



# Journal of Library Outreach & Engagement

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## Journal of Library Outreach & Engagement

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## FROM THE EDITORS

**Sarah Christensen,  
Matthew Roberts,  
and Mara Thacker**

*University of Illinois  
Urbana-Champaign*

# New Beginnings: the Inaugural Issue

It is Tuesday, April 2 2019. On this day, like many days, the three of us sat down to answer and craft emails. But on this day, we wrote to each other, responding to a simple question that we began to ponder: “What if we created a peer review journal of academic librarian engagement?”.

According to the English language proverb, “necessity is the mother of invention.” Like many librarians, we commit ourselves to serving members of our community, and library outreach and engagement continues to represent an increasingly significant part of the work that librarians and libraries do on a daily basis. However, as a result of our research and own anecdotal experience, we discovered that librarians often lack a more public, scholarly venue to discuss the multifaceted nature of these efforts. And thus, we came up with the idea for the *Journal of Library Outreach and Engagement* (JLOE).

Of course, coming up with an idea is the easy part. Bringing that idea to fruition is another matter altogether. It turns out that starting a journal is hard work. We realized that we needed advice and we needed funding. We are grateful to the many generous colleagues and journal editors that spoke with us to give us their best advice for founding and maintaining a peer-reviewed, open-access journal. We thank our University of Illinois colleagues Lisa Hinchliffe, Merinda Hensley, Dan Tracy, Sara Benson, Steve Witt, and Billy Tringali (now at Emory University) for their thoughtful help. We would also like to thank Matthew Reidsma and Kyle Felker from *Weave: Journal of Library User Experience*, and Ian Beilin and Ryan Randall from *In the Library With a Lead Pipe* for sharing their experiences and advice with us. We are especially grateful towards our editorial advisory board, which has provided essential guidance. Finally, we would like to give thanks to the University of Illinois Library, which provided us with the initial seed funding to design and produce the journal’s first issues.

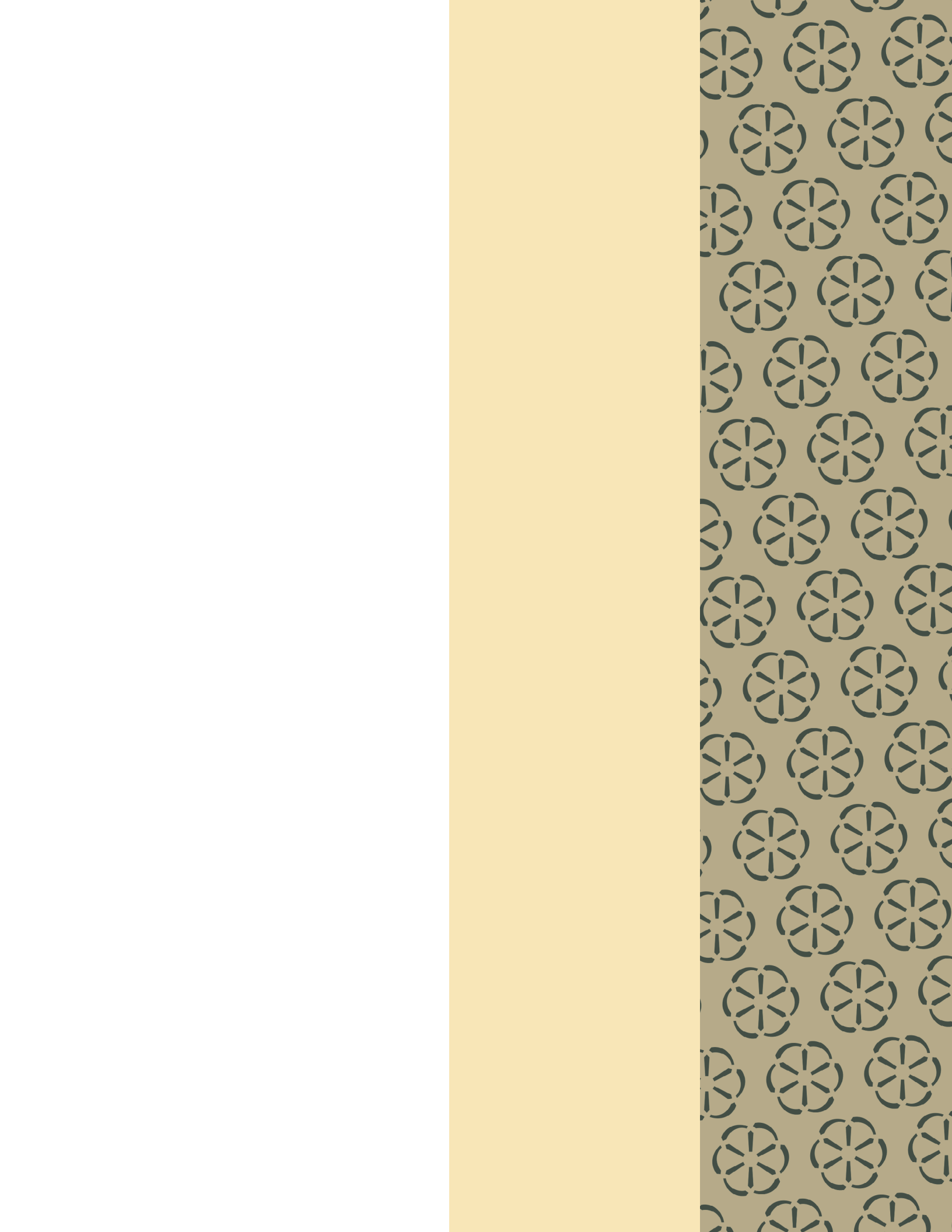
Eighteen months and hundreds of emails later we are so proud to publish our inaugural issue. In reflecting on our journey over these many months, we learned important lessons and raised questions that will impact the future of this journal, such as matters relating to the diversity style guide, divisions of labor, public library representation, pandemic disruptions, and the need for mentorship.

The submissions we received represent an excellent cross section of outreach and engagement scholarship and discussion. We hope that the journal inspires librarians from across the globe to share their work, to develop research methodologies that represent the unique nature of library outreach and engagement activities, and to create new knowledge that underscores how library outreach and engagement enhances societal good and challenges oppressive conditions. To foster discussion further, we plan to host a panel discussion event where JLOE authors will share their research and answer questions from the audience. And in the months to come, we look forward to implementing a mentorship program, which will assist early career librarians as they prepare their research for publication.

We are so proud of all the work that has gone into this issue, and hope you find inspiration from the shared knowledge within its pages.

Warmly,  
Mara Thacker  
Matthew Roberts  
Sarah Christensen







## EDITORIAL

**Renee Kiner &  
Kelly Safin**

*Millstein Library,  
University of Pittsburgh  
at Greensburg*

# Campus Engagement: Faculty Recognition and the Library's Role

## *Lessons Learned*

**A**s faculty librarians on a regional, undergraduate campus of a research university, with enrollment at around 1,400 students, we frequently attend faculty senate and other committee meetings. We have found that these meetings are a valuable way to connect with colleagues and their work. On several occasions, we heard them comment that they would appreciate wider recognition of their efforts inside and outside of the classroom. With these comments in mind, conversations started within the library about recognizing one aspect of this work—faculty scholarship—in some way.

The value of faculty recognition has been explored by researchers. In interviews and focus groups, Benito and Scott-Milligan (2018) found that achievements faculty consider important but under-celebrated included publication of a paper, conference presentations, external awards, participation in or organization of an event, and participation in or organization of a community activity. More formal recognition could enhance the motivation and engagement of faculty (Benito and Scott-Milligan 2018). Additionally, among full- and part-time faculty, recognition within their division or institution can “foster a stronger sense of respect among faculty of all appointment types.” (Eagan 2015, 475)

Realizing the need and importance of recognizing the scholarship and other work of faculty, we brainstormed ideas about organizing an event showcasing faculty scholarship and service. With publications being a focus, the library was a logical location. Another reason to host this event was its potential as an outreach opportunity. Several long-time library employees had left in recent years, a few within months of each other. The campus had experienced its share of personnel changes as well. This recognition event would boost outreach to faculty who might be new or unfamiliar with the services and liaison work of librarians.

We also consider this type of outreach an important way to help faculty recognize the value of librarians as partners in their work with students. Kelly (2019) explored the topic of faculty perceptions of librarian value, noting “faculty who felt positively about librarians in the first place, encouraged their students to work more frequently with librarians than faculty who held a less positive initial view of librarians” (232). Thus, this opportunity to host faculty in a positive setting would potentially raise awareness of library services, prompting faculty to recommend librarian consultations to their students.

### **Bringing the Idea to Fruition**

Once we decided to begin planning a faculty recognition event, we realized that partnering with Academic Affairs would be beneficial, given this office's

“Mapping out a plan early on, with time built in to address delays or surprises, is key to coordinating a successful event.”

central role in faculty activity. We met with the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) a few times to discuss logistics such as the type of work highlighted, the means of sharing this work with the library, and the event date.

The VPAA advised us to focus on three areas that she considered representative of faculty's efforts: Publications, Presentations, and Community Service. The librarians added Grants, Stipends, and Awards as another area to highlight. The chairs of the campus's three academic divisions, comparable to other institutions' department heads, were the recommended sources for accomplishment information. The three chairs collected information from faculty for their annual reviews, which included publications and other achievements. The VPAA and librarians agreed that soliciting this information from the chairs would be most efficient.

Several factors influenced the decision to choose late September as the event time. This is typically a busy month on any college campus, but October and November have their own challenges with midterms, student activities, and the Thanksgiving holiday. Spring semester was ruled out almost immediately; we didn't want our event to compete with spring break or interfere with seniors' final project presentations, and in our area, spring brings with it the potential for inclement weather hampering commutes.

Once these details were settled, the bulk of planning fell to the librarians. Our focus moved to displaying the faculty achievements in the library. Displaying books and articles is straightforward, but how could presentations, service, grants, and awards be showcased? This was at the forefront of the event creation process.

Starting an annual event can be overwhelming, with small details popping up and, occasionally, morphing into bigger details, as we will show below. Mapping out a plan early on, with time built in to address delays or surprises, is key to coordinating a successful event. As this plan came together, it was clear that effectively collecting, compiling, and displaying each faculty accomplishment was essential. Addressing the most pressing need—collecting the information—we reached out to division chairs around the time that faculty were required to submit their reviews. We explained that we had the support of the VPAA in making our request. We provided a deadline that gave us ample time to put together the display without too much interference with our daily responsibilities.

In theory, receiving the information from division chairs would be the most efficient method for everyone involved. However, only two of the three division chairs submitted their faculty achievements. The third instead asked faculty in that division to submit information directly to the library. This was a snag we were not expecting, as it was unlikely faculty traveling for recreation or research during the summer would be online to respond.

Once the information from the two division chairs was received, reviewed, and grouped into categories, we formulated our display plans. Book publications would be displayed on a table along with articles, which we printed and organized in folders for each faculty member. For Community Service, Presentations, and Grants, Stipends, and Awards, information was printed alphabetically by last name on large posters—convenient because our library owns a poster printer. The posters were then framed and displayed on easels. This process sounds straightforward, but we did not anticipate how time-consuming it would be to format everything for consistency. Would we use professional titles? Would items be organized by faculty last name, division, or both? Adding to this was the occasional submission from faculty on their own behalf, incomplete citations requiring extra searching to locate, and a few instances where requests for journal articles from other libraries took longer

than expected to be filled. We also set aside anything not yet published to be displayed the following year. During these preparations, we realized the amount of material might interfere with foot traffic to our busiest computer area, so we changed the layout for the materials and refreshments to better accommodate our patrons.

As an outreach tool, this event had staying power because we chose to continue displaying this material afterward. We placed the posters, books, and publications in the display case near the library entrance. Students, staff, and faculty entering or exiting the library could view what faculty had worked on the previous year.

What happened to the information from the third division? Only a few people responded, so this group was not well-represented at the event. A few faculty members who attended the event noticed this gap in representation. Many colleagues were aware that division chairs had been asked to provide the information, but those who were not were politely informed that the omission was not intentional on the librarians' part. Our second event had information from all three divisions, which also made the display a lot larger.

## Positive Outcomes

*Faculty impressions.* Faculty seemed genuinely happy that the library hosted this informal networking event. They were able to view their colleagues' work while answering questions about their own achievements. Additionally, we overheard and took part in conversations about future projects and collaborations. Our goal was to draw in at least five faculty members, and about twelve attended. For these reasons, we considered our first event a success. At the second event one year later, attendance increased to about thirty faculty members.

*Student impressions.* The library was open during this event, and students were able to view the posters, browse publications, and talk with their instructors. Students also stopped and looked at the displays of faculty work after the event. Researchers have studied students' perceptions of faculty research and how it affects views of faculty overall. Based on responses of university students in the UK, Healey, Jordan, Pell, and Short (2010) found "the most positive facet of being taught by research-active staff was considered to be their enhanced enthusiasm and motivational abilities. [Students] tended to associate staff involvement in research with up-to-date knowledge. . . ." (242). Students attending the event or looking at the materials displayed afterward had the opportunity to see how their professors contributed to their fields and continued to learn through their research.

Faculty achievement is not limited to publications and presentations, however. Student knowledge of faculty involvement in the community can also influence their view of instructors. This is one reason why the categories of Service and Grants, Stipends, and Awards are part of this event. O'Brien and Pizmony-Levy (2016) found that some students viewed faculty participation in community groups as evidence of a personal commitment and understanding of social issues. Faculty "credibility is boosted by their combined academic expertise and personal commitment to social action" (262).

## Discussion

*Increase in faculty attendance.* The increase in faculty attendance between the first and second events could be attributed to two factors: a new campus president and advertising—especially word-of-mouth promotion. The second event was held during the new campus president's first fall semester. He was very interested in the event, agreeing to provide brief remarks. This was noted

on the invitation, and a few attendees commented that the opportunity to greet him was one reason they stopped in. The president also suggested a more attention-getting name for the event, so it became the Celebration of Faculty Scholarship and Service.

The librarians also increased their marketing efforts leading up to the second event. Both years, the library director emailed faculty a postcard invitation. Prior to the second event, we also intentionally mentioned the event in conversations with faculty as much as possible. Each librarian also encouraged faculty in their liaison areas to attend with an emailed reminder. Word of mouth from those who attended the first year also helped with attendance, along with the additional promotion around campus.

*Outreach and engagement.* Drawing more faculty members into the library is beneficial, but we tried to foster even more engagement during the event and beyond. During both events, we had informal conversations with faculty about instruction, research consultations, course reserves, and library materials. While discussing their work and classes, we were able to show how the library could help them. Some attendees also chimed in to share their positive experiences requesting materials via ILL for their research.

## **Recommendations**

*Start small.* Set manageable expectations and be prepared to learn from missteps. We did not expect a huge turnout during our first year; our main goal was to learn how to put the event together and what it would entail. We were fortunate to have that opportunity. We also learned that greater buy-in from division chairs might be achieved by meeting with them directly. To that end, we attended a meeting of the VPAA and the division chairs before the second event, so that everyone heard the same message about their role in making the effort a success.

*Get involvement from other areas on campus.* When trying something new, partnering with another department or group can help with logistics and outreach. The input of the VPAA helped us better understand the process by which faculty shared their achievements with their division chairs. Additionally, the President's participation in the second event generated interest. We also had the support of our library staff colleagues, who helped with poster printing and other setup details. Finally, Academic Affairs also shared refreshment costs.

*Provide refreshments.* If the event is in person, consider offering refreshments. We had light lunch offerings, such as vegetable trays, finger sandwiches, and desserts. We held the event over the lunch hour, so offering food was incentive to attend.

*Choose an appealing location.* Our library is a welcoming space, with natural light and views of the campus. However, because of the open design of the building, events are not typically held there during operating hours. Because this event was relatively passive, with minimal noise beyond quiet chatter, it worked well at that point in the semester. An event with lots of speeches and applause, or held around midterms or finals, might have been considered a disruption.

*Collect and review feedback.* Evaluating the success of an event can be as simple as asking participants to informally share their opinions, or creating a survey for them to complete anonymously. After the first event, a survey sent to faculty found that many wanted to attend but could not due to illness or other obligations. With that in mind, we did increase promotion to try to get the event on calendars earlier. We did not conduct a survey for the second event, but the campus administration offered specific feedback immediately afterward: they

requested that each division chair give formal remarks about their colleagues' work, in addition to the President's welcome. We will be incorporating this brief programmatic aspect into future events.

## Conclusion

We believe these events were successful in accomplishing our original goals: faculty outreach and recognition of their work. The faculty that attended felt the campus recognized their past year's achievements, and viewed the library favorably for creating and hosting the event. Starting a low-stakes event like this one benefitted both faculty and librarians. At this relaxed networking opportunity, we were able to connect with faculty members less familiar with the library, including new faculty. We also continued building rapport with faculty who already referred students to us. After these events, we can anecdotally report that we've had more inquiries from instructors about library services, including instruction sessions and consultations.

Although COVID-19 restrictions will change the format of the third event, planning is underway to collect information from division chairs and compile posters and documents for some type of recognition during the fall 2020 semester. The format may be completely virtual, with bibliographies linked to faculty work available online. If the library is open with limitations, we may develop a companion web page that includes recorded remarks from the President and division chairs, along with a physical display of materials, instead of a gathering. In any case, we plan to use the groundwork in place to create another event and display of faculty scholarship and service.

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## EDITORIAL

Jessica  
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C. Lili Klar

*Clemson Libraries*

# Growing Collaborative Outreach Efforts to Support the Well-Being of Communities

## *De-Stressing on Campus*

Library outreach programs and activities that focus on de-stressing and well-being are prevalent in public, school, and academic libraries. Communities face many stresses and libraries try to meet their communities' needs by providing outreach activities that engage users with library resources and services. Students, such as on our campus, face many of the same stresses as the larger community, but with the additional strain of exams, standardized testing, and other end-of-course tests.

The professional literature offers resources on different types of de-stressing programming for libraries, yet it lacks discussion on how to establish partnerships or deepen existing relationships to support patrons in the area of de-stressing and well-being. Through our project we sought to engage students during their periods of heightened stress, to promote library and campus resources, and to strengthen our relationships with campus and community partners.

As a former public library employee and a school librarian, we wanted to create a collaborative, creative, and low-cost de-stressing program during the week of exams for students at our library. Our institution is a large, public land-grant, R1 university located in the southeast region of the United States. It currently serves approximately 20,000 undergraduate students

and 5,000 graduate students and has campuses located across the state (Clemson University 2019). The main campus has four libraries: the main library, an education media center, a special collections and archives unit, and an architecture library. In the fall of 2018, the university's library system was in a transition phase; it had a new

library administration and many new employees. There was no position that was truly dedicated to outreach to students, and nor was there an events or outreach committee. The library had not offered any de-stressing programming to students in many years.

Many public, school, and academic libraries offer programs and services to support the wellness of their communities. From fitness programs, therapy animals, and de-stressing activities, libraries support their communities in creative ways. The creation and maintenance of partnerships is integral to these outreach initiatives. Working with campus partners, we sought to do something similar for our campus community. We called on our knowledge of collaborative strategies that had we gained in our public- and school-library experiences to create a de-stressing program during exam week at the main library on campus. What started off in the fall of 2018 as a program composed of small-scale activities has developed into a week-long,

“ We wanted to create a collaborative, creative, and low-cost de-stressing program during the week of exams for students at our library. ”



multifaceted program—all through the strengthening of collaborative efforts between partners at our university. Although this article examines the collaborative programming experience at an academic library, the methods for strengthening collaborative efforts—as well as the next steps—can be applied in various library settings, especially those looking for low-cost options for de-stressing activities.

## **Cultures of School and Public Libraries**

Our initial collaborative efforts began between just the two of us as we came to realize, within a few months of meeting, that we had many experiences in common: we were both fairly new to academic libraries and had previously worked in other types of libraries; we were both facing similar challenges in our new positions, such as feeling siloed in our roles and overwhelmed with learning new systems and institutional knowledge; and, most significantly, we were both trying to create opportunities for student engagement with the library.

In the next sections, each of us will describe our experiences in our previous roles as they relate to the culture of collaboration and community engagement.

### ***Culture of the School Library***

In my experience, the culture of school librarianship is based on collaboration. As a school librarian, I was taught how to collaborate with classroom teachers, students, and other school community stakeholders to support the success of students. School librarians endeavor to make the school library the hub of the school, where young people feel welcome and safe, and where they can get excited about reading, working with others, and using critical thinking skills. As is the case for many school-library programs, I encountered a lack of funds to support activities and materials, so I used creative problem-solving and sought DIY projects that I often found online. Asking for donations or help from families/parents and other community partners was part of my experience in order to offset the cost of needed materials or to help when we were understaffed. I was fortunate to have the support and encouragement from my administration to try new strategies and approaches to learning; this was invaluable to our culture of learning as educators. Essential to this was using reflection to refine our work. As educators, reflection is an important tool we used to think on what went well or what needs to be improved in a learning opportunity so that the needs of students are met.

From my professional experience, I came to value creative problem-solving, collaborative efforts to support student success, and a willingness to try new learning strategies and activities to support students. All of these values I brought with me to my academic-library position. Although the culture of the academic library is quite different, I strive to apply my values and skills to my position, which include making the library a welcoming place, supporting student success, and collaborating with others.

### ***Culture of the Public Library***

The culture in the public library where I worked—a small branch of a library system in a rural community—was a friendly and supportive one. The staff inherently understood that we needed to work collaboratively in order to better serve our patrons. For many of our patrons, it was the only place they could go to check their email, read the newspaper, or borrow DVDs. Many of them came to the library every day, so we were able to build rapport with the patrons and, in turn, create programs that appealed to them. Although the county and library

administrators were supportive of our efforts to engage with the community, there was not a large budget for outreach activities. Staff had to be creative with the programs that we offered, and we often adapted ideas for activities using materials we already had on hand.

This experience taught me that making personal connections with library users is crucial to building a sense of community and to providing the best experience for our patrons. I wanted to achieve that in my new role at the academic library. Although building rapport with students has not been as easy, I have sought out opportunities to work with colleagues who also want to develop a supportive community and engage with students to create a positive library experience.

### ***Blending Cultures***

As we shared our experiences in our previous roles and the challenges we were facing in our academic-library roles, we realized that collaboration and relationship-building were endeavors we both valued and missed from our previous work. We also realized we each brought varied strengths to our positions that would help meet a need in our academic library—student engagement and outreach. We saw this need as a priority, and we could work together to meet it.

### **Building our Collaborative De-Stressing Program**

With just two weeks to go before exam week in the fall of 2018, we learned that no de-stressing activities were planned within our library and that it had been years since anything like this had been implemented. We felt this type of programming could be helpful for students as well as an opportunity for the library to try something new. We also thought it would help us to better understand the needs of our students and to build a sense of community.

We began by establishing goals for the program—including a learning outcome—and aligning them with the strategic plan of the university and the library. We then discussed activities we had implemented at our previous libraries to engage our communities; they had involved different types of games and crafts, as well as food to draw patrons to the events. We also searched online for new ideas, and we ultimately put together a set of activities and giveaways throughout the week that cost a total of \$70, as we already had some of the required items. We distributed scented bookmarks and candy with motivational quotes attached, set up a white board for students to post their frustrations, and hosted a station to make DIY stress balls.

From our previous library experiences, we knew we had to be proactive in reaching out to students and showing our enthusiasm for the activities. We delivered the de-stressing program from two tables in our main library's lobby for two hours each weekday. We tracked the number of students who stopped by our table each day and noted any comments that would help us plan future programs. We did not know how students would respond to the program; our only expectation was that we would engage with students as best we could, as we had both seen activities/events that were poorly attended at our previous libraries. By the end of the week, we reached over 900 students and received a lot of positive feedback. Students were appreciative of the activities and some of the comments we received included "This is pretty nice, not going to lie," "Why weren't you here last semester?" "This is exactly what I needed," and "I love my campus. I wish a tour was going through to see this."

Buoyed by the initial success of the programming, we sought to make improvements for the coming semesters, especially since we had more time to plan. With support from our supervisors, we planned to have a recurring event

during exam week. Part of a successful library program or event is to continue to tailor it to meet the needs of the community, yet two constraints held us back: lack of funds to provide more substantial activities and lack of the expertise in helping students cope with exam-related stress. To address these limitations, we considered whether we could partner with other campus entities to bring both resources and expertise to our program. We were used to collaborating with parents, volunteers, and community members to help with library events and programs at our former libraries, so we brainstormed what groups on campus had similar outreach goals to ours.

We met with staff from the counseling center and the student success center and shared our goals, learning outcomes, and ideas for the de-stressing program. We discussed how our organizations could help one another to meet our mutual goal of serving students. The counseling center explained that they had had limited success at their previous exam-week activities due to poor attendance; they wanted to empower students by teaching them how to de-stress. The student support center wanted to raise awareness of their services in a more proactive way, as many students knew of their resources only when they needed help. The main library is usually packed with students during exam week, so the library could help our partners meet their needs of reaching students, while they could help us with our lack of resources and expertise. Over the course of a few meetings and emails, we brainstormed ideas and coordinated a week-long program featuring a quick DIY activity that would take 1–2 minutes for students to complete, along with a longer stress-relief activity, including yoga, progressive muscle relaxation, and deep breathing exercises facilitated by a counselor from the counseling center.

To market the program campus-wide, we jointly created promotional materials; we wanted to convey the message that the co-sponsors of the de-stressing program were all on-campus offices with resources students could access anytime. At our former libraries, we were used to making our own in-house flyers, promoting events on our libraries' social media channels, and creating book displays to connect the collection to these events. We called on this experience to promote the de-stressing program on campus, and we relied on our newly-formed collaborative partnerships to bolster the advertising and marketing.

Each of our campus partners has their own social media channels, so we created content for each to post, in addition to paper flyers that we could each distribute through our offices. While the program was running, the library promoted its activities through Instagram Stories and Twitter posts. We also created a book display to highlight materials about managing stress and promoting wellbeing, such as yoga books and DVDs, and meditation books. Flyers were distributed throughout the library and at the services desk.

Our marketing and communication strategies evolved over time as we gained experience, and we looked for more ways to get the word out to students. We reached out to a contact in the housing and dining office and were able to get our activities promoted on the electronic displays in lounges of the dorms for the duration of the event. We also reached out to our student affairs office and had them promote the event on their social media channels. Finally, we coordinated with the library's marketing and communications team to have our event included on the library events calendar on the library's website.

With our second iteration of this programming, we quickly discovered what was popular with the students and what didn't resonate. We had many students

“Comments we received included “This is exactly what I needed,” and “I love my campus. I wish a tour was going through to see this.” .”

participate in the quick DIY activities, but had low attendance for the longer activities. Regardless of the turnout, we all considered it a success. With these new partnerships, we felt confident that we could have a greater impact in helping students learn how to care for their wellbeing during stressful times.

We have continued to revise our programming based on student feedback. Through conversations with students and posing questions on dry-erase boards placed in strategic locations around the library we have elicited from students what they would like to see at library events. Over the past three semesters we have added activities such as yoga, puzzles, board games, and coloring sheets to see what was popular with students. We have also brainstormed other possible avenues of partnership.

We were both accustomed to tracking attendance levels at programs and events at our previous libraries, but we wanted to do more than just count people at the de-stressing activities. We wanted to find a quicker and simpler way to evaluate the impact of the activities on students, so we partnered with our web developer to build a smiley-face assessment tool, like those that can be found in airports. The web developer was able to create a similar application and we placed an iPad loaded with the tool on a stand near the library exit for students to quickly provide their feedback.

Establishing Partnerships

From our experiences at public and school libraries, we viewed librarianship through the lens of collaboration. Although our academic library was not as highly collaborative as our previous workplaces, particularly around outreach initiatives, we knew that working together would strengthen our outreach efforts. Our library did not have an outreach librarian or committee, so we brainstormed ideas to extend our outreach efforts. Table 1 presents some of the brainstorming questions we used to guide us in our work to establish partnerships. Deepening Collaborative Efforts

Brainstorming Questions
1. Who in our library has outreach responsibilities similar to our own? 2. Who works with outward-facing events or activities for library or organization visitors? 3. Who in our community (on or off campus) may have similar goals similar to ours in working with students and visitors? 4. Which organizations has the library collaborated with in the past? 5. Who may have outreach programs or initiatives within their organization?

Table 1. Brainstorming questions for establishing partnerships

Saunders and Corning (2020) discuss the spectrum of collaboration, noting that collaboration can range from cooperation to more fully integrated collaboration. Cooperation can include the sharing of space and resources, whereas more integrated collaboration includes capacity-building efforts where partnering organizations “provide programs that are clearly intertwined and share resources and funding.” (Saunders and Corning 2020, 1-2)

Our collaborative journey has centered on growth—building capacity so we can continue to meet the needs of our students. To facilitate communication with our partners we used collaborative planning documents, assessment data, and notes from our reflective sessions which were recorded and shared in Google Docs. We also implemented a debrief protocol after each week of

programming. Table 2 outlines the reflective questions we used in our debrief sessions. For our planning efforts, we used a perpetual Google Doc file so we could refer back to milestones on our collaborative journey. We focused on growth and how we could make continuous improvements to our activities, marketing strategies, assessment strategies and reflective data and feedback.

Debrief Questions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What went well with the activities/program?</li> <li>2. What do we need to change for next time? What areas need to be improved?</li> <li>3. Based on our assessment data, what activities do we need to revise?</li> <li>4. Are there any other partners that we could collaborate with to strengthen support for students?</li> </ol>

Table 2. Debrief questions for outreach activities

Although we chose to use Google Docs, any collaborative editing software can work. Table 3 provides some other suggestions for free, collaborative workflow tools. Issues and Challenges

With the many benefits of collaboration come many challenges. Lack of funding, staff, and time are ever-present constraints, and competition/ownership of ideas often test collaborative efforts (Saunders and Corning 2020). We had support from library administration for our de-stressing activities, yet

Collaborative Resource	Access Details
Google Drive Google Documents (Google Docs) Google Slides Google Sheets	One person needs a Google account to create a Google Document, but partners do not need a Google account to view or edit the Google Document, just an email address.
Trello	Can get a free account for basic level. You can invite partners to project management details by inviting them by sending an invitation to their email.
freedcamp	Free online collaboration tool to help you stay organized with task lists, project boards and more.

