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JLOE

Journal of Library Outreach & Engagement

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Letter from the Editors

FROM THE EDITOR

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As we launch volume 3 of JLOE, readers may note we've changed our publication schedule. When we dreamed this journal into existence we underestimated how much work is required to publish semiannually. This work is too important to do haphazardly or discontinue entirely, so we decided to publish just one exceptionally superb issue per year.

And we believe the proof is in the pudding– this year we have one superb issue with both breadth and depth. This issue covers topics ranging from going viral with witchcraft, to escape rooms, to outreach in STEM libraries, and more. We are also proud to share that some of these fantastic articles are success stories from our pre-peer review program and showcase the perspective of librarians who are newer to publishing research.

Additionally, this issue also contains a thought-provoking "Idea Lab" article, which explores ethical quandaries associated with libraries using potentially exploitative social media networks like Twitter/X and the Metaverse. The responses we received to our call for contributions represent a wide range of viewpoints. Although we may not agree with or endorse all of them, we respect the honesty and vulnerability of our contributors who address such a fraught and complex issue.

Speaking directly and honestly in today's political and cultural climate can feel risky. Indeed, we at JLOE are dismayed by the decision by the Montana State Library Commission to withdraw from the American Library Association due to their animus toward ALA president Emily Drabinski's politics and sexual orientation. The rise in open expressions of homophobia and bigotry under the guise of free speech is horrifying, as is the rampant anti-intellectual, anti-education stance taken up by the far-right.

We need to take a stand against bigotry and also protect academic freedom. If you have not already done so, consider signing this Letter of Support for Emily Drabinski. Also, consider whether you are in a position to utilize your professional experiences to organize resistance against authoritarian policies. If you do take up this call to action, might you also consider writing about it for our 2024 issue of JLOE?

We'd like to announce that the 2023 issue is founder and editor Matthew Roberts' last issue with us. Matt is leaving the world of libraries to pursue a new career track in higher education. Matt's impact on JLOE cannot be overstated; indeed, it was his brief email message "Maybe we should start a journal :)" that started this entire adventure. From the beginning, Matt has shown up, worked hard, and helped his co-editors grow in our own editorial roles. His tireless work made our pre-peer review program possible and his editing has directly improved many of our articles. Even as we congratulate Matt and wish him continued success, he leaves huge shoes to fill.

To that end, we have taken on two new editors to join our team: Kimberly Shotick and Janis Shearer. Kimberly is a longtime JLOE Editorial Advisory Board member and an assistant professor and Student Success Librarian at Northern Illinois University. They are well-known in the field of library outreach and engagement both via their research and work on national committees. Janis is an assistant professor and Public Services & Engagement Librarian at the University of Illinois and brings a wealth of professional experience in library outreach and engagement as well as experience as a researcher and peer-reviewer. We can't wait to benefit from both of their expertise for the 2024 issue. In the meantime, enjoy the 2023 issue and we look forward to your submissions for volume 4!

Practical Witchcraft

A Collaboration between a Special Collections Library and a Public Library

EDITORIAL

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>❝The distinctions between academic and public libraries are significant, with a vast gulf between audiences, budgets, and functions.❞

In a twenty-first century beset by political polarization and active disinformation campaigns, libraries are already leading the charge in emphasizing our institutions as inclusive spaces for learning and community. Further, many special collections are being newly charged with developing collections and services aimed at reparative and recovery work. Encouraging non-academic patrons to visit our premises and take advantage of unique resources is made difficult by communally known past histories of exclusion that must be dismantled. We argue that collaborations between public and academic libraries can benefit both types of institutions by mutually reinforcing shared goals in advocacy, diversity, and public access to information.

The distinctions between academic and public libraries are significant, with a vast gulf between audiences, budgets, and functions. In small college towns where the population is made up entirely of either the university staff and students who are transplanted from elsewhere, or the local community or "townies," this separation can lead to tensions and disinformation regarding access and services. The problem is exacerbated by the complicated history of many special collections, which were created with the dual charges of protecting fragile materials and promoting access to them. Special collection libraries are intended to be repositories in which rare materials are able to age gracefully while still being accessible to interested individuals. In short, many patrons, both academic and public, have been led to believe that special collections are not "for" them.

The Complicated Past of Rare Book Libraries

In his article on the inculcation of exclusivity in rare book libraries, Michael Garabedian (2006) notes that "To many people, the special collections library is comparable to a chic, four-star restaurant, their librarians the equivalent of snooty maître d's who delight in turning away the poorer and less fashionably dressed customers at the door" (56). While this draws a picture that is lightly humorous to some, it nonetheless articulates a very real anxiety among patrons that must be acknowledged and mitigated. Daniel Traister (2000) wrote the following:

> All of us know people who have been turned away from, had difficulties at, or experienced condescension, downright rudeness, or suspicion of their integrity, cleanliness, or general demeanor while trying to use . . . rare book and manuscript repositories. . . .Our theory too easily justifies a broad range of practices that, however well-intentioned they may be, prove in execution. . . to be mean-spirited, judgmental, exclusionary, hierarchical, and otiose (60–61).

These attitudes are a function of the training received by many librarians in the last century, as well as past cultures of gatekeeping that were previously

promoted as morally and intellectually worthy. Writing in 1974, Gordon N. Ray reported colleagues who nonchalantly stated that "rare book libraries should not wash the feet of the poor" (133), conflating snobbery, public services, and incredibly messy religious imagery within a single statement of breathtaking hubris. The current generation of librarians, therefore, must directly confront our shared history of disciplinary injustice alongside our continual problems of work backlogs, understaffing, and diminishing resources.

Indeed, the histories of many special collections and rare book libraries in the United States revolve around promoting specific narratives of elitism and higher learning that benefitted these institutions in the past. William Joyce (1988) traced the history of special collections in higher education from the creation of limited libraries in the eighteenth century through to the "Treasure Rooms" of the early twentieth century. Early libraries segregated their materials, with rare and old materials more or less locked up and their use discouraged. When such items were displayed, they were done so conspicuously for admiration's sake. "Though the artifacts collected might be 'treasured' as source material for scholarly research, no doubt their financial value—not to say prestige value or even elitism—was also duly recognized" (Joyce 1988, 25). Even today, the most popular question by new visitors to reading rooms is "What's your most expensive book?" as if cultural value and monetary value were synonymous. Aside from a fundamental problem of literalized value of collections, it is clear that more work needs to be done to demystify special collections and their purpose. We need to bridge the gap of audiences, publics, and values to promote equity, scholarship, and social justice.

The first steps of this work have already been done. In 2003, Alice Schreyer identified the elements that make up the necessary shift special collections need to make in her essay "From Treasure House to Research Center." While noting that special collections libraries must have reliable funding for support in personnel, space, and resources; an online presence with guidelines for access; and a place within the overall strategic plan of the institution, she adds that libraries should work "collaboratively with appropriate partners to build collections in emerging areas of scholarly interest, to enhance access to Special Collections, and to design the most effective, standards-based digitization projects"(Schreyer 2003).

In the current age of Zoom, we think that digital programming is a useful evolution from digitization projects. During the time of the COVID-19 pandemic when no one was going anywhere, many people could, at least, go online. There was a noticeable surge in interest in virtual programming that libraries at all levels hastened to meet as best they could. This is where, in our case, we found that rare books and public libraries could collaborate to meet the public exactly where they were: at home.

Developing Our Coven: Why it's Valuable for Public Libraries to Collaborate with Academic Libraries

Academic libraries tend to seem as though they are available merely for current students, faculty, scholars, and the like. This can be a damaging perception, especially for institutions that seek to make their knowledge available to any who wish to engage with it. If awareness of specialty libraries is limited in the student population, then it is even more so in the public sphere.

The world of academia has long been sequestered from the public, appearing to ostracize those of a different social or economic class. Many of the community members served by the Champaign Public Library (CPL) were completely unaware of the existence of the University of Illinois' Rare Book & Manuscript Library (RBML) and even upon discovery, did not necessarily feel welcome

or inclined to visit. CPL was established in 1876 and has continued to serve a broad and diverse community, some of which are college students and some of which are permanent community members. The perception of academia as an insular body with no interest in making connections outside of the campus community is in direct opposition to the mission of the RBML, which was established in 1936 and stewards the largest public university collection of rare books and manuscripts in the United States.

The library sought to change this perception by enlisting knowledgeable scholars to present on a crowd-pleasing topic using a truly magical, in-depth collection. Thus, the History of Witchcraft webinar was developed. To us, the timing was integral in the success of this virtual event. We mixed sought-after expertise on the culturally hot topic of witchcraft with a twist of curatorial banter. To this we added a dash of technology flavored with Zoom, social media, and accessibility provided by internet access. Finally, we combined these ingredients with the suppression of activities outside the home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The resulting product was a perfect elixir that accelerated this event into a successful collaboration between two seemingly disparate institutions.

Rectifying the common misconception that academic libraries are solely for academics themselves is no easy feat. A great many patrons are lifelong members of their local public library, and this comfortable relationship leads to a willingness to place trust in the partnerships proffered by their library. With an abundance of free services and programs, public libraries can serve as a conduit to more specific knowledge from sources that seem altogether out of reach to the general population—thus making a partnership between the public library and the academic a natural one. With the combined power of the loyal patrons of the CPL, its social media connections, and the prowess of the stewards of the RBML's holdings, we were able to expose and connect with a cross-section of our community that was previously untapped.

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According to our website, the holdings in the RBML are for everyone. So, why the disconnect? The ability to attend a university is inherently classist; therefore, the libraries within them seem unapproachable and pretentious. It is unlikely that this event would have garnered as much attention with such a wide range of viewership had it not benefitted from the public library's reach.

For this event, we were able to tap into a wellspring of interest although our audience did not specifically request information about witchcraft. We learned more about the subject of witchcraft, but most importantly, we delved into RBML's vast collections and explored items that are directly related to the topic. We were then able to synthesize our knowledge, combine it with the physical objects, and present it to a public audience. The viewer's ability to see the pages for themselves and to watch the speakers touch and interact with the items created a tactile—even visceral—experience that is exceptionally difficult to achieve via computer screen. This unique confluence made the History of Witchcraft event exceptional at the time and continues to draw viewers to the presentation after the fact. The CPL simply cannot carry the sort of historically valuable materials to inspire the sort of interest and awe conjured up by these medieval manuscripts.

Libraries, whether they are public libraries or special collections libraries, have the same objective—to promote access and share knowledge. Overall,

RBML and the field at large seek to break down barriers and share knowledge without discrimination. Public libraries have long been known to have a similar objective, furthering the logic of a marriage between community-funded public libraries that patrons feel some real ownership of and academic libraries that are not perceived as so outwardly welcoming. One of the many reverberations caused by the pandemic has been a push to make all manner of information more widely accessible. The fact that access to archival and library materials had been so starkly limited, as well as the fact that portions of the public suddenly had additional free time and wanted to fill it with cultural pursuits or other entertainments while still subject to lockdown restrictions, spurred on the excitement and fervor for such an event.

It's Magic! How We Developed a Webinar. . . on Witchcraft

With the goal of showcasing RBML's collection and increasing overall public awareness and interest in both libraries, Cait Coker, Ruthann Mowry (Miller), Tracy Allison, and Madeleine Wolske began organizing the collaborative event and developing the content of the webinar in August 2020. Halloween planning was on the horizon and, inspired by previous exhibitions as well as Coker and Mowry's backgrounds, Halloween became the focal point of the event. There were several obstacles that both RBML and CPL needed to overcome. The most pressing of these issues involved technology followed closely by the stumbling blocks associated with a first-time collaboration. In an effort to mitigate these two concerns, RBML and CPL opted to keep the event relatively informal and narrow its scope to just Western European witchcraft. It was determined that the material should be interesting and accessible to the broadest possible audience without sacrificing the quality of the content. As mentioned previously, there were strong feelings about disrupting the idea of special collections existing in a metaphorical ivory tower. The plan was to have a lecture followed by a fifteen-minute question-and-answer period that would be as user-friendly as possible and endeavor to avoid academic jargon.

The lecture presented foundational information on the history of Western European witchcraft up to the publication of the Malleus Maleficarum in 1487, followed by specific case studies of trials in early modern England through 1700. In addition to historical context, the content was selected to have a broad appeal, a sprinkling of popular culture references, and plenty of images. The speakers were very upfront and transparent regarding the specific dates and regions that would be covered. It would have been ideal to include a broader range of material, but the speakers were limited by RBML's collections, their individual curatorial knowledge, and the bandwidth available between CPL and RBML.

In particular, one of the aims of the webinar was to emphasize displaying actual objects from RBML's collection rather than just PowerPoint slides. For RBML staff, this was especially important because it had been months since in-person activities had occurred and there was a certain amount of desperation and eagerness to showcase materials and promote interactions with them. With this in mind, the content of the lecture was shaped around items in RBML's collection that were visually interesting, appealed to an audience who may not have any specialized knowledge, and utilized speaker commentaries to contextualize and explicate them.

As mentioned earlier, one of the major concerns for the webinar was the use of technology that was new to both RBML and CPL. Aside from Zoom, RBML would be using a new document camera that would allow viewers to virtually "see" the objects. In a typical in-person class, an instructor could have twenty items out and open for the students. However, the document camera restricted

how many items could be handled, required object transitions, and limited the size of the items selected. To deal with this, the number of items selected was significantly reduced and only one person was responsible for operating the document camera. This meant the speakers could focus on the content rather than speeding through, the likelihood of technological mishaps would be reduced, and the speakers would not need to swap their (socially distanced) stations in the middle of a live webinar. Ultimately, the alterations allowed us to highlight the truly important aspects of the webinar—the books.

Picking our Spells: Learning to Zoom, Banter, and Making it Accessible

CPL and RBML were facing an unprecedented fall semester and RBML had not yet ventured into the realm of virtual events. The plan was to use Zoom in conjunction with a document camera to simultaneously show the speakers as well as the material. CPL began arranging the logistics through their Zoom account and RBML began preparing and selecting the content. It was felt that CPL's experience with webinars and their easy access to a Zoom account would be an excellent convergence with the primary sources provided by RBML. The Zoom account allowed for one hundred registered participants, which was the expected level of response and consistent with typical levels of attendance for both libraries. The registration link was publicly released on a Wednesday and by that Friday, the event had reached the one hundred registered participant cap. Although the initial success of the event was exciting and unexpected, would it be possible to accommodate more participants? In order to manage the influx of interest, the event was transferred to the university's Zoom webinar account, which had a participant cap of five hundred. The transfer took place over a weekend, but by Monday morning, the event had reached capacity again. In the span of five days, the event had gone viral. Interactions quickly increased on the Facebook event page, which in turn racked up views and comments. Also, to our dismay, copycat pages popped up that were charging for our free event! According to Facebook, 2,424,178 individuals (as of January 15, 2021) from all over the world were/are interested in The History of Witchcraft and in the libraries organizing it. As of May 23, 2023, the recorded webinar had approximately 29,154 views on YouTube (Coker and Mowry 2020).

As comments poured in and the waitlist continued to expand, it became obvious that a new course of action was needed. The solution was to add a live stream component to the webinar. Simultaneously with the Zoom event, the webinar would be broadcast on CPL's YouTube channel and RBML's Facebook event page. This, of course, presented its own set of challenges—neither CPL nor RBML had any experience with live streaming, and October 2020 was a politically contentious period during which political trolls were known to show up and disrupt online events. The new priorities were to ensure a safe web environment for the audience, with additional staff and both libraries tasked with monitoring comments and managing the online presence. Meanwhile, the story of RBML and CPL's partnership on the event became a story onto itself, with articles appearing in local venues (Domal 2020, Heckel 2020, Shapiro 2021) and even a feature on an East Coast community news channel (PACTV 2020).

In many virtual settings, the audience does not have the same opportunities to engage with the material items as they do at in-person events, and there was a concern that this may be an issue. The impetus behind the webinar was not to alienate the audience, it was to promote the availability of special collections for everyone. Simply having a talking-heads style lecture that viewers watched was not the preferred route. One of the first steps to alleviate this was the use of the document camera and actual books. It was important to maintain a "live" feel

to the event; physically handling the books while talking helped. The content was workshopped until it was approachable for everyone. The speakers did not present themselves as all-knowing experts, but rather people sharing information with a group. The question-and-answer period was also extended to promote open conversation, which resulted in a fantastic discussion that lasted over an hour—longer than the actual lecture, which was about 45 minutes. Questions came from the Zoom audience, Facebook commenters, and people who were watching live via YouTube. A wide variety of people posed questions—both individuals curious to know more, and people knowledgeable enough to ask detailed questions. Participants ranged from colleagues, to local community members, and even international participants.

> "However, we still needed to balance entertaining content with promoting online resources. Questions and comments came in from around the world requesting access to materials. Witchcraft fans from Athens, Berlin, Calgary, and Istanbul participated."

In addition to extending the time for the Q&A portion, Professors Coker and Mowry also engaged in what was termed "curatorial banter." They were in the same room (socially distanced), which enabled them to have a more organic conversation. When people posed questions, viewers could witness Coker and Mowry talking to each other to see who wanted to answer or discussing which books to put on the document camera to aid in the answer. Most importantly, they were able to work together to create an easygoing atmosphere by answering questions with a smile, cracking jokes, and sharing each other's enthusiasm for the material and audience questions. Essentially, the viewers were able to see that the curators really enjoyed their work and valued the content. In turn, this made a more open and engaging atmosphere that encouraged viewers to participate, ask questions, and join in the conversation.

Executing the Spell: Managing Social Media and Zoom for the First Time

Unfortunately, there is no magic spell that will guarantee a viral event. It must be a perfect storm of algorithmic luck, community interest, and pragmatic programming. After the event was posted to CPL and RBML's social media accounts, it was shared by community interest groups, public libraries across the United States, and reported on by local and national news outlets. Professors who were planning to share the content with their students, and scholars who wanted a closer look at the manuscripts contacted CPL. Primarily the public's interest was piqued through engagement on CPL's event page. CPL's Promotions Manager, Evelyn Shapiro, posted interactive questions and images from RBML's collection, prompting approximately two hundred individuals to respond and interact per post on average. The goal was to take advantage of the engagement and interest around the webinar and ride the social media wave to reach a broader audience for the webinar. However, we still needed to balance entertaining content with promoting online resources. Questions and comments came in from around the world requesting access to materials. Witchcraft fans from Athens, Berlin, Calgary, and Istanbul participated. Individuals were encouraged to connect with their local libraries and were put in contact with RBML curators as needed. Due to the increase in awareness, CPL and RBML were each able to increase virtual traffic, even though both libraries were temporarily closed to the public.

One of the major frustrations involved with library programming is that although public libraries have the connections and resources to offer events that a great many people would find both interesting and edifying, creating

awareness around these events is difficult. The sheer number of avenues for engaging with the public and promoting events requires a significant amount of management and concerted effort, especially as it pertains to social media. For example, CPL promotes their events using a monthly emailed newsletter; an online event calendar; advertisements in local newspapers, radio, and television; promotional slideshows inside the library; and Facebook events and posts. Even if the same formula is used each time, it yields different results. Social media is a variable that cannot be fully predicted. The only aspect that can be controlled is what content is posted and when. It is impossible to know with certainty when patrons will see the posts, or if the events will go viral or be hidden by complicated and covert algorithms.

The CPL has a loyal contingent of patrons who peruse the events offered each month and attend those that appeal to them, but reaching out to and capturing the attention of those who are not regular patrons is a consistent library objective, an aim that has its fair share of difficulties. That is one part of what made the response to this particular event so surprising. We had a hunch that it would be a well-attended event because of the subject matter, but there was no predicting the level of fervor and response garnered. It was free to attend, and with the announcement of a livestream via Facebook and YouTube, there were no capacity limits. A patron sharing the event with others did not take a seat or opportunity from anyone else. Community members and beyond could therefore disseminate the event information with abandon.

Sharing & Tracking the Spell: The Aftereffects of a Successful Collaboration

For both public libraries and special collection libraries, it is in their best interests to collaborate and foster relationships with outside entities. By combining the skills and reach of a public library and an academic library, events can reach a broader audience and more time can be spent on promoting visibility and access. It behooves public libraries, especially in college towns, to partner with academic libraries to increase engagement within the community and their audience, targeting that hard-to-reach eighteen- to thirty-year-old demographic. It also behooves academic and special collections libraries to gain an understanding of another organization's offerings, which can further bolster any activities that may be initiated.

The History of Witchcraft changed the way both RBML and CPL interact with the local community as well as a broader audience. This webinar was the first collaboration between CPL and RBML. While CPL had experience running virtual events, this was certainly the first time for both libraries that an event went viral. Due to the success of the witchcraft webinar, both RBML and CPL received a significant amount of positive press, both libraries have seen an uptick in social media accounts, and—possibly most importantly—RBML and CPL continue to collaborate, opening each other up to new communities. Ultimately, the witchcraft webinar serves to underline the positive outcomes that can be achieved when public and special collections libraries work together.

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Familiarity, Autonomy, and Safety Together (FAST)

a program for adults with dementia and their family caregivers

EDITORIAL

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Familiarity, Autonomy, and Safety Together (FAST) is a program idea for adults living with dementia and their family caregivers. FAST has been developed specifically for public libraries, but other types of libraries and organizations can also implement this program[1]. Further, while FAST is aimed at adults with dementia and their family caregivers, others for whom the program is suitable may also attend. This may include people with conditions resulting in temporary or permanent symptoms similar to those of dementia (e.g., certain types of brain injuries or cognitive impairments) and their family caregivers, as well as family members or friends of people with dementia (or similar) who would benefit from the caregiver portion of the program despite not being a (primary) caregiver.

> **"**FAST consists of multiple activity stations, each with a different theme, that people living with dementia are free to move about and participate in (or not) as they choose, while caregivers are given an opportunity to interact with each other while still being readily available to assist their loved ones if needed.**"**

FAST consists of multiple activity stations, each with a different theme, that people living with dementia are free to move about and participate in (or not) as they choose, while caregivers are given an opportunity to interact with each other while still being readily available to assist their loved ones if needed. As will be expanded upon below, the acronym FAST is based on the following four concepts that are key to supporting people living with dementia:

Familiarity: Familiarity comes in a variety of forms, including through memory items and practicing previously developed cognitive and physical skills, the familiarity of the sense of autonomy, and the familiar presence of family caregivers.

Autonomy: People living with dementia are free to move around multiple activity stations as they wish, deciding whether, when, how, for how long, and at which stations they will participate.

Safety: The presence of family caregivers, the activities, and the physical space allow people living with dementia to move around and participate in a way that is safe.

Together: People living with dementia and their family caregivers are together in the same space, and people living with dementia participate together with staff and fellow program participants at each station.

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1 Other types of organizations that could implement this program include community centres, non-drop-off adult day centres, and support groups seeking to simultaneously provide services for both people with dementia and their caregivers. The portion of the program designed for people with dementia could be implemented without the accompanying caregiver portion at, for example, residential care facilities and drop-off adult day centres.

Target Client Group

Primary: People living with dementia

Almost 50 million people around the world are currently living with dementia, with over half a million living in Canada (Alzheimer Society of Canada 2022a; Government of Canada 2017) and over six million living in the United States (Alzheimer's Association 2022). While dementia is not restricted to the older population, in Canada approximately 7 percent of people aged 65 and older are currently living with dementia (Government of Canada 2017) and in the United States approximately 11 percent of people aged 65 and older are currently living with dementia (Alzheimer's Association 2022). Dementia is an umbrella term for a variety of similar diseases, many of which are progressive and of which Alzheimer's disease is both the most well known and most common (Mayo Clinic 2020a, 2020c). While symptoms of dementia can vary depending on the specific type of dementia and its degree of progression, common symptoms include memory loss; decreased focus and attention; difficulties communicating; difficulties with vision and spatial navigation, coordination, and cognitive tasks such as planning or problem solving; and psychological changes such as changes in personality or onset of depression, anxiety, agitation, hallucinations, and similar (Mayo Clinic 2020a, 2020c). The progression of dementia is typically grouped into seven stages according to the Global Deterioration Scale (Reisberg et al. 1982), and these stages are themselves often grouped into three broader stages of dementia: early, middle, and late (Alzheimer Society of Canada 2022b; Alzheimer's Society 2021). The typical symptoms in each stage vary by the type of dementia and can also vary by individual.

The safety of the person with dementia is often a primary concern, due to the symptoms described above, and the increased control exerted by family members and other caregivers over the person with dementia leads to a loss of autonomy for that person (Berry, Apesoa-Varano, and Gomez 2015; Dworkin 1986; Mayo Clinic 2020b; Moyle et al. 2011). However, involvement in various types of activities can help improve a person with dementia's sense of autonomy, and people with dementia are more likely to participate in activities that include a sense of familiarity (Phinney, Chaudhury, and O'Connor 2007; Smebye, Kirkevold, and Engedal 2016).

These ideas of familiarity, autonomy, and safety underlie dementia villages, a recent development in residential care facilities for people living with dementia. The first of such villages, Hogeweyk, opened in the Netherlands in 2009, and the first in Canada, The Village, opened in 2019 (CBC News 2019; Haeusermann 2018). These villages are set up so that residents are free to move around the village as they please while remaining safe, and include a variety of amenities such as restaurants, theatres, stores, cafes, and parks, as well as opportunities to take part in various activities. Some villages, such as Hogeweyk, include different styles of housing so that residents can live in a housing and cultural environment that most resembles that to which they were previously accustomed. Given the numbers of people living with dementia and their needs, libraries would do well to increase services for these patrons that follow the dementia villages model of focusing on familiarity, autonomy, and safety, as discussed below.

Secondary: Family caregivers

Family caregivers of people with dementia are non-professional, non-paid caregivers who provide care due to a personal connection with the care recipient, such as being a family member or close friend. Family caregivers are often the spouse/partner or adult child of the person with dementia, but may

also be children-in-law, siblings, grandchildren, friends, or other relatives or non-relatives (Bressan, Visintini, and Palese 2020). There are various reasons that someone may provide non-professional, non-paid care for a person with dementia, including love, a sense of fulfillment, a sense of duty, guilt, societal pressures, and cultural norms (Brodaty and Donkin 2009).

While many family caregivers of people with dementia experience positive impacts from caregiving (e.g., enjoying time spent together, personal growth, sense of accomplishment), negative impacts are also common. Family caregivers often suffer from burnout and an assortment of related problems, including depression, anxiety, fear, stress, frustration, resentment, social isolation, problems with physical health, financial difficulties, and concern about the future (Brodaty and Donkin 2009; Lindeza et al. 2020). For example, some studies suggest that rates of depression among family caregivers are as high as 85 percent and rates of anxiety are as high as 45 percent (Brodaty and Donkin 2009).

Family caregivers suffering from negative impacts of caregiving can benefit from support groups that help reduce social isolation, provide support and information, improve coping abilities (with regard to both caring for the person with dementia and improving the balance between caregiving and the caregiver's own needs), and increase sense of hope (e.g., hope that the situation will improve, or at least not get worse, through appreciating a realistic possibility of mitigating these negative impacts) (Alzheimer Society of British Columbia 2023; Bressan, Visintini, and Palese 2020; Duggleby et al. 2009). Libraries can provide such support in connection with supporting people with dementia by developing programs that simultaneously support both people living with dementia and their family caregivers, thus increasing the positive impact of libraries through a single program[2]. Additionally, this combined approach allows family caregivers to receive support even in situations where they might not otherwise be able to due to their caregiving responsibilities and resulting lack of available time.

Overview of Existing Library Programs and Services

Numerous library programs and services currently exist in support of people living with dementia and/or their family caregivers. One of the most well known of these is the program Memory Cafes. Memory Cafes also began in the Netherlands, in 1997, can be held at libraries or elsewhere (e.g., residential living facilities), and offer opportunities for people living with dementia and their caregivers to socialize, participate in activities, and receive dementia-related educational information (Charbonneau and Rathnam 2020; Memory Cafe Directory 2023). While the exact way Memory Cafes run can vary, they involve both people living with dementia and their caregivers participating together in a predetermined activity (Goyer 2022; Memory Cafe Directory 2023).

Other library programs aimed at people with dementia include TimeSlips, in which people with dementia create impromptu stories inspired by stock photographs; Tales and Travels, in which librarians use various supporting materials to take participants on an imaginary trip to a real location; and the use of memory boxes, which are filled with items aimed to trigger memories and at a minimum stimulate interest and curiosity (ACT on Alzheimer's 2018; Witteveen 2017). More common or widespread library programs can also be used specifically for people with dementia, such as story times, crafts, movies,

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2 In developing such programs, libraries should keep in mind that not all caregivers will be interested in the same types of programs and should consider the numerous factors that affect the likelihood of caregivers participating in such programs (Alzheimer Society of British Columbia 2023; Martindale-Adams, et al. 2016).

and games (ACT on Alzheimer's 2018; Witteveen 2017). Library programs can also be aimed specifically at caregivers, such as educational programs on topics related to dementia and caregiver support groups (ACT on Alzheimer's 2018).

Library collections can also support people with dementia and their caregivers. Such collections include educational materials for caregivers and materials specifically for people living with dementia, such as fiction books that are short with easy-to-follow plots, nonfiction books on local history written in an easy-to-follow format, books with lots of colorful images, and music and movies in a variety of formats (ACT on Alzheimer's 2018; Mortensen and Nielsen 2007). Further, training for library staff on how best to communicate with and support people with dementia, and supportive and safe physical environments, are part of the way libraries help better meet the needs of people with dementia and their caregivers (ACT on Alzheimer's 2018; Mortensen and Nielsen 2007; Witteveen 2017).

Overview of FAST Program

The FAST program is based on the needs and interests of adults with dementia and their family caregivers. However, others for whom the program is suitable (e.g., people with certain temporary or permanent cognitive impairments and their family caregivers, people who have a close relationship with someone with dementia but do not have a caregiver role) may also attend. While the program is primarily intended for people with dementia and their family caregivers to attend together, both people with dementia who are able and family caregivers may attend separately. Professional caregivers should also be permitted to attend when accompanying someone with dementia so that the person with dementia may take part in the program, or independently for the purpose of providing education, support, and advice to family caregivers (or receiving such things to the extent useful and relevant).

The program should be held in a room or similar at the library or elsewhere where there is sufficient space to set up multiple stations for people with dementia, a quiet area with comfortable seating for people with dementia to relax and get away from noise and other stimulation, and a section for caregivers. The amount of space needed will vary depending on the number of program participants and stations[3]. The space should be, or should be adjusted to be, suitable for people with dementia. This includes clear signage with strong contrast between the words and background; markings on any glass doors; good lighting that is consistent and avoids particularly bright, dark, or shadowy areas; flooring that is not shiny or slippery; furniture that is plain (e.g., avoid stripes and strong patterns), traditional and easily recognizable (rather than more modern or unique designs), and is of a colour that contrasts with the walls and floors so as to be more easily seen; sufficient space between furniture so that people can easily move around; removal of any tripping hazards (e.g., floor mats, wires); and family or universal washrooms so that caregivers can comfortably assist if needed[4].

Stations should be set up around the space at sufficient distance from each other so that they are clearly separate and distinct from other stations, and each station should have a library staff member or volunteer to run the station and

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3 In determining the quantity and physical layout of stations, it is important to consider cognitive load, levels of stimulation, and other impacts on people with dementia. For a general overview of such issues, see, e.g., Barrett, Sharma, and Zeisel (2019).
4 There are numerous resources available that provide more information on creating dementia-friendly physical environments. See, e.g., ACT on Alzheimer's (2018), Alzheimer's Society (2020), Social Care Institute for Excellence (2020a), and University of Worcester Association for Dementia Studies (2019).

assist patrons. Stations should have different themes, ideas for which can come from other programs for people with dementia as well as program participants themselves. Themes could include memory items of different types, such as technologies from the past or pictures of the way neighborhoods used to look (keep in mind the ages and cultural backgrounds of program participants when choosing such items), arts and crafts, exercise, games, puzzles, and story time, among many others. Attention should be paid to the particular interests and needs of program attendees. For example, if someone used to enjoy carpentry, a station that uses these sorts of skills might be a good choice.

In determining the needs and interests of attendees, keep in mind that people living with dementia may have difficultly remembering and/or communicating their needs and interests, and that their ability to remember and communicate may fluctuate. To the extent possible, learn about these needs and interests from the people with dementia themselves by asking them directly. The best way to communicate with someone living with dementia will depend on the individual and the stage of dementia. For example, as dementia progresses, communication may need to occur in person using short, easier-to-understand questions (for example, What is your favourite hobby? Do you like to paint?)[5]. Other ways of learning about these needs and interests can also be employed. For example, ask family caregivers or observe the people living with dementia when they are participating in program activities or other times they may visit the library and make note of what their interests seem to be. If asking family caregivers, be sure to do so in a way that does not belittle, patronize, or overtly exclude the person living with dementia. For example, discuss this topic when the person living with dementia is not present or communicate via email or by using a survey. Also keep in mind that people's interests may change over time and that people who are no longer able to participate in an activity the way they used to may become frustrated (Social Care Institute for Excellence 2020b; University of California San Francisco Weill Institute for Neurosciences Memory and Aging Center 2023).

In addition to suggesting station themes, participants (both people living with dementia and their caregivers) should be allowed to contribute items, either permanently or temporarily, to stations for use during the program (which may be particularly relevant for memory-based stations). Consideration should also be given to how best to support people living with dementia, including consideration of different stages of dementia, when choosing station themes and specific activities.

People with dementia should be allowed to move around the space freely, participating at any station of their choosing (or not participating at all) in the way that they would like and for the duration that they would like, moving on to other stations as they choose. By allowing people with dementia to move about freely in a safe environment, these patrons will both have and appreciate a greater sense of autonomy.

At one end of the room (or in a similarly separate yet present area), a space should be set up for caregivers. This space should allow caregivers to interact with each other while still being readily available to assist their loved one with dementia if needed. Caregivers should be provided with refreshments and offered the opportunity to socialize with each other and/or participate in programming as desired. Programming for caregivers could include support groups, educational speakers or materials, or simply a chance to relax. The exact programming for caregivers should be based on the needs and desires of the attendees. Such needs and desires can be determined in various ways, including

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5 For more information on communicating with people with dementia see, e.g., Alzheimer Society of Canada (2023) and Alzheimer's Association (2023).

through pre- and post-attendance surveys, informal conversations with attendees while attending the program or at other times, and adding a reflection discussion to the end of each program session that allows attendees to share their thoughts on the usefulness of that session and what they would like to do in future sessions. Professionals with experience supporting family caregivers could also be consulted to provide suggestions for useful programming ideas that the caregivers themselves may not have considered.

The FAST program can be held as frequently or intermittently as demand and resources dictate. Additionally, a modified version of the program that includes only the component for people with dementia could be brought to patrons who are unable to make it to the library or other location by setting up stations temporarily in, for example, a residential care facility.

Budget

Costs for this program can vary significantly depending on factors such as the availability of space and resources for the stations and the extent of marketing. Importantly, if budget is a concern, this program can often be held at little or no cost beyond that already included in the library budget. For example, stations can be staffed by librarians and others already employed by the library and/or by volunteers (although ideally people contributing their time should be paid); materials for stations can be obtained for little or no cost through donations (either permanent or temporary) by program participants or other library patrons, by using items the library already has in its collections, and by bargain hunting at vintage or antique stores; and marketing can be limited to low- or no-cost options.

While this program can be held for little or no cost, potential sources of significant expense include renting or modifying existing space; expanding dementia-relevant collections; hiring consultants with relevant expertise to develop the space or stations, train staff, or develop programming for caregivers; hiring additional staff to run each station; and hiring speakers to give educational talks for caregivers.

Conclusion

The FAST program allows public libraries to meet the needs of adults living with dementia and their family caregivers by expanding upon existing programs in a way that best supports both of these patron groups. Through FAST, people with dementia can experience an often-lost sense of autonomy while participating in suitable activities that can even help slow the advancement of their disease, all in a safe and supportive space with their caregivers nearby. Simultaneously, family caregivers can receive support and a sense of community while remaining available to their loved one living with dementia.

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Grassroots Inquiry through Reading Groups in Academic Libraries

fostering community across campus

EDITORIAL

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This article discusses the way reading groups within academic libraries can foster communities of grassroots inquiry. The kinds of reading groups we are discussing are not book clubs based on fiction, but rather, themed reading groups where members read scholarly texts together. These reading groups are advertised across campus with no requirements for membership beyond an interest in the theme. Reading groups like these allow library staff and faculty to collaborate with researchers from different disciplines and departments; in turn, researchers benefit from joining a community outside of the disciplinary boundaries. When reading groups cohere and form a cohort around shared curiousity, they can foster a sense of kinship based on shared inquiry and interests, promoting collaboration and generosity.

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Our reading groups have been most relevant at the initial stage of research where discussing foundational texts with those outside normal departmental boundaries, and across disciplinary borders, opens a researcher to wider understandings than their own. This depth of understanding will, in turn, effect the final research outputs, such as articles or books. The library's role in hosting the reading group can then as a discipline agnostic space that fosters intellectual generosity and true collaboration.

Our argument is both practically and theoretically oriented. We have created multiple reading groups within academic libraries and experienced the way these formed into interdisciplinary or undisicplinary communities of inquiry. Past themes of our reading groups include Digital Humanities, Academic Labor, and Critical Theory. In exploring how our reading groups succeeded in bringing together scholars across disciplines, we ventured into the history of reading groups in general and within libraries and theories of reading. In this article, we bring with some of this history and theory to help situate how reading groups are foundationally inclined toward grassroots inquiry, along with practical advice for facilitating your own reading groups.

The Grassroots of Reading Groups

Because reading groups are locations of self-education and informal education, they are rather invisible, existing almost as phenomena. Elizabeth Long (2003) notes in her research on women's book clubs, perhaps the most iconic style of reading group, that such groups "occupied a zone of cultural invisibility" (ix) because they were not of interest to any sub-discipline

of research. They were too quotidian to garner research interest in the traditional academy, but Long argued that "to take reading groups seriously had the potential, like much feminist scholarship, to destabilize received notions in social thought" (x). In much the same way, when taken seriously, reading groups have the potential to destabilize notions of the solitary genius in academia.

Certain kinds of reading groups have been successful precisely because of their veil of invisibility, which allows them to operate within liminal social space. In 1920s Korea, for example, reading groups played a role in the growth of socialism in the country, which could only occur if a communalist ethos was adopted by the general population. The popularity of reading circles fostered this ethos by asking readers to bring their individual interpretations of texts they read alone to the reading community, where conversations introduced readers to the ideas of others. They also offered a "relatively secure communal spaces where members with a similar intellectual capacity could routinely associate within an egalitarian framework of social relations" (Cheon 2014, 79). Reading circles quickly became known as "dangerous organizations" (84) in Korea because they provided a space for intellectual discussions away from state-mandated curriculum, thereby shifting cultural ideology in a bottom-up way. Reading this way had to take place through clandestine outlets, as Cheon noted that "no capitalist society is generous enough to allow its working class to enjoy the leisure activity of reading" (85). Academic libraries can similarly serve as microcosms existing in the liminal space of disciplinarity, both outside of the reward systems of the university, while still integrated in its institutional workings.

Collectivity is a core feature of a successful reading group. Reading is too often described as an individual activity, particularly clichéd in stereotypes of the silent library. As Long (2003) has argued, reading actually can only exist within specific kinds of social infrastructure. "Reading must be taught, and socialization into reading always takes place within specific social relationships," argued Long (2003, 9), adding that "Reading thus requires… an infrastructure as social base, in much the same way as modern transportation requires a physical infrastructure of highways, airports, and fuel supplies" (10). Libraries, since their inception, have operated within several dimensions of this infrastructure, providing not only the materials to read, but also evaluations on what is good to read, and the space to read within.

Traditional schooling is a very encompassing social infrastructure for reading, given that it is a place where reading is taught, advanced, and where materials to read are readily available. The curriculum itself stipulates what is worth reading, and book nooks and media libraries provide the space. The reading habit is maintained through various techniques that emphasize the dialogic nature of reading, where reading aloud, discussions of literature, book report presentations, oral recitation of literature, and book competitions all create communities of readers. From kindergarten to the graduate seminar class, many courses today exist in a dialogic classroom, grounded in Bakhtinian or Freirean logics (Bowers 2005), in which "talking to learn" as James Britton (1969) argued, is a primary delivery method.

Traditional schooling, while a successful social infrastructure for reading, is not accessible to everyone. Reading groups have thus offered the diglogic and social infrastructure for reading when traditional schooling is unavailable or untenable. Historically, such spaces have provided a incredible opportunities for changing the way knowledge is circulated. Long (2003) tells of "evening gatherings within peasant communities" where "readings from the vernacular Bible… allowed them to reflect on its message without the help

of a priest" (32). Reading together allowed for interpretive authority, which allows for a multiplicity of readings, and a destabilization of an authoritative reading. Gaining literacy disempowers interpretive authority among other transformative effects.

It is no wonder that some have described reading groups as a space of salvation, given that they were sometimes the only space for discussing intellectual matters. Long's (2003) work considers how women used reading groups as a way "out of the narrow round of their domestic concerns" (48). Others, like the diggers on alluvial goldfields who worked "isolated in a maze of gullies and streams" (Trau 2007, 47), similarly found reading groups as a primary source for connection. Not only did reading put them in contact with each other, but importantly, it connected them to the outside world through periodicals and newspapers. These reading groups were never frivolous pursuits based purely on pleasure, but often keys to living a good life in spite of isolated circumstances.

Reading Groups in Libraries

The history of library outreach and programming has overlap with the history of reading groups. Public libraries, in particular, have contributed to the creation of many reading groups; and at the very least, public libraries help(ed) provide materials for community and grassroots groups to read. One can find anedcotes like this from the Director of the Indianapolis Public Library, who expressed that "Since his library opened in 1873" there had been an increase in "'literary activity of the city; never before have the number of "reading clubs" and social meetings for the discussion of literary topics been so numerous'" (Wiegand 2015, 42). Contemporarily there are many similar notions related to things like the "the Oprah effect" a phenomena that showed immense circulation increase in books mentioned by Oprah's Book Club, and consequently, impacted how public libraries adapted their collection purashes based on the interest patrons had in Oprah's selected titles (228).

Libraries have also served as host sites for reading groups, including sponsoring reading groups centered on niche genres of fiction, romance book clubs (p. 229) and mystery novel clubs (Fister, 2005). In the 1950s, events like National Library Week and partnerships between the American Library Association and publishers set a foundation for book-centered library programming in order to mutually support the book industry and interest in libraries (Preer, 2010). Reading groups remain a popular part of public library programming and outreach; including moves toward virtual reading groups (Brynge, Case, Forsyth, Green, Holke 2015), which have been shown to contribute to members' sense of community (Fister 2005). As Fister's interview study of reading group participants demonstrated, these groups are successful at contributing to their members "'social and intellectual [worlds] at the same time'" (2005, 305). Members share stories about how when a loved one died, or they themselves suffered an illness, their reading groups actually became a central aspect of their social support network, illustrating how reading groups function beyond acts of reading. Librarians have both major and minor roles in all of these groups, acting as facilitators or simply supporting the groups by providing materials and space.

