

OUR BLUE LIBRARY

AGES

Children/Teens/Adults
Multigenerational

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

What better way to celebrate our blue planet than by turning the library blue for a day/week/month/all summer long? Invite local patron-artists to create an underwater landscape right in your library. They could paint aquatic scenes, make abstract art in blues and greens, and/or create papier-mâché or other 3D sculptures of their favorite aquatic animals. You could drape paper

“seaweed” at entrances or suspend a massive whale from the ceiling. The possibilities are as vast as the ocean. Decorate the whole library or only children/teen areas, depending on how much artwork your patrons create. Make sure to create a photobooth area for blue library selfies! Tech-savvy teens might also want to create a green screen. Suggested runtime: 90–120 min.



Image source: Shutterstock

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

Material ideas:

- Blue and green construction paper, butcher paper, poster boards, etc.
- Various types of paint and paintbrushes, markers, other art supplies
- Tacks, tape, nails, or other art-hanging materials
- Papier-mâché supplies (flour, water, newspaper/tissue) (optional)
- A variety of props (optional)
- Computer with video editing software, such as Canva Pro, OpenShot, or iMovie (optional, for green screens)

TIP:

See also Jellyfish Lanterns on page 281 for another fun ocean decoration.

TIP:

Some aquariums also have really interesting traveling exhibits! If you have an aquarium in your area, try reaching out to them to see.

TIP:

A great option for libraries without much wall space is to have patrons decorate the sidewalks around the library with chalk. Hairspray over the drawings helps to preserve them.

CRAFT | DECORATION/DISPLAY | PASSIVE

Beforehand: Clear the new temporary décor with management and cleaning staff. Take down any existing posters/artwork or plan to cover them without damage. For a book display, feature ocean books and/or books with blue covers.

Instructions:

- Send a call out for patron-artists young and old to create oceanic artwork and promote the idea on social media, in the library, etc. Patrons can work on their (pre-approved) artwork at home, or come to the library and work in groups. You could also pitch the idea to local high school and middle schools to see if they can work on them in classes before summer starts.
- Organize a day for hanging the materials. Run it as a kick-off party, or enlist the help of a teen advisory board or volunteers.
- Once the installation is complete, promote summer programming on social media and in newsletters with plenty of pictures!

UNIQUE SPACE AND/OR PERSONNEL NEEDS

1–2 extra staff members or volunteers to help hang the installation.

RESOURCES

Web

“11 Best Free Green Screen Software” from *Fix the Photo*:
<https://bit.ly/2TeCuVc>

Books

Non-fiction

Oceans & Seascapes (Oil & Acrylic) (2012) by Martin Clarke (YA/adult)

Watercolor with Me in the Ocean (2019) by Dana Fox (children’s)

Ocean Anatomy: The Curious Parts & Pieces of the World under the Sea (2020) by Julia Rothman and John Niekrasz (adult/all ages)

Learn to Draw Sea Creatures (2014) by Robbin Cuddy (children’s)

ADAPTATION:

You could also hold a prop-making contest. The prop that gets used the most (based on photos posted to the library’s social media) by the end of the summer wins!

TIP:

Create a space that is multisensory by including artwork that is tactile and touchable. Use recordings of whale songs or other oceanic sounds, and display various sea shells or other real aquatic artifacts.