

Feature Stories

Games at the Library 2020 Report

Jennifer Devlin, Games @ the Library Co-Convener

The 2020 Games at the Library week was held from Sunday, October 16 through Saturday, October 24, inclusively. These dates were chosen so APLA's Games at the Library could align with celebrating Canadian Library Month. It was important this year, more than ever, to provide opportunities for community members to practice self-care through fun experiences and to connect with their community in safe ways.

All participants during Games at the Library week were eligible to enter their names in the grand prize draw, which took place November 16, 2020. This year there were 414 ballots submitted for the grand prize draw, and 281 participants. A total of fifteen libraries sent in ballots and tally sheets in 2020. This rate of participation has decreased from the 2019 Games at the Library, when 45 libraries submitted ballots and tally sheets. Rates of library participation were lowered significantly due to Covid-19.

Putting on a socially distanced, safe, and game-themed event was a challenge, and many libraries may not have the resources to be able to put on an event while also following safety procedures. Many libraries may have had reduced hours, have been short staffed, or may have not been able to welcome patrons in for programs or events. Most academic libraries were closed to patrons in the fall.

Library staff were very creative and put in extra time to organize, given the added challenge of making the event fun, safe, and socially distanced. Libraries offered many types of games including board, card, video, and building games (both socially distanced and lent for the week to family bubbles). Active and outdoor games were also offered. Virtual games included a virtual family bingo and an online escape room. Other games included: puzzles, trivia, Scrabble (patrons vs. librarians), Duplicate Scrabble, a pet photo contest, and guessing games.

Games included practicing literacy, creativity, memory, strategic thinking, problem solving, spatial analysis, nonverbal reasoning, and motor skills. Libraries held socially distanced games to encourage social connection while following state of emergency restrictions.

Denise Green Jesso participated in the 2020 Games at the Library week at A.C. Hunter Public Library in St. John's, Newfoundland and won the grand prize of an online \$175 gift card for EB Games!

Many thanks to Margaret Vail (APLA Webmaster) and Kim Mears (APLA Communications Coordinator) for disseminating the information about Games at the Library online via the APLA Games at the Library website and APLA social media accounts. Thanks also to Terri Winchcombe (APLA Treasurer) for purchasing and sending the prize, and APLA President Ann Smith for her guidance and support. Finally, a big thank you to everyone who held a Games at the Library event this year! The goal of Games at the Library is to show that libraries are places where people meet, learn, and have fun. That goal was met, and libraries were celebrated through the wide range of successful activities offered by Atlantic libraries during the Games at the Library 2020.