Table 3. List of collaborative tools/resources for outreach

some of our colleagues questioned the role of the library in providing such activities for students. One librarian questioned our expertise in dispensing stress-management advice. We took this opportunity to clarify we were not offering advice but were promoting activities and resources for students to engage with and, hopefully, relax.

Before collaborating with our partners, we had very limited resources and lacked the time and staffing to provide activities to the students. These challenges were overcome by finding partners who had similar goals; we came together to improve our services, share our resources, and work efficiently together.

## Future Directions and the Online Environment

We had planned additional activities and stronger collaborative partnerships for exam week of spring 2020. These included hosting a visit from a local therapy dog organization, local massage therapists, and working with new partners to distribute food during late afternoon and evening hours. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has disrupted these plans as students and employees were sent home to finish the semester online. Working at home has forced us to think about program delivery in new ways. We found ourselves wondering how we could expand de-stressing activities to the virtual environment. We revisited our original brainstorming questions, such as what organizations are providing online services that could help with stress relief during this taxing time? Since we couldn't rely on "library as place" to promote our program, how could we reach students?

With limited time, and with our current partners unable to collaborate due to having to adapt to modified campus operations, we formed a new connection with the housing office on campus. We explored options for hosting a virtual movie night and partnered with the housing office to host a movie watch-party and discussion. Although we had only five participants for the movie night, we were able to establish a new partnership with a campus group we may not have interacted with otherwise. One of our future goals is to continue looking for new partners to support students, whether with online or in-person activities or programs.

## Conclusion

Establishing and developing partnerships can be highly beneficial to library outreach efforts, yet they can also be quite challenging. When the work environment does not have a long history of partnering with other groups, or when limited resources make it difficult to launch new initiatives, collaboration can seem daunting. We were fortunate that our prior experiences at a public and a school library motivated us to prioritize collaboration in order to support students, despite the challenges we faced in starting something new. Collaboration can start small and grow over time. Over three semesters, we have continued to learn and refine how to provide de-stressing outreach programs for students and how to collaborate with others. We continue to think about how to meet our students' needs in an online environment. In a time when so many in our communities are under considerable stress, libraries can work creatively and collaboratively to deliver de-stressing programming to their users.

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## EDITORIAL

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# The Capturing Science Contest: an Open-Ended Approach to Promoting STEM Communication

## *Celebrating Creative Energy*

“The contest provides a great opportunity for library staff to recognize and engage with students, and the judging process is a fun and challenging way for library staff to connect with each other.”

Since fall 2017, the University of Georgia (UGA) Science Library has hosted an annual [Capturing Science Contest](#). The contest invites students to explain STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) concepts to a broader audience using any format, media, or genre of their choice. The idea for the competition spun out of discussions among the Science Library Research and Instruction team over how to encourage STEM communication beyond the traditional writing contest. We often see students teaching each other in the library, using computers and whiteboards to share elaborate schematics, concept maps, vocabulary lists, and STEM-related illustrations. We asked ourselves how we could celebrate and tap into this creative energy in order to further students' development as STEM communicators.

We were also inspired by the innovative work we saw students creating in the Science Library Makerspace, such as UGA alum Tony Blasucci's [Spatium Mechanicus](#), a strategic board game that teaches microelectronics (Blasucci 2020).

After debating which types of competitions, such as photo contests or film festivals, might best solicit innovative STEM communication, we wondered if we should just drop all format requirements entirely. We agreed that an open-ended approach might inspire the widest range of student skills, knowledge, and creativity. While we would provide criteria to make our judging process transparent, we decided that our only requirement would be that submissions explain a STEM concept.

Now in its fourth year, the contest plays an important role in UGA Libraries' outreach efforts. Since 2017, we have received 161 submissions on a range of subjects and formats from both STEM and non-STEM majors. We received 71 in 2017, 36 in 2018, and 54 in 2019. According to Google Analytics, the contest home page has had over 6,000 page views over its life span. The popularity of the contest has helped us increase the combined award amount, which has grown from \$1,500 to \$3,000. Our success has also helped us secure additional financial support from the UGA Office of Research, which continues to cosponsor the contest every year. The contest provides a great opportunity for library staff to recognize and engage with students, and the judging process is a fun and challenging way for library staff to connect with each other.

This article provides an account of how we administer the Capturing Science Contest—from promoting the contest, to judging the entries, to announcing the winners. We also describe some upcoming changes to the contest that we are

implementing or considering. We hope that this account will help other libraries interested in experimenting with different contest formats, as well as those seeking ways to promote STEM communication and engagement.

## Contest Promotion

The [Capturing Science Contest](#) launches each September when we put out a call for submissions; we set a submission deadline in late November and we announce the winners in late January. We promote the contest through a variety of channels: press releases, departmental contacts via our liaison librarians, instruction sessions, posters, flyers, newspaper ads, campus radio, and social media. Anecdotally, many students report seeing the contest ad in Stall Street Journal flyers, which appear in library restrooms across campus. We also reach out directly to student groups, campus units, and faculty whose teaching or research interests intersect with STEM communication and education. A key factor for promotion is the award money, which we divide into undergraduate and graduate prize categories.

In our emails to departments, we try to appeal to their local context and interests. For example, we have used the subject line “How could a choral fugue explain meiosis?” in a promotional email to the School of Music. This tactic also provides a concrete example of how one might interpret the open-ended contest rules, which may seem nebulous to some students. We focus our promotional efforts on individual faculty whose research or instructional emphases overlap with the contest (e.g., science, math, and engineering education; science journalism; and scientific illustration). These individuals can then serve as informal faculty advocates, sharing details about the contest with their students and colleagues. Some faculty have even offered extra credit to students who submit entries, which suggests the contest aligns with course curricula. In the contest’s first year, a faculty member even required students to submit their final projects to the contest.

The Makerspace, housed in the Science Library, is a collaborative workspace that provides instruction on and access to technologies like 3D printers and virtual reality, which makes it an ideal platform for promoting the contest. Through their social media account and informal network of makers, the Makerspace has helped us recruit participants and, later, announce the winners. In fact, a number of students have used Makerspace tools to create their submissions. A recent winner, Madison Smith, used a MakerBot 3D printer at the Makerspace to prototype game pieces for her board game [SYNERGY: A Game of Heat, Work, and Strategy](#).

## Contest Judging

In our communications and on our website, we make explicit three criteria for judging submissions: clarity of expression, creativity, and appeal to a broad audience. We allow group submissions as well as work submitted for classes and other contests. As a condition for submission, we ask that physical entries be allowed to remain at the Science Library for six months for exhibition purposes.

A number of submitted formats have challenged our ability to store, display, and evaluate entries. We encourage students to communicate with us before the deadline to address any format issues or concerns. Some challenging formats have included a person-sized cardboard and foam hypodermic needle; a miniature green roof that required watering; clothing; a virtual-reality game that vexed our group’s collective ability to play on any mobile device; and a mock bovine gastrointestinal system that used diapers, plastic tubes, and Pepto-Bismol to simulate digestion. In some cases, we encourage

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*continued*

students to submit images or videos if a physical submission is not feasible. For instance, one student asked to submit digital images because his physical entry was, in his enigmatic words, “alive” and demanded “constant care and maintenance.” (It turned out to be an aquarium.) When participants seek advice on how to present or format their entries, we try to avoid making specific recommendations, as navigating these kinds of format decisions are

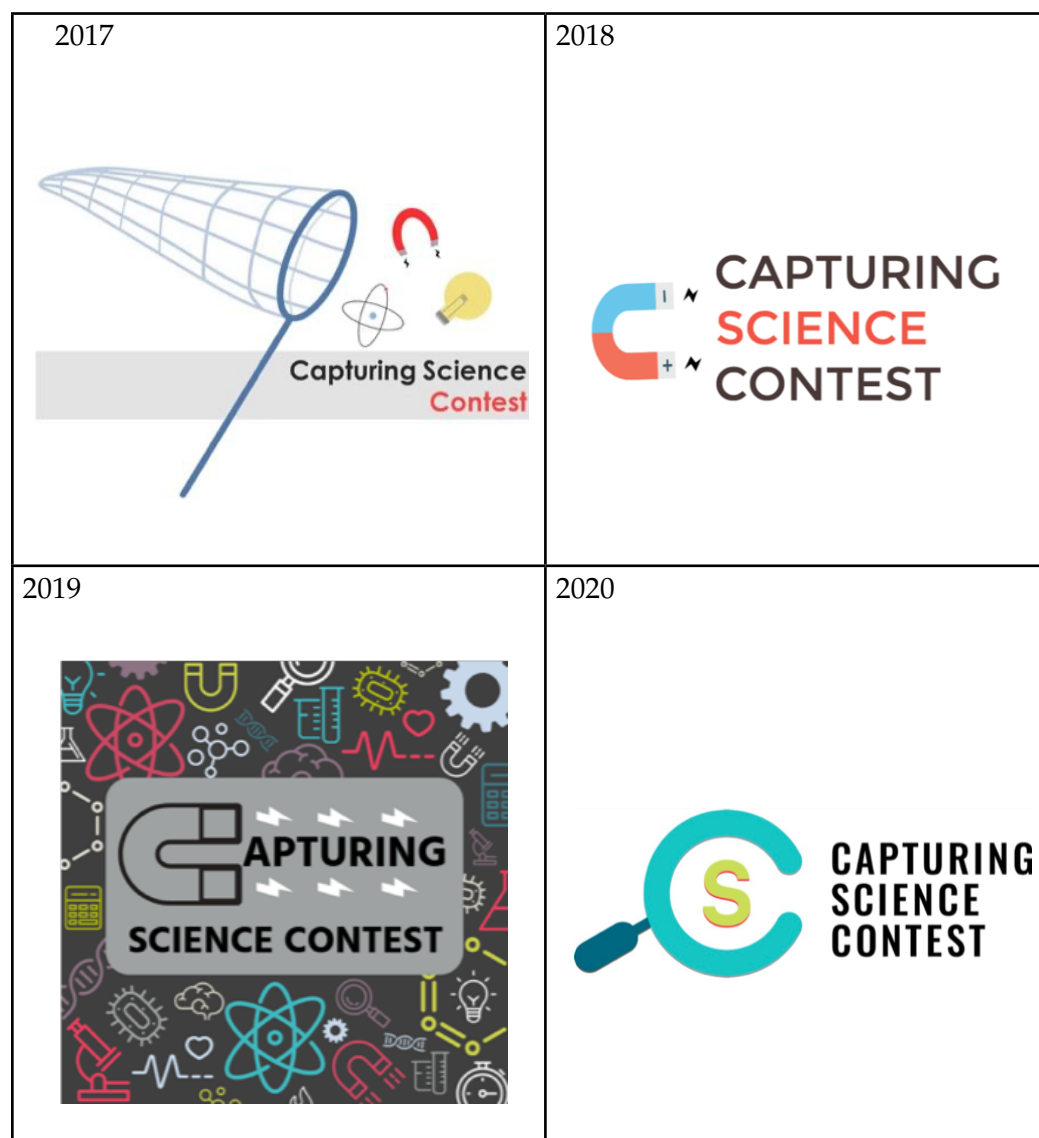


Figure 1: Contest logos, 2017–2020

an important feature of the contest. Bringing together judges from different libraries and disciplines has helped us to better recognize the relative strengths of diverse entries. Our judges have been a mix of library staff from the Science Library and, at various times, the Makerspace, Art Library, Main Library, Miller Learning Center, Curriculum Materials Library, and Special Collections Library. For our most recent contest, we invited our graduate writing consultant, who is based at the Science Library, to be a judge. Recruiting non-STEM library staff to participate also reinforces our contest’s multidisciplinary spirit. For instance, our art librarian’s experience with art critique has allowed us to analyze and evaluate entries’ aesthetic elements with greater appreciation and rigor. The contest has also provided judges a fun opportunity to connect with other library staff across UGA Libraries

We give judges about two weeks in early December to review submissions independently and at their own pace. During this stage, each judge completes an online form to score entries using a five-point scale for each of our three evaluation criteria. The form also allows judges to comment on each entry. We then tally these scores to create a short list of the top entries to review as a group. These tallied scores are not definitive; judges are encouraged to advocate for entries that merit consideration despite their lower cumulative score. For the next stage, we meet in person as a group for about four hours in mid-December to choose our winners.

The contest's open-ended approach presents a challenge for judges: How do we evaluate entries with such different formats? How can we compare a woven textile to an animated tutorial to an Instagram account? It helps to interpret the guideline "explain STEM concepts" broadly, allowing for a diverse range of communication methods. Our contest criteria also help us weigh the relative merits of each entry's rhetorical strategy.

A sample of winning entries gives a sense of these diverse approaches: Zachery Jarrell's [A SA-Ve on Efficiency: Surface Area to Volume Ratio Explained](#) and David DiGioia's [Can Any Knot Be Untied?](#) simplify complex topics with clever animated videos; Tong Li's [Quantum Teleportation and Magic](#) video and Megan Prescott's [Designing Science](#) Instagram account underscore the appeal of deceptively simple, well-executed ideas; Madison Smith's [SYNERGY: A Game of Heat, Work, and Strategy](#) and Ben Burgh's [N3TWORK](#) show how games can facilitate learning; Katharine Napora's [Tree Rings & Archaeology](#) demonstrates how STEM educators can modulate their approaches to different audiences; and Katlin Shae's [The Woven Quantum Image](#), Kathryn Koopman's [gamma rhythm](#), and Alison Bank's [Spheres of Heaven and Hell](#) all convey the mutual resonance between science and art.

In some cases, we have offered participants suggestions on how to improve their entries, which for many represent passionate hobbies, career ambitions, or research interests. In fact, some students specifically request feedback from judges. We advised one participant on equipment available at the UGA Libraries that she could use to improve her podcast's audio quality. We encouraged other participants to conduct user research to test their games, recommending potential user groups and venues for recruiting them. We consider these types of suggestions to be an extension of our core work as librarians: suggesting helpful information and resources to students. At times, we have connected participants to the Office of Research Innovation

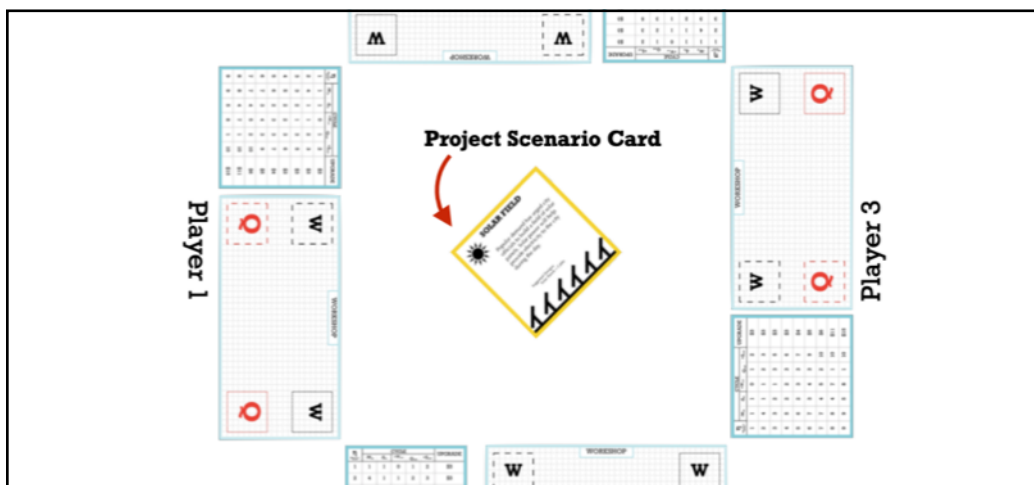


Figure 2: Game table setup for Madison Smith's winning 2019 entry SYNERGY: A Game of Heat, Work, and Strategy



**The Capturing  
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an Open-Ended  
Approach to  
Promoting STEM  
Communication,  
*continued***

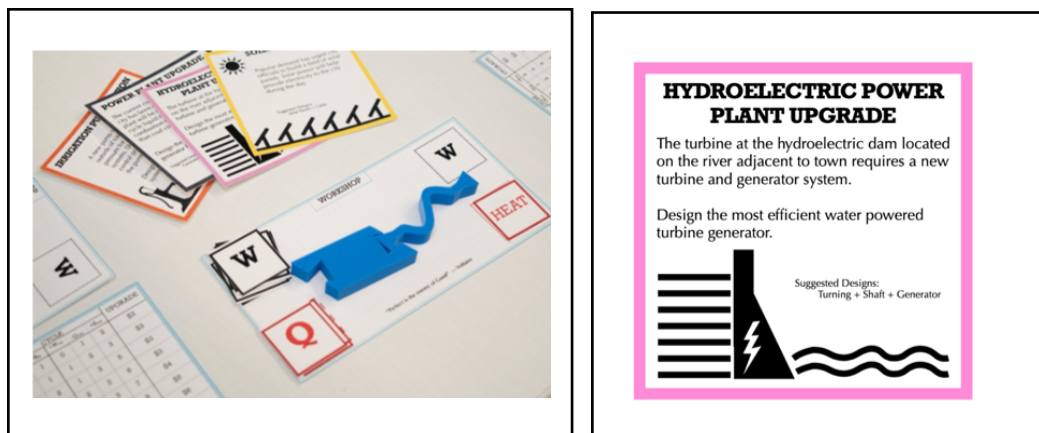


Figure 3: Game pieces and table setup for Madison Smith's winning 2019 entry SYNERGY: A Game of Heat, Work, and Strategy. Madison used a Makerbot 3D Printer in the UGA Science Library Makerspace to build and prototype some of her game pieces. (Bottom left photo by Amy Ware, University of Georgia.)



Figure 4: Material from Katharine Napora's winning 2019 entry Tree Rings and Archaeology. Katharine and her coauthor Kristine Schenk are also preparing a manuscript for publication on these outreach activities (Napora and Schenk 2020). (Photo by Amy Ware, University of Georgia.)

Gateway, which can support students looking to market their entries' intellectual property.

### Announcing Contest Results

In late January we announce our winners through email, social media, and the UGA Libraries' website. In these communications, we link to our contest site (a LibGuide), where we provide judges' commentaries for each winner, briefly summarize their entry, and explain why it won. In addition to inviting site visitors to explore entries more in-depth, these commentaries also help us articulate the spirit of the contest. These commentaries help shape how we

as judges conceptualize the contest and signal to future participants how they might interpret our guidelines. Here is an example:

In [March to Andersonville Prison: STEM Edition](#), Daniela Murcia poses questions around “fun facts” in which science and history not only connect but intertwine in compelling ways. Her game, intended for fourth- to eighth-grade audiences, shows how the Civil War can be understood through STEM topics like medicine, engineering, mathematics, and agriculture. For example, some of Daniela’s fun facts remind us that war is also a story about public health. Another theme in the game is how quantitative reasoning can be used to underscore important historical evidence around death, disease, and destruction. The game requires players to test, extend, and apply these fun facts in challenging ways, demonstrating Daniela’s belief that students are more “capable of learning complex concepts” than we give them credit for. We can easily imagine students immersed in a future iteration of this game, blithely unsure whether they’re in History or Science class.

In addition to the winning entries, we host all other submissions on Google Drive, which we link to on our contest site. In order to facilitate browsing, we organize all past and current entries by both subject and format.

We alert department contacts when their students have participated in—or won—the contest, or if any entry topics match their major subject areas. As a result, these departments will sometimes craft press releases to announce that their students have won contest awards (Flurry 2020; Kao 2019). These custom emails to departments take time to prepare, but they help to sustain interest in the contest.

Our cosponsor, the Office of Research, has been instrumental in communicating the contest to a wide audience. They have published social media posts, news and magazine articles, and press releases that either feature or mention the contest. For example, the Office of Research featured the tapestry Katlin Shae created for her winning 2017 entry in their quarterly UGA Research Magazine (Mann 2018). More recently, they supported the contest by conducting a photo shoot with participants for a news piece published by UGA Libraries’ Marketing and Public Relations Department (Williams 2020). Our collaboration with the Office of Research has also helped boost the profile of our contest and winners with other campus units, such as the UGA Division of Marketing and Communications, who produced a video and published news pieces about 2018 winner Tong Li (Freeland 2020).

For each contest cycle we provide programming to sustain interest in the contest throughout the year. We have curated displays on tables and in glass cases in the Science Library to exhibit the work of winners and participants. One year, we created an interactive exhibit that allowed users to view winning entries on a touch-screen display. In our contest’s first year, we hosted an event to honor the winners. During this small event, which was mostly attended by UGA Libraries staff, the winners gave brief presentations about their entries.

## Upcoming Changes

While we have grown and adapted our promotional efforts over time, the original guidelines and judging process have not changed. However, our judges agreed to the following changes for the next contest cycle:

- Rather than simply stating that group work is permitted, actively encourage “collaboration and multidisciplinary teams.”
- Replace explain with convey in the guideline “explain STEM concepts.” The word convey conjures up a more inclusive range of communication methods, while we think explain comes across as more limiting and uninspired.

- End the distinction between the undergraduate and graduate award categories, merging them into a single set of winners. When we initially created these categories, we anticipated that graduate students might have an advantage over undergraduates; however, the judges have not found this to be the case. We also found that some team projects included both undergraduate and graduate students, which posed a challenge to our award structure. The judges agreed that shifting to one category—with additional prize levels—could provide more flexibility in selecting winners.
- Provide additional funding for submissions that deal with certain themes, such as COVID-19 and Racial and Ethnic Justice in STEM. In this manner, we hope to encourage students to engage more directly with

Winning entry	Format(s)	Subject(s)	Participants' major(s)
<b>2019 Undergraduates</b>			
1st place: SYNERGY: A Game of Heat, Work, and Strategy	Game	Engineering	Engineering
2nd place: Flows into The River	Music and video	Ecology	Animal science
3rd place: Can Any Knot Be Untied? Intro to Knot Theory and Tricolorability	Video	Mathematics	Mathematics and computer science
Honorable mention: The Bachelorette	Video	Genetics	Biology and genetics
<b>2019 Graduate Students</b>			
1st place: Spheres of Heaven and Hell	Embroidery	Climate change	Geography
2nd place: Music of Life	Musical composition	Genetics	Bioinformatics and integrated life sciences
3rd place: Tree Rings and Archaeology	Learning activity	Archaeology and dendrochronology	Anthropology
<b>2018 Undergraduates</b>			
1st place: N3TWORK: An Analog Game of Digital Communication	Game	Computer science	Computer systems engineering
2nd place: The Urban Heat Effect & Climate Change	Video	Atmospheric science and climate change	Geography and history
3rd place (tie): Reabsorption: A Board Game for Life	Game	Biology	Biochemistry and molecular biology
3rd place (tie): All That Crawl: An Arthropod-cast	Podcast	Entomology	Journalism and ecology
Honorable mention: March to Andersonville Prison: STEM Edition	Game	History and general science	Cognitive science



2018 Graduate Students			
1st place: Quantum Teleportation and Magic	Video	Physics	Learning, design, and technology
2nd place: Where's My Creek?	Educational guide	Ecology	Forest resources
3rd place: gamma rhythm	Video art	Medicine	Music composition
2017 Undergraduates			
1st place: Earth Systems	Video	Environmental science	Entertainment and media studies
2nd place: Mitosis Melodrama	Short story	Biology	Pre-nursing
3rd place: To Earth, From Mr. Brontosaurus	Poetry and video	Climate change	Ecology and English
Honorable mention: Tree of Life	Music	Biology	Musical composition and musical business
2017 Graduate Students			
1st place: Designing Science	Fashion and social media	Microbiology	Microbiology
2nd place: The Woven Quantum Image	Weavings	Physics	Sculpture
3rd place: A SA-Ve on Efficiency: Surface Area to Volume Ratio Explained	Video	Biology	Poultry science

Table 1: Different formats, subjects, and participants' majors represented among our winning entries. Nine out of our twenty-two winning entries were submitted by students majoring in traditionally non-STEM fields, including sculpture, history, and music composition.

societal challenges and crises while still maintaining our contest's open-ended approach.

- Due to safety concerns and campus-access issues presented by COVID-19, we decided to accept only online submissions for the upcoming contest.

We are considering several other steps to improve how we administer the contest:

- Recruit testers to play and help evaluate board game entries, which may involve complex rules and conventions unfamiliar to judges. These testers could be members of gaming-related courses or student groups.
- Assess content promotion and engagement. We could survey participants to ask how they learned about our contest, which may help us identify successful promotion methods. While Google Analytics provides page views for our contest site, we do not currently measure user engagement with the 161 entries hosted on Google Drive.
- Advocate for hiring a student worker—perhaps as part of an experiential-learning internship—to support contest administration and promotion. As the contest evolves from an experimental “labor of love” into a regular piece of UGA Libraries’ outreach, we should reflect on which features

are core to the contest and which are peripheral, and how to sustain and divide this workload.

- Explore working with the Office of STEM, which conducts its own Art of STEM competition (Office of STEM Education, n.d.). We have already discussed ways to build on the synergies between our mutual contests and goals through co-promotion. They could also help in assisting Capturing Science Contest participants who want to display, demonstrate, and conduct user testing on their entry ideas on campus.

## Conclusion

Why might libraries host a competition like the Capturing Science Contest? While the contest does not require the use of library research materials, it does leverage our role as a multidisciplinary campus hub where students engage with a variety of subjects, tools, and activities. For UGA Libraries in particular, the contest has aligned with our strategic goal of being a “teaching library” where students not only consume but also synthesize, create, and share new knowledge (University of Georgia Libraries 2014, 11). Furthermore, it highlights the Science Library’s potential to serve as a platform for STEM engagement and communication. On this last point, the contest aligns well with recent efforts by the Science Library and the Makerspace to host experiential- and peer-learning internships that involve the creation of STEM curriculum, exhibits, and workshops. We look forward to seeing how the contest continues to evolve and provide opportunities for both STEM and non-STEM students. In the words of one recent participant who learned new embroidery skills in order to create her winning entry: “This seems like my way to communicate—to create something. That was cool to discover about myself” (Williams 2020, para. 14).

## Acknowledgments

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## EDITORIAL

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# Creating an Outreach Plan that Accounts for the Seen and Unforeseen

## *Efficient and Effective Outreach*

“There is no set standard for defining or planning outreach.”

Over the last ten years, there has been a growing emphasis in the academic library literature on the role outreach plays in engaging users formally and informally throughout their collegiate experience. Many examples focus on initiatives that target specific groups of students: first-year students, transfer students, graduate students, and so forth. While there is wide agreement that outreach is a necessary component in an academic library's operations, there is a gap in the literature regarding how to create outreach programs that are efficient and effective and can account for unexpected additions to the outreach program. This article explores how outreach plans can create customized guidance for an academic library—first through a brief literature review and then through a case study about the process of creating and implementing an outreach plan at a subject-specific academic branch library.

### Literature Review

To create an outreach plan for my branch library, I started by scanning the literature to identify trends in how academic libraries initiate their process for designing outreach programs. In reviewing the literature, it became clear that there is no set standard for defining or planning outreach.

The question of how the profession defines outreach is long standing, with scholars debating whether it is even necessary to create an overarching definition. While one popular opinion simply states that academic librarians are likely to know outreach when they see it (Courtney 2008, 4), it is important to note that the purview of outreach is likely to be different among libraries based on the mission of the institution that the library serves (4). Meanwhile, in the larger Library and Information Sciences field, there is a struggle to identify the key concepts that affect scholars' and practitioners' work. Fleming-May (2014) notes that defining key concepts such as outreach can “illuminate the theoretical foundations of a larger field of study” (204). While definitions of outreach may vary between academic libraries, there are commonalities in what constitutes outreach.

As part of my work to design an outreach plan, I crafted my own working definition that was shaped by Stephanie Diaz's conceptual analysis of outreach in academic librarianship. Diaz's definition is broad and applicable to a variety of academic library landscapes. It takes into account the library roles responsible for outreach, the outreach location, the program cadence (whether the outreach is a one-time event or part of a larger program), and the outreach goals (Diaz 2019, 191). (See Appendix for working definition.)

As noted, my review of the literature revealed wide variance in how academic libraries go about planning outreach programs. One survey

conducted by the Association of Research Libraries notes that only 37 percent of libraries plan their outreach annually, with 38 percent of participants choosing combination tactics (LeMire, Graves, Farrell, and Mastel 2018). One recurring write-in response noted that academic libraries try to plan outreach annually while also accounting for unpredicted events (LeMire, Graves, Farrell, and Mastel 2018). Likewise, fostering a culture that is open to trying new tactics to reach library users is important. Owens and Bishop (2018) note that “A library that has a culture of yes understands that outreach creates positive associations with the library and encourages students to see the library as a partner in their success” (81). To embrace a culture of library outreach that is open to new ideas, academic libraries need to walk a fine line between preparedness and flexibility.

Sustaining an outreach program that is innovative and responsive requires formal plans. Many case studies of academic library outreach efforts focus on specific events or programs, but fail to explore how they contribute to a larger program. A resource that contributed significantly to my outreach plan was Wainwright and Mitola’s (2019) paper, which focuses on the importance of creating outreach that is not only effective but also aligns with the strategic priorities of the university. Doing so secures greater buy-in from others within the library and helps in telling the larger story of how the library supports the institution.

One method for creating outreach plans that are aligned with the institution’s strategic goals takes a curriculum-mapping approach. Curriculum mapping is a concept often used in planning instruction. In an outreach context, curriculum mapping has the potential to illuminate gaps and overlaps in an outreach program, which ensures that outreach is not only effective to a wide array of students but also efficient with the resources available (LeMire and Graves 2019).

Another method for strategic outreach planning emphasizes the role of assessment throughout the planning process. It includes establishing outcomes that will inform how the event aligns strategically to institutional goals. The outcomes can also act as a guide for selecting assessment methods that best fit the program or event. Depending on the scope of the outreach initiative and the staffing available, libraries will have varying levels of difficulties including assessment in their process. Farrell and Mastel (2016) note that a good way to determine which mode of assessment will work best for any outreach event is to first establish what information you want to know. Including mixed methods of assessment can help garner qualitative and quantitative feedback, making it easier to gauge the overall success of the program or event. (Farrell and Mastel 2016; German and LeMire 2018). While academic libraries may use that feedback to share their programming’s overall impact with their institutions, assessment also serves as another data point that will help in planning future outreach initiatives.

