As a part of my duties as the Marketing and PR Specialist, I am working on expanding the outreach and community involvement at the Braille and Talking Book Library. An endeavor I would like to take on while I am here is starting a book club through the library. The purpose of this book club is not only to increase the use of our services, but to also connect more with our patrons as a part of our commitment to serve and engage as many people as we can. I believe a book club would be a great way for more people to learn about and make use of the Library, as well as foster relationships with people who have similar interests to them.

The structure of the book club should be constructed with member’s wants and needs in mind. I am sending out a survey to gauge interest in the book club, as well as to see what the structural preferences are for the club. Generally speaking though, the book club can either meet in a virtual or in person setting, and should meet bi-weekly or monthly. As for book selection, they can either be pre-selected and scheduled by a Library staff member, or they can be suggested and voted on by book club members. The survey should tell us what the prospective member preferences are, that way we can work together to create the best book club experience possible. The reason that I want so much feedback before jumping into planning is because I want the members of the club to have as much agency as possible. They should not feel restricted by the club’s activities, and need to have an appropriate amount of freedom in order to have a great experience.

Book clubs go beyond just allowing people to share their love of books with one another; they can help people create deeper bonds with their peers, meet new people, think critically, and grow their own reading and writing skills. I believe this project has a lot of potential for the community that we serve. I have also given thought to making our book club a bit more unique by extending services like assistance with resume and cover letter writing, for example. In turn, our book club would be a multi-purpose resource for people.

I am interested in reaching out to the Florida Association of Blind Students as a starting point, because we both service blind people and I intend on growing our number of young patrons at the Braille and Talking Books Library. I hope that you are interested in this project, and would consider taking it on. I think that this book club would be a great asset to the Association, and I would love to see where it goes even after my internship is over.