

Nonfiction is Non-Negotiable

Why Nonfiction Books are Important to
Public Library Collections

Agenda

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Nonfiction
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the Collection

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Nonfiction
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06

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Q&A



01

Welcome!

Let's get to know each other

Hello! I'm Barbara Alvarez



- Former public librarian
- Author of two books
- University instructor
- 2022 LJ Mover & Shaker
- MLIS from UIUC
- PhD from UW-Madison
- www.barbaralvarez.com

What type of library do you work in?

- #1 urban public library
- # 2 suburban public library
- #3 rural public library

What is your nonfiction budget like?

- #1 really robust
- # 2 so-so
- #3 almost non-existent



02

Overview of Nonfiction Material





How would you define “nonfiction”?

How do you think patrons define “nonfiction”?

“Nonfiction is the broadest category of literature”

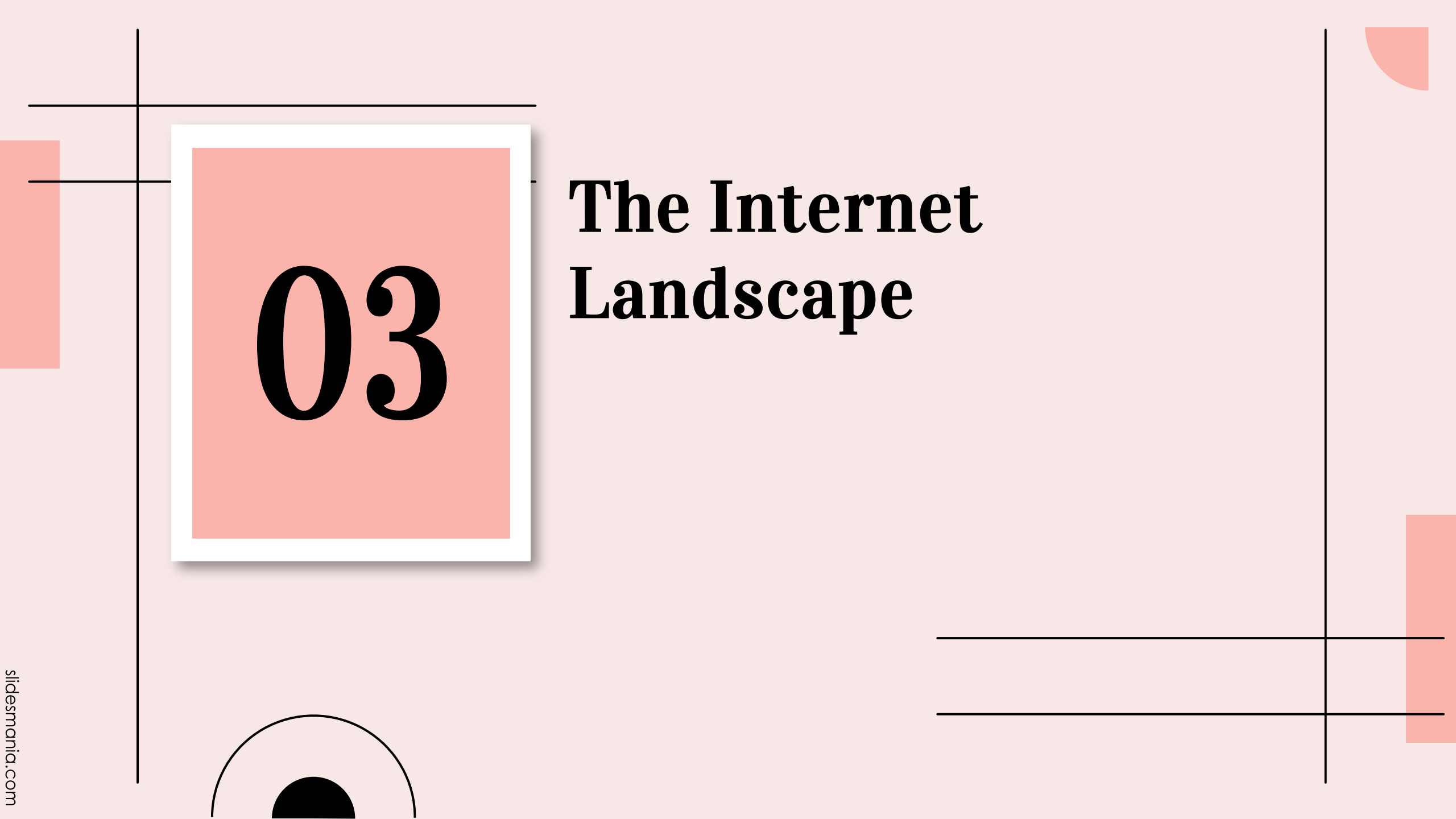
- Business
- Food & Travel
- History
- Memoirs & Biography
- Science & Nature
- Society & Culture
- True Crime