## **Case Study**

### ***About Pendergrass Library***

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UT) is a land-grant research university that supports 29,460 total students and 1,586 full-time instructional faculty (University of Tennessee n.d.). Three branches make up the UT Libraries system: the John C. Hodges library (the main campus library), the George F. Divine Music Library, and the Webster C. Pendergrass Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine Library. Situated about a mile from the main library and open to any UT affiliate, the Pendergrass Library primarily supports students in the Herbert College of Agriculture and the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Pendergrass Library supports 7 percent of the student population at UT, ranging from undergraduates to doctoral candidates. In addition, Pendergrass Library supports the UT Institute of Agriculture's (UTIA) Extension and AgResearch programs, which serve communities throughout the state of Tennessee. Students at the agriculture and veterinary medicine schools frequently visit Pendergrass Library as it is the nearest study space available to students at their colleges.

### *Rationale*

When I began my position as Pendergrass Library's only Outreach and Instruction Librarian, the fall semester was just set to begin. This did not leave much time to plan effective outreach, so the fall semester served as an opportunity to learn about the culture of outreach within Pendergrass Library and to identify potential areas of growth. While historically a hotspot for students of the nearby agriculture and veterinary medicine colleges, Pendergrass Library had difficulty in engaging students at events. Since Pendergrass's outreach is primarily targeted toward a small community of students, the desire to ensure the effectiveness of that outreach was heightened.

Reflections from the fall semester showcased how difficult it is to plan outreach on the fly. Because of limited staffing in the branch library, I was often planning events alone or in collaboration with one of the liaison librarians. Planning programs and events with limited staffing requires peak efficiency in planning. As I entered the spring 2019 semester, I was eager to explore new ideas for outreach programming. These outreach endeavors were unlike any program or event that Pendergrass had seen before, and I found that I had difficulty assessing their potential impact since they were disconnected from previous programming.

In May of 2019, I decided it was necessary to create an outreach plan for Pendergrass Library for the 2019–2020 academic year. After a year of observing the culture of outreach in my library, I wanted to create an outreach plan that was comprehensive in its scope, allowing time and space to reflect on whether and how a specific event or program supports the strategic priorities of the Libraries and the institution. Likewise, creating an outreach plan would provide an overview of the upcoming academic year's outreach calendar and enable us to see where there would be opportunities to add events, should they come up. While creating an outreach plan was initially used to help justify the purchase of promotional giveaways and a budget request for the upcoming year, this new outreach plan would end up doing so much more.

### *Creating the Plan*

I began by consulting the literature to identify themes in other case studies. As noted in the literature review, a common theme that emerged was the push towards establishing outreach programs that are strategically aligned with the priorities of the institution. Working at an academic branch library added the need to consider the role that Pendergrass Library plays as a branch within the larger UT Library system. For example, Pendergrass Library has its own mission statement, which focuses on its role in supporting UTIA and programs that affect the state of Tennessee (Pendergrass Library n.d.). To ensure the outreach plan focused on the needs of Pendergrass and its communities, I developed the following framework for the outreach plan:

- **Library mission statement**

My outreach plan focused primarily on Pendergrass Library's mission statement so anyone reading the plan would understand the specific context

in which it operates. For this reason, I placed the mission statement at the beginning of the plan.

- **Goals of the outreach plan**

Establishing goals for the plan helped ensure that there is intentionality behind the programs and initiatives being planned. The goals were broad enough to account for the opportunities that may arise later in the academic year, but also specific enough to accurately reflect the mission statement of the branch library.

- **Definition of Outreach at Pendergrass Library**

Using the learnings from my review of the literature as a guide, I created a definition that was customized to Pendergrass Library's work, and specific to the community that we serve.

- **Events/programs**

Here, I listed the events planned for the academic year, whether they were established programs or new events tentatively scheduled. As the academic year progressed, events that were not accounted for during the planning stage were added.

- **Campus partnerships**

At the end of the 2018-2019 academic year, I had met with campus partners from the Judith Anderson Herbert Writing Center, the Office of Information Technology, and Multicultural Student Life. Together we had set goals to attract students to the services they provided in Pendergrass Library.

- **Promotional giveaway recommendations and inventory**

This section included recommendations for promotional items the library would need to purchase and in what quantity. As the year progressed, this section was also used to inventory giveaways, which helped gauge needs for future giveaway purchases.

The largest section of the outreach plan was the detailed overview of each event and program that I intended to enact in the upcoming year. Working out the logistics for each event took the most time to develop. For each event I recorded the most critical details of the program or event, which I broke down into the following categories:

- **Strategic goals**

For this section I reviewed Pendergrass Library's annual goals, the UT Libraries strategic plan, the strategic plans for the Herbert College of Agriculture and the College of Veterinary Medicine, and "Vol Vision," UT's 2020 strategic plan. I pulled out any applicable goals from these plans to provide context for how my program or event support them.

- **Description of the program or event**

- **Date and time of program or event**

Here I listed potential dates for an event if I was unsure when it would take place. Throughout the year this section was updated when events were added or when dates were determined.

- **Outcomes**

In this section I recorded targeted outcomes for the program or event. At the completion of the program or event, I reviewed the targeted outcomes and added any additional outcomes that I discovered during implementation.

- **Target audience**

- **Methods of marketing**

Here I detailed any marketing work that would be needed to promote the program or event. This included social media content, graphic design, and the names of contacts who might assist in promoting the event.



- **Resources needed**

This is where I inventoried the tools I would need to implement the program or event, including faculty and staff participation, resources already on hand (graphics, giveaways, etc.), and the resources that would need to be created.

- **Budget**

I listed any budgetary needs for the program or event and I detailed what the funds would be used for.

- **Time needed for planning and execution**

This section was adjusted throughout the planning and implementation process. I provided an estimate of how much time was expected to be required for planning and implementing the program or event. Afterward, I reviewed this section and adjusted accordingly so that I would have a clear picture of what the time commitment would be if the program or event were to occur again.

- **Methods of assessment**

Here I recorded my plans for how to assess the program or event, whether my chosen assessment tool was formal (such as conducting a survey) or informal (such as reflecting on the interactions I had during the event).

- **Giveaways utilized**

For programs or events that would use promotional items, I estimated how many of each item I would need. After the event, I documented how many of each promotional item I used so as to aid in future planning.

## **Implementing the Plan**

The process of creating and refining the initial outreach plan for the 2019–2020 academic year took three months to complete, from May to July of 2019. Throughout this process I approached members of my department to request their feedback and to establish buy-in. Though half of the members of the branch library do not have outreach-related responsibilities, sharing the plan launched larger conversations on different methods for reaching Pendergrass's users.

Throughout the fall 2019 semester, three new outreach events were added to the outreach plan. The first event had Pendergrass partnering with the other branches of the UT Library system in a Halloween library scavenger hunt. Students from every department on campus were encouraged to visit the different branches and to learn more about the resources available. Each library location had informational handouts, candy, and promotional giveaways. The other two events strengthened partnerships with the Herbert College of Agriculture's Student Life Coordinator. Historically, Pendergrass had difficulty engaging with its users at library-planned events. With this partnership, the library was able to gain a captive audience.

Unfortunately, a fourth event fell through at the planning stage due to communication barriers with departmental faculty and staff.

Continuing into the spring, more changes were made to the outreach plan as new partnerships within the UT Library system and the Herbert College of Agriculture developed. Often, my plan for an event or program served as an launching point for further discussions and relationship building. As changes were made to the outreach schedule, the plan was updated to reflect these new partnerships.

As noted in the plan framework, throughout the fall and spring semester I returned to the outreach plan to track the use of promotional giveaways. Before an event, I would set aside a designated supply of promotional giveaways. Often, it was more than what the event actually required, but having a predetermined supply made the process of tracking the use of giveaways easier

since inventory was controlled. At the conclusion of the 2019–2020 academic year, I plan to review the remaining inventory to determine what needs to be purchased for the 2020–2021 academic year.

## Lessons Learned

In reflecting on the process of creating and implementing Pendergrass Library's 2019–2020 outreach plan, the first lesson I learned was that an outreach plan should not be a static document. As the year progressed, the plan was used to aid in decision-making when we were considering whether to take on the responsibility of a new program or event. As well, I edited and made notes in the plan throughout the year when additional resources or ideas were incorporated. Creating a living document allowed room for creativity when last-minute changes need to be made to the event or program.

Because the implementation of the outreach plan was iterative, I realized that the process of measuring the final outcomes is not fully possible until the event or program is complete. Additional outcomes can be discovered throughout the process of planning an event or program.

For example, as part of Pendergrass Library's Date-with-a-Book program, students were encouraged to explore the library's leisure-reading collection. I expected that students would become more avid readers of the collection; what I didn't expect was that students would become more familiar with library staff because of this process. Students noticed when books that were part of the Date-with-a-Book program were put out on display. Throughout the program, students approached staff for recommendations based on the available genres. In addition, students would talk at length about their recent reads with library staff when returning books to circulation.

As I prepare for the 2020–2021 academic year, I remind myself of the most important lesson I learned from this experience: expect the unexpected. Even with events that happen every semester, new challenges and opportunities arise that change how students interact with the library and the role that the library plays in student success. Looking forward, I will now place a greater emphasis on thinking critically to plan events and programs that are more inclusive of students who are unable to participate in events on campus. Reviewing the 2019–2020 outreach plan serves as a baseline to consider new routes to reaching students, though the roadmap is ever changing.

“An outreach plan should not be a static document.”

## Conclusion

The process of creating and implementing an outreach plan demonstrated how flexible one must be to create meaningful and efficient outreach. Outreach plans that allow for flexibility successfully straddle the seen and unforeseen, creating a customizable guide to their unique outreach landscapes. They enable outreach librarians to ensure their library's programs align strategically with their institution's priorities while also having a clear and positive impact on the faculty, staff, and students they serve.

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## Appendix

### Outreach plan 2019–2020

#### Mission:

This outreach plan supports Pendergrass Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine Library in its mission to serve those seeking information and scholarship in areas important to the University of Tennessee's Institute of Agriculture (UTIA), which encompasses the Herbert College of Agriculture, the College of Veterinary Medicine, Ag Research, and UT Extension. The plan strives to connect current and potential users of Pendergrass Library to the highest quality of resources and to ensure equitable access to all information and resources within our collection.

## Goals:

- Develop Pendergrass's identity as a resource for the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) and the Herbert College of Agriculture (HCA) faculty, staff, and students through specialized events that promote our campus partners and Pendergrass's services and resources.
- Establish a culture of consistent feedback from the UTIA community through targeted outreach, surveys, and focus groups.
- Support niche groups such as first-generation students, graduate students, and transfer students.

## Definition of outreach

Outreach consists of activities that connect Pendergrass Library with the UTIA community: Herbert College of Agriculture, College of Veterinary Medicine, Ag Research, and UT Extension. Outreach promotes awareness of Pendergrass's services, collections, spaces, technologies, etc. It includes giving the UTIA community the information, training, and knowledge to help them with their research, teaching, and learning goals.

## A listing of outreach events is found below.

- Tentatively scheduled items are in **bold**
- Proposed times/items are in *italics*

### 1. Orientations for incoming students (Freshmen and transfer students)

- Strategic goals
  - o From UT Libraries' strategic plan: Teaching, learning and innovation
    - Collaborate with campus academic support units to identify and provide targeted orientation and outreach for at-risk populations such as transfer students, first-year students, and others.
    - Align Libraries and campus efforts to develop a strategy for helping transfer students build foundational skills to be successful at the university.
  - o From Pendergrass Library's 2017–2018 annual plan: Teaching, learning and innovation
    - Provide inviting and inspiring spaces for learning, research, and engagement.
    - Promote Pendergrass's spaces, services, and resources across UTIA.
  - o From UT Libraries' strategic plan: Sharing our story
    - Increase awareness of library services and resources
    - Use messaging appropriate to audiences at hand to increase knowledge about the Libraries' collections.
- Description of the event: Over the summer, incoming students for the fall 2019 semester come to campus and prepare for their first semester. Students will visit HCA and learn about the resources available to them on this side of campus, including Pendergrass Library.
- When:
  - o Freshmen orientation dates (1:15–1:45): May 30, June 3, June 5, June 10, June 13, June 17, June 20, June 24, June 27, July 1, July 8, July 11, July 15
  - o Transfer student orientations: May 29, June 12, July 3, July 17, August 14, August 15
- Outcomes: Incoming students will be introduced to Pendergrass Library's services and resources. Students will identify Pendergrass as a space they can utilize while at UT.

- Target audience: Incoming HCA freshmen and transfer students
- Methods of marketing: Work with the Student Success Advisors to let them know the library has interest in contributing Pendergrass content to freshmen orientation.
- Resources needed: Slides with Pendergrass content
- Budget: \$0
- Time needed for planning and execution: 25 hours
- Methods of assessment: After each orientation, the Assistant Librarian will reflect on the sessions and what was interesting to the new students.

## **2. Syllabus Support Day (new event, added June 2019)**

- Strategic plan goals
  - From Pendergrass annual plan 2017–2018: Teaching, learning and innovation
    - Provide inviting and inspiring spaces for learning, research, and engagement.
    - Promote Pendergrass spaces, services, and resources across UTIA.
    - Equip students, faculty, and staff with the knowledge and skills they need for academic success.
- Description of the event: This will be a targeted event for faculty and staff who teach writing courses, research-intensive courses, and other general education agriculture classes. This event will host the Writing Center, the Office of Information Technology and Student Disability Services to showcase Pendergrass Library's services and demonstrate how these services support their students. This event will also showcase how instructors can integrate library resources and services into their syllabi/classes.
- When: August 7, 2019 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. (two weeks before the fall semester begins)
- Outcomes: Faculty will become acquainted with services and resources available to their students and how these services can support their teaching.
- Targeted audience: Herbert College of Agriculture instructors
- Methods of marketing: A survey will be created that asks instructors what they would like from this event. This survey will go out in June. In July we will send out an invitation requesting attendees RSVP so we can get an accurate headcount to inform our food order for the event.
- Resources needed: Survey design, catering, swag bag (old totes), stress cows, cell phone wallets, pens, highlighters if they have arrived, and flyers that instructors can take with them.
- Budget: \$385 for catering from Jason's Deli. Gallons of coffee to be delivered in the morning. At lunch attendees will receive boxed lunches. Gallons of tea and lemonade will also be delivered.
- Time needed for planning and execution: 35 hours
- Methods of assessment: Track attendees and whether they reach out to the library for library instruction. Document feedback from attendees and campus partners throughout the event.

## **3. Make Breaks**

- Strategic plan goals
  - From UT Libraries' strategic plan: Teaching Learning and Innovation
    - Equip students, faculty, and staff with the knowledge and skills they need for academic success.

- Provide instruction and consultations on topics central to our mission, such as information literacy, poster design and printing, 3D design and printing, and academic writing.
- Description of the event: Make Breaks are an opportunity for faculty, staff, and students to learn about things they can make at Pendergrass using our 3D printers. Participants will learn the ins and outs of 3D printing, from finding a design they would like to print, to developing their own design.
- When: Second Thursday of the month from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
- Outcomes: Showcase to library users how to use a 3D printer. Faculty and staff will learn how they can incorporate 3D printing into their curricula.
- Target audience: Faculty, staff, and students from UTIA and the main UT campuses
- Methods of marketing: Social media stories, 3D printing news stories, [calendar.utk.edu](http://calendar.utk.edu), UTIA listserv, Herbert Student News, 3D printing token pieces with customized messages to departmental faculty and staff.
- Resources needed: Signage that we can put up in the makerspace when a Make Break is happening. To assist with the marketing of the event, we will need to learn what questions patrons have regarding 3D printing. Common questions that are asked can inform how to market this event effectively to patrons. Collaborate with the Libraries Marketing department to identify how we can utilize our social media presence to promote the event. To provide targeted advertising to departments in HCA and CVM, craft a letter that to the department heads in the two colleges providing information about the event and asking that they share details with their departments. (3D printed Power Ts were created and sent out to eight departments.)
- Budget: \$0.20 cents per orange and white Power T. Thus far, we have given \$1.60 worth of Power Ts away to department heads.
- Time needed for planning and execution: 20 hours for the academic year
- Methods of assessment: Tracked attendance through the reservation process. After the event, Pendergrass's Assistant Library and IT Specialist will reflect on each Make Break and the conversations that arose during the events.

#### 4. Student Engagement carnival (added August 2019)

- Strategic plan goals
  - o From UTK's Vol Vision: Undergraduate Education
    - Engage Students in the Volunteer Experience
- Description of the event: This is an event to promote student engagement in student organizations in the HCA. Attendees of the event can circulate through the Brehm Animal Science building arena and learn about the different student organization. Pendergrass Library will be represented at the event, and we will be sharing handouts and resources that may be of interest to student organizations.
- When: September 4, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- Outcomes: Students will learn about how the library can provide targeted resources that will benefit the student organizations' academic and social goals.
- Targeted audience: Herbert College of Agriculture students
- Methods of marketing: We will not need to create any marketing materials. Reach out to HCA's Coordinator for Student Life and Diversity to identify how we can help advertise.
- Resources needed: Plan to bring the following quantities of swag:
  - o 100 stress cows
  - o 100 cell phone wallets
  - o 250 pens
  - o 30 highlighters

- o 30 sporks
- Budget needed: \$0
- Time needed for planning and execution: 10 hours
- Assessment: Reflection
 

We had 160 attendees visit our booth last night. Originally, people come to the table to check out the “Wheel of Swag,” but this served as an entry point for ZB to talk with students about the resources and services available to them as students and as potential leaders in student organizations. Because this event took place near the beginning of the semester, there were new students who discovered Pendergrass at this event.
- Swag given away:
  - o 45 stress cows
  - o 35 pens
  - o 17 sporks
  - o 19 cell phone wallets
  - o 23 hand sanitizers
  - o 21 highlighters
- Handouts given away:
  - o 15 3D printing brochures
  - o 30 Moo cards/ business cards
  - o 15 poster printing brochures
  - o 48 student organization/library resources handouts

## 5. Ag Day

- Strategic plan goals:
  - o From UT Libraries’ strategic plan: Sharing Our Story
    - Increase awareness of library services and resources
      - Use messaging appropriate to the audience at hand to increase knowledge about the Libraries’ collections.
- Description of the event: Ag Day is held every year and is a time for UTIA faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the general public to learn about the achievements of our colleges, research units, and Extension during the year as well as UTIA’s plans to help improve the lives of all Tennesseans. Pendergrass will host a table that shows how we support the UTIA campus.
- When: October 5, 2019 from 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- Outcomes: Increase awareness to the UTIA community (faculty, staff, students, alumni, Extension, Ag Research, and friends and family) of how we support UTIA.
- Targeted audience: UTIA community, alumni, and other Tennesseans
- Methods of marketing: None
- Resources needed: Swag (we had 321 visitors last fall): pens, sporks, highlighters (Friday event only), hand sanitizer (Saturday event only), cell phone wallets (both days), standing banners
- Budget needed: \$0
- Time needed for planning and execution: 10 hours
- Potential assessment: Head count
- Swag given away:
  - o 130 hand sanitizers
  - o 150 (estimated) cell phone wallets (from 2018–2019 AY)
  - o 324 sporks
  - o 69 highlighters
  - o 133 pens
- Handouts given away:
  - o 14 Finding Extension publications

- o 15 Project Ceres
- o 9 LinkedIn Learning (Friday only)
- o 1 Library Society brochure

#### 6. *Plant Sciences Poster Competition Poster Workshops (Did not happen; return to in 2020)*

- Strategic Plan goals
  - o From UT Libraries' strategic plan: Teaching, Learning and Innovation
    - Goal: Equip students, faculty, and staff with the knowledge and skills the need for academic success.
      - Provide instruction and consultations on topic central to our mission, such as information literacy, poster design and printing, 3D design and printing, academic writing, etc.
    - Be a campus leader in furthering graduate student success.
      - Offer instruction and support, at the point of need, by providing consultation and online learning materials to assist graduate students with their research and writing needs.
- Description: Students will learn about the best practices of creating a research poster. This workshop walks students through the logistics of how to utilize the UT template, how to use PowerPoint when creating a research poster, how to work with fonts and image sizes, and how to submit a poster request to either Pendergrass or the Studio. Tentatively, there will be two workshops that cover 1) the basics of poster design and 2) more specialized work with posters. Participants can choose whether to enroll in one or both workshops.
- When: To be determined
- Outcomes: Students will learn the logistics and best practices for creating a research poster. Students will learn how to submit a poster request to Pendergrass.
- Targeted audience: Graduate students in the plant sciences department.
- Methods of marketing: Post flyers on bulletin boards through the Plant Science buildings (Ellington and Plant Biotech); collaborate with the Plant Sciences Communications Specialist promote on social media
- Resources needed: Location to be determined. Check with Plant Sciences department about any requirements the participants must follow. Create a curriculum and PowerPoint. Note: a new Large Format Printing form is being created and will need to be incorporated into this work.
- Budget: \$0
- Time needed for planning and execution: 20 hours
- Potential assessment: Post-event survey that asks students what they learned. If participants enroll via [workshop.utk.edu](http://workshop.utk.edu), a survey will go out automatically after the workshop. Raffle off a swag bag for participants.

#### 7. **Halloween Quest (Added October 2019)**

- Strategic plan goals
  - o From UT Libraries' strategic plan: Sharing our story
    - Increase awareness of library services and resources
- Description: This is a student-led initiative in which students will visit the different library locations, learn about the specific resources available to them, and receive swag (library trick or treating).
- When: October 31, 2019 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- Outcomes: Students will become acquainted with the resources and services found at the different branches of UTK Libraries.
- Targeted audience: Students from UT and UTIA
- Methods of marketing: Social media



- Resources needed: When students visit each library location they will hear a library staff member provide a brief statement about Pendergrass. Prepared statement: At Pendergrass, you can find additional technology for equipment checkout, poster and 3D printing, and a variety of writing services at the Writing Center. Handouts for large format printing and 3D printing will be available for students.
- Budget: No additional funds are needed.
- Time needed for planning and execution: 5 hours; Allison Shepard is the main planner
- Methods of assessment: Keep a tally of the number of people who stop by the table
- Swag given away
  - o 25 cell phone wallets (from 2018–2019 AY)
  - o 25 stress cows
  - o 25 highlighters
- Handouts given away
  - o 3D printing brochure
  - o LFP brochure

#### **8. Date with a Book**

- Strategic plan goals
  - o From UT Libraries' strategic plan: Sharing our story
    - Increase awareness of library services and resources
      - Use messaging appropriate to the audience at hand to increase knowledge about the Libraries' collections.
- Description: To promote the leisure-reading collection, the month of February will be dedicated to Date with a Book. In Date with a Book, I will choose twenty books of different genres. This year, Hodges Library will also pick books to circulate. We will choose books that were purchased in the last four years and have had lower circulation stats. Pendergrass Library has an account on Goodreads.com that will be used to check ratings of potential books involved in the program. These books will be wrapped in brown paper and will have a short description. Students will be able to check out their "blind date" and read.
- When: Month of February
- Outcomes: Faculty, staff, and students will explore our leisure-reading collection.
- Targeted audience: UTK/UTIA community
- Methods of marketing: Collaborate with Learning Commons Librarian in charge of the Hodges' leisure-reading collection to develop a social media campaign. We will create digital signage that will be displayed in Pendergrass and Hodges.
- Resources needed: I will need to choose twenty books for Pendergrass and create short descriptions for them. A spreadsheet that provides information regarding the books' titles, authors, call numbers, and barcodes will be created so student workers can assist in keeping track of what books are checked out. This will also assist in determining which books should be included in future leisure-reading promotions.
- Budget: \$10 for brown wrapping paper.
- Time needed for planning and execution: 10 hours
- Methods of assessment: Formal methods of assessment include reviewing the circulation statistics for the books that are checked out. In addition, I will review the genres of the books that were checked out during this time to see if there is a particular genre that saw the most circulation. I will gain informal feedback

by talking with students when they return books to see what they thought of their choice.

## 9. EURECA poster workshops

- Strategic Plan goals
  - o From UT Libraries' strategic plan: Teaching, Learning and Innovation
    - Goal: Equip students, faculty, and staff with the knowledge and skills the need for academic success.
      - Provide instruction and consultations on topic central to our mission, such as information literacy, poster design and printing, 3D design and printing, academic writing, etc.
- Description: Students will learn the best practices for creating a research poster. This workshop walks students through the logistics of how to utilize the UT template, how to use PowerPoint when creating a research poster, how to work with fonts and image sizes, and how to submit a large format poster print request to either Pendergrass or the Studio.
- When: In collaboration with the Director of Advising/Head of Undergraduate Research in Herbert College of Agriculture, we aimed to host the event on March 24, 2020, from 12-1:30, which was the Tuesday after spring break. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this event was cancelled, but the prepared presentation was recorded for those enrolled in the EURECA poster competition.
- Outcomes: Students will learn the logistics of creating a poster. Students will learn how to submit a poster request to Pendergrass or the Studio.
- Targeted audience: Herbert College of Agriculture undergraduate students, Herbert honors students
- Methods of marketing: Social media, Herbert student news, bulletin boards, student success advisors, and other faculty (undergraduate coordinators?)
- Resources needed: Room reservation in one of the HCA buildings. Flyers will need to be distributed, and the workshop.utk.edu portal will need to be activated.
- Budget: \$0
- Time needed for planning and execution: 16 hours
- Potential assessment: Because this event was cancelled, a survey was sent out to the HCA students who participated in the virtual poster competition. This survey asked whether students watched the recording of the presentation and what other academic resources they used to create their poster.

## 10. De-Stress for Success

- Strategic plan goals
  - o De-Stress supports VolVision's goals for undergraduate education. The goals for undergrads include strengthening retention rates and providing high quality health, wellness, and safety programs and services.
  - o For graduate students
    - From UT Libraries' strategic plan: Teaching learning and Innovation
      - Goal 1.3. Be a campus leader in furthering graduate student success
- Description: De-Stress for Success occurs once every semester during final exams to promote mindfulness and wellness to our students. Pendergrass hosts massage therapists, HABIT dogs, arts and crafts, games, and technology-related events. In spring 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a research guide to promote wellness and stress relief was created and shared on the UT Libraries' social media channels.

- When: During final exams for fall and spring semesters; however, it was cancelled in the spring semester due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Outcomes: Students will be supported through activities and events that will relieve stress.
- Targeted audience: All UT students
- Methods of marketing: Herbert Student News, digital signs, social media, commons.utk.edu, calendar.utk.edu
- Resources needed: Set out the coloring sheets, origami paper, phone-polaroid paper, 3D printer pen, and board games.
- Budget: \$500 for food and \$150 for coffee (paid for with separate budget)
- Time needed for planning and execution: 15 hours
- Potential assessment: De-Stress for Success planning committee's survey, review responses to questions written on white boards throughout the library asking students how they are feeling, review comments from the comment book that is by the snack table.