While public libraries have plenty of intersecting history with reading groups, academic libraries have very little to do with the history and current state of reading groups. Naturally, they are part of the broader infrastructure of literacy and reading that are essential, but they have different purposes than building reading community. At the foundations of librarianship's development as a profession, in general, there has long existed a debate about whether or

not books and reading should be essential to any libraries. Libraries were disciplinarily aligned with the social sciences on purpose, as part of professional debates about the purpose of libraries. While Lawrence Powell, a devoted humanist, "argued that 'books are basic; to librarianship and that to be effective professionals, librarians primarily had to be readers" (Wiegand 2016, 120). Jessa Shera notably pushed for "librarianship to form links with an evolving scientific community" (120). Shera's drive for the library "science" emphasis in the professionalization of libraries is more similar to the foundations of libraries as institution, which are products of the Enlightenment (Bivens-Tatum 2011).

In accordance with this emphasis on information science, academic libraries do not serve a community of readers so much as researchers. In addition, reading groups are often considered part of recreational reading, rather than a research activity. Wiener (1982) noted that librarianship has considered "recreational reading as an altogether superfluous function of the academic library" (64). Julie Elliott (2007; 2009) has written about how academic libraries do little to promote "extracurricular reading," due to many reasons, including that promoting reading activities "might detract from the image of the librarian as information specialist and might ally academic librarians too closely to their public library counterparts" (2007, 39). Even in the 1980s, Wiener's survey of academic library support of recreational reading revealed that an emphasis on reading would disrupt the trajectory academic libraries were after. He writes that "when libraries are straining to contain the information explosion, when information itself is identified with the computer and the electronic display terminal, is mistaken for knowledge and substituted for experience," it would be strange to many to devote budget money to supporting the reading interests of patrons (59).

As Wiener's commentary suggests, the activities and programs that academic librarians promote link closely to the field's professional identity. Thus, it makes sense that the field that self-consciously worries about being mistaken as romantic, nostalgic, out of touch, and acritical would wish to direct more energy toward the future of information rather than the supposed anachronism of reading. Looking at the past 30 years of conference themes for Academic, College, and Research Libraries (ACRL) conferences, titles like "Choosing our Future" (1997); "Racing Toward Tomorrow" (2001); "Currents and Convergence: Navigating the Rivers of Change" (2005); "Sailing into the Future—Charting our Destiny" (2007); "Imagine, Innovate, Inspire" (2013); "At the Helm" (2017); and "Ascending into an Open Future" (2021) imply that the field is preparing for a radically changing future with fewer books.

One theme that stands out from the scholarship is that there is a firm boundary around the concept that reading with others in a library context is automatically a recreational activity. It is difficult to find a nuanced discussion of reading with others as a necessary aspect of research within academic library literature. This is partially due to what Long (2003) calls the "the ideology of the solitary reader," which "suppresses recognition of the infrastructure of literacy and the social of institutional determinants of what is available to read, what is 'worth reading,' and how to read it" (11). Additionally, this perception is compounded by the notion that writing—the product we produce from our research—is also individualized: "the image of the solitary scribbler … suppresses the social aspects of writing: reading other writers, discussing ideas

> **"** …it makes sense that the field that self-consciously worries about being mistaken as romantic, nostalgic, out of touch, and acritical would wish to direct more energy toward the future of information rather than the supposed anachronism of reading.**"**

with other people, and writing to and for others in the language whose very grammar, genres, and figures of speech encode collectivity" (2). In general, both the ideology of the solitary reader and scribbler prop up individualistic notions of success within academia. When we do not recognize the collective nature of how all knowledge is created, we enact "the archetypical neoliberal subject," who "is the entrepreneurial individual whose only relationship to other people is competitive self-enhancement" (The Care Collective 2020, 4). The solitary genius is a harmful notion for both the modern university and the modern academic library.

Along with this notion, there is also a sense that in leading the campus in information and data literacy, digital or computational advancement, can only come in lieu of reading. While this is certainly not true on the microscopic level of individual libraries—almost all academic libraries do promote reading in some way—it seems true on a broad professional level. We assume that this attitude is in-part due to the belief that the concept of reading together is conducted through the ubiquitous seminar classroom. In all cases, academics have opportunities to read with other academics simply by participating in the academy. If we support what academics do for a living—research—then we automatically support reading. And yet, we are less likely to support reading explicitly in groups, though that is also something academics do for a living through the dialogic processes of writing, reviewing, presenting, and naturally, reading.

Transformative Potential of Reading Groups

While academics have the opportunity to read together in many contexts, it is the opportunity to read together in a different context that keeps academics interested in reading groups. In many academic spaces, texts are discussed as a community, but not for the sake of collective interpretation, but rather for competition over the most correct interpretation as a kind of moral high ground (Kaserman and Willson, 2009, 27). While conversation based on the required reading is largely the main activity within the seminar classroom, Kaserman and Wilson (2009) argue that it often functions as a place for a monologue with an audience, "a space for the embodiment of individualized claims of knowledge" (28). They note that many academic spaces are plagued by a false sense of interest in dialogue, where a question to another is not authentic inquiry, but rather "the deceptive 'socratease', 'the asking of friendly questions, which show holes in a person's ideas'" (28). An interdisciplinary reading group offers an alternative to this type of dialogic in that the goal is not critique, but instead a method of gaining new insights and a broader understanding of a text.

To explain more, most academic readers are trained in the art of critique and taught to read in order to be suspicious of the writer. Paul Ricouer famously called this phenomenon the hermeneutics of suspicion. While this stance prepares readers for the critical frameworks necessary for academic argument and interpretive production, it can also overwhelm the act of reading with a kind of paranoia (Sedgwick 2002). Bruno Latour (2004) has explained that this suspicious mode of reading has gone so far as to push the art of critique into blatant conspiracy theory (229). Such an ethos does not merely impact private reading, but naturally overtakes the reading community. Kaserman and Wilson (2009) state that "a common tactic of textual critique is citing weakness," but since the author of the text is not typically present in the room, "the bodily impacts of trashing are obscured" (29). The impact is not obscured, however, when the members of the seminar community begin trashing other interpretations made by others in the room. Trashing, they say, is "easier than caring critique and careful listening" (29).

This is the default hermeneutics of many academic reading communities (and conferences, etc.), and ultimately it manifests as an actual atmosphere in a given space. Heidegger argued that "experiences of mood, or of certain moods, are ontologically revelatory" (Stolorow 2014, 6) meaning that the affects and feelings of people, their approaches to texts or the world, can be felt by others. As Felski noted, "Whether our overall mood is ironic or irenic, generous or guarded, strenuous or languorous, will influence how we position ourselves in relation to the texts we encounter and what strikes us as most salient" (2015, 21). Strangely, how the readers approach a text often stipulates the very ontological—tangible, physical, experiential—state of the space we are in. This concept is precisely why reading in different contexts that may have different norms than the traditions in the academy can literally revitalize an academic's experience of reading in community. Carlson and Walker (2018) argue for academic reading group that enact radical care, wherein being "attentive to different things that we open up space for 'other possibilities'" (786). Their reading group was different because it did not "rush to conclusions to justify time spent" (786), avoiding the "hurried scholarship of profit-oriented universities" (787).

Reading Groups as Academic Communities

While at the University of Georgia, we sought to create a different space and foster a different community of reading based on these notions of inquiry, our first reading groups within an academic library were focused on Digital Humanities (DH), which is inherently interdisciplinary and broad enough to disperse expertise throughout our discussions. We created a Faculty Learning Community (FLC) through our campus Center for Teaching and Learning that was centered on Critical DH. Our group included eight faculty members from five different departments, each with varying degrees of familiarity with DH. With a diverse group, each of whom had different perspectives and expertise, in the neutral location of the Digital Humanities Lab within the Main Library, we could shed the politics of the university and the needs of individual departments in favor of reading communally. On equal footing, we were able to talk openly and deeply about the central issues in DH, data, preservation, and labor.

We used a similar format to establish a second reading group with seven graduate student members. We wanted all participants to exist on a level playing field given that graduate students are asked to read infinetely, but normally under the rigors and competition of their department and their degree requirements. In the space of a reading group, these students could feel free to breathe and know they are there to find a generous, supportive cohort and to exchange knowledge outside typical academic purview, rather than to obtain a grade or meet a requirement. Our reading list was similar to that in the FLC, though with a special attention to graduate student labor on DH projects. Without university level incentive or credit, we retained the reading group all year with nothing to offer but a collaborative environment and a few snacks.

Given the success of these groups and the hunger for this kind of intellectual space, we have each gone on to start reading groups separately at new institutions toward our thematic interests at a given time. In general our calls for members are completely open, and texts are selected for broad appeal appeal and to be deployed differently across disciplines. In this environment, complexity is welcome, as we can all offer our own interpretations rooted in our disciplinary training. These groups seek to skirt siloed boundaries that estrange students from each other at many R1 universities.

Conclusion

There is no guaranteed way to create a reading group that finds success, i.e. a group with common interests and that has a strong, participatory membership. Much of the success of the group is dependent on the location, the participants, the theme, and so forth. There are, however, a few guiding principles that can help form a reading group like the ones we have experienced and described here, which might reduce frustration of group members and keep the purpose of the group in focus.

Explicit Roles: Reading groups require organization and facilitation. The person(s) who organize the group will need to send calendar invites to participants and prepare the readings. They need to create recruitment materials or send invites if the group is invitation-only. They need to look at schedules and make sure the group meets at a reasonable time for everyone. They need to return emails.

The facilitator(s) of the group need to lead the discussion. It is not a good idea to go into a reading group meeting without an explicit leader. While we understand the importance of democratic leadership, a conversation facilitator is essential for helping guide the discussion, preparing questions to draw out participation, directing participants to significant aspects of the text, and sometimes, providing background knowledge to the text (this requires research in advance). If someone talks over people or provides negative criticism to members, the facilitator can mediate the situation.

Careful Planning: It is good for reading groups to be flexible, but it is bad for them to be haphazard and undetermined. The readings for the group should be planned in advance, by way of facilitator selection or group selection. The meeting location should be stable and reserved (or linked in advance, if virtual). Make sure the volume of reading is reasonable for the group members.

Accessible Texts: Provide the texts for the readers, when possible. If this is articles, the task is easy. Sometimes this requires making pdfs of excerpts for larger texts. Place digital copies in a location that members can easily access, such as a Dropbox or a learning management system. Place the readings behind a password that is shared with members, as not to violate any copyright regulations by putting something freely online.

Accommodating Locations & Plans: Reading groups can be held on campus or off campus, but one thing we liked to do was build the reading group into the workday, where people could plan to take part as part of their normal daily life on campus. Still, survey the group to find collective times to meet. Consider inviting the members to bring children or anyone else for whom they may need to care for during their day. Circumstances with COVID-19 extended our ideas about accommodations, as well. Consider a virtual group so that mobility, chronic illness, and risk of infection is a non-issue.

We have experienced reading groups that were joyful and reparative, created interpretation collectively, avoided competition, and seemed to actually renew members. We believe that the academic library is a disciplinary agnostic space was one of the reasons we saw such success, given that libraries can sometimes maneuver around and through the logic of the neoliberal university and attract researchers from across the curriculum who are hungry for the kind of interdisciplinary discussion that is lacking in quotidian academic experience. These researchers are searching for a deep engagement with the content without looking for holes in the argument. Hearing disparate perspectives from fellow academics allows for a respectful conversation that may reveal perspectives that were unseen or unrecognized within a particular discipline. The encouragement of this kind of intellectual exchange breaks down the imagined divide between STEM and the Humanities, social and hard sciences, and specialization that is

favored over collaboration. Reading groups have the potential to reorganize research and restructure the way we think of learning and researching as a whole.

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EDITORIAL

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Launching a Virtual Study Hall Service for University Students During the Pandemic

a crucial third place as a remote alternative

Libraries have long been seen as the elusive "third place" (Elmborg 2011), a space dedicated to social inclusion outside of commercial activities. Campus libraries are often crucial spaces on campus; in addition to housing the knowledge needed for academic pursuits, they provide much-needed seating and shelter for those who seek refuge within the building's walls. Libraries give students the opportunity for planned social activity and spontaneous interactions that have become integral to the student experience. It was not until libraries were forced to close at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic that many students realized a key element to socializing at university was lost. Libraries of all types sought to recreate those interactions online during pandemic closures for their patrons. One such project took place at McGill University, in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. As part of an outreach initiative, a series of virtual study halls were launched in order to provide students with a remote alternative to studying in the hopes of replicating the social nature of the library. This paper explores the conception of the virtual study halls from September 2020 to April 2021.

Literature Review

Libraries fostering engagement through outreach activities benefit students both academically and socially. Esbach (2020, 2) finds that "academically engaged students are motivated, they want to do well in school, and they participate in purposeful activities." Some libraries have even gone so far as to adopt a "culture of yes" to proposed events as a way to encourage and grow the outreach program and send a positive message to students about collaboration (Owens and Bishop 2018, 77). In fact, "student engagement in educationally purposeful activities is positively related to academic outcomes as represented by first-year student grades and by persistence between the first and second year of college" (Kuh et al. 2008, 555).

> **❝Library outreach plays a huge role in how students and staff interact with campus libraries.❞**

Library outreach plays a huge role in how students and staff interact with campus libraries. A 2018 Association of Research Libraries SPEC Kit on Outreach and Engagement revealed how libraries defined and structured their activities: while overall definitions of outreach varied significantly, a majority of respondents included tours, orientation sessions, open houses, and resource tables as being primary outreach activities (LeMire et al. 2018). Bradford Lee Eden's (2016) Marketing and Outreach for the Academic Library explores the

ways in which librarians can engage users on campus. Similarly, The Library Outreach Cookbook (Sittler and Rogerson 2020) published by the Association of College and Research Libraries reviews "recipes" for outreach programs and includes a section dedicated to on-campus activity. Often these programs are done in collaboration with non-academic departments outside of the library with writing centers, student affairs offices, and career services being some of the most frequent partners (Wainwright and Davidson 2017, 128).

As library outreach services continue to expand, outreach and engagement are quickly becoming positions in and of themselves and no longer just an offshoot of a librarian's job responsibilities. The University of Birmingham moved to a functional model in 2017 that resulted in the creation of an Engagement Team (Ashcroft et al. 2020). Buehler (2020) provides a model for understanding unserved or underserved members of a library community as outreach can often play an important role in bridging service gaps. The Indiana University Bloomberg's library provides an example of outreach to underserved campus communities through the creation of workshops targeted at international graduate students and a branch library with resources for the LGBTQ+ community (Buehler 2020, 60).

There is an abundance of library literature on the use of space and how library space can be defined, especially that of Elmborg's (2011) discourse on libraries as the third place. For the purposes of this paper, the literature reviewed was limited to articles primarily focused on study spaces and study halls in libraries.

Discussions on academic library outreach would be remiss if they did not consider the aspect of space and how "today's academic libraries purport to deliver space as service" (Spencer and Watstein 2017, 390). Spencer and Watstein propose that librarians are challenged with "designing increasingly complex spaces" and that this must be done in consideration of "the ever-shifting and evolving landscape of technological possibilities" (399). The Learning or Information Commons is a prime example of how libraries have repackaged space as a service in an attempt to reach as many learning styles as possible (Berman 2020). Many university libraries even provide wellness or de-stress management support either through activities or collaborations. The Louisiana State University Library's Relaxation Room is an example of how space has been adapted to accommodate wellness and encourage student success (Morgan 2020).

Yet, despite the growing movement toward collaborative study areas, students have frequently been observed studying alone rather than in pairs or groups (Lowe, Miller, and Moffett 2018). Research on the study habits of undergraduate students at the City University of New York revealed that nearly half of respondents preferred private study (Regalado and Smale 2015). This element of solitary study invokes images of the study carrell, a common fixture in many libraries and to some a symbol of academic pursuit. In contrast, students at the University of Tennessee asked for active learning spaces that combined study seating with "a combination of posture and balance seating, standing-height desks, and resistance pedaling workstations" (Walker et al. 2018, 24) creating a blend between the solitary study habits preferred by students and the trends toward wellness support. In a study of commuter students and their space preferences, Bauer (2020) aptly notes that "as technologies and preferences for learning environments change over time, so must evolve the physical space of the academic library" (146).

The COVID-19 pandemic forced physical libraries to close and staff to reconfigure how patrons would access library spaces online. This primarily featured methods of access for collections and specialized software that

previously could only be accessed onsite. Little attention was paid to activities and outreach programs during this time. Some libraries were still able to adapt physical programs or create entirely new virtual activities during this time. The Cushing Memorial Library and Archives at Texas A&M University transitioned to online talks and guest lectures for the public, developed online talks aimed at librarians, and launched virtual exhibits and a blog. (Marini 2022).

Event series were a popular initiative with the University of New Mexico Libraries who launched their Summer of Sci Fi program, which featured three hour-long events, linked social media activities, and themed marketing as a way to discuss science fiction books (Surbaugh 2021). Other academic institutions used the pandemic as an opportunity to collaborate with local public libraries, such as Athabasca University's media literacy workshops with specific emphasis on misinformation on Facebook (Nemeth and Rempel 2020, 3).

A research study in Sweden sought to map digital services in university libraries through the examination of 39 institutions. Of the libraries consulted, the Linneaus University library offered virtual consultations for planning studies, note-taking skills, and oral presentation skills as a new pandemic service (Temiz and Salelkar 2020, 371). Temiz and Salelkar also warn against the "zoom"fication of library employees and their interaction with the audience," advocating for flexible approaches instead (372). Saint Xavier University Library was one of the few institutions who publicized their virtual study rooms; most institutions used Zoom for workshops and consultations (Archer-Helke et al. 2021).

Planning and Preparation

McGill University is a research institution with over 24,000 full-time undergraduate students in Montréal, Québec, Canada. The McGill University Library is made up of several branches, including its largest location, the Humanities and Social Sciences Library (HSSL). During a library-wide census in November 2018, HSSL received 8,195 visits (not including staff) over a period of twenty-four hours, accounting for over half of all library visits made to the entire McGill Library system during the census period. (Badia 2019). The library, which is spread out over two distinct buildings, is arguably one of the most used spaces on campus. At HSSL, Outreach and Engagement consists of a variety of programs and one-shot activities, such as tabling for student club promotion, book displays and exhibitions, pet therapy visits, and more.

In March of 2020, HSSL closed its doors, along with the rest of campus, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the next few months, the staff at HSSL continued to find ways to serve the McGill University community online. Though efforts like remote access to online resources, curbside pickup, and digitization of course material have taken the forefront, outreach activities and programming have remained a priority. From June 25 to July 11, 2020, McGill University conducted a survey of new and returning students regarding planning for a remote fall 2020 semester. The results of this survey revealed that 34 percent of undergraduate students would not be residing in Montréal during the semester and that most students were interested in virtual office hours and virtual group sessions (McGill University 2020). With this information in mind, the Outreach and Engagement Coordinator for HSSL set out to create a virtual study space initiative that would help provide online social spaces for students.

To create the virtual study halls for the fall 2020 semester, it was decided that the web conferencing application Zoom would be used as McGill had purchased an institutional subscription and students would be more familiar with its features. Zoom also provided the capability of creating breakout rooms, which would allow the study halls to expand themes and activities. The original

structure of the study halls offered three styles of breakout rooms to reflect the noise levels permitted on various floors of the physical libraries: silent, quiet, and group. Silent study meant participants could not use audio or video, but they could communicate by chat. Quiet study permitted the use of video and the chat feature only. Lastly, group study allowed for video, audio, and chat. Students were invited to pre-register for a study hall and were initially asked to indicate which of the rooms they would like to join. Over the course of the fall semester, Zoom changed breakout-room access so that participants could select their own rooms, if permitted by the hosts, meaning students no longer needed to be polled prior to entering a study hall; they were welcome to move about the rooms as desired.

The virtual study halls ran for two hours each session and were held twice per week over the course of the term. A member of the library staff, either the Outreach and Engagement Coordinator or a Library Assistant, hosted each virtual study hall. The weekly schedule was designed to offer one early morning session and one late afternoon/early evening session. The hope was that by varying the times throughout the day, the study halls would be accessible to a variety of schedules. The fall 2020 remote planning survey had also revealed that nearly 20 percent of undergraduate students would be in a different time zone during the semester (McGill University 2020). By offering both an early and a late study hall, the library hoped that students would find a day and time that worked for them no matter where they were in the world.

The virtual study halls were expanded during the winter 2021 semester as the library was able to hire two undergraduate students to act as Outreach Assistants with the primary responsibility of designing and moderating their own study halls. From late January until April 2021, HSSL increased its virtual study hall offerings from two sessions per week to three. Additionally, the format of the study halls was altered to accommodate the feedback and experiences from the fall 2020 semester. As a result, three distinct study hall themes emerged: Time Capsule Study Halls, Quiet Study Halls, and the Accountability Café. The Time Capsule Study Hall offered a new experience each week with a setting from a different period in history. The Quiet Study best reflected the original fall 2020 project with emphasis on a silent space to work online. Lastly, the Accountability Café used a coffee shop atmosphere with virtual backgrounds, shared screens, and a playlist for background music. The Accountability Café also differed from other study halls in that students were asked to check in when they joined the session to declare a study goal (e.g., reading a chapter for class, writing a paper, conducting a literature review, etc.). This helped keep all students on task and feel connected.

To promote the virtual study halls, the library's centralized communications office was able to share information to social media and create weekly Facebook events to help with discovery. The communications office also provided information about the virtual study halls to the university's email newsletter. Icons for the study halls were placed on the homepage of the library, both with the top information box highlighting essential resources and services during the pandemic, and in the image gallery box featured next to the catalogue search bar (see figure 1). Liaison librarians were encouraged to share information about the virtual study halls with their own faculties, and prominent student societies were contacted to help promote. The University's Teaching and Learning Services department also contributed to the promotion of the study halls through their own newsletters and by placing links to the registration landing page on their virtual group study kit, which was used to help encourage effective studying during the sessions.
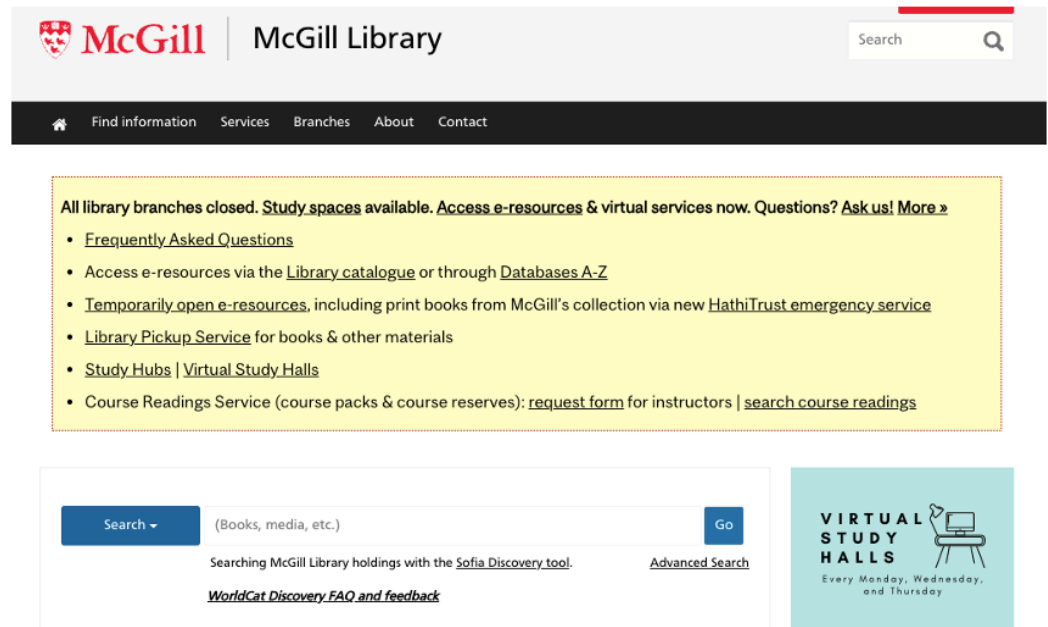
Figure 1. McGill Library home page in January 2021

Assessment

The most important goal for the library staff in creating this experience was trying to help students struggling to connect remotely. It was decided early on by the Outreach and Engagement Coordinator that success would mean even one student found the study halls to be useful. And while widespread promotion helped to encourage registration in the virtual study halls, there were roughly only seventy participants throughout both semesters.

Despite the low attendance, the students who did participate tended to come back each week as the virtual study halls had become a regular part of their work routine. Toward the end of the fall semester, the students became more active in the chat feature, choosing to check in on each other, as well as the library staff hosting the session. While participants chose not to use video and audio, the virtual study halls can still be considered a success as they managed to create a productive work environment for the students who utilized them.

Informal feedback collected from participants of the study halls suggested that the overall experience was positive. Students expressed in the chat that they were grateful to have a place to study and connect with real people. They also liked the aspect of accountability the sessions created by allowing them to put the virtual study hall into their schedule. The library also received communication from students unable to attend the study halls who requested additional times during the week to accommodate more schedules.

Larger community feedback from McGill University shows that students are struggling to stay motivated and balance their education and personal lives. This sentiment is true not just at McGill but at institutions all over the world. Future iterations of the virtual study halls will be incorporated into library activities as needed, and hybrid options will be explored now that the campus has reopened to the public.

Discussion

As with many new virtual initiatives launched in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the virtual study halls were a great way to explore new library programs and make connections with the university community. They offered

a way to bring together students seeking to replicate the social aspect of studying at a library.

A significant takeaway from the virtual study halls is the importance of creating cross-campus collaborations. While the Teaching and Learning Services department played a key role in providing support and promotion for the program, more opportunities could have been made to engage with other groups. Future iterations of the study halls could benefit from partnerships with campus student groups and student faculty associations, many of whom were seeking support and engagement during pandemic closures. For example, the Post-Graduate Students' Society of McGill University had contacted the Outreach Team at the Library about providing workshops and support for various events. They considered running The Accountability Café as a possible activity. More efforts could be made to replicate similar relationships with other student societies.

Another important aspect to improve upon is the structure of the study halls themselves. Even though the structure of the study halls was changed between the fall and winter semesters, more could be done to refine their functionality. Anecdotal feedback suggests that having students set goals and encouraging them to participate in conversation at the beginning of the study hall correlated with higher overall engagement. Offering conversation starters when a student joins a study hall is a favourable way to create relationships and instill a positive experience.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic offered many libraries the opportunity to evaluate their current service offerings and find new ways to connect with users. With the closure of the McGill Library, the virtual study halls promoted a sense of community among students who felt disconnected from their school and their peers. Campus libraries have often been regarded as pivotal locations in academia, not only for the information they hold but also for the physical space. A learning commons or reading room creates a sense of comradery and companionship among students who are endeavoring to pursue their dreams of higher education. While it is impossible to recreate the third space in a Zoom meeting, the virtual study halls served as an intermediary to bring students into these places. Going forward, the pandemic has opened the door for libraries to include more virtual outreach initiatives and provide flexible programming that can meet the needs of users both in person and online. It is unlikely that these digital offerings will disappear in the near future as campuses reopen.

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Using the Physical Academic Library to Cope with Stress

ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

Today's undergraduate college students experience high levels of stress from both academic and non-academic sources. While there has been research on the various strategies students use to manage their stress, it is unclear what role academic libraries play in stress coping. A qualitative study conducted at a regional campus of a land-grant institution in the Spring of 2020 used a grounded-theory approach to evaluate how students used the physical library to cope with their stress. The findings suggest that students who experience high levels of stress use the library to purposefully cope with their stress. Three categories of library use were identified, which align with specific stress-coping strategies. This theory has implications for the division and use of library spaces, as well as the impact that institutional investment in the physical library has on student wellness.

KEYWORDS

Stress, Coping Strategies, Academic Libraries, Library Use, Library Space

High stress levels are a common experience among undergraduate students, with more than half experiencing notable levels of stress (Gustems-Carnicer, Calderón, and Calderón-Garrido 2019, 382; Brougham et al. 2009, 85; Dyson and Renk 2006, 1231). Their stress can arise from a variety of sources, such as their personal relationships, families, and employment, as well as their coursework. Universities are aware of this fact and invest significant resources to address this issue with academic libraries generally following suit. In recent years, and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, academic libraries popularized mental health and wellness initiatives in their physical spaces (Bladek 2021, 4; Cox and Brewster 2020, 3). These initiatives are usually temporary and invite students into the library to partake in an activity such as petting therapy animals or getting a massage. However, researchers typically have not examined how students use traditional library spaces, services, or resources to deal with the pressures of academic life.

This qualitative study examines how undergraduate students cope with their stress through their everyday use of the library and its physical spaces. Librarians at a regional campus of a state land-grant institution conducted a series of focus groups in April 2020 at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. While library programming was the original focus of the study, the librarians were struck by the number of students who expressed their feelings of stress, even though they were not directly asked about it. Many of those comments were associated with library spaces and services that students used while they experienced these feelings of stress, suggesting that stress and their library use are related.

Literature Review

While stress is historically common to college and university students (Gallagher 2008, 13; Blanco et al. 2008, 1434), recent college students tend to experience it in greater intensity and frequency than students from previous generations (Sax 1997, 259; Sax 2003, 19). Several factors cause stress, but some, such as academic performance, financial concerns, post-graduation plans, and quality of sleep, cause students the most concern (Beiter et al. 2015, 92). Other causes include homesickness, low self-esteem, and problems with friends and significant others (Joseph et al. 2021, 2602).

Long-term exposure to stress can put students at a higher risk for physical and psychological impairment (Misra and McKean 2000, 41). Specifically, it can lead to negative mental and physical health effects (Barker et al. 2018, 1261; Pascoe, Hetrick, and Parker 2020, 107), especially depression (Salmela-Aro et al. 2009, 1324), which can negatively impact academic achievement and lead to burnout (Struthers, Perry, and Menec 2000, 589; Schaufeli et al. 2002, 477; Väisänen et al. 2018, 311–312). Students who suffer from burnout can develop feelings of exhaustion, cynicism, and inadequacy (Väisänen et al. 2018, 302). Burnout can promote indifference towards students' studies, a focus on the "here-and-now," and a decreased ability to ignore "irrelevant stimuli," leading to procrastination (Kuittinen and Meriläinen 2011, 44). Procrastination can compound the stress students experience, which can exacerbate their problems and make it much more difficult to succeed academically. Therefore, colleges and universities need to intervene to help students manage their stress. With their growing role as a supporter of student wellness (Rose, Godfrey, and Rose, 2015, 4), academic libraries must also work to address this issue.

Stress has become so ubiquitous among college students that it is almost endemic to the undergraduate experience (Winterdyk et al., 2008, 6). Unless students can effectively manage their stress, many may struggle to achieve their academic goals, which could snowball into a number of issues around retention and graduation. Some students may not be equipped to properly cope with their stress, the process of altering one's thought processes or behaviors to ease the demands of pressures that induce stress (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, 141). Even those that can manage their stress are often not given the space and time on campus to effectively do so. Providing students with better strategies and designated spaces for managing their stress can potentially lead to better academic and personal outcomes.

Stress coping strategies differ from person to person and vary in effectiveness. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) organized the types of coping mechanisms into two categories: problem-focused coping—coping strategies that are "directed at managing or altering the problem causing the distress," and emotion-focused coping—strategies that are "directed at regulating emotional response to the problem" (150). Specific problem-focused strategies include seeking social or professional support or creating a plan to resolve the issue, while emotion-focused strategies include social support and wishful thinking (Gustems-Carnicer, Calderón, and Calderón-Garrido 2019, 383; Renk and Smith 2007, 421). Later research further divided both categories into "active" and "passive" subcategories (Lin and Chen, 2010, 71). Some methodologies (Endler and Parker 1990, 846; Halstead, Johnson, and Cunningham 1993, 339; Twamley, Hami, and Stein 2004, 267; Iwanaga, Yokoyama, and Seiwa 2004, 14), group specific student relaxation behaviors as a separate "avoidance" category, while others include avoidance strategies under the umbrella of emotion-focused coping.

Academic libraries have embraced the opportunity to provide support for stressed students by developing a growing number of wellness programs, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bladek 2021, 8). Many of these

initiatives take the form of electronic resources, such as curated guides of stress-reducing resources or links to online tools made available on the libraries' website (Cox and Brewster 2020, 6; Hall and McAlister 2021, 941). Others involve collaborations with external departments or organizations, which share their expertise relating to students' wellness (Hall and McAlister 2021, 941–942; Ramsey and Aagard 2018, 330–331). As a natural extension of the library's traditional roles, some librarians create specific wellness collections, incorporate more wellness resources into the general collection, or increase the marketing of specific wellness resources (Bladek 2021, 4–5; Henrich 2020, 239). Academic libraries frequently offer other "unconventional stress relief offerings during finals" (Bladek, 2021, 5), which, according to Meyers-Martin and Borchard (2015), can involve extended hours, pet therapy, games, and arts and crafts (518). While many of these studies examine isolated examples of wellness programming, a smaller number of articles describe this type of work as a core part of the library's mission (Cox and Brewster 2020, 6; Merga 2021, 672).

Beyond wellness programming, the library remains a popular place for students to study and socialize (Kim 2017, 213; Choy and Goh 2016, 26), with many students considering the library to be essential to their higher educational experience (Soria 2013, 467). While students primarily perceived the library as a place for "learning and information seeking" (Kim 2017, 214), a growing number of students perceive the library as a space for collaboration, socialization, and quiet contemplation (Kim 2017, 214; Castro, Spina, and Xu 2019, 599–600; Choy and Goh 2016, 26). This perception has informed the transition of libraries from the traditional information-commons model to a learning-commons model (Delaney and Bates 2014, 31; Mehta and Cox 2021, 5). Kim (2016) found that students perceived and used the library in three ways: to seek information and services, to read and study, and to relax (512). Students also described the library as a space to seek out fun and enjoyable experiences (Sare, Bales, and Budzise-Weaver 2021, 27). This idea ties into the work of Montgomery and Miller (2011, 234) who studied students' perception of the library as a "third place"—or a space that is neither work nor home—on campus. Students describe the library as possessing a level of "homeness" (Mehta and Cox 2021, 25) and as a place where they "feel settled" and consider a "safe haven" (Sare, Bales, and Budzise-Weaver 2021, 25).

> "As the so-called heart of the campus, academic libraries are well situated to meet the mental health needs of its student population."

It is important to acknowledge the shift in the literature regarding the study of library space and student stress since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of campuses and the move to remote learning affected both the amount and intensity of stress students experienced, as well as how students used the library's space when it was available (Cox and Brewster 2020; Cox and Brewster 2022; Merga 2021; Hall and McAlister 2021; Bladek 2021; Babicka-Wirkus et al. 2021).

While a major focus of the literature discusses student use of the library and student stress independently of one another, there is little that explores the value of traditional library use in addressing this epidemic of student stress on college campuses. As the so-called heart of the campus, academic libraries are well situated to meet the mental health needs of its student population. Yet most research focuses on extracurricular activities students can engage with in the library as opposed to the impact that everyday library use can have on student stress (Cox and Brewster 2022, 112). This study will explore how traditional library use can manage student stress, examine the stress coping techniques

students use in the library, and reevaluate the role of the physical library on college campuses.

Methods

The author collected data for the study via a series of five focus groups consisting of a total of twenty-four undergraduate students at a regional campus of a state land-grant institution located in the suburbs of a major metropolitan area in the Northeastern United States. The campus is diverse, with a majority-minority population of about 3500 students FTE. The campus library is located in one of two academic buildings on campus and consists of three floors with the third floor being reserved for quiet study and the main and lower levels open for collaborative study and events. Of the twenty-four students who participated, ten were first-year students, five second-year, three third-year, and six graduating seniors; all twenty-four participants represented seventeen different majors. While the population skewed heavily towards first- and second-year students, that is representative of the campus as many third- and fourth-year students choose to finish their degrees at the main campus. To promote privacy and encourage student participation, responses by individual students during the focus groups were not tracked.

The author used a grounded theory research methodology to analyze responses to the survey. Grounded theory is a form of qualitative analysis originally theorized by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967). It is a collection of systematic but flexible methods for gathering and analyzing qualitative data, emphasizing multiple iterations of data collection, analysis, and constant comparisons, ultimately leading to the formation of theories "grounded" in the data itself (Charmaz 2014, 1). In a grounded-theory analysis, qualitative data is analyzed for themes, which are constantly compared to each other to identify connections and larger themes. This process continues until an overarching theme or theory is identified. It has since been expanded upon by Corbin and Strauss (1990) and Charmaz (2014). For this study, the author followed Corbin and Strauss' (2008) recommendations for employing grounded-theory analysis.

After the study received approval from the University's IRB, the author invited students to complete a recruitment survey from late January to early March of 2020. Sixty-one active students completed the recruitment survey to participate in the study. The author scheduled the in-person focus groups for mid- to late March of 2020. Due to onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus groups were moved online and delayed to April 2020. The number of participants subsequently dropped to thirty-two, who were rescheduled into five focus groups to be conducted via Zoom. Of those, twenty-four attended the focus-group discussions.

The transcriptions of the focus groups were analyzed using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software program, utilizing an open coding system. Codes were developed during the coding process in response to themes pulled directly from the participants' responses. Memo writing was employed during open coding, which assisted in the organization of ideas and in-depth exploration of themes and concepts discovered in the data. Memo writing also informed the reorganization, removal, and creation of new codes throughout the entirety of the open coding process, which led to the writing of additional memos. Throughout the entire coding process, the author used constant comparisons to group individual codes into larger themes and concepts. As a result, the author identified three primary ways students used the library to address their stress: to be productive, to de-stress, and to socialize. Due to the

online nature of the conversations, the use of theoretical sampling beyond the original focus groups was not possible.

Results

Students in the focus groups were asked nine primary questions mainly focused on library programming, spaces, and feelings of belonging in the library. Upon analyzing their responses, several themes were identified. First, the students' responses provided unique insight into how they used the library's spaces, resources, and services. Analysis of their responses identified several themes, including three distinct reasons for students to use the library: to be productive, to de-stress, and to socialize.

Student Productivity in the Library

Students commonly used the library to maximize their productivity. They described the library as the place to "get stuff done." Consistently, students spoke of the library as providing "the focus I need to crank out a paper" or describing it as a place where they "can really focus. . . because the whole environment is really based on studying." This contrasted with how students viewed their dorm rooms or apartments, which were not considered conducive for completing rigorous academic work. Some students went to the library even when it was inconvenient for them. One student noted, "[E]ven though sometimes I do go [elsewhere] because I don't feel like going all the way to the library, I eventually leave . . . and I go to the library because I feel like I'm just not able to study there."

Some students specifically sought quiet spaces within the library to work on their assignments. One student described how ". . .if [the main floor is] too loud for me, I'll go downstairs because it's just a little bit quieter. And then if I want absolute silence, I'll go to third floor." Another student mentioned she likes "going into the [study] rooms . . . it really helps having a quiet space with no other students in there, so I can focus." Students seek out spaces where they can focus and limit distractions in order to be most productive. Students described other locations on campus where they attempted to study but ultimately deemed them unacceptable because they were too loud or too distracting, indicating a need for a certain atmosphere to be productive: ". . . if I tried to study in a cafeteria, sometimes, it's like too many people in there, so I can't focus. So the library is just much better."

Though some students prefer a quiet space when they need to be productive, others use the library to work collaboratively with others. Several students enjoyed the library as a place to "study with a group" because "even when you're with groups of people [in the library], the idea is really to study." Students sought specific spaces in the library to conduct such collaborative work, such as the library's "group cubes,"—open cubicles on the main and lower floors of the library—and study "rooms in the lower half of the library." Some used the rooms to attend their remote classes: "Sometimes actually, we would have an online class there, and I have a couple of friends, we would just rent out a room there and use just one screen for the class."

Students Using the Library to De-stress

Students also used the library to "relax," "chill," or "take a break" throughout their day. One student described conversations she had with her friends about why they did not attend any campus events: "they say it's because they just came from a class where they just saw a PowerPoint presentation or they just learned, so they just want to relax and sit down and go on their phones." Another student used the library "as a space where I

can be on my phone or just using the computers." A third visited the library to "walk around and just relax a bit." This is even without acknowledging neurodivergent students or those with religious needs. One student specifically sought a "multiuse quiet room" on campus because she has "a lot of friends who are either practicing Muslims or deal with anxiety or just need a general space to nap, and they don't necessarily have that space on campus. And I think the library with all the different conference rooms would be . . . the space to have that, like it makes sense."

Several students identified and utilized library spaces as a place to take a nap. Whether from commuting to school "so early" in the morning, working after class, or just getting "tired in class," students consistently described themselves as being tired. Sleep, or the lack of it, is such a concern for students that some requested the library purchase "nap pods" they have "seen at other colleges," or that the library create "a designated nap area." Even without those designated spaces, students see the library as a "space to turn down." This may be due to the welcoming nature of the library. As one student put it: "the fact that I can take a nap on the lower floor and no one really says anything about it, honestly, makes me feel pretty welcome at the library."

While many students use the library to relax, others seek out the library to engage in fun activities. Several attended fun programs in the library: "So the library did a late-night study session last semester . . . And it was just a very nice environment and it was fun. I told my boyfriend actually. I was like, we're going to do this again next semester. We're going to keep coming back." Other students shared this line of thinking, indicating a desire to seek entertaining events on campus. One student would ask himself questions like "'Will this be fun?'" and "'will I make a good memory?'" to identify which events to attend. Students especially sought out events if there was free food: "Whenever there was an event that offered free food, I always try to go."

Many of the students' comments imply a sense of "homeness" that they feel in the library. Echoing Mehta and Cox (2021), students described several traits that correspond with the feeling of "homeness" such as rooting themselves in a part of the library for extended periods of time ("I'll go [to the library], and then I'll go to class, and I'll come back."), regeneration in the library space ("I spent a lot of time on the silent space upstairs taking a nap"), and the warmth of the space ("I always felt comfortable going to the library, and I feel respected by other people.") (9). They perceive the library as a comfortable and welcoming space where they can be themselves and let down their guard.

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Student Socialization in the Library

Many students considered the library to be a social space in addition to an academic and relaxation space. Several identified specific areas within the library as the place "to go with people" to hang out. Many described the main floor of the library as the "social floor" where they can "hang out with my friends." Others see the library in general as a social destination. ". . . if I'm talking to any of my friends and they're in a different class and their class just ends, I tell them just to come to the library because it's like a social hangout." One student will come to the library "to just have fun with my friends." Part of this draw is due to the events held in the library. A student described how he "usually socialize[s] when I go" to events in the library and that he either goes "with a friend or . . . plan on meeting a friend there."

However, sometimes students just want to use the library's space for their own fun. One student described how she uses the library's collaborative spaces with friends to "play board games, and . . . just discuss different anime we watched." Others simply use the library to "chill with my friends, just sit around, maybe just talk about something."

