

Crowley Public Library Engages Readers Year-round With Wandoo Reader

Wandoo Reader



Image courtesy of Crowley Public Library, Crowley, TX

Crowley Public Library in Crowley, TX has had a history of successful summer reading programs. In fact, they typically attract 1,500 participants, including adults, teens, and children, out of a community of about 14,000 people. Their reading programs are irresistible, with delightfully elaborate props, animated storytellers, and prizes. Such efforts have helped to make the library a preferred destination.

While library staff were happy with these results — and the fact that the summer programs are so popular that library spaces are often filled to capacity — they felt there was a reading void during other times of the year. They found themselves asking, “What about winter?”

“We had been talking about a winter reading program for a while, because we felt there was a need for it,” said Cristina Winner, library director at Crowley Public Library. “Kids are out of school and the parents are looking for something for their kids to do that is entertaining, educational, and free.”

Winner first heard about Wandoo Reader, an all-in-one reading tracker and game software platform, through a teacher librarian colleague with the Crowley School District. Subsequent conversations with Evanced Solutions, a Demco company and the creator of Wandoo Reader and other library software solutions, occurred at various tradeshow events.

Quick and Easy Setup

Crowley Public Library purchased Wandoo Reader in October 2014, completed setup in less than an hour, and rapidly trained staff. The first-ever Crowley Public Library Winter Reading Program debuted close to Thanksgiving 2014.

Children ages 12 and under were the focus for the winter reading program, at that time. A mobile-friendly, non-gamified version of Wandoo Reader is also available for teens and adults.

How Wandoo Reader Works

The gamified version of Wandoo Reader that Crowley Public Library used enabled kids to solve a mystery surrounding an intriguing, robotic visitor to the library. What’s more, as the children logged more and more minutes of reading within the Wandoo Reader platform, they were able to unlock more and more robot parts, in order to create their own custom robots.

A new Wandoo Reader theme that complements the Collaborative Summer Library Program will be made available every year. Currently, Wandoo Reader customers can access robot and superhero themes.

“Wandoo Reader allowed us to automate and streamline our processes, so that we could spend more time being hands-on with the kids and parents — as opposed to bookkeeping.”

– Cristina Winner, Library Director
Crowley Public Library

“The kids really took to the gaming aspect of Wandoo Reader. We still award small prizes for hitting new levels — pencils, stickers, little toys, etc.,” said Winner. “But it was so wonderful to see the kids reading and logging their time for more intrinsic purposes.”

Tiered difficulty levels allowed kids to progress at a rate geared to their individual reading levels. In addition, kids could print and share their robot. The software also managed the awarding of prizes and random drawings.

“They were so proud of their robots and started reading and logging time to get more parts. They were excited to come to the library and use Wandoo Reader. They show their robots off to each other and library staff. It has allowed us to connect with the kids in a new way,” Winner added.

Connection to Library Programming

Over the holiday and winter breaks, the library also has a variety of other programs taking place, such as a snow globe-making session. To better market those programs, Crowley Public Library staff linked them to Wandoo Reader.

Within Wandoo Reader, the events feed advertised upcoming activities occurring at the library, helping to increase patron awareness. At the live, in-person events, staff revealed exclusive codes that kids could input into Wandoo Reader to unlock especially rare robot parts.

“We like to do things online, but we still like the personal touch,” Winner said. “We did several codes where they had to come to a program or ask a librarian a question.”

Tracking Efficiency

Prior to using Wandoo Reader, Crowley Public Library relied on paper logs to record reading program details. Winner noted that parents sometimes struggle to keep up with paper logs — especially if they have more than one child. With Wandoo Reader being online, it was more convenient for caretakers.

“Wandoo Reader allowed us to automate and streamline our processes, so that we could spend more time being hands-on with the kids and parents — as opposed to bookkeeping,” she explained.

To be clear, Wandoo Reader works with paper logs, too. However, the digitized data collection aspect of Wandoo Reader opens the door for more consistent and accurate participation tracking.

Robust Reporting

Prior to using Wandoo Reader, Crowley Public Library maintained a sizable Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. However, it was time-intensive to gather pertinent information. Plus, the format didn't lend itself to extracting key data and gleaning important insights. All reporting was manual.

For example, Crowley Public Library is interested in knowing which schools and which genders log the most books, so that it can effectively tailor outreach efforts and instill a love of reading. Before Wandoo Reader, staff could not easily access those metrics. Now, comprehensive, yet simple-to-export reports are at the ready. “We really like all the different reporting filters available in Wandoo Reader — boys vs. girls, what school they go to, how old they are, how long they're reading — because that gives us information to evaluate the program and its effectiveness,” Winner said.

“It gives us data to back up our observations and help us reevaluate, adjust, and improve.”

Joining Forces: Partnership with the School District

With Wandoo Reader, persistent patron accounts create a lasting reader record from year to year. However, Crowley Public Library takes this one step further. They partnered with the local school district to cross-promote Wandoo Reader and securely share results, such as grade level interests and reading minutes, with the schools.

“We wanted kids to make the connection between the school library and the public library and understand that when school is out they can still come to the library.”

The library has also held contests at the schools to celebrate the classes that are logging the most reading time in Wandoo Reader. The thinking is that libraries and schools are stronger together.