## 11. Pop-Up Library

- Strategic Plan goals
  - From UT Libraries' strategic plan: Sharing Our Story
    - Increase Awareness of library services and resources
- Description: The Pop-Up Library is an initiative where either the library's graduate assistant or the Outreach and Instruction librarian will set up a table at selected locations around the UTIA campus to promote library resources and services. In the most recent iteration of the Pop-Up Library, we are looking to make the program more opportunistic by setting up during crucial points in the academic year (beginning of fall and spring semester, midterms, and finals). We are also looking to use the Pop-Up Library in more UTIA events.
- When: Key points in the semester and during important events happening in the Herbert College of Agriculture.
- Outcomes: Faculty, staff, and students will learn about the library and its resources.
- Targeted Audience: Faculty, staff, and students in the Herbert College of Agriculture
- Methods of Marketing: Social media through the Libraries and collaborating with departmental social media to increase awareness.
- Resources Needed: Laptop or iPad; 3D printed models; flyers for 3D printing and poster printing; and the "Resources for Undergraduates," "Resources for Graduate Students," and "Resources for Faculty" handouts.
- Budget: \$0
- Time needed for planning and execution: 4 to 8 hours during the high-impact weeks, as needed for events. 20 to 40 minutes for setup and takedown.
- Potential assessment: The graduate assistant has a Google form on which to note the nature of interactions and status of the people they talk to (faculty, staff, student).
- Amount of Swag used
  - August 2019
    - Stress Cows: 41
    - Cell phone wallets: 7
    - Pens: 7
  - September 2019
    - Stress cows: 42
    - Cell phone wallets: 9
- Sporks: 28
  - Stickers: 5
  - Pens: 19
- October 2019
  - Stress cows: 9
  - Cell phone wallets: 4
  - Sporks: 7
  - Stickers: 1

- o November 2019
  - Stress cows: 24
  - Cell phone wallets: 1
  - Sporks: 17
  - Stickers: 4
  - Pens: 5
- o December 2019: Pop-Up Library did not occur during December because of final exams.
- o January 2020
  - Stress cows: 0
  - Cell phone wallets: 3
  - Sporks: 7
  - Stickers: 5
  - Pens: 7
  - Hand sanitizer: 5
- o February 2020
  - Stress cows: 0
  - Cell phone wallets: 3
  - Sporks: 7
  - Stickers: 0
  - Pens: 3
  - Hand sanitizer: 4
- o Pop-Up Library did not occur from March-May due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Campus Partnerships

### 1. Writing Center

#### Goals:

1. Continue to build clientele of students in the Herbert College of Agriculture and College of Veterinary Medicine.
  2. Utilize Thesis and Dissertation service to build clientele of graduate students from across UTIA/UT campuses.
- Methods of advertising: Showcase the new UT map feature on social media. The syllabus event in early August will promote the Writing Center to teaching faculty and staff.
  - Opportunities: Herbert College of Agriculture will be reviewing their curricula soon, as part of creating a new strategic plan. Once we know the outcomes and goals of the new curricula and strategic plan, we will have new ways of supporting Herbert College of Agriculture.
  - Hours for fall: 12:00–3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

### 2. Subject Tutoring

#### Goals:

1. Increase clientele of undergraduates from the different Herbert College of Agriculture departments.
  2. Establish best methods of promoting Multicultural Student Life's (MSL) tutoring services.
- Methods of advertising: The Syllabus Support Day in early August provides an opportunity to connect faculty with this service. Once MSL has a list of courses available, this information will be sent to the Student Success Advisors in the Herbert College of Agriculture, and the members of the Herbert College of Agriculture social media task force.
  - Opportunities: MSL will be hiring new tutors, which could allow a wider reach into the Herbert College of Agriculture student population as the tutors will themselves be HCA students. These tutors will be able to provide support in classes that most HCA majors need to complete.
  - Hours for fall: 5:00–8:00 p.m. on Wednesdays and 3:00–6:00 p.m. on Sundays
  - Swag proposal:
    - o Sporks
      - Quantity: 1000

- Price range \$400–\$450
- o Stress cows/animals
  - Quantity: 250
  - Price range: \$300–\$400
- o Hand Sanitizer:
  - Quantity: 400
  - Price range: \$400–\$500
- o Highlighters:
  - Quantity: 500
  - Price range: \$400–\$500
- o Pens:
  - Quantity: 3000
  - Price range: \$800–\$900

Total: \$2850 + shipping

Resource	Cost
Swag	\$2850 + shipping
Yard Signs	\$100–\$200
Arts and crafts materials	\$10
Catering	\$385
Total	\$3345–\$3355 + shipping

Budget

Items (beginning inventory)	Quantity: Number of each item given away at a specific event
Sporks (1000)	CarniVOL: 17 Ag Day: 324 Henton Conference: 32 VOLiday: 45 Pop Up: 66 <b>Total: 484 given away at promotional events</b>
Cows (250) + 80 from 2018 -2019 AY	CarniVOL: 45 Halloween Quest: 25 Pop Up: 116 (as of Dec 2019) Clue: 21 De-Stress for Success (Fall 2019): 58 <b>Total: 54 given away at promotional events</b>
Pens (3000)	CarniVOL: 35 Ag Day: 133 Henton: 50 Pop Up: 47 <b>Total: 265 given away at promotional events</b>
Highlighters (300)	CarniVOL: 21 VOLiday: 50 Ag Day: 69 <b>Total: 130 given away at promotional events</b>
Hand sanitizer (400)	CarniVOL: 23 Ag Day: 130 VOLiday: 50 <b>Total: 205 given away at promotional events</b>
Cell Phone Wallet (270)	CarniVOL: 19 Ag Day: 150 Halloween Quest: 25 Pop Up: 28 <b>Total: 222 given away at promotional events</b>

Overall swag inventory





# Charlotte Libraries Tackle Controversial Topic

## EDITORIAL

**Beth Scarborough  
and Susan Foster  
Pardue**

*University of North  
Carolina, Charlotte*

## *Beyond the Myths*

Five years after white supremacist Dylann Roof shot and killed nine members of a Bible study class at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, Minneapolis police officers suffocated George Floyd on a city street, causing his death. The viral video of that act of violence was the breaking point: years of oppression, violence, and racial injustice culminated in protests for rights of Black Americans throughout the United States. One by one, Confederate monuments began tumbling from their pedestals throughout the South. For over a hundred years the monuments have stood for white supremacy and oppression, flagrant signs to Black Americans that they do not have a place in society, signs intentionally planted by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in the early twentieth century. Today those outward signs of oppression are finally crumbling. People are tired of racial violence. What can stop it? What can help people understand that Black Lives Matter does not mean only Black lives? How can generations of

White Southerners, raised to ignore systemic racism and to believe in myths disseminated through popular films such as *Birth of a Nation* and *Gone with the Wind*, understand the truths of history and their own privilege? Can libraries help change opinion and reveal the truth? Is that a library's responsibility?

Companies, organizations, and governments throughout the country are publishing diversity and inclusion statements, pledging support to Black Lives Matter, and expressing abhorrence of discrimination of all kinds. Many agencies and organizations, including libraries, have long been agents for social justice and change. Though libraries have often tried to be politically neutral and unbiased stewards of information, they

cannot—especially today. Libraries have to take a stand. Jane Cowell said that as part of critical librarianship, libraries should promote truth and root out false information, thereby providing a platform for conversations that will strengthen communities and democracy (Cowell 2020, 30). In discussing critical librarianship, Emily Drabinski said, “At the heart of critical librarianship, for me, is a conviction and a radical hope that things could be different from the way they are now.” (Drabinski 2019, 53)

In Charlotte, North Carolina, librarians took on the elephant in the room. University of North Carolina (UNC) Charlotte and Charlotte Mecklenburg libraries took a lead role in shining a light on racial injustices and deep histories hidden behind the Confederacy. By examining North Carolina's role in the Confederacy and the leading part the United Daughters of the Confederacy played in maintaining white supremacy and racism throughout the South, the libraries sought truths at a time of racial upheaval.

“How can generations of White Southerners, raised to ignore systemic racism and to believe in myths disseminated through popular films such as *Birth of a Nation* and *Gone with the Wind*, understand the truths of history and their own privilege? Can libraries help change opinion and reveal the truth? Is that a library's responsibility?”



The impetus for the project was sparked, in part, when the UNC Chapel Hill Confederate statue, Silent Sam, became the center of attention in the state. Erected in 1913, Silent Sam had long been a subject of controversy. Confederate monuments, primarily erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in the early twentieth century, served to memorialize Confederate veterans and mythologize Old South culture as a means of venerating slavery. In North Carolina, the contentious debate over memorials led to the enactment of Session Law 2015-170, Senate Bill 22 protecting public memorials, plaques, statues, or markers considered “objects of remembrance.” Though most students and faculty wanted Silent Sam removed, campus officials at UNC Chapel Hill claimed the new law prevented the removal of the statue from the campus entrance.

Then, in August 2017, white supremacists descended on Charlottesville, Virginia, protesting the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee. Amid violence between protesters and counter-protesters, James Fields, a confirmed neo-Nazi, crashed his car into a group of counter-protesters, killing Heather Heyer and wounding thirty-five, many very seriously (Duggan 2018). Protests over Silent Sam then ramped up at the UNC Chapel Hill campus. University board members and North Carolina legislators wanted the statue to stay; Chancellor Carol Folt said her hands were tied by the legislation (Patel 2018). While officials dragged their feet, the issue became more intense with fierce debate from both sides until protesters finally toppled Silent Sam from his nine-foot pedestal in August 2018.

## **The Programs**

As tensions mounted in Chapel Hill, Atkins Library faculty and staff talked about how to address the issues simmering beneath the surface. No one in Charlotte appeared to be having a public conversation about it; was this something a library could take a stand on? Many thought it a good idea, but the library had no funds to bring outside authorities to campus, and the UNC Charlotte Department of History faculty experts on the Confederacy were on sabbatical or book tours. We submitted a grant proposal to the North Carolina LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) fund, but it was rejected. Still, the topic loomed as an important one; no one at Atkins Library was ready to give up so easily.

Dean Anne Cooper-Moore kept the topic fresh on the minds of library staff and thought it a good project for the library’s newly formed board of advisors to get behind. The board liked the idea, too, but the problem with funding remained. Then a historian and grant writer on the board used her expertise to make contacts with a prominent faculty member in the history department, convincing her to become involved. The team, along with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library, sought grant approval through the UNC Charlotte Chancellor’s Diversity Challenge Fund for a series of public programs to be held in Charlotte. Its mission was to dispel myths about the Confederacy and to show how those myths evolved. It was the group’s vision to illustrate that an accurate awareness of the past is essential to understanding present conflicts.

The series, entitled *Beyond the Myths: The American Civil War in History and Memory*, sought to explain the history and myths of North Carolina’s role in the Civil War and those surrounding the presence of Confederate monuments in the United States, particularly the South.

The Chancellor’s Diversity Challenge Fund approved the proposal in June 2018. *Beyond the Myths* kicked off on February 21, 2019, with the first of two major events. The final, large event closed the series on March 13, 2019. Three smaller, related programs were sandwiched in between the two larger ones.

Beyond the Myths opened in the J. Murrey Atkins Library Halton Room with noted North Carolina history scholar Paul Escott discussing “North Carolina in History and Memory.” Dr. Escott detailed how North Carolina, the last state to join the Confederacy, came to terms with impressment, conscription, and the Confederacy’s highly centralized government: with protests, food riots, and high rates of desertion, particularly in the western and poorer counties. Non-slaveholders saw the war as a “rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight.” (Escott and Crow 1986, 377-402)

Two smaller programs, genealogical workshops, emphasized a Black American and a North Carolina genealogy focus. Marcellaus Joiner, a North Carolina librarian and archivist, led the Black American genealogy workshop at the Sugar Creek branch of Charlotte Mecklenburg Library. Participants learned how unusual resources such as bastardy bonds and apprenticeship records may lead to ancestors not commonly found in United States census records. A North Carolina genealogy workshop offered by genealogical librarian Donna Gunter included the story Gunter discovered in her own search to find her Shelton family ancestors: In January 1863, a group of residents—including several members of the Shelton family of western North Carolina’s Madison County—raided a supply of salt that was being hoarded by Confederates. In retaliation, Confederates hunted and gunned down, without trial, thirteen members of the Shelton family in what became known as the Shelton Family Massacre (Bynum 1987, 45).

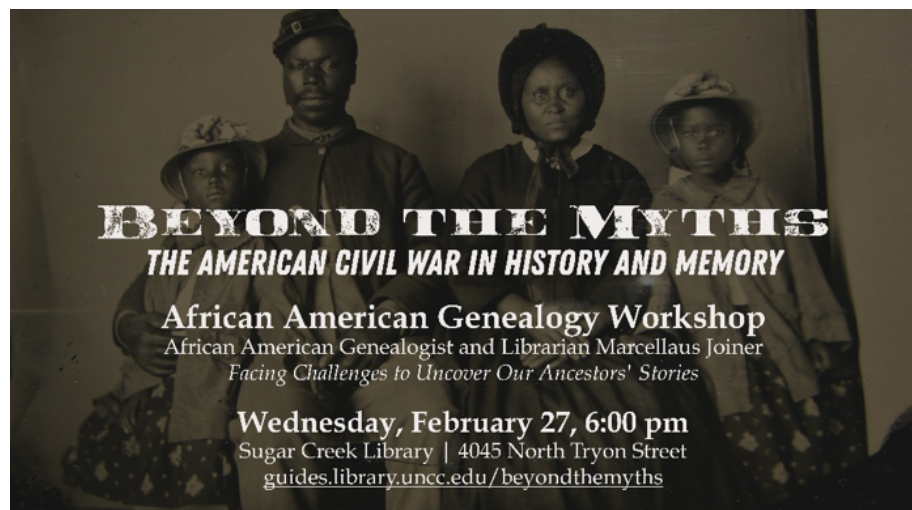


Figure 1: Atkins Library’s marketing slide for genealogy workshop. (Photo unattributed, from Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.)

The addition of the genealogy programs allowed individuals to look at history through a personal lens. With the knowledge to understand themselves and their heritage, they increase their ability to understand others.

A film screening of the 2016 movie *A Free State of Jones* took place at the Sugar Creek Library. The movie examines the life of Newt Knight, a Mississippi farmer and Confederate soldier. Knight, disgusted by the sacrifices of young men for a cause he believed only benefitted the rich, deserted his position and started a rebellion against the Confederacy. Charlotte Mecklenburg Library historian Thomas Cole provided a historical commentary on the film and answered audience questions.

A panel presentation, “Commemorating the Confederacy: History, Memory and Meaning in the 21st Century South,” completed the series. Dr. Karen Cox, UNC Charlotte professor of history and an authority on the United Daughters of the Confederacy, led the presentation. Joining Dr. Cox were Dr. William

Sturkey of UNC Chapel Hill and Dr. Hilary Green of the University of Alabama. Dr. Sturkey specializes in the history of race in the American South. Dr. Green is in the Department of Gender and Race Studies and is program codirector of the African American Studies program.

The panel presented to an audience of more than 130 at the UNC Charlotte Center City campus, bringing to light the history and myths perpetuated by the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The panelists emphasized how the presence of Confederate monuments, particularly in public spaces, are an affront to Black Americans because the monuments represent and honor a time when Black Americans were enslaved. Whenever a Black American enters a state house or university where Confederate monuments are displayed, it signals to them that they do not belong. Guests peppered the panelists with questions at the conclusion of the presentation. This event was recorded.



Figure 2: Dr. William Sturkey answers questions at the “Commemorating the Confederacy: History, Memory and Meaning in the Twenty-First Century South” presentation. (Photo by Lynn Roberson, UNC Charlotte.)

## The Planning

The majority of the funds received from the Chancellor’s Diversity Challenge Fund were used for speakers’ fees. Dean Moore allocated discretionary funds to provide receptions at the larger events; this allowed speakers to mingle with the audience and answer specific questions. The Charlotte Mecklenburg Library purchased film screening rights and provided refreshments at each of the events held at Sugar Creek Library.

Considerable preparation went into the planning and marketing of the events. From the beginning it was clear this was not a one-evening program. To be heard, it had to be a series and it had to reach a varied audience—students and the public. Marketing was key to success. The library formed a committee to assist with planning and implementing the programs. Librarians created a detailed online research guide that not only highlighted each event but also provided resources for lesson plans and classroom assignments. A “special collections” tab on the guide provided links to digital sources and information on in-house sources. Links to books, e-books, and videos highlighted sources available to UNC Charlotte students and to the public.

E-mail proved to be the most effective form of marketing and communication. All UNC Charlotte faculty members received emails

introducing the series as well as email reminders before each event. Several history faculty members supported the series by offering extra credit to students for their attendance. The library marketing team created graphic slides for each event and distributed those across campus, including displaying the slides on information monitors in the library and on the website. The library committee built an email list of history and political science faculty from colleges in Charlotte and the surrounding area. This list proved to be a successful marketing tool as several faculty and students from other colleges attended events. A group from one college located about fifty miles north of the UNC Charlotte Center City campus even arranged a vanpool to the panel presentation on Confederate memorials. A registration link on all marketing materials corresponded to an Eventbrite webpage for enrollment in each of the two major events. Eventbrite proved to be an effective tool for managing emails, reminders, questions, and follow-up.

The partnership with Charlotte Mecklenburg Library allowed us to tap into the marketing expertise of a large organization, dramatically increasing the outreach possibilities and reaching a varied audience. This also drew more visitors to Atkins Library, allowing patrons to peruse a very different collection from that of the public library. Atkins' Special Collections department played a large role in each event, staffing a display table with copies of historic



Figure 3: Special Collections faculty showcase Atkins Library archives at Beyond the Myths: The Civil War in History and Memory event. (Photo by Lynn Roberson, UNC Charlotte.)

documents and manuscripts housed in the collection, while also answering questions and showcasing archives.

The UNC Charlotte Communications department landed an appearance on local public radio station WFAE for Drs. Cox, Sturkey, and Green prior to the final panel presentation. "Charlotte Talks" personality Mike Collins interviewed the scholars, asking detailed questions about the topic while also promoting the final presentation. Many guests registered for the panel presentation as a result of the radio program, which was also archived on the radio station's website.

At the close of each program, detailed evaluation surveys were distributed to all guests either by email or in person; this gave the library the opportunity to gauge the success of the programs. The surveys encouraged guests to make recommendations on how to improve the presentations and to offer suggestions

for future planning and programming. Many guests requested more historical programs; others desired topics of current interest, especially related to Charlotte and Mecklenburg County history. One attendee commented, “I liked the fact that this event reinvestigated something well-known in history to shed light on a new perspective. More events like this would be great.”

The intent of the series was to provide truthful information; this did not include giving voice to those opposed to the removal of Confederate monuments or who promote the states’ rights view of the Confederacy. (The claim that the South seceded over states’ rights has long been proven a false claim. Dr. Escott’s talk brought up the fact that the Confederate government was very centralized—quite the opposite of the states’ rights claims—and asserted the war was very much about slavery.) The series demonstrated how memory is different from history: history is factual; memory is how the United Daughters of the Confederacy sought to create and perpetuate a false history—a history that posits slaves were treated like family, and that all soldiers volunteered and fought bravely for a cause they believed in. The series showed how the Lost Cause myth—one that has persisted for more than a hundred years—is dangerous. Those were the facts the library strove to reveal. That is what critical librarianship is all about.

The library and the university place a large focus on outreach to the public as well as to students. Librarians consistently plan exhibits and programs. Other historical programs have taken place at Atkins Library since the *Beyond the Myths* series. Several of the library’s current committees focus on diversity, outreach, exhibits, and marketing. The committees open their membership to all library employees to take advantage of new and fresh ideas.

## **Lessons Learned**

Always expect the unexpected. The University’s Center City campus technology team planned to stream the final presentation via Facebook Live. However, on the day of the event, March 13, 2019, Facebook Live experienced one of the largest outages in its history when it went down across the Eastern United States. WhatsApp, Messenger, and Instagram were also affected (Isaac and Conger 2019). Luckily, the technology team came to the rescue with recording equipment of their own. The day also brought other unexpected problems: the private parking lot at Center City sold all the campus parking spaces to the Atlantic Coast Conference basketball tournament being held in Charlotte at the same time, without notifying the university. Late notifications had to be emailed to all registered guests to make them aware of the problem. Luckily, the Center City campus is located on Charlotte’s Lynx light-rail line; guests could travel into downtown on the train. In the end, not all parking spots were taken, but the last-minute snafu caused several guests to cancel.

The project brought out passionate feelings from many throughout the library. As the library coordinated the project, it welcomed any faculty or staff member wishing to join. Faculty and staff from various sections of the library, including the board of advisors, participated in *Beyond the Myths*. Library staff and faculty volunteered to create exhibits, help register guests, coordinate the receptions, pass microphones during question-and-answer periods, welcome and escort guests, and help at the Sugar Creek Library, among other duties. One employee commented on the experience, “I was especially thrilled with the general public’s attendance! So many I spoke with had never attended an Atkins event on campus (many had never even been on campus) or at Center City. All spoke very highly of the library and hoped to come back.” Our best advice after implementing a multi-day, multi-event series is this: recognize the program’s needs and ask for help; people are the greatest resource.



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## ARTICLE

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# Highlighting Heritage: Promoting Collections through Pop-Up Libraries at the Multicultural Center

## ABSTRACT

This article discusses a pop-up library program that was piloted at the University of Arkansas Libraries in collaboration with the University of Arkansas Multicultural Center. The goals of the program were to increase the visibility of library resources and services, to highlight diversity within library resources, to encourage interaction with students in a casual setting, and to invite students to inform future collection development. This article discusses the planning, implementation, and outcomes of the program. The inclusion of a button maker and a whiteboard were found to be particularly successful tools in encouraging student interaction. The authors also reflect on changes they would make to the program in the future to enhance student engagement and relationship building with student groups and campus organizations.

## KEYWORDS

pop-up library; social justice; library outreach; special collections; diversity and inclusion

Libraries and archives are always exploring strategies to raise awareness about library resources and services. In recent years, libraries have experimented with expanding services into new spaces outside of the traditional library environment. During the 2019–2020 academic year, the University of Arkansas (UArk) Libraries partnered with the UArk Center for Multicultural Education (the Multicultural Center) to pilot a pop-up library program highlighting cultural diversity as part of the center's Cultural Heritage Months events. During the fall 2019 and spring 2020 semesters, the Librarian in Residence (LIR) and the Research & Educational Services Archivist (RES Archivist) curated a pop-up library each month featuring circulating materials from the Diversity Collection and original, primary sources from the Special Collections Division. These materials were paired with interactive, hands-on activities to encourage engagement, such as creating buttons from images in the Special Collections materials and answering questions or participating in polls on a whiteboard.

This pilot program grew out of the LIR's relationship with the Multicultural Center as the Diversity Liaison for the library; it provided the opportunity to highlight themes of diversity and inclusion with resources from the library's circulating collections and Special Collections. The goals of the program were to increase the visibility of the library's collections as well as the diverse groups represented, to encourage student interaction with library resources and staff in a casual setting, and to collect information from interactions to inform future

collection development. It is the authors' hope that the pilot program discussed in this article will serve as a model for similar programming at other institutions and might inspire others to seek out ways to highlight diversity and inclusion in their own public programming.

## Literature Review

A review of library literature reveals an increasing move towards innovative outreach efforts that take place beyond the traditional library space. Pop-up libraries or pop-up exhibits have proven to be particularly useful forms of outreach and there is a growing body of literature about this type of programming. While the term "pop-up" has become the customary way to refer to short-term library displays or exhibits, there is no standard definition. For the purposes of this article, the authors have drawn on an abbreviated version of the definition offered by Davis et al. (2015) in their exploration of pop-ups in public library outreach efforts in Australia:

A pop-up library is a collection of resources taken outside the physical library space to the public. These resources may be physical or digital. . . Pop-up libraries are about informal access to library resources. . . A pop-up library should be unexpected in the space it occupies, thus generating a buzz and garnering attention—this will be added to by the pop-up library's temporary nature (Davis et al. 2015, 97).

Literature on pop-up libraries highlights the ability of these temporary programs to increase the visibility of librarians and library services (Anderson, Bull, and Cooper 2014; Barnet, Bull, and Cooper 2016; Dera et al. 2019). The casual nature of the pop-up, the use of incentives such as prizes or free promotional materials (Anderson, Bull, and Cooper 2014; Barnet, Bull, and Cooper 2016; Dera et al. 2019; Gofman and Settoducato 2019; Empey and Black 2005), the hands-on engagement offered, and the incorporation of activities that encourage student interaction with materials and library staff are all considered to be elements that make pop-up libraries successful (Gofman and Settoducato 2019; Lotts 2015; Lotts and Maharjan 2018).

Pop-up programming has come to the forefront in discussions of library and archives outreach in the last five to ten years, though there is some disagreement on the origins of pop-up libraries. Some have suggested that they evolved out of pop-up culture in the private sector, such as pop-up restaurants or retail shops that are often tied to short-term events (Davis et al. 2015). Yarrow and McAllister, librarians at the Ottawa Public Library, argue that pop-up libraries are an extension of historical book wagons and bookmobiles, outlining a long history of librarians conducting outreach outside the physical confines of a library building (2018). The literature also points to organizations like Little Free Library (Davis et al. 2015), an international movement in which volunteers create mailbox-sized free libraries in their communities (Little Free Library, 2020), as inspiration for pop-up libraries.

Whether pop-up libraries are an evolution of long-standing traditions in librarianship or a more contemporary phenomenon, they have become an increasingly popular outreach method. Pop-up libraries serve as a low-cost way to engage a wide range of individuals who may not normally visit the library (Settoducato 2017; Gofman and Settoducato 2019). This is especially important

“The goals of the program were to increase the visibility of the library's collections as well as the diverse groups represented, to encourage student interaction with library resources and staff in a casual setting, and to collect information from interactions to inform future collection development.”

for organizations that may not see the value in outreach programming, or that lack the resources to host traditional outreach events, which often require a significant amount of funding as well as dedicated public relations efforts on the part of the library (Fleming and Gerrard 2014).

One of the key aspects that differentiate pop-ups from other forms of programming is the ability to host them nearly anywhere, thereby reaching those who may not physically visit the library often or at all. The literature reveals that one of the most cited reasons for pursuing pop-up programming is to increase the visibility of the library—its collections and its services (Anderson, Bull, and Cooper 2014; Barnett, Bull, and Cooper 2016; Davis et al. 2015; Dera et al. 2019). For example, the University of Birmingham piloted a pop-up library within the main lobby of the University's Business School to reach a group of students who did not regularly use the library's resources and services but whose coursework required them to use business databases (Anderson, Bull, and Cooper 2014). Following the initial pop-up, the librarians have since experimented with hosting pop-up libraries in a variety of teaching, learning, and social spaces on campus (Barnett, Bull, and Cooper 2016). Of note, the University of Birmingham Librarians have found that not all spaces outside the library are well suited for pop-up libraries. Transitional spaces, such as large lobby areas of academic buildings, were found to generate fewer interactions than mixed-use spaces in which students socialized and/or studied, such as common areas (Barnett, Bull, and Cooper 2016). These findings were echoed by New Jersey Institute of Technology librarians, who found pop-ups to be more successful in mixed-use spaces than in exclusively academic or quiet study spaces (Dera et al. 2019).

Despite the challenges of determining where to host pop-up libraries, most librarians who have written about their programs have generally found them to be successful. Librarians at the New Jersey Institute of Technology hosted pop-ups to reach STEM students who did not often visit the library; they found that the pop-ups increased the visibility of the library and its collections and services (Dera et al. 2019). And despite the limitations of certain locations used in the University of Birmingham's pop-up program, the librarians ultimately considered the program to be successful due to the quality of interactions between staff and students, and the ability to reach students who reported not having visited the library (Barnett, Bull, and Cooper 2016). Pop-ups encourage more casual interaction between librarians and students who might be uncomfortable asking questions in more formal settings or may feel intimidated by the reference desk (Sharman and Walsh 2012). Essentially, pop-ups make libraries and librarians more approachable, which encourages students to engage with both library staff and materials (Settoducato 2017).

A common element across pop-up programming is the use of promotional materials and incentives. Of the literature reviewed for this article, five articles or conference presentations specifically cited the use of promotional materials (Anderson, Bull, and Cooper 2014; Barnett, Bull, and Cooper 2016; Dera et al. 2019; Empey and Black 2005; Gofman and Settoducato 2019). These materials included handouts about library collections or services (Anderson, Bull, and Cooper 2014; Barnett, Bull, and Cooper 2016; Dera et al. 2019) as well as swag like pencils or bookmarks from library vendors or from the library itself (Barnett, Bull, and Cooper 2016; Dera et al. 2019; Empey and Black 2005). These items offer an incentive to students to engage with the librarians staffing the

“Another key feature of pop-ups is their participatory nature, which allows students and others to engage with materials in a variety of ways” ”

pop-up display; they also serve to remind students about library resources and services after the pop-up has ended. However, many pop-up programs have relied so heavily on promotional materials that the pop-ups featured minimal or no actual library materials—in either print or digital forms (Anderson, Bull, and Cooper 2014, Barnett, Bull, and Cooper 2016; Dera et al. 2019). The lack of library materials in academic library pop-up programs is a notable omission, as it seems to contradict the goal of increasing the visibility of library resources, and it stands in contrast to the pop-up programs favored by public libraries, which rely heavily on physical library materials (Yarrow and McAllister 2018).

Another key feature of pop-ups is their participatory nature, which allows students and others to engage with materials in a variety of ways. Just as educators move towards active learning in the classroom, librarians have made efforts to move towards a more participatory model of library instruction and outreach (Casey and Savastinuk 2007; Ottoson and Green 2005; Johnson et al. 2001). One way to encourage engagement is through the availability of materials at the pop-up itself (Settodicato 2017; Gofman and Settodicato 2019). Students can pick up and flip through a library book, use a provided laptop to browse library resources online, ask questions of a librarian in real time, or engage with original historical materials from Special Collections—perhaps for the first time. Additionally, some advocates of pop-up libraries have suggested incorporating aspects of library “makerspaces” through activities such as posing questions on whiteboards, decorating holiday cards (Lotts 2015), and having a button maker on hand to enable students to make their own buttons (Lotts and Maharjan 2018). It is important to note that pop-up library hosts must be intentional when incorporating these “making” activities (Lotts 2015). For example, Lotts highlights how making activities must contribute to the overall goals, learning, or outreach outcomes that the pop-up aims to achieve (Lotts 2015). If activities are not aligned with the overall aims of the program, this type of outreach is likely to be less effective.

The integration of diversity and inclusion outreach goals and the incorporation of campus and community partnerships have not been covered extensively in current literature on pop-up programming. The authors’ review of the literature revealed only one project that included an outreach goal related to diversity and inclusion. In their poster presentation at the meeting of the New England Chapter of the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) in 2019, Gofman and Settodicato discussed a pop-up library project highlighting materials by and about people of marginalized identities, which they hosted each month over the course of the 2018 fall semester. In creating their pop-up, these librarians partnered with two organizations on campus: the LGBT Center and Student Accessibility Services. While collaborating with other organizations on campus or hosting a pop-up as part of an existing University event (Lotts 2015; Empey and Black 2005) have proven to be emerging trends in pop-up programming, Gofman and Settodicato’s focus on furthering a mission of diversity and inclusion makes their pop-up program a unique contribution to this body of outreach work. Additionally, it reflects Gofman and Settodicato’s commitment to highlighting social justice and diversity, and it positions the library as an important resource in that arena. Their program served as one of the primary inspirations for the pop-up library program at UArk, and it is the authors’ hope that the UArk program will help to fill this gap in the literature and provide an additional model for similar programming.

## **Overview of the Roles, Programming, and Local Context**

Founded in 1871, UArk is a public, land-grant research university located in Fayetteville, Arkansas. As the flagship campus of the University of Arkansas

System, it is the largest university in the state with an enrollment of 27,000 students. UArk Libraries comprise the David W. Mullins Library, which serves as the main research library on campus; the Robert A. and Vivian Young Law Library; the Fine Arts Library; the Chemistry and Biochemistry Library; and the Physics Library. Mullins Library houses most of the liaison librarians under the Research and Learning Division. It also houses the Special Collections Division, which was created in 1967 to encourage research and writing on the history and culture of Arkansas and the surrounding region.