Student Feelings of Stress

An unexpected theme that arose from the focus groups is the prevalence of the stress students felt. Even though no students were asked questions about their stress, they consistently described themselves as "stressed" or "super tired." The fact that the sentiment of feeling stressed was so common among the students suggests that student stress is underrepresented in the data. One student sometimes felt like she was "drowning in homework." Others sought "time off from a busy schedule" or spaces and programs that were "really relaxing and [help] to de-stress a little bit." Another student visited the library "just to wind down, I guess, relax," suggesting he was under a constant level of stress. Several described long commutes. One student said he lived "an hour away" from campus, while another had to "make sure I can get on the shuttle bus so I can get to a certain train." Other students described having to "work in the morning and then come to school after that" and dealing with other responsibilities outside of their classes. The students' insights into their stress indicate it is very much on their minds and informs many of their daily decisions.

Association between library use and stress

Considering the number of students who expressed feelings of stress unprompted in the focus groups, it was assumed that their stress regularly influenced their behavior on campus. Student responses regarding their library use were compared to the emotion-focused and problem-focused coping styles on Lin and Chen's stress coping inventory (2010, 71). A connection was observed between library use and different stress coping strategies. Of the twenty-eight coping styles included in the inventory, eight were clearly evident in the students' responses surrounding library use. Of those eight, four are categorized as active emotion-focused coping styles, three active problem-focused, and one passive problem-focused coping style (see table 1).

Students were most likely to describe problem-focused coping strategies, which attempt "to actively alter a problematic situation" (Dyson and Renk 2006, 1233). Most specifically described active problem-focused strategies, wherein students "solve their problems by looking at the centre of the problem and assist themselves or search for assistance" (Lin and Chen, 2010, 71). Some students searched for information from the library or internet for homework: "most of the time I'm in the library using the computer because I'm either doing an assignment or I'm looking up something." Others discussed academic issues with instructors or classmates: "I didn't really know what resources the library had, so I asked for a librarian to help me." Many, if not most, students used the library to focus and work hard to complete their academic tasks: "I had a four-hour break between classes. I would spend it [in the library] working on homework, projects, whatever. Sometimes more." These coping strategies all align closely with the *Be productive* category of library use. However, some students mentioned that they would procrastinate and put their responsibilities aside, at least temporarily: "nice to take a break from our finals and just get some snacks and relax." Procrastination is categorized as a passive problem-focused coping strategy that aligns more closely with the *De-stress* library use

Coping type	Strategy	Library practice	Evidence
Active emotion-focused	Seek social support	Seek support from friends and family	"I go with a friend, or I plan on meeting a friend there. And because I have, I guess, an anchor, it's a lot easier"
	Seek out pleasure	Fun events	"I would definitely choose [fun events] because everyone needs some time off from a busy schedule to enjoy"
		Food	"Whenever there was an event that offered free food, I always try to go"
	Actively calm the mind	Find a place to meditate or relax	"I usually go just to wind down [and] relax"
		Sit and just be	"I'll just sit there [in the library]"
Active problem-focused	Seek academic resources	Navigate library databases	"looking up something"
		Check out books on reserve	"go over to the library and check out the textbook"
		Utilize hardware and software in library	"I use [the] computer [Mersive Solstice station] for [sharing my screen]"
		Access online tutorials	"used a lot of the resources they offer online"
	Work hard	Focus on work	"focus and get my work done"
		Stay for long periods of time	"stay late and work on everything in the library"
		Studying or taking quizzes or exams	"take my online quizzes or borrow a book and do homework"
		Work on homework or projects	"using the computer for doing my homework"
	Seek professional support	Talk to front desk for checking out items	"I'd ask the people at the front desk a question"
		Research help from librarians	"asked a librarian to help me"
		Online chat tools	"I asked [some] questions and [the librarian] emailed me back"
	Collaborate	Group Study	"I would go with my friends . . . and we would study together"
		Group projects	"I used to spend mostly my time at the library because we have projects, and then we have group meetings"
Passive problem-focused	Procrastinate	Watch videos or surf web on device	"I'll just use it kind of as a space where I can be on my phone"
		Nap	"Something that I actually use the library for pretty often is a place to nap"
		Socialize with friends	"sometimes, I just go there, chill with my friends"
		Snack	"take a snack at Noon"

Table 1. Coping styles for stress

category, though procrastination has the potential to be detrimental to students' academic success.

Students also used the library to address their emotional response to stress by "adopting the attitude of emotional adjustment like positive thinking emotions and self-encouragement" (Joseph et al. 2021, 2600-2601). Some actively addressed their mental state through purposeful relaxation: "I usually go just to wind down [and] relax." Others would temporarily separate themselves from their stress by seeking out pleasurable experiences: "I would definitely choose [fun events] because everyone needs some time off from a busy schedule to enjoy"; "I'll just use it kind of as a space where I can be on my phone." These types of responses also align with the *De-stress* category of library use.

Many students actively sought the support and companionship of their friends and classmates in the library. It is important to point out, however, that the types of support their friends and classmates offer can be both problem-focused and emotion-focused depending on whether they use their friends for academic assistance ("I would go with my friends . . . and we would study together") or emotional support ("if I'm talking to any of my friends . . . I tell them just to come to the library"). Similarly, if the purpose is to use the library to spend time with friends for non-academic purposes, those social interactions best align with the *Socialize* category. However, if the purpose of those peer interactions was to support each other in completing their academic tasks, they would better fit into the Be productive category.

After analyzing how student library use aligned with problem-focused and emotion-focused stress coping styles, a central theme came into focus. Different students in the focus groups described using the library in one of three distinct ways, but for apparently different purposes. One characteristic that almost all students seem to share was the stress they experienced. Considering that all three types of library use align with different stress coping strategies, the central theme that using the library is a form of coping with stress itself was generated. How students cope with their stress through their use of the library could be divided into the three categories of library use (see figure 1).
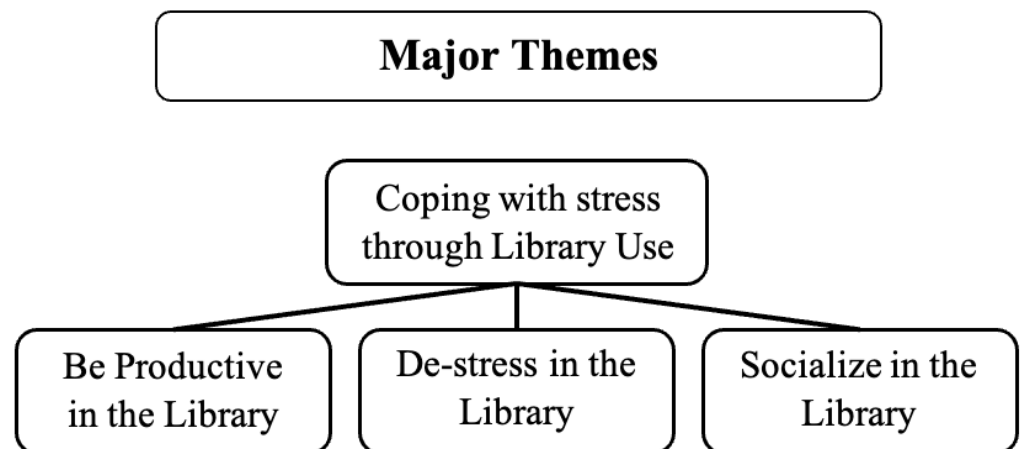

Figure 1. Major themes

Discussion

The association between student stress and library use identified in this study has three implications for the design and purpose of physical library spaces. Academic libraries should not just consider but emphasize the creation of quiet, comfortable library spaces that promote calmness and relaxation

through emotion-focused stress coping practices. Library spaces traditionally encourage students to employ problem-focused coping strategies through independent study in study carrells or desks. However, recent library trends are moving towards the inclusion of more group study and workspaces, turning the library into a collaborative learning commons (Oliveira 2018, 70). The novel takeaway from this study is the inclusion of space for neither independent nor group study, but for students to visit the library and just be. While students still primarily use the library for working on academic assignments, a significant portion of the participants in this study purposely used the library to address their stress through emotion-focused coping strategies. Library administration should keep these students in mind through the creation of dedicated relaxation spaces or by allowing students to use existing spaces for relaxing, non-academic purposes. This use of library space may not initially appear to serve the scholarly mission of the academic library but there is clearly a need that is not being met; providing easy access to such spaces has the potential to offer significant mental and emotional benefits for students and, ultimately, improve students' capacity to achieve their academic goals.

The variety with which students use the library to manage their stress speaks to how students perceive the library as a space on campus. The fact that students use the physical library for both traditional academic purposes and to cope with their stress supports the idea of the library as a third place on campus, which echoes the work by Montgomery and Miller (2011, 234). A "third place," as described by Oldenburg (1999), is a public space that hosts voluntary and informal gatherings of people outside of one's home and professional workspaces (14). While some students may use the library solely as a work or home-like space, across all study participants there was a diverse mix of uses which blended these concepts together, leaving the library somewhere in between. The students' comments not only support this idea of the library serving as a place that fits between one's home and work but also reflect the importance students place on such spaces on campus. Considering that students seek the library for this unique combination of reasons indicates how crucial physical library spaces are for students and how "third places" need to be accounted for in library space design. It also comes back to speaking to the library as the true heart of the campus where work and play, motivation and relaxation, can occur in the same space and can assist students in achieving their academic and personal goals.

The concept of the library as a "third place" supports the diversification of library spaces to support multiple types of use by students. Considering the variety of stressors students face, and the variety of coping styles they employ to manage their stress, different students need different spaces to employ their individual coping style. This suggests that libraries should not aim to transform into a massive learning commons at the expense of quiet, independent study spaces. Likewise, academic libraries should not explicitly label spaces for academic purposes only or repurpose popular group study rooms into silent meditation spaces. Academic libraries should reflect the diverse needs of their students by creating and maintaining diverse spaces that can allow students to cope with their stress in a way that suits their individual needs. This is not to say that learning commons or traditional library models are inherently wrong; they both serve valuable roles in the library. But the exclusion of one for the other—or prioritizing solely academic spaces over spaces that encourage relaxation and emotion-focused coping strategies—is doing a disservice to a large portion of the library's student population. While this balance of new and traditional library spaces can, and should be, considered in large-scale renovations of the physical library, it can also be met through

small modifications of existing spaces, such as dividing larger open spaces into smaller collaborative ones or adding comfortable chairs near outlets or other strategic points. Even small changes to library spaces have the potential for a significant impact on student well-being.

Limitations

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus groups that we planned to conduct in person in March 2020 were moved online and delayed until April 2020. This may have affected the results in several ways. Lacking visual and auditory cues, the moderators may have been less effective at directing follow-up questions to relevant participants. Gauging levels of agreement and dissent among participants was also more challenging. The virtual format also made interchange between multiple participants difficult. As a result, the data may have been less nuanced and represent fewer perspectives than anticipated. However, the remote sessions may have enabled more students to attend than normally would at the commuter campus. Though some students were quieter in the remote discussions, as was expected, others seemed comfortable with the online format and offered ample contributions. The virtual format also provided moderators the opportunity to ask about library space at a time when that space was not available, potentially prompting new insights from the students. Though most questions asked students about their in-person experiences in the physical library, they answered them in an online, remote environment. While it was only a couple of weeks removed from their on-campus experience, and students often referred to previous semesters as well, this may have skewed their answers of how they utilize the library. Additional research exploring in-person experiences in an in-person environment is needed.

Finally, the qualitative analysis of the study occurred after the initial round of focus groups had finished, preventing the use of theoretical sampling in the development of this theory. Participants were selected as part of convenience sampling as an alternative, which may have prevented the full in-depth exploration of some of these concepts. Further research with different samples may be required to fully flesh out these ideas. Additionally, the author was the only coder and, considering the small sample size of this study, the results cannot be generalized for larger populations. Further research is needed to determine if this theory can be applied to different student populations and libraries at different campuses.

Conclusion

The participants in this study described using the physical library not just to study but also to cope with their stress through problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. Students are subject to elevated levels of stress from their academic, familial, and employment responsibilities and they recognize their need to address their stress on campus. Students utilized the library's quiet and collaborative spaces to employ problem-focused stress coping styles. By using the library to complete assignments and directly address a cause of their stress (i.e., deadlines or coursework), students can cope with their stress, supporting previous findings about the library's role in promoting student well-being (Cox and Brewster 2020, 8–9; Merga 2021, 672–673). In the library, students also applied emotion-focused coping strategies to manage their stress and avoid burnout. Students employed physical breaks—such as naps—and mental breaks—such as attending fun events or just looking at their phones—to address their emotional response to stress in the library. Socializing with peers in the library served as both a problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategy for students depending on the purpose of the interaction.

Academic libraries should, therefore, emphasize their physical existence on campus as a space whose mere presence provides support to the whole student. While much effort has been put into online resources and services recently, the value of the physical library cannot be overstated; it is crucial not only to students' academic achievement but to their overall well-being. The physical library continues to be one of the few spaces that addresses multiple needs, including serving as a space where students can attend to their stress. Given the level of "homeness" students feel about the library, relying solely on other campus spaces to address specific students' needs ignores those qualities that make the library an attractive and unique space for students. The library offers a "one stop shop" of services that appeals to students who may not have the time or energy to spend traveling around campus. Libraries can provide spaces conducive for this purpose by promoting the physical library as a "third place" on campus and creating library spaces for both quiet study and relaxation and social collaboration.

Knowing this, library administrators should encourage further investment into the physical library. Students continue to seek out physical library spaces for a variety of reasons and this research suggests that investment in such spaces can potentially help students better manage their stress, which can lead to better academic performance and retention. The findings from this study extend beyond academic libraries to suggest that colleges and universities may not need to seek out every new, innovative initiative for helping students manage stress. By investing in the existing academic infrastructure, they can make a meaningful impact on their institutions' well-being by promoting their students' well-being.

Appendix I: Focus Group Questions

1. How often do you come to the library and how long do you usually spend here?
2. What do you usually do in the library?
3. How does the library compare with other study spaces on campus?
4. Do you feel like you belong in the Abington College Library?
5. What kinds of interactions have you had with the library staff?
6. Have you ever used the library for help with a class assignment?
7. Have you ever attended an event at the library (such as Finals Recharge, Research Party, poetry reading, workshop, etc.)?
8. What kind of events are you interested in?
9. Do you have any other comments you'd like to share that we haven't covered in the earlier questions?

Acknowledgment

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With Passionate Purpose: How Public Library Outreach Staff Are Transforming the Library from a Building to a Service

ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

This research study, part of the Institute of Museum and Library Services-funded Project LOCAL (Library Outreach as a Community Anchor in Learning, 2017–19), employed a nationwide survey of library staff to learn their motivations for engaging in outreach, the types of support library staff receive for this work, the challenges they face in serving the community outside library walls, and their future plans for outreach work. Survey analysis found that 100 percent of respondents believe libraries should be engaged in outreach. Furthermore, library staff expressed a variety of purposes for their outreach, including to promote and support learning for children and families and to inspire future engagement with the public library. For most respondents, outreach is highly valued by their library, though library support can differ in terms of staff time, funding, and materials. Outreach work, particularly with families and children in underserved communities, brings with it a variety of challenges that do not seem to deter most of the respondents; many indicated an intent to maintain or expand their outreach efforts. This research builds a picture of the passionate purpose underlying the commitment by library staff to meet communities where they live and thrive, while also making visible and validating the labor of these dedicated professionals as they transform the library from a building to a service.

KEYWORDS

public libraries, outreach as service, families and children, survey methodology, underserved communities

P ublic libraries can and often do play a crucial role in their communities by "providing access to information that helps people improve their individual, family, and community lives" (Scott 2011, 191). Despite serving as a trusted community resource and engaging in initiatives around learning and information access, libraries are not often recognized as fulfilling the crucial role of community anchor—a term that originated in the National Broadband Plan and has been prioritized by the field and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (Hildreth 2013; Ball 2014), which can be described as an organization focusing on civic engagement, responding to community needs, supporting lifelong learning and digital inclusion, and "knitting community members together through common experiences and shared interests" (Hildreth 2013, 44). Given that libraries meet most of these characteristics (Garmer 2014),

research is needed to understand why libraries are not often recognized as community anchors.

It is possible this lack of recognition is due to a historic focus on the library's physical space, which limits the scope of service to those who take part in programs and services inside the library. However, many libraries have recognized that such a focus on physical space often excludes groups in their communities who face barriers to accessing the library. As a result, many libraries have moved their programs and services outside of the physical building and into community locations to reach and serve the entire community (Campana et al. 2022), typically referred to as outreach programs and services. This transformation of the public library from a physical space to a service that operates throughout the community may help the library to fulfill the role of community anchor, "knitting community members together" by more proactively responding to community needs and facilitating lifelong learning for the entire community regardless of location.

Though libraries and/or library staff invest time, organizational and personal resources, and funds in these programs and services, their outreach efforts are often hidden and become "invisible labor" (Clarke 2022) for the broader library and community because they are often not advertised or even included in the library events calendar. Research can pull back the curtain on this "invisible labor" (Clarke 2022), validate the importance of outreach programs and services, and help libraries gain recognition and acknowledgement for their crucial role in supporting their communities. The study described here contributes to uncovering some of this invisible labor by providing insight into the motivations for outreach work (specifically with families and children in underserved communities), as well as the logistical support provided for this work and the inherent challenges. These insights build a picture of the passionate purpose underlying libraries' outreach work.

Study Background

To provide insight into the different aspects of family outreach services offered by the public library, this study used survey data collected as part of a larger planning grant, Project LOCAL (Library Outreach as a Community Anchor in Learning, 2017–19), funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The planning grant employed focus groups, interviews, and a nationwide survey to understand the landscape of public library outreach with families and children in underserved communities (Campana, Mills, and Martin 2019; Campana et al. 2022). The planning grant illuminated current practices used by outreach library staff to reach and serve families where they are and revealed areas for further inquiry. Findings from the study data have been detailed in previous articles. Briefly, Campana et al. (2022) used findings from the focus groups and interviews to demonstrate that outreach library staff offer a variety of programs and services to reach many kinds of communities; in so doing, they are working to increase educational equity for these families amidst significant barriers. Campana, Mills, and Martin (2019) used data from all three methods to show that outreach staff employ a variety of strategies to gather data about their communities to inform their outreach work planning.

Literature Review

Recently, public libraries have been moving from a primary role of providing patrons with books and other resources to a community-engagement role in which they offer a variety of programs and services in addition to resources for their communities (Reid and Howard 2016). The Aspen Institute describes the public library as "a hub of civic engagement, fostering new relationships and

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strengthening the human capital of the community." Further, "librarians are actively engaged in the community. They connect individuals to a vast array of local and national resources and … facilitate learning and creation for children and adults alike" (Garmer 2014, 10). The diverse range of programs and services offered by different public libraries includes interest areas such as literacy (Rea 2020), STEM learning (Baek 2013), physical activity (Lenstra 2017), health (Philbin et al. 2019), and engagement with nature (Lenstra and Campana 2020). In addition, libraries have begun to offer services intended to meet basic needs in their communities, including meal services (Lenstra and D'Arpa 2019), social work support (Philbin et al. 2019), and basic health services, such as health assessments and vaccination clinics (Philbin et al. 2019). Some of these programs and services evolved as libraries realized that portions of their communities do not have access to food, healthcare, or other basic services due to a variety of barriers (Lenstra and D'Arpa 2019).

Along with the recognition by libraries that many groups in their community face significant needs but often cannot access their resources and services, the library field has also embraced social justice as an important part of their work (Jaeger, Shilton, and Koepfler 2016). Because of this, many libraries have placed a strong emphasis on learning how to overcome some of the barriers faced by underserved groups. Moving programs and services outside of library walls into community locations where underserved communities live and work has emerged as one way to overcome some of the barriers faced by underserved communities when trying to access library programs and services (Campana et al. 2022).

Outreach

The various programs and services that librarians offer out in community locations can be broadly referred to as outreach programs and services. However, outreach can be defined in different ways by different library systems, in the absence of national outreach standards. Since this study looked specifically at outreach programs and services that are offered to families and children, outreach is herein defined as "any activity conducted outside the library walls, such as presenting a school assembly to promote the upcoming summer learning program or developing a partnership with the local Boys and Girls club to offer joint programs in their facilities" (Crist 2019; Velasquez 2019). Moreover, it is crucial to understand who offers these family-focused outreach programs, why they offer them, and what challenges they encounter in practice.

Library outreach throughout US history has embodied a fervent mission to defeat poverty and illiteracy in urban and impoverished areas at all costs (Wheeler 2021). And yet, an additional and persistent reality concerning outreach in underserved areas is that few library staff come from or reflect the demographics of the community—racially, ethnically, socioeconomically, linguistically, etc. (Rosa and Henke 2017). This can pose additional barriers between libraries and the communities they serve. To be effective, outreach—especially with families and children in underserved communities—requires a community-centered approach that works to bridge these divides between library staff and community members. Additional research can help shape this approach and build on a call to service so evident in the ways many library staff work to close gaps and increase access, as well as to learn from and with communities (Campana et al. 2022; Mills, Kociubuk, and Campana 2021).

Invisible labor

Implementing a community-centric approach can take significant time and effort as it involves building relationships with the community and community

organizations, securing locations, designing and planning outreach programs and services, managing logistics and transportation, and providing the outreach program and service (Mills, Campana, and Martin 2019). Few of these tasks are acknowledged, yet each may be integral to the success of community-centric outreach. This work constitutes the "invisible labor" of library staff—the "unrecognized or undervalued work" (Clarke 2022). Invisible labor has been noted and explored across many fields and aspects of life, including teaching (Lewis 2006), nursing (Allen 2014), and caregiving (Kaplan et al. 2020).

Hatton (2017) builds out the concept of invisible labor and identifies three mechanisms that can contribute to making work invisible: sociocultural, sociolegal, and sociospatial. Sociocultural refers to work being obscured and devalued due to cultural ideas related to gender, race, sexuality, ability, and more. Sociolegal refers to work that is hidden because it does not fit within the legal designations of employment. Finally, sociospatial refers to work made invisible because it is "physically segregated from the socially constructed 'workplace'" (Hatton 2017, 343). Hatton further breaks down the sociospatial mechanism into two categories: 1) work that is invisible because it is in the domestic sphere and 2) work that is invisible because it is done in nontraditional worksites, which include "segregated workplaces" like prisons, but also includes roles that do not have one specific worksite, like digital labor (Hatton 2017). It is likely that most library outreach work is invisible due to the sociospatial mechanism as it is physically segregated from the library building and occurs in a nontraditional worksite(s), such as a bookmobile or across many different community locations. Therefore, the field needs to embrace the idea of the library as a service rather than a building, which could lead to viewing the entire community as a "socially constructed workplace." This can ultimately help libraries adopt a stronger community-centric focus. To facilitate the acceptance of these ideas, research is needed to provide insight into outreach efforts, and the work that goes into them, to bring attention to this invisible labor.

Methods

The study described here begins to fill these gaps by using the Project LOCAL survey data to explore the following questions:
1. Why do library staff and their libraries offer outreach programs and services for families and children in underserved communities?
2. What types of support are libraries providing for their outreach staff?
3. What, if any, challenges do library staff face in offering outreach programs and services for families and children in underserved communities?
4. What, if any, future plans do library staff and their libraries have regarding their outreach work?

Participants

Participants were recruited through national listservs, including those associated with three American Library Association divisions—Public Library Association (PLA), Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), and Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL)—as well as through established online library communities such as Storytime Underground and state library listservs. As a result of these recruitment efforts, the survey gathered responses from participants across twenty-two states. The survey included demographic questions to ensure a diverse representation of libraries. These demographic questions provided insight into the type of geographic area (urban, suburban, and rural), the nature of the library (stand-alone versus multi-branch system), and the size of the populations (American Library

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Association 2011) served by each participant's library, and the type of location in which these participants conduct their outreach work.
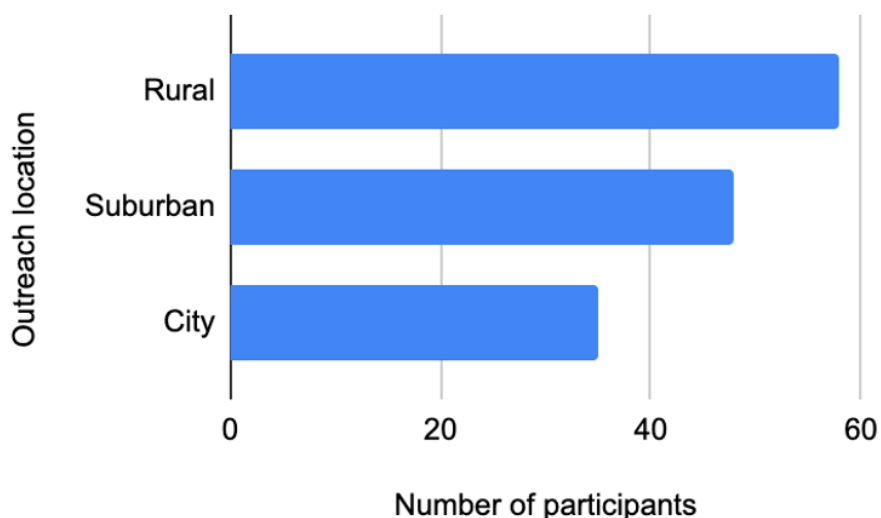
Figure 1. Geographic area
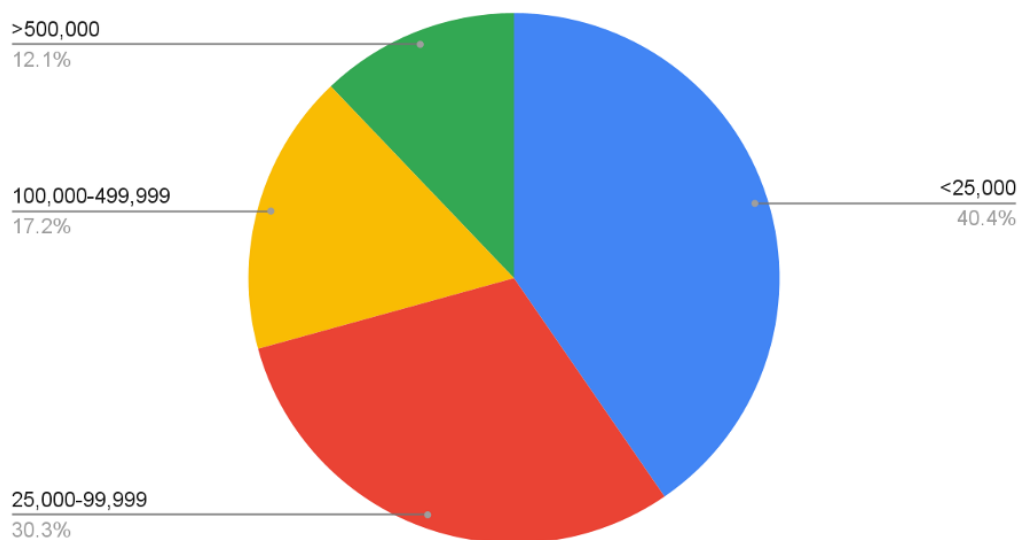
Figure 2. Population served

While the survey asked whether the respondents worked at a stand-alone or multi-branch library, this paper analyzes the data in aggregate, without specific attention to this distinction. Further research will be necessary to tease out the implications of this distinction, if any.

When asked about their job titles, respondents shared a wide variety that fall into two main categories. Examples include Children's Outreach Librarian, Children's Literacy Outreach Librarian, Teen Services Outreach Librarian, Library Outreach Manager, Head of Youth Services and Outreach, and Outreach Coordinator. Note the split between Librarian and Administrator in terms of "outreach" as a part of their job title (Figure 3).
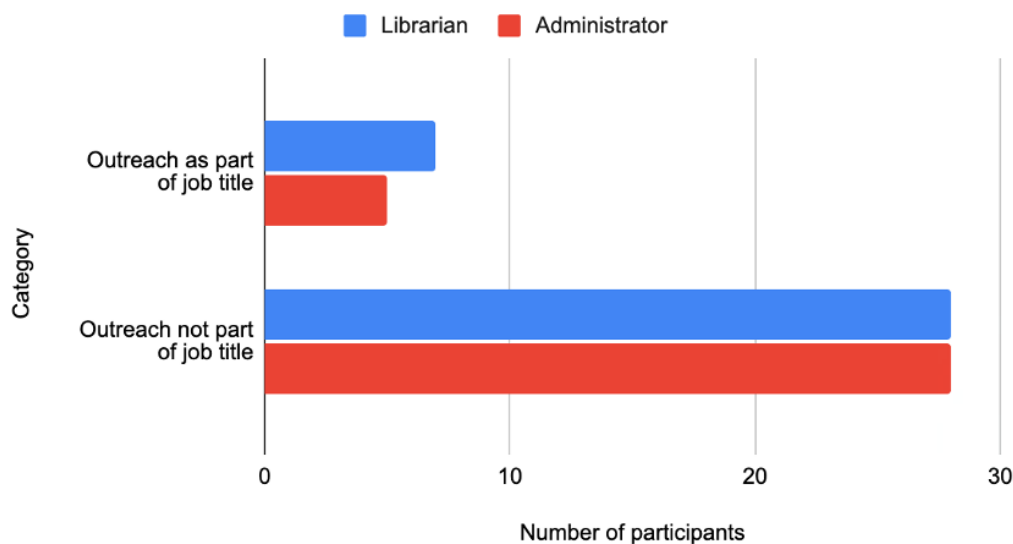
Figure 3. "Outreach" in job titles

Data collection and analysis

The survey's goal was to provide a broad, national understanding of current practices, challenges, and needs regarding library efforts to reach families in underserved communities—particularly those who do not come into the library to access its services. Because these libraries serve many communities, participants were asked to share their own definitions of underserved communities and to then identify relevant communities around their library (Campana et al. 2022).

Quantitative and qualitative survey questions explored a variety of areas related to outreach, with multiple-choice options drawn from the data gathered in the focus groups and interviews. In this way, the survey questions could ensure relevance to the work that library staff are already doing to reach underserved communities through outreach efforts. After undergoing several rounds of testing before dissemination, the survey was open for one month to maximize participation, resulting in a dataset of 115 complete responses. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the answers to the multiple-choice questions, looking for frequency and patterns to better understand the perceptions of library staff regarding the role and purpose of their own work and of their libraries' work out in the community to reach families and children where they are. Open-ended participant responses were analyzed using inductive and deductive coding to uncover broad themes and categories to construct a preliminary understanding—grounded in participant language—of the nature of the passionate purpose evident in this work. The responses to these open-ended questions were analyzed at the respondent level.

Results and Discussion

The survey findings will be presented by research question with short discussions to demonstrate how the data address each area of inquiry and to situate the data in the literature.

Research Question 1: Why do library staff and their libraries offer outreach programs and services for families and children in underserved communities?

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Four survey questions were posed to elicit participants' perceptions of their libraries' motivations and the purpose of their work. Responses are presented within three areas of inquiry: Library's Role in Outreach; Library's Attitude Toward Outreach; and Library Staff's Role in Outreach.

The Library's Role in Outreach

Respondents were unanimous in indicating that libraries should be engaged in outreach work. Presented with a list of purposes for such work (Table 1), respondents were asked to select all options that apply. Four options were selected in 90 percent or more of responses:

- To promote and support learning for children and families
- To inspire future engagement with the public library
- To serve underserved communities where they are
- To increase awareness of library services and programs

Outreach purpose	% respondents
To promote and support learning for children and families (e.g., school readiness, early literacy, STEM, grade-level reading, lifelong learning, K–12 learning, etc.)	93
To inspire future engagement with the public library	92
To serve underserved communities where they are	90
To increase awareness of library services and programs	90
To bring underserved communities into library	84
To increase usage of digital services offered by the library	51
To provide library cards	43
Other (please specify)	12

Table 1. Outreach purpose

Interestingly, these four responses focus on both serving communities ("promoting and supporting learning for children and families" and "serving underserved communities where they are") and building connections between the community and the library ("[to] inspire future engagement with the public library" and "[to] increase awareness of library services and programs"). This is further evident in the short answers respondents were prompted to write in when they selected "Other." These short answers feature themes of connection, building and sustaining relationships in the community, helping to make library services more equitable and accessible, and offering opportunities for togetherness and learning through outreach programming. Terms such

as enriching, building, creating, connection, and thriving offer insight into the service-focused and active nature of the outreach work in which these participants engage in their communities. One quote in particular sums up many of the insights gained into respondents' outreach motivation: "To make meaningful connections [and inspire] the people of our community to succeed through ideas, interaction, and information."

Library's Attitude Toward Outreach

Respondents were asked to indicate what they perceived to be their library's attitude toward outreach, with available responses designed to sit on a continuum. Respondents could select only one statement (Table 2). In most cases, respondents indicated that their libraries prioritize outreach outright, that outreach is a part of the library's strategic plan, or that the library at least appreciates and supports the work involved in outreach efforts, even if outreach is not a priority. When taken together, these statements represent most of the responses to this question. However, it is interesting that no one option received an overwhelming majority. Perhaps this indicates that more advocacy work needs to be done to demonstrate to library administrators the importance of prioritizing, supporting, and appreciating outreach efforts.

Library's attitude toward outreach	% respondents
The administration makes outreach a priority and provides support for it	32
My outreach work is appreciated, and while the library does not make outreach a priority, they do provide support for it	24
It is a part of my library's strategic plan	23
My outreach work is appreciated, but the library does not make outreach a priority and does not provide support for it	8
The administration makes outreach a priority but does not provide support for it	6
Other (please specify)	6
The library does not support it	1

Table 2. Library's attitude toward outreach

Themes elicited from the responses written in by participants who selected Other further underscore the need for advocacy work, by communicating a desire to demonstrate impact through numbers and data, the frustrations

resulting from a lack of data, and differences between the goals of a library's administration and those of the library staff, among others. Overall, this reveals the range of libraries' attitudes toward outreach, particularly that a lack of data might indicate a lack of need for outreach to administration. Moreover, administrations may not always have a clear or prioritized attitude toward outreach. One response elucidates the difference between library administration goals and the goals of outreach staff: "Time and patience are not an administrative strength, but they are a librarian's strength," which may indicate why in some cases libraries do not support outreach work.

The Library Staff's Role in Outreach

Finally, the survey elicited respondents' perceptions of their individual motivations and sense of purpose in outreach work. Given a list of statements, respondents were asked to select all those that reflect their views (Table 3).

Library staff motivations	% respondents
I personally believe it is a crucial library service	94
It is a part of my job description	63
It is a part of my library's strategic plan	52
My department makes it a priority	40
Other (please specify)	6

Table 3. Library staff motivations

Themes elicited from the responses written in by participants who selected Other presented two main themes of personal satisfaction and professional purpose. The first theme of personal satisfaction can be further unpacked to include subthemes of fulfillment, love, highlight, and fun. The second theme of professional purpose can be further analyzed to include subthemes of "raising our circulation," a desire to "reach as many kids as I can," and "It's my job and I think it's important." These inductively generated subthemes begin to reveal the depth contained in these broad themes of personal satisfaction and professional purpose, pointing to a kind of inner calling or motivation that drives this work–a "passionate purpose." Furthermore, when asked directly if outreach was a part of their job description, 17% of respondents indicated it was not, which suggests that they have personal motivations for engaging in this work. Subsequent data analysis will help to further construct this idea of passionate purpose in the work of library outreach staff to meet their communities where they are and provide access to crucial library services and programs.

Why do library staff and their libraries offer outreach programs and services for families and children in underserved communities? The data demonstrate that librarians have a deep level of passion and motivation that drives their efforts to reach families where they are in their communities. Library staff see the purpose of outreach as multifaceted, operating across a variety of areas such as learning, library engagement, service, library awareness, and usage of the brick and mortar building as well as the available online services. Library

staff view their role in outreach as essential and multifaceted as well. Beyond overwhelmingly indicating they do outreach because they personally believe it to be a crucial library service, respondents pointed out that outreach is related to more practical aspects of their role—the organizational and administrative nature of their work.

Furthermore, the survey question regarding the purpose of outreach also touches on library staff's view of their role in outreach work, that of providing and supporting children's and families' learning, inspiring engagement with the library, serving underserved communities where they are, and increasing awareness of the library's services and programs. These four frequently identified roles indicate a complexity to the work of outreach library staff, as they work to meet communities' needs and aspirations in a variety of ways and with a range of resources and information. They help explain why libraries play such a crucial role in their communities by providing access (Scott 2011), thereby serving as a community anchor. These roles also further demonstrate how and why libraries are actively engaging in the community (Garmer 2014). But this complex, multifaceted, passionately purposeful work cannot be achieved simply or quickly; it is important to understand how libraries support their outreach staff.

Research Question 2: What types of support are libraries providing for their outreach staff?

Six survey questions addressed the ways in which libraries support their staff logistically in their outreach work. Responses are presented within two areas of inquiry: Multifaceted Types of Library Support; and the Nature of Staffing, Time, and Funding Support.

Multifaceted Types of Library Support: Respondents were presented with a list of types of support and asked to select all that represent the support their libraries provide for outreach and outreach staff. Staff time was clearly the top choice among respondents. Materials and funding were also common selections. The least selected type of support was transportation, which is compelling, given the wide area often traveled by outreach staff to reach their communities. It is worth exploring further how the participants define these terms and whether they believe transportation should be provided by the library or whether they feel that is something they should be expected to provide. Particularly significant is the fact that 72 percent of respondents chose more than one type of support, with many choosing most or even all the responses. Only 10 percent selected a single option. This indicates that libraries are providing multifaceted support to their outreach library staff.

Write-in responses yielded interesting insights that build on these findings. One participant shared the following: "All of these [types of support] are provided to varying degrees. In the end, 90% of the time, it is me, my vehicle, and a bag of books/puppets/games. Outreach doesn't have to be elaborate, but it does have to be fun. I bring the fun." However, in other cases, library staff need more support; another participant shared, "I am expected to do outreach within the constraints of staff and budget."

The Nature of Support Types: To understand more about how time is allotted for outreach efforts, the survey asked participants what percentage of their time is spent on outreach monthly. Respondents could select only one option. The majority of respondents (64 percent) said they spend zero to 25 percent of their time on outreach monthly, indicating that outreach is not all that these participants do each day to serve their communities. Therefore, the work they do to design and deliver their outreach programs and services sits alongside their other responsibilities, which speaks again to their passionate purpose.

Twenty percent of participants indicated spending up to half of their time on outreach, and just under 10 percent say they spend 75 to 100 percent of their time on outreach. To understand more about the staffing situation at these libraries, the survey asked if a participant's library has staff (full-time and/or part-time) dedicated solely to outreach. Forty percent of respondents selected Yes, and 60 percent selected No. To put this data into context, while only 40 percent of library staff reported having dedicated outreach staff, most respondents indicated that outreach is part of their job description and that they spend up to 25 percent of their time on outreach. Thus, for respondents whose job expectations include outreach work but who are not dedicated outreach staff, they must balance their outreach efforts with many other responsibilities in the library.

To further understand the funding situation at libraries with dedicated outreach staff, the survey asked about funding sources for these positions. Respondents were asked to select all options that apply (Table 4). Respondents unanimously indicated that their libraries' own budget funds these positions. Using the library operating budget—a more consistent, permanent source of funding—to fund these efforts speaks to the relative permanence of outreach in the library's service strategy. At the same time, because respondents could select "all that apply," these responses indicate that even if their library does fund outreach positions, additional support often comes from Friends of the Library, foundations, and other sources. This perhaps suggests that even when the library invests in the salaries for outreach library staff, they often need additional resources to make outreach programming viable.

Funding for dedicated outreach	% respondents
Existing library budget	100
Friends of the library	11
Grant funds	9
Other (short answer)	9
Foundation	4

Table 4. Funding for dedicated outreach

What types of support are libraries providing for their outreach staff? The data demonstrate that public library outreach staff receive a variety of support, particularly staff time, materials, funding, and transportation. And while 40 percent of the participants report having dedicated outreach staff at their library, there clearly are many other duties outside of outreach that are expected of most of the respondents. Thus, library staff whose positions are not exclusively dedicated to outreach, are balancing their outreach work with many other responsibilities. Given that the process of outreach work can take time (Mills, Campana, and Martin 2019), this balancing act should be explored further to better understand the various demands on library staff doing outreach, and to guide administrators in how to better support outreach efforts and help library staff achieve a balance across responsibilities. As these efforts often sit alongside existing work responsibilities and occur outside the

building, they fit with Hatton's (2017) characterization of sociospatial invisible labor. Though the creativity and motivations of library staff are key, outreach efforts cannot exist nor be sustained without the multifaceted support of the library. As explained by Clarke (2022), staffing, funding, and materials are components of the invisible work behind successfully facilitating community-based outreach, and yet they can too often be in short supply. The passionate purpose of outreach service therefore embodies balancing outreach with other responsibilities and taking advantage of library support as well as drawing on intrinsic motivation.

Research Question 3: What, if any, challenges do library staff face in offering outreach programs and services for families and children in underserved communities?

One survey question elicited the difficulties and obstacles library staff may encounter in their efforts to serve families and children in underserved communities. Given a list of challenges to outreach work, respondents were asked to select all that apply (Table 5).

Staffing, scheduling, and fiscal limitations received the most responses, which interestingly reflects the types of support respondents felt their libraries provide. This could be due to several reasons: 1) staff encounter these challenges outside the library during outreach efforts, 2) these challenges may be faced by respondents whose libraries are not offering outreach support, and 3) the library support is not matching the level needed by these respondents in their day-to-day work. Thus, the challenges persist despite the presence of library support. Future research might explore the extent and depth of these needs and challenges and the degree to which respondents' challenges are met by the types of support offered by their library. Importantly, 56 percent of respondents chose three or more challenges—with some selecting all six options—indicating that the challenges to outreach work are complex and numerous. Additional challenges include language barriers, transportation, and safety, which each warrant further research to unpack the nature and influence of these challenges on outreach work.

Write-in answers reveal various broad themes across these challenges. Of particular interest were the entwined challenges of time and staffing, as expressed through these quotes: "[I'm] unable to get it all done in a part-time position," and "I'm the only person that works through the week."

Participants also discussed funding and transportation, saying "We would always like to do more if we had more money," "I am limited by the type of outreach vehicle we own and feel an updated Bookmobile would be more suited to our needs," and "As a non-driver, I have limited ability to carry supplies (like boxes of books) to outreach locations."

New challenges surfaced in these open-ended responses as well, including perceived partnership difficulties and a lack of community interest, as expressed in these quotes: "there was a lack of interest by parents," "personalities and administration at different school systems [can pose challenges]," and "We go to their homes in many cases and still can't get a consistent attendance." These comments from library staff about the challenges they experience while providing outreach indicate both a desire and a passion to serve young children and families in their communities and an attentiveness to what is needed to do outreach well.

What, if any, challenges do library staff face in offering outreach programs and services for families and children in underserved communities? The data demonstrate that public library outreach staff face a variety of challenges, particularly funding, staffing, and time, as evidenced in this quote: "Most

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Outreach challenges	% respondents
Staffing	86
Scheduling	71
Fiscal limitations	50
Language barriers	27
Transportation	24
Safety	7
I haven't faced any challenges	4

Table 5. Outreach challenges

community locations either want us first thing in the morning or in the evening after work hours. I do not have enough staff to flex those hours and it is challenging to schedule at both ends of the day." One participant responded that, despite the relevance of all the multiple-choice options for doing outreach, they also faced "limited staff and limited budget," which was "placing an emotional and physical strain" on them as a director. This indicates that time is impacted by an insufficient number of staff to cover work inside the library while also sending staff out to do outreach, which in turn is impacted by funding. In this way, the data help to pull back the curtain and expose two of Clarke's (2022) components of invisible work—funding and staffing—as potent challenges faced by outreach library staff.

While personal motivation is profoundly present in responses that depict how outreach library staff persist amidst challenges, this work is not easy and is often constrained. One participant did share a solution to handling some of the challenges they faced in doing their work amidst these odds: "We used to have massive barriers to doing outreach but recently [our library system] has gone back to allowing librarians to reach out. If our local managers are good, we are allowed flexibility in our scheduling and staffing to get out and deliver services. I'm lucky that I have hugely supportive managers." This response suggests that flexibility, recognition, and perhaps even autonomy provided by their managers enable library staff to move beyond and even resolve some of the challenges they had been facing prior to that flexibility and autonomy. This is an area to consider for future research and to share with library organizations as part of their approach when managing outreach staff.

These complex, complicated challenges—often entwined and interdependent—are indeed real and can impact library staff's capabilities to reach beyond their walls and meet community members where they are. Despite the challenges, optimism seems to persist among these respondents. The data further enrich our understanding of this passionate purpose to include intrinsic motivation, balance, and resilience in the face of challenges, as well as a certain creativity despite difficulties.

Research Question 4: What, if any, future plans do library staff and their libraries have regarding their outreach work?

Three survey questions addressed this research question and enabled participants to reflect and share their thoughts on the prospects of their outreach work with respect to their own professional practice, as well as their library's strategic intentions. The responses are presented within two areas of inquiry: Participants' Future Plans and Libraries' Future Plans. In both areas, respondents could only select one answer from the lists (Tables 6 and 7).

Participants' Future Plans: Most participants indicated they are expanding their outreach work, followed by fewer than half who say they are keeping their outreach work the same, and a tiny number indicating that they are reducing their outreach work. No one indicated that they are eliminating their outreach work. Clearly for this respondent group, outreach is a priority as part of their library services, and most are doing their best to continue the work they have been doing in their communities. Future research might explore how these individual plans intersect with the libraries' strategic plans regarding the future of outreach to uncover any divergences and to understand what causes them.

Participants' future plans	% respondents
I am expanding my outreach work	56.5
I am keeping my outreach work the same	41.7
I am reducing my outreach work	1.7
I am eliminating my outreach work	0

Table 6. Participant' future plans

Libraries' Future Plans: Overwhelmingly, respondents indicated that they are planning to keep, and expand, their outreach work, even amidst the challenges listed above. Once again, this drive to persist underscores the passionate purpose behind the work these outreach library staff do.

Intriguingly, the write-in responses resurfaced many of the challenges presented above in research question 3, as evidenced by quotes such as the following: "My department is interested in increasing our outreach as may be possible within the limits of our library's staffing" and "Expanding the number of places we go but reducing the frequency. So it looks like we are doing more, but really we are reducing quality and impact for the sake of stats." A prominent theme involved a lack of management vision and a change in priorities, as evidenced by quotes such as these: "Unknown at this time—at the local level outreach is primarily initiated and sustained by individual librarians. The management team does not have a process, approach, or expectation," and "I don't know what [our library system] has planned but my hope is that we will continue to be allowed to reach out to our community in a powerful way. If management changes, we could all find ourselves back in a chair trapped behind a desk again. So far so good." These responses paint a picture of uncertainty around continued library support; a deep recognition of the challenges present in this work; and a persistent drive to get out from behind the desk, go outside the library, and serve the community no matter the barriers.

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Libraries' future plans	% respondents
We are expanding our outreach work	53
We are keeping our outreach work at the same level	30
Other (please specify)	17
We are reducing our outreach work	0
We are eliminating our outreach work	0

Table 7. Libraries' future plans

Programs and locations are clearly areas in which libraries are looking to expand in their outreach, with the number of partners not far behind (Table 8). Staffing may continue to be an issue, given current circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic, even amidst library plans to expand outreach.

Libraries' outreach expansions	% respondents
Number of programs	43
Number of locations	43
Number of partners	35
Number of staff	16
Other (please specify)	4

Table 8. Libraries' outreach expansions

Write-in responses offer some insights into how libraries are planning to expand their programs and locations to meet perceived needs, as evidenced by the following quotes: "We are exploring other avenues of outreach, including developing a roving collection that could house a Wi-Fi hotspot to provide ongoing internet access in vulnerable neighborhoods" and "I am always looking to achieve the greatest impact though so if we can adjust times or places or locations and reach more patrons, I am willing to do the work to increase overall outreach work." These answers demonstrate creativity and flexibility in the ways in which respondents work to sustain and extend their outreach in the community.

What, if any, future plans do library staff and their libraries have regarding their outreach work? The data demonstrate that most of the public library outreach staff are planning to expand or sustain their current outreach efforts, which is a positive finding in terms of the future of this work. To enable this

sustainability, libraries offer different types of support, which in many ways mirror the staffing type of support already offered by many libraries. Moreover, the respondents seem hopeful about the sustainability of their outreach work in some form, to continue to meet their communities where they are and to work to be recognized as fulfilling the crucial role of community anchor (Hildreth 2013). Despite the gap between provided support and persistent challenges, library staff show a passionate purpose in seeking new program ideas, locations, and potential partners to enrich their outreach approach. However, it is important to keep in mind that the challenges uncovered by this survey may persist if libraries expand their outreach programs, locations, partners, and staff, without a consideration by the administration of the accompanying stresses those types of expansions can place on existing staff, time, and funding, as well as on transportation and materials. Future research should explore these intersections to develop research-based recommendations for addressing the challenges of outreach while still seeking to sustain and expand outreach programs and services.

Limitations

This study's survey received a rather small response rate, perhaps due to competing surveys being offered at the same time, as well as the busy lives of these professionals. This initial snapshot still offers a robust set of insights on which future work can be based to contribute to a fuller portrait of public library outreach with families and children in underserved communities.

To keep the length and complexity of the survey manageable for these busy library professionals, some survey questions remained rather broad, including the questions related to types of support, challenges, and future plans. More targeted surveys, which would enable shorter but deeper protocols, can work to provide additional information in these areas.

This survey was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; future research is needed to understand how the landscape of outreach has changed due to this global event.

This study did not seek to understand how the various challenges faced by outreach staff may have impacted their outreach programs and services; this presents an excellent area for future research.

Finally, additional research may provide further insight into how libraries can continue to increase their wider recognition as a community institution through the work they do to understand their communities better and serve them where they are.

Conclusion

This study provided a broad understanding of how and why public library staff offer outreach programs and services to serve families in underserved communities, particularly those who do not or cannot come into the library. Drawing on the data from all four research questions, it is clear that these professionals possess a multifaceted, passionate purpose—one that encompasses hope, balance, support, intrinsic motivation, resilience, and persistence, evidenced in how they offer outreach programs in the community. Returning to the survey question that asked whether the library should be engaged in outreach, 100% of respondents responded Yes, identifying the reasons of addressing family learning, increasing awareness of the library, inspiring future engagement with the library, and meeting the community where they are, among others. It is the recommendation of the researchers that the field consider the invisible labor undertaken by outreach staff to meet various challenges and explore ways to increase support to help them

overcome those challenges. Furthermore, recognizing community spaces and bookmobiles as part of the accepted library "workplace" should help to address the sociospatial mechanism that contributes to the invisibility of outreach labor, and thereby help outreach work become more visible and valued. By combining sources of funding, offering flexibility and autonomy to staff members, encouraging creative problem solving, and enabling staff to increase the time they can spend on outreach, this area of library service can become more visible and prioritized and, in so doing, increase in reach and richness. Partnering with well-established organizations such as the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services (ABOS) offers a way for practitioners to raise the visibility of this important work through inter-library conversations and cooperation. As libraries transition their programs and services to community-based locations, they are working to shift the emphasis away from the physical space (Campana et al. 2022), and toward meeting communities where they are, by engaging in sociospatial invisible labor that deserves recognition and resources to succeed. The field therefore must be dedicated to fostering and sustaining the passionate purpose of their outreach library staff in their work to strengthen communities through the services of the library, not just the building of the library.

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STEM Outreach Activities in Academic Libraries: Planning Strategies, COVID's Impact, and Future Considerations

ABSTRACT

Outreach in academic libraries is an important aspect of their mission to support campus communities, but the nature of these activities, and the steps taken to plan them, is not fully understood at the profession-wide level. This study aimed to start the process of gathering data on outreach, especially among those who serve STEM-related constituents, and to begin recording the effects of COVID on library programming and events. In the summer of 2022, surveys were sent to representative librarians from Association of Academic Universities (AAU) members asking about their current outreach offerings and whether they utilized a formal outreach document to help plan and evaluate their efforts. Though all reported engaging in some sort of outreach, most shared that they had an informal approach to outreach planning. A majority reported that COVID required a shift in outreach, with staffing continuing to be a concern. Survey results are offered, along with a discussion of the findings and thoughts on the next steps towards a clearer understanding of the effects outreach has, as well as its role in academic libraries post COVID.

KEYWORDS

academic libraries, STEM, outreach, outreach plans, campus engagement

Outreach has become an increasingly important part of academic library activities as they strive to demonstrate their value to communities (LeMire et al. 2018, 2). This shift towards outreach as a core responsibility has led to a growing body of literature discussing applied outreach practices and outcomes. Few studies have called for systematic outreach planning, though Farrell and Mastrel (2016) note that "outreach is most effective when tied to institutional goals." Even fewer have directed research towards whether and how libraries actually attempt this systematic planning. LeMire and Graves (2019) suggest that this may reflect libraries' continued ad hoc approach to outreach, in contrast with their more intentional approach to library instruction, which often reflects more planning and long-term goals (273).

Along with the lack of literature on systematic planning, Wainwright and Mitola (2019) observed that "there are not robust examples in the library literature of assessing co-curricular outreach activities and programs" (315). LeMire et al. (2018) also note that most library outreach assessment focuses on individual events and is limited to headcounts, collaborator feedback,

and comments from attendees (8). Assessment such as this is rarely programmatic and, with its limited scope, cannot be applied much beyond an event-level reflection.

To present, The Outreach and Engagement ARL Spec Kit 361 (LeMire et al. 2018) may be the most thorough examination of academic library outreach. The project surveyed ARL (Association of Research Libraries) institutions, collecting information on outreach missions and outcomes, approaches to planning, and administrative support. The survey revealed that most respondents took some steps to plan outreach on a yearly basis and to align outreach goals with the library's strategic plan. However, "most respondents indicated that goals were set at the individual librarian (40, or 73 percent) or unit (39, or 71 percent) level. Only 18 (33 percent) said that they had goals or outcomes for their overall outreach program" (5). The study also found that definitions of outreach were often inconsistent, and many respondents lacked a clear view of outreach beyond their own responsibilities (2–3). The effects of this lack of clarity were also seen by Carter and Seaman (2011), who found that some librarians felt hampered by the lack of a position dedicated to marketing or outreach, or the lack of a formal outreach plan (166).

Based on their findings, LeMire et al. (2018) ultimately recommended a systematic plan for library outreach: "a programmatic approach that includes a clear definition, meaningful and measurable outreach outcomes and goals, a defined budget, and utilization of various assessment methods" (10). Hallmark, Schwartz, and Roy (2007) also advised that any document outlining an outreach plan incorporate institutional benchmarking, assessment strategies, funding needs, and consideration of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for the library (92).

Concrete examples of such systematic plans are not widely seen in the literature. However, Bastone (2020) outlined the development of such a formal plan at the University of Tennessee, and Del Bosque et al. (2017) and Wainwright and Mitola (2019) both discussed the implementation of systematic outreach plans at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The University of Tennessee case study noted how the plan added intentionality to outreach events, like when budgeting in advance for larger events and strategically targeting certain audiences. At the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, their systematic outreach plan utilized student surveys to plan outreach events, gauge audiences, and track user need (Del Bosque et al. 2017). This allowed them to provide outreach aligned with the library's strategic plan and other campus events (Wainwright and Mitola 2019). All three case studies shared that successful formal outreach plans should be allowed to grow and change in response to changing circumstances and assessment (Bastone 2020, 29; Del Bosque et al. 2017, 14; Wainwright and Mitola 2019, 321).

Literature concerning outreach to STEM patrons in particular rarely touches on questions of systematic planning and has been largely limited to discussion of the specific marketing and outreach materials used by STEM libraries (Slebodnik 2006) and case studies of outreach at STEM libraries (Duong 2010; Flash et al. 2017; Mack, Ruffin, and Barajas 2014). In discussing the overall goals of outreach, and once again emphasizing the importance of flexibility, Wilson (2013) uses the image of the octopus to illustrate what STEM library outreach should be. "Octopi are known as being very intelligent creatures with obvious mobility and flexibility in both physical and behavioral ways. We constantly adjust to the rapidly changing landscape efficiently and productively in order to remain relevant to our users" (72–73).

Outreach planning faces challenges in the wake of the COVID pandemic, which upended many traditional library events. Surbaugh (2021) noted

this disruption, while also noting that the pandemic was a driver towards innovation. "Exceptional circumstances provided an impetus for the accelerated development of pilot outreach and engagement programs using readily available tools/platforms, such as Zoom, Springshare, Kanopy, Buffer, Microsoft Forms, and Google Forms" (109). Libraries hoped that these innovations would help them adapt to post-pandemic circumstances (124). Similar challenges and opportunities can be seen in the years before COVID, with Wilson (2013) discussing the experience of STEM libraries turning to virtual outreach as their physical spaces were closed due to budget cuts. "The loss of physical book stacks may have been disruptive at first, but this experiment opened doors to expand our library services and reputation as a high-end research library" (82).

Overall, questions remain concerning the state of academic library outreach. It is unclear how widespread systematic outreach plans are, how they are structured, and the ways in which they incorporate institutional strategic goals. Also important is understanding whether such a programmatic approach to outreach is desirable. Insight into the outreach planning process and into the general status of academic library outreach seemed especially important after the COVID-19 pandemic. To help fill this gap, this research project hopes to begin an investigation of libraries' approaches to outreach, including the use of formalized outreach plans, and to take a snapshot of current outreach programming.

Methodology

The overall goal of this project was to undertake a preliminary assessment of outreach in the pandemic/post-pandemic landscape with the aim of drawing general conclusions that could aid in further, more sophisticated, research into the topic. Because both authors worked closely with STEM departments at their locations, including developing STEM outreach and engagement opportunities, they decided to focus this survey on individuals with similar experiences as a way to limit its scope. To this end, the survey focused on three interrelated questions: whether surveyed academic libraries utilized a formalized outreach plan to guide their outreach endeavors and what form such plans took, what types of STEM specific outreach was offered, and how COVID-19 affected their overall outreach.

An online survey was identified as the most efficient method for gathering information. Instead of using national listservs or community boards like ALA Connect, the project followed a similar strategy to that used by the Outreach and Engagement Spec Kit 361. Since it was a preliminary exploration of outreach, it was decided to limit the pool of potential survey responses. A cohort of STEM or outreach librarians from peer libraries in the Association for Academic Universities (AAU) was chosen and received the survey through direct invitation.

A Note on the Definition of Outreach

Numerous authors have offered their own definitions of outreach while noting that the library profession lacks a definitive definition (Carter and Seaman 2011, 163; Blummer and Kenton 2019, 180; Diaz 2019, 184). Some articles center on the act of "reaching out to non-traditional library users, extending 'beyond borders' of a physical library, and promoting underutilized or new library resources" (Dennis 2012, 369). Others, however, focus more on instruction as a core component of outreach (Blummer and Kenton 2019, 180–181). For the purposes of this research paper, the definition provided by Diaz (2019) was used:

In academic librarianship, outreach is work carried out by library employees at institutions of higher education who design and implement a variety of methods of intervention to advance awareness, positive perceptions, and use of library services, spaces, collections, and issues (e.g., various literacies, scholarly communication, etc.). (191)

Identification of Peer Librarians

Key to this project's preparation was identifying survey recipients. Because of the authors' interest in STEM-related outreach, they decided to limit this initial survey to librarians who had similar responsibilities or those who worked exclusively in outreach and engagement (if no STEM-focused individual was identified at an institution). To develop the invitation list, the online staff directories of each AAU institution were reviewed, including any branch or satellite locations. The decision to focus on subject or function-specific librarians allowed for a more targeted pool of respondents, but it also proved challenging to put into practice. Many library websites did not include the practical title or subject area for their librarians, and others did not include clear information on whether any employees belonged to a branch or satellite location. One insight into this difficulty came from the survey responses. This will be discussed in more detail, but many responses included staffing concerns and frustrations. It could be that STEM or outreach librarians were hard to identify because they did not exist; those positions were vacant at the time of the survey.

Once a librarian was identified, their name, library, and email address were added to an Excel spreadsheet. Six hundred forty librarians were contacted from the sixty-four member institutions of AAU. Mail merge was used to send the invitation email individually, and an additional reminder email was sent a few days prior to the deadline. Because of the limitations of the librarian identification model, a line was included in the email encouraging the recipients to forward the survey to a more appropriate librarian. The authors did receive a few responses indicating that outreach was not within the scope of the recipient's job description, and alternate librarians were contacted.

The survey was live for three and a half weeks during late spring/early summer 2022. The timing of the survey sought to align with the end of institutions' academic year and to fit with the other commitments held by the authors. The survey received eighty-two responses, a 14 percent response rate. Though the rate was rather low, it likely reflects the difficulty in identifying individuals who were responsible for outreach, and the fact that multiple individuals at each library were ultimately contacted to complete the survey. In all, the eighty-two responses gave plenty of data to review and allowed for preliminary reflections on the status of outreach efforts at research university libraries.

Survey Development

Qualtrics was used to create the online survey, as the software would allow for easy dissemination and data export. Survey questions were written by the authors, though the library's assessment department was asked for feedback on survey design. A pilot survey was also offered to colleagues to solicit feedback and check functionality. The full survey text can be found in Appendix 1 and is available online at https://bit.ly/3p58qLW.

Though the project sent direct invitations to peer librarians, there was a commitment to respondents' privacy and anonymity. Questions were strategically developed to elicit the data needed without any unnecessary identifying information, and the settings in Qualtrics were adjusted so as to not

gather IP locations or other identifiable information. Demographic questions such as type of library (main site, branch, or satellite), number of overall employees, and number of those engaged with outreach, provided some context to help evaluate the responses without identifying those who participated.

Most of the survey structure was a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions. Respondents could answer "yes" or "no" to a particular question, and then be guided to a follow-up qualitative question to expand upon their response. Skip logic was utilized to eliminate the need to answer irrelevant questions. Since each institution has a unique library structure and outreach approach, it was felt that these qualitative questions would provide the most insightful data.

Analyzing Results

The eighty-two responses were aggregated and the qualitative data was codified in an attempt to discover trends and generalizations. The qualitative questions often received multi-faceted responses, so the main themes in each response were identified and then organized into categories to provide easier assessment. As this research project was envisioned as a preliminary study, it utilized very basic analysis strategies. Tables and graphs were created in Excel to help visualize the responses and place them into context.

Results

This results section is organized first by the demographics of respondents and then by the project's three research questions. They do not reflect the order that the questions were presented in the survey, which differed for each respondent based on their responses and the skip logic used. Questions were organized by theme to help readers place individual questions into a larger context.

Demographics of Respondents
All eighty-two respondents answered "yes" to the question of whether they provided outreach. Though the survey provided an option to select "no," it appears they may have self-selected out of the survey if they did not participate in outreach. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine to what extent this was the case.

As seen in figure 1, a majority of responses indicated that they worked at "the main library location on campus/only library location at university" (35 responses). Those that worked at a "satellite or specialized location located on the same campus as the main library location" made up another large group (28). A smaller number indicated they worked at a "branch library" located at a separate campus from the main library location (12). Seven other respondents chose "other," with most indicating that they split their time between locations (3), or that they considered themselves "one library" even though they were physically dispersed amongst locations (3).

Since the research project's focus was on outreach from STEM libraries or on STEM topics, the project tried to target those librarians who worked at such locations or participated in liaison work with those groups. Figure 2 outlines the responses received to an open-ended question. A large majority of the respondents indicated that their library specialized in science, technology, engineering, and medicine. Many focused on one specific discipline or subject area, though as it was an open-ended question, some indicated they served the "sciences" in general. Seven referred to the population served instead of the subject, saying that they worked primarily with undergraduates or graduate students. Fewer than ten indicated that they served subjects other than those traditionally included in STEM.
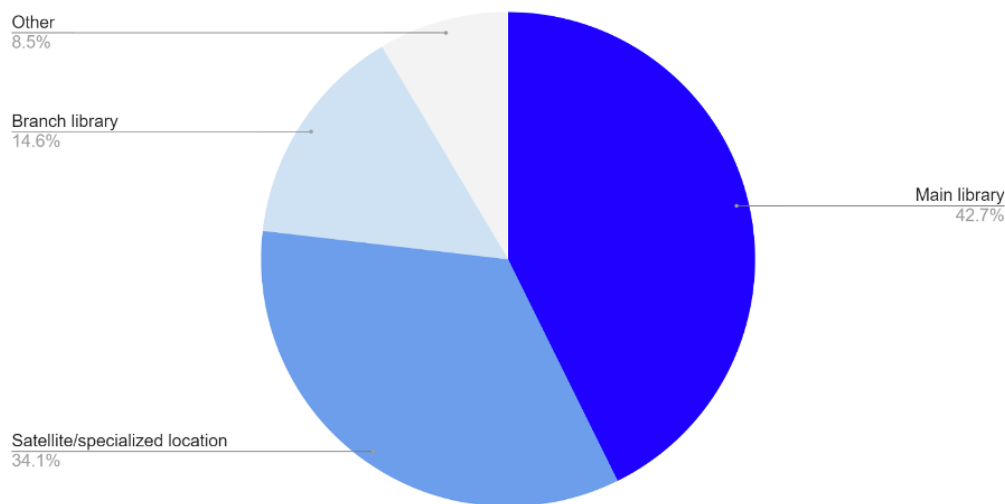
Figure 1. Type of library
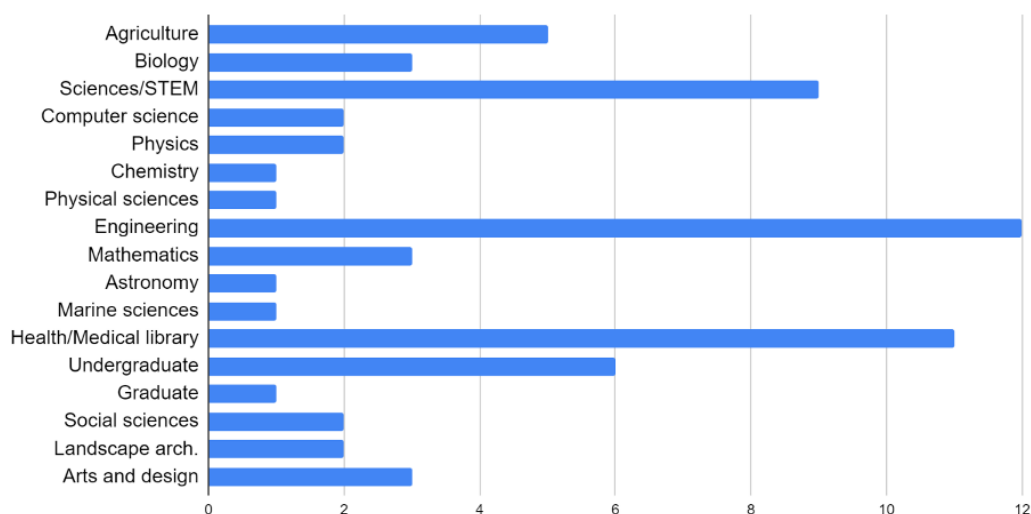
Figure 2. STEM library types of liaison areas

The final demographic questions asked about the staffing of each library. A majority of the responses indicated they worked at a location with more than twenty employees (46). Twenty-two respondents indicated that they worked at a smaller location, with twelve reporting that there were fewer than five employees at their location. This is consistent with the majority of respondents working at the main or only library at their institution. Though the responses indicated predominantly large staff sizes, it was notable that almost 43 percent indicated that five or fewer employees actually assisted with outreach. Staffing becomes a strong theme as the survey continues, and a relevant follow-up question may be how much time employees are able to spend on outreach in light of their other responsibilities.

Formal & Informal Outreach Plans

The survey asked respondents if they utilized a formal outreach plan, which was described as a "document to lay out systematic goals for library outreach over a given period." Few librarians (10 or 12 percent) indicated as such, or it

could have been that only a small number knew of such a document. With this and the subsequent outreach planning questions, there was a noticeable level of uncertainty, with responses to open-ended questions often including statements like "I'm not sure" or "I hope that they have one."

The survey's skip logic directed respondents to different question subsets depending on whether they selected "yes" or "no" in answer to the question of whether their library had a formal outreach plan. Those who answered "no" were given two follow-up open-ended questions.

First, those who indicated that they did not have a formal outreach plan were asked how helpful they thought such a plan might be to their current outreach efforts. As seen in figure 3, a majority of the seventy-two respondents who did not have a plan indicated that they thought one might be "Very helpful" (20) or "Somewhat helpful" (29). Twenty-three (32 percent) were unsure, answering "Neither helpful or unhelpful" or "Not really helpful."
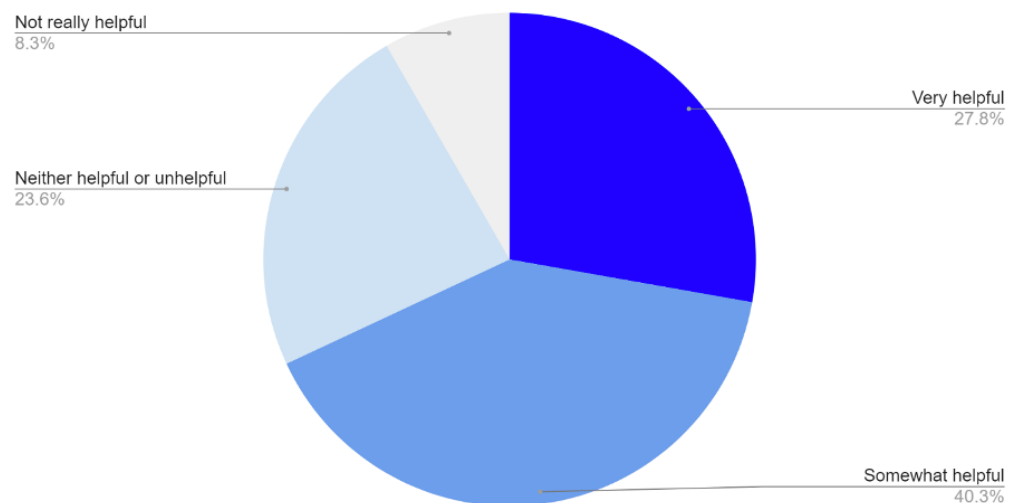
Figure 3. Would an outreach plan be helpful?

Next, those who indicated they did not have a formal outreach plan were asked to consider what challenges there might be in implementing a formal outreach plan at their library. When the qualitative responses were coded, the researchers found that the most-cited challenges included difficulty getting staff or colleague buy-in for the plan, or a lack of administrative support. Some respondents reported that they had previous problems reaching a consensus among colleagues, and that colleagues preferred to focus on individual outreach goals and objectives instead of taking a holistic view. Concerns about administrative support were mostly related to staffing, including the lack of an outreach coordinator and the inability to set aside time to prepare or follow a formal plan. There were also concerns related to funding and whether outreach was an administrative priority. Additional concerns included the potential lack of flexibility in a formal plan, whether it could adapt to changing patron needs, and whether it would devolve into busy work.

Those that indicated the existence of a formal outreach plan (10) were asked more detailed questions about their plan and its implementation. Most organized their document "by date" (4) or by "learning outcomes or strategic goals" (6), though some did report that they also considered "audience" (3) or "existing library services" (3). The survey presented a variety of common organizational strategies and allowed respondents the ability to select more than one answer. A majority of responses (7 or 70 percent) indicated that their

plans explicitly referred to the library's strategic plan, while six (60 percent) said their plans referred explicitly to the university's strategic plan. Half indicated that they did not include an assessment process in their formal outreach plan, and one librarian indicated that they did not assess outreach at all. Responses were evenly split on whether they followed the plan throughout the year. Thirty percent indicated that they followed the document "not very closely" while 40 percent said "somewhat closely" and 30 percent said "very closely."

When asked about the benefits of a formal outreach plan, the results were mixed. Those who used such documents reported that it helped keep the library aware of the outreach goals, while others used it to inform their quarterly or yearly reviews. Some admitted that the reach and overall value of the plan was limited, while others found that it helped attract new patrons or engage with other stakeholders. One respondent reported that completing this survey helped them to identify aspects currently being considered informally, such as strategic plans and assessments, which may need to be added to their existing formal outreach plan.

Though few had a formal outreach plan, all eighty-two respondents were asked about their general approach to outreach activities; their responses showed that most followed an informal structure. Only three indicated that they planned all their outreach on a semester or yearly basis. However, none indicated that their outreach was entirely ad hoc. Ninety-six percent said that they used some sort of advanced planning with most indicating that they used an "even mix between planned-in-advance and ad hoc events" (43 percent) or "Mostly planned out in advance, with some ad hoc events" (38 percent).

An overwhelming majority reported that they informally designed outreach with audiences in mind (99 percent). The survey included several audience categories (see figure 4), but under the "other" category, eleven reported additional audiences like the public or larger community, K–12 students, or general outreach just to faculty or new patrons.
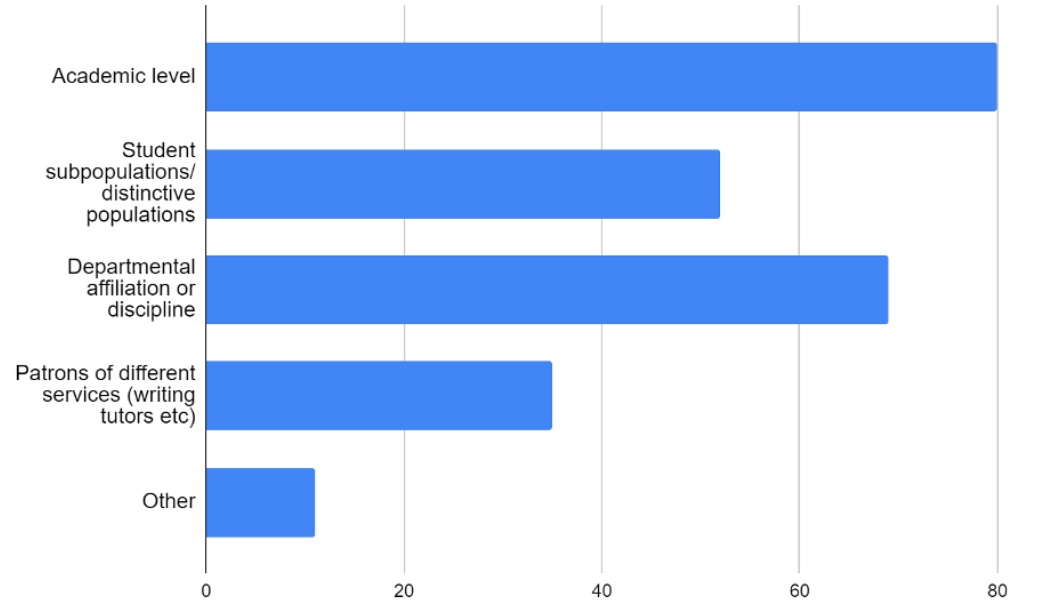

Figure 4. Categories of outreach audiences

When asked how they identified the audiences they wished to engage, some indicated they did so through university systems (like lists of new undergraduates, graduate students, or faculty), but most indicated that audiences were built through personal relationships. Either the library's

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continued

communications or marketing department had connections with certain groups, or the liaisons or subject specialists used their relationships to tailor outreach. Others have a library position that partners with student clubs and organizations or with student services to develop outreach for those groups. Often these relationships were built on previous interactions with the library or previous outreach events that have evolved. There were few that stated that they do not target a specific audience at all.

The survey then asked, "What steps do you take to ensure that all potential audiences were represented in outreach events?" The wording of this question was a bit ambiguous and led to multiple interpretations. Some reported on their marketing strategies and how they utilized social media and other promotional tools to advertise outreach events to specific audiences. Others shared ways that they connected with the identified audiences through campus groups, committees, or campus departments like student services. Others shared that they did not limit or consider the audience of their outreach events and all were welcome to attend.

Also of interest was the role that strategic plans played in libraries' approach to outreach. Seventy-two percent of the eighty-two respondents (59) indicated that they took steps to align outreach with at least part of the library's strategic plan. When asked what areas of the strategic plan they aligned with, seven main themes emerged (see figure 5). A few offered alignments beyond these broad themes like "student success," "collection preservation," and innovative uses of "the library as space."
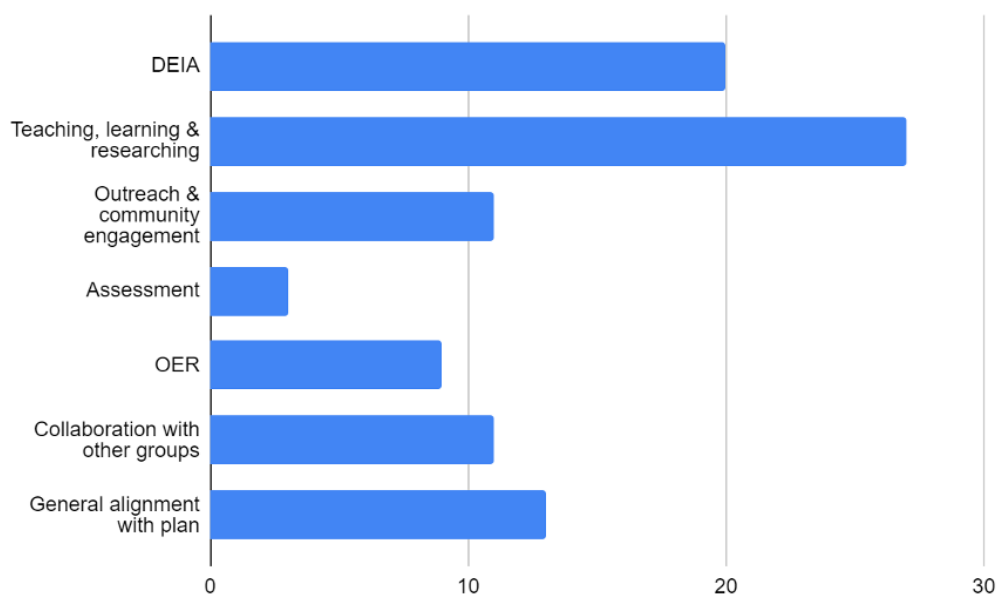
Figure 5: Areas of alignment with library's strategic plan

Alignment with their university's strategic plan was less clear, with only forty-five (55 percent) indicating that they took steps to align outreach with that document. Many indicated that any alignment with the university's plan only came through alignment with the library's, while others reported that outreach was tied to certain campus initiatives like new student orientation; DEIA; OER; or academic, research, and teaching excellence.

When asked, most indicated that they attached some type of assessment to their outreach (69 or 84 percent). The most common strategies were attendance and usage numbers (67), or follow-up surveys (45). A small number (6) indicated that they tried focus groups. Ten respondents shared

other assessments like informal conversations with attendees, follow-up with organizers, or looking at usage of a promoted resources. Interestingly, one librarian shared that they used a "secret shopper" during an orientation to gain feedback.

Of those who recorded assessment (69), most kept the numbers internal and only 24 (35 percent) shared them outside the library. Of those that shared their data with outside groups, most shared with collaborating groups or those that helped organize the event. A few reported that they shared data with ACRL or other professional organizations. Only two mentioned sharing outreach assessment with university administrators, and only one mentioned that it was included in the library's public annual report.

Sixteen percent (13) disclosed that they did not have any assessment process tied to their outreach. A follow-up question offered potential reasons why they may not have one. Three chose "not have enough staffing," while 4 others responded that they were "not required." The third option, "not enough time" was not chosen exclusively, but two respondents wrote in "all of the above." The "other" field also elicited reasons such as collaborating groups had their own assessments, and that assessment was less of a priority with COVID and staffing shortages. One noted that they had been planning to start assessment but have yet to initiate it. A majority (8 or 61 percent) of those without any outreach assessment said they do not have plans to develop any.

Types of Outreach

This project's definition of outreach (provided in the methodology section) was presented at the survey's start for respondents' consideration. Eighty-two percent (67) said that the definition provided was consistent with their own. Of those that provided alternate definitions, seven shared that they were not aware that their library had any set definition. Others shared that they viewed outreach as more restrictive, referring only to engagement with the public (groups external to the university). In these cases, the survey's definition better reflected academic engagement or liaison work. Others reserved "outreach" for marketing, promotion, or other one-way communications that highlighted library services or resources. Unfortunately, due to faulty survey design, a small number missed the provided definition of outreach and so were not able to answer the question.

When asked about the specific types of activities or events they categorized as outreach, responses varied greatly. All eight-two shared, some in great detail, outreach endeavors organized by their libraries. They ranged from informative promotion of services to campus-wide events and competitions. By codifying the results, the following themes were identified (figure 6 shows the total numbers of responses in each theme):

- Asynchronous/passive events: Book displays, giveaways, or other exhibits that did not require direct interaction with users.
- Orientations/open houses: Informative tours or orientations for specific audiences (like first-year students) or at specific times of year (like the beginning of the semester).
- Library information tables/resource fairs: May be organized internally or as part of larger campus events. They are typically staffed by library employees and have the potential for interaction with attendees.
- Workshops: Librarians reported hosting workshops on a variety of topics. They may also be invited to speak to particular groups.
- Newsletters/emails/advertising: Events and services may be promoted in a variety of ways: newsletters, flyers, event calendars, blog posts, etc. This category also grew to include social media posts.

- Finals or midterm-specific events: These events were separated from orientation or open house events because they all had an element of "stress-busting" or study breaks that were especially common during midterms or finals.
- Liaison work: Efforts, typically by subject specialists, to engage and build relationships with their assigned departments or disciplines. These included informative emails, attending department meetings, or meeting new faculty for lunch.
- Co-curricular or "for fun" events: These may be similar to midterm or final events but are not tied to a specific time of year. They include providing specific resources for checkout like gardening tools or board games, or organizing campus book or film clubs.
- Contests/competitions/awards: Campus-centered contests or giveaways tied to student research or creative works, or raffles for library swag. Some reported that they also served as judges for outside events.
- Outreach to community: Many libraries supported connections with local schools and public libraries or participated in other community-sponsored events.
- Other programming: Outreach in this category comprised cases where the library did not coordinate the event but provided logistical support.
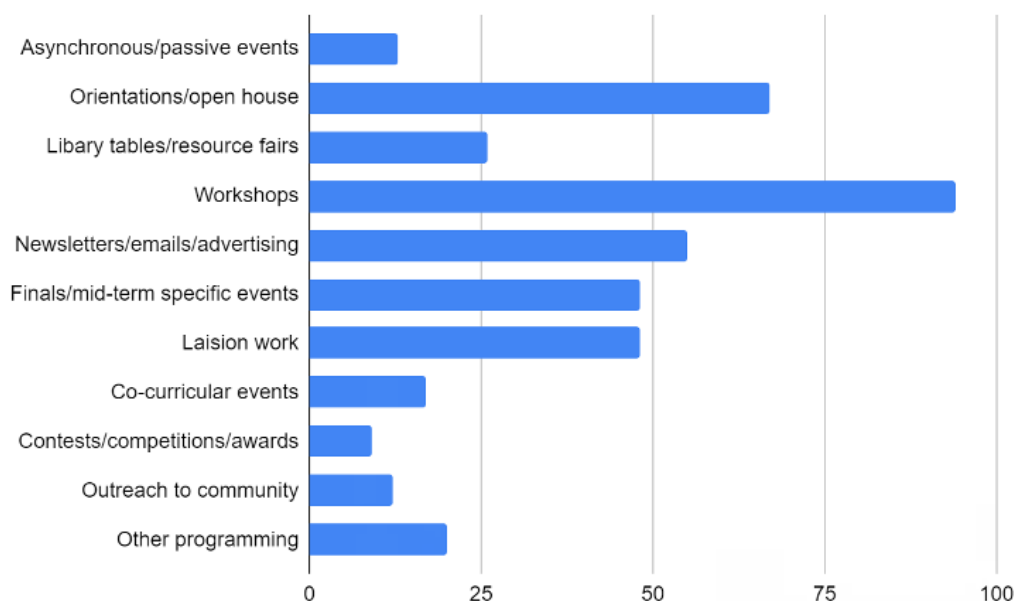
Figure 6: Types of outreach

When asked specifically about outreach related to STEM, 70 percent provided target outreach on STEM topics and 84 percent indicated that they specifically targeted STEM departments and students. The survey provided outreach options popular with STEM disciplines (see figure 7). At least 50 percent (41) of respondents indicated that they provide outreach on most of the topics offered. Those provided least often were poster creation/conference presentations (31), patents (33), and copyright (41).

Eighty-nine percent of respondents indicated that they collaborated with others when creating outreach events. The survey provided example groups librarians may collaborate with (see figure 8). The survey also provided an "other" option to allow respondents to add any other groups that may have been overlooked. Librarians shared that they collaborated with outside groups like vendors, state extension offices, and professional organizations. Other university departments mentioned often focused on student support,
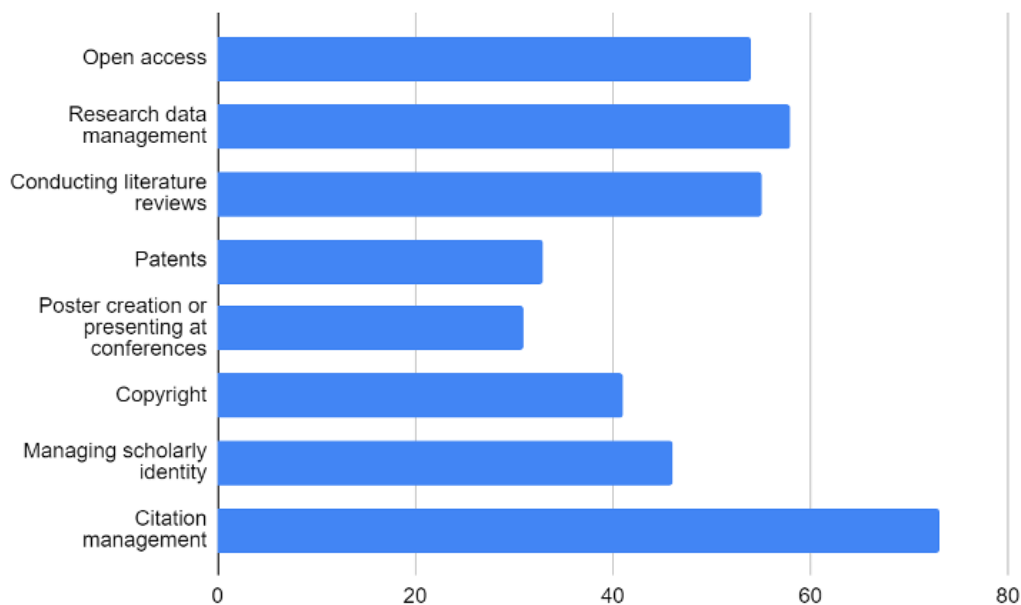
Figure 7: Types of STEM-specific outreach

including centers for writing, tutoring, academic support, or health services. Other faculty support departments included centers for teaching excellence, faculty development offices, or offices of research.
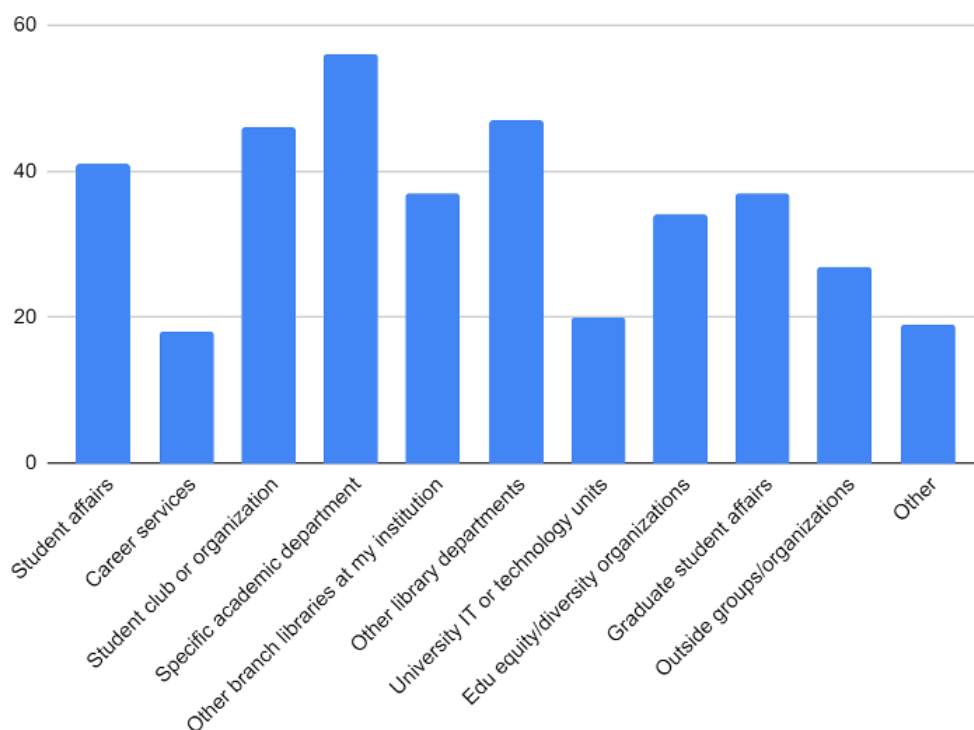
Figure 8: Outreach collaborators

Effects of COVID

This survey was launched in the summer of 2022 when COVID's impact on higher education, and library outreach in particular, was still being processed. Whether librarians were going to be able to return to the "normal" landscape of outreach in the coming 2022–23 academic year was still uncertain. It was

important, therefore, to flesh out the pandemic's role in the outreach strategies highlighted elsewhere in the survey. As seen in figure 9, an overwhelming majority indicated that COVID affected their library's outreach at least "a moderate amount."
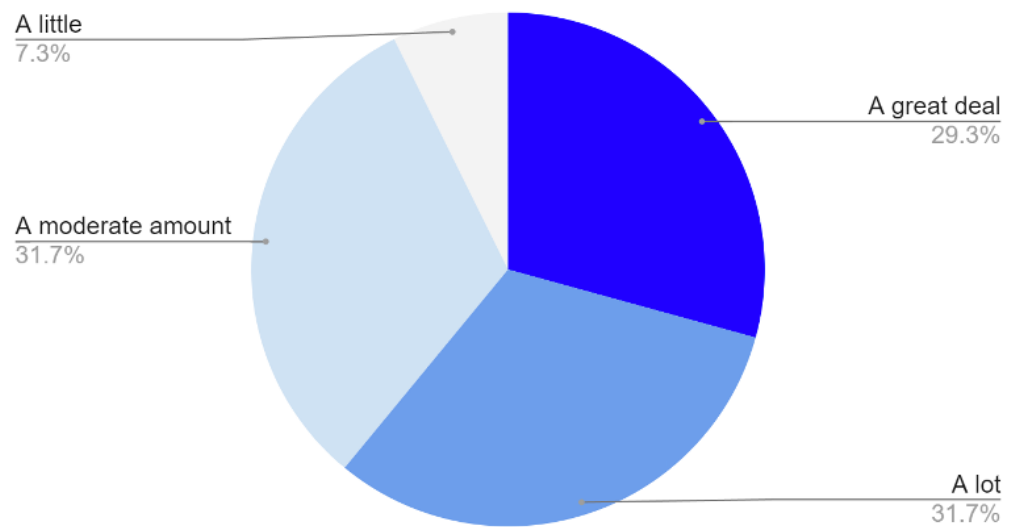
Figure 9: Effect of COVID on outreach

When given the opportunity to expand upon the impact, respondents went into great detail explaining the ways COVID initially affected their outreach plans and continued to inform their plans for the 2022–23 academic year. Themes included the following:

- Shift from in-person to virtual events: Especially during the spring and fall of 2020, libraries had to find ways to shift in-person events to a virtual space (10). Many reported that events were canceled because they did not translate well to virtual (16). At least one mentioned Zoom fatigue affecting participation/attendance. Others reported that the switch was not an issue and students seemed to prefer virtual events (4).
- Limited access to library space: With library buildings being closed, many reported missed opportunities to interact with the campus community (12), and limited promotional opportunities because of missing in-person traffic (5).
- Library staffing: Staff shortages (5) and shifting staff priorities away from outreach (7) were both concerns that continue into the post-COVID environment. Staff also were less comfortable participating in group events (2).
- Change in offerings or attendance: Though this category could be considered a subsection of the themes above, it is important to highlight the impact COVID had on overall outreach planning and execution. Many reported that they simply canceled or postponed outreach events (17), or student engagement declined (12).
- Innovation: Librarians reported that they had to adapt their outreach offerings because of changing student needs and so they tried new programming. For some, virtual programming led to broader event reach and the engagement of new audiences (3). Others successfully launched new social media presences as ways to engage their communities virtually.

- Post-COVID: Some reported that they were still figuring out how to return to a pre-COVID outreach environment, or wondered if that was even possible since the pandemic had such a negative impact on their outreach. Five reported that they were back to pre-pandemic levels of outreach, while others said they were just returning to in-person events. Some were sticking with virtual or outdoor events for the near future (4) or were going to keep the options for hybrid and virtual models (3). Three respondents reported that they were not able to continue some pre-pandemic events because they lost outreach funding during the pandemic.

Discussion

Though the targeted nature of this research project led to a somewhat small sample size, it still provided some interesting insights into the current status of outreach and the use of formalized outreach plans in academic libraries. Though not a comprehensive picture, the authors were able to make some generalized conclusions based on the survey responses.

Outreach is still a largely decentralized activity in academic libraries

While some library objectives, such as information literacy, have been formalized with set standards, frameworks, and best practices, library outreach is still an individualistic endeavor. Many respondents were frankly unsure of their library's larger outreach environment. This is in line with findings reported by the Outreach and Engagement SPEC Kit 361 (LeMire et al. 2018, 10). Outreach appears to be the purview of multiple librarians at any given location, and their focus is on their specific areas of responsibility (like subject/liaison librarians, or those who only work with undergraduates). The majority of our respondents may have a narrow view of outreach because they seem to focus exclusively on STEM departments or programs. They know their individual approaches to outreach, but most do not have a holistic understanding of outreach at their library. However, it was interesting to see that the outreach reported by many was general enough to appeal beyond a specific STEM department or program.

One reason behind this decentralization could be that, unlike instruction, outreach has a nebulous quality that depends on the unique needs of the campus community, or an individual department or program. It is strongly tied to the context of how each institution has historically defined and classified these activities, and the roles and relationships that the library has traditionally had. This aligns with the continued struggle to define outreach in library literature, as seen in Diaz (2019).

Librarians may not want to centralize outreach planning

When asked about any challenges in implementing a formal outreach plan, common concerns were achieving staff buy-in and a lack of flexibility. Ninety-six percent of respondents said that they incorporated at least some ad hoc events into their outreach calendars, so having latitude and the agency to amend outreach plans as opportunities arise is important to librarians. Such concerns could be relieved by emphasizing the importance of having built-in mechanisms for change and improvisation, as seen with the University of Nevada Las Vegas Library case studies (Del Bosque et al. 2017, 14; Wainwright and Mitola 2019, 321).

Outreach appears to be an extension of the respondents' relationships with academic departments, academic support organizations, or student clubs and organizations. While our initial focus was on STEM departments, there is an

opportunity to extrapolate this reliance on relationships to library outreach focused on other departments or disciplines. Ideas for outreach events often come from personal relationships, and librarians may feel that formalized outreach plans minimize this partnership. Librarians may be more comfortable being reactive instead of prescriptive in this regard.

Of those that use outreach plans, most find value in them

Among those respondents who had a formal outreach document, most felt that they benefited from having them. The primary benefits included helping libraries keep track of outreach goals, as well as generating reports for quarterly or yearly reviews. Others found that it helped attract new patrons. This confirms the potential benefits already identified in the literature (Bastone 2020, 26; LeMire et al. 2018, 10) However, other respondents felt that the plan was of limited value to their institution, so this experience is not universal. Further, the survey did not ask explicitly about the drawbacks to using outreach plans, which deserves further examination in future studies.

Libraries are already following an informal outreach plan

While a formalized outreach plan does not appear to be common among academic libraries (only 12 percent of respondents indicated that they used one), most of those surveyed appeared to follow an informal planning process. They indicated that they followed an outreach calendar or timeline for most events (84 percent), identified potential audiences (99 percent) and collaborative partners (89 percent), and included some type of assessment (85 percent). Even without a plan, they are taking steps to align with the library's (72 percent) and university's (55 percent) strategic plans. The survey responses reported that 60 percent of those who did not have formal outreach plans believe such plans could be at least "somewhat helpful."

Perhaps formalized outreach plans simply have a public relations problem. For example, some respondents offered frustration about the lack of clear outreach planning or ownership of some outreach activities, sentiments also found in Carter and Seaman (2011, 169). Many were likely STEM liaison or subject specialists, so their inability to answer holistic questions may stem from a lack of outreach communication. Advocates of formal outreach plans may gain more buy-in if they focus on its benefits, like greater communication and collaboration, efficiency, and easier reporting to stakeholders. Librarians already report that they are overworked and under-supported, so the idea of another "hurdle" to their outreach may be met with skepticism. Implementation leaders may need to proactively address issues of department dynamics, desire for flexibility, and a clear definition of the plan's objectives, goals, and obligations.

Though outreach is decentralized, libraries are following a similar game plan

Though some libraries had a different definition of outreach, they all reported very similar outreach activities and programming, including many endeavors that went beyond the boundaries of STEM-specific departments or programs and appeared to benefit the larger campus community. Out of the hundreds of examples provided by respondents, it was fairly easy to categorize them into ten or so overarching themes. This congruence was even more explicit when asked about specific STEM outreach topics. Though the respondents identified about fourteen STEM departments/programs that they worked with, almost all the respondents participated in at least one of the eight STEM outreach types identified by the authors. Collaboration groups and assessment strategies were also very consistent among respondents. While libraries value the ability to personalize and adapt to their unique campus communities, they are all offering

similar events and activities: workshops, midterm/final programming, and new faculty or student orientations are all important markers on academic libraries' calendars.

COVID is changing the outreach landscape

It may be too early to say for certain how libraries will adjust their outreach in the post-pandemic world, but in the summer of 2022, they reported that previous outreach events had been canceled, adapted, or completely re-envisioned due to the changing needs of students, faculty/staff, and community audiences. The shift to virtual programming mentioned by Surbaugh (2021) and Wilson (2013) was still alive and well in the results. Also present was a dichotomy between the desire for in-person connection and the convenience of virtual programming that many libraries are trying to figure out. This tension in student preferences may require librarians to place more forethought into an event's format, even if it was successful in previous years.

Another way that COVID may change outreach at academic libraries is the impact it had on library staffing. Between hiring freezes or cuts in positions, many reported that they were stretched thin among their responsibilities. Such an environment may lead to a reduced amount of outreach, as time typically spent for outreach planning and hosting is now used for other tasks. The current economic and funding environment may actually help codify outreach efforts. COVID's impact may force libraries to critically assess how they are supporting outreach and may lead to a more centralized approach to outreach for efficiency. Many reported that outreach and campus engagement are current parts of their library's and university's strategic plans, so more efforts to define and assess outreach may be forthcoming as libraries look for ways to demonstrate their impact.

There are only minor distinctions between kinds of libraries

Responses were assessed by library type (main libraries versus a branch or satellite library) to identify any meaningful distinction in their outreach planning. In terms of the use of assessments, collaboration with other departments/groups, or designing outreach towards specific audiences, library type did not appear to have a significant effect. However, only 6 percent of respondents who worked in a main library reported that they had an outreach plan, compared to 17 percent of branch or satellite library respondents. This may suggest a potentially significant difference in the usefulness or feasibility of these formal documents based on library size or perhaps the number of stakeholders. Due to the low response rate, however, the significance of this is not clear at this point.

Limitations

Limited by the information provided in the public directories, survey invitations were necessarily sent to multiple librarians per library, department, or division. Because of this, the exact number of institutions represented is unknown, though since the project was not designed to be comprehensive, it is a minor concern. The survey also could contain duplicate submissions from a library or department, though these individuals could have different points of view regarding outreach, which would add value to this potential duplication.

Other limitations were not identified until after the data was collected and analyzed. Formatting issues with the Qualtrics survey, along with issue related to some of the questions' wording, led to confusion and uncertainty. In other cases, the confusion was due to respondents' lack of knowledge related to outreach at their institution. This meant that some of the questions related to

outreach administration (like assessment or alignment to strategic plans) were not answerable by the individuals solicited.

Next Steps/Further Research

This research project represents the beginning steps of an attempt to create a comprehensive evaluation of outreach in academic libraries. To see if the trends and themes found hold true, it will be necessary to explore a broad range of library types and institutions. More research will be necessary to survey librarians from other academic institutions, including liberal arts institutions, community colleges, and others outside of the AAU. In particular, the preliminary finding that branch and satellite libraries may be more likely to utilize formal outreach plans than main libraries should be tested.

More work may also be needed to correctly identify those who participate in and oversee outreach at each institution. The STEM focus of this project meant that many surveyed were not in a position to know the overall outreach strategy for the institution. Soliciting library administrators might be one way to access a library's overall approach to outreach, especially if the library includes outreach metrics in their reporting. Researchers may also want to attempt to solicit the planning document themselves, which would allow for analysis of the actual documents rather than librarian perceptions. These strategies may also help parse out any drawbacks or negative consequences resulting from the use of a formal plan.

More exploration could help deepen the understanding of activities undertaken by libraries, and the ways in which library type and size influence outreach. This study focused primarily on STEM-related outreach, but it would be interesting to see if the themes identified here are consistent with a broader scope of libraries, or what additional activities or events may be common at other institutions. Assessment of library outreach activities would be another avenue of investigation, especially into whether traditional assessment tools can successfully measure the impact of certain outreach activities (like workshops or table events), and whether assessment data directly affect future outreach strategies.

COVID's impact on library outreach is a multi-faceted question that deserves in-depth examination. It would be particularly worthwhile to explore the long-term effects of COVID on outreach, whether the impacts are generalizable, and whether any changes observed will persist. For example, the persistence of virtual or hybrid programming, which were essential to pandemic outreach, would be an interesting trend to follow.

Finally, as staffing surfaced as a strong theme, a relevant follow-up may include more analysis on the staffing and time allocated to outreach. Respondents indicated that there was a relatively small number of staff dedicated to outreach, but it would be interesting to discover exactly how much time librarians are able to spend on outreach in light of their other responsibilities. In addition, such a follow-up could explore whether staffing has an impact on the topics and modes of outreach, as well as on the ways that librarians plan and assess outreach activities.

Conclusion

This research study found that STEM-related academic library outreach continues to be a relatively individualized endeavor, supporting trends initially observed in LeMire et al. (2018, 10). Survey respondents indicated that many chose to approach outreach in individualized ways that met the unique needs of their locations and saw great value in an adaptable and reactive approach to outreach. Even if formal outreach plans are not currently adopted by libraries,

the survey showed that they are starting to think about outreach in a more systematic way and may be considering the value of such a document as a way to demonstrate their value to university administration or other stakeholders. More explorations of outreach programming and planning strategies would be beneficial as libraries navigate post-COVID budgeting and staffing concerns. Such research would allow librarians from a variety of backgrounds more opportunities to share their experiences and would gather insights to help provide more guidance to the larger library profession.

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Appendix 1: Outreach Survey Questions

Within this survey, the authors are defining outreach as "work carried out by library employees that includes methods of intervention to advance awareness, positive perceptions, and use of library services, spaces, collections, and issues (e.g., various literacies, scholarly communication, etc.). Outreach efforts are typically implemented periodically throughout the year or as a single event" (Diaz, 2019). Some examples of outreach may include finals week events, writing retreats for graduate students, open houses for new students, or contacting new faculty and/or staff via email to invite them in for a personal tour of the library, among many other examples.

Does your library provide outreach?
• Yes
• No

(If no) If your library does not perform outreach, what are the reasons your library does not?

How would you describe your library?
• Main library location on a campus/only library location at University
• Satellite or specialized location located on the same campus as the main library location
• Branch library located at a separate campus from the main library location
• Other (please describe)

If your library location is specialized or subject specific, what areas do you serve?

How many full-time employees work in your library location?
• 1–5
• 6–10
• 11–15
• 16–20
• More than 20

How many employees in your library location assist with outreach events?
• 1–2
• 3–5
• 6–10
• More than 10

- My library doesn't engage in outreach

Does your library use a different definition of outreach than the one provided above?
- Yes
- No

(If yes), If your library uses a different definition, how does your library define outreach?

What kind of outreach do you provide? What kind of activities, events, topics, etc.?

Do you collaborate with other departments or groups on outreach?
- Yes
- No

(If yes) What other departments or campus groups have you collaborated with on outreach? Please check all that apply.
- Student Affairs
- Career Services
- Student club or organization
- Specific academic departments
- Other branch libraries at my institution
- Other library departments
- University IT or technology units
- Educational equity/diversity organizations
- Graduate student affairs
- Groups or organizations outside the university (e.g., public libraries, community groups)
- Other (please describe)

To what extend do you plan your outreach calendar in advance on a semester/yearly basis, versus conceiving and planning outreach events ad hoc?
- All planned out in advance on a semester/yearly basis
- Mostly planned out in advance, with some ad hoc events conceived throughout the year
- A fairly even mix between planned-in-advance and ad hoc events
- One or two planned out in advance, but most are done ad hoc
- All events are planned out ad hoc

Does your library design outreach events with particular audiences in mind (like undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, distinct student populations, or specific departments)
- Yes
- No

(If yes) What categories of audiences have you identified? Check all that apply.
- Academic level (graduate or undergraduate students)
- Student subpopulations/distinctive populations (race/ethnicity, LGBTQ, international students, military students, etc.)
- Departmental affiliation or discipline (STEM, art, etc.)
- Patrons of different services (writing tutors, VR, etc.)

• Other (please describe)

(If yes) How does your library identify these audiences?

(If yes) What steps do you take to ensure that all potential audiences are represented in outreach events?

Do you provide targeted outreach on STEM topics?
• Yes
• No

Do you provide targeted outreach to STEM departments and students?
• Yes
• No

Do you provide outreach on any of the following topics?
• Open Access
• Research Data Management
• Conducting Literature Reviews
• Patents
• Poster creation or presenting at conferences
• Copyright
• Managing scholarly identity
• Citation Management

Do you take steps to align outreach with your Library's strategic plan, goal, or mission statement?
• Yes
• No

(If yes) What are some examples of how your outreach aligns with your Library's strategic plan, goals or mission statement?

Do you take steps to align outreach with your University's strategic plan or mission statement?

(If yes) what are some examples of ways your outreach aligns with the University's strategic plan or mission statement?

For this survey, assessment is the evaluation of library services or events to determine the use and efficacy of the services by relevant stakeholders.

When you do outreach, do you accompany it with some form of formal assessment, such as follow-up surveys or collecting usage or attendance data?
• Yes
• No

(If yes) What assessment strategies do you use?
• Follow-up surveys
• Attendance/usage numbers
• Focus groups
• Other (please describe)

Do you share this assessment with others outside the library?

- Yes
- No

(If yes) If you share this assessment, with whom do you share the assessment data?

(If no to the first assessment question above) Are there specific reasons why your library does not have an assessment process? Check all that apply.
- Not enough time
- Not enough staffing
- Not required to have one
- Other (please describe)

(If no to the first assessment question above) Does your library have future plans to develop an outreach assessment process?
- Yes
- No

Some libraries use a document to lay out systematic goals for library outreach over a given period. This is often called an outreach plan.

Does your library have a document like this?
- Yes
- No

Follow-up questions if respondents indicate they have an outreach plan

How is your outreach plan organized? Check all that apply.
- By date
- By audience
- By learning outcome or strategic goals
- By existing library services
- Some other format (please describe)

Does your outreach plan explicitly refer to the library's strategic plan, mission, or goals?
- Yes
- No

Does your outreach plan explicitly refer to the university's strategic plan, mission, or goals?
- Yes
- No

If you assess library outreach, is the assessment process outlined in the outreach plan?
- Yes
- No
- Outreach is not assessed

How has having an outreach plan benefited your library and its outreach efforts?

How closely do you stick to your outreach plan throughout the year?

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Follow-up questions if respondents indicated they do not have an outreach plan

How helpful do you think it would be to your outreach efforts if your library had a formal outreach plan?
• Very helpful
• Somewhat helpful
• Neither helpful or unhelpful
• Not really helpful
• Definitely not helpful

Can you think of any challenges you may face if you were to try and implement an outreach plan?

To what extent has COVID affected your library's ability to provide outreach?
• **A great deal**
• A lot
• A moderate amount
• A little
• None at all

If you'd like to expand upon COVID's effect on your library's ability to provide outreach, please do so here.

ARTICLE

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Bridging the Mind and Body: A Case Study of a Mini Pantry Collaboration within a Library

ABSTRACT

Campus food pantries are on the front lines of feeding college students who are experiencing food insecurity, with some academic libraries now joining the effort. Academic libraries are uniquely positioned to address the needs of these students. Food pantries located in academic libraries have many advantages over traditional food pantries, such as longer hours, greater accessibility, and staff with more customer service experience. This case study provides insight and concrete takeaways on the partnership between the University of Maryland, Baltimore County's (UMBC) Albin O. Kuhn Library & Gallery and Retriever Essentials, the on-campus food access initiative. The authors examine campus demographics, specifically campus food insecurity statistics, and how they contribute to the overall need for the library mini-pantry space. In addition, this case study also discusses ways to identify key partners and assists in selecting a location and pantry model. The urgency of this initiative spurs the inclusion of tips to getting started at your own campus. Usage statistics are also briefed, and best practices—including the need to offer culturally inclusive foods—are reviewed, as well as our next steps for the mini pantry.

KEYWORDS

academic libraries, STEM, outreach, outreach plans, campus engagement

T he day-to-day responsibilities of a college student involve classes, course work, and extracurricular interests—activities that often take priority over accessing adequate food or nutrition. The US Department of Agriculture defines low food security as having "reduced diet quality and variety—but typically … fewer, if any, indications of reduced food intake" and very low food security as having "multiple indications of reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns" (US Department of Agriculture 2019). Hunger, on the other hand, refers to a personal, physical sensation of discomfort.

A report released by the US Government Accountability Office in late 2018 reviewed 22 applicable studies related to food insecurity and found that more than 30 percent of college students face food insecurity at some point in their college career amid the rising costs of higher education (US Government Accountability Office 2018). Student food insecurity is experienced at higher rates by traditionally underrepresented groups, "including first-generation college students, Black and Indigenous people, single parents, people with disabilities, nonbinary and trans-identifying individuals, former foster youth, and those who are presently unhoused or at risk of homelessness" (Wood 2020).

Food insecurity exists at every college and university but occurs at higher rates in public universities and two-year colleges (Cornett 2022). Students

experiencing food insecurity are overwhelmingly part of the labor force, with many of the most vulnerable students working more hours than their peers (Cornett 2022). Dr. Harmony Reppond, an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, paints a stark picture of food insecurity among students: "Food insecurity for college students can mean running out of food between paychecks, attending campus events in search of food, reducing food intake, [turning to] minimally nutritious food that costs less, skipping meals, and deciding between paying for textbooks or food" (Reppond 2019). This escalates into students' inability to meet their educational commitments, including sound academic performance, reliable class attendance, and adequate concentration.

Some campuses across the country have responded to this crisis by establishing food pantries that use various food delivery models to feed students (Price et al. 2019). For instance, some on-campus residential housing offices have initiated "Swipe Out" programs wherein students can donate extra meals from their dining hall meal plans to students experiencing food insecurity. In other universities, campus pantries partner with academic units to raise awareness or build capacity, including coordinating with nutrition programs (Price et al. 2019).

Libraries are one of the campus units with which these food pantries partner; they are uniquely positioned to address food insecurity. Food pantries located in academic libraries have many advantages over traditional food pantries: longer hours, greater accessibility, convenience to students' daily lives, and staff with more customer service experience (Forehand 2018). Further, many campus libraries are heavily used and are convenient to students' daily lives, giving an internally located pantry high visibility.

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) library's vision states it will alter itself to the changing needs of its users: "We will transform the library's physical and virtual space to adapt to changing needs" (UMBC n.d.-a). Students are experiencing food insecurity; UMBC's library has responded to this fact by adopting various initiatives and supporting collaboration with campus units that support students' physical wellbeing. The library has supported the creation of the Health Literacy Working Group, end-of-semester wellness events, and other pro-health initiatives.

This paper focuses on the budding partnership between UMBC's library and Retriever Essentials, UMBC's on-campus food access initiative, as well as the new program established from this partnership—a library mini pantry. The authors examine UMBC's campus demographics, specifically campus food insecurity statistics, and how they contribute to the overall need for such an offering. In addition, the article discusses ways to identify key partners, an ideal location, and the best food delivery model to implement. The urgency of this initiative spurs the inclusion of "tips for getting started" at your own campus. Usage statistics and best practices are considered—including the need to offer culturally inclusive and ready-to-eat convenience foods. Finally, the paper reviews next steps for the library mini pantry.

Literature Review

Food insecurity is prevalent and affects a diverse group of college students. In a review of studies of rates of food insecurity on college campuses, researchers Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2018) determined that as many as half of all students at two- and four-year US colleges experience food insecurity. Furthermore, a 2017 study calculated the rate of food insecurity among college students at almost double the prevalence in the general US population (Bruening et al. 2017). This issue disproportionately affects already marginalized groups based

on disability (Bottorff et al. 2020), gender identity (Bottorff et al. 2020; Regan 2020), race (Broton, Weaver, and Mai 2018; Bottorff et al. 2020; Maroto, Snelling, and Linck 2015; Regan 2020), socio-economic status (Broton et al. 2018; Bottorff et al. 2020; Regan 2020; Broton et al. 2018), and student status such as first-generation (Regan 2020), graduate (Regan 2020), and international (Bottorff et al. 2020).

Researchers Nazmi et al. reviewed the available literature and found a link between food insecurity on college campuses and public health crises (2019). One of their most troubling findings was that food insecurity rates were at least three times higher on college campuses than in US households, even higher than findings by Bruening et al. The Nazmi et al. study encouraged future researchers to develop commonly accepted standards for assessing food insecurity in collegiate samples, "including identifying and implementing standardized and valid methodological approaches" (2019).

In a concept analysis of existing literature on the topic, Kendrick et al. (2022) listed the defining attributes of food insecurity in college students as "(1) Lack of sufficient food (2) Negative academic implications (3) Negative physical health impacts (4) Negative psychosocial health impacts and (5) Learning to identify and use food resources" (2022). Critically, Nazmi et al. (2019) stated colleges and universities must examine further the food insecurity problem and develop policies to alleviate the crisis and its consequences. Short-term solutions, like on-campus food pantries, address the symptoms rather than the causes of the problem.

One such policy is to have students participate in government assistance programs. However, existing social benefits, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps), have low participation rates among college students with many students ineligible for SNAP or unaware of their eligibility due to exclusionary and confusing eligibility requirements (Freudenberg, Goldrick-Rab, and Poppendieck 2019). Therefore, college food pantries have stepped in to fill this service gap, with 55 percent of two- and four-year universities now having their own food pantries. These initiatives use a wide range of food delivery models to feed students (Cady and White 2018). One such model is utilizing academic libraries to combat food insecurity on campus.

Academic libraries have lagged behind their public library peers in this regard. While many campuses have food pantries, academic libraries' involvement with them has thus far been relatively limited (Wood 2020). It should be noted that food banks are usually large facilities where food is stored and distributed to smaller entities, while a food pantry is more localized, acting similarly to a grocery store (Martin, Xu, and Schwartz 2021). Partnerships between campus pantries and academic libraries offer many advantages to students. Libraries tend to be located in areas accessible to more students; open longer hours than Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; accessible to a broader spectrum of people; and experienced with implementing and sustaining a variety of student-focused programs.

Food for Fines, a type of incentive-based food drive initiative, has long been common in public libraries for patron relations and retention; it encourages the return of overdue items while also addressing some of the challenges of food insecurity. Some offer a one-for-one exchange of grocery items for the forgiveness of per-item fines. Academic libraries such as at the University of California, San Diego, have begun to tap into these programming opportunities with greater awareness of the growing prevalence of food insecurity on college campuses (Goodson et al. 2019). The logistics of Food-for-Fines policies vary across participating academic libraries. For example, Loyola Marymount

University—a private Jesuit and Marymount research university in Los Angeles, California—created an initiative to award two dollars off library fines to participants of the campus blood drive (Goodson et al. 2019).

A 2022 study at Texas Woman's University (TWU) exploring students' barriers to accessing on-campus food pantries found that almost half (47.8 percent) of the TWU students surveyed were unaware that on-campus pantries existed at that institution. More than one in four TWU respondents believed there were barriers to accessing the pantries, with time constraints, lack of transportation, limited food pantry hours, and social stigma most commonly cited as major barriers to access. The study suggested TWU campus food pantries could address major barriers by offering after-hours access through the libraries or campus police, partnering with public transportation, and normalizing access of food assistance among students (Brito-Silva et al. 2022).

Having food pantries in libraries makes sense at the Fort Hays State University (FHSU) campus in Hays, Kansas. The library's proximity to the campus quad and residence halls, and the fact that students frequently spend time in those locations, make the presence of the library's food pantries there ideal. Located on the first floor of Forsyth Library at FHSU, the pantry stocks free provisions, including produce from a "university garden, and donations from faculty, students, and local businesses" (Udell 2019). Library staffers guide students to the pantry and ensure the area stays stocked and organized.

Another food delivery model that libraries have implemented is offering pre-assembled bags of food. Instead of a following a client-choice model, the campus pantry at the Mason Library of Keene State College in New Hampshire offers bags of food that students can claim at the circulation desk. That program stemmed from the limited hours of the campus pantry. Library Dean Celia Rabinowitz states, "the [library] was the first [solution] they thought of because we have such extended hours . . . We're open a lot, particularly during the academic year. We're open seven days a week, we're open late at night" (Udell 2019). From the circulation desk, students can claim their pre-assembled bags after showing their student ID. Rabinowitz says the system offers students privacy because it verifies that they attend the school without recording their names as food assistance recipients.

In interviews with 30 students at a large US university, Fortin, Harvey, and Swearingen White found that students' perception that their peers need food more than they do is a barrier to pantry access for some (2021). Other barriers they identified were a lack of cooking and food storage facilities, social stigma around seeking food assistance, limited hours of pantry operation, and a lack of information about food-support offerings. The same students described missing meals; suffering negative effects on physical, mental, and academic well-being; and utilizing coping mechanisms to rationalize or tolerate a lack of food.

Community Profile (University of Maryland, Baltimore County) and Campus Food Pantry Use

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) sits roughly eight miles southwest of downtown Baltimore and about 34 miles northeast of Washington, DC. In the fall of 2021, UMBC had approximately 13,600 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled full- or part-time. Most of its student body hails from Maryland, but UMBC does have many students enrolled from neighboring states and around the world. For the fall 2021 semester, UMBC had more international students enrolled than out-of-state, domestic students. That information, coupled with the fact that 25 percent of the graduating class of 2020 was from outside the United States, signals

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that international students make up a considerable portion of the university's overall student population.

Retriever Essentials is UMBC's food-access initiative; its stated mission is "to develop a comprehensive program of resources which immediately eliminates the burden of food insecurity for UMBC members and connects them to ongoing support networks, in order to enhance their academic retention and career success" (UMBC n.d.-b). Retriever Essentials has surveyed and interviewed UMBC students, staff, and faculty regarding food insecurity on campus. In their 2019–2020 survey of 260 UMBC students, 24 percent stated that they did not have enough to eat at some time in the past 12 months, 38 percent described not having adequate nutrition during winter or summer breaks in the past year, and 43 percent indicated that their academic performance had been negatively affected in the past 12 months by a lack of food. In follow-up interviews, participants provided additional detail to their experiences with food insecurity, such as graduate student stipends that go primarily towards rent, leaving little left over for food, or the obstacles international students face to obtaining culturally relevant foods near campus or transportation to grocery stores.

Since its inception in 2018, Retriever Essentials has distributed over 57,000 pounds of food, and 1,300 meal swipes to UMBC students, staff, and faculty. The pantry serves many international and graduate students, with these populations collectively comprising nearly two-thirds of Retriever Essentials' users. The program continues to expand its impact and reach by destigmatizing the process of receiving free food and making its resources more accessible. In 2022, the program's most impactful year to date, it distributed over seven times the amount of food distributed in 2019, its second most impactful year. Retriever Essentials' growth can be partly attributed to its on-campus partnerships, including the campus library and its mini pantry.

Methodology

Launched in May 2022, the UMBC library's mini pantry differs from existing campus pantries in the following ways:
- Open twenty-four hours a day
- Freely available food
- Unrestricted access to the location by students, staff, and faculty
- Strives to stock culturally diverse foods
- Stocks convenient foods and snacks
- Stocked and managed by the well-staffed and structured Retriever Essentials

Prior to the initiative's launch, the authors evaluated the literature to determine best practices for implementing a new pantry. Potential partnerships were identified to support the new location based on specific interests and shared goals. To determine the precise site of the mini pantry, the authors collected feedback from stakeholders in the form of a pantry intake form, as well as interviews with library staff. The location for the mini pantry was selected based on a situational assessment of strengths and weaknesses of various models that the main campus food pantry already employed. The authors then created a marketing and outreach plan, implemented the mini pantry, and began collecting data on the weight of food stocked by the pantry manager and volunteers.

Identifying Campus Partnerships
In Retriever Essentials' interviews with pantry users, respondents expressed

that providing different pickup points across campus and maintaining users' confidentiality improved their experience with the organization. Therefore, adding additional locations available twenty-four hours a day for confidential pickups was crucial to effective expansion. That pointed to two on-campus location options for the program: the campus police station and the library. The campus police station already housed a mini pantry for Retriever Essentials; however, it experiences very little traffic compared to other food pantry distribution locations on campus. On the other hand, the library is centrally located and more heavily trafficked, and it is a facility to which students naturally gravitate and feel comfortable.

Identifying and soliciting library partnerships were essential in establishing a food pantry in the library. Three in-house groups were quickly identified to help establish the library food pantry: library administration, Health Literacy Working Group (HLWG), and the Library Assembly committee.

Library administration consists of the director, associate directors, and building manager. The building manager was contacted and invited to participate. He supported having a pantry in the library and subsequently participated in the ongoing conversations and improvements.

The Health Literacy Working Group (HLWG) was created to improve the health of library employees and patrons by making health information easy to understand, access, and use. The working group dedicated the theme of its spring 2022 initiatives to on-campus food insecurity. Initiatives included a speaker series, an online newsletter, and collaboration with the campus University Health Services.

Library Assembly is an in-house committee that establishes and maintains effective communication among all library staff. Retriever Essentials and the chair of the HLWG gave a presentation to enlighten library staff about food insecurity on campus.

These three groups worked together to locate and establish a Retriever Essentials pantry presence in the library.

Identifying the Best Model

Various food pantry models already exist and are implemented in academic libraries across the country. Libraries, however, need to identify the best model for their population because "library food pantries are not one-size-fits-all" (Wood 2020).

Retriever Essentials currently employs three food delivery models on campus: food zones, mini pantries, and the main campus pantry.

- A food zone is a site offering free, pre-assembled, and nutritionally balanced bags of non-perishable food and toiletries.
- A mini pantry is a bookcase from which individuals can take what they want of the available inventory. These are available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and have a smaller selection of non-perishable items and toiletries than the primary campus pantry.
- The main campus pantry is open approximately twenty-four hours per week and includes perishable items and baby supplies, in addition to a broader inventory of food and other offerings.

When considering the best food delivery model selection for the library, its decision makers primarily considered how visitors currently use the location. Open twenty-four hours a day, the library provides a space where students can remain studying for many consecutive hours, especially during exam periods. However, this space is also used by students who do not have consistent or adequate shelter; students have often been observed using this area as a safe

place to sleep. To best provide for these two main types of users and address safety and staffing issues, the authors determined that the best food delivery option for the location was a mini pantry instead of a food zone.

The library-located mini pantry would not be maintained or staffed by library employees but stocked weekly by Retriever Essentials employees and volunteers. The mini pantry would be primarily stocked with individually wrapped snacks that could be consumed onsite and meals that come in microwaveable containers such as soups and macaroni and cheese. Additionally, the pantry would be stocked with a small selection of miscellaneous pantry items like canned fruit, tuna, and vegetables for library visitors to take home with them if they need groceries outside of the main campus pantry's hours of operation. The library does not have a microwave available for public use because the in-house cafe did not want to compete with the option of microwavable items nearby. Instead, the authors supplied the mini pantry space with information on where users can find microwaves for public use on campus (figure 3). It should be noted that the library's current policy allows for food and beverages with lids.

As with all of Retriever Essentials' food distribution points, there is no requirement to prove need or provide personal information. In addition, the organization avoids the use of poverty-evoking language such as "food insecurity" and "hunger" in its marketing to the campus community, instead positioning itself as a community resource which all are invited to partake and engage in reciprocally. This is an intentional choice meant to de-stigmatize receiving food aid.

Identifying an Appropriate Location

The group identified a few key must-haves for the ideal space for the mini pantry within the library. Requirements included the following:
- Visibility to combat stigma around food insecurity
- Accessible twenty-four hours a day
- Space large enough to accommodate a pantry

The initial thought was to place the pantry in the library's atrium because the space is highly visible and has ample traffic flow. However, employees were concerned that the presence of people attending library-hosted events in that space throughout the academic year might hinder students' willingness to seek food there. Further, the atrium currently has a Retriever Essentials food donation bin used to receive canned and/or shelf-stable food, which could lead to confusion over where to donate food versus where to retrieve food resources.

The library's Retriever Learning Center (RLC), a collaborative learning space open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week that students access by swiping their ID cards was an immediate contender to house the pantry. The RLC is a well-known study location on campus and is heavily frequented year-round, especially during peak times around midterms and finals. For instance, between May 6 and June 22 of 2022, just over 7,100 people visited the RLC. The space is also largely considered a safe environment in which to unwind and has vending machines with amenities like snacks, beverages, general wellness items, and school supplies.

Within the RLC, a few specific location options were identified for the pantry. One option was to place the pantry next to the vending machines. This idea would allow food items to be housed in one centralized location of the RLC. Another suggestion was to house the pantry in the RLC's outer entryway. Though its placement would mean not having to enter the RLC fully, the authors concluded that this idea might leave students feeling that their

Figure 1. The mini pantry in the Retriever Learning Center at Albin O. Kuhn Library displays a variety of ready-to-consume breakfast or snack items and groceries. (Photo by Jasmine Shumaker, UMBC.)

food insecurity was something to be ashamed of and hidden from their peers. Instead, more visible placement just inside the RLC, adjacent to the vending machines was selected to help normalize the act of accessing the mini pantry.

Figure 2. The mini pantry in the Retriever Learning Center at the library showing primarily ready-to-eat convenience foods. (Photo by Jasmine Shumaker, UMBC.)

Promotion and Marketing

A tactical approach needed to be planned to get the word out about the new mini pantry in the library's RLC, especially with the pantry being installed near the end of the semester. There was a limited time frame for on-campus promotion before many students left campus for the summer.

One team member, serving on a committee with a few Student Government Association (SGA) members, leveraged these relationships to market the new mini pantry. SGA members happily agreed to spread the word to their campus networks and offered to promote it on their personal social media accounts as well.

Next on the docket was promoting the mini pantry to the graduate student population. It was vital that the marketing target this group directly because, as previously noted, graduate students are likely to experience food insecurity and tend to be the most active users of Retriever Essentials resources. Graduate Student Association (GSA) contacts were identified and contacted, resulting in a similar successful outcome as with the SGA.

Aside from marketing directly to student groups on campus, informing Library colleagues of this new initiative was important. The authors presented information regarding the new mini pantry at Library Assembly, a bi-monthly meeting wherein all library staff and faculty members get updates on building projects, administration, and other library news.

The library's Health Literacy Working Group (HLWG) coordinated with the library's web team to promote the pantry via the library's digital signage; they also worked with the University Health Services to promote the pantry. The chair of the HLWG, along with the coordinator of the Retriever Essentials, delivered two presentations to library employees on food insecurity on campus and individual and collective ways to help.

Figure 3. Signage and flyers posted at the mini pantry.

Results

Mini Pantry Statistics and Use

From its inception in early May 2022 through mid-August 2022, the library's mini pantry has distributed over one thousand pounds of snacks, convenience meals, and groceries: 384 in May, 326 in June, 163 in July, and 283 in August. While precise inventory is not tracked, staff and volunteers who stock the mini pantry anecdotally report that the most popular items are those that can be consumed in the library and that do not require microwaving or other preparation. Such items include soups in microwaveable containers, fruit cups, and granola bars. Available inventory varies and is based on donations.

Discussion

Food insecurity can potentially harm college students' ability to achieve their educational and professional goals. Stress and food insecurity contribute to
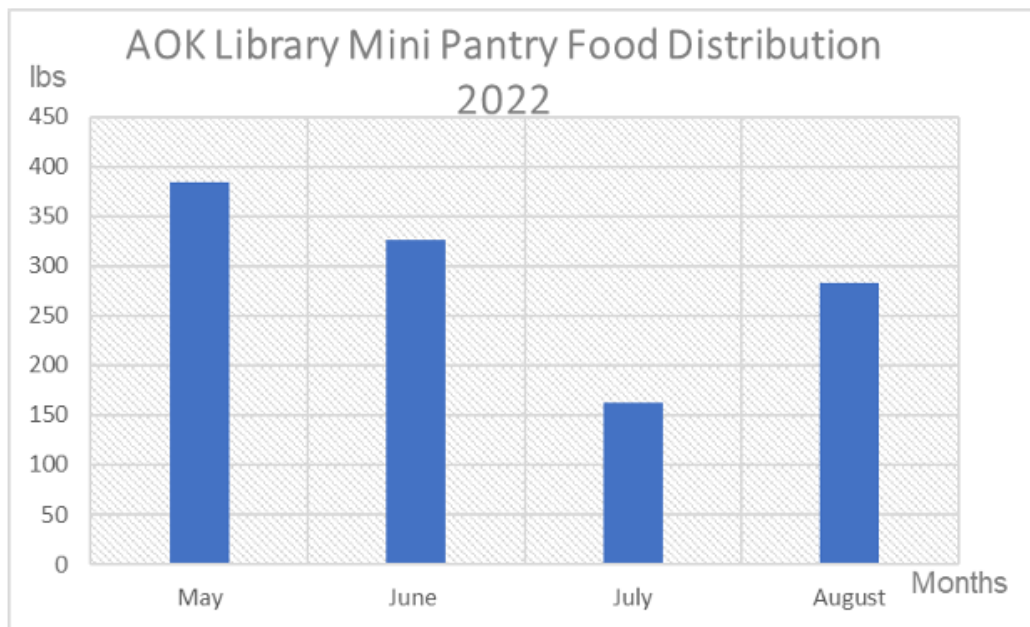
Figure 4. Pounds of food per month distributed through the mini pantry

lower GPA, class participation, class attendance, and completion rates, as well as poorer health outcomes compared to their food-secure peers (Kendrick et al. 2022). Universities have responded to these needs on their campuses with brick-and-mortar food pantries. Several hundred campuses in the United States now have food pantries and other programs that employ a range of delivery methods (Cady and White 2018).

As with all of Retriever Essentials' food distribution points, there is no requirement to prove need or provide personal information. Combined with intentional choices about word choice in outreach materials and presentations, these strategies have been suggested as ways to de-stigmatize receiving food aid and to encourage broad use of the services (Conrad et al. 2022).

Even though library staff do not participate in stocking the mini pantry, they contribute in other ways. Staff are trained in customer service and information literacy and are well-equipped to answer questions about the mini pantry. To date, staff have received no fewer than three workshops dedicated to college students' food insecurity and the launch of the library's mini pantry.

Early experience with the mini pantry highlighted some unexpected disadvantages with the location and approach. RLC is unstaffed and therefore has issues with safety and occasional vandalism. Determining safety measures without deterring users from utilizing the service was challenging. Another notable issue is measurement of the service. Current statistics to assess users' demographics and food preferences come from the main pantry on campus, not the library mini pantry. Accurate statistics on user demographics specific to the library mini pantry are currently unavailable, making it challenging to stock the resource with desirable and culturally inclusive foods.

Additionally, a more detailed inventory method is needed, specifically to track which items are being taken and how quickly, in order to accurately gauge how often to restock the mini pantry. The pantry is currently restocked weekly during the normal academic calendar. A method to ascertain the demographics of users of the library's mini pantry is also needed to better understand how to best target marketing to those in need. Currently, the main campus pantry is in the process of researching the effects of its presence on student retention and success. The mini pantry hopes to replicate this study. The tremendous

success of the first few months of the library's mini pantry is only the beginning of endeavors to address food insecurity at UMBC. The authors will install a digital monitor near the mini pantry that displays general information on useful resources such as SNAP.

The library is also working with Retriever Essentials to revamp the current food donation box in the library's atrium, hopefully leading to more donations from those visiting or employed by the library. Once this occurs, a food drive will be held during future academic semesters to supply the campus pantries.

Another idea in development is a free, weekly fresh-food market as a collaboration between the library and Retriever Essentials. It would be located in front of the library and display literature on the new mini pantry. Advantages of establishing a free, fresh-food market in front of the library mirror those for locating the mini pantry in the library. One goal of the fresh-food market is to generate interest in workshops within the library about SNAP benefits. A two-part series of SNAP workshops would include an online informational and question-and-answer session, followed by in-person office hours staffed by experts from the state's food bank organization.

Limitations/Strengths

Like all research studies, this study had limitations that had an impact on the results and conclusion. This study was limited in its ability to obtain demographic information from users due to the design of the pantry, which was unstaffed and provided convenient food access. This study may not be replicable at other institutions because of the very specific context of the project. Additionally, the decision-making process was based on a review of the literature and conversations with stakeholders; it did not involve rigorous analysis of surveys or interview transcripts. Future recommended studies should include longitudinal information about the impact of library-based food access programs on students' academic, physical, and emotional health.

However, this case study is thorough and explores all aspects of the authors' decision-making process. The researchers were strategic and intentional with project leaders. The data collected were simple to obtain (pounds of food) and is a standard measure for food pantries. The authors recognize the initiative is timely and current. In addition, this case study provides useful information to a wide and cross-disciplinary audience. This study provides insight for future projects, initiatives, and scholarship. Finally, the authors' work identifies the intersection between phenomenon (food insecurity), physical environment, students, and multiple barriers to food access.

Tips for Getting Started

The process of starting a new pantry in a library can be daunting. Tips to get others started are shown in table 1.

Conclusion

In choosing to create a mini pantry, the library intended to be more accessible to the diverse population outlined in the university profile. The library as a mini pantry location—in a visible and high-traffic area on campus—serves a dual purpose of de-stigmatizing interactions between students and Retriever Essentials, and in meeting students where they are. This provides students with a stepping stone to welcome them to the pantry and to introduce other resources.

Moving forward, an evaluation of this mini pantry location will be conducted to learn which foods students most value at this location; how effective the mini pantry and main campus pantry are, together, in relieving the burden of food

Tip for getting started	Examples
Profile your community	Student enrollment and demographics
	Profile school employees
Research other libraries' programs	Service models
	Locations
	Outreach strategies
Build partnerships	On-campus food pantry
	Health services
	Dining services
	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion organizations
	Student affairs
Build support & buy-in	Library & campus administration
	Library employees
	Student government bodies
	Confirm with your governing authority that your plan meets building and zoning codes
Choose a service model	Rely on community donations
	Stocked by library staff or outside partner such as a food pantry, nonprofit, or school
Determine site logistics	Refrigeration
	Microwave
	Hot water kettle
Select acceptable inventory	Non-perishable food only
	Culturally relevant foods
	Gluten-free, vegetarian, and other dietarily-inclusive foods
	Produce
	Toiletry products
Create promotion plan	Syllabus statements
	Marketing, newsletters, social media
	Outreach through other departments such as Student Affairs

Table 1. Tips and examples for getting started

insecurity among UMBC's student population; and whether the mini pantry is successful in lowering the barrier of stigma to campus food-pantry access.

This initiative acknowledges and promotes the concept that for students to be successful, they need to be nourished in body and mind. Attending college, pursuing extracurricular activities, and participating in internships foster academic success. A student cannot achieve academic success without a nurtured body.

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Examining Our Roots: The Origins and Evolution of Outreach in Academic Libraries, 1958–2020

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ABSTRACT

Analysis of historical milestones in the field of library studies reveals the changing values, purposes, and structures related to outreach within academic libraries. A timeline and narrative are presented that trace the effects of the national outlook on higher education from the mid-century to the current neoliberal reality on outreach efforts, from 1958 to 2020. We contend that the present post-pandemic moment affords practitioners a chance to turn a critical eye toward the purpose and audience of outreach, to re-orient our actions, and to reflect an original philosophy of outreach: inclusivity.

KEYWORDS

In the wake of the "return to campus" after full or partial closures of our buildings and in-person library services resulting from COVID-19, we authors have felt a tugging to ask why when it comes to academic library outreach. We have become reflective and turned a critical eye toward our otherwise normal and inoffensive outreach offerings: Why game night? Why a seed library? Why sidewalk chalk? Why cookies? This study does not ask, "does serving cookies engage students?" It does not ask, "does the relationships made at outreach events with librarians result in reference appointments?" Instead, this study asks a more fundamental question: Why does academic librarianship do outreach as part of the profession? Academic librarians didn't do outreach in the usual way for nearly two years, and in making careful decisions about our limited time, staffing, and resources, we took the chance to re-orient ourselves on the philosophy and practice of outreach in academic libraries to answer the question of why we do outreach.

To satisfy our inquiries, we undertook a tracing of the origins and evolution of outreach through the historical milestones in the field's journals and professional associations, beginning with the earliest mention we could find in the literature, 1958. We created a timeline of 13 milestones and a narrative that presents the purpose, growth and changes over time, and current state of outreach in academic libraries—an undertaking we have yet to see in the outreach literature. For instance, the milestone of the Higher Education Act of 1965 resulted in the creation of a National Advisory Committee on Libraries, which provided new levels of funding to academic libraries (de la Peña McCoo 2002). Soon after, a boost in outreach activity could be seen, as our timeline and narrative will explain.

Learning from such examples overturned initial assumptions we as authors held about the purpose and results of outreach in academic libraries. When we began this project, our hypotheses were that library outreach corresponded with more modern undertakings to increase gate traffic and demonstrate a return on investment from the late 20th century. This ultimately proved wrong.

Instead, the present analysis reveals that the inclusive philosophy that historically fueled library outreach dwindled over time. When outreach efforts began in academic libraries in a spirit of inclusivity, the desire to share outreach practices grew through the creation of disciplinary entities such as conferences and committees over time. In the early years of the 21st century, outreach evolved quite obviously in its purpose and manner, becoming removed from inclusivity and leaning towards internal marketing of its own services to university audiences.

This paper argues that the effects of neoliberalism taking hold in higher education, including major shifts in perceptions and expectations of universities by outside stakeholders, as well as internal changes in attitudes and behaviors, have influenced academic libraries' reasons for and approaches to outreach. The evidence to support this claim is presented in a timeline and narrative starting in 1958, moving through the late 20th and early 21st century, and pausing at the present return-to-campus moment. The milestones presented on our timeline reflect important changes or decisions in the field that punctuate academic outreach trends—for instance, assessment is not a word one would come across frequently in the literature before 2000, around the time assessment became a watchword in higher education in general. After reviewing the scholarly literature that defines outreach, delineating methods and activity types, considering timely topics such as mental health, assessment, research gaps, and the management and administration of outreach, we present a timeline a narrative explanation of outreach's evolution in academic libraries. Heading toward the 2020s and beyond, we conclude our observations of this historical pattern with new scholarship that has begun to reclaim early outreach philosophies of inclusivity in spirit and in practice.

Muddy Waters: A Review of the Literature

Conducting a review of the literature on outreach demonstrates the unfocused nature of the topic and scholarship of outreach in academic libraries over time. Diaz's 2019 meta-analysis of 29 definitions of outreach results in a unifying definition that is so wide-ranging as to be difficult to utilize. Still, definitions of outreach typically convey its purpose or rationale rather than define the topics, forms, and approaches of specific outreach projects, programs, or events.

For example, in their introduction to the 2003 special issue on outreach in academic libraries, Kelsey and Kelsey write: "Outreach services designed to promote awareness of the library and to meet the information needs of these constituents are of vital importance to academic and special libraries" (1). The question of which constituents are best served by outreach efforts is addressed by Schneider (2003). Schneider focuses her definition on unaffiliated non-academic users with outward-facing outreach rather than considering, as some studies of academic libraries have, the inclusion of promotion or marketing or the execution of events and programs to the library's own internal university audience regarding its services such as information literacy and research support. Schneider (2003) identifies three main reasons that academic libraries undertake outreach to their extra-academic user community: "whether a need is expressed from outside the academy, whether they see their mission as an

invitation to pursue an action on their own accord, or whether they construct a form of outreach in response to a specific problem or crisis" (201).

Further, Carter and Seaman (2011), in their attempt to understand the scope and nature of outreach, offer this definition of the purpose of outreach: "to reach out to their users, to encourage use of the library and its resources, and to promote a positive image on campus and often in the community—but the activities that libraries use to fulfill these purposes run the gamut" (164). Carter and Seaman's (2011) work addresses the sticking point we note above in easily defining outreach because such efforts often overlap with the work of instruction, liaising, scholarly communication, etc. They write: "For some libraries, liaison work falls under the banner of outreach, while for other libraries, liaison activities such as collection development and library instruction represent distinctive functions established in libraries. These functions may share similar goals with outreach but do not carry the outreach label" (164).

Diaz (2019) analyzed 29 definitions of outreach as presented in the library science literature and provided a concept analysis to posit an overarching definition that reflects the heretofore disconnected themes and trends in the scholarship. As noted above, the challenge of encapsulating the variety of outreach efforts is evident in the many articles that describe libraries' unique outreach topics and events. Examples and case studies are common in the literature including Shirato's 1999 broad overview of the history of LOEX, which notes the types of topics that have risen to the surface of the organization over the years. Her examples from 1999 emphasize electronic resources and the impact of the burgeoning internet changing the focus of outreach to include marketing and instruction of these new tools.

Several years later, Fabian et al. (2004) discuss trends and types of outreach including exhibits, book talks, multimedia kiosks, and workshops for teaching assistants focused specifically on their needs. Notice that among these efforts, both students and faculty are the target audience, as they are in Bastone's 2020 article on her library's outreach methods, which included a Halloween scavenger hunt, a syllabus prep day for faculty, a date-a-book event, a maker space event, and other programs.

Many of these examples are focused on either making the library a student-friendly place or supporting traditional academic needs. Another trend has arisen as a result of the spike in student mental health concerns: providing outreach on wellness and health literacy (Kohout-Tailor and Klar 2020; Morgan 2020; Tringali 2021). As well, reflecting the definition of outreach to the unaffiliated local community provided by Schneider (2003), Salamon (2016) shares a case study of outreach particular to bridging academic/community divides with an Islamic Studies collection outreach project that included a book club, film series, lecture, and other events.

Assessment is another recent feature of the conversation on outreach, especially in light of neoliberal impulses to provide a return on investment (Nicholson 2017). We include two studies that reflect the types and difficulty of assessing library outreach. On one hand, assessment studies show that concerted efforts and additional resources put toward outreach can increase awareness of library services. For instance, Rust and Brown (2018) studied engagement metrics in their library. After hiring an outreach librarian and focusing efforts on branding, marketing, promotion, social media, etc., they found that 82 percent of their survey respondents were aware of library student success programming, an increase from previous years.

On the other hand, Rogerson and Rogers (2021) found that even a very large and popular community event—a liberal arts festival with a band and

several thousand attendees—did not increase reference and research help cases compared to holding no events the following year. This study is a good example of the difficulty in assessment because at this same institution, a different assessment of a scaled-down Harry Potter escape room event did achieve positive results for the library (106).

Another important element of outreach that is often covered in the literature is the management and administrative support of outreach in libraries, which can take many forms. Carter and Seaman (2011) found in their non-representative survey of librarians that 43 percent of respondents had a position at their institution with some amount of the role dedicated to outreach. Libraries without dedicated positions relied on committees and volunteerism often with very limited or nonexistent budgets and administrative support. Relatedly, a challenge noted by respondents was the reliance on committees and the lack of clear outreach goals. A recent content analysis of job advertisements for outreach librarians finds similar themes as Carter and Seaman with a wide variety of responsibilities and job titles muddying the waters for the essential competencies of such a role (Metzger and Jackson 2022).

We observed two gaps in the scholarship on outreach. The first is that outreach assessment studies can in essence be tautological in that they claim to "reach students," and they find—through survey, attendance, etc.—that reaching students has indeed occurred. Is it not bound to, if one is reaching out to students? A second problem is that most outreach assessment studies report positive results, rather than ambiguous results or even failures. We suggest that publishing more studies, whether showing success or difficulties in outreach, would be instructive and legitimizing, as the field presents an honest accounting of its work. The work of Rogerson and Rogers cited above is a rare and helpful example.

Knowing the recent and present state of the conversation on outreach, we now turn to our methods for answering the question: Why do we do outreach?

Methodology

To undertake our inquiry, we conducted a comprehensive search of core library journals as indexed in LISTA (https://www.ebsco.com/m/ee/Marketing/titleLists/lxh-coverage.htm) for the keyword *outreach* in author-supplied keywords, titles, subject terms, or abstracts. As terms have evolved over the years, we conducted additional searches using older keywords, *orientation* and *library cooperation* in the same fields. LISTA includes indexed coverage of 453 library science journals with many of those titles including coverage back to the 1960s. While orientation and outreach efforts no doubt predate online LISTA coverage, the authors did not have access to a retrospective collection in library and information science beyond printed sources. In addition, based on our own professional knowledge of the field's general history, we looked at the purpose statements of all journals listed in the References section below, as well as the webpages of the ALA, ACRL, and LOEX to glean their histories as far as we could. We supplemented this information with some written histories/remembrances by scholars in the field, such as Barbara Ford's 2000 "Jean E. Coleman Library Outreach Lecture," and Kathleen de la Peña McCook's 2002 paper "Rocks in the Whirlpool," which offers a historical perspective on the ALA.

As we found what we considered to be milestones, the criteria for which can be determined by when a clear turn or leap in the field of outreach – for example the 1981 distinction between *orientation* and *instruction* by LOEX. Upon determining a milestone, we added it as a new entry on a timeline, from oldest at the top to the most recent at the bottom (see table 1). This resulted in thirteen

significant milestones between 1958, where we saw outreach "begin" with the first major study of library cooperation in *Library Trends* and end (for now) in the current post-pandemic moment, with the creation of the *Journal of Library Outreach and Engagement*.

We acknowledge a few limitations of our study. First, we were open to a broad interpretation of *outreach* spanning the many existing definitions for fear of excluding important milestones that may have occurred before the term became more standardized in the 2010s (as per the 2011 ACRL Standards). Second, in creating a timeline and narrative understanding, we are in no way claiming an exhaustive history of the field, nor of outreach, but instead offer an earnest attempt to trace the concept of outreach in two ways: back in time as far as we could, and within the changing context of higher education in the 20th and 21st centuries. This leads us to the third limitation: We are interpreting all that we learn through the lens of our own experiences within public universities in the 21st century. This means our interpretation of outreach intentions and milestones is grounded in a certain historical moment; our perspective may therefore enables us to note shifts in US higher education and politics that scholars of the past may not have seen with the same clarity while living through it.

Results: Timeline and Narrative

When reading the timeline presented in table 1 from left to right, note that the milestones occupy the left-hand column, with the right-hand columns containing explanations of the context and purpose of the milestone, sometimes directly quoted from a source for brevity. In our documenting of these milestones, we observed the influence of societal changes and their downstream effects on higher education, its libraries, and our outreach efforts.

According to Schneider (2003), an early understanding of *library cooperation* was that of libraries working together within a community, whether public, academic, special, or K–12 libraries. While our analysis is exclusive to academic libraries, outreach historically included cross-library cooperation as seen in the 1958 special issue of the journal *Library Trends*, which suggests that librarians were considering how they could reach other libraries. In 1965, the ACRL conducted one of its first large-scale studies of academic libraries and determined that 94 percent of academic libraries provided services to community members; further, the study provided additional information about the range of practices libraries were using to reach their communities in terms of borrowing privileges and other practical matters (200).

Before the end of the 1960s, the ALA Council established the Coordinating Committee on Library Service to the Disadvantaged, which was rooted in inclusivity, access, and commitment to literacy for all. According to de la Peña McCook (2002), the creation of this committee and other efforts concerning inclusion were part of a greater shift in the US ideals and included the Higher Education Act signed by Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, which infused federal funding into education at all levels. There were booming numbers of college-enrolled students in the post-war era, as well as gains made in access to educational opportunities during the Civil Rights movement as well (43). The name of the committee was changed in 1980 to the Office of Library Outreach Services, with the stated purpose of promoting services to "urban and rural poor, ethnic minority groups, the underemployed, school dropouts, the semiliterate and illiterate and those isolated by cultural differences" (Ford 2000, par. 7).

Milestones	Purpose & Context
1958: Library Trends journal devoted an entire issue to "library cooperation" in January 1958, in an issue called "Building Library Resources through Cooperation."	The issue focused on cooperation among academic libraries as well as between libraries of different types and cooperative efforts between libraries in the US and Europe (Schneider 2003, 200).
1965: Among the first large studies of outreach, or serving those beyond traditional academic library patrons, the ACRL conducted a nationwide survey of 1,110 academic libraries.	The primary topics of interest include community users and their access to the library, how community users are defined, what borrowing privileges they have, and methods of safe-guarding collections. The study found that 94 percent of academic libraries do provide some or all of the above services to most community members (i.e., non-affiliated users), although most imposed restrictions (Schneider 2003, 200).
1968: The ALA Council established the Coordinating Committee on Library Service to the Disadvantaged, which evolved by 1980 to become the Office for Library Outreach Services, which remained so until 2000 and which was rooted in inclusivity, access, and commitment to literacy for all.	Library influence in the Higher Education Act under Lyndon Johnson in 1965 resulted in the creation of a National Advisory Commission on Libraries in 1966. This helped to unite libraries' and the public's understanding of the importance of outreach and literacy. It also directed federal funding to literacy outreach programs at a crucial time when education was experiencing its biggest spike in enrollment of the post-war period, working class people had ready access to education for the first time, and the Civil Rights movement opened up education opportunities to communities that were previously excluded (de la Peña McCook 2002, 43).
1971: LOEX Founded after the "First Annual Conference on Library Orientation."	"The initial 1971 conference had been held as a result of Eastern Michigan University's librarians' desire to share the knowledge and the information that they were developing as a part of their ``library outreach'' program in the early 1970s [...] These events were among the first stirrings of the beginning of the modern library instruction movement" (Shirato 1999, 215).
1980: the 1968 ALA committee evolved to Office of Library Outreach Services.	"The purpose of the Office was to promote the provision of library service to the urban and rural poor of all ages and to people discriminated against because they belong to minority groups; to encourage the development of user-oriented informational and educational library services to meet the needs of the urban and rural poor, ethnic minority groups, the underemployed, school dropouts, the semiliterate and illiterate and those isolated by cultural differences; to ensure that librarians and others have information, access to technical assistance, and continuing education opportunities to assist them in developing effective outreach programs" (Ford 2000, par. 7).

Milestones	Purpose & Context
1981 LOEX changed its name and focus from "Orientation" to "Instruction."	"Changing the title of the conference and the proceedings was the decision of Carolyn Kirkendall who led LOEX from 1975 to 1986 (Kirkendall 1982). By this time it was evident that the term 'library instruction' had become dominant and was separate from 'outreach,' and it continues to this day to be the most commonly used term" (Shirato 1999, 216).
1995: The ALA Office of Outreach Library Services changed to Office for Literacy and Outreach Services and emphasized diversity within members of the profession.	"The resolution identified OLOS for work increasing library service to the unserved and underserved; promoting literacy; advocating full intellectual participation for all members of the public; making it possible for minority librarians to be active in ALA through liaison work with ethnic affiliates and the Council Committee on Minority Concerns and Cultural Diversity; work with the Social Responsibility and Ethnic Materials and Information Exchange Round Tables; and development of publications and programs on outreach, literacy, and community information" (de la Peña McCook 2002).
2001: Midwinter ACRL President's Discussion Forum highlights the importance of critical campus partnerships as a basis for outreach.	Citing examples from three large public institutions, the report encourages academic librarians to plan library programs and services in response to community needs and wants (McKinstry and Garrison 2001, par. 1).
2011: The creation of the Association of Library Communications & Outreach Professionals, later renamed Library Communications Conference in 2014.	"ALCOP aims to connect public and academic library professionals engaged in marketing, public relations, special events, fundraising, outreach initiatives, and program development for libraries [...] focusing exclusively on the best practices of library communications and outreach programs" (Salamon 2016, 2).
2011: ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education are created and include outreach in Standard 9.	Standard 9 reads: "Libraries engage the campus and broader community through multiple strategies in order to advocate, educate, and promote their value. 9.1 The library contributes to external relations through communications, publications, events, and donor cultivation and stewardship. 9.2 The library communicates with the campus community regularly. 9.3 Library personnel convey a consistent message about the library and engage in their role as ambassadors in order to expand user awareness of resources, services, and expertise" (ACRL 2011).
2014: The ACRL Library Marketing and Outreach Interest Group was established at the Spring Executive Committee Meeting.	The charge reads: "to provide a forum for discussion regarding effective communication methods and outreach initiatives, including marketing strategies and strategic relationship building, that academic and research libraries utilize to disseminate information about their value, events, services, and resources and to engage the communities they serve" (ACRL 2022).

Milestones	Purpose & Context
2019: Diaz's concept map united many definitions of outreach.	"In academic librarianship, outreach is work carried out by library employees at institutions of higher education who design and implement a variety of methods of intervention to advance awareness, positive perceptions, and use of library services, spaces, collections, and issues (e.g. various literacies, scholarly communication, etc.). Implemented in and outside of the library, outreach efforts are typically implemented periodically throughout the year or as a single event. Methods are primarily targeted to current students and faculty, however, subsets of these groups, potential students, alumni, sur- rounding community members, and staff can be additional target audiences. In addition to library-centric goals, outreach methods are often designed to support shared institutional goals such as lifelong learning, cultural awareness, student engagement, and community engagement" (Diaz 2019, 191).
2020: The Journal of Engagement and Outreach published its first issue.	The editors write that the purpose is "to create new knowledge that underscores how library outreach and engagement enhances societal good and challenges oppressive conditions" (Thacker et al 2020).

Table 1: Timeline of outreach

During this same period of the mid-century higher education boom, LOEX was founded in 1971, with its initial purpose to share practices related to library orientation for new students, many of whom were entering higher education after military service or from the working class for the first time. Ten years later, LOEX distinguished between orientation and instruction in concept, suggesting that each arm took on its own dimension as a sub-field (Shirato 1999).

In 1995, The Office of Outreach Library Service revised its name and stated mission again, for the first time emphasizing diversity within the membership of the profession, "making it possible for minority librarians to be active in ALA through liaison work with ethnic affiliates and the Council Committee on Minority Concerns and Cultural Diversity" (de la Peña McCook 2002).

At the turn of the millennium, the term neoliberalism begins to creep into critiques and commentary of US higher education (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2000; Olssen and Peters, 2005; Davies, Gottsche and Bansel, 2006). Ian Beilin (2016) summarizes the complex theory of neoliberalism when applied to libraries as one "whose policies are guided by the imperative of the market in the strictly economic sense," meaning that the need to justify an institution's or organization's existence shifted to a near-complete emphasis on using data and a focus on return on investment—rather than, for example, considering mission and education as central factors of justification. This is a significant (and foreboding) shift in perception and behavior on the part of universities that also coincides with the digitization of resources. These two changes in higher education bear out in the narrative of library outreach.

For instance, the next milestone in 2001 is an emphasis within the ACRL Midwinter President's Discussion Forum on the importance of critical campus partnerships as a basis for outreach (McKinstry and Garrison 2001, par. 1). From this point, we contend that the timeline and narrative reflect reactions to the effects of neoliberalism on institutions and their cultures, a main response

being that academic libraries' outreach happens within the campus and not beyond it. We will see that this reaction is a necessary one based on several changes in higher education, including 1) fewer full-time faculty, 2) data-driven decision-making, 3) changing student attitudes in regards to the purpose of higher education, and 4) a self-service shift for students and employees with the introduction of technologies such as learning management systems. These changes which will be explained in the next section on neoliberalism.

In 2011, the Association of Library Communications & Outreach is established with the stated purpose of "connect[ing] public and academic library professionals engaged in marketing, public relations, special events, fundraising, outreach initiatives, [etc.] (Salamon 2016, 2). Additionally in 2011, the ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education are created and include outreach in Standard 9, which focuses on efforts of outreach and consistent communication from libraries to their constituents (ACRL 2011). In 2014, the Association of Library Communications & Outreach is renamed the Library Communications Conference, and the ACRL Library Marketing and Outreach Interest Group is established with a charge to "provide a forum for discussion regarding effective communication methods and outreach [...] that academic and research libraries utilize to disseminate information about their value, events, services, [etc.] (ACRL 2022). This marks the first time in our observations of the history that the purpose of outreach is designed for the library's benefit and visibility—such as by demonstrating a return on investment of resources as demanded by neoliberal university administrators— rather than previously stated purposes of expanding literacy to the general population. This is an important nuance and distinction: libraries, like many other units within universities in this moment, are reacting to the demands of the neoliberal university.

What's Neoliberalism Got to Do With It?

Lori Goff (2013) states it succinctly: "Universities today are emulating corporate practices and directives." (102) The effects are severalfold, as we have suggested above and which we explain further here.

More and more often managerial practices such as reliance on lower-paid contingent adjunct instructors, who often juggle multiple jobs and institutions and often cannot make curricular decisions. These practices affect the ability of libraries to make important curricular and pedagogical connections across campus, resulting in a need to increase outreach directly to students, given the difficulty in gaining the attention of the dwindling faculty.

In addition, the emergence of data analytics in business filtered to higher education, and universities became more accountable to their stakeholders in the era of Big Data, with state funding tied to performance measures such as enrollment, graduation rates, etc. Note that state funding was in decline even before an insistence on tying funding to outcomes. Hence, usage data, assessment, and other quantitative accountability measures increased in importance in higher education, edging out conceptions of the intrinsic value of education for the public good. This trend was accelerated and institutionalized in libraries with the ACRL Value of Academic Libraries Project, which supported library projects seeking to prove the worth of libraries to administrations rather than the role they play in the lives of users themselves (Arellano Douglas 2020).

Dovetailing with a new distrust and devaluation of universities, intellectualism, and science by state governments, parents and students begin to see higher education as strictly a means to a degree leading to a career and a

paycheck (Nadworny and Larkin 2019). Respect and understanding for general education and the liberal arts decreases.

The shift to digital access of library materials and in the perception and treatment of students as "customers," "users," or "subscribers" plays a role as well. Technologies have replaced employee and student services in many industries in general, with self-service portals at the university replacing human interaction (and jobs) in student records, learning management systems, advising, instructional tutorials, library materials, and others, all of which create a social effect of employees and students expecting to access resources of many kinds alone and remotely.

Outreach Today

We pick our timeline back up in 2019, when Diaz undertakes a concept analysis of the many definitions of outreach circulating in the literature. She provides an all-encompassing definition:

> In academic librarianship, outreach is work carried out by library employees at institutions of higher education who design and implement a variety of methods of intervention to advance awareness, positive perceptions, and use of library services, spaces, collections, and issues (e.g., various literacies, scholarly communication, etc.). Implemented in and outside of the library, outreach efforts are typically implemented periodically throughout the year or as a single event. Methods are primarily targeted to current students and faculty, however, subsets of these groups, potential students, alumni, surrounding community members, and staff can be additional target audiences. In addition to library-centric goals, outreach methods are often designed to support shared institutional goals such as lifelong learning, cultural awareness, student engagement, and community engagement. […] This analysis positions librarians to make outreach work more intentional and ideally, more impactful, by encouraging librarians to identify key target audiences, determine clear goals and outcomes, and design relevant and effective outreach programs. (191)

In this definition, we can see that outreach has come to encompass a wide range of efforts aimed at a wide range of people "to advance awareness, positive perceptions, and use of library services, [etc.]" and to carry out universities' missions (Diaz 2019, 191). Nowhere in this definition remains the spirit of inclusivity or providing access to oppressed groups that older philosophies of outreach encompassed; instead, we see that outreach has become a reaction to the divided attention of a dwindling full-time faculty and to students who have been trained in self-service methods in many areas of their education. This is not a critique of Diaz, whose work reflects the reality of the moment.

However, we see a glimmer of the original spirit of outreach on the horizon with the founding of the Journal of Engagement and Outreach in 2020. Its editors write that its purpose is "to create new knowledge that underscores how library outreach and engagement enhances societal good and challenges oppressive conditions" (Christensen, Roberts, and Thacker 2020). The most recent publications in this journal speak to the strategic planning of outreach with an eye on sustainability (Bastone 2020; Colwell and O'Keefe 2021; Rodriguez 2020; Owens and Bishop 2019).

In trying to understand the relatively short history of outreach by tracing its purpose and shifting forms since 1958 and through the changes in US higher education over time, we suggest that the proliferation of outreach methods, as well as the increasing sense of its importance, has grown as the effects of neoliberalism on higher education have taken hold. The sheer variety of topics, forms, and planning approaches of outreach represents an earnest attempt to

simply gain the attention of our very own constituents, which perhaps became a distraction to the original purposes of access and equity.

In the end, we are not criticizing this turn and we are heartened by the new attention to equity via library outreach that this journal's mission statement suggests. Post-2020 there is evidence that recent diversity and inclusion statements are resulting in related programming and outreach (Bresnahan 2022). Like other facets of American life in a neoliberal regime, individual actions cannot be expected to overcome difficulties created by systemic degradations. In this case, our constituents' time, attention, and mental health have also been degraded.

In addition to the recentering of inclusion as a main value for outreach, a final milestone we share is an emphasis on strategy and sustainability to continue efforts within the neoliberal regime. For instance, in the most recent publications on outreach, articles present strategic advice, frameworks, or processes for outreach activities that speak to sustainability and perseverance in the face of shrinking budgets, workforce, and trust. For instance, Diaz (2019) encourages librarians "to identify key target audiences, determine clear goals and outcomes, and design relevant and effective outreach programs." Bastone (2020) suggests that an outreach plan needs to be aligned with the strategic priorities or mission of the library (26). Colwell and O'Keefe (2021) offer a top-level model for "providing a scalable, sustainable model for collaborative programming and event execution" (41), which includes organizational models for collaboration; a model for sharing folders, to-do lists, and timelines; and reflections on how all parts can adapt and change over time, with an emphasis on documentation to support the next group or project (55). Finally, at the time of this writing, the ACRL University Library Section Academic Outreach Committee has proposed new standards for Academic Library Outreach Work in July 2022. These proposed standards include advocacy, an emphasis on diversity and inclusion, and the use of marketing strategies.

We see these as heartening, politically savvy ways to maintain outreach today with its renewed focus on inclusivity. At the peak of neoliberalism and in the post-shutdown moment, the field re-aims its focus on the underserved in sustainable ways that do not continue to degrade our energies or educational values. The underserved in our public, teaching-focused institutions are often our very own students. Many of them are first-generation, Pell Grant-eligible students who are often underprepared for higher education and taking on burdensome debt to access it. They are unlikely, in many cases, to finish their degrees. How can we be smart and critical about our outreach to them? How do we show them the value of the resources their tuition dollars have paid for? How do we best support and teach them?

One answer is to rely on the narrative we present here, reminding us—our colleagues and our students of our origins: to lift up, to open up opportunities, to share the intrinsic value and joy of learning. In telling the story of outreach, we see libraries' potential to change, be critical of, and overcome systems of inequity that put dollars and efficiency before people. We should not sugar-coat it, even if we serve cookies. It is a story worth sharing.

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ARTICLE

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New Horizons for Academic Library Collection Development: Creating a Community-Curated Collection Through Student Empowerment

ABSTRACT

As the role of the academic library in university life changes, libraries are seeking ways to better engage their communities—university students, faculty, and staff. Student success and engagement have come to the forefront of these efforts. In 2019, Kent Library at Southeast Missouri State University implemented two programs to engage students in collection development. The first program enriched subject areas within Kent Library's collection that were selected by the student body. The second program awarded student groups grants for purchasing library materials that supported their focus. This case study shares details of the two programs, their implementation, and the results, including the impact of student engagement in collections and the creation of a community-curated library collection.

KEYWORDS

academic library, collection development, student engagement, student success, community curation

Over the past few decades, universities have faced declining enrollments with stiffer competition for the ever-shrinking pool of high school graduates. This reality, coupled with a welcomed focus on the needs of first-generation and underserved student populations, has prompted universities to renew or begin efforts toward student success. As academic librarians focus their attention on student-success measures, they question many preconceived or more traditional professional services and modes of engagement.

Academic librarians typically respond to matters related to student success by using their limited resources to develop or enhance user services (Tran and Higgins 2020). In many cases, developing or enhancing user services leads to a de-prioritization of collection development (Appleton 2020). Increased need for collaborative spaces, technology, and seating has caused physical library collections to be dramatically consolidated, sent to storage, and/or weeded to free up square footage. Library resources are left out of the student services equation exposing a limited understanding of the library's collection as a service tool for student success. Collection budgets have been reallocated to

shore up funding for creating these physical spaces while simultaneously being cut or kept stagnant due to funding constrains.

Southeast Missouri State University (Southeast) was experiencing some of these dynamics in 2019 when the student engagement programs detailed in this paper were implemented.

Southeast Missouri State University

Southeast Missouri State University is a small regional university located on the Mississippi River in Cape Girardeau, in the "Bootheel" of Missouri. The university's 2021 full-time equivalent enrollment was 7,239 (Southeast Missouri State University 2022c), down from just over 11,000 in the fall of 2017. Southeast was founded in 1873 as a normal school training elementary and high school teachers (Southeast Missouri State University 2022b). During its existence, the university has grown into a thriving Carnegie Classified "master's colleges and universities: larger programs" institution (American Council on Education 2015).

In 2017, the Missouri State Legislature, under a new governor, began making major cuts to the state's funding for higher education (Rosenbaum 2017). This exacerbated an already difficult situation brought on by the increasing costs of declining enrollment and state laws capping annual tuition and fee increases. In the spring of 2019, under a mandate from the president of the university, all unused departmental budgets were swept to secure funding for Southeast's budgetary shortfall due to funds withholding by the Governor of Missouri. This eliminated approximately $100,000 from Southeast's Kent Library's collection budget of $1.7 million, constituting an approximately 6 percent reduction. These swept funds represented intentional savings the library had accumulated over several years to cover inflation costs. While the effects were not felt that fiscal year, the consequences in the coming fiscal year were apparent.

The urgent situation with Kent Library's collection budget was further compounded by a new directive in the spring of 2020 from Southeast's administration for Academic Affairs, the university division the library fell under, to cut 12 percent of its overall budget for the coming fiscal year. The library was not spared. This cut and the previous cut represented an 18 percent reduction in library funding, adding to a total revenue reduction for the library, since 2015, of 25 percent—20 percent directly from collections. Given this financial reality, an emergency review of all collection spending was launched in the fall of 2020 to balance the reduced budget and try to ensure a revenue surplus to cover the next fiscal year's inflation costs. With this financial backdrop in mind and a dire need to use the remaining collection's funds as strategically as possible while supporting students, faculty, and staff, ways were sought to create new opportunities and paradigms for collection development at Kent Library.

Kent Library

Established in 1939, Kent Library is a lean operation with little more than five staff members per 1,000 students—thirteen librarians and eight professional staff members (National Center for Education Statistics n.d.). In 2021, the library held over 500,000 physical monographs and journal volumes, over 11,000 e-books, and over one million other items such as microforms and DVDs (National Center for Education Statistics n.d.).

Southeast operates under the decades-old, faculty-driven collection development model, meaning academic department faculty select materials for the library's collection rather than librarians. Kent Library's Acquisitions Unit allocates library materials funds each year to individual academic departments.

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These departments autonomously create lists of materials they feel build the collection for their department's needs. The Acquisitions Unit collects these lists of monographs, e-books, films, and kits and then orders them. Since 2009, Kent Library has had the good fortune to be able to offer individual grants to faculty through the Carrie Woodburn Johnson Endowment (Southeast Missouri State University 2022a). These grants are used to purchase research and teaching materials based on individual faculty requests. All one-time purchases for the library are handled through these processes.

With the endowment and a faculty-driven collection development model, librarians at Southeast are virtually uninvolved in collection development. The librarians only maintain collection responsibilities over resources that require ongoing commitments, such as journal and database subscriptions, as well as some special collections like juvenile and reference materials. This equates to a great deal of academic faculty involvement in the library but also creates problems when topics of deselection or budgetary reductions are discussed.

To increase librarian-student collaboration and library visibility, methods to strategically engage Southeast's students and enhance the collection through a more holistic community curation were investigated. After hearing about limited efforts to engage students in collection development from Missouri Southern State University at the Eighteenth Annual Brick and Click Libraries Conference (Reed and Carr 2018), two initiatives that strove to answer the needs at Kent Library were developed. The "What Would You Like to Read About?" program allowed the student body to choose a subject area for collection enhancement and the Johnson Endowment Grants for Student Groups allowed student organizations to request materials that would support their groups' focus (Southeast Missouri State University 2022a and 2022d).

Literature Review

"Student engagement in higher education is complex, can mean different things to different people, and is underpinned by a range of different, and at times, competing ideologies" (Freeman 2013, 146). Yet it is generally accepted in universities today that student engagement directly correlates to student success. A Clemson University study concluded that "students with at least some level of engagement were seven times more likely to graduate with a baccalaureate degree within six years than those with no engagement" (Trogden, Kennedy, and Biyani 2022, 154). This echoes a 2018 University of British Columbia study of psychology students, which found that students who engaged in events performed better academically and participated in further engagement opportunities (Whillans et al. 2018). Holmes' 2018 Sheffield Hallam University study further supports the understanding that student engagement aids in student success by comparing students in online courses containing continuous assessments [engagement] to previous years' online students in courses without assessments. Students who were assessed regularly were more actively engaged and more successful (Holmes 2018).

Despite this correlation to student success, engagement is inconsistent. Trogden, Kennedy, and Biyani (2022) state that, "Some students may seek out repeated opportunities [to engage] while others engage very little or not at all…" (145). Tualaulelei et al. (2022), found that there were limited opportunities for social, collaborative, and emotional engagement in online courses and that "…students' engagement with touchpoints was highly variable" (196). This variability can be attributed to a scattered ideology of student engagement. Several articles referred to specific tools to increase engagement, such as self-generated exams and quizzes, and reflective journal writing (Muñoz-Escalona et al. 2018; Lin, Sun, and Zhang 2021; Ahmed and Zaky 2021). One

study defines these mechanisms as high-impact educational practices such as "first-year seminars and experiences, learning communities, student-faculty research, study abroad and diversity/global learning, service-learning, internships, senior experiences/capstones, common intellectual experiences, writing-intensive course, and collaborative assignments and projects" (Trogden, Kennedy, and Biyani 2022, 146–47). Howell, Hamilton, and Jordan (2023) describe a tertiary model of engagement developed at Middle Georgia State University focused on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement strategies. The literature does not offer a consensus on student engagement best practices.

With the same complexities and inconsistencies, academic libraries are also seeking ways to increase student engagement to help support student success. Appleton's review on the subject from 2020 divides the literature into three areas of possible engagement: "partnerships between students and librarians, seeking student voices and opinions; and library instruction" (189). Appleton (2020) explains, "A lot of the literature about student engagement in academic libraries naturally focuses on methods and techniques practiced and required for effective engagement with library instruction…" (204). When considering tools for seeking out student voices, Appleton (2020) found only instruction-focused tools stating, "Surveys, interviews, and focus groups are all common methods of eliciting student feedback, but they have not always been regarded as forms of 'student engagement.'" (200).

Due to the thoroughness of Appleton's literature review, the authors focused their review on more recent contributions—2021 to the present. A review of this literature demonstrated a broader effort and definition of student engagement in academic libraries beyond instruction and orientation (Farry 2022; Helbing et al. 2022). These broadened engagement efforts ranged from library social media (Ihejirika, Goulding, and Calvert 2021) to library space planning (Keisling and Fox Jr. 2021) to how students were involved in collection development through various acquisition models. The authors chose to focus on student engagement through collection development practices to provide context for their work.

Jansen (2021) provides background on traditional academic library collection patterns by stating that at Pennsylvania State University, faculty are the predominant users of the collection, including their popular titles collection. As the predominant users, they hold the greatest influence over the collection's composition. Traditionally, the role of the academic library collection is to support the needs of the faculty in teaching and research. Very little room is left for student input and needs. Yet from the literature, we can see this paradigm shifting to focus on active student engagement and success through collection development (Ayton and Capraro 2021; Pavenick and Martinez 2022).

One of the first, though passive, engagement mechanisms for students in collection development is interlibrary loan (Roll 2015; Shen et al. 2011; Waller 2013). By allowing students, faculty, and staff to request materials not currently in their academic library's collection, libraries formed a mechanism to initiate requests based on need. Many libraries have developed specific criteria to trigger a purchase of the interlibrary loan request. This system creates a patron-driven acquisitions model and passively engages students in collection development. Another passive student engagement model is the patron-driven and demand-driven acquisition models offered by publishers and aggregator library vendors. These models of acquisitions are thoroughly represented in the literature though not as student engagement tools. Veeder (2021) states that these models are active forms of collection development "…even if the patrons may not know that they are contributing to the collection development process" (318).

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An example of this comes from Geisel Library at Saint Anselm College (Waller 2013). Anselm College, like Southeast Missouri State University, operates under a faculty-driven collection development model, allocating funds to academic departments for the purchasing of items for the library's collection. Geisel Library decided to start purchasing items requested through interlibrary loans rather than borrowing them, utilizing collection development guidelines that had already been established. This patron-driven collection activity was limited to undergraduate students and utilized them as selectors which is unique to the literature. Waller's (2013) findings show that, on average, items purchased using this method circulated more than items purchased via other methods. The library did not directly engage or communicate with students or student groups in the collection development process as was typical of the reviewed literature.

Two articles stand out in the literature because of their focus on active student-driven acquisitions as engagement tools and move us toward the idea of active student engagement in collection development to foster student success.

Ayton and Capraro (2021) at Rhode Island College detail a program that engaged a small group of students to actively collaborate with librarians and faculty to enhance a specific collection. The authors engaged six education students in reviewing the current Curriculum Resource Center collections through project-based learning. The collection included children's materials as well as curriculum materials and ranged in format from visual aids to books. The six students reviewed every item in the collection, with guidance from their faculty and the librarians, determining whether to remove, replace, or keep items. The students then made recommendations for purchases to update the collection to increase diversity.

Efforts at California State University by Pavenick and Martinez (2022) engaged students in the development of a special collection. The authors were charged with building and sustaining the Arnold T. Schwab Endowed Collection which contains LGBTQIA+-related materials. Acknowledging the limits to their expertise, the authors developed strategies to gain input from faculty and students. Three of the employed strategies directly engaged students in developing the collection. The authors visited LGBTQIA+ tables at Club Week at the University, set up tables at campus events to encourage suggestions, and organized a library pop-up at the LGBTQIA+ House on campus. These efforts were successful in building a relationship with students and receiving student suggestions for items to be included in the collection. Students also had suggestions for vetting materials. Material types added included e-books, books, DVDs, streaming media, and one new database. A study of circulation statistics showed that circulation of this collection increased after the new items were added. The program has become part of the collection development process every two years.

Though a review of the literature demonstrates the history of patron-driven acquisitions in its various forms, there is little regarding the engagement of students—or faculty—in collection development with intentionality. Academic libraries, through necessity, have moved toward automated acquisition models, but few have engaged their communities directly to form relationships and bolster strategic collections. The articles referenced above, though similar to the programs initiated by the Acquisitions Unit at Kent Library in 2019, lack the breadth of engagement and the focus of purpose.

Student Engagement In Collection Development

Subject Area Nomination Program

In the spring of 2019, the Kent Library Dean approved a proposal planned for implementation in the fall, which included the creation of a subject-area nomination program called "What Would You Like to Read About?" Initially, $3,000 was budgeted to be spent on a subject area nominated and voted on by the student body at Southeast. After the nomination and voting process was completed between September and November, a librarian volunteer would select materials in the chosen subject area.

As seen in figure 1, the first year of the program saw ten subject areas nominated. All ten areas were put onto an electronic ballot with young adult bestselling novels winning the most votes (17). This eclectic group of subject areas included sports history (12 votes), mythology and fables (10 votes), acquiring foreign languages (7 votes), and the history of transgendered and non-binary people (6 votes).
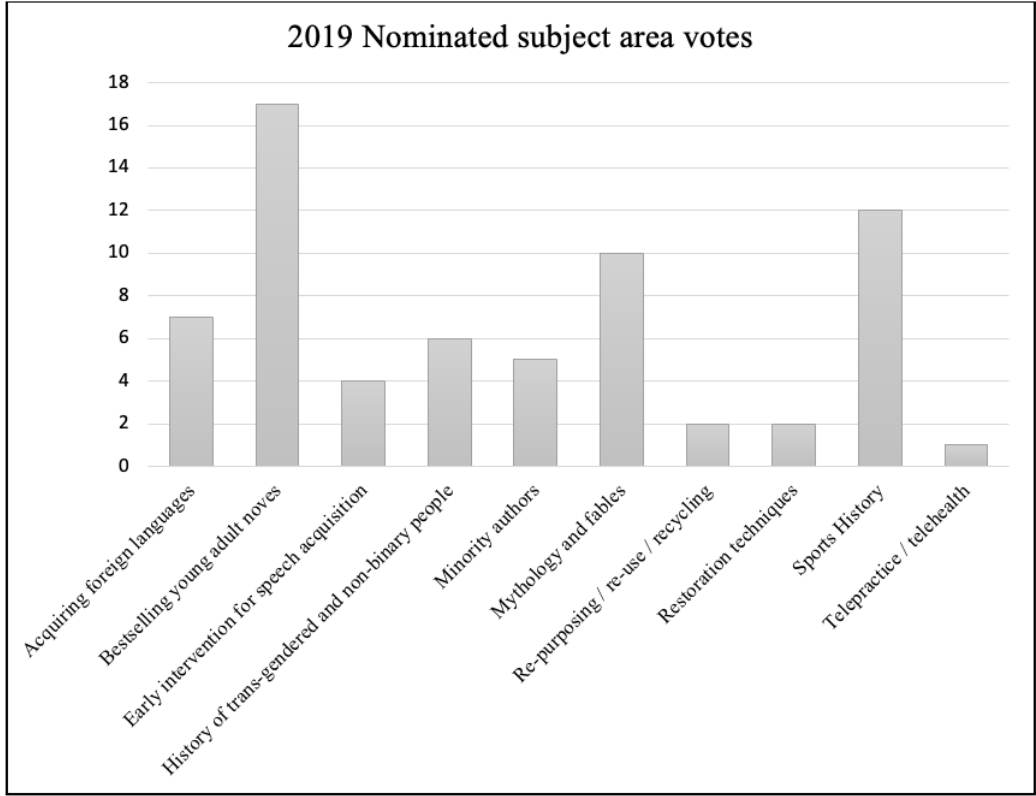
Figure 1. Year one subject area voting results

In the second year of the program, four nominations were received with foreign language instruction winning against subjects like illustration and Marxism. The second year saw a reduction in the overall budgeted amount from $3,000 to $1,000 due to funding constraints. As well, the second year of the program coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, which created extra challenges in getting student engagement and campus-wide information about the program in front of students.

Student Group Grant Program

The second program that started in the fall of 2019 was the student group grant program. Kent Library initially budgeted $3,000 for the first year with the intent of awarding two grants of $1,500 each. In the second year, that budget

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was cut to $2,000, or two $1,000 grants; however, due to the applicant pool composition, the committee chose to award an additional $1,000 grant. In 2021, only one grant was awarded for $1,000. This program mirrored the faculty endowment grant program mentioned above, which had been established for decades.

An electronic application was created, which the student groups had to fill out. They were asked to justify their request by answering the following prompts:

- reason for the request
- how materials would aid in the purpose of the group
- how the materials would improve the library's collection
- how the requested items were identified

They were also asked to create a list of materials they wanted with pricing. Most importantly, applicants were asked to collaborate with a librarian from Kent Library. This incentivized more collaboration with students using librarians as a resource and created more engagement in collection development. Ultimately, to ensure proper oversight, the group's sponsor and a librarian had to approve the application.

Materials requested were limited to one-time purchases like monographs, films, or kits. Any resource requiring a continuing commitment of funds such as databases or journals was excluded. Requests were limited by not allowing anything that would require additional spending for things like software, hardware, or facilities work orders. This helped to ensure the budget allocated for this program would not be overspent or that a request would not incur unexpected costs.

Student groups that were awarded grants included the National Student Speech Language and Hearing Association in 2019 and 2021; Student Dietetic Association in 2019; Finance and Economics Club and Law, Politics, and Society in 2020; and Black Student Union in 2020. Examples of groups that applied but were not awarded grants were God's Ensemble—an a cappella group on campus asking for music stands and folders—and Greek Life, who asked for leadership monographs and films found to already be within the collection.

For the second year of this program, the application was edited, eliminating the question "How were these materials identified?" to help ease barriers for applicants based on applicant feedback from 2019. Some respondents felt this question implied a need to do extra work and created a hardship. Since the overall point of both student engagement programs was to build relationships with students, not overburdening the student groups was important while still asking for adequate justification.

The grid in table 1 from 2020 was used by the Collection Development and Management Committee of Kent Library, which evaluated the student organization grant applications each year. The committee comprised six librarians who based their evaluation on three criteria:

- evidence of a need
- consistency with department and university teaching-learning goal objectives
- the availability of resources

These criteria were reviewed as they were depicted in the answer to the application questions.

Two requests broadened the library's understanding of what academic libraries should be purchasing: (1) The Dietetics Student Association application requested food kits to use for demonstration purposes when teaching about

Student group grant application scoring grid										
		C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	Total
Student group name	Amount requested	y|n	y|n	y|n	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	25
Black Student Union	$ 1,000.00	y	n	y	4.7	4.1	4.8	4.4	3.3	21.3
Finance & Economics Club	$ 912.49	y	y	y	4.6	4.6	4.2	4.6	4.6	22.6
God's Ensemble	$ 1,000.00	y	y	y	2.3	2.3	1.5	1.8	2.3	10.2
Greek Life	$ 500.00	n	n	y	4.2	4.2	4.6	3.5	3.3	19.8
Law, Politics, & Society	$ 905.00	y	y	y	3.8	4.8	4.4	4.8	4.6	22.4

C2: Kent Librarian Signature
C3: University-recognized student group
C4: Reason for request
C5: How will the materials aid in the purpose of the group?
C6: How will these materials improve the Kent Library collection?
C7: Quality of materials requested
C8: Application quality – grammar and mechanics

Table 1. Student group grant application scoring grid

nutrition and portion size; and (2) the Student Kinesiology and Recreation Group requested course survey kits to use in setting up physical training courses. It is fair to say both were items that never would have been considered under traditional selection practices. These requests highlighted how direct student engagement in collection development can be used to strategically meet student needs and support student success.

Timeline

The timeline for both programs fell within the fall semester of each academic year as seen in figure 2. Though fall semesters are busy, this timeline would allow the materials to be available for students before they graduated the following May, thereby providing more immediate and tangible, positive reinforcement of their participation.

Throughout the preceding summer, the Acquisitions Unit, comprising five staff members, prepared for and coordinated the programs. This included working to ensure the coming cycle's promotional materials were edited and updated as needed, submitting graphic design requests for new materials to the library's graphic design staff, updating email lists, editing press releases, and updating the subject area nomination form and student group grant application.

In September, after Labor Day, the programs kicked off based on a publicity schedule, including emails and social media posts. This schedule was different for each program so they would not be confused with each other and so they would stay refreshed in the university promotional ether. Messaging on a college campus is difficult, and collaboration with other units on campus helped ensure multiple and varied points of communication with students.

For the subject area program, nominations were due by the first week of October. By the second week in October, the Acquisitions Unit had had time to create the subject area ballot from the nominations so voting could start. This also gave the graphic design staff enough time to input new links and refresh any library website advertisements. This required a new push of emails and announcements to the campus at large with the electronic ballot link.

The first week of November saw two major deadlines: subject area voting and applications for the student group grants. Once the voting results were finalized, the volunteer librarian began creating a list of material in the winning subject area using that year's allocated funds amount. Simultaneously, the student group application pool and scoring grid were opened to the Collection Development and Management Committee following some processing to ensure group and signature validation.

Subject area material lists were due to the Acquisitions Unit by the end of the first week of December. This was also when the committee met to finalize student group grant awards. All material lists were submitted to the Acquisitions Unit and ordered "on rush" before the holiday break at the end of December. If all went well, the new materials were processed and put on display, ready for checkout, by the start of the spring semester.
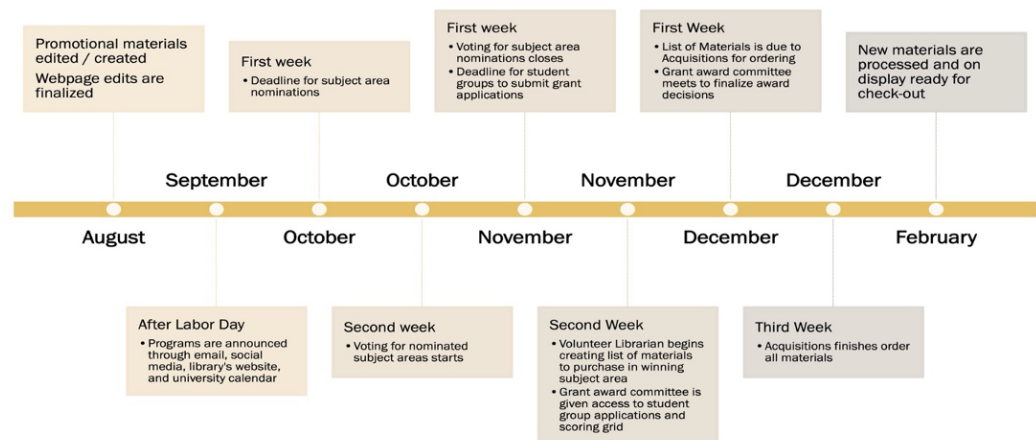
Figure 2. Timeline.

Promotion

As mentioned, messaging is difficult on a university campus because students are overwhelmed with announcements, deadlines, and programs vying for their engagement. A consistent and multi-pronged approach was needed, and all means were used to promote both programs. Partnerships with Campus Life and the Dean of Students offices were formed to help send out bi-weekly emails and social media announcements, as well as student activity calendar entries for the deadlines.

At the suggestion of a library staff member, an A-frame whiteboard was placed in a heavily trafficked area of Kent Library that asked anyone passing by to write down a nominated subject area. The whiteboard included a tiny URL and QR code for the nomination form. On the opposite side of the whiteboard, a tiny URL for the student group application directed them to the nearby Reference or Circulation Desk for further help. Those working at both access points were directed to send students to the Acquisitions Unit if they were unable to answer any inquiry.

To make these programs' materials more visible to students, a temporary location was created on the main floor of the library. Materials purchased through both programs were placed there until the next year's program cycles were completed. The previous year's materials were then integrated into the main collection and the newly selected materials replaced them. Bookplates

were added to the materials to further designate their reason for being added to the collection.

Signage was created, as seen in figure 3, to place on the temporary display that not only designated where these materials came from and why they were there but also created the message, "You spoke, we listened." It was important for the students to see that the library was engaging them in a real way and their participation brought on real results. Particularly on a college campus, it can be difficult to see the effects of one's actions. Students being able to see a tangible result of their efforts—books that they chose were purchased—seemed like an obvious way to promote.

Figure 3. Temporary display signage.

The library's graphic design staff created and placed sliders, as seen in figure 4, on the library's main webpage announcing the program and linking to the various forms and program webpages. The sliders' designs matched the signage used in the temporary location to create a cohesive image and to help visually delineate the two programs. As part of our publicity schedule, the graphic design staff posted regular social media announcements for each stage of the program to help raise awareness. In the first year, the Acquisitions Unit also placed posters throughout campus to help raise awareness.

Figure 4. Kent Library webpage sliders.

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When it came to voting on the nominated subject areas the first year, the information literacy librarians who were teaching sessions that fall incentivized participation through free candy and gift cards for coffee at the library's in-house coffee shop. During the week of Halloween, the vote count tripled because of their work. Of all that was done to promote the program, the in-person engagement of students was the most effective promotional tool. Due to COVID and virtual instruction, that same level of engagement was not possible during the second year of the program.

In a promotional boon for us, the Southeast student-led newspaper, The Arrow, covered these programs not once, but twice. As part of the initial push in year one, a student reporter helped us announce these new programs in an August 2019 article, titled "New Kent Library Programs Make Student Choice a Priority" (Wagner 2019). A different reporter came back to us in the spring to write a follow-up and complementary article about new materials added to the collection called "New Kent Library Pilot Project Offers Students Opportunity to Build Library Collection" (Lawson 2020).

Analysis

The main reason for these programs was to connect students to the collection of Kent Library; those connections are not always quantifiable. Particularly given the timing of these programs' implementations—the pilot year being the fall before the COVID-19 pandemic and the second year being very much in the middle of the response—the data are not definitive and should be reviewed with this reality in mind. With any program in an academic setting, a commitment of at least three to five years must be the plan. Any opportunity to engage and build relationships takes time and consistent effort. This is true for normal academic years, not addressing global pandemics.

The data shows that over the two years, the subject area program added 209 items to the collection. These items were selected by Kent Library librarians based on subject expertise and professional standards to expand the selections in that subject area or to fill collection gaps. Concurrently, the student group grant program added eighty-six items over three years. These additions represent a wide range of materials from typical monographs to kits. Together, through these programs, students added 295 items to the collection.

Table 2 shows that the subject area program cost Kent Library roughly $3,139 over two years through the purchasing of young adult bestselling novels and foreign language instruction titles. The student group grant program cost $5,660 to fulfill the request of six student groups ranging in areas from dietetics to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Overall, Kent Library spent $8,799 to support these two programs over three years.

Student engagement programs: Purchases and costs				
	2019	**2020**	**2021**	**Total**
Items Added to the Collection				
Subject Area	157	52	0	209
Grants	24	51	11	86
Total	181	103	11	**295**
Amount Spent on Student Selected Items				
Subject Area	$ 2,114	$ 1,024	$ -	$ 3,139
Grants	$ 1,947	$ 2,695	$ 1,017	$ 5,660
Total	$ 4,061	$ 3,720	$ 1,017	**$ 8,799**

Table 2. Student engagement programs: Purchases and costs.

In terms of tangible student engagement, we saw a definite pattern of increased participation as depicted in nominations, votes, and applications to the two programs. Table 3 presents the engagements we were able to count. While the numbers may seem low, it is worth noting that these numbers do not take into consideration students that were passively engaged through the promotion and associated effects of these programs. While that number is impossible to estimate, it is fair to say that far more students were engaged than those represented by the numbers in table 3.

Student engagement programs: Engagement				
	2019	2020	2021	Total
Student engagement: Subject area				
Nominations	10	4	0	14
Votes	66	24	0	90
Student engagement: Grants				
Applications	2	5	1	8
Awards	2	3	1	6

Table 3. Student engagement programs: Engagement.

To give context to the concrete engagement of these programs—checkouts and cost per use—table 4 lays out statistics for titles available between 2020 through 2022. For accuracy in comparing usage, we present only data for all other titles purchased at Kent Library during the same period. It was important, given the historically higher usage of the juvenile and kit collections, that the usage statistics be divided in this way as well.

At Kent Library, the juvenile and kit collections see unique usage patterns and consistency. Both collections are highly utilized by education students. Southeast Missouri State University's history as a normal school is reflected in high institutional engagement with the juvenile collection. Pulling out usage statistics for the collection of the kit separately was important since the kits are not in open stacks, thus limiting the ability to advertise their content and unobstructed access.

The data presented here show that the materials purchased using these student engagement programs generally have slightly lower-than-average usage compared to titles purchased at the same time—having the same period of availability—at Kent Library. The only exception to this trend is materials purchased and placed in the juvenile collection where usage is almost double that of other items in that collection. Particularly materials purchased in 2020 for both programs show this increased usage because of the content. In 2019, the students selected bestselling young adult novels for the subject area in which they wanted increased investment. This directly correlates to the more than double average usage of those materials—.93 vs .49.

Generally, the subject area program usage is lower in 2021 due to the subject area selected by the student body—foreign language instruction. When compared to the previous year's selected subject—bestselling young adult novels—the decrease in usage makes sense. Foreign language instruction, while an important topic to the students, serves a smaller subset of the library user population. This translates to a more strategic purchase for the collection. While it meets a need, overall usage is not going to reflect its importance when compared to the rest of the collection.

Lower-than-average usage for items purchased through the student group grants program is predictable given the specific nature of those purchases and selectors—similar to the second year of the subject area program in 2021. While the hope is that materials in a library are widely used, items selected by a group

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of students specific to their work would naturally assume a lower-than-average usage when compared to materials added to the collection through other selection tools. Strategic collection development, like that presented through these programs, does not always equal greater overall usage.

Student Engagement Programs: Usage and Cost-per-use Comparison					
Year added	Collection	Program	Average cost per checkout	Average check-out per title	Kent Library average checkout per title***
2020	Main	SGG*	$32.97	0.33	0.83
2020	Main	SAN**	$5.00	0.6	0.83
2020	Juvenile	SGG	$53.18	0.88	0.49
2020	Juvenile	SAN	$2.00	0.93	0.49
2020	Kits	SGG	$325.20	0.75	1.5
2020	**Year averages**		**$83.67**	**0.70**	**0.83**
2021	Main	SGG	$74.58	0.62	0.76
2021	Main	SAN	$1.65	0.6	0.76
2021	Juvenile	SGG	-	-	0.25
2021	Juvenile	SAN	$3.33	0.3	0.25
2021	**Year averages**		**$26.52**	**0.51**	**0.67**
2022	Juvenile	SGG	$67.57	0.18	0.12
2022	Kits	SGG	$110.00	0.6	0.73
2022	**Year Averages**		**$88.79**	**0.39**	**0.43**
	Cumulative		**$66.33**	**0.53**	**0.64**

*Student Group Grants program
**Subject Area Nomination program
***Titles used in this average were purchased in the same time period.

Table 4. Student engagement programs: Usage and cost-per-use comparison.

The cost-per-use data provided in table 4 give important context to the strategic nature of these programs. Kits represented in the student group grant purchases for 2020 reflect dietetic kits selected by the Dietetics Student Association. Both kits were well over $500 each. Kits are generally more expensive than monographs and represent tools used by faculty and students to provide a wide range of unique materials. The kits selected here are key to aiding in the success of Southeast dietetics students.

The data presented here should not discount the secondary engagement of offering students direct participation in the collection development of a library; rather, the outcomes should bolster the conclusion that strategic engagement with students is beneficial, though not necessarily quantifiable within standard metrics. These programs were designed to increase the relevancy of the library's materials, but more importantly to create relationships between the library and students by engaging with librarians directly—searching the library's catalog for materials, and having a need met by the library as a tool for ensuring student success.

Takeaways

First, students welcomed the opportunity to contribute. Given Kent Library's pre-existing level of engagement with students, these programs were a success. Before these programs were started, the library only engaged

students passively. These programs provided an avenue for consistent engagement with students by giving their voices real consideration. With time and further promotion, these programs can help bolster student buy-in and overall library engagement.

Second, responsiveness, consistency, and commitment are key to success. Parts of the original application process were found to be too cumbersome for some applicants. Each year the application and process were re-evaluated to see where barriers could be eliminated for students and show responsiveness to their feedback. This helped ensure connection and formed relationships. This required balancing participation requirements with the ease of applying.

Third, some university faculty will not approve of the library purchasing materials students have requested. After the library spent $3,000 on bestselling young adult novels in the first year of the subject area program, some faculty expressed concern with the quality of the purchases. There must be a balance between purchasing materials that support traditional research and teaching dynamics and, if students are to be engaged where they are, supporting both their academic and non-academic needs.

Fourth, student engagement is critical for academic library vitality. There is a distinct trend when looking back on three years of these programs, particularly regarding what was requested by the students and what was ultimately added to the collection. Students requested academic materials that were outside the scope of what the academic faculty or librarians were traditionally collecting. This fact illustrates the need for libraries to engage students in what they need to succeed; often, trained academics do not adjust to those modern needs. Whether it is books to help first-time English speakers, objects to teach hearing-impaired children, or food models for teaching nutrition, these items fall outside the radar of our current selection systems. By empowering students, not only are they engaged in collection development but are also making current systems more responsive, useful, and diverse.

Lastly, these programs provided new avenues for diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice outreach and partnerships. The Black Student Union was awarded the additional student group grant in 2020. Despite the funding having been reduced that year and awards cut, when the committee reviewed their application, they saw it as an opportunity to dig in and support the group's work while also making our collection more inclusive. The committee agreed to award the Black Student Union's grant and asked a librarian on the committee to volunteer to do some outreach. This served to be a valuable collaboration and opportunity for the library to perform outreach to and for an underserved population. This work by our Special Collections and Archives Librarian eventually led to the realization of an archives collection detailing the history of African American sororities and fraternities at Southeast. This collection is still under development, but the relationships built due to this level of engagement directly led to this exciting opportunity.

Conclusion

As libraries on university campuses work to address their institutions' evolving priorities and needs, active student engagement in collection development can help foster collaboration and bolster student success, particularly for marginalized groups. Building more strategic, community-curated collections through student engagement is a tool academic libraries can use to ensure more accessible, well-rounded, and useful collections. This is reflected in both the data presented here and the literature. This case study from Kent Library at Southeast Missouri State University can provide the genesis for strategic, innovative thinking and out-of-the-box approaches to student

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engagement in areas not always considered when discussing student success. Through this type of approach, academic libraries can ensure their continued place at the heart of academic life and learning while expanding their influence and services.

Acknowledgements

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Creating an Academic Library Escape Room: An Outreach and Assessment Experience

ABSTRACT

An escape room encourages participation within the library while offering a fun and cost-effective experience. Academic librarians initially apprehensive about creating and advertising an escape room will find, as evidenced in this paper, that the benefits far outweigh the challenges. This article describes the efforts of a small, four-year, public university library and the lessons learned for improving the outreach experience and altering content to fulfill more diverse needs found pre- and post-pandemic.

KEYWORDS

Problem Statement

Our library desires students and the larger university community to utilize the library and participate in outreach activities; however, we have struggled to attract this participation. We would like to know whether our promotional efforts are reaching our target audience and what outreach activities are appealing to our university community.

Introduction

Academic libraries, often referred to as the heart of the university, are places of refuge for students. Walking through a campus library, one will find students working alone or with classmates on projects, papers, and research. These patrons of the library may even find avenues for relaxation and entertainment in the collections of books, movies, and games, or other resources the library offers. It is a place where a student can thrive as they chart their course in academia.

However, not all students recognize the benefit of the library or the librarians who are ready to help. Some students seem to fear of the complexity of a library and approaching a librarian to ask for help. Others might believe the library is a boring place with nothing to offer; they may feel they can complete their studies without the assistance of the librarian. Still, many are simply unaware of what the library has to offer. Understanding these barriers have prompted many libraries—including ours—to create outreach programs that will engage students as well as the larger university community. Our library strives to create outreach programs to connect; however, it is difficult to determine which outreach programs will be appealing, especially with budgetary constraints. It

is also challenging to ensure the advertisements for the program reach the target communities.

This document will share our process for examining whether an escape room might be a viable option for our outreach. We will examine the promotional strategies we employed, and which were or were not useful in reaching our target audience. The original idea for an escape room was successfully implemented prior to the pandemic. This paper will provide suggestions for adjusting the program to better accommodate proper safety precautions during and after the pandemic, and to give improvements learned through feedback and observation. This detailed account of lessons learned provides a template that can be modified to fit a library's needs should other institutions choose to create an escape room.

Literature review

There has been a growing interest in leveraging escape room popularity in libraries spreading to all types of institutions across the United States. In 2016, Katie O'Reilly published an interview with Karissa Alcox, a youth librarian at Fort Erie Public Library. Alcox provided a compelling reason to consider escape rooms by stating simply, "It takes place indoors, and you don't need much aside from some locks and props—a library can afford to do it" (O'Reilly 2016, 14). Ouariachi and Wim (2020) point out how an escape room is the type of activity that provides opportunity for group collaboration, critical thinking, and motivation for teamwork while solving problems to escape the room. Kroski published the book *Escape Rooms and Other Immersive Experiences in the Library* in 2019 after we had already researched and created our Escape Room. We have found that several of the points made in this book directly support our design. These points, along with identified elements for improvement, will be mentioned throughout the paper.

Several university libraries have turned to escape rooms for freshmen orientation activities. The University of Surrey library (Wise et al. 2018) and the Kreitzberg Library at Norwich University (Veach 2019) have successfully adapted the escape room concept to reach incoming freshmen during their first-year orientation. By gathering qualitative feedback from new and returning students who participated in their escape room event, Wise et al. (2018) reported that their escape room achieved its three intended goals: raising awareness of the library and what it offers, teaching basic information skills, and encouraging student engagement with the library. Veach (2019) conducted their assessment through observational forms filled out by facilitators and through post-orientation surveys filled out by freshman students. The library at the University of North Texas chose to create an escape room that was geared towards "helping students learn basic library literacy skills and encourage engagement with libraries and librarians" (Kincaid, DeWitt-Miller, and Robson 2016, Slide 4). Of 250 participants, 170 completed surveys showed the room was a success in teaching students basic library literacy skills and encouraging engagement with librarians.

In 2018, *The Southeastern Librarian* reported on D.H. Hill Library's escape room and 3D scanning studio (SELA 2018). The escape room was designed by library staff as an alternative to scavenger hunts. The experience was fun and challenging for participants while showing off key library resources and technologies and promoting library literacy. Groups of up to five individuals could register to solve puzzles with cameras, tablets, and other gadgets. Mirasol and Walker (2020) of Wichita State University Library, chose to create two escape rooms that would "give patrons hands-on experience with unique collections that they may not be aware are housed in the academic library"

(323). While the two rooms were created at different times with different themes, they were both beneficial in showcasing the special collections of the library and in encouraging future engagement and research (Mirasol and Walker 2020).

Virtual escape rooms are trending in libraries as they have a greater ability to reach patrons and are available at any time. The terms "virtual" and "online" are used interchangeably within our research paper to describe rooms/activities made available entirely online. This is not to be confused with "virtual reality" games which require special equipment for the experience and potential software development.

Virtual escape rooms became very popular during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the inability of students to attend normal library outreach events and instruction sessions. An example of creating a virtual escape room out of necessity is found at the Stony Brook University Library. Kretz, Payne, and Reijerkerk (2021) detail the experience of using a multitude of interconnecting Google online tools to create a virtual escape room to supplement library orientation for new students who could no longer visit the physical building. While the creation of the virtual escape room was challenging "from a curation and a planning standpoint," the authors were still satisfied with the overall outcome and found that students were largely positive in their feedback obtained through a feedback form (Kretz, Payne, and Reijerkerk 2021, 285). This prompted the authors to relay the value of designing these and other types of interactive gaming experiences.

Research questions

RQ1. How can we design an outreach activity to engage with our university community?

RQ2. Which avenues of promotion reached the target audience?

RQ3. Was the outreach activity successful and can it be repeated?

Preparations

Background

Escape rooms are an excellent avenue for entertainment. By design, they are mysteries needing to be solved. Often, they require participants to physically search a designated area for items and clues and to solve riddles, puzzles, and other conundrums to "escape" the room. Lama and Martín (2021) provided the following definition: "An escape experience is an immersive team-based game, the objective of which is to escape from a room within a given time" (2). Escape rooms can be physical or virtual and can be modified to fit almost any theme with the goal of teaching, encouraging community or teamwork, fostering connections, or for the pure purpose of entertainment. Our library recognized the great potential for outreach that escape rooms offer as seen in the literature review, and we chose to create an escape room for National Library Week (NLW) in 2019.

Creating an escape room has many moving parts and requires learning through trial and error. This paper will identify and expound upon the importance of teamwork, organization, research, and authorization in creating any outreach program, including an escape room, and the significant amount of interaction and engagement with the target population that is achieved through this type of activity. Understanding the finer points of an escape room includes providing adequate time for promotion, creation, execution, and evaluation, which are all vital to the success of the room.

NLW was first sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1958 to celebrate and promote libraries; it is a tradition that has continued within our library and in libraries across the nation (2023). NLW was the perfect opportunity for our library to create a fresh and exciting outreach program. A committee was formed of five volunteer staff members and the outreach librarian. Reading about the escape rooms of other libraries helped the committee understand the scope the room could offer and the need to keep the room running smoothly; however, experiencing a professional escape room provided the emotional context experienced by participants and a greater understanding of the placement and flow of clues within the room. It also helped to encourage team building for our committee.

 It would be inadvisable to take on a large project like an escape room without the support of one's supervisors. Helping administration understand the idea and vision for the escape room will go a long way in securing support. The committee approached the dean and assistant director of the library with the necessary research. We pointed out that attending a professional escape room would create an opportunity to interview professional escape room employees about the logistics of running a room. With the support of our dean and assistant dean, the NLW committee was able to secure the funding needed to attend and experience a professionally designed escape room during work hours. This was an invaluable step in our process towards understanding how an escape room functions and how to create a room with a few of our own surprises.

Funding and Marketing

Building an escape room for our patrons required creativity, collaboration, and funding. We were able to engage with and get financial support from our campus community by presenting the idea to several campus entities and supporters of previous library initiatives. Funding provided the money for marketing, clues, and other items that helped us build the room. It was also a great way to market the library as a place for creative ideas, collaboration, and team building. We received funding and support from the Office of Student Affairs, the Diversity Committee, the Career Services Department, the Alumni House, and the University Archives. Our final budget including donations was $500.

Potential donors understood this event to be an opportunity for effective student engagement in learning. By participating in a playful and fun activity, students can start to overcome possible library anxiety and change the perception that the library is a place for books, study, and technology only.

Funding is important because it determines the extent of development for the escape room, props, and promotion. The financial support we received from our funders was used to purchase props that included locks and keys of differing varieties, a magnifying glass, a magnetic extender wand, a toy construction crane, an ultraviolet flashlight and pen, and a lockbox with a keypad for entering a code. An escape room board game was purchased as a grand prize item awarded through a drawing at the end of National Library Week.

Funding is also useful in marketing. The first major promotional item created was a flyer detailing the escape room event. Creating a flyer (figure 1) had its challenges but was essential, since it was going to serve as the template for all physical and electronic marketing outside of social media. Canva was our most-used tool for creating the promotional materials. To create an influential flyer, use images in your flyer that clearly represent the theme of your escape room. Our escape room was fashioned to look like a cozy office or library. A

magnifying glass, lightbulb, keys, lock, and book were all images used in the flyer. The colors (muted with dark browns, creams, and black) helped to give a feel of continuity and mystery, with shadows and darker tones adding to the effect and lighter tones keeping it from looking too dark or difficult to read. Many of these same elements were used in the bookmarks, the website banner detailing sign-up information for the escape room, and the TV digital displays in the library and student union. There were enough colors and images to be eye-catching, but not overwhelming.

With multiple people on a committee, there will be those with different styles and color preferences. It is essential to be open and understanding when working on a design as a group. Often the most uncomplicated and straightforward message comes across best. When creating a flyer, we have found that no more than three colors and two different fonts are good guidelines to consider. Kasperek (2014) notes that a choice in font "has a voice" which "creates a tone" for the reader (50). For the content of the flyer, we included the name of the event, a daring question to "hook" the reader, the dates and times the event would be offered, how to reserve a spot, a special thank-you to a major sponsor of the event, and the logo required by our institution. Keep the flyer simple but informative to get the message across quickly and effectively. An essential lesson learned for marketing is time management. In our case, our printing service provider was accommodating several large orders, which caused significant delays in printing for some of our promotional materials.

Figure 1. Promotional flyer created for first escape room event.

Creating the Escape Room

The Story: Theme and Storyline

To decide on a theme and storyline, choose a setting for which you already have many of the props, and consider a storyline that will draw in a wide audience. After you have completed your first escape room and have cemented the experience with your audience, then you might consider a more diverse array of themes. For our first escape room, we chose a library setting with elements that would easily be found in an office or library. This was to ensure that the escape room was suitable for our target audience who may be unfamiliar with escape rooms. Another factor we had to consider was that the thriller movie *Escape Room* (Robitel 2019) had recently been released and had some of our target population on edge. Several students and staff had to be reassured that they would not actually be locked in the room. Once we reassured them that it was not allowed since it would be a safety hazard and that they could get out at any time, they became visibly calmer about the idea of participating.

A library or office setting was practical because we had many props available from our work surroundings and from our personal collections that could be used at no cost. This gave us the ability to make the room feel furnished with a natural and inviting atmosphere while staying within a limited budget.

Our professional escape room experience included an introductory video, which provided a story for why the room would be entered, searched, and eventually escaped. The context and excitement felt while watching this video inspired us to create a story for our own room that would build anticipation and give purpose and direction towards escape. In developing the storyline, we kept in mind the location, limitations, and related history, and we researched our story to ensure authenticity. The narrative evolved as a result of our discussions until we felt the story was believable and well-rounded for the participants (see figure 2). We held meetings in which we discussed the story and whether it was too long or short, whether the ideas were something that made sense, and whether the content was believable. We didn't want the story to be too long such that participants would become confused or bored by the details; nor did we want it to be so short that it failed to establish the purpose for being in the room. We also wanted to keep an element of mystery that would help to hook the participants and be exciting. This is why we chose a storyline that includes a donor since the university has a donation process we could follow, and it helps to make the scenario believable. In the storyline, the donated amount was for the library, which helped tie in the location and theme of the escape room. A large sum of money was referenced in the hopes that it would provide intrigue for participants to search for this hidden "treasure." We developed the story first, and then created puzzles and props afterward. The introductory video mentions the phrase "chart your course," which was intended to tie in with one of the room's props, a globe, though participants did not need to make this connection in order to find the associated clue. Finally, the video was created and recorded using PowerPoint slides with the voice recorder, slide transition timer, and slide animation feature.

Before his death, Dr. Odo Sun was a benefactor and admirer of both Delta State University and its library. He was a man of means who loved puzzles and codes and enjoyed time spent with friends solving mysteries. Dr. Sun decided to invite university members to join him in a night of sleuthing by solving puzzles to lead them to the hidden treasure; a ten million dollar check for the library.

Sadly, Dr. Sun perished before the festivities could commence and the bank will not cash a check after 10 days of the issuers passing. This deadline is quickly approaching. Your team has been tasked with solving the room with clues Dr. Sun left behind to help "Show the Path". You will "Chart Your Direction" using the "Clues" to find the missing donation before time runs out!

Figure 2. Escape room storyline and introductory video link: https://youtu.be/MV47WG3UZi0

The Setting: Location, Location, Location
The room chosen stood out because of its availability and location, with multiple exits and an open work area. The room was in a secluded spot so that the noise level was better contained and other library patrons would not be disturbed. With the location in a corner of the library building, traffic could be controlled to help verify who was coming in and leaving the escape room. The room had two doors—one for entering and one for exiting—which made it easier to have participants enter through one door and exit out a different door, where they would find a photo and prize station. The room was naturally divided by a large set of lockers. These lockers became a natural wall for our

room and divided the large room into two sections, providing a smaller, more manageable area for the escape room activities and another area for the group to watch the video before entering the room.

The room area influences the size of the groups. The larger the room, the larger a group can be. However, there must be enough clues that allow each person to participate in the room. Otherwise, some members may stand around watching while others attempt to complete every clue. Smaller group sizes in a more contained room encourage all members to participate without feeling overwhelmed by the room or group size. This is another reason we focused the escape room in one of the sections divided by the lockers and did not place clues on both sides of the lockers. This kept the room small and manageable.

The size of our chosen room and the door and hallway placement were excellent for our needs and worked well with our groups. As participants progressed through the room, there was interaction by all the members at different stages. A few of the groups were more subdued in their expression while others were extremely active and vocal. Through our observations, we found that six-member groups are manageable, but five- or four-person teams may be beneficial to further encourage participation by all members, especially for individuals that may be overwhelmed by a larger group size.

The Scene: Room Dynamics and Props

Creating an atmosphere is necessary to contribute to the excitement for a new experience while still being in a familiar building. Since the entrance and exit were on the same wall, we set up a dark curtain to block participants' view as they first entered the room (figure 3). This would add to the suspense as the participants walked to the chairs where they would watch the video detailing the storyline. We were inspired to use a curtain, as well as many of our props and clues, by O'Reilly (2016), who described the use of tablecloths, curtain rods, and other items to divide the room into smaller spaces. To enter the escape room, the students walked through a makeshift doorway blocked by another curtain. Once they walked through, their time would begin. They had forty-five

Figure 3. Pictures of the escape room with clues and props scattered throughout the room.

minutes to find the clues and escape the room. One of the members of the NLW committee would sit in the room near the entrance to provide clues, keep an eye on props and the handling of props, and to be ready to receive the final clues/items that would allow the participants to "escape" (figure 3). One lesson learned occurred with the very first group. The room was silent, and the participants appeared hesitant to talk or make noise. Turning on soft music helped to alleviate the tension and encourage participant interaction.

Props are extremely useful in creating a desired atmosphere and contributing to a storyline or experience. Our props were specifically chosen to do three things: add theme or atmosphere to the room, help hide clues, and direct and assist participants. Enhancing the theme of the room included adding a rug, two bookshelves with books and figurines, and a globe. We outfitted the room with a podium and dictionary, a table and chairs, and two lamps. The lamps, tissue-box holder, and vase were book-themed to enhance the library atmosphere. A jacket on a coat rack added to the feel of a well-used room. We also placed a corkboard with pencil and paper in case participants wanted to take notes. The magnifying glass, magnetic wand extender, and mirror wand extender were each made available in the room to help with participant accessibility.

