Wisconsin Public Television’s Reel to Real program provides libraries with films and program guides to help facilitate community discussions and action. Topics are critical to Wisconsin communities today.

a collaboration of

UW-Madison School of Library and Information Studies and the South Central Library System
Many are surprised to discover the abundance of thought-provoking films on Wisconsin Public Television (WPT)-films dealing with race and diversity, social justice, history, the arts, education and civic engagement. These topics resonate in communities throughout Wisconsin and they get people talking.

Reel to Real engages your community by providing tools supporting local screening and discussion events featuring an acclaimed, thought-provoking PBS film, local experts and community leaders, bridging the gap between viewing the series, and creating community dialogue and action. Each event is designed to meet the individual and community at its core. Participation in these community events has impacted issue discussion, community participation, and library and station involvement.

Support for Reel to Real comes from Friends of Wisconsin Public Television. For more information on Reel to Real please contact Mike McKenzie at mike.mckenzie@wpt.org

Planning Your Reel to Real Event

**WATCH THE OUTREACH DVD**

- Take notes on the important issues you’d like to address.
- Are there any controversial topics to be aware of? Is this film appropriate for all ages?
- What aspects of the film pertain to your local community?
- Who in your community would be your “audience” for the event?
- How would this event connect to and extend your organization’s mission?

**FIND YOUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

Collaborating with other individuals and community organizations can simplify your planning and add meaning to your event. Folks who have firsthand experience with the subject of your discussion can advise you on how to
structure the event to increase its impact. Also, they may have connections with community members you would like to attract to your event.

A variety of viewpoints will enrich your project and ease your workload at the same time. Partners can take on tasks you are not comfortable performing or don’t have the necessary experience (or time) to perform. None of us can be experts in every topic, so it’s beneficial to find folks who will lend their expertise in support of your event.

**Before you approach a potential community partner, consider the following:**

- Decide how many partners you’d like to work with. A group that’s too large may take more time than you have to spend.
- Consider the event from a potential partner’s point of view. Is there a natural connection?
- Assess the partner’s availability. If they’re overbooked, keep them in mind for next time.
- Ask partners for suggestions of who else they think should join the effort
- Can the topic of your program be tied to any events in the community that other organizations are already sponsoring? If so, talk to those organizations.
- Decide what role(s) you’d like a partner to play before approaching them. It’s easier to attract and motivate a partner when it’s clear they’re providing a necessary function.

Put together your group of community partners at the start of your planning. Partners will feel stronger ownership in the event if they’ve been able to contribute to it from its inception.

**Community partners can contribute to the event in a variety of ways. For example, they can:**

- Provide expertise on the discussion topic or contribute their experience in fundraising, event planning, group dynamics, publicity or evaluation.
- Act as facilitator or suggest others who could play this role
- Publicize the event by speaking at events around the community
- Provide staff or volunteers to help support the project
- Help distribute invitations or flyers

**Some places to look for potential community partners:**

- Check with local colleges, universities, and University of Wisconsin-Extension offices for people who might serve as community partners. Also, you’ll find people there who study or work with conflict resolution. These folks are excellent resources to serve as, or help train, facilitators.
- Local historical societies
- Schools
- Churches
- Retirement/Senior Centers

**Once you’ve created your group of partners, meet with them to decide what roles they will play. Partners can contribute to the event in many different ways, such as:**

- Act as facilitator or guest speaker at the event, or recruit others to play this role
- Provide expertise on the topic and guide decisions about event goals and format.
• Contribute to planning and/or hosting the event, including fundraising, logistics, publicity and post-event follow-up.
• Provide a location for the event or furnish refreshments.
• Donate in-kind services such as access to press lists, photography and audio, etc.
• Distribute information about the event to their membership, general public or the press.
• Help with printing and materials preparation.
• Distribute materials at event and/or collect and coordinate event evaluations
• Publicly endorse the event and/or include their name in event publicity.