“Nonfiction refers to literature based in fact”

- Cooking
- Health & Fitness
- Pets
- Crafts
- Home Decorating
- Languages
- Religion
- Self - Help

What do you think is the hardest part of ordering nonfiction?

- #1 Deciding what to purchase
- # 2 Balancing the collection
- #3 Promoting it to the public



03

The Internet Landscape



“

**We don't need 5 million
answers- we just need a single
correct one.**

Bing vs. Google: What Patrons Should Know about Search
by Jennifer Bruneau

<https://www.infotoday.com/cilmag/sep19/Meyer--Bing-vs-Google-What-Patrons-Should-Know-About-Search.shtml>

Information is everywhere!

Think about how much information you consume in a day

- Social media
- App alerts
- Listservs
- TV
- Radio
- Books

Information Overload

"An individual's efficiency in using information in their work is hampered by the amount of relevant, and potentially useful, information available to them."

Can be associated with

- Loss of control
- Overwhelm

Bawden, D. and Robinson, L. (2009). The dark side of information: overload, anxiety and other paradoxes and pathologies. Journal of Information Science, 35(2), pp.180-191.
doi: 10.1177/0165551508095781

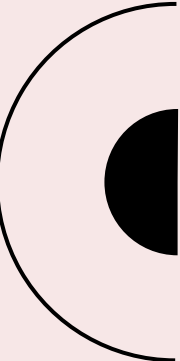
**Misinformation
and
Disinformation**

1 Clickbait

2 Algorithms

3 AI

4 Biases

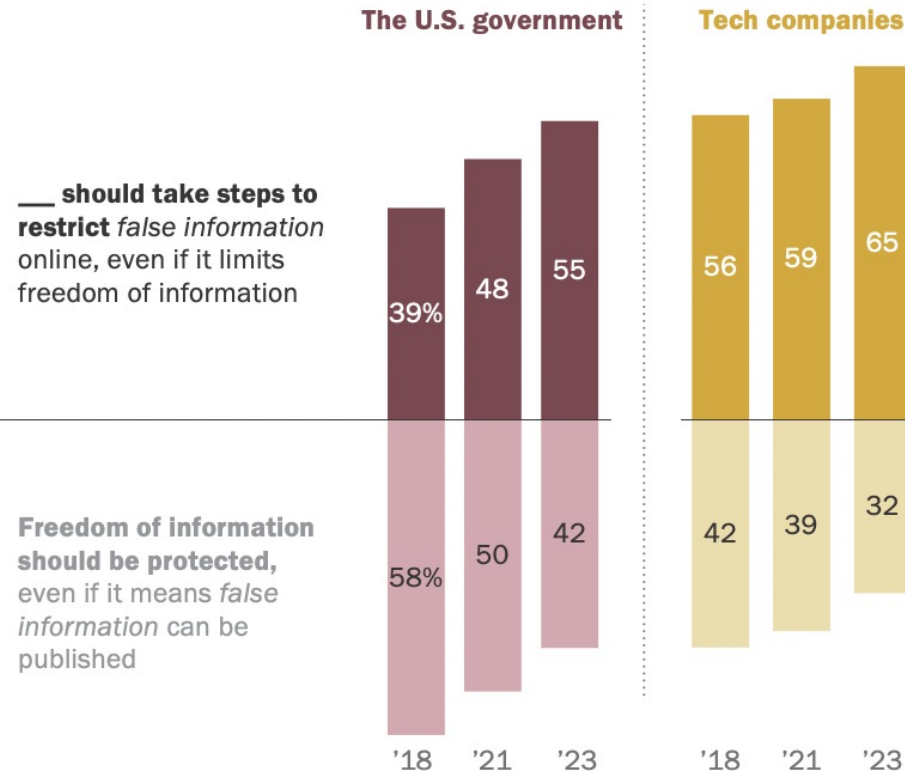


Misinformation and Disinformation

- May account for 0.2% to 29% of overall news consumption
- May be higher in specific categories, like health

Support for the U.S. government and tech companies restricting false information online has risen steadily in recent years

% of U.S. adults who say ...



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 5-11, 2023.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



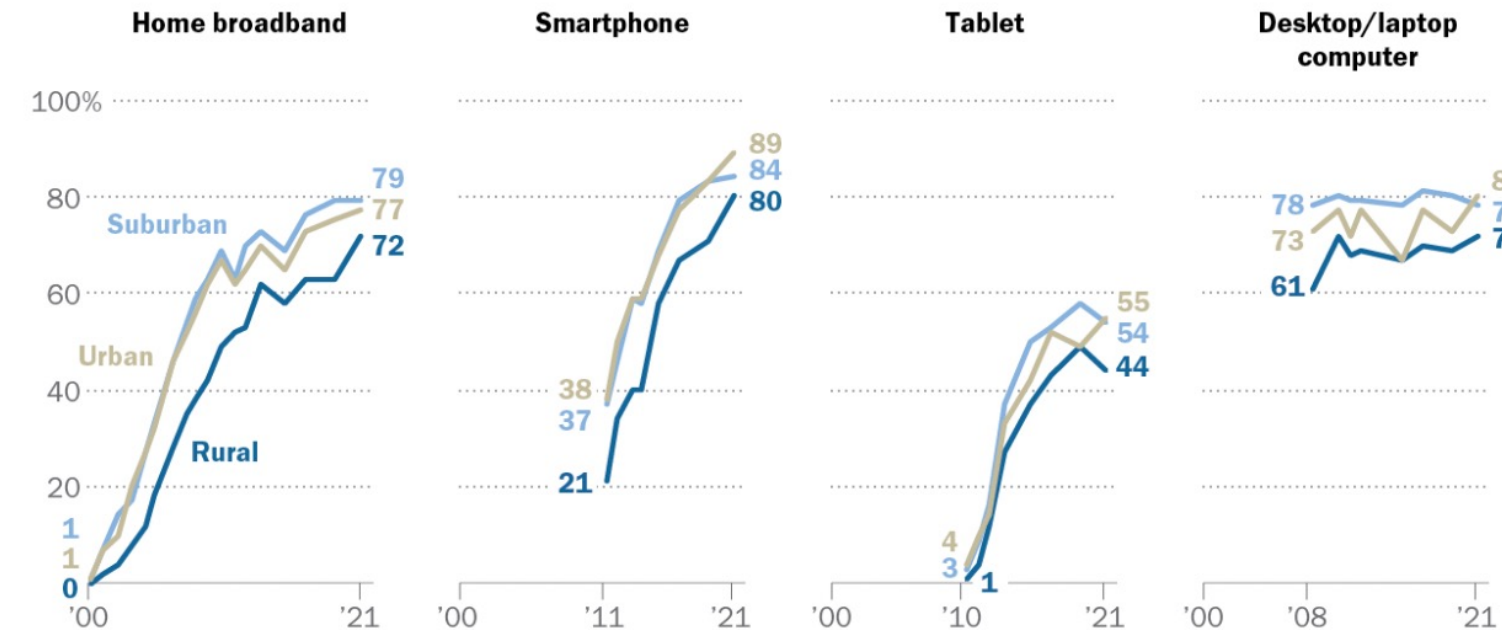
Digital Divide

The gap between those who have access to information via modern technology and those who do not