We included a box for participants to place locks, keys, and other clues they found and no longer needed. This was to encourage the safekeeping of these items throughout the sometimes-frenzied experience. Finally, we printed older images of the university library, past librarians, and students gathered from yearbooks and other publicly available data to decorate the walls in the space. A large space was left in the center of the main wall to allow for a screen with a timer to be projected onto the wall. This required a projector, hooked up to a laptop, with a timer video already prepped and ready to display.

The Suspicions: Clue Design

Once a story is settled on, the next step is to begin working on the clues. First, determine your paths and where you want the patrons to go. By starting with that, you can be imaginative when creating clues to fit your path needs. The NLW committee found that flowcharts really helped them visualize, understand, and remember the details discussed (figure 4). Kroski (2019) states, "The best way to begin the design stage is to make a flowchart of your game and its puzzles" (75). The Fairfield (Connecticut) Public Library and the University of North Texas Libraries both provided PowerPoints filled with steps, suggestions, and flowchart options for putting together their respective escape rooms; these were very informative as we planned our room (Scherer and Bucci 2016; Kincaid, Dewitt-Miller, and Robson 2016).

When developing your routes, begin your design by working backward. Start with your final prize or treasure and make sure that there are three or four paths and independent emergency routes. Independent emergency routes are an essential precaution in case a clue malfunctions or disappears. If you have the funds, buy a copy of each key or lock. Include some redundancies for a few paths, as well, in case something does not work out for the patrons or they miss a step. When imagining the paths, remember that simple is best. When in doubt, go with the easier route so that players do not lose confidence. Red herrings can be fun to include, but too many will frustrate your patrons. Most of your decorations need to have a purpose. If a room is overdone in meaningless decoration, expect the patrons to take longer in figuring out the clues and to grow frustrated as they look for clues in everything.
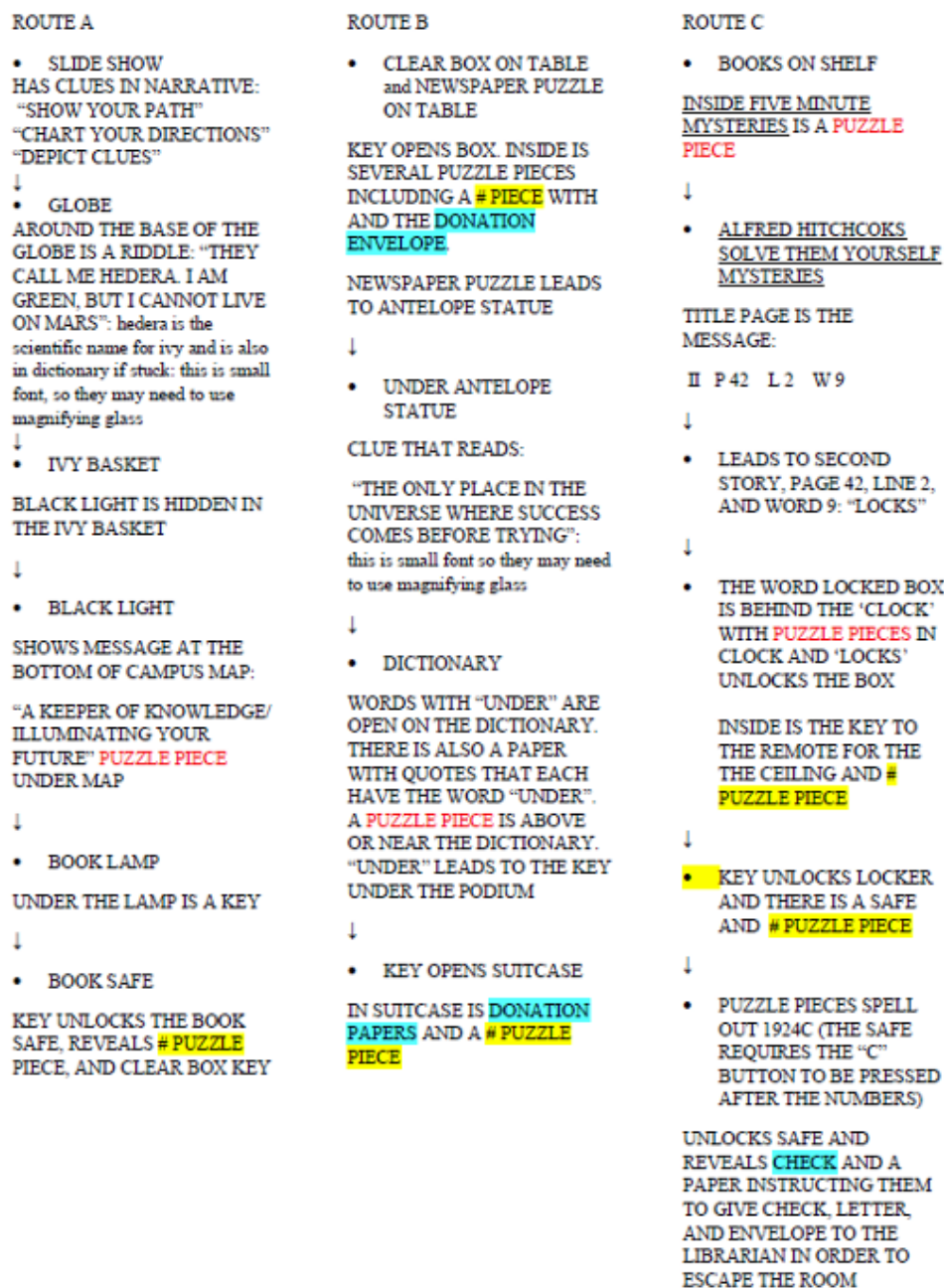
ROUTE A

- SLIDE SHOW

HAS CLUES IN NARRATIVE:
"SHOW YOUR PATH"
"CHART YOUR DIRECTIONS"
"DEPICT CLUES"

↓

- GLOBE

AROUND THE BASE OF THE
GLOBE IS A RIDDLE: "THEY
CALL ME HEDERA. I AM
GREEN, BUT I CANNOT LIVE
ON MARS": hedera is the
scientific name for ivy and is also
in dictionary if stuck: this is small
font, so they may need to use
magnifying glass

↓

- IVY BASKET

BLACK LIGHT IS HIDDEN IN
THE IVY BASKET

↓

- BLACK LIGHT

SHOWS MESSAGE AT THE
BOTTOM OF CAMPUS MAP:

"A KEEPER OF KNOWLEDGE/
ILLUMINATING YOUR
FUTURE" PUZZLE PIECE
UNDER MAP

↓

- BOOK LAMP

UNDER THE LAMP IS A KEY

↓

- BOOK SAFE

KEY UNLOCKS THE BOOK
SAFE, REVEALS # PUZZLE
PIECE, AND CLEAR BOX KEY

ROUTE B

- CLEAR BOX ON TABLE
  and NEWSPAPER PUZZLE
  ON TABLE

KEY OPENS BOX. INSIDE IS
SEVERAL PUZZLE PIECES
INCLUDING A # PIECE WITH
AND THE DONATION
ENVELOPE.

NEWSPAPER PUZZLE LEADS
TO ANTELOPE STATUE

↓

- UNDER ANTELOPE
  STATUE

CLUE THAT READS:

"THE ONLY PLACE IN THE
UNIVERSE WHERE SUCCESS
COMES BEFORE TRYING":
this is small font so they may need
to use magnifying glass

↓

- DICTIONARY

WORDS WITH "UNDER" ARE
OPEN ON THE DICTIONARY.
THERE IS ALSO A PAPER
WITH QUOTES THAT EACH
HAVE THE WORD "UNDER".
A PUZZLE PIECE IS ABOVE
OR NEAR THE DICTIONARY.
"UNDER" LEADS TO THE KEY
UNDER THE PODIUM

↓

- KEY OPENS SUITCASE

IN SUITCASE IS DONATION
PAPERS AND A # PUZZLE
PIECE

ROUTE C

- BOOKS ON SHELF

INSIDE FIVE MINUTE
MYSTERIES IS A PUZZLE
PIECE

↓

- ALFRED HITCHCOKS
  SOLVE THEM YOURSELF
  MYSTERIES

TITLE PAGE IS THE
MESSAGE:

II P 42 L 2 W 9

↓

- LEADS TO SECOND
  STORY, PAGE 42, LINE 2,
  AND WORD 9: "LOCKS"

↓

- THE WORD LOCKED BOX
  IS BEHIND THE 'CLOCK'
  WITH PUZZLE PIECES IN
  CLOCK AND 'LOCKS'
  UNLOCKS THE BOX

  INSIDE IS THE KEY TO
  THE REMOTE FOR THE
  THE CEILING AND #
  PUZZLE PIECE

↓

- KEY UNLOCKS LOCKER
  AND THERE IS A SAFE
  AND # PUZZLE PIECE

↓

- PUZZLE PIECES SPELL
  OUT 1924C (THE SAFE
  REQUIRES THE "C"
  BUTTON TO BE PRESSED
  AFTER THE NUMBERS)

UNLOCKS SAFE AND
REVEALS CHECK AND A
PAPER INSTRUCTING THEM
TO GIVE CHECK, LETTER,
AND ENVELOPE TO THE
LIBRARIAN IN ORDER TO
ESCAPE THE ROOM

Figure 4. Escape room flowchart

The Suspicions: Physical Clues and Puzzles

Our PowerPoint video was our "instructional item," which detailed the final object that the patrons needed to find and gave them the first clue to start on their journey. That first clue starts one path. Diversifying clues is vital because patrons will have different detecting skills and learning preferences. Codes are a type of challenge that can add an element of intrigue, and books are great for code games with pages, sentences, letters, and words. We used a dictionary opened to an underlined word to give a clue where to look next. We also hid a letter in a book on a shelf that listed a code to decipher the passcode for the combination lock. We created a jigsaw puzzle by laminating and cutting up a newspaper article, which was a visual clue. We also included a map on the wall

with a hint written in invisible ink. Remember, spread out the key puzzle pieces around the room and include audio cues, visual pairings, ciphers, maps, and/or math. Be prepared to edit. While ideas for placement and format may work on a flowchart, they may not work in practice. Finally, Kroski (2019) advises clues to be supportive of the storyline. This is an area we can improve upon in the future. Some of our clues correlated with the theme, while others were chosen for their convenience. For example, while we might have found a puzzle with a library theme, the cost and time needed to find and purchase the puzzle would not have been conducive or even necessary when a child's puzzle is cheaper and easier to manipulate.

Practice Makes Perfect

When preparing an escape room, it is wise to conduct several practice sessions with different groups that represent your target audience. This will give you the opportunity to identify areas that are too difficult or easy for the participants and to adjust or add clues for areas where extra support is needed or has been missed entirely. Participants can also provide feedback for what they did and did not enjoy about the room, and it can be adjusted accordingly. This also gives the creators a chance to see the room play out in real life—from the effectiveness of the clues to feeling the energy of the participants as the timer runs out.

Six practice groups of between four and six library staff, faculty, student workers, and volunteer community members were willing to test and give feedback on the escape room. The committee were hoping to identify the areas that were particularly difficult for each group, as well as learn what was confusing, what was fun, and what was memorable. This was determined through observation during the practice sessions and through a debriefing after each session wherein participants could share their enjoyment and frustration. For example, several groups struggled to recognize the dictionary was open to the page starting with the word "Underneath," which meant they should look under the podium the dictionary was sitting on to get another clue. We chose to fix this problem by adding a note in the dictionary that had several quotes listed, each quote using the word "Under" in some way. The tests went well overall, and the changes made were useful. It was also helpful to see that each group was able to complete the room within the allotted time with some finishing faster than others.

The Escape Room

We created the room to be available for three nights during National Library Week. Each group would have forty-five minutes to participate. Fifteen minutes was devoted to resetting the room after each session. Each group was instructed to arrive ten minutes early so they could sign the consent forms and learn about the rules for the room; this also helped to ensure all members arrived in time to participate without causing unnecessary delays.

We chose dates and times for the escape room that benefited our patrons best. Each library is different. Look towards busiest periods and the reasons why those periods are more popular. Are classes usually out at a particular time? Is there a time that would work best for faculty and staff? Which days might elicit the most interaction? Would the weather encourage indoor activity? Reviewing use statistics, class schedules, and campus activities can help to decide on the schedule. The University of Wisconsin-Parkside Library chose to have an escape room in the spring to help provide an indoor activity as a fun alternative during the cold winter weather and to promote their new study room (Edson 2019).

Rules and Survey

The first step to our escape room was to enter the "Welcome Room," which was an open study room to the right of the official escape room. Participants checked in, left their belongings to be watched by the attending librarian, went over the rules, and signed a consent form authorizing picture- and video-taking and posting on the library's Facebook page and other social media sites or reporting avenues. See figure 5 for a list of the rules given to participants.

Escape Room Rules

1. Do not tear down pictures.
2. Do not topple furniture.
3. Do not break or tear anything in the room.
4. Do not break into a box that has a lock; solve the lock.
   If you force a clue out of a locked box, you will forfeit your time and you and your group will be asked to leave.
5. Professional rooms often allow up to three clues when the group needs help. This room will allow as many clues as needed; however, everyone must agree to ask for a clue.
6. The librarian will be sitting in the room with you in order to give a clue when it is asked for.
7. You will have 45 minutes to complete the room.
8. Do not use phones or other smart devices while in the room. Please turn phones off. All needed tools are provided for you. Please do not take pictures or video of the room.
9. Please do not share any clues or experiences you had in the room with others outside of your group and the library aides. We want everyone to experience the room with a clean slate.
10. Please let the librarian know if you need to exit the room for the restroom or any other reason. You will be allowed to reenter the room; however, the timer will not stop while you are absent.

Figure 5. List of rules given to each escape room participant

Upon leaving the "Welcome Room," participants were led into the large escape room, which was divided into two sections. In the first section, participants watched a video of the scenario, and the librarian gave additional guidance about completing the game. Professional rooms often allow up to three clues when the group needs help. In our room, participants could ask for as many clues as needed; however, everyone had to agree to ask for the clue before librarian would provide it. The second section was the main escape room.

After escaping the room, the group was led into a hallway where they were given goody bags and had their photo taken with a whiteboard that displayed their completion time for escaping the room. The participants were asked to fill out an optional post-game survey. Those who completed the survey were entered into a drawing to win an escape room board game. Once the group exited the escape room, two volunteer librarians or student workers reset the room. One lesson we learned about the survey is that it was helpful to encourage participants to fill it out before leaving. Having a computer and QR codes ready for easy access to the survey encouraged feedback, something participants are not as likely to provide later.

Challenges/Problems and Solutions

Scheduling, using, and resetting the room posed several unanticipated challenges. These included technical and software problems, user error, and lost or broken items. One of the first problems was with our chosen sign-up software system. Once a student signed up for a particular time, we would email students to confirm the time or to inform them if there was a problem. The system did not prevent students from signing up for slots that were already taken, even though the calendar would show it as full. The students simply did not pay attention to the calendar. Therefore, we were emailing students to let them know they signed up for an unavailable slot, and we tried to give alternatives. However, students failed to check their emails for confirmation (as instructed) and showed up for the event. We had to tell students the slot was not available.

If this happens, be direct with the patrons. Explain how the mix-up happened and provide them with options such as attending an open slot at a different time. Remain calm, be firm in explaining and enforcing the rules, and provide other flexible options if available. We were able to accommodate many students, but there were still a few we had to turn away. A sign-up system that lessens confusion may be worth the expense, though having students call or physically come in to verify their respective slots is another option.

Clue development in creating the room should provide flexibility so that clue paths can be tweaked independently of each other. A clue may get lost in the shuffle, or a key may get stuck. When this happens, simply remove the path(s) that is now unavailable or replace the clue with an alternative option. For example, during a room reset, we had a key get stuck in a ceiling panel and NLW committee members did not have enough time to retrieve it and reset that portion of the room. The decision was made to leave the key in the ceiling, remove one clue that led to the key, and overlook that specific path of clues. Be prepared for such scenarios and meet each one with patience and confidence.

A list will ensure that you put clues back in an order that will allow you to lock items before hiding the necessary key. For example, we had a locker that required a key to lock and unlock it. This locker key was hidden above the ceiling and would come down through a small hole when the students used a remote control. During practice we reset the room, put the locker key above the ceiling, locked the remote, and hid the remote's key. We did all of this before we realized we hadn't locked the locker with the locker key. We had to reverse several steps so that we could lock the locker. Our list helped to keep us from continuing to make this mistake and others like it.

Evaluation Data

Assessing your escape room allows you to analyze the overall success of the game and determine whether the intended objectives were met. The analysis of your escape room will provide useful assessments of the groups and give insight into the characteristics of players, teams, and tasks. Observations and surveys are often used for assessment of these types of activities. Observational methods may involve recording the participants as they go through the room, which would require their prior consent to be recorded. Surveys, on the other hand, involve asking participants questions before and/or after the event and would elicit everyone's perspective. We chose to use surveys after the event to gather assessment data due to familiarity with using basic surveys and the convenience of creating a survey without additional cost that may come with other forms of evaluation.

Players were given a link to complete the survey immediately after the event or at a later time. We designed the questions to provide feedback on how

they heard about the event, how they felt while going through the room, and whether they would participate in future library events. We wanted to know which marketing strategies were successful (RQ2), what they enjoyed about the game and what could be improved upon (RQ1), and whether they were interested in participating in more library events (RQ3).

Sample of Survey Questions
What classification are you (RQ1 & RQ2)? The classification question was important because it revealed the number of players by class level. From the survey results, 26 percent of the participants were seniors, followed by juniors and sophomores at 23 percent each (figure 6).
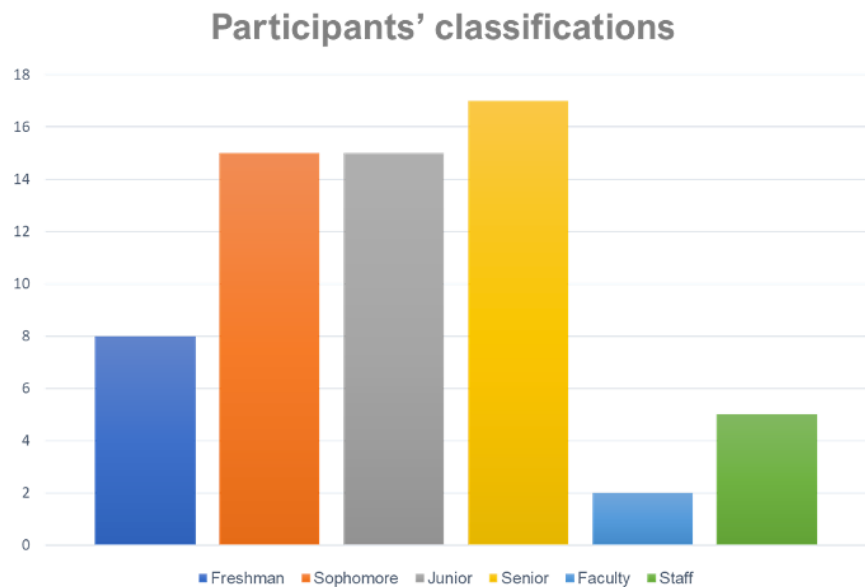
Participants' classifications

Figure 6. Participants' classifications.

How did you hear about this escape room (RQ2)? The survey showed that out of sixty-two respondents, 30 percent heard about it through faculty or staff members; 29 percent through an advertisement (Facebook, digital display, flyers, etc.); and 24 percent through a friend (figure 7).
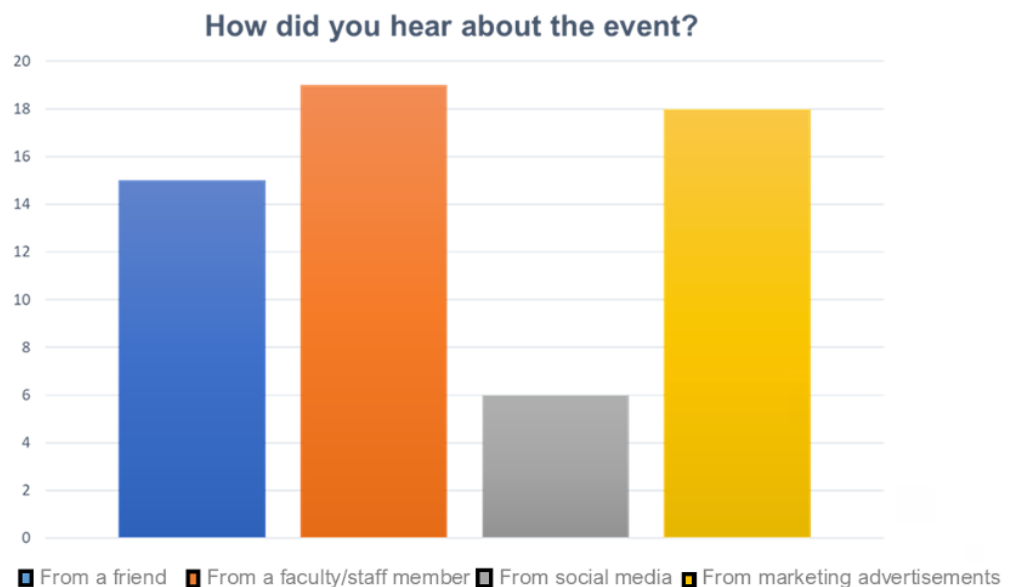
How did you hear about the event?

Figure 7. How participants learned about the escape room event as collected in a post-event survey.

What was the hardest part (RQ3)? Responses included the following:

"Finding the first clue and not knowing where to start"
"Find the clues that matched the quotes"
"Finding the keys"
"Finding the last lock"
"The numbers and acronyms"
"Figuring out the order of the combination of the safe"
"Finding the clues with the flashlight"

What did you enjoy the most (RQ1 & RQ3)? Responses included the following:

"My friend escaping and having fun"
"Having fun use teamwork to figure out the hardest clues and locating hidden objects. And mostly trying to beat the best team's time"
"The overall challenge and that hints were available"
"Honestly, enjoyed ALL"
"Working together with my group"
"Having to work with people I did not know before"
"Working with friends to find everything that needed to find"
"Dropping the key from the ceiling"
"All experience of trying to solve a puzzle with a group of people"

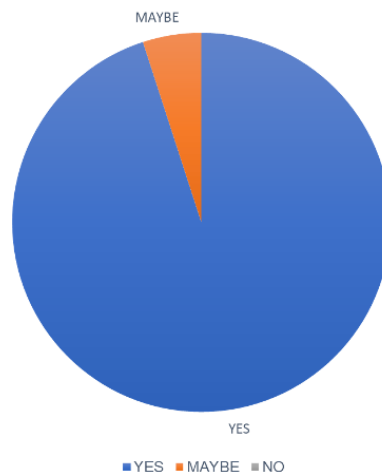**Would you attend future events at the library?**

Figure 8. Participants' interest in attending future library events as collected in a post-event survey.

Would you attend future events at the library (RQ3)? Ninety-five percent of participants who took the survey indicated they would attend future events at the library (figure 8). The overall rating of the game was 4.75 out of 5.

Discussion

When we first created the survey, the purpose was to get some basic feedback to help us know demographics of participants (RQ1 & RQ2), how the participants knew about the event (RQ2), and whether the event was successful (RQ1 & RQ3). Our committee was not as familiar with best practices for evaluation and our questions were not as informative as we now know they could be. However, we did elicit valuable responses and we made several observations that helped us to answer our research questions.

Learning the classification of the participants helped us to learn whether all classification levels had been reached or if there was a group that was missing, per RQ1 and RQ2. The survey showed that all four classification levels for students were represented, with seniors as the largest population. Faculty were the lowest population with only two participants who were from the library and helped with testing the room and the survey. We were thrilled to have two staff groups take part in the event as a team-building exercise, which they seemed to enjoy based on observations and positive comments made when they escaped the room. These results show that the event was appealing for most

of the university community, but we will have to implement changes with the event or marketing to boost faculty involvement.

Survey feedback helps us to answer RQ2. We know that over half of the respondents heard about the event through word of mouth via a friend or professor. We further learned that several of the students were offered extra credit from their professors for participating in the event. This is an option that we did not strongly consider when promoting this program. However, it may be a very useful tool for engaging students in future library activities, especially those new to the experience who may need more encouragement to take part.

A third of the remaining respondents seemed to hear about our event through promotional materials via Facebook, flyers, digital displays, etc. While they were informed of the event through promotional materials, we needed to be more specific with our question to identify which promotional material type was the most effective in reaching the population. This could also help us determine which format to allocate the most funding. For example, flyers and bookmarks were some of the biggest line items on the budget. The bookmarks were delayed in printing and were not available to use until the week before the event, which lessened their effectiveness. The flyers were available at an earlier date and were disseminated throughout campus about a month before the event. Wise et al. (2018) shared that a week or two of promotion does reach the target audience, but it is not a sufficient amount of time to fully promote the event. To determine which promotional strategy was most effective, a future survey would benefit from a question asking which promotional strategy influenced participation the most. This would allow for a much more efficient allocation of time and resources.

RQ3 and to a lesser extent RQ1 is answered in the affirmative by the 95 percent positive response for participating in future events. Also, the statements concerning difficult and positive aspects of the room helped us determine what improvements might be made and what aspects were successful. We were surprised by the number of participants who commented on how they enjoyed working with others to solve the room, even when the team was composed of strangers working together. We were also able to answer this question based on our observations of participants throughout the entire event. Many participants often expressed directly to us their excitement, satisfaction, and eagerness for this event to be offered again. This helps to affirm the value of continuing this type of outreach event in the future. While we learned that participants would attend future events, we realized that we should have asked whether they would attend specifically future escape room activities, and whether they would attend other library events and/or library outreach programs of interest. We also needed to ask about escape room improvements. Did they like the amount of time given? Would they want the room to have a set number of clues? Was the room large enough for the group size? What kinds of themes would they like to see in an escape room? What other outreach activities would they like the library to provide? These are several questions that could help to draw out more useful data for future outreach planning.

Plans For Future Outreach

We planned and conducted this escape room before the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic had a global impact and libraries were not an exception. The need to social distance and to work online spurred many librarians to embrace the online world and explore multiple platforms for creating virtual escape rooms, which might be an avenue for us in the future. While virtual escape rooms are not new, the scope and diversity that they offer has exploded due to necessity. The online world is a great venue to reach patrons during a pandemic.

It is a creative outlet for librarians to engage students who are unable to come to a physical location or are not comfortable having face-to-face activities. The online escape room can also be useful when weather conditions prohibit participation. Finally, a virtual room can be extremely cost-efficient since there is no need for physical equipment and can be created with free resources such as Google documents, YouTube clips, or Springshare's LibGuide platform.

If we were to continue to offer a physical escape room, we would consider redesigning it to be more academic in nature by incorporating clues that require students to utilize library services found online or throughout the library. One possibility would be to teach a bibliographic instruction session through a physical or virtual escape room. Kroski (2019) describes the use of a research-based puzzle that "requires players to conduct some sort of research to discern the answer to a problem" (83). These would be an excellent resource to include in an instructional escape room. First-year students are often enrolled in classes that require attending at least one bibliographic instruction session; these may benefit from a more hands-on, interactive approach provided through an escape room. Since these students are often freshmen, this may also be a way to reach more freshmen beyond the current marketing strategies and to engage them early in their college experience.

The librarians at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice used an "Escape the Library" (ETL) activity to welcome first-year and transfer commuter students between 2013 and 2017 (Davis 2019). The primary objectives of the activity were to reduce anxiety among the incoming students; introduce the library building's location and contents; foster a welcoming, fun, and learning atmosphere; create a space to meet new students; and acquaint the students with basic research skills. A post-activity survey indicated that 88 percent of the participating students had fun, and 92 percent gained research skills or learned about library skills (Davis 2019).

There is an argument for creating protocols for both physical and virtual escape rooms that can accommodate pandemics and other environmental and physical factors. Physical escape rooms need space for social distancing and clues and items that can be easily cleaned. Virtual escape rooms could be used during flu season, unpredictable weather, and for online students or patrons with disabilities that preclude them from participating in a physical room.

Conclusion

There is a thrill and a sense of accomplishment when solving puzzles and figuring out clues to escape a room. Our first research question was about creating an event that would be appealing to the university community. Our escape room met this goal for our students and staff. They found the room to be even better when they solved it with friends or when a new friendship was formed while working in a group. While we reached a wide spectrum of participants, we would need to do further study to determine the best promotion strategies for our university community including the possible use of extra credit with faculty to better answer our second research question. Word spread about the enjoyable library adventure and the campus community continued to request that future escape rooms be made available. This ties in with our third research question about making an event that was successful and could be repeated from year to year. Ninety-five percent of respondents shared they are willing to participate in future events, and the continued requests we received for this activity after the outreach event further supports the escape room as a viable library outreach program. This detailed account of the process used to create our escape room provides a template that can be modified to fit

a library's needs should other libraries choose to create their own escape room experience.

There is a wide variety of escape room avenues that can be explored along with a diverse number of themes. Having learned the process for funding, marketing, creating, running, and assessing an escape room, there is an opportunity to create a new escape room experience with improvements from lessons learned and with different goals for engaging the campus community. Escape rooms continue to be a beneficial tool for librarians to reach patrons, teach skills, and encourage interaction; the steps, strategies, and lessons learned shared in this paper are meant to help other libraries pursue this avenue for outreach with a strong foundation.

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Idea Lab: on Library Social Media Ethics

REPORT FROM THE FIELD

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Introduction

by Stephanie Diaz and Jenna Freedman

In recent years, social media companies like Twitter (or "X") and Meta have come under scrutiny. These companies face data leaks, provide platforms for hate speech and disinformation, promote unchecked echo chambers, and are becoming increasingly predatory. Still, many libraries continue to use these platforms as a convenient tool to reach their users. Considering these ethical challenges, we sent out a call for contributions targeted to LIS professionals and students that asked, "should librarians and libraries walk our digital footprints away from exploitative platforms?" Potential authors were encouraged to consider the following topics and questions:

• As information professionals, do we have a responsibility to our users to lead by example and stop lending our credibility to troubling products?
• What other platforms (Mastodon, post.com, Bluesky, etc.) are you using or considering as Twitter alternatives and why? How effective are they?

Following are responses from individuals managing social media for a public, an academic, and a law library, and a library school professor. You may observe that the JLOE editors do not necessarily agree with all the points of view.

Responses

Dorothea Salo, University of Wisconsin-Madison Information School:

How it started: When I was a new librarian, "Library 2.0" – applying pre-social media web tools in libraries – pervaded professional discourse. Amid the excitement and experimentation was an undercurrent of existential threats and bullyragging. Stephen Abram insisted (2005), "It is essential that we start preparing to become Librarian 2.0 now… and guarantee the future of our profession." So, we started blogs, gardened wikis, tagged everything in sight, and kept current with newsreaders, alongside quite a few "power patrons." Mostly it was good fun while helping keep library web presences fresh and inviting. Essential, certainly not – worth the trouble, absolutely.

But the 2.0 learning curve proved too much for many. Into this adoption breach leapt ambitious startup companies hoping to connect people in a 2.0-ish fashion without the 2.0-ish hassle. Not every startup survived, but a few prospered, attracting billions of users and becoming today's social media platforms. Many of those users were our patrons, so we librarians and our libraries followed them onto social media platforms, often from simple "it's where the patrons are" strategy.

How it's going: Facebook has been credibly accused of fomenting genocide (Amnesty International 2022), losing track of user data (Biddle 2022), lying to researchers (Lyons 2021) and shutting down legitimate research (Brandom 2021), manipulating teens into allowing Facebook to surveil their web use (Constine 2019), and claiming to Congress that the service would dampen the spread of conspiracy theories while actually juicing that spread (Shephard 2018).

Yet libraries and librarians remain on Facebook.

Instagram has been credibly accused of worsening body-image issues among teenaged girls and then trying to cover it up (Mak 2021); algorithmically suppressing images of fat people (Richman 2019); and harboring harassers, hatemongers, cryptocurrency scammers, pedophiles, and identity thieves (Das and White 2023; Sharma 2022; Frenkel, Isaac, and Conger 2018).

Yet libraries and librarians remain on Instagram and flock to Threads.

TikTok has been credibly accused of stalking journalists (Belanger 2022; Criddle 2023), data-profiling children (Vaas 2019), suppressing posts from poor and "ugly" people (Dias 2020), and drowning its human moderators in the dregs of human expression (McIntyre, Bradbury, and Perrigo 2022).

Yet libraries and librarians remain on TikTok (Bogan 2021), in part because of BookTok.

Before Elon Musk took over Twitter in 2022, Twitter was credibly accused of helping police locate protestors for arrest (Biddle 2020) and creating new features that were inaccessible (Katz 2020). Since Musk's takeover, the service has been credibly accused of damaging user-account security to save money (Mondello 2023); facilitating impersonation of celebrities or government officials (Vyas and Dang 2023); and harboring hate (Steele 2022), especially hate from paying users (Muldowney 2023).

Yet libraries remain on Twitter. Some librarians remain as well, though many have moved on – and I find hope in that.

What now?: Philosopher S. Matthew Liao wrote in 2018 – and I agree – that there is little ethical justification for remaining on Facebook. When do we admit that by interacting on these platforms, we have made ourselves complicit in the crimes and senselessly destructive behavior committed by and on them? We have credibility in our communities. Why lend that credibility to such horrors?

The likeliest successor to the giant amoral platforms is the still-small but growing Fediverse. While Twitter lookalike Mastodon is probably the best-known Fediverse service, the Fediverse also boasts the image-sharing system PixelFed, the video-sharing system PeerTube, and the book-review system BookWyrm.

> "As information professionals, do we have a responsibility to our users to lead by example and stop lending our credibility to troubling products? What other platforms (Mastodon, post.com, Bluesky, etc.) are you using or considering as Twitter alternatives and why? How effective are they?"

The Fediverse is not a polished experience, nor is it free of serious problems such as widespread racism (Hendrix 2022). Still, we can help shape the Fediverse into something better than it is, and more civic-minded than corporate social media was or ever can be. It's not too late to stop bullyragging our colleagues into joining and staying on platforms as deadly as whirling buzzsaws. It's not too late to lead our patrons toward something that could be better, rather than yet again following them into perdition. It's definitely not too late to start making considered decisions about where and to whom we lend our credibility.

Elizabeth Portelli, Maurice M. Pine Library, Fair Lawn, NJ:

I started full-time at the Maurice M. Pine Free Public Library in Fair Lawn, NJ in July of 2011. At that time, I was personally on Facebook, but our library was on no social media channels. I've been lucky to have supportive directors during my time here, and they have allowed me to do as a saw fit, social media-wise. I started with a library Facebook, then Instagram, Twitter, during Covid we began using Tik Tok and YouTube as well, and most recently Bluesky. We have the most engagement with our Facebook and Instagram accounts.

My main reason for wanting the library to have as many social media accounts as we can, is to connect with as many people as we can. There have been many instances over the years, where patrons will say to us, "I didn't know that you have or do" X, Y, Z. Patrons want and need to know what the library can offer them in terms of materials and services. For example, we have been lending out museum passes and hotspots for 5+ years at this point, and when we share this information on social media, we are able to cast a much wider net. It's important to reach as many people as possible so that the people that want or need to are able to take full advantage of the library, and for us to continue to prove to the public how vital we are in this community.

While we are very active across our social media accounts, I understand the downsides of social media - the data mining, lack of privacy, addictiveness, just to name a few. I also recognize that quite a few people are adamant that they do not want to be on any type of social media. In order for them to stay updated with library news and programs we also send out semi-weekly email blasts. We also still supply paper flyers as well that people browse and take at the library itself. We will continue to meet the public where they are and will connect with them in any way we can. As long as the public chooses to use social media, so will we.

Misty Trunnell, Research Services Librarian, The George Washington University, Washington, DC:

No! Libraries and librarians should not end their use of exploitative platforms. In doing so libraries will be exhibiting the same exploitative behavior it seeks to prohibit. The opening paragraph of the ALA document Politics in American Libraries: Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights states:

> "All people" and "all points of view" should be included in library materials and information. There are no limiting qualifiers for viewpoint, origin, or politics. Thus, there is no justification for the exclusion of opinions deemed to be unpopular or offensive by some segments of society no matter how vocal or influential their opponents may be at any particular time in any particular place." (ALA, 2017)

My opinion is that libraries would be regressing away from the current interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights and first amendment of the United States Bill of Rights. Libraries have to ensure that they do not engage in the censorship of citizens' viewpoints and opinions because it has to conform to the politically correct discourse of the time. Doing so, by default, makes libraries participants in movements focused on suppressing free speech.

Libraries have to consider if the decision to end use of the most popular social media platforms would limit communication and impact library services to users who frequent those platforms. How likely is it that users would follow libraries to less popular platforms just to stay connected? Is that type of resistance worth leaving a segment of users behind? Consideration also has to be given to the unfavorable decision libraries made during other historical shifts in this nation's society. Jean L. Preer (2004) and Karen Cook (2013) provide historical accounts of the 1936 and 1962 ALA conferences where differing ideological perspectives of those eras created conflicts among the ALA executive councils, membership, and practices for providing service. For example, libraries in the South adhered to their state laws and continued to practice segregation policies in libraries after Brown v. The Board of Education. That decision forced those state library associations and members to withdraw their ALA membership, cut them off from professional development and federal funding, and continued to restrict literacy development of African Americans in those states. African American librarians were also impacted and aggrieved by those decisions.

Information professionals do have a responsibility to lead by example. A more effective way to lead might be to teach users ethical and appropriate ways to engage in political discourse using these platforms. Librarians have taught users information literacy skills and how to use social media. Now is the time for libraries to utilize frameworks such as Metaliteracy to impart critical thinking skills and ethical participation in these environments. I acknowledge this type of instruction would require investment in training and resources to be successful, and that it would take time to become efficient. However, under no circumstances can we promote censorship as a solution! To do so would be succumbing to dangerous policies that threaten our basic democratic and constitutional rights.

Meredith Weston Kostek, J.D., M.L.I.S., Research, Instruction & Engagement Librarian and Robert Truman, J.D., M.L.S., Associate Dean and Director, Paul L. Boley Law Library, Lewis & Clark Law School:

Lewis & Clark Law School's Boley Law Library looked at its social media offerings in 2019 and realized it didn't have an understanding of who was using what and why. So the social media team looked at the platforms we had, examined who was using those platforms nationally (Perrin 2019), and created a voice and content strategy for each platform (Forbes Agency Council 2019).

Instagram (Boley Law Library Instagram, n.d.) is our most used social media platform by our students, so our content focuses on student-centric ideas with a conversational tone. We often feature "day in the life" types of posts that feature the help the library can give to students through services, studying, and materials. The conversational tone, widespread use by students, and immediacy with which we handled national and local topics of interest helped establish the use of the account. Because of these practices we have seen our following triple in the past three years.

The other thing we specifically tried to achieve was an accurate reflection of our student population. Lewis & Clark is considered a progressive law school with many of our students entering the practice of law as environmental, animal, and public interest law attorneys. We try to reflect our general student population with our social media posts. This includes an ongoing series of #walkingpdx in which we feature BIPOC painted murals, found sayings, and protests throughout the Portland area. We find that the reflection of our student body allows us to be an authentic voice for our students and our followers.

To maintain this authenticity, we work hard to be a voice that our followers are interested in hearing. This means using Facebook in a different way than we use Instagram. Instead of a day in the life we focus on articles about the practice of law and legal research because we found that our Facebook users are typically alumni, potential students and families, and public patrons.

When it came to removing our Twitter platform from our library's homepage and moving to Mastodon, this decision was again a reflection of our users, community values, and maintaining the library's authentic voice. Boley Law Library was a very early adopter of Twitter, grabbing the @lawlib handle that matched our website URL and posting legal news and updates pretty much daily since 2009. As Twitter grew we gained followers and interaction, and found that though our students were never heavy users it was an effective means to reach our alums, provide a service to the greater community, and expand awareness of the legal research expertise of the school itself.

Over time, growth on Twitter peaked and began to rapidly decrease. Twitter more and more focused on interactions and virality, neither of which were areas we chose to emphasize. The tipping point was when Twitter was taken private by Elon Musk. Since then, the platform has reintroduced and even emphasized

what may be described as extremist accounts, allowing language and messaging that goes against what we stand for as a school and that is actively offensive to much of our community (Warzel 2023). The recently monetized "blue check" system further enables those accounts, decreases trust and authenticity, and lowers our visibility to interested followers (Sottek 2023).

There is a place for going where your users are, but between Twitter's changing ecosystem and our user base likewise abandoning that platform we decided to move to Mastodon relatively early (Truman 2022). In this way we could help offer a safer alternative to members of our community likewise alienated from Twitter, one that is not built on a privately-owned service subject to sudden changes (Masnick 2022). Thanks to the good folks providing the glammr.us server (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums, Memory Work and Records), we found a home on Mastodon that even included our favorite username: @lawlib@glammr.us.

Similar arguments could be made for leaving the Meta platforms, Facebook and Instagram. Facebook especially has provided many ethical (Marantz 2021), privacy (Brenner and Hoekstra 2022), and engagement-related reasons (Morris 2021) to leave. Instagram certainly raises similar issues. How to decide whether to join, remain, or to move on from a social media platform? It can be an easy decision when a platform neither fulfills any of our social media outreach goals, has limited uptake within our community, and does not reflect our shared values. Thus we are quite unlikely to be establishing accounts on Truth Social and the like anytime soon. Twitter was a more difficult decision, but as discussed presented us with multiple reasons to explore alternatives. Meta is a mix and for the moment we have chosen to remain on its platforms, as has much of our core constituency. As decentralized alternatives such as Friendica (Facebook), PixelFed (Instagram), and PeerTube (YouTube) (Jerska, n.d.) continue to develop and expand, we may consider moving to those or others.

For now, this new space on Mastodon well reflects our values, connects us to the greater library community, and allows us to invite along our own community of students, faculty, staff, and alums to a social media platform that enables us to maintain our authenticity and provide a valuable service for years to come.

Conclusion

The responses we received from contributors provide evidence that there is not a strong consensus among library professionals about whether libraries should maintain a presence on popular social media platforms. In some cases, librarians find the business practices and lack of accountability of popular platforms so unethical that maintaining an affiliation with them does not align with their professional and institutional values. Yet others feel very strongly that engaging on Twitter and Meta continues to be one of the best ways to reach their users and promote awareness of their services and events; and some believe that libraries should continue to use popular platforms, no matter their practices, due to their interpretation of the first amendment.

If you are interested in learning more about social media ethics and alternative platforms, we encourage you to read the resources cited by our contributors. In the spirit of healthy dialogue and debate, we encourage readers to join the conversation by sharing your comments on this topic, on the platform of your choice, with the hashtag #jloeidealab where possible.

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