The Librarian in Residence (LIR) is a post-MLIS, non-tenure track residency program at the UArk Libraries that was established in 2007 and designed to be an early-career introduction to academic librarianship. The current LIR began her residency in the summer of 2017 and will conclude it in 2020. In addition to completing rotations in several departments within the Libraries, the LIR acts as the outreach and engagement liaison for several groups across campus that support diversity initiatives: the Center for Multicultural and Diversity Education (Multicultural Center), the Office for Diversity and Inclusion, the Office for International Education, and various registered student organizations and community groups that serve or support underrepresented or historically marginalized populations. The LIR also manages the Diversity Collection—a grant-funded circulating collection of materials to support diversity and inclusion. The fund is not directly allocated to academic subjects or departments and can be used to purchase a broad range of materials with the goal of highlighting underrepresented stories, publishers, authors, and media. The Diversity Collection has been used to purchase translations of new authors, documentaries, and book club materials for registered student organizations, as well as monographs from independent book publishers focused on specific issues such as Indigenous sovereignty or Black feminism. Due to the flexible nature of the LIR program and the Diversity Collection, the LIR actively seeks out partnerships with campus and student organizations as part of a collaborative and responsive collection development practice in which staff and students are encouraged to suggest new purchases.

The Research & Educational Services Archivist (RES Archivist) is a tenure-track position in the Special Collections Division. Created in 2018 to help expand the division's instruction and outreach programs, the position provides research support to students and other patrons, oversees the division's exhibits team, and seeks new avenues for outreach on campus and in the wider Fayetteville community. While the RES Archivist does not play a liaison role for specific academic departments or campus organizations, one of the goals for the position is to cultivate new relationships with a wide range of campus and community stakeholders that have not traditionally accessed or been aware of Special Collections resources.

### **Background of the Project and Partnership with the Multicultural Center**

The LIR's closest liaison relationship is with the Multicultural Center. The center hosts a broad range of programs and events for a diverse student body, including La Oficina Latina, a bilingual support program for Latinx students and families; LGBTQIA+ mentoring programs; a Safe Zone Allies training program; and a number of student-success and mentorship initiatives designed for students of color and first-generation students from Arkansas. Since 2017, the LIR has worked with academic counselors at the Multicultural Center every summer to review their tentative programming calendar for the upcoming academic year and to explore ways the library can support that programming. The Center celebrates six cultural heritage months over the course of the

academic year and hosts a variety of workshops, performances, lectures, and other events throughout each heritage month.

One of the most popular recurring programs at the Multicultural Center is First Fridays, which are usually cosponsored by registered student organizations and campus partners. The first Friday of every month, the center invites departments across campus to set up tables in an open programming space in front of the Multicultural Center. The events feature performances, contest giveaways, and a catered lunch. When the LIR met with the academic counselors at the center in the summer of 2019, she suggested piloting a pop-up library program during First Fridays for the fall 2019 semester showcasing Diversity Collection materials related to each heritage month. The academic counselors were enthusiastic about hosting the pop-up and agreed to reserve a table for the library during each of the First Friday events.

In August of 2019, the LIR reached out to the RES Archivist to discuss the new outreach program she was piloting and to invite the RES Archivist to participate in the program by providing materials from Special Collections. The RES Archivist did initial research into the collections for each heritage theme, then met with the LIR to discuss the types of materials they planned to include each month and how to assess the impact of the pop-up library program.

### **Goals of the Pop-Up Library Pilot Program**

The goals of the pop-up libraries at the Multicultural Center were increasing the visibility of library resources and services, highlighting diverse library resources, encouraging interaction with students in a casual setting, and inviting students and staff to inform future collection development. An additional goal for the program was to help the LIR and RES Archivist to build new relationships with campus partners and registered student organizations. Creating displays of materials from the Diversity Collection allowed the LIR to showcase the collection and increase its visibility, as well as to informally survey students and staff on collection gaps to strengthen the relevance of the Diversity Collection.

Similarly, this pop-up series offered Special Collections a unique opportunity for outreach and potential collection development. The RES Archivist hoped these pop-up libraries would introduce special collections as a resource to a new student demographic and would demonstrate the diversity of individuals and communities represented by the collections. Additionally, the RES Archivist hoped the pop-ups would serve as an initial step toward working with student groups who might be interested in donating materials to the University Archives.

### **Planning the Pilot Program**

Unique aspects of the UArk pop-up library program include the partnership with the Multicultural Center, the program's focus on themes of diversity and inclusion, and the interactive components. The section below details the primary factors that were considered in planning the pilot: location and timing, promotion, materials, and interactive components.

#### ***Location and Timing***

One of the key considerations for piloting any new outreach or engagement program is the location and timing; many studies on the efficacy of pop-up programming have cited these factors as having an influence on a program's success (Anderson, Bull, and Cooper 2014; Barnett, Bull, and Cooper 2016). Partnering with the Multicultural Center provided the LIR and RES Archivist with an established and popular venue in which to test out this new outreach

program. The Multicultural Center is centrally located in the UArk Student Union building and includes a conference room; a large student lounge with booths, tables, and chairs; a classroom; and a programming space, as well as free snacks and coffee. The spaces can be booked by student groups and enjoy a heavy amount of traffic from passers-by as well as regularly scheduled programming. The pop-ups were located in the communal area outside of the center, a space that sees high levels of traffic during the day and where students often study. As it's a place where students gather informally, this location for the pop-up was particularly well suited to encourage casual interaction between students and library staff.

The pop-up library was on display from noon to 1:30 p.m. on the first Friday of each month from September through November and February through March. Partnering with an existing catered program—the Multicultural Center's First Fridays—was especially helpful in maximizing engagement numbers for the pop-up as it attracted many students and allowed the LIR and RES Archivist to reserve their programming budgets for other events.

### ***Promotion***

Advance promotion of pop-up libraries is a factor that has generated debate in the literature. Some have suggested that the unexpectedness of a pop-up generates its own buzz, thereby minimizing the need and effectiveness of advance promotion (Davis et al. 2015). However, librarians at the University of Birmingham received feedback from students recommending advance promotion (though, notably, they found no evidence that students visited the pop-up libraries as a result of advance promotion) (Barnett, Bull, and Cooper 2016).

The Multicultural Center already had a robust promotion schedule for First Friday events that included posters, social media posts, and direct marketing via their GroupMe threads and e-mail listservs; thus, the authors decided to do minimal promotion through the University Libraries. The LIR worked with the UArk Libraries' Director of Public Relations in the summer of 2019 to integrate promotion of the pop-up library into the Libraries' event calendar and social media feeds at least two weeks in advance of each event. The director then reached out to the Multicultural Center's PR coordinator to share and synchronize their promotion schedules and materials before the academic year started. For the fall 2019 pop-up, the Libraries' PR director designed a small poster that outlined each of the dates of the pop-ups. This was found to be redundant, however, given the Center's existing marketing, and a poster was not designed for spring 2020. It was also decided that the pop-up libraries would not be included on the Libraries' public events calendar to avoid confusion since they were not being hosted in the Library. As day-of social media posts have been shown to be the most successful promotion mechanism (Barnett, Bull, and Cooper 2016), photos of the LIR and the RES Archivist at the pop-up library were posted to the Libraries' Instagram and Facebook accounts on the day of the events. Otherwise, the pop-up library relied on the Multicultural Center's existing PR channels and materials to promote attendance.

### ***Materials***

In order to encourage student interaction and to increase visibility of the library's collections, each pop-up library featured a selection of books from the library's Diversity Collection, as well as a display of original materials from Special Collections that focused on the heritage theme of that month. The inclusion of library materials was an important aspect of the pop-up as



the literature suggests the ability to physically interact with materials is key to the pedagogical impact of pop-up libraries. At the pop-ups, visitors interact with library materials in new ways, which sparks conversations with library staff and fosters a more equitable relationship between visitor and staff, rather than the traditional expert/novice relationship between librarian and student (Settodicato 2017).

The LIR selected books from the Diversity Collection based on a range of criteria, including accessibility of content and book cover design, with the thought that visually appealing materials might attract more students. Classic works (such as *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*) as well as recently published works were included. At UArk, nearly all hardcover books have their book jackets removed during cataloging, so the LIR recreated these covers for the pop-up libraries in the hopes of enticing students' interactions with the materials. Digital materials such as e-books and documentaries streaming from the Libraries' databases were featured on an iPad included in the display.

Special Collections materials were selected according to similar criteria. The RES Archivist wanted to include a variety of materials from a range of time periods, such as handwritten documents, photographs, and ephemera. Only materials that were in suitable condition to be handled were included. Whenever possible, the RES Archivist made a point to include materials created by members of a specific community, rather than materials created by others about that community. This was an important distinction to make, given that one of the goals of the program was to demonstrate the diversity of the Libraries' collections. The RES Archivist did not include any written information about the objects at the first pop-up, but decided it was important to provide additional context for the materials in ensuing pop-ups. Written labels also allowed for more passive engagement from students if they preferred to browse rather than to talk with library staff.

The authors provided only limited promotional materials at the pop-up libraries lest they detract from the library materials and interactive components that were available. The RES Archivist brought promotional pamphlets about Special Collections to each pop-up library, as well as the business card of the University Archivist in an effort to encourage leaders of student groups to consider donating materials to the University Archives. Relatively few visitors chose to take either of these materials, however. The LIR brought promotional pencils to the first pop-up library, but promotional materials were not provided at the ensuing pop-ups due to limited supplies.

### *Interactive Components*

Taking cues from the literature on pop-up libraries that feature interactive components (Lotts 2015; Lotts and Maharjan 2018), each pop-up library at the Multicultural Center included a button maker and a rolling whiteboard, which were used to encourage additional student interaction. This combination of interactive components offered both active (button making) and passive (whiteboard feedback) engagement options to accommodate a diversity of student preferences. Students could choose from a variety of button options featuring images from Special Collections materials, such as student newspapers and yearbooks, or different versions of the Razorback, the mascot of the University of Arkansas. The buttons served a dual purpose by offering an engaging activity for students and increasing the visibility of Special Collections as a resource.

The LIR wrote questions on a rolling whiteboard that was set up next to the pop-up library at each event and provided whiteboard markers for visitors to respond. Sometimes the questions were library-oriented: for Latinx Heritage

Month, students were asked about their favorite Latinx author; for LGBTQ History Month, students were asked about a favorite book that deals with LGBTQ issues. For Women's History Month, students were asked to name a strong woman they looked up to. Some months, the LIR invited visitors to suggest authors, books, music, or films to add to the Diversity Collection. In other months, the whiteboards were used to display posters the LIR created highlighting library resources. For Native American Heritage Month, the LIR designed a poster featuring films by and about Indigenous people; the poster included QR codes that linked to the library catalog entry so students could use their phones to access the films online. Black History Month included a poster that featured book covers related to Black history and culture from the Diversity Collection; students were provided gold star stickers to vote on books that should be included in a Black History Month reading list hosted on the library's website, and they could use sticky notes to suggest additional titles.

### ***Assessment Methodology***

Although two case studies from the literature on pop-up libraries utilized surveys to assess the success of their pop-up programs, the authors decided against administering a formal survey given the inconsistent completion rates of surveys by students (Anderson, Bull, and Cooper 2014; Barnett et al. 2016). Additionally, the authors felt that administering a survey would detract from the more casual atmosphere of the First Friday events at which the pop-ups were hosted. Instead, recording student interactions during each event was the main form of assessment for the five pop-up libraries. Student interaction was measured according to three metrics: the number of students who looked at the display, the number of students who spoke with staff, and the number of students who took promotional materials. The authors also recorded the total number of students who visited the pop-up. These metrics were based in part on Ari Gofman and Liz Settoducato's poster presentation at the 2019 ACRL New England Chapter Annual Conference. The metrics were designed to provide data on the intended goals for the pilot, specifically those related to increasing visibility of the collections and encouraging student interaction in a casual setting outside the library. During events, either the RES Archivist or the LIR tallied interactions on a form that included the name and date of each event and the three metrics described above. The UArk Libraries use the Springshare platform LibApps to record data for a range of measures, including outcomes of outreach events. Following each pop-up library, the LIR or RES Archivist recorded the information from the assessment form in a LibInsights electronic form. The same information was also recorded in Special Collections' LibWizard exhibits form, which is used to track Special Collections' exhibit work. The metrics for student interactions from each pop-up is in Table 1.

### **Pilot Program Outcomes**

#### ***Total Student Attendance and Pop-Up Library Display Viewings***

First Fridays were part of a recurring series organized by the Multicultural Center; thus student interaction with the pop-up library was relatively consistent across individual events with an average of forty-two students visiting the pop-up across the five events. The LGBTQ History Month and Black History Month events experienced the highest volume of visitors with fifty students, faculty, or staff visiting the pop-up at each event. A majority of visitors to those pop-ups—indeed, to all of the pop-ups—actively viewed the displays. The LGBTQ pop-up display attracted the highest number views with 100 percent of visitors (all 50 students who visited) looking at it.

The Native American Heritage Month event experienced the lowest numbers of visitors with twenty students, faculty, or staff visiting and viewing the display. This dip in attendance may have been affected by the timing of the event: the beginning of November tends to be a busier period academically for students with midterm exams and larger assignments due. Additionally, while most First Friday events are cosponsored by student groups, the Native

<b>Pop-up theme</b>	<b>Looked at display</b>	<b>Talked to staff</b>	<b>Took promotional materials</b>	<b>Total students who visited the pop-up</b>
Latinx Heritage	42	35	Not recorded	47
LGBTQ History	50	40	31	50
Native American Heritage	20	20	12	20
Black History	37	26	7	50
Women's History	40	38	38	45

Table 1. Assessment of student interaction at first Friday pop-up libraries, 2019–2020 academic year

*NOTE:* The Multicultural Center's Asian Pacific Heritage Month events were canceled due to COVID-19; no pop-up library was held.

American Student Association (NASA) did not participate in the Native American Heritage Month First Friday events due to a transition in NASA's student leadership in fall 2019, and to Indigenous Peoples' Day in October having occupied most of their programming capacity.

### *Verbal Interactions with Staff*

Across all of the events, staff experienced meaningful verbal interactions with visitors; 75 percent of all students who visited the pop-up library also talked with the staff. Some of the best indicators of the success of the pop-up library came from students' comments, which tended to fall into one of two categories: (1) increased awareness of library resources and services and (2) suggestions of subjects, authors, and genres for the collections—a category the authors summarize as collection development. Many students relayed that they had been unaware of the Libraries' Special Collections or Diversity Collection and they asked for more information about accessing these materials. Over the course of the pilot, students suggested at least sixty new titles and authors for the Diversity Collection. The Multicultural Center also worked hard to ensure that the campus partners hosting tables at these events had meaningful engagement with students. During a few First Fridays, the center designed a kind of scavenger hunt where students who got their ticket signed by exhibitors could put their names in drawings for prizes. This encouraged students to not only view the items on the table but to have more substantial interactions with the LIR and RES Archivist.

Although the Black History Month event experienced the lowest rate of verbal interactions with staff (52 percent), the interactions that the LIR did have

“The authors considered events with lower attendance a success because of the quality of the interactions with visitors to the pop-up.”

with students were particularly meaningful, especially in terms of collection development. During the event, students recommended the names of forty authors and titles that were later added to the Black History Month reading list. Many of the authors were represented in the Diversity Collection, though specific titles from their oeuvres might have been missing. For example, Zadie Smith’s 2000 novel *White Teeth* had been included as one of the covers the students could vote on, however many students suggested Smith’s 2005 novel *On Beauty* also be included. Students suggested new avenues for the LIR to explore in terms of developing the collection, such as the Nipsey Hussle Marathon Book Club. Nipsey Hussle was an influential community activist and rapper based in the Crenshaw neighborhood of Los Angeles when he was fatally shot in March 2019. In response to his death, small reading groups formed in 2019 dedicated to reading the books that inspired Hussle or that

he had mentioned in interviews or his music. These groups often refer to themselves as the “Marathon Book Club” after Hussle’s influential brand (Jennings 2020). While no official chapter of the Marathon Book Club had been started at UArk, several student leaders mentioned this list of classic, contemporary, and independently published Black authors as being important and

of interest to them. The LIR then sought out titles and authors from the Nipsey Hussle Reading List to fill potential gaps in the Diversity Collection (Malik Books 2020).

The authors considered events with lower attendance a success because of the quality of the interactions with visitors to the pop-up. The highest rate of interaction with staff among students who visited the pop-up (100 percent) was at the Native American Heritage event, although this event also had the lowest number of interactions recorded (20 students). Despite the lower overall student attendance at this event, the staff had meaningful interactions with students, Indigenous community members, and Indigenous faculty and staff for whom the pop-up library sparked conversations about their own experiences of being Indigenous at UArk. Due to the smaller size of the event, the LIR and RES Archivist were able to engage with everyone who visited the pop-up, which was more difficult during busier events when many visitors viewed the display simultaneously.

### ***Engagement with Interactive Components and Promotional Materials***

All but one First Friday event featured the Special Collections button maker and a selection of free buttons for students to take. The pop-up library in February did not include the button maker because the RES Archivist—who provides the tool—was unable to attend, but a small number of pre-made buttons were available. The inclusion of the button maker appears to have had a positive impact on student engagement with the pop-up, though data collected on this metric was incomplete, since the button maker was not available at the Black History Month event. At events where data on this metric was collected, 60 to 80 percent of all attendees took a button. On average, 65 percent of students who came to the table for a button had a substantive verbal interaction with the RES Archivist or LIR about library resources and services. Because of its inclusion in multiple library events, the button maker has become a recognizable feature for students, and several students began commenting that they had already “collected” the buttons that were regularly available. To meet this demand, the RES Archivist created a few new button templates to offer at the Women’s History pop-up.

In addition to the button maker, the RES Archivist and the LIR utilized a rolling white board as an informal method of assessing student engagement, although specific numbers of how many students wrote on the board were not regularly recorded, and the questions and levels of engagement for the whiteboard varied each month. For example, during Latinx Heritage Month, the board asked “Who is your favorite Latinx author?” and over twenty-six names were written, from historical Latin American authors such as the Argentine novelist Julio Cortazar and Honduran writer Froylán Turcios, to contemporary authors Junot Díaz and Sandra Cisneros. While whiteboard interactions were not tallied during this pilot program, if the program were to continue, recording this interaction would yield valuable insight into students’ interactions with the pop-up library.

During the Black History Month event, the poster designed by the LIR to solicit feedback on which books should be included in a Black History Month reading list saw high levels of interaction. Approximately thirty students voted by placing gold star stickers next to their favorite books listed on the poster. These titles were then compiled into a gallery on the Diversity and Inclusion Research Guide on the Libraries’ website; a link to the reading list was distributed through the Multicultural Center’s social media channels and the Black UArk faculty listserv, as well by email to the Black Student Caucus membership and the African American Studies Department. While posing questions or having students vote on topics using the whiteboard resulted in high levels of student engagement, the QR codes and digital content on the iPad were less successful. Given the time and energy it took to create QR codes and curate digital content, the authors are likely to skip this step in the next stages of planning. If by the end of a First Friday event the boards were full of thoughtful responses and comments by students, the authors considered the event to be a success.

## **Future Directions**

### *Assessment*

Upon reviewing the pop-up library pilot at the Multicultural Center in 2019-2020, the authors can offer suggestions for future directions. First, develop robust metrics to determine whether the pop-ups are driving more visitors to the library and its collections. Defining “outreach outcomes” is one way to do this: similar to learning outcomes, outreach outcomes are specific outcomes that allow for more targeted assessment and data collection (German and Lemire, 2018). For the pop-up pilot, the authors had broad goals; defining outreach outcomes would allow for the collection of more specific assessment data in the future. The authors would also collect data on the responses students left on the whiteboard as an additional assessment metric.

Second, examining the circulation statistics of the Diversity Collection to identify check-out trends related to heritage months and the circulation history of books featured in the pop-up libraries may also provide data on the impact of the program. Adding a portable method for students to check out books during the pop-up library would provide an easy way to track circulation statistics directly related to this programming. Assessing the impact in Special Collections may be more difficult, but the RES Archivist could use call slips filled out by patrons to track whether materials used in the pop-up libraries were accessed more frequently following the First Friday events. Patron registration could be tracked to determine if higher numbers of students were registering as users in Special Collections; however, to tie this information to the pop-up library, the call slip would need to be altered to collect information on how students heard about Special Collections. Many students access the

collections and it would be difficult to determine their reasons for visiting Special Collections.

Finally, while the authors chose not to administer a survey during the pilot of this program, designing a quick, easy survey that visitors could respond to during events would enable the authors to gather data directly from visitors. Having a work-study student or a third colleague tasked with recording more in-depth assessment metrics during a pop-up library event would allow the LIR and RES Archivist to focus solely on interacting with visitors, which may provide more accurate data on student interaction during the pop-up libraries.

### ***Guest Curators***

Seeking out partnerships with faculty, registered student organizations, and other campus partners to have guest curators for pop-up libraries could also increase engagement with library materials and add perspectives and voices beyond those of the LIR and RES Archivist. At the Tisch Library of Tufts University, librarians Gofman and Settoducato (2018) emphasized the ability of pop-up libraries to strengthen existing partnerships with entities on campus that support social justice and diversity initiatives. In future iterations of the program, the authors plan to reach out to diversity groups on campus such as the Center for Educational Access, the PRIDE student organization, or the Black Student Caucus, to do joint programming at the Multicultural Center and cross-promote the services and resources these organizations offer to the UArk community. Ideally, offering guest curator roles for credit as a part of coursework or as volunteer hours recognized by a registered student organization would ensure that guest curators are motivated and compensated for their time. The RES Archivist would also like to pursue involving student workers from Special Collections as guest curators in the future.

### ***Social Media***

As a part of the pop-up libraries events, the authors have largely relied on the existing strength and popularity of the Multicultural Center's outreach on social media to draw students to the pop-up library. In the future, the LIR and RES Archivist would want to work with the Libraries' PR director to be more proactive in promoting the pop-up libraries. Featuring the items on display in the pop-up libraries on social media both in advance of and after events may lead to increased interest and engagement in person and on social media platforms. Creating thematic social media content based on the Multicultural Center's recognized heritage months may also drive more awareness and traffic towards library resources, even if it did not drive up attendance at the pop-up library itself.

### ***Takeaways and Conclusions***

The pop-up library pilot program at the UArk Multicultural Center highlights several aspects of pop-up programming that others seeking to implement similar programs might consider in their own outreach efforts. Specifically, the authors found that including physical library materials, as well as a quick activity, had a positive impact on the level of engagement with librarians or library staff. Engaging with a library book, a primary source, or even a question posed on a whiteboard often leads to more substantial verbal interactions with library staff. Additionally, partnering with other campus or community organizations' events can help to increase library visibility and drive up the numbers of individuals one can reach in each outreach event.

The integration of diversity and inclusion goals served as a powerful factor in this pilot. It opened avenues for conversations with a diverse

group of community members who saw themselves and their communities represented in library materials. While the pop-up library program at the UArk Multicultural Center focused specifically on heritage months, the authors encourage those considering their own pop-up programs to include materials from a diverse group of authors, whatever the focus of their pop-up libraries might be.

Overall, the authors believe the pop-up library program piloted at the University of Arkansas' Multicultural Center's First Friday events during the 2019–2020 academic year was successful in many ways. Through the pilot, the authors were able to increase student awareness of Special Collections and the Diversity Collection as evidenced by the high levels of meaningful interaction the authors had with students during the events. Student recommendations highlighted collection gaps, which the LIR filled with strategic purchasing for the Diversity Collection. While the authors collected enough assessment data to draw initial conclusions about the positive impact of this pilot program, they seek to improve the quality of assessment data for future iterations of this program.

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## ARTICLE

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# Con-vergence: Bringing Libraries and Popular-Culture Conventions Together

## ABSTRACT

Popular-culture conventions (cons) can be powerful opportunities for library outreach, but they are underutilized or ignored by many libraries as a way to reach new audiences. This article summarizes the results of a survey of libraries concerning their own con attendance/non-attendance as well as perceived benefits and actual barriers to attending. We also discuss our own experiences attending cons, including lessons learned and benefits gained by our own institution.

## KEYWORDS

library outreach, popular culture, comic conventions, programming, libraries, communities

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Libraries have a strong tradition of being involved in community activities and finding ways to bring collections and services to their users. As libraries expand their holdings of popular-culture material beyond genre fiction to include graphic novels, video games, movies, board games, role-playing game manuals, and other items, popular-culture conventions become a new venue for outreach, education, and professional development. We define popular-culture conventions (cons) as organized events in which fans of a particular film, television series, comic book, actor, or an entire genre of entertainment (such as science fiction, anime, and manga) gather to participate and hold programs and other events, and to meet experts, scholars, famous personalities, and each other.<sup>1</sup>

Our institution, Cushing Memorial Library & Archives at Texas A&M University, is one of the genre’s major collecting repositories, with over 50,000 items in its Science Fiction & Fantasy Research Collection (SFFRC). Consisting of books, manuscripts, archival collections of authors and other creators, comic books and graphic novels, maps, pulp magazines, and fanworks such as fanzines, fanvids, and filksong (folk songs relating to science fiction or fantasy), the SFFRC is a popular collection that we routinely promote at cons. We have attended cons—small and large, local and across the country—as representatives of our library. Attending cons has proven to be an excellent outreach activity; we are repeatedly struck by the enthusiasm shown for libraries in general and for our specific collections by con attendees. We identify both as librarians and as fans, and in our professional work these identities

1 Our definition of cons expands on the definition from Wikipedia’s Fan convention entry. “Fan convention,” Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Fan\\_convention&oldid=930400322](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Fan_convention&oldid=930400322).

speak to and inform each other. Our fannish enthusiasm and interests are, happily, consistent with our collection development policies. They motivate much of our outreach, and that outreach has, in turn, fostered connections with fellow fans of all genders, sexual orientations, cultural backgrounds, ages, and interests. Those connections have led to more interest in visiting the library, in using our materials, and in donating new materials that enhance the collection—a complete outreach circle!

We suggest, based on our personal observations and on the data collected during our survey, that libraries with popular-culture materials have a presence at cons. There are many benefits to participating in a con: cons serve as outreach venues, professional development and networking opportunities, and sites for both collection- and donor-relations development. We recognize there are barriers, such as cost or perceived irrelevancy, that prevent librarians from attending cons as representatives of their institutions; we hope to provide both evidence and ideas that help reduce or eliminate those barriers. Additionally, we will provide examples of ways other libraries are participating in cons and share our own con success stories. We gathered this information by surveying libraries and documenting our own personal observations.

Personal experience, coupled with a general professional curiosity, formed the motive and basis for this study. We did not intend this study to answer a particular problem that was calling out for an immediate solution; rather, we see our investigations here as the exploratory foundation for further research into a question that interests us and has the potential to increase outreach options for institutions looking to extend their public presence. This study and its practical applications are rooted in our own experiences working with cons and the people who attend them, associations we have found personally rewarding and reputationally profitable. We believe such associations will be equally beneficial for other institutions; this initial study is an attempt to chart the institutional ecosystem encompassing cons and libraries as it now exists, and to lay the groundwork for solid data that library staff and administrators can use when looking to establish their presence at cons.

## Literature Review

The literature on library outreach has grown increasingly robust in the last few decades, much of it concerned with traditional outreach activities such as exhibits, book discussions, provision of library cards to people outside the defined patron communities, a stronger online presence, the establishment of cooperative consortia, and in-library events. Our research question for this piece is framed in terms of investigating spaces where librarians perform outreach outside their traditional environments—outside their “comfort zones”; therefore, we do not explore the wider issue of general library and archives outreach.

It’s important to note here the work of Shannon L. Farrell and Kristen Mastel (2016) who grouped library outreach activities into general categories that can be used by institutions to help shape their outreach strategies in the context of their missions or programmatic motivations. The categories are Collection-Based Outreach, Instruction & User Services-Based Outreach, “Whole Person” Outreach, Just-for-Fun Outreach, Partnerships and Community-Focused Outreach, and Multi-Pronged Themed Events and Programming. It is a reasonably comprehensive categorization of the outreach environment, which is why we cite it here. However, we also note that all of these outreach categories

“This initial study is an attempt to chart the institutional ecosystem encompassing cons and libraries as it now exists, and to lay the groundwork for solid data that library staff and administrators can use when looking to establish their presence at cons.”

are library-centered, that is, they are designed to be conducted primarily within the walls of the institution itself. We find this same institutional centering in the majority of the literature related to outreach. While we certainly are not decrying these kinds of activities—far from it!—librarians' engagement with different communities may require stepping outside their comfort zones and meeting these communities where they gather.

There is a paucity of research in the literature on the effectiveness of librarians functioning as roving ambassadors to expand their patron populations.<sup>2</sup> The occasional piece outside of the professional literature discusses this need to varying degrees. For example, Butch Lazorchak of the Library of Congress highlights the importance of librarians' presence at the massive South By Southwest (SXSW) festival in Austin, Texas noting, "it's one thing to attend panels and participate on the edges; it's quite another to drive conversations and be active participants. LAMs [Libraries, Archives, and Museums] can occasionally isolate themselves in their own communities, but SXSW forces LAMs out of that comfort zone and puts them in contact with like-minded people who might not have the exact same perspective as LAMs but have shared interests and are looking to solve some of the same problems." (Lazorchak 2013) However, this sort of guidance is rare.

There is little in the library literature relating to the connections between librarians and popular-culture conventions beyond anecdotal and usually brief descriptions. Both *Library Journal* and *Publishers Weekly* have presented brief reports of librarians' presence at major cons such as San Diego Comic-Con (SDCC) and New York Comic-Con (NYCC). There is certainly value in having this information, if only to affirm that libraries and cons are a natural partnership (demonstrated by, for example, NYCC's introduction of special badges for librarians in 2017). These brief pieces also provide examples—though with little enough detail—of con panel topics relating to libraries, which can be helpful to librarians seeking guidance for their own con activities. In the end, however, they are not substantive. An exception is a 2015 *American Libraries* article that discusses how libraries can facilitate pop culture events that are cheaper and easier for fans to attend than the traditional giant cons. The piece quotes librarian Sarah Hall: "I think rural communities are the best place for libraries to host conventions. . . . There isn't anywhere else nearby [with whom] patrons can get their nerdy on. This gives them a safe environment to meet others with similar interests without having to travel for hours or pay exorbitant rates to attend." (Rogers-Whitehead 2015) Several successful examples of library-run cons are given, as well as a list of typical con activities a library might choose to engage in as part of its event. Ian Chant's 2016 *Library Journal* article makes a similar case, pointing out the kinds of advantages these events offer, including energizing and reaching new user groups, reducing the "stuffy librarian" stereotype, and increasing awareness of the richness of library collections. Heidi MacDonald (2014) stresses these advantages as well, paying particular attention to library cons' ability to serve as marketing platforms by comics retailers and publishers, increasing the levels of direct outreach between these creators and library patrons.

