

Swansea Libraries Book Trumps

The new card collecting game from Killay Library

Book Trumps is an exciting and innovative new reading challenge from Swansea Libraries which has been running at Killay Library since December of last year. Aimed at 4-12 year olds, children are able to collect 30 fantastic playing cards by just reading books. As well as encouraging reading, the cards also assist in reading development by providing recommended reading based on the genre of each card.

The Cards

There are six great sets to collect in total and each set is based on a particular reading genre. The first set, The Myths and Legends Set contains a dragon a Giant, a princess, a knight and a mermaid.

The second set, The Sport Set contains a footballer, a surfer, a gymnast, a racing driver and a skateboarder. The third set, The Sci Fi Set, contains an astronaut, an alien, a mad scientist, a creature and a robot. The fourth set, The Magic Set contains a witch, a phoenix, a unicorn, a fairy and a wizard. The fifth set, The Superheroes Set contains a Hero, a Police Chief, a Heroine, a Sidekick and a Villain.

The sixth and final set which is aimed at our older participants is a special Horror Set and contains a Werewolf, a Monster, a Ghost, a Vampire and a Skeleton.

Each of the characters has a set of scores based on strength, courage, wisdom, agility and book power and therefore all of the cards can be used to play a Top Trump style game.

The Reading Challenge

For a child to take part in the challenge is really easy. First of all the child has to register and to do this all they have to do is come along to the library and express an interest. We immediately make up a progress sheet for them whereby we can keep track of how many books they have read. At this point we also give out an A3 poster showing images of all of the cards that are available to collect, a "rules card" and a "cover card".

The child can now collect the six sets. To collect the first set of cards, the child must read and return 5 books, for the second set, a further 6 books, the third set, 7 books and so on up to 10 books for the sixth set. Therefore a child would need to read 45 books to collect the complete game pack.

The Challenge is running throughout the year so the children have plenty of time to collect the cards. What's more, every child who collects all six Sets by July 1 2011 will have their names put into a prize draw to win £25 of vouchers.

Creating Book Trumps

The cards were all designed in-house.

From the very start, we were aware that each of the characters had to be distinct but unnamed generic characters to avoid any copyright infringement, so no Tinkerbells or Edward Cullens. Nevertheless, we came up with plenty of ideas and then narrowed it down to those outlined above which we believe provide strong, identifiable characters which appeal to both boys and girls.

The basic template was straight forward to design, using the Swansea Libraries branding for the colours and use of circles and curved corners so it feels like an extension of our existing brand identity.

The reverse of each card is used to promote reader development, listing books related to the subject, character or genre. Most of the sets have a white background and list a picture book, a 5-8 book and an 8-12 book. The Horror set, which has a black background lists a 5-8 book and 8-12 book and a teen book.

Emma Townsend, Swansea Libraries Programme and Exhibitions manager worked on the basic template for the front and reverse of the cards while Nat Hudson, Assistant Manager-Programmes and Exhibitions worked on drawing all 30 characters and their backgrounds. All the characters were hand-drawn in pencil first, then inked over, before being scanned. This was to help achieve a uniform look for all the cards and also eliminated any copyright issues.

Emma then dropped each character into the templates and filled them with colour. Finally, Emma and Nat allocated scores to all of the characters in such a way which would allow the game to work.

Partnership

A key factor in this initiative has been our partnership with the five local primary schools of Cila, Dunvant, Hendrefoilan, Pen Y Fro and Crwys.

The schools recognise that this initiative supports their efforts to improve literacy amongst their pupils and therefore their support for Book Trumps has been amazing.

First of all, all five schools have allowed me to attend school assemblies in order to promote the challenge and inform the children of what they need to do to join.

They have also put up posters within school promoting the challenge and ask the children on a weekly basis who has joined and who has got the latest cards.

Incredibly, the head teacher of Dunvant School is also giving out School House points for all of the children who join and all of the children who then

complete and has promised the winning House a day out at the beach in the summer. Therefore as you can see this is a venture that benefits both the schools and the library.

Marketing and Support

We have tried to market this initiative in a number of different ways and using a number of different strategies.

As I have already mentioned, Book Trumps has been marketed directly at the schools by me attending School assemblies and telling the children about the initiative. These visits are backed up by letters to give out to the children at the time.

We have also developed two posters to promote the Challenge. One poster as I mentioned earlier is given out on the first library visit and depicts all 30 cards, the second which has been used to promote in the schools, in the library and within the community reveals three cards as taster and focuses more on the game aspect of the cards. The differences in the two posters were deliberate in order to appeal to both those who just wished to collect the cards and those who love Top Trumps style card games.

The Challenge has also been promoted through the internet and the Swansea Libraries site has done a special feature on it.

The Book Trumps are supported by celebrities Rob Brydon and Michael Sheen. This has helped us generate coverage in The South Wales Evening Post and local radio.

Success of Book Trumps

Book Trumps has already proved a big success with over 200 children signing up to do the challenge and over 1500 books read to date. Based on these figures we are hoping to hit our final target of 500 joins and 12-15000 books read.

As you can see from some of the comments below, Book Trumps has proved has proved extremely popular with individual children, especially amongst boys who are encouraged to read more in order to collect the cards.

It has also proved successful on a partnership level with us and the schools working closely together over an extended time in order to support and promote the challenge.

Book Trumps has also proved successful in getting the support of two very prominent Welsh celebrities which not only highlights the Challenge but also the importance of libraries in general.

Finally Book Trumps has touched a nerve in the local community and has attracted support from all parts of that community. Below I have enclosed just a small selection from the many comments we have received supporting the initiative and hope from this you will see how it has impacted on real people.

