



TOP 5 STEPS IN ORGANIZING A CAREER HUMAN LIBRARY

The Career Human Library is a take on the Human Library movement. This movement is trying to help build bridges and create understanding among people by giving community members from different backgrounds a forum to talk with each other. Like in the Human Library, humans at a career human library are also books that people can “check-out.” The idea of the Career Human Library is to invite people who have all kinds of different jobs into a school, library, employment services or a community centre so that career explorers can talk to and learn about a wide range of different careers in the community. The hope that those that come to check-out the “books” will learn that, whatever their interests and skills - whether they like building things, being outside, crunching numbers, writing or being around people - that there are jobs that reflect those interests and use those skills.

AND, the best news is that it doesn't take much to organize one. Below are 5 simple steps for making it happen.

STEP 1: GET A POSSE

It doesn't take a lot of time to pull this off -- some have done it in a few days, but typically it takes a few weeks. A few well-chosen folks can shore up the time it takes to organize the event. Once you have recruited a group of volunteers ask them to take on specific tasks such as those outlined in the next four steps. Make sure that your committee members (or at least some of them) are also available to volunteer at the day of the event.

STEP 2: FIND A SPACE

If you are a librarian, a teacher, a career development practitioner working in an employment office, you may already have space. If not, connect with local community centres, public libraries, schools, etc., to see if they will donate space for the event. Check out what they have in terms of facilities. Do they have tables and chairs for the “books” to use in their presentations? Do they have electrical outlets for presenters to use? Is the site accessible?

STEP 3: GET SOME “BOOKS”

With your organizing committee, develop a list of people from your networks that would make great “books.” Extend an invitation to these people to be a part of the event and **ask for an RSVP within a week of sending**. This email should include:

- ✦ The purpose of the event
- ✦ The date and logistics
- ✦ Characteristics of the “reader” group (e.g. students, community members, job seekers)
- ✦ Expectations of them (e.g. Do you want them to bring in work-related materials, demonstrate a work task, answer specific questions, etc?)

Once they have accepted the invitation, send them a form that asks them:

- ✦ What they need in terms of set-up (table, electrical outlet, other)
- ✦ For a 2-4 sentence career bio (e.g., their job title, what they do daily, highlights of their job, the key skills they use).

You will use this information to profile the books to the attendees so that they can select the books they want to “check-out.”

A few days before the event, send your “books” any further details regarding logistics and any other information they need to prepare for the event.

STEP 4: PREPARE THE READING GROUP

A few weeks before the event, promote it! Depending who is hosting it, you may need to put a call out for people to sign-up to attend. Once you have determined your attendee “reading” group, send them the “booklist” (the bios of the “book” volunteers) so that they can indicate to you their “check-out” preferences. This will help you assign the books to the attendees. You may want to provide the attendees with some guidelines on good questions to ask and any behavioural expectations that you have.

STEP 5: LAUNCH IT!

With planning, the Career Human Library can be a very impactful experience for both “reader” and “book.”

The day of ensure:

- ✦ The facility is step up before the “books” arrival
- ✦ The volunteers are ready to help “books” with set-up and takedown

- ✦ There are refreshments and snacks (if you can't provide for everyone attending, consider having something for the "books")
- ✦ To meet with the "reading" group to go over briefly how the library will work. Invite questions to ensure understanding.
- ✦ You facilitate the "loan" period (usually 10-30 minutes depending on the age group and number of "readers" in the group. For example, if it's one-on-one, you may want to have less time than if you have the books attending in small groups). End the loan period by ringing a bell or making an announcement that it is time to switch "books." Depending on the length of time of the event, you may have several loan periods.
- ✦ Volunteers rotate throughout to ensure both the "books" and the "readers" are doing OK.
- ✦ To thank everyone at the closure of the event for attending.
- ✦ To invite feedback from the "books" and the "readers" about the event.

After the event, send out thank you notes to the "books" and committee members and anyone else that contributed to making it a huge success. Debrief with the organizing committee and brainstorm ways to make the event better in the next round.

FOR MORE TIPS AND TOOLS ON HOSTING A CAREER HUMAN LIBRARY, SEE:

- **Atlantic Canada Career Week, Human Library:**
https://careermonth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/EN_Human-Library.pdf
- **Human Library - UBC Okanagan Campus:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4rEh9ZfyYM>
- **Webinar about how to plan a Human Library**
<https://vimeo.com/107602044>
- **The Human Library @ Your School:**
<http://www.accessola.org/web/Documents/OLA/Membership/Human-library-at-your-school.pdf>