However, few articles have been written which provide any kind of thorough, practical grounding in the subject of library outreach through convention attendance and participation. Interestingly, events related to anime and comics have produced the largest number of case studies, reflecting perhaps the wide

2 In conducting this literature review, we used a combination of searching under *Library Literature* in JSTOR and numerous Google searches using combinations and variations of relevant search terms such as outreach, publicity, comfort zones, marketing, and so on. We received thousands of returns, the vast majority of which proved to be irrelevant or insignificant to our study.

popularity of these genres. Nina Exner (2012) in *North Carolina Libraries* details the involvement of North Carolina Research Triangle-area libraries with the annual anime event Animazement, including Wake County Public Libraries' embedded presence at the con through hosting a manga reading room. Exner points out that North Carolina libraries seized on Animazement, as well as other anime and science fiction cons, as fertile and effective ground for increased library outreach. She also observes that libraries need not rely on large-scale events like SDCC; there are advantages to participating in smaller venues. Institutions limited by distance or relative isolation can coordinate with fans who are hampered by the same barriers. "Outside of the largest cities, people often feel that it is difficult to find events and gatherings of common interest. These smaller conventions represent efforts to remedy this lack and show the diversity of interests among the fan community. They also represent a great opportunity for programming, outreach, and [a] better understanding of teen and adult fans." (Exner 2012, 30) Exner's piece is unique in the available literature for its focus on library participation in outside cons (rather than in cons organized by libraries), a subject that deserves greater investigation.

An article from *Young Adult Library Services* by Brehm-Heeger, Conway, and Vale (2007) also describes the fruitful connections possible between a library (in this case, a branch of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County [PLCH] in Ohio) and the anime fan community, specifically its young fans. PLCH has been running anime clubs at this branch with activities that include cosplay events, teen-only gaming nights, and sending enthusiastic librarians (with the support of teen patrons) to anime cons in order to expand their understanding of the anime subculture. Paula J. Knipp et al. (2015) published a valuable study detailing a 2014 public-academic collaboration between Florida's Palm Harbor Library and the St. Petersburg College Tarpon Springs Campus library in which they created a large-scale, multi-day anime and comic con (ACEcon). The article makes clear the advantages of pop culture-related programming to different kinds of libraries, particularly when multiple institutions collaborate: greater attendance at collaborating facilities, increased public visibility, and tighter links with the local community.

We did find a limited number of targeted studies in our search of the literature. Schneider and Cannon (2020) published an article that used quantitative data gathered through surveying attendees at the 2019 Tampa Bay Comic Convention. Unlike our own survey (described below), which was designed to elicit the attitudes of librarians towards actual and potential attendance at cons, Schneider and Cannon's study looked at con attendees' attitudes towards libraries and comic books. Both studies were designed to elicit new avenues for library outreach, although the Schneider and Cannon study deals specifically with comic book collections at libraries. Schneider and Cannon use data-driven evidence to suggest local comic cons have "real potential to reach patrons and encourage patrons to make more use of their local libraries."

In a broader study, librarian-bloggers Sophie Brookover and Elizabeth Burns produced *Pop Goes the Library* (2008), which explores how libraries can interact with and make use of popular culture in collection development, outreach, and programming. Brookover and Burns use as the backbone of their study a 2007 survey of more than 700 librarians that sought their opinions on how pop culture is defined, how libraries track pop culture interests among patrons and use that in building collections, how they market their pop culture collections, how they keep abreast of new developments, how they incorporate new IT trends, and how they choose the types of pop culture-related programming to engage in. The book is a useful guide for establishing

pop culture linkages between libraries and audiences, but it gives little attention to the type of targeted outreach we were looking for. Brookover and Burns point out the need for librarians to expand their horizons and their understanding of their collections and the patron groups they serve; they are also conscious of the constraints that may prevent a library from doing so, such budget, time, or institutional mission. Nevertheless, as they note, it is important that libraries not discount the drawing power of pop culture.

## **Our Research**

We conducted this study to gain a better understanding of attendance and non-attendance of libraries at cons, as well as the perceived barriers and benefits. More specifically, our study sought to answer these four questions: 1. Do libraries participate in cons? 2. If libraries do participate, how do they participate? 3. What value do libraries find in participation? 4. If libraries do not participate, what are the reasons for non-participation?

## **Methods**

We created a survey consisting of multiple choice and open-ended questions using the Qualtrics survey platform. The survey included twelve questions in total; however, respondents who indicated they do not attend cons as representatives of their library were asked to respond to only five questions, and respondents who have attended cons as representatives of their library were presented with nine questions. The survey was anonymous: we did not collect respondents' names or the names of the libraries they work for; we did collect the type of library the respondents work for and the respondents' organizational roles. The study was submitted to the University's Human Research Protection Program for IRB approval and determined to be exempt. (See Appendix for survey.)

We distributed the survey through listservs, social media, and direct email to selected libraries. We selected which listservs to target using the American Library Association's Electronic Discussion Lists database and filtering for groups that focus on graphic novels and popular culture, science fiction and fantasy, children's services, and marketing and outreach. The lists we selected for our survey were Graphic Novels and Comics in Libraries, ACRL Library Marketing and Outreach Interest Group, and Library and Information Technology Association's main list (LITA-L) as well as LITA's Imagineering Interest Group list. Additionally, the survey was distributed on several professional discussion lists for archivists: Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, Society of Southwest Archivists, and the Midwest Archives Conference.

Social media was also used to share the survey: we posted links to the survey on the library and archive-focused Facebook groups Library Think Tank - #ALATT, Archivists Think Tank, and SciFi Collection Libraries Consortium. The twenty-five largest public libraries in America were directly emailed the survey, most using email addresses identified for outreach or youth librarians. If a named individual's address was not listed on the library's website, the email was sent to the generic library address requesting it to be forwarded to the appropriate employee.

## **Results**

The survey was open for responses during the months of August–September 2019; 112 responses were received. The responses were reviewed for validity, which left 106 usable responses (Table 1). The survey responses were then analyzed, with open-ended responses coded into categories for analysis.

<b>Library Type</b>	<b>Attend</b>	<b>Do not Attend</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
Academic	9	49	58
Corporate	0	3	3
Government	0	1	1
Museum	1	1	2
Public	15	16	31
School	0	1	1
Special	1	8	9
Unspecified	0	1	1
Total	26	80	106

Table 1. Participation at popular-culture conventions by library type

Respondents reflected the range of library types, with responses received from employees at academic, public, special, corporate, museum, government, and school libraries. The majority of respondents, 75%, indicated that they do not attend cons as a representative of their library, while 25% reported attending cons.

Participants who reported attending cons as representatives of their library represented public libraries, academic libraries, museums, and special libraries. Employees of public libraries were the largest attending group, with fifteen individuals reporting that their library sends representatives. Academic libraries followed with nine individuals reporting attendance, and both museums and special libraries had one report of attendance each (Table 1).

Respondents who reported attending cons as a representative of their library were asked additional questions focusing on their participation at the con. These questions included the number of employees from their library that have attended cons (Figure 1), how far they have traveled in order to attend cons (Figure 2), and what activities they've taken part in at cons (Figure 3). These questions did not require responses from survey participants, and several respondents chose not to supply answers.

Public libraries, which send the largest number of people to conventions, were the only library type that reported sending a range of more than one to three employees to a single con event; several libraries in this group, in fact, reported sending seven or more employees. However, both academic and public libraries have participated in cons at the local, state, and national levels, and the one respondent representing special libraries indicated they have attended only a national-level con. Public libraries reported the largest number of local cons; this is not surprising, as reflected in our literature review. Staff from public libraries not only attended, but were also often involved in hosting local cons.

Of particular interest to us are the ways libraries participated at cons and why they attended. Academic, public, and special libraries reported participating

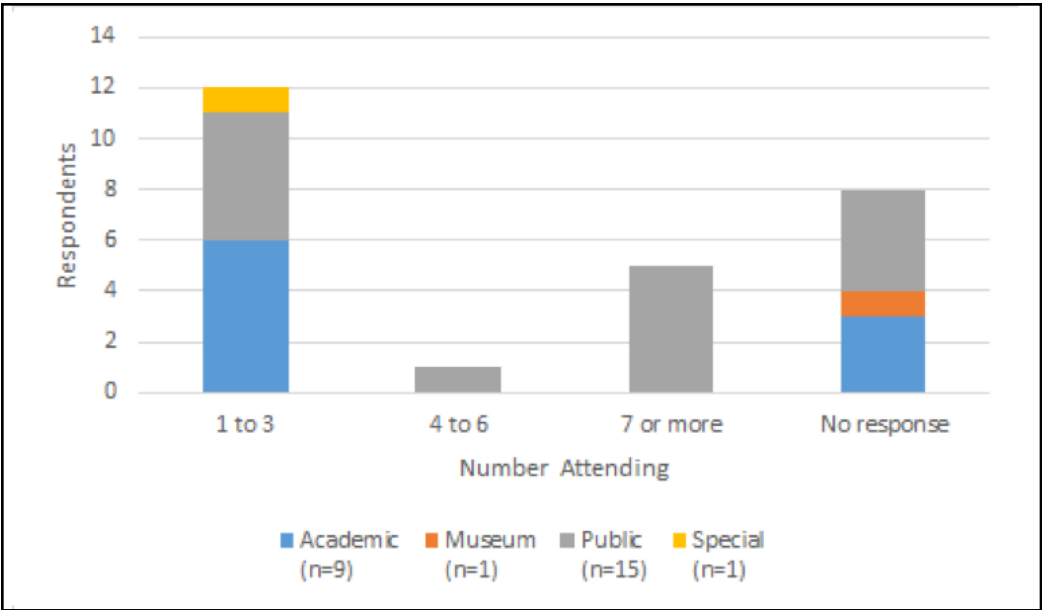


Figure 1. Number of staff in attendance by library type

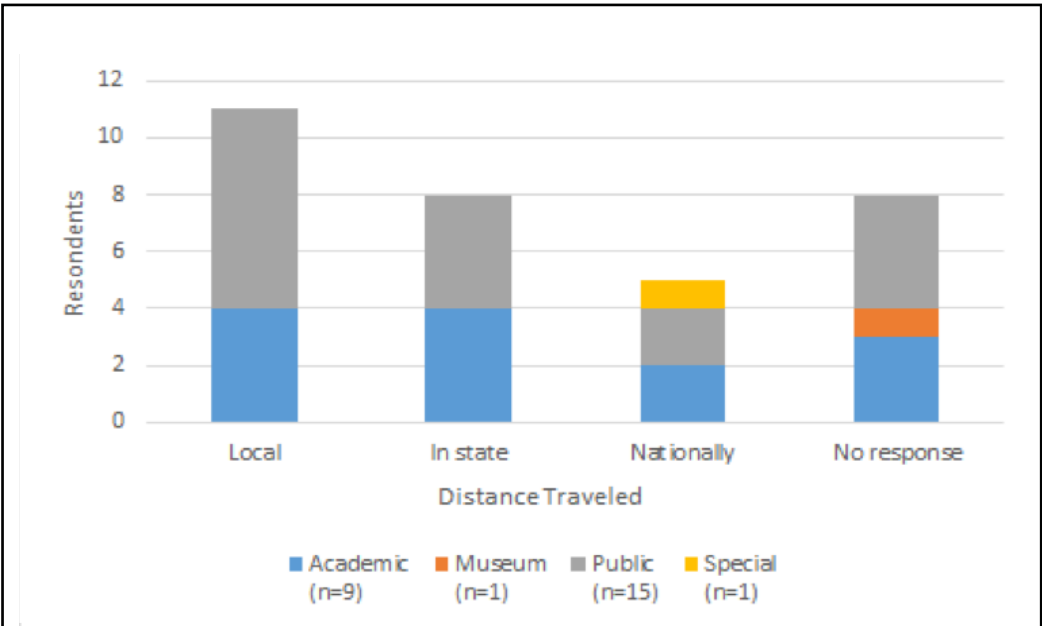


Figure 2. Distance traveled by library type

in a variety of ways, most commonly staffing a booth in the vendor/artist hall of the con and engaging as panelists at convention sessions. Respondents who chose the Other option were able to expand on the response in a free text field—one library respondent wrote that their employees “walk through and give out information about our library and invite participants and vendors to our own [con].” Respondents were also asked, in an open-text field, to describe the perceived benefits to their library of attending cons. Responses varied, but can be categorized into four themes: outreach, collection development, professional development, and networking (Figure 4). The most common responses centered on cons as outreach opportunities, with respondents stating that cons let them publicize library programming in a different venue and “reach non-traditional library customers.” The words and phrases market services, exposure, community engagement, and raise awareness were reported across all library types, highlighting cons as a venue for library outreach.



Several respondents highlighted the collection development benefits of attending cons, identifying them as events where they can “learn more about upcoming products the library may want to add to its collection” and as a placeto meet potential donors. Networking and professional development were also popular responses. One respondent noted, for example, that by attending cons they learn “from other libraries and campuses on their projects in relation to comic books and popular culture, and gain ideas from them,” and that they

Cons are akin to academic conferences these days. You attend panels to learn how researchers engage with pop culture and gain ideas about how to incorporate resources from your library into the curriculum or community. Cons are also one of the best places to do collection development and to network with potential donors. For universities with local cons, they can also be “town and gown” events where you build goodwill between the community and University.

Of all the library types represented in the responses, academic libraries represent the majority of those who answered “no” to the question of whether they had ever attended a con as part of their job. This is understandable considering academic libraries make up the majority of respondents overall

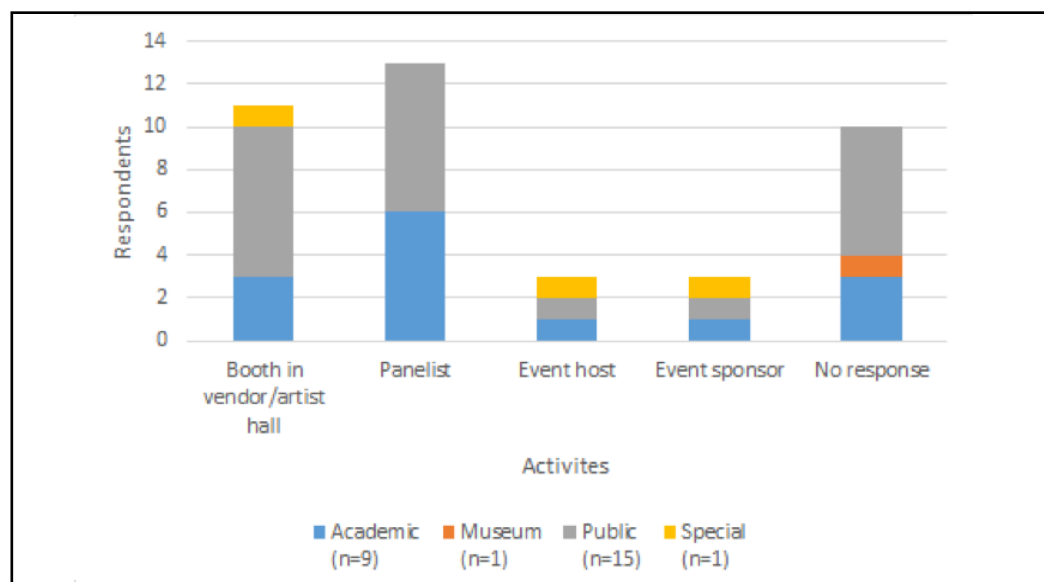


Figure 3. Con activities by library type

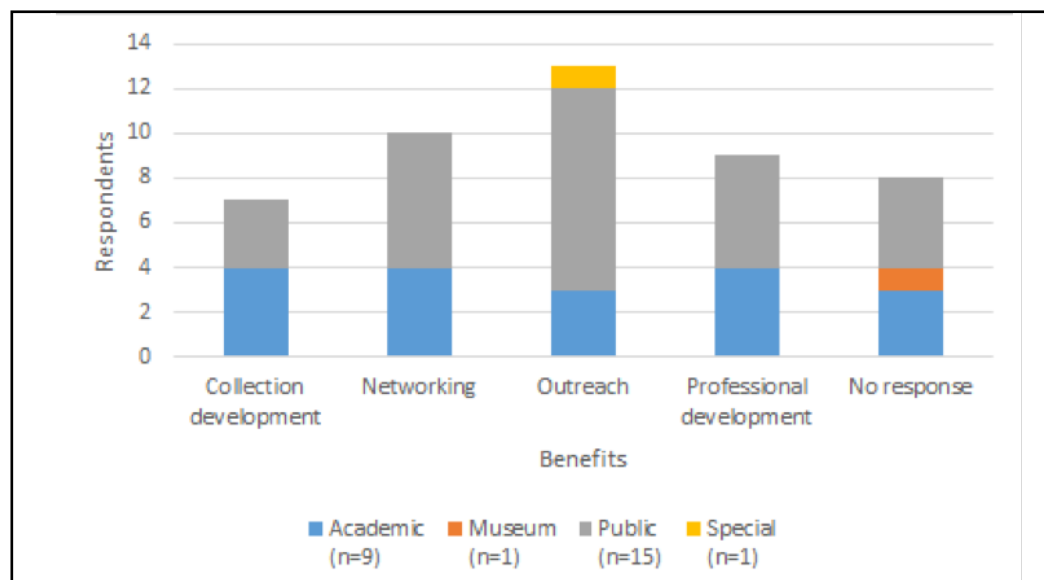


Figure 4. Percieved benefits of con participation by library types

(see Table 1). The preponderance of academic libraries that do not participate in cons is perhaps not surprising, given that these institutions tend to have specific missions geared towards serving a targeted user community. These kinds of institutional mandates often leave little room for more general interactions

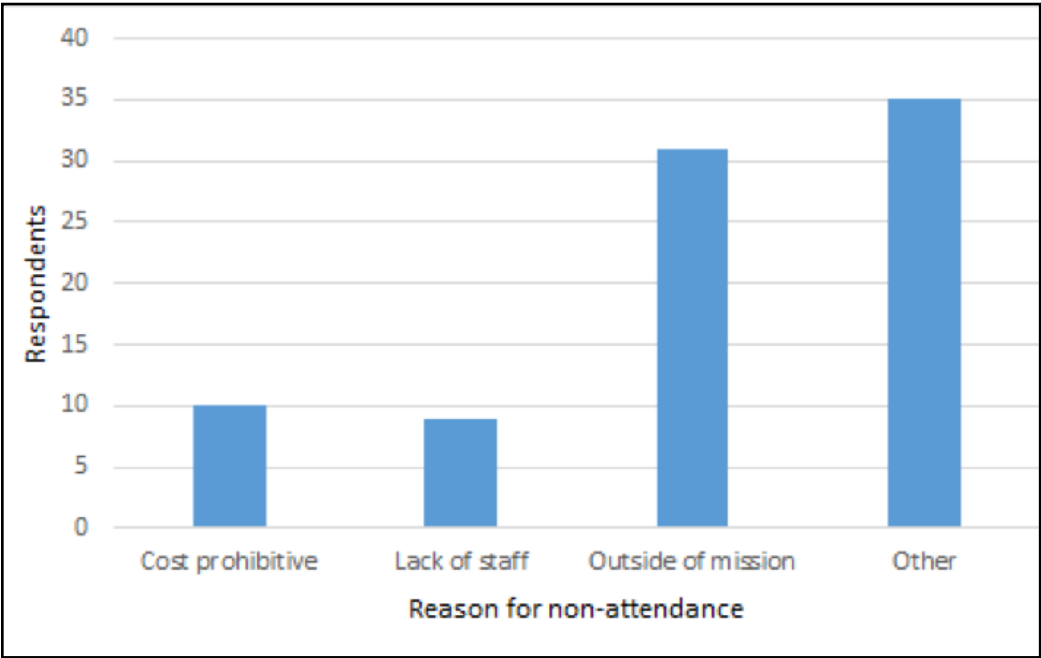


Figure 5. Reason for con non-attendance

with the public or with groups outside the campus community.<sup>3</sup> This barrier is perhaps reflected in responses to the question “Why have you not attended a con as a representative of your library?” (Figure 5).

Respondents were permitted to choose more than one answer from the given list, or to provide a different reason Other open-text field. Note that of the choices given, Outside of mission—whether alone or in concert with another choice—is the reason most often given. Furthermore, in almost every case where Outside of mission was selected as a reason, it was a staff member from an academic institution that did so. In addition, several of the Other answers that were elaborated upon in open text could be considered variations on the issue of mission scope: “The Director would not have thought it useful,” and “None [of the cons] that I know of [are] relevant to our collecting scope,” for example.

A number of responses given in this Other field conveyed a simple lack of knowledge that con attendance was even a possibility or a useful event. Some of these answers included “Not aware,” “I don’t think we’ve ever thought about this!” “Hasn’t come up as a possibility,” “Never thought about it!” “Never came up,” “Never crossed their mind,” and “Management does not understand why this could be a good thing.” This suggests that cons might do well to make their presence known to local or regional institutions, and individual library staff members might need to take the lead in offering con attendance as a possibility to their administrators.

3 Of course, we ourselves represent an academic library, and yet we pursue participation in cons. However, we acknowledge our library is something of an exception to the rule, given the nature of the collections we curate (science fiction and fantasy, imaginary maps, etc.), which fit well into the interests that drive cons. We are also fortunate to have an administration that understands the institutional value in our presence at cons. Not every academic library will have these advantages.

Although a lack of staff and prohibitive costs were also offered as reasons for non-attendance at cons, the percentage of these responses (and variations on them as given in the Other open-text field) fall far behind that of mission scope. Therefore, we find that the primacy of mission should pair with the evident enthusiasm that respondents had for the possibility of librarians attending cons; that is, libraries whose staff show an active interest in con attendance may need to change their formal missions accordingly. At the very least, assuming that institutional missions include as part of their mandate interaction with the public or their specific patron communities, that mandate could be imaginatively expanded to include cons.

There were thirty-four respondents who indicated they would consider attending a con as a representative of their library. Another twenty offered a qualified yes in that they signaled willingness given certain conditions. These types of qualified responses included comments like the following: "Only if it was appropriate and could be a learning experience," "Only if a student group on campus actively looked for representation in the library and a related con was in the area and not cost prohibitive," "Yes, if our materials complemented the programming," and "Yes, but most of the archival positions only last for a year. . . so management usually doesn't want to spend \$ on that." A clear minority answered "No." Allowing for self-selection, the data show that libraries overall see advantages in con attendance and would welcome an opportunity to become a part of con programming. Some institutions clearly require additional justification to do so, whether that be buy-in from the administration, or a new consideration or interpretation of the institutional mission. Overall, however, it is clear that the desire and the interest are already there; what remains is the will and commitment of resources.

## Discussion

The objective in developing this survey was to collect baseline data on attendance at cons by libraries. Based on our own experience, we expected the number of librarians participating in cons to be small. However, participation was reported by 25% of respondents, which was higher than we anticipated. We note that this result could be due in part to sampling bias as the survey was voluntary and distributed to targeted interest groups alongside broad library profession groups.

Academic libraries were the largest group to respond to the survey (58% of the total respondents), yet they reported only the second highest level of attendance at cons. Public libraries—representing 35% of respondents—reported the highest level of con attendance. It is not altogether surprising that these two library types reported the highest level of attendance: each typically collects material broadly across genres, and each serves a wide audience with varied interests. Additionally, the public libraries' focus on community partnership and programming lends to participation in community engagement events.

One theme that emerged across library types concerns non-attendance at cons due to such events lying outside of the library's mission. Additionally, several respondents indicated not attending due to a lack of relevancy to their collections. An in-depth analysis on library mission and collections as the impetus for participation at cons is beyond the scope of this study, however we acknowledge that mission and collection are at the center of library decision-making; they play a guiding role in deciding what services are offered and which events to participate in. We suggest that libraries interested in attending cons look to their mission and collections as a reason for attendance. Con attendance has bigger institutional implications than one might imagine. It is

unlikely that “attending public events such as conventions” is an explicit part of most institutional missions; thus the opportunity to attend a con can also be an opportunity for institutions to think more expansively and imaginatively about their mission.

A second theme we found in the data concerns the benefits of attending cons. Again, looking at the two library types reporting the largest attendance at cons—academic libraries and public libraries—we see 60% of responding public libraries indicated outreach as a primary benefit of attendance while only 33% of academic libraries reported the same. Perhaps this is because public libraries engage a wider range of patron groups—in theory, every member of the public—whereas academic libraries traditionally limit their outreach to their campus and research communities. The concept of proactive outreach to new and emerging communities may come more naturally to public libraries.

Further, academic libraries reported professional and collection development opportunities as benefits of attending cons at a higher rate than did other library types. We surmise this may be due to the disproportionately greater degree of access academic libraries have to resources that support attendance at events outside the home institution and to their larger collection budgets.

When reviewing the survey responses, we recall the wisdom Brookover and Burns (2008) share in calling for librarians who do not work with pop culture materials—or who simply do not like pop culture—to reconsider their view on pop culture materials and its value in libraries. The majority of our respondents have never been to a con as representatives of their institutions, most of them because such events lie outside their mission. However, many of them expressed the desire or willingness to go if the opportunity presented itself. As Brookover and Burns found in their survey responses, our respondents cited the constraints of budget, time, and institutional mission as barriers to establishing a con presence. Even with the presence of these constraints, we are gratified that so many of our respondents are excited by the prospect of connecting their libraries with pop culture communities.

The results from the survey are the first data points in understanding library participation at cons, and they open new lines of inquiry. For example, do libraries that attend cons see an increase in the use of popular-culture materials or foot traffic in general at their institutions after con attendance? For libraries that do not attend cons and expressed interest in doing so, what resources or tools could help support attendance? Additional surveying that focuses on answering these questions, and that gathers more robust data about respondents and their libraries, would provide a more detailed data set for understanding the benefit of participation to libraries and how these types of events fit within a library’s mission. Additionally, con organizers are another audience for future surveys: how many report libraries participating at their events, and do organizers see a benefit in having libraries present?

Texas A&M University is a Carnegie Research 1 University that has the resources to support travel and has a major library collection focused on popular culture. Together, the resources and collection emphasis have put annual attendance at multiple cons within easy reach for us. Other libraries with similar resources or collections are likely to find support for con attendance from their administration. For those libraries who are interested in attending cons—and our survey results suggest a high percentage of librarians are, indeed, interested—we offer five pieces of advice gained from our experience:

1. *Never feel reluctant to simply ask.*

Rarely are we approached by cons to attend—though it has happened. If your library builds up its con presence, it is more likely to happen to you. In

almost every case, from small con to large, we made the first move and asked the con organizers whether there might be a place for Cushing Library in its programming or in the Dealers Room (the con equivalent of a vendor hall). Moreover, in one case—at San Diego Comic-Con—we did not even ask; we just took our bundles of library swag and roamed the con. To date, no one has ever turned us down; in fact, our requests have always been met with enthusiasm and excitement. Yours will likely be as well, provided that you ask early on. Cons have reasonably strict deadlines for programming and other activities, so you will want to get started as early as you can. It is a tired old saying, but no less true: the worst thing they can do is say no.

## *2. You deserve to be there.*

Libraries are an important part of the community: our collections, services, and programming have a definite impact. Cons are an opportunity to share our expertise; attendees have demonstrated an interest in how we build collections, what we've learned from hosting gaming and manga events, and how they can discover more at the library. We have served as panelists, sitting beside creators, offering insights on how our profession collects and preserves pop culture materials. At a con, you will find yourself surrounded by authors, artists, cosplayers, and enthusiastic fan creators, and you may feel that you do not belong. We know that impostor syndrome is real; we've all felt it, whether at professional conferences or at cons. However, each time we go into a con, we remind one another that we have our own experiences and expertise to impart, as much as any other guest or attendee. We have a place there, too.

## *3. Cons like librarians.*

One of the most exciting aspects of cons is the welcoming nature of organizers and attendees. Schneider and Cannon (2020) demonstrate that con attendees are already primed to use libraries and appreciate librarians, and this is borne out in our own experiences at cons. When you go to a con identifying as a librarian, you are already a long way towards amassing goodwill. At every con we have attended, we've been met with enthusiasm, oftentimes feeling like a VIP. We joke that librarians are rock stars in the world of pop culture, and in many ways it is true. Did you know that as a library employee you qualify for free admission to San Diego Comic-Con? You still have to pay for your travel and lodging, but the entry fee is waived, and you are given access to the professional's lounge where you can network, grab a free cup of coffee, and kick back to relax. Many larger cons host a special library track, featuring panelists and presenters speaking directly to the unique and valuable asset libraries are to fandom.

## *4. There are many doorways.*

Cons provide a variety of ways for you to participate and present your library to an audience. We have sat on panels in our capacity as librarians/archivists and represented our institution that way. We have made more formal, conference-like presentations on various aspects of our collections. We have staffed tables in the Dealers Room where we have talked with visitors about our collections, given out swag and library exhibit catalogs, and provided a place to meet conversationally with potential patrons. In our experience, a presence in the Dealers Room is always a good idea because at a con, everyone visits the Dealers Room at some point. Moreover, it gets you that much closer to the merchandise for sale.

5. *There is a con for every library.*

The diversity of cons matches the diversity of our library collections and services. Your presence at any con will be welcome but picking the right con can truly highlight your library. There are cons that cover all aspects of fandom; if your library has a particularly large manga and anime collection, for example, attending an anime-focused con would be a good use of your resources. For Cushing Memorial Library & Archives it's important, when we can, to have a presence at Con of Thrones, an event focused on Game of Thrones and the source novels by George R.R. Martin (whose archive we maintain). For others, a con dedicated to Star Trek, Harry Potter, or fanzines may be more appropriate.

