 1 or 2 staffers unless you're sorting out items as they come in.
5. You've got a dedicated Swap team?! Consider letting Journey (hawthornej@aadl.org) know what the team is doing, because that's EXTREMELY cool. And then consider presenting at a conference, because you're probably more knowledgeable about this work than I am.

Write your ideas here: