



Twitch and Discord

During building shutdowns due to COVID 19, several different online platforms are being used by library staff to connect with patrons. Face to face replicators such as Zoom and WebEx are among the most common internet tools used to meet with individuals. Some libraries however have experimented with using gaming platforms such as Twitch to reach out to groups of readers. Twitch enables the user to live stream or pre-record gaming sessions with viewers. You can also run a chat box on the side while the game is running. To use Twitch you need an internet enable device and a connection to www.twitch.tv. If you want to create your own library content on Twitch you need to sign up for an account at www.twitch.com

Examples of librarians running book clubs on Twitch include: ZoZee_Librarian, MysticsLibrary (with 21k followers), Pulp Comic book club. Twitch has a navigation bar to the left and a chat window on the right. This enable the readers to navigate through the game and chat while watching. You can broadcast via Twitch using a computer or a late model gaming console. So for example you could broadcast a children's book session where you read to your audience and they can interact/replay the session as they wish. You will need an open source broadcast software for your device or you can purchase a commercial package such as Xsplit Gamecaster. Twitch has a software support page that provides help with setting up your system with different software packages. In many cases you will need to install other software such as Direct X, and QuickTime.

Most of this software runs on Windows machines, but is possible to use Macs running WireCast software to run Twitch.

Discord, (www.discord.com) is like Twitch but is a more personal discussion group type of package. Discord runs on your computer and you control who can join in on the conversation. Discord was initially set up for gamers to use to discuss the operation of their games. Simple replace the games with books and libraries can use Discord as a book discussion platform. You can set up Discord groups dealing with cooking, COVID 19, bird watching, home schooling, etc. Discord was developed to help groups get together and not have VoIP charges for their group activities. Most VoIP services require a fee, but Discord is free since it is hosted on your own computer. Discord does have a premium service: Discord Nitro that offers some enhancements to the basic service. Discord replicates the chat functions in games, but provides a better quality audio service. Discord enable you to get a group of people together say for a book talk, and arrange a time for them to all meet at one time to talk about the book.

Both of these platforms will enable librarians to arrange groups for discussions on the web. They are ideal ways to connect with your patrons during the COVID crises. Even beyond the current circumstances, these platforms and others will provide libraries with another method of services and outreach to both current users and other users who have no interest in entering brick and mortar buildings.