**CHOOSING YOUR EVENT FORMAT**

**Consider the resources you have to devote to this event (e.g. time, calendar, volunteers, partners, space, public relations efforts, funding, etc.)**

**Given your resources, what type of event would best serve your intended audience and fits your time, energy level and needs? Some examples:**

- Screen entire DVD in a single evening followed by large-group discussion. Invite community leaders to join discussion.
- Divide the DVD into segments and screen one segment each week for a month. End each event with small-group discussion.
- Screen the DVD as one event in a series of community events devoted to topic.
- Invite community organizations that are invested in the film topic to attend the screening. After the film, invite audience members to talk with the organizations about possible action steps.

**LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION**

If possible, choose a venue or create a space within a venue that is welcoming and accessible to all. Community centers such as libraries, neighborhood centers or schools are often great choices provided the space is suitable to the event format. The general rule to selecting a venue is to “go to your intended audience; don’t make them come to you.” For example, an exclusive club or private space can be off-putting for some and could keep them from attending.

**Some things to consider when choosing a venue:**

- Is the location easy to find?
- Is it accessible to people with disabilities?
- Is it available for pre-event site visits?
- Is there a contact person?
- Is it available for a large enough block of time if your event runs overtime?
- Is the room the right size for your event?
- Is there an appropriate electrical system for audio/visual equipment?
- Is there access to a kitchen and/or child care?
- Is it served by public transportation?
- Is there enough parking?

**FIND A DATE AND CONFIRM**

When is the best date to hold this event? Are there local conflicts that might affect
the date(s) you choose? What is the best time of day for your targeted participants? Once you find a date, confirm with your partners. Give them a call or write them an e-mail reminding them of their participation and next steps.

CREATE A BUDGET
Some things to include are:
• Location rental fee/charges
• Staffing needs
• Promotion (mailings, stationary, printing/copying, graphic design, postage, newspaper advertising and public service announcements)
• Photography
• Food
• Transportation
• Audio/visual equipment rental
• Fees for guest speakers and/or facilitator
• Photocopying and printing costs for handouts or other materials to be distributed at event

PLAN THE DISCUSSION
You and your partners will need to decide what format your discussion will take. For example, do you want the audience to discuss the topic as a large group with one facilitator guiding them? Or would you rather they share in small-group discussion that allows each participant more opportunity to speak?

If you invite guest speakers, how will they be involved in the discussion? Will they present first in front of the audience and then participate in a discussion that follows? You could also invite a guest speaker to rotate around the room to answer any questions audience members may have as they discuss in small groups.

Once you and your partners decide the general format of the discussion, you will need to consider the spatial configuration that best suits that format. If you want the participants to be able to see each other, you’ll need to move the chairs into a circle. If you don’t have chairs that move, you’ll need to come up with a different configuration. Or if you choose to have guest speakers, you will need to create a place for them to present that can be seen by everyone.

The most powerful discussion is one in which all participants feel welcome to express their individual views, to ask questions of one another, and to fully engage in the dialog. We’ve found that certain configurations encourage this type of participation. Participants who are seated in a circle tend to listen more carefully and be more willing to share their thoughts. In a circle, everyone is included and anyone is in the position to speak.

EVENT SIGNAGE, AUDIENCE HANDOUTS AND OTHER DETAILS
The final details of choosing signage for an event or creating handouts for the audience may feel unimportant. Actually, these details can make a major difference in the impact of the event. Signs can turn an event space into a place that feels welcoming. And handouts with background info and resources make it easier for the audience members to continue the discussion after they’ve left the event.
You and your partners should consider these details and decide who will take on the responsibilities. Here’s a list of needs to think about:

• Creating and bringing event signage
• Creating and collecting materials to use as audience handouts
• Creating an event sign-in sheet/running the sign-in table
• Setting up literature table or display
• Setting up the space/cleaning up afterwards
• Greeting audience and distributing audience materials
• Distributing and collecting post-event evaluations
• Greeting/escorting/introducing the facilitator and other guest speakers
• Escorting the press
• Providing food (if applicable)
• Providing child care (if applicable)
• Running audio/visual equipment
• Closing the event and recognizing partners

Once you agree on the details of the event, create an event schedule and list of responsibilities and give a copy to all involved.