“They are fun”.

[Luxi Li, Aged 8, Hendrefoilan School](#)

“We like them and want to collect them all”.

[Megan Stapley, Aged 5, Dunvant School
& Dylan Stapely, Aged 6](#)

“I really like the cards.”

[Finlay Davies, Aged 8, Cila School](#)

“I feel the scheme encourages the children to read more.”

[Lourri Morgan, Aged 9, Pen Y Fro School](#)

“I like the princess and the mermaid cards best and I like passing the cards around and reading the information.”

[Kayla Nemeth, Age 6, Pen Y Fro School](#)

“They’re excellent!”

[Chloe Leahy, Aged 7, Dunvant School](#)

“I think it is an excellent idea to get children reading.”

[Priyanka Kaushal, Aged 9, St Michaels](#)

“I think they’re excellent too.”

[Sophie Leahy, Aged 8, Dunvant School](#)

“I think the Book Trumps are a good idea because people will borrow more books. It’s a really good game.”

[Ffion Parry, Aged 8, Ysgol Login Fach](#)

“I have just got my first set of cards and am looking forward to reading some more books so I can get my second set of cards”

[Brooke Castle, Aged 8, Cila School](#)

I think the Book Trumps are a very good idea because I want to read more books to collect the cards.

[Megan Rees, Aged 10, Pen Y Fro School](#)

"What a great idea from everyone at Killay Library! I hope all the local children get involved and start reading as many books as they can, collecting their special bookmarks."

[Rob Brydon](#)

"Reading is a gateway to all kinds of possibilities. It frees our minds and gives us immense riches. Libraries have the ability to empower all of us, no matter what our backgrounds or circumstances. They are one of the most powerful tools we have. I completely support Killay Library with its Book Trump Initiative. I think it's a fantastic way to get children more involved with reading and I wish it all the very best."

[Michael Sheen](#)

Yet another fantastic way to encourage our young readers to borrow books from the Library!

This has been a real success with the children in school with many of them now discussing and challenging each other with the trump cards. The Myths and Legends has been a really popular category with the mermaid card being one of the favourites.

The children have brought in their cards to share with the class and are enthusiastic about borrowing more books from the library in order to add to their card collection. This is a fantastic incentive to encourage more reading which is a welcomed addition to our strategies for developing high quality readers.

[Mrs Vanessa Taylor \(Deputy Head Teacher ,Cila Primary School \)](#)

A wonderful opportunity to promote a love of reading. Let's utilise the wonderful resources we are fortunate to have on our doorstep

[Mrs Griffiths- Head Teacher Duvant Primary](#)

With latest reports indicating that children's reading ages are going down in Wales I think an initiative like Book Trumps which encourages children to read more is a wonderful idea. I am also delighted that this initiative has attracted the support of two big names like Rob and Michael as this will help lift the profile of public libraries.

[Duvant School Governor and former Cabinet Member for the City and County of Swansea. Gerald Clement](#)

"It is a great initiative to bring children into the library environment where they may not have been before, to access a great wealth of books"

[Teacher: Miss Evans](#)

"A very exciting idea, brilliant for engaging the most reluctant readers, especially boys."

[Parent: Mrs Sian Mitchell](#)

Its fun and encourages reading. It also encourages the children to use the library and get to know the staff.

Parent: [Mrs Boughey](#)

“It’s important to continuously think of different ways to encourage children to read and this is a fantastic initiative.

“It’s already proven a huge success and the scheme should attract several more hundred young readers by the summer.”

[Cllr Graham Thomas, Swansea Council’s Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Tourism.](#)

The Book Trump Initiative is yet another example of Killay Library trying to encourage children and young people to read and enjoy books. Killay Library already attracts the largest number of children apart from the main city centre library and this scheme will, we are sure, be an added attraction to those who have previously not discovered the joys and benefits of reading. The library is one of the focal points of the community and this initiative will further attract young people.

[Councillors Jeff and Mary Jones](#)

“Another absolutely fabulous idea! I really like the idea – they look great and this will surely motivate kids.”

[Stephanie Vaughan. Literacy Advisory](#)

Sustainability.

Book Trumps is a perfectly sustainable project because now that we have the card images, these can be produced over and over again with very little effort. This not only means that Killay Library could continue this Challenge; it also means that Book Trumps can very easily be rolled out to the other libraries in the Authority.

This also applies to all of the promotional material as the name Killay can be easily taken out and the name of another library can be put in.

Effective use of resources.

Book Trumps have been entirely designed in-house and as a result this has kept the cost of the initiative low.

I have outlined the printing costs below.

Book Trump Cards	£128.00
	£77.00
	£60.00
	£44.00
	£35.00
	£31.00
Book Trumps Posters	£167.00
Total	
£542.00	

The main resource has been staff time but even this has not been demanding. The planning stage involved a few meetings and both Emma and Nat gave their time in the making of the cards. However, Nat and Emma were able to do this when they had a quiet moment or two and at no time were they forced to interrupt their regular duties. Again I would like to point out that now the cards are completed, time resources on this project will be minimal in future.

Book Trumps has highlighted the great work that Libraries do, not only to the public, but also to national celebrities, local politicians and a host of influential individuals.

It also illustrates how we can work effectively with schools and other bodies to have real impact on people's lives. Indeed, from the quotes provided it is quite clear that those in Education see Book Trumps as a great asset in trying to improve children's literacy.

However, most importantly, Book Trumps helps make reading fun and encourages children to read more in order to collect the fantastic cards on offer. As a Library Service we can do more than that.

Steve Jeacock
Emma Townsend
Nat Hudson