Science Café: Conversation and Coffee at the Library

In late 2007, the Library at Cal Poly (San Luis Obispo, California) began experimenting with the concept of a "Science Café" program in order to make more meaningful connections with our community. The program’s success has been encouraging, and this essay offers some insights into the reasons for its popularity.

The term "Science Café" is often used to describe a semi-formal setting in which people can come together to discuss science-related topics in an open, informal atmosphere. In the case of our program, the cafés are held in the Library’s Learning Commons, a space designed to encourage community engagement and collaboration. The format of the Science Café is fairly flexible, with events usually consisting of a presentation by a guest speaker followed by a Q&A session and an open discussion. The topics covered range from scientific research to everyday phenomena, and the audience is typically made up of a diverse group of people, including students, faculty, staff, and the general public.

One of the main goals of the Science Café program is to make science more accessible and engaging for the public. By bringing together people from different backgrounds and interests, we hope to foster a sense of community and encourage open dialogue about science-related issues. The programs are usually free and open to the public, which helps to attract a wide audience. The Science Café program at Cal Poly has been well-received, with attendees reporting that they enjoyed the opportunity to learn about science in a relaxed and informal setting.

In addition to the Science Café, the Library has also been involved in other initiatives aimed at promoting a culture of learning and engagement. For example, the Library has been working to create a "Learning Commons" space in the library, which aims to provide a comfortable and accessible area for students to work and study. The Learning Commons is designed to encourage collaboration and peer-to-peer learning, and it features a variety of resources and services to support student success.

Through these and other programs, the Library at Cal Poly is working to create a welcoming and dynamic environment that promotes learning and community engagement. By providing opportunities for people to come together and discuss science-related topics, we believe that we are helping to build a stronger and more informed community.

References