Location, location, location—you do not have to travel across the country to attend a con; we guarantee there is a con near you. Smallness can be a virtue, too. We have established a presence at a number of smaller Texas cons—including ArmadilloCon (Austin), ConDFW (Dallas-Ft. Worth), and GeekFest (now Epically Geeky Expo) (Killeen)—at relatively low cost and effort. In return for that investment, we were able to make our presence felt in more-intimate settings and to have a greater impact through direct and sustained interaction with more people. These advantages are points to take to your higher administration if you want to have your library represented at a con.

## **Conclusion**

If libraries are to remain relevant institutions that serve society and the public good in all their aspects, they need to seek out new and more varied audiences. They need audiences that reflect the diverse nature of a robust humanity. The problem for libraries is often less about specific outreach activities and more about locating these new audiences in the first place. Our own experiences—seeing the joy in con attendees' eyes when they realize who we are and what we can offer, or the excitement when they learn about all our collections—demonstrate that cons are ideal places for reaching out to potential patrons and advocating publicly for the rich resources of our institution.

Cons are always remarkable, frequently heartwarming, and intensely human events. Unlike, say, academic conferences, which are geared towards a very specific type of attendees—that is, scholars and researchers—cons are places where scholars sit side by side with celebrities, artists, dealers, authors, editors, and, most of all, communities of fans, readers, and viewers. Cons serve multiple audiences; part of their delightful nature lies in the sheer diversity of people who attend. We believe that any institution (academic, public, or otherwise) that is concerned in any way with popular culture or expanding its range of patron audiences, can find value in con attendance. Library staff who attend cons have the opportunity to interact with a wide variety of people, any one of whom has the potential to become an enthusiastic library patron. Even an academic library, whose primary audience is the campus community, can benefit from establishing a presence in unconventional locales, like cons, in which members of their campus are likely to be participating. Their presence gives the library a new openness and dimensionality—it steps outside its traditional walls to engage directly with new audiences on their own ground.

The outreach opportunities presented by cons range from one-on-one interactions to large group activities. Librarians going to cons might participate in a panel in their professional capacity. They might sit at an informational table or booth. They might even act as a roving ambassador for their institution, as we did at the 2019 San Diego Comic-Con, carrying Cushing Library swag back and forth across the massive San Diego Convention Center and using it as a way to introduce ourselves and our library to con attendees, dealers, and special guests alike. The exchange of a few short days of our time for

face-to-face engagement with hundreds of fans, artists, authors, and media personalities about our library and its services was a trade well worth making. These opportunities for intimate and friendly interactions with new audiences make cons invaluable loci for effective outreach. Cons offer myriad, exciting ways to connect engaged and enthusiastic consumers and producers of popular culture to our services and collection.

## Acknowledgment

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## Appendix

### Libraries and Popular Culture Conventions Survey

A fan convention (also known as a con) is an event in which fans of a particular film, television series, comic book, actor, or an entire genre of entertainment, such as science fiction or anime and manga, gather to participate and hold programs and other events, and to meet experts, famous personalities, and each other.

**Q1** Please indicate the type of library you are affiliated with.

- ☐ Academic
- ☐ Public
- ☐ School
- ☐ Special
- ☐ Corporate
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Q2** What is your position at the library?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Q3** Have you attended a con as a representative of your library?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**Skip To:** Q6 If Have you attended a con as a representative of your library? = Yes

**Skip To:** Q4 If Have you attended a con as a representative of your library? = No

**Q4** Why have you not attended a con as a representative of your library?

- ☐ Outside of mission
- ☐ Lack of staff
- ☐ Cost prohibitive
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

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**Q5** Would you consider attending a con as a representative of your library? Why or why not?

---

**Skip To:** End of Survey If Would you consider attending a con as a representative of your library? Why or why not? Is Displayed

**Q6** What cons have you attended as a representative of your library?

---

**Q7** How many staff went to the con as a representative of your library?

☐ 1-3

☐ 4-6

☐ 7+

**Q8** What activities do you participate in at cons?

☐ Booth in vendor/artist hall

☐ Panelist

☐ Event host

☐ Event sponsor

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Q9** How far do you travel to attend cons?

☐ Local

☐ In state

☐ Nationally

☐ Internationally

**Q10** What was the benefit to your library/institution of attending the con(s)?

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**Q11** Are there cons your library sends representatives to regularly?

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## ARTICLE

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# Librarians across Institutions: Establishing Outreach Programs. A Study of Effective Outreach Programs and Support Groups in Academic Libraries

## ABSTRACT

The data used for this study was collected from "Librarians across Institutions: Establishing Outreach Programs," which gathered data from academic outreach librarians across the United States in order to identify factors that contribute to—and hinder—effective outreach programs. The study examines support for the most and least effective outreach programs carried out by outreach librarians in five support areas. To analyze the five support areas, the author conducted five independent-sample t-tests. The author wanted to test if the mean scores of support from librarians, staff, faculty, students, and volunteers were significantly different at a p value of less than 0.05 across the most effective versus least effective outreach programs. The target group was created by searching LinkedIn profiles for academic librarians whose job title included "outreach" or who had outreach listed in their work experience.

The data analysis shows there is a difference in support levels between the most effective and least effective library outreach programs. The results also revealed there are significant statistical differences in the levels of support from librarian, staff, and students between the most and least effective programs. Results from the study confirm our understanding that outreach librarians are innovative and use communication and collaboration techniques to garner support from librarians, staff, faculty, students, and volunteers to create effective outreach programs.

## KEYWORDS

academic libraries, outreach, outreach programs, librarians, outreach librarian

Outreach librarians in academic libraries advocate engagement with students, underserved populations, and their local community as part of their mission. In planning outreach activities, outreach librarians must work within the constraints of budget and time for the success of their program objectives. Few academic institutions maintain a budget designated for outreach. A study done by Carter and Seaman (2011) revealed that 23 percent of

respondents had a budget for outreach, with those budgets ranging from \$700 to \$30,000 (167).

Outreach librarians often have a number of duties outside their typical outreach activities: they promote and participate in library services, teach information literacy instruction, design curriculum, teach workshops, attend conference proceedings, publish scholarly works, and promote scholarship. Therefore, outreach librarians must assess their priorities and identify nonmonetary factors that can contribute to the success of their programs. The scholarly literature shows that in addition to budgetary concerns, the work involved in creating outreach programs often requires the collaboration of groups, departments, and library staff who also perform outreach activities (Carter and Seaman 2011).

Measuring the effects of nonmonetary support on the success of outreach programs in academic libraries is the primary focus of this study. The research was conducted by asking outreach librarians to rate the level of nonmonetary support they received from each of five support categories—librarians, staff, faculty, students, and volunteers—for their most and least effective outreach programs. The author employed a concurrent mixed-method survey to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, then analyzed that data to determine whether the level of support from each support category has a statistically significant effect on programs' effectiveness.

## Literature Review

As the study described in this article evaluates and discusses how support from certain groups contributes to the overall effectiveness and ineffectiveness of outreach programming, the author conducted a literature review focusing on effective outreach efforts in academic institutions. Several academic articles describe the success of outreach programming in academic libraries, yet there is a paucity of articles presenting information about factors that hinder the success of outreach programs.

One example of an effective outreach program comes from Texas A&M University Libraries, where librarians, faculty, students, and staff participate in the Learning and Outreach (L&O) group, which is responsible for approximately a hundred outreach activities each year. The L&O group utilizes the support and skills of the libraries' technical services staff to expand its outreach initiatives. The group has also partnered with Aggie Shields, a registered student organization, to develop outreach programs that benefit the institution's military veteran and service member population (LeMire and Ballestro 2019, 151). This collaborative support led to the success of Texas A&M libraries' outreach events: "The University Libraries' outreach program could not function without the contributions and support of everyone in the library, and there is considerable value in bringing together library employees from across the libraries to reach out to the University community" (152).

The librarians at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Special Collections Department illustrate the outcomes of taking an innovative approach to one faculty member's research. In this outreach initiative, the librarians learned that a faculty member had a strong interest in the library collections. Building a relationship with the faculty member led to a program wherein librarians trained certain students to transcribe letters and diaries. These primary documents later became sources in the students' research papers (Harris and Weller 2012, 299). The UIC Special Collections librarians created many effective programs that led staff to focus on instruction and outreach, such as collaborating with local library groups, holding receptions for politicians, and exhibiting manuscript collections. As a results of these efforts,

the library saw an almost 100 percent increase in student visits and the use of their reading room from previously measured usage (301). In this case study, the librarians collaborated to learn more about faculty needs and created a strategic plan to integrate students and faculty research in their outreach program.

The collaboration and support from librarians, staff, and student-tutors at Mississippi State University is another example of an effective outreach program. To help the freshman football athletes meet their academic requirements, the coordinator of Reference Service and Campus Outreach, in collaboration with other librarians, taught tutors how to navigate the library site, how to perform database searches, and how to search the library catalog (Davidson and Peyton 2007). The outreach program initiated a conversation between academic departments and librarians and led to the expansion of the program to provide more subject-specific databases for the tutors to use when working with the athletes. The effectiveness of this library outreach program created an informative and safe environment where students and tutors would feel comfortable and eager to learn more from the librarians.

Access to remote library resources has allowed students, faculty, and staff to perform research without visiting the library or requiring librarian reference help. At the University of Oklahoma, the librarians' outreach efforts created the Faculty-in-Residence (FIR) program. An outreach librarian lived in one of the residence halls and provided research and other assistance to students. The effectiveness of the FIR program was attainable with the help of the residence hall staff: the residence hall was new territory for the librarian and the staff provided insight on residence-hall culture. After learning about students' needs and interests from the staff, the outreach librarian was able to arrange effective educational programming. (Strothmann and Antell 2010, 55).

Support from faculty in outreach programming is critical for its success. Scholarly literature on the topic illustrates how important it is to build relationships with faculty before requesting their participation in outreach.

“Outreach librarians must assess their priorities and identify nonmonetary factors that can contribute to the success of their programs.”

At Northwest Vista College in San Antonio, Texas, an outreach program became a success after faculty learned what roles librarians played in academia. As librarians attended more college events and learned more about academic courses, the faculty at Northwest Vista College began to support the librarians' outreach initiative. As a result of the program's effectiveness, more students went to the librarians for help with their informative

and persuasive papers assignments. Additionally, requests for workshops and instruction increased as the semester continued (Reeves et al. 2003, 65).

Effective outreach program support can be developed for different audiences. Training students on library day-to-day tasks might seem the usual protocol for libraries and their student workers, but at the University of Illinois Springfield Brookens Library, the librarians trained and tasked the students to provide outreach to other students. The students' particular skills, motivation, and leadership were a strong marketing tool for the library, and the effective collaboration resulted in staff having time to perform other special tasks (Arnold-Garza and Tomlinson 2017, 8).

To continue to expand library services to students and the community, many outreach librarians create outreach committees who tap into the vast knowledge and skills in local organizations to establish community relations and, ultimately, improve students' success. Librarians at the John D. MacArthur Campus Library at Florida Atlantic University created a science outreach committee to enrich their science students' educational experience. The committee created an outreach program that provided the science literacy

and research skills required for the students' curriculum and future careers (Arrieta, Brunnick, and Plocharczyk 2015, 81). The program's objective was to host workshops at the library in collaboration with volunteers from the Taras Oceanographic Foundation so librarians, faculty, students, and staff could be trained in how to interact with and assist aquatic mammals (84). The outreach program gathered a total of sixty-nine volunteers made up of faculty, students, and staff. The extensive support from volunteers and the effectiveness of the program led to a second collaboration between the foundation and library (86).

The literature shows that having support from librarians, staff, faculty, students, and volunteers helps with outreach programs' success and, in some cases, expansion. This study wants to test whether nonmonetary support from those groups—or the lack of their support—has a significant impact on the effectiveness of outreach programming.

## Methodology

This study explores and compares the significance of support from librarians, staff, faculty, students, and volunteers on the success of outreach programming in academic libraries. The study focuses on two aspects: effective outreach programs and ineffective outreach programs. The sample size (seventy-five respondents), collected via survey, provides enough data to run statistical analysis.

The author created a concurrent mixed-method survey to target outreach librarians in academic libraries. Outreach librarians were identified through a search of LinkedIn and included those whose profile contained "outreach" as part of their job title or listed outreach in their work experience. The survey was additionally emailed through institution listservs to encourage participation from interested librarians from all geographic regions of the United States.

The Institutional Review Board of Georgia State University approved the author's study on March 11, 2020. On April 6, 2020, an unsolicited email invitation containing the Qualtrics survey link was distributed to two hundred LinkedIn profiles and listservs. The survey was closed on May 7, 2020 with a total of eighty-one responses. Seventy-five librarians completed the study. Of note, the data collection occurred during the COVID-19 outbreak, which may have suppressed our response rate.

The three-part survey contained checkbox, multiple-choice, yes/no, open-ended, and slider questions. The questions in the first part of the survey pertained to the most effective outreach programs. Participants had the opportunity to share a brief description of their most effective program and to rate on a ten-point sliding scale how much nonmonetary support the program received from each of the five support categories: librarian, staff, faculty, student, and volunteer. The values for the support scale ranged from no support (zero) to a great deal of support (ten) (Figure 1). The second part of the survey repeated the questions from part one but focused on outreach programs the respondents identified as their least effective. Part three of the survey collected demographic information: years of experience as outreach librarians, and the type and size of their institutions. (See Appendix 1 for survey.)

## Results & Analysis

The results in Table 1 show that most of the support for both most and least effective outreach programs came from the assistance of other librarians, followed by staff. The table also shows there is a difference in each support category between the library outreach programs that were most effective and those that were least effective. Overall, programs deemed most effective

by the participants in the survey had more support from each of the support categories.

To analyze whether having more support from each of the support categories had a significant effect on the success of the programs, the author compared means of each rating (Figure 2) and ran t-tests to find any statistical differences between the most effective and least effective outreach programs using a cutoff statistical significance value of .05 (Table 2).

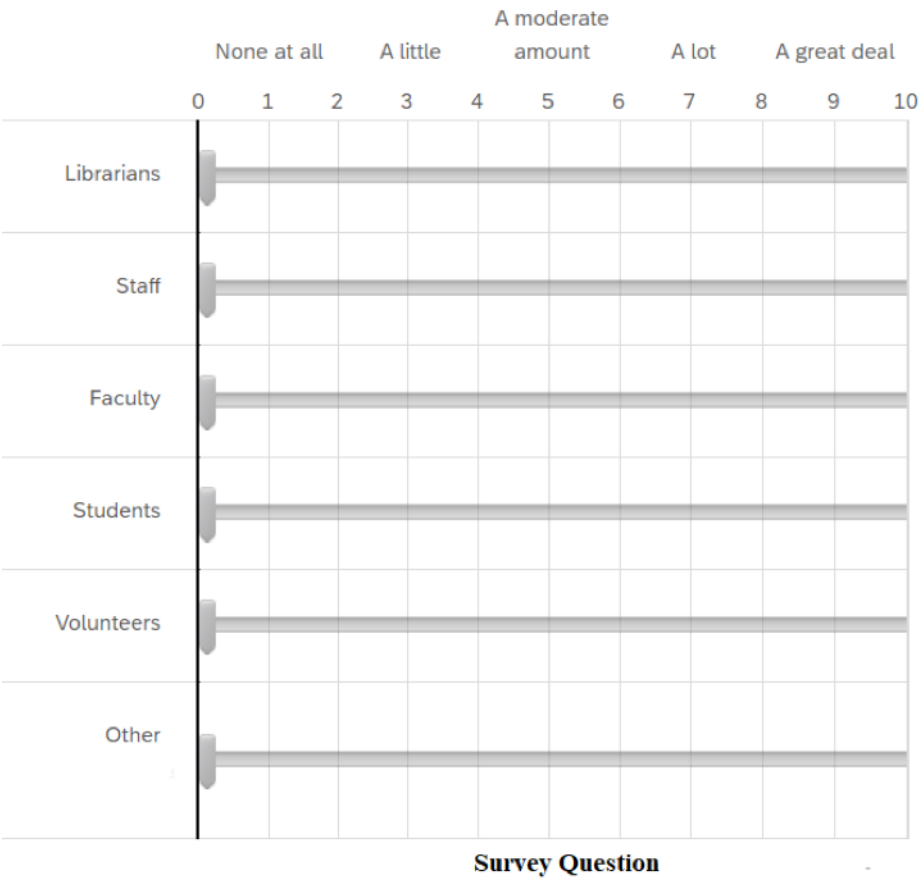


Figure 1. Survey question (How much nonmonetary support (e.g. set up, recruiting) did you have from each of the following groups?) utilized to rate the level of support reviewed from each support group in respondents’ most effective and least effective outreach programs

Support categories	No. (%) of responses	
	Most effective program	Least effective program
Librarian	60 (80.0)	45 (60.0)
Staff	54 (72.0)	35 (46.6)
Faculty	42 (56.0)	21 (28.0)
Student	49 (65.3)	22 (29.3)
Volunteer	24 (32.0)	11 (14.6)

Table 1. Survey responses from outreach librarians on nonmonetary support. The percentages were calculated over the total number of respondents, n=75

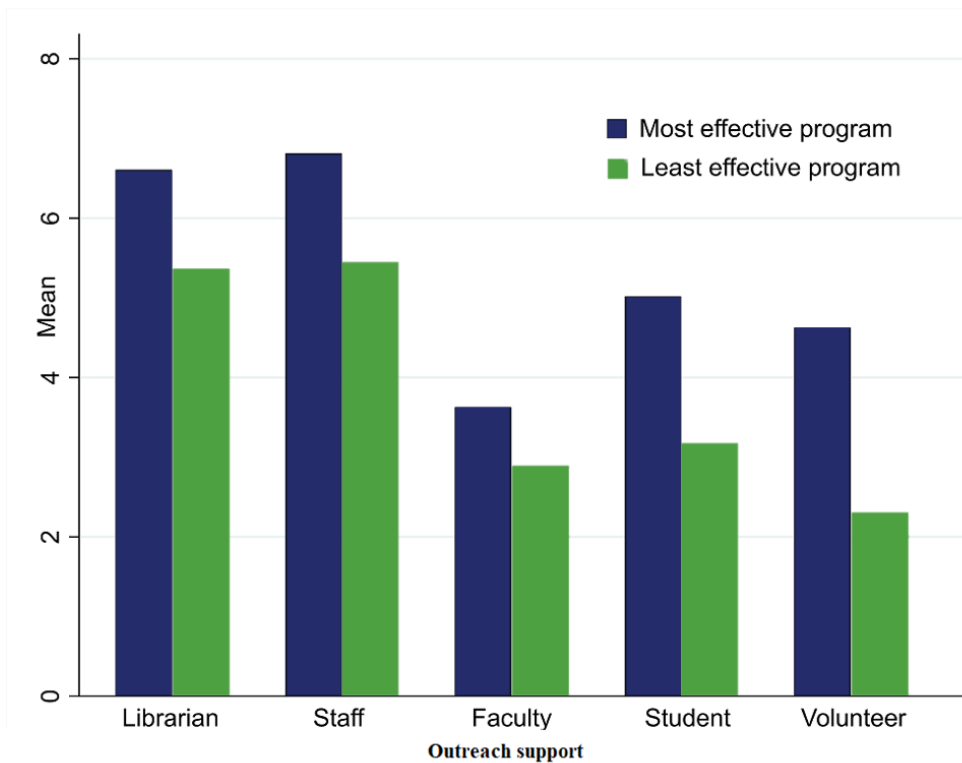


Figure 2. The most effective and least effective programs for each support category.

Types of support	Mean	Standard error	Standard deviation	Statistical significance
Librarian support				
Most effective program	6.58	.384	2.98	.0412*
Least effective program	5.30	.503	3.38	
Staff support				
Most effective program	6.81	.405	2.98	.0235*
Least effective program	5.37	.461	2.73	
Faculty support				
Most effective program	3.52	.450	2.92	.3921
Least effective program	2.88	.544	2.49	
Student support				
Most effective program	5.00	.363	2.54	.0079**
Least effective program	3.09	0.661	3.10	
Volunteer support				
Most effective program	4.63	0.761	3.73	0.0737
Least effective program	2.30	0.827	2.74	

*n*=75

\* *p* < .05

\*\* *p* < .01

Table 2. *T*-test results from most effective and least effective programs

Table 2 contains information from all independent-sample *t*-tests across types of support. Support from librarians showed the greatest statistical significance between most effective and least effective programs ( $p = .04$ ). Support from staff followed with a statistically significant *p* value of .02, and support from students had a statistically significant *p* value of .007. Support from faculty and volunteers showed no statistically significant values between the least and most effective programs.

## **Discussion**

The author's research fits with the scholarly literature on academic library outreach. The results relating to support groups in this study suggest that academic outreach librarians rely greatly on the support of other librarians, staff, and students for the success of outreach programming. Having support from other librarians provides new perspectives and innovation in promoting library services, such as using orientations and instruction as part of outreach (Davidson and Peyton 2007, 71). Therefore, it's no surprise the librarian support category received the highest rating. Moving forward, outreach librarians should continue to collaborate with their librarian colleagues on programming and research, and share the results of their outreach achievements to academic librarians across the United States.

The tremendous support from staff suggests that outreach librarians in academic institutions realize this support group has the skills and interests to become a natural fit for collaboration in outreach programming. Library staff possesses different technical skills, networks, and marketing ideas that complement academic library programs. As library outreach programs in academic institutions continue to grow, libraries require the support of staff to accomplish the programs' success (LeMire and Ballestro 2019, 159). The results could also indicate that outreach librarians understand the value of staff support in expanding the capacity of outreach programming.

While previous studies on the topic describe the importance of faculty support in outreach programming, the participants' responses in this study show a significantly low percentage of faculty support (28 percent) in the least effective outreach programs (Table 1). Research has shown that many faculty do not hold the work of academic librarians in high regard (Reeves et al. 2003, 61). Such findings may explain the low support from faculty in outreach programming; perhaps faculty members do not understand the academic nature of the work of outreach librarians. Moving forward, the author is confident the results showing low faculty involvement will provide fodder for academic outreach librarians to communicate their roles to faculty and explain the importance of faculty contribution to outreach.

The study's results show students' contributions to outreach programming are significant to the programs' effectiveness. The substantial statistical difference in student support between most effective and least effective programs provides insight to academic librarians who have not tapped into this type of support for their outreach programs. The results of this study echo the experiences at Towson University's Albert S. Cook Library, which developed an outreach program that trained students to promote the library to other students and academic departments (Garza and Tomlinson 2017, 21). The author finds the results of the student support data to be evidence that academic outreach librarians should actively seek student support for their programming.

Support from volunteers as reported by the survey respondents was surprisingly low. Previous studies have shown the importance of having trained volunteers to carry out outreach initiatives in academic libraries: the quality and dependability of support are more valuable than the quantity of support (LeMire and Ballestro 2019, 158). Perhaps the time needed to train volunteers and their high turnover rate are contributing factors to the low number of respondents citing volunteers as being involved in outreach. The author encourages librarians to be proactive in reaching out to volunteers. Further research on this topic will benefit scholarly research in academic library outreach.



## Limitations

While this research provides valuable insight into academic library outreach programming, the study had a relatively small sample size. Additionally, data collected from a nonrandom sample creates an obvious limitation. This study focused on collecting data from librarians who are current outreach librarians or were in the past. Moving forward, a survey of all academic librarians would be valuable for comparison; studies have shown that many academic librarians contribute to outreach despite having different job titles (Carter and Seaman 2011, 166). A future survey could also gather information from outreach librarians at public libraries to determine similarities and differences related to nonmonetary support of programming. Furthermore, future studies might focus on student support in outreach programming by distributing a survey to students to ascertain their interests in participating in and in gathering ideas for academic libraries outreach efforts.

## Conclusion

Overall, the study contributes to the body of knowledge on the current trends of academic libraries and outreach. The data used for this study arose from “Librarians across Institutions: Establishing Outreach Programs,” which collected survey data from seventy-five academic outreach librarians across the United States. Conducting a comprehensive search through LinkedIn profiles proved to be a successful research method. The ability to interact with the participants and to explain more of the details about the research might be a reason why most of the responses came from LinkedIn rather than from the email sent through institution listservs. Of note, during the distribution of the online survey through LinkedIn, a good number of the participants expressed eagerness to leave feedback and said they looked forward to the findings of the research.

The study set out to examine nonmonetary support for the most effective and least effective outreach programs carried out by outreach librarians in five support areas: other librarians, staff, faculty, students, and volunteers. Although some of the promising groups had low ratings for their support of outreach programming, the small sample used in this study should motivate other outreach librarians to perform more research, particularly on volunteer and faculty support in academic outreach programs. Finally, the results suggest that outreach librarians continue to be innovative and use their strong communication and collaboration techniques to garner support. The work these librarians put forth to build relationships with their librarian colleagues, staff, and students has contributed to the effectiveness of their outreach programs.

## Acknowledgments

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## Appendix 1: Librarians Across Institutions Survey

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Start of Block: Survey

Q1

**Part I. The following questions will focus on your most effective outreach program.**

Think about your most successful outreach program. Please provide a brief description of this outreach program.

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Q2 Was funding a major component for the success of this outreach program?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

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Q3 How much funding did you receive?

☐ \$0 (did not receive any funding) (1)

☐ Some funds, but less than \$50 (5)

☐ \$50 - \$99 (2)

☐ \$100 - \$149 (3)

☐ \$150 or more (4)

---

Q4 What did you use the funds for? (Check all that apply)

☐ Promotional Materials (1)

☐ Food and beverages (2)

☐ Other (3) \_\_\_\_\_

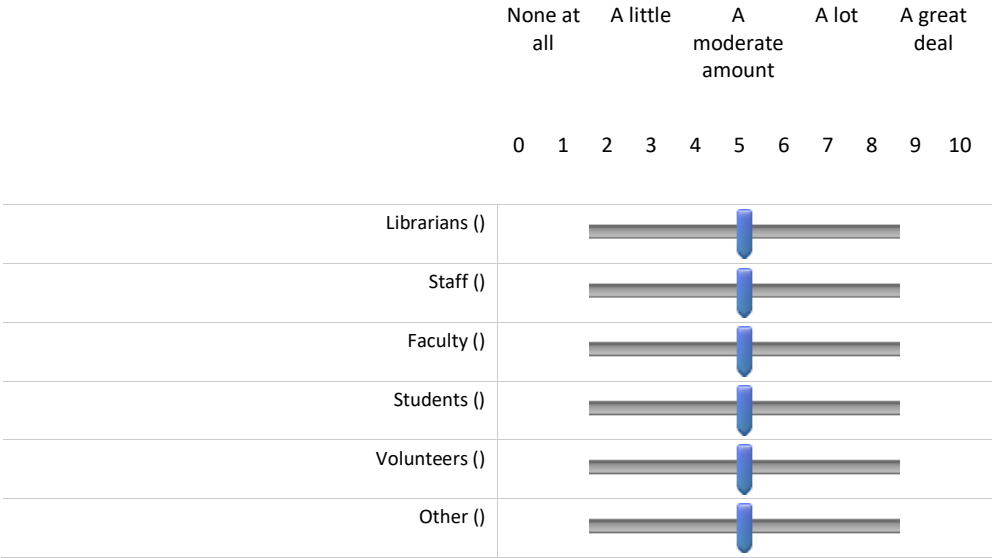
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**Libraries across  
Institutions:  
Establishing Outreach  
Programs. A Study  
of Effective Outreach  
Programs and Support  
Groups in Academic  
Libraries, *continued***

Q5 How important was funding for the outreach program?

- ☐ Extremely important (1)
- ☐ Very important (2)
- ☐ Moderately important (3)
- ☐ Slightly important (4)
- ☐ Not at all important (5)

Q6 How much nonmonetary support (e.g. set up, recruiting) did you have from each of the following groups?



Q7 Which groups did you collaborate with on this outreach program? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ None (1)
- ☐ Academic departments (e.g. Sociology, Biology, English) (2)
- ☐ Centers on campus (e.g. Multicultural Center, Writing Center, Disability Services) (3)
- ☐ Community groups (4)
- ☐ Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_

Q8 Where was the outreach program located? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Library (1)
  - ☐ On campus (2)
  - ☐ Off campus (3)
  - ☐ Online/virtual (4)
  - ☐ Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q9 What school term did the outreach program occur?

- ☐ Spring (1)
- ☐ Summer (2)
- ☐ Fall (3)
- ☐ Other (4) \_\_\_\_\_

Q10 What marketing strategies did you use? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Social Media (1)
  - ☐ Flyers (2)
  - ☐ Newsletter (3)
  - ☐ Email (4)
  - ☐ Marketing department (5)
  - ☐ Other (6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q11 Did you have enough dedicated time to create this outreach program?

- ☐ Definitely yes (1)
- ☐ Probably yes (2)
- ☐ Probably not (3)
- ☐ Definitely not (4)

**Libraries across  
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of Effective Outreach  
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Groups in Academic  
Libraries, *continued***

Q12 How many total **hours** did you spend on this outreach program? This includes planning and the outreach program event.

---

Q13 How important was having dedicated time to plan the outreach program?

- ☐ Extremely important (1)
- ☐ Very important (2)
- ☐ Moderately important (3)
- ☐ Slightly important (4)
- ☐ Not at all important (5)

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Q14 Was having enough dedicated time, a key component to your program's success?

- ☐ Definitely yes (1)
- ☐ Probably yes (2)
- ☐ Might or might not (3)
- ☐ Probably not (4)
- ☐ Definitely not (5)

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Q15 What, if anything, would you have done differently with this outreach program?

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Q16  
**Part II. The following questions will focus on your least effective outreach program.**

Think about an outreach program that you had difficulties planning. Please provide a brief description of this outreach program.

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Q17 Was funding an issue with this outreach program?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

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Q18 How much funding did you receive?

☐ \$0 (did not receive funding) (1)

☐ Some funding, but less than \$50 (5)

☐ \$50 - \$99 (2)

☐ \$100 - \$149 (3)

☐ \$150 or more (4)

---

Q19 What did you use the funds for? (Check all that apply)

☐

Promotional materials (1)

☐

Food and beverages (2)

☐

Other (3) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q20 How important was funding for the outreach program?