<https://www.investopedia.com/the-digital-divide-5116352>

Despite growth, rural Americans have consistently lower levels of technology ownership than urbanites and lower broadband adoption than suburbanites

% of U.S. adults who say they have or own the following



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 25-Feb. 8, 2021.

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04

Nonfiction Material in the Collection

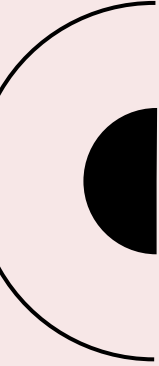
**It's not
just
physical
books!**

1 Audiobooks

2 Magazines

3 Movies

4 Databases



For all ages

Children

Picture books

Graphic novels

Magazines

Beginner chapter books

Encyclopedias

Movies/TV Shows

Young Adult

Books

Graphic Novels

Magazines

Textbooks

Databases

Adults

Movies/TV Shows

Books

Magazines

Textbooks

Encyclopedias

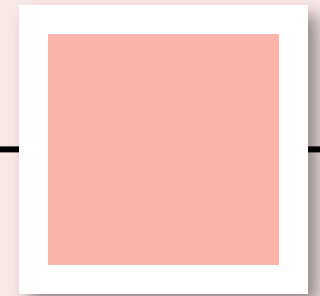
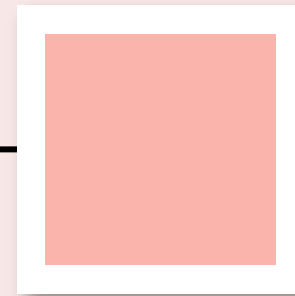
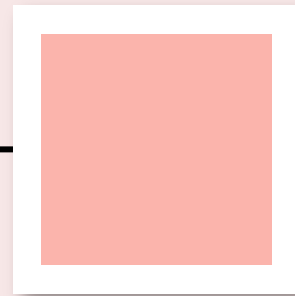
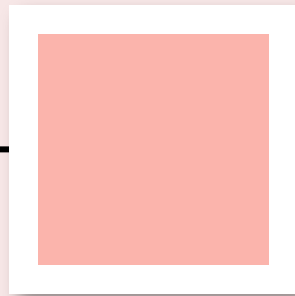
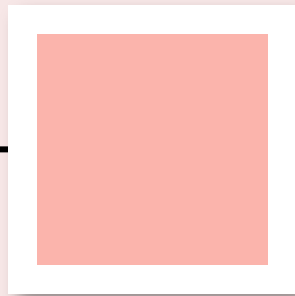
Databases

Some Nonfiction Facts

More than 80% of first graders chose nonfiction when picking their own book

Adults tend to pick fiction to read to children

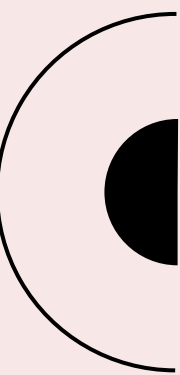
Essential to information literacy



Average child spends less than 4 minutes per day reading nonfiction

Nonfiction is underrepresented in classrooms

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1207/s15548430jlr3801_4
<https://ascd.org/el/articles/nonfiction-reading-promotes-student-success>
<https://ncte.org/statement/role-of-nonfiction-literature-k-12/>





Nonfiction develops and extends vocabulary, builds a repertoire of background information, and helps the child make connections to the natural world

Lester Laminack, Professor at Western Carolina University

<https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/nonfiction-books-kids.html>

