

CASE STUDY: FRANKENFEST



IT'S ALIVE!

To kick-off *One State / One Story: Frankenstein*, a year-long statewide read of Mary Shelley's monstrous novel, Indiana Humanities hosted Frankenfest on Saturday, September 30, 2017. Nearly 600 people attended the 12-hour read-a-thon and festival on the grounds of the Indiana Medical History Museum. Frankenfest featured a continuous read-a-thon of *Frankenstein*, museum tours and curatorial talks on Frankenstein-related objects, a pop-up exhibit of rare anatomical books from the time of Mary Shelley, hands-on art-making activities, Franken Yard Games and an onsite Franks-N-Steins beer garden. The festival concluded with a live theatrical production of *Frankenstein*.

LET'S READ

The read-a-thon took place in the operating theater of the Old Pathology Building, the museum's main building. Fifty readers volunteered or were recruited to take the stage for 5-15 minute segments. Celebrity readers included elected officials, professional athletes, and local TV anchors. More than 40 other Hoosiers, including students, teachers and *Frankenstein* enthusiasts, rounded out the line-up. Demand was so high, we shortened our original timeslots and increased the number of reader spots available.



PASSPORT TO FUN

To encourage attendees to stay awhile and try the different activities, we designed “passports” to be stamped as attendees moved through Frankenfest. We included completing one of our evaluation strategies as part of the passport. If they collected at least five stamps, they could redeem their passport for a button. Reviewing the stamped passports helped us figure out which activities were most popular. The back of the passport included a schedule of events and museum map.

FRANKLY FASCINATING OBJECTS

With its collection of brains in jars and turn-of-the-century Victorian gothic atmosphere, the Indiana Medical History Museum, located on the former grounds of the state mental asylum, provided an atmospheric setting for Frankenfest. Given the specific ways the museum interprets the history of science and medicine, especially as it relates to theories of the mind and how our personality and consciousness are formed, it was also an appropriate place to think, read and talk about *Frankenstein*. Docents provided tours throughout the day and the museum curator selected eight objects to feature during short talks every hour. See the objects and learn how they connect to *Frankenstein*: <http://bit.ly/2E5HLIP>.

POP-UPS EVERYWHERE

Event organizers planned a temporary Franks-N-Steins beer garden. King David's Dogs, a local artisanal hot-dog maker sold franks and other snacks, while Central State Brewing, a craft brewer housed near the museum, sold their signature sour “franken” beers. We incentivized guests to come early by giving away FrankenSTEINs to the first 100 pre-registered attendees.

A librarian from the Ruth Lilly Medical Library at Indiana University School of Medicine curated a pop-up exhibit of early and rare anatomical textbooks tied to Mary Shelley and *Frankenstein*. We asked visitors to write haikus inspired by the exhibit; here are a few of our favorites:

*Anatomy lives
Bodies live beyond the grave
To treat the living*

*Spines are detached here
Open books open bodies
Frank is alive here!*

*Anatomical
Illustrations help me see
Frankenstein anew.*



From top: A teacher and her students volunteer at Frankenfest, a local TV anchor takes the stage during the read-a-thon, attendees quaff a beer from the Franks-N-Steins beer garden, and readers follow along in the museum's operating theater.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

The novelty of a *Frankenstein* festival and read-a-thon earned great local and statewide coverage in print and on television, including features in the *Indianapolis Star* and the *Northwest Indiana Times*. We sponsored posts on Facebook and hyped the event in our newsletters and social media. We did some targeted outreach in the low-income neighborhood immediately surrounding the museum, including posters at the local library branch and around town. A friendly *Frankenstein* enthusiast offered to set up a live stream (\$1,200 value), which reached an additional 900 people.

EVALUATION

Our *One State / One Story* evaluator helped us design festival-appropriate strategies to capture what attendees did and learned. Roving volunteers randomly collected surveys, while a talk-back board and our haiku-writing station captured what folks learned and thought about our key themes. Some highlights:

- More than 50% of attendees stayed longer than two hours
- 83% of attendees had never attended an Indiana Humanities event before
- 65% had never visited the museum before
- 39% had never read *Frankenstein*
- 96% were inspired to learn/do more with *Frankenstein* in 2018

STAFFING & VOLUNTEERS

In addition to Indiana Humanities' small but mighty team, more than 30 volunteers worked three-hour shifts throughout the day. Volunteers, including high school students and members of the local Junior League, helped with check-in, managing the read-a-thon, monitoring activities and museum galleries and collecting participant feedback.

BUDGET

At approximately \$6,700, we came in under budget; key expenditures included:

- \$2,500 honorarium paid to host venue, covering access to the site and staff time
- \$1,300 for tent, table, chair and A/V rentals and on-site security (required with our event permit)
- \$700 for theatrical performance
- \$500 for signage and collateral
- \$370 for art activity leader and supplies
- \$350 for misc. event supplies and materials, including yard games
- \$270 for volunteer and staff t-shirts
- \$125 for special event and temporary alcohol permits

QUESTIONS? IDEAS?

Contact Leah Nahmias, director of programs and community engagement at Indiana Humanities, to learn more. lnahmias@indianahumanities.org / 317-616-9804

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From top: Leaving a note on the talk-back board to say whether the creature is a monster or misunderstood, showing off some FrankenSTEINs.