FIND YOUR FACILITATORS AND OTHER GUEST PARTICIPANTS

You and your community partners may decide to find others to facilitate or speak at the event. If so, invite your partners to recommend people. Don’t be afraid to ask questions about the potential person and/or ask for a short bio. You need to be comfortable that the person will fit the event and can do the job assigned. This is especially true if you’re paying the person.

Local University, College or Secondary School faculty members could also serve as “guest participants.” However, don’t rely entirely on academics to play this role. Instead, expertise should be defined broadly. The best discussions are generated not only by people who study the topics of your discussions, but also by people who have lived them.

Although you may be reluctant to ask people to talk publicly about their personal experience with a difficult public issue, people are often happy to have a welcoming forum in which they can make their stories known. While it’s always a good idea to include people in the room who can provide basic facts and history, the conversations are most likely to engage people and remain in their memories if they revolve around stories heard in person from actual people.

Whenever possible, invite relevant public officials to become involved in the project and/or to attend the event. Their involvement confers credibility on the event, and very often encourages some people to attend who would not otherwise. Many people view talk as just talk and not a step toward action. But when they know a public official will be in the room, the possibility for significant change is increased and therefore also the incentive to attend.

When public officials are in attendance, encourage them to sit among all the participants, not in front of them. If you’re asking everyone to sit in a circle for the
discussion, the officials should as well. The mere position of a public official connotes speaker, not listener, but officials have as much to learn in these situations as ordinary citizens (even though they may be unaware of that fact at the beginning of the event). The community will benefit most if the event can truly become an opportunity for listening to as wide an array of perspectives as possible, not just a chance for officials to tell community members what decisions they have made and why.

Depending on the topic of the discussion, you will need to find spokespeople for “both sides” of a topic. Sometimes it’s not possible but it’s important to try if you want a balanced discussion that welcomes all viewpoints.

Be sure to meet the facilitator or guest participant before the event. At that meeting, communicate the goals of the event and discuss whatever topics you want covered. Provide as much background information as possible so the facilitator has a clear picture of what you need.

**INVITE YOUR AUDIENCE AND PROMOTE THE EVENT**

Don’t be discouraged by a small budget. E-mails and word-of-mouth invitations are extremely effective. Also, USE YOUR PARTNERS TO PROMOTE. Suggest they post the event on their Web sites, mention it in their newsletters or send e-mailed “e-vites” to their members. Ask them to announce the event at any and all community functions they’re attending in the weeks before the event. Remember, you can never promote too much!

**Additional ways to promote include:**
- Post flyers – a simple one-page document that explains your event around town
- Send printed invitations to your or your partners mailing list
- Request Public Service Announcements on Radio or TV
- Submit event info to newspapers and/or weekly, alternative papers with community calendars
- Announce at other events or meetings
- Contact educators at community colleges, universities or high schools

**Don’t forget to think outside of the box!**

**A few more ideas to get you started ...**
- If there’s a credit union you’re familiar with, ask if they’ll advertise the event on their ATMs
- Create small, square versions of the event flyer and place at check-out counters in local cafes, coffee shops or library check-out counters. Places that are independently owned are often the most receptive to this.
- Adapt the flyer into bookmarks and distribute.

