Briefing the Case: Constitution Day Outreach to Campus and Community

Julie Leuzinger
Political Science Library Liaison
Department Head
Eagle Commons Library
University of North Texas

Constitution Day Outreach to Campus and Community

The celebration of Constitution Day (or Citizenship Day) on September 17th each year began in 2005 as a mandate for all publically funded educational institutions to provide instructive activities that recognize the adoption of the United States Constitution in 1787 (U.S. Department of Education). There are many creative and engaging ways to commemorate the signing of our Constitution. At the University of North Texas Libraries we have our own traditions which will be shared here along with some other resources and ideas to get you started for your next Constitution Day celebrations at your institutions.

Denton is a Texas community of over 96,000 residents (Census 2010), with over 30,000 full time students attending the University of North Texas each semester (UNT Factbook). Our Government Documents Department has a long standing tradition of providing U.S. Pocket Constitutions (purchased from ConstitutionFacts.com) to our students and community year round, but on Constitution Day we get out on campus and into the community to get as many Pocket Constitutions in people’s hands as possible! On this day we not only provide Constitutions at our Government Documents Desk but also at many of our other library service desks. We pack up hundreds of Pocket Constitutions and take them to the building on campus that houses the History and Political Science Departments to pass them out in between classes and share information about the libraries. We also go into many classrooms on the rest of campus to share Constitutions with several of our other students. The UNT Libraries also get out into the community by staffing a table at a local book store to share educational materials, library information, as well as U.S. Constitutions to those that stop by the table. The UNT Government Documents Department purchases and passes out nearly 1,000 Constitutions each September.

In addition to these outreach activities, consider sharing with your students and faculty members some of the Constitution Day educational resources provided by the U.S. Courts website. This site includes a great PowerPoint on the U.S. Justice System as well as links to outside educational resources. The National Archives also offers several interactive resources including video, digitized documents, information on the signers of the Constitution, a self-paced workshop, and a Constitution Q & A. Other ideas include working with faculty to create exhibits and panel discussions to promote “civic literacy” (Carpenter), planning your library event at the same time and location as another major campus event and promoting the library’s Constitution Day activities to your faculty to
share with their students (Payne), as well as collaborating with other on-campus organizations to create a successful event (Xiong). Whatever you decide to do to celebrate Constitution Day at your library, do your best to share the historical importance of our nation’s founding principles and how these values are still important to the rule of law in our nation today and tomorrow!

Resources