Benefits of Nonfiction Materials

1

Promotes curiosity

2

Makes connections to
the world

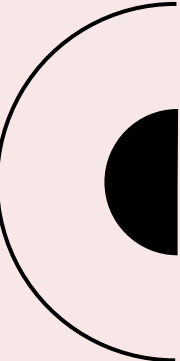
3

Improves vocabulary
and literacy

4

Sparks critical
thinking skills

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branch-out/never-too-young-nonfiction>
https://www.continentalpress.com/blog/nonfiction-reading-strategies/?srsId=AfmBOoopKB9zmpKKq-5PitRvrN_1tQGTDn-0LZ6GEU6B1fb-RX9_dY4U



Nonfiction material is crucial

- Connect to community issues
- Introduce new cultures
- Challenge biases
- Build confidence
- Educate and expand on topics





05

Promoting Nonfiction Material

What to Order

- Community analysis
 - Demographics, interests, upcoming events
- Review programs
 - What are the most popular?
- Hot topics
 - What's in the news, what are upcoming local/national events?
- Community partnerships
 - What are people doing locally?

Three Key Ways to Promote Nonfiction Material

Readers' Advisory

- Incorporate readers' advisory in your regular practice
- Create reading lists

QR Codes and Book Shelves

- Promote databases and online resources
- Create book shelves on current events or interesting topics

Programs and Book Clubs

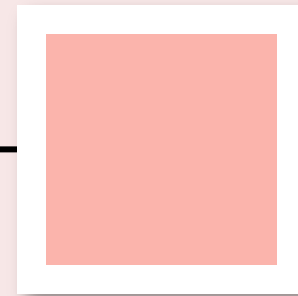
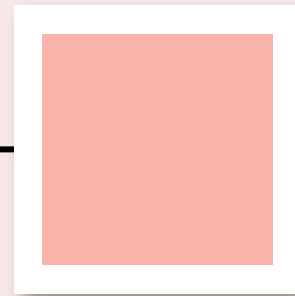
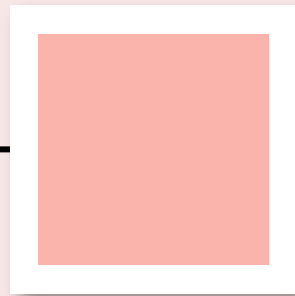
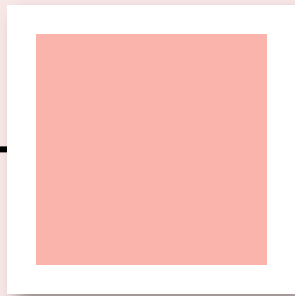
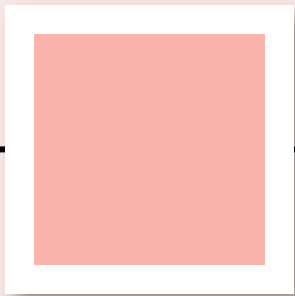
- Find out what is going on in the community
 - Incorporate in existing infrastructures

Examples

Business Book
Club

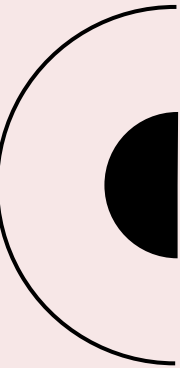
Current Events

One-Book, One
Community



Environmental
Issues

Historical Events





Community partnerships

- Local grants, initiatives, and programs
- Ex: Dementia Friendly



06

Wrap-Up





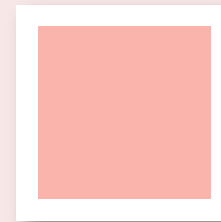
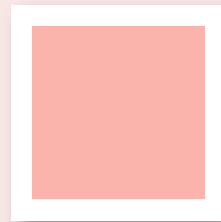
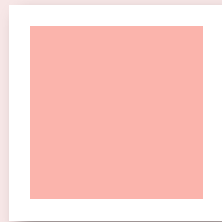
**Remember:
nonfiction materials
are non-negotiable**



Thank you!

Do you have any questions?

www.barbaralvarez.com





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