**Event Timeline**

**BEFORE THE EVENT**
- Gather materials and equipment you need for the event:
  - Several sign-in sheets (one should be on a clipboard that you can pass around).
  - Name tags, pens, markers
  - Signs for outside of the building to direct audience to the correct entrance
• Signs for inside of the building to welcome audience and list ground rules
• Audience packet of materials (printed or photocopied)
• Community partner literature
• Post event evaluations
• Audio/visual equipment to view film
• Microphones (if needed) for facilitator, guest speakers or audience members
• The outreach DVD

AT THE EVENT
After you’ve set up but before the audience arrives …
• Check the audio/visual equipment by running a small segment of the film. Make sure everything looks and sounds okay.
• While you’re checking the audio/visual equipment, view the film from different seats to be sure everyone will be able to see.
• If you’re using microphones, try them out and check the PA system.
• Find the switch for the lights and become familiar with adjusting the setting. Same for the room thermostat.
• SHOWTIME!
• Do all that you can to begin the program on time (NEVER start more than 10 minutes late, no matter who is missing or what is happening,) and close on time. Also, let the facilitator know that this is important to you.
• Every event should begin with a welcome and concise explanation of how the event will proceed so the audience knows what to expect.
• Remember to thank your facilitators, community partners and/or any sponsors you may have either in the welcome or closing of the event.
• Encourage the audience members to sign in. You may want to mention how their contact information will be used (perhaps to invite them to future events?) and that it is confidential.
• Leave time for the audience to complete the post–event evaluations. Let the audience know their feedback is important to you.

AFTER THE EVENT
• Send thank-you letters to community partners, volunteers, facilitators and special guests.
• Share evaluation feedback with community partners and sponsors.
• Arrange a meeting with community partners to evaluate the event and brainstorm for future programs.

How to Introduce Your Screening Event

Before your program begins, it is essential to welcome attendees and offer some brief information about how your screening will be structured. This time also serves as a wonderful opportunity to thank individuals involved in the planning of your program, and can even be used to plug upcoming library events or initiatives.

What should be included in your opening remarks?
• A warm welcome to all those attending.
• Clarification of event (i.e. “... special preview screening of segments from the upcoming program...”).
• Structure of event.
• Acknowledgement of the Reel to Real program
• Gratitude to special guests, program organizers, partner organizations, etc.
• Content warnings if applicable.

Sample Script:
Good Evening! My name is Mary Smith and I am the Director of the Anytown Public Library. I would like to warmly welcome you to tonight’s event; a special preview screening of Wisconsin Public Television’s upcoming Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories, with facilitated discussion to follow. We so appreciate you taking time to be part of tonight’s special event.

Just to give you an idea of how tonight’s program will proceed; in just a moment we will show highlight clips from Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories, a new Wisconsin Public Television program that chronicles Vietnam through the stories of ordinary people from Wisconsin. The program will be broadcast on Wisconsin Public Television beginning in May. This production is from the same partners and production team that created Wisconsin World War II Stories and Wisconsin Korean War Stories.

Following the film, I will invite Vietnam Veteran and Commander of Anytown American Legion Post 76, John Johnson, to come forward and lead a discussion about reactions the film, its topics, and how they relate to all of you. I know that we have many veterans in the crowd, so I anticipate some wonderful stories. Please remember, though, that the discussion portion of tonight’s event is completely voluntary. It is perfectly fine to just sit back and listen to what others have to say.

I would like to quickly acknowledge that tonight’s event is part of the Reel to Real program, brought to you by Wisconsin Public Television and the Wisconsin Library Association. The Reel to Real program, funded by XXX (local funders?), seeks to create engagement though public television programming by hosting community screenings and events, like this one, in cities throughout Wisconsin. The Anytown Library is planning additional screening events through the Reel to Real program. Information about these upcoming programs is available at the front desk, or on our website.

Before we begin, there are a few people I need to thank. First and foremost, my deepest gratitude to John Johnson and the entire Anytown American Legion for their assistance in planning and promoting tonight’s event. To rely on an old adage; we could not have hosted tonight’s event without you. Additionally, special thanks to Waldorf’s Grocery for so generously providing tonight’s refreshments.

Finally, I should warn you that tonight’s film contains some graphic images of battle, and is definitely not suitable for all audiences. (may not be needed)

With that, I present Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories. Thank you.