☐ Extremely important (1)

☐ Very important (2)

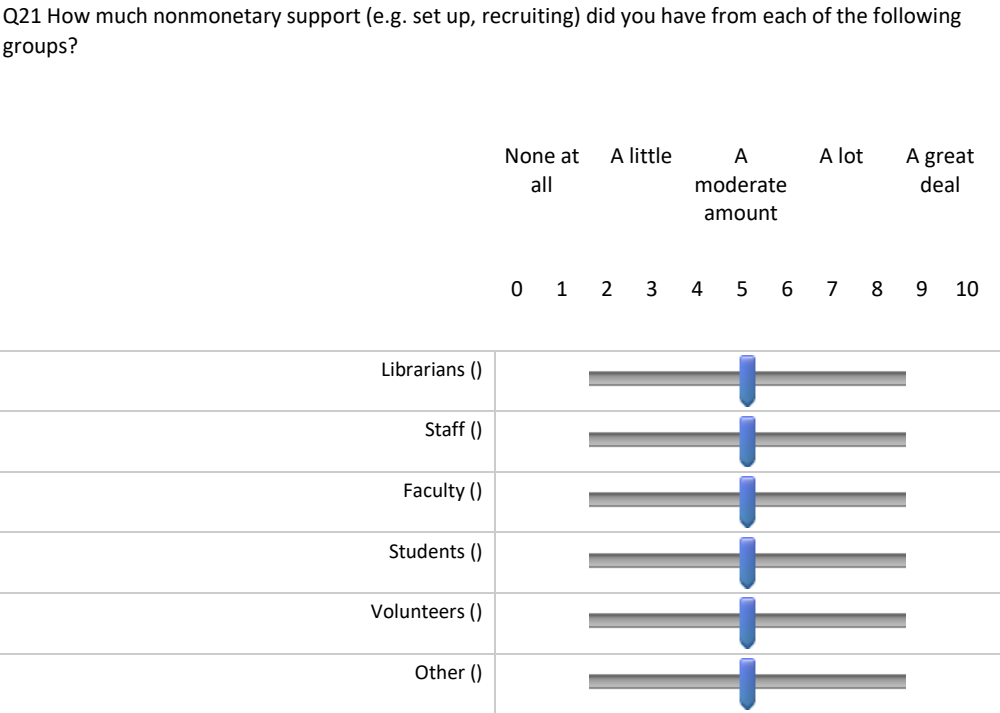
☐ Moderately important (3)

☐ Slightly important (4)

☐ Not at all important (5)

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**Libraries across  
Institutions:  
Establishing Outreach  
Programs. A Study  
of Effective Outreach  
Programs and Support  
Groups in Academic  
Libraries, *continued***



Q22 Which groups did you collaborate with on this outreach program? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ None (1)
- ☐ Academic departments (e.g. Sociology, Biology, English) (2)
- ☐ Centers on campus (e.g. Multicultural Center, Writing Center, Disabilities Services) (3)
- ☐ Community groups (4)
- ☐ Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_

Q23 Where was the outreach program located? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Library (1)
- ☐ On campus (2)
- ☐ Off campus (3)
- ☐ Online/virtual (4)
- ☐ Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_



Q24 What school term did the outreach program occur?

- ☐ Spring (1)
- ☐ Summer (2)
- ☐ Fall (3)
- ☐ Other (4) \_\_\_\_\_

Q25 What marketing strategies did you use? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Social Media (1)
- ☐ Flyers (2)
- ☐ Newsletter (3)
- ☐ Email (4)
- ☐ Marketing Department (5)
- ☐ Other (6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q26 Did you have enough dedicated time to plan the outreach program?

- ☐ Definitely yes (1)
- ☐ Probably yes (2)
- ☐ Probably not (3)
- ☐ Definitely not (4)
- 

Q27 How many total hours did you spend on this outreach program? This includes planning and the outreach program event.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Libraries across  
Institutions:  
Establishing Outreach  
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of Effective Outreach  
Programs and Support  
Groups in Academic  
Libraries, *continued***

Q28 How important was having dedicated time to plan the outreach program?

- ☐ Extremely important (1)
- ☐ Very important (2)
- ☐ Moderately important (3)
- ☐ Slightly important (4)
- ☐ Not at all important (5)
- 

Q29 Was not having enough dedicated time, a contributing factor to this outreach program?

- ☐ Definitely yes (1)
- ☐ Probably yes (2)
- ☐ Probably not (3)
- ☐ Definitely not (4)
- 

Q30 What, if anything, would you have done differently with this outreach program?

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Q31

**Part III. About You and Your Library.**

Which gender identity do you identify with?

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)
- ☐ Transgender female (3)
- ☐ Transgender male (4)
- ☐ Gender variant/Non-conforming (5)
- ☐ Not listed (7) \_\_\_\_\_
-

Q32 How old are you?

- ☐ 24 or younger (1)
- ☐ 25 - 30 (6)
- ☐ 31 - 40 (2)
- ☐ 41 - 50 (3)
- ☐ 51 - 64 (4)
- ☐ 65 or older (5)

Q33 What is your race? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (1)
  - ☐ Asian (2)
  - ☐ Black or African American (3)
  - ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (4)
  - ☐ White (5)
- 

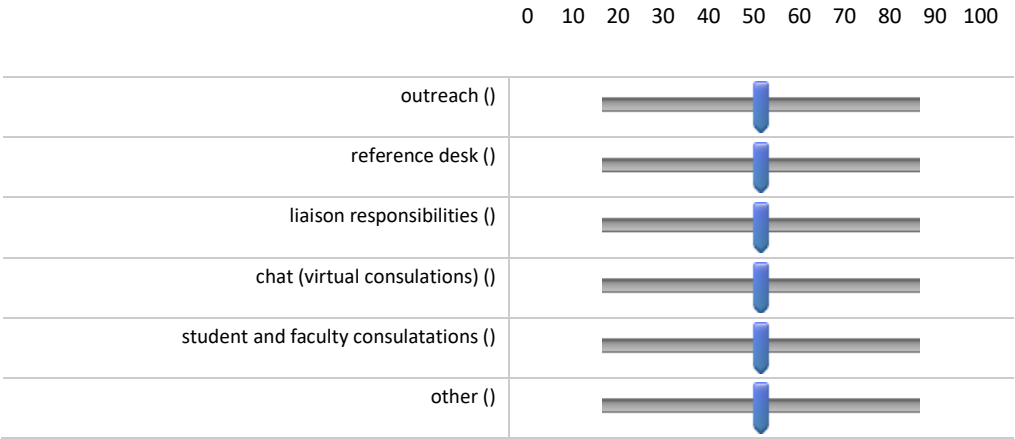
Q34 What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin (1)
  - ☐ Not Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin (2)
- 

Q35 In total, how many years have you been an Outreach Librarian?

- ☐ 0 - 1 (1)
- ☐ 2 - 4 (2)
- ☐ 5 - 7 (3)
- ☐ 8 - 10 (4)
- ☐ 11 or more (5)

Q36 What percent of your time is dedicated to each of the following areas?



Q37 Approximately, how many students are enrolled at your institution?

	Less than 1K (1)	1-5K (2)	6-10K (3)	11-15K (4)	16-20K (5)	50k + (6)
Number of students (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q38 Degree options at your institution (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Associate (1)
- ☐ Bachelor (2)
- ☐ Masters (3)
- ☐ Doctorate (4)

Q39 What state is the institution located in?

▼ Alabama (1) ... I do not reside in the United States (53)

## Appendix 2: Statistics/Data Analysis

**Librarians** \*Group 1= Most Effective Program \*Group 2= Least Effective Program

. ttest Q6\_1, by (Type)

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
1	60	6.583333	.3842166	2.976129	5.814518	7.352149
2	45	5.2976	.5033423	3.376523	4.28318	6.31202
combined	105	6.032305	.3125477	3.202661	5.412511	6.652099
diff		1.285733	.6218583		.052424	2.519043

diff = mean(1) - mean(2) t = 2.0676  
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 103

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0  
Pr(T < t) = 0.9794 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0412 Pr(T > t) = 0.0206

**Staff** \*Group 1= Most Effective Program \*Group 2= Least Effective Program

. ttest Q6\_2, by (Type)

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
1	54	6.814815	.4053055	2.978375	6.001875	7.627755
2	35	5.372371	.4608949	2.726691	4.43572	6.309023
combined	89	6.247562	.3129641	2.952498	5.625611	6.869512
diff		1.442443	.6255377		.1991195	2.685767

diff = mean(1) - mean(2) t = 2.3059  
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 87

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0  
Pr(T < t) = 0.9883 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0235 Pr(T > t) = 0.0117

**Faculty** \*Group 1= Most Effective Program \*Group 2= Least Effective Program

. ttest Q6\_3, by (Type)

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
1	42	3.52381	.4498523	2.915376	2.615314	4.432305
2	21	2.882476	.5441591	2.49365	1.74738	4.017572
combined	63	3.310032	.3500422	2.778374	2.610307	4.009756
diff		.6413333	.7440962		-.846579	2.129246

diff = mean(1) - mean(2) t = 0.8619  
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 61

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0  
Pr(T < t) = 0.8039 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.3921 Pr(T > t) = 0.1961

**Libraries across  
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Libraries, *continued***

**Students** \*Group 1= Most Effective Program \*Group 2= Least Effective Program

. ttest Q6\_4, by (Type)

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
1	49	5	.3630464	2.541325	4.270046	5.729954
2	22	3.087545	.6614304	3.102384	1.712026	4.463065
combined	71	4.407408	.3379582	2.847687	3.733372	5.081445
diff		1.912455	.6991676		.5176533	3.307256

diff = mean(1) - mean(2) t = 2.7353  
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 69

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0  
Pr(T < t) = 0.9960 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0079 Pr(T > t) = 0.0040

**Volunteers** \*Group 1= Most Effective Program \*Group 2= Least Effective Program

. ttest Q6\_5, by (Type)

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
1	24	4.625	.7609407	3.727833	3.050874	6.199126
2	11	2.298	.8273349	2.74396	.4545829	4.141417
combined	35	3.893657	.6051336	3.580019	2.663878	5.123437
diff		2.327	1.259588		-.2356517	4.889652

diff = mean(1) - mean(2) t = 1.8474  
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 33

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0  
Pr(T < t) = 0.9632 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0737 Pr(T > t) = 0.0368





## ARTICLE

**Randa Lopez  
Morgan,**

Louisiana State  
University

# Supporting Student Wellness and Success through the LSU Libraries Relaxation Room

## ABSTRACT

As students are increasingly overwhelmed with stress and anxiety, especially during exam weeks, it is important for libraries to demonstrate their impact on student wellness and success. While libraries have traditionally been focused on the educational aspects of student growth, it is important that as students' mental-health needs grow, the range of libraries' services grow as well. One way Louisiana State University (LSU) Library is meeting this need is through the creation of a Relaxation Room during exam weeks. The room helps the library engage students during exam weeks, alleviate library anxiety, and encourage the idea of library as a place for community. By focusing on students' needs, the library positions itself as a community center on campus and a leader in helping to develop well-rounded students.

## KEYWORDS

academic libraries, library outreach, student engagement, library programming, community

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104–115  
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10.21900.j.jloe.v1i1.469

The Relaxation Room at the Louisiana State University (LSU) Library is a former conference room set up with tables, chairs, and activities to allow students to take a break from studying for exams. It is a low-cost way to engage students during exam weeks by providing a variety of stress-relief activities and materials, and to reinforce the idea of a library as place. The Relaxation Room (RR) was created in spring 2016 when the newly formed Programming Committee noticed the high number of students in the library during exam weeks. The committee saw an opportunity to show support for students through the creation of a Relaxation Room.

The Programming Committee envisioned the Relaxation Room as a student-only space—repurposed from a staff meeting room—with puzzles, games, coloring sheets, and origami materials to help students decompress during finals. While this space is fun, it was designed to meet students' needs. It challenges the idea that academic libraries are boring and monolithic by encouraging students to socialize and hang out. The Relaxation Room supports LSU's mission "to achieve the highest levels of intellectual and personal development" (Louisiana State University 2020) by providing a space where students can decompress as well as grow interpersonal relationships. Having a space where students can relax, connect with other students, and retreat from the stress of academia is integral to the intellectual and interpersonal growth of our students. The room helps students engage with each other and the outside world and helps them develop stress-coping techniques that the students can



call on throughout their lives. The Relaxation Room reinforces the idea that the library is the heart of campus by holistically serving students.

## Literature Review

LSU Library's Relaxation Room is a de-stressing service for students that many libraries have adopted in some form: Michigan State University has a "Stress-Free Zone" with classical music and puzzles; Dalton State College hosts a "Stress-Free Week" during finals featuring a coloring station and games; University at Albany, SUNY hosts a "Stressbusters" event that provides games and toys (Flynn 2017; Whitley and Burger 2019; Newton 2011). There is also the "Living Room" at the University of Tennessee, with its comfortable furniture, games, and snacks; "Micro-Breaks" at Memorial University of Newfoundland, which provide toys, stress balls, playdough and more; and the "Finals Resting Place," with comfortable furniture and a relaxing environment at the University of Louisville Kornhauser Health Sciences Library (Walker, Sandelli, and Smith 2018; Rose, Godfrey, and Rose 2015; Smigielski and Nixon 2004). These programs share a similar theme: they provide a student-specific space for relaxation and a reprieve from studying. Some of the programs differ in the details, but the overall concept is to boost student success and build community within the library setting. LeMire et al. (2018) mention finals week programming and other stress-relievers as a common activity among many libraries (LeMire, Graves, Farrell et al. 2018). These programs can be an important part of student success and are a great way to build community through student engagement.

The RR encourages students to see the library as a place not only to study and learn but also to engage socially and actively. Libraries are natural "third places." As Ray Oldenburg lays out in his 1999 book, *The Great Good Place*, the first place is home, the second place is work, but the third place provides social engagement and capital. In third places, people are free to come and go as they like. Third places are accessible and inclusive to everyone; conversation flows and, while open to anyone, there are regular visitors. We designed the RR with all of these characteristics in mind. The room is accessible and open to everyone, there are no barriers to access, and students can use the room however they need to. Montgomery and Miller (2011) argue that libraries need to become these third places in order to build community and to demonstrate "how academic libraries are advancing the mission of the academy by evolving into a place for active learning where students create their community" (235). Communities are important for students because it is through community that they find belonging and a sense of purpose. The RR takes traditional library space and utilizes it in a non-traditional way to meet student needs.

As noted, through programs like the RR, LSU libraries are not only supporting the university's mission but also promoting student success by providing opportunities for students to make connections with each other. In her 2020 article, Barbara Eshbach notes, "by providing opportunities for students to make connections with others on campus and participate in activities that foster effective learning practices, spark curiosity, and engage them both academically and socially, the academic library can have a positive impact on student learning and personal development" (1). A recent study by Croxton and Moore (2020) suggests that social activities done outside of the classroom play an important part in student success (413). The RR provides opportunities for students to socialize with friends or make new acquaintances through the use of board games, puzzles, aromatherapy jars, or even by sharing colored pencils. Often, one or two students will start a puzzle and another group will come in to finish it. The students have common concerns to bond

over: exam weeks and stress. It is vital that students have these opportunities to come together; this is how students find belonging and purpose. Students who have a community where they feel welcome and at ease to participate are more likely to succeed (Croston and Moore 2020 414). Jong-Ae Kim (2016) recommends academic libraries host spaces where students can study as well as take a break from their studies: "Academic libraries serve as places to socialize, relax, and communicate as well as places for information seeking and learning. They serve as valued public spaces on campus that enrich users' academic and social experiences" (509). Through library engagement, students see that the library is inclusive and has something for everyone (Whitley and Burger 2019, 1). The library is evolving to meet not just the academic needs of students but their social needs as well—all while building community.

The RR is beneficial for students' mental health and contributes to their overall wellness. "Students frequent the library in greater numbers at the end of the semester and during exams, a time when they are likely experiencing the highest levels of stress and anxiety, making it an ideal location for wellness support (Rose, Godfrey, Rose 2015, 4). Exam weeks put library faculty and staff in a prime position to assist students with their mental wellness. As the American College Health Association's fall 2019 assessment shows, 29.3 percent of students surveyed said their anxiety impeded their academic performance; 23 percent cited depression and 40.2 percent cited stress as negatively affecting their academic performance. In addition, 50.3 percent of students said they experienced loneliness and 76.5 percent reported experiencing moderate to high amounts of stress (2019). Students use the Relaxation Room and report feeling better afterward. It is natural for libraries to see a student's need and fulfill it, even if the need is not a traditional, library-based need. Librarians do not stop being librarians at the end of a reference question. If a student needs access to a resource, librarians help students find that resource, be it a journal article or the Student Health Center's phone number. "By asserting their place in this form of caregiving, academic libraries can contribute to the lifelong health, wellbeing, and successes of their students (Ramsey and Aagard 2018,333).

The Relaxation Room and other exam week programming help students overcome their library anxiety. Libraries can be scary and intimidating; even approaching a desk to ask questions can put many students on edge. Mellon's 2015 study found that "75 to 85 percent of students. . . described their initial response to the library in terms of fear or anxiety" (278). However, the same study discovered that just by interacting with a librarian, that anxiety was reduced (2015, 280). The RR brings students into a positive space designed specifically for them. It shows the students that librarians and staff care about the their well-being. It is an act of kindness and shows warmth toward students, which helps build trust. "Any program that brings students into the library space demonstrates the value of the library as a supportive place. Students interacting with librarians during library programs and events can help build positive relationships that could lead to individualized research consultations. Together, all of these promote academic rapport and student engagement" (Eshbach 2020, 4). A student may use the RR without ever reaching out for help; just providing the space to students shows them that libraries are here to help them.

The Relaxation Room is great for students, but it also helps bring the library to the forefront of the discussion about services that are essential; it helps showcase the multitude of resources libraries have. "Leveraging space, collections, and campus expertise and priorities can all help illustrate libraries' value to institutions" (Kelly 2020, 340). An RR or other programing like it can be implemented as simply or as grandly as library missions and budgets allow.

It is vital that we continue to explore, question, and get curious about ways to expand our libraries' resources to connect and engage with students. "It is too easy to retreat into more traditional forms of librarianship in the face of tight budgets and reduced staffing. Instead, just as academic administrations are questioning many of the "sacred cows" of twentieth-century college life, we should also continue to investigate and question the role of the library as a place in our users' lives (Montgomery and Miller 2011, 237).

The LSU Library is open twenty-four hours a day, five days a week during exam weeks. The committee saw this as an ideal opportunity for outreach to students and to challenge the old-school notion that a library is meant only for studying. For the duration of exam weeks, we converted a staff-only meeting space into the Relaxation Room. This space is easily accessible (if a bit hidden) on the second floor near the Access Services Desk. Since the room is not normally used by students, it was not a highly sought-after study space. Using this second-floor meeting space also allowed the committee time to set up and take down the RR without disturbing other library meetings and activities. The room was stocked with coloring sheets and colored pencils, origami instructions and colorful paper for folding, bubble wrap donated by our Interlibrary Loan Department, and puzzles and board games donated by library faculty and staff. The room was also stocked with LSU Library-themed postcards that students could fill out and send to their family and friends. We decorated the door and room using materials bought at Dollar Tree to catch students' attention and make the room feel inviting. The final cost for stocking the room—including pencils, postcards, and decorations—came to one hundred dollars, with the pencils and decorations accounting for thirty dollars of that total.



Figure 1: Relaxation Room door decorated for Spring 2017. Photo by Randa Lopez Morgan.

## Publicizing and Running the Relaxation Room

The Programming Committee advertised the room within the library using flyers posted around the building as well as directional arrows leading from the ground floor to the RR. The Committee created a blog post on the library's website and posted information and photos on the library's social media accounts to promote the event.

The committee decided that while they did not want to have someone staffing the room the entire time, it would be a good idea to have a staff member present throughout the day to check on the room, clean it up or reset the games and puzzles if needed, and to take a head count of the students for assessment purposes. The committee members volunteered for two-hours shifts during which they would peer into the room periodically. The members also used this time to write down how many students were in the room at the time and to pull any completed surveys (discussed below).

## Assessing the Relaxation Room for Spring Midterms 2016

Aside from counting the number students using the room throughout the day, the committee developed a short survey that students could fill out for a chance to win a small gift card to a local coffee shop. The gift card was donated by a staff member. The survey asked if the students enjoyed the room (yes/no), what they liked best (open-ended), and what they would like to see in the future (open-ended). (See Appendix for the survey.) We felt this survey was the easiest way to determine whether students liked the room, what aspects they specifically liked, and what they wanted to see in the room if we were to continue to host it. As this was our first semester hosting the Relaxation Room and the committee was learning on the fly, the survey was an expedient way to take a convenient sampling and get a general overview of the room's favorability. While the committee decided against running a focus group—because of time and budget constraints—several student workers were asked their opinions of the room during the planning process; all indicated they thought the RR would be well received.

There were some limitations in the assessment measures. When committee members checked the room, there was no way of knowing whether the students present had been counted already. Additionally, if a committee member couldn't check the room during his/her shift, the counts for that day were incomplete. Finally, the committee members' working hours prevented them from taking head counts during the night. The last count was taken at 5:00 p.m. each weekday, which meant the committee missed about fifteen hours of usage counts. They assumed high usage of the room at night judging by the amount of time it took to tidy the room in the mornings, but this assumption couldn't be measured.

## Results of the Assessment

The Relaxation Room's assessment results during spring midterms 2016 were incredibly positive and encouraging. The committee counted roughly a hundred students during midterms and received thirty-one completed surveys (see table 1). Twenty-nine respondents enjoyed the room, while one did not. The students indicated they liked the origami and bubble wrap the best, and they wanted snacks and drinks in the room going forward. The responses to our survey echoed similar comments found in the literature. Survey respondents at the University at Albany, SUNY give positive feedback for their "StressBusters" event (Newton 2011, 172.) One hundred percent of respondents to the University of Louisville Kornhauser Health Science Library survey said they "thought the Finals Resting Place worthwhile and. . .should be repeated" (Smigielski and Nixon 2004). And comments left by students at Memorial University Libraries in Newfoundland asked for more coffee and snacks (Rose, Godfrey, and Rose 2015). The committee took the lessons learned from the spring implementation of the Relaxation Room and were able to apply them in future iterations.

## How the Room Has Evolved

Since 2016, the Relaxation Room has been a standard part of exam-week activities at LSU Library. However, the design of the room and our assessment methods have evolved. The committee gathered a lot of feedback from students indicating they wished the room could remain open longer. The current schedule has the room open during LSU's concentrated-study period, from the Wednesday before finals to the Friday of finals. The room stays open during the

weekend with limited monitoring by Access Services staff, graduate students, or student workers.

Number of surveys collected	31
Did you enjoy your time in the Relaxation Room?	Yes: 29 No: 1 No response: 1
What did you like best?	Origami: 7 Popping bubble wrap: 7 No response: 5 Coloring: 4 Games: 4 Postcards: 4 Everything: 3 Puzzles: 2 The silence/relaxed environment: 2
What would you like to see in the future?	Snacks/drinks: 7 No response: 5 This room every day: 4 Connect Four: 2 Inspirational board: 2 More bubble wrap: 2 Puppies: 2 Bean Bag Chairs: 1
	Contests: 1 Less intricate coloring pages: 1 More advertising: 1 More origami: 1 Music: 1 People: 1 Something to make us stand up: 1 Video Games: 1

Table 1: Survey responses collected for spring midterms 2016 Relaxation Room

Committee members continue to conduct room checks, but they are no longer taking a count of students in the room. In fall 2017, the committee purchased an inexpensive door counter—similar to those used in many retail stores—and positioned it so that students entering the room activated it. This approach comes with its own flaws (for example, one student entering and exiting throughout the night can cause high numbers to be recorded), but the committee believes it provides a more accurate count of usage than did the previous approach.

The survey went through many iterations throughout the semesters, including asking how the students found out about the room (usually through a friend), how they were using the room (most frequently “to relax” with “studying and relaxing” coming in second), and whether they had visited the room previously (most often “no,” although we do have our fair share of



Figure 2: Students using the Relaxation Room during finals week in fall 2017. Photo by Randa Lopez Morgan.

repeat users). We also provided space for open comments, which usually ranged from requests for food and places to nap, to enthusiastic feedback such as “This is awesome!” and “Just discovered this place. Seriously, SO AMAZING. Y’all are amazing. I wish nothing

but the best for all who arranged this magical place.” The survey also collected information about the students’ majors, which mostly fell into the humanities and social sciences, as well as engineering. The committee decided to discontinue the survey in fall 2018 feeling that it had served its purpose. It was replaced with a large whiteboard on which students could write their comments instead. One of the downsides to this approach concerned the temporary nature of notes on a whiteboard: some comments could not be documented by the committee before eager students erased them to use the board for studying. Committee members attempt to address this problem by taking photos of the board throughout the week.

The committee has added a sensory table with calm-down bottles, aromatherapy with scented oil, kinetic sand, stress balls, word puzzles, and “fun” furniture like inflatable chairs and bean bags. The committee has had to replace games and puzzles over time, either by purchasing them or through staff donations. One student-led change was the addition of music through a Spotify playlist featuring piano music or spa music that runs continuously throughout the week. The space has also been a great place to try out weird or fun new ideas for helping students relax. The committee has tried cardboard Jenga, fishing for positive fish (a game in which students fish for positive and encouraging words written on the backs of paper fish using makeshift fishing poles), coloring seashells, and posting positive quotes around the room. Not all of the ideas have been winners, but students have had fun and have appreciated all of the attempts at changing the room.

Factors that differentiate the LSU Library Relaxation Room from other universities’ relaxation spaces include the access to the space itself and the wide variety of materials and activities in the room. The room has no barriers to access; it doesn’t require swiping in or showing identification. The room isn’t constantly monitored, so students can feel more at home. While committee members do stop by to straighten the room, the students feel free to let down their guard. There is a wide array of resources in the room that appeals to a variety of tastes and preferences. In selecting materials for the room, the committee attempted to incorporate each of the five senses: kinetic sand and rice for touch, sensory bottles filled with glitter and beads for sight, essential

oil aromatherapy for smell, music for hearing, and a Keurig coffee machine contributing for taste. The students use the room in different ways; many use it for relaxing, but they also use it for studying and collaborating with other students. They use it to play and to release pent-up energy; they use the room to de-stress in whatever way benefits them.

## **Lessons Learned**

The committee has learned several important lessons over the course of their experience running the Relaxation Room.

### ***1. Every semester is different.***

The things students liked one semester may not appeal to them the following semester. During some semesters the music is a big hit, while in others the students will turn the music down or off. This means it's important to try new approaches, to experiment with new ideas. Get weird with it and don't be afraid to fail. If an idea doesn't work as planned, figure out what went wrong and try a new variation. Try approaches meant for different age groups. When people are tired and stressed, it is often the simple ideas that bring the most relief. The most important thing is to provide a space that is homey and comfortable; students will begin to see the library as not just a place for studying but a place where they can hang out and relax.

### ***2. Students handles stress in their own way, and it is not always positive.***

Not everyone reacts positively when they're stressed; sometimes items get destroyed (usually stress balls) or go missing. While these twenty-somethings are adults, stress, lack of sleep, and improper fuel can lead to poor decision-making. It is easy to get frustrated and want to shut the room down when students behave negatively, but the committee tries not to let one bad apple spoil the bunch. For every student who treats the room disrespectfully, there are twenty students who help clean the room up or leave encouraging comments.

### ***3. There is no right way to do a Relaxation Room.***

A relaxation room can be implemented in variety of ways to fit the space and budget of any library. Don't have an available room? A cart with coloring sheets and pencils also works. The committee has had success using a corner of the lobby to create a relaxation space, putting out puzzles, board games, or other small items for students to enjoy during non-exam times. During LSU's Welcome Week, the committee set out a mini version of the Relaxation Room in the lobby for students to use in-between classes. Don't have a budget for puzzles and games? Ask your library faculty or staff if they have some they would like to donate. Many of our RR games and puzzles were donated by people cleaning out their closets. The committee has even received puzzle donations from graduating students. Through the committees' partnership with the Access Services department, the library has been able to circulate the RR's board games during non-exam weeks. Students can check out a game for a limited amount of time and play wherever they want. It's a way to help bring students together and encourage collaboration and problem solving even when the Relaxation Room is not set up.

### ***4. Get student feedback along the way.***

Ask students what they want to see or what helps them to relax. This can be done via a survey or through conversation during room checks. Asking students for their opinions allows them to have a voice in the decision-making process and helps them to see that this space is for them. Not every idea they



suggest is feasible (such as nap spaces and a constant supply of snacks), but get into the habit of saying, “Great idea! How can we implement that?”

The committee has learned that students are truly appreciative of small gestures of comradery. Many of the comments from the survey were not suggestions but simple thank-yous. It feels great to be able to do something for students that has all the benefits mentioned above, and to show that the libraries care about the students and their well-being.

### **COVID-19 and the Future of the Relaxation Room**

In spring 2020, the LSU campus was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic much like other institutions across the world. It led to the closure of the LSU Library building and forced staff and faculty to work from home. Due to the ever-changing nature of this virus, as of this writing, there are no plans to host the Relaxation Room in fall of 2020. The LSU Libraries’ foremost priority is maintaining the health and safety of LSU students, faculty, and staff. The Relaxation Room will return when it is safe for everyone to return to normal campus life. In light of what we’ve learned through the pandemic, important changes will be made, including more regular cleanings of the Relaxation Room and sanitizing the circulating board games more frequently during the semester. As we’ve done in previous semesters when influenza was spreading on campus, we will remove the more hands-on items, such as the sand and rice tubs, and wipe down surfaces with Lysol. The committee does not wish to limit the number of students who can access the Relaxation Room at one time, yet it is a precaution we will need to consider. We may also need to relocate the Relaxation Room to a space that allows for better social distancing. These conversations are ongoing. Encouraging students to have routine good health practices, especially during times of high stress, will be a focus moving forward. Through the pandemic experience, the committee has learned that the library can also be a place to help cultivate not just mental health but physical health as well.

### **Conclusion**

Students’ exam-week stress will always be an issue in academia. As the place where most students study during high-stress times, libraries are in a prime position to not only help students access resources that can help them in times of stress but also to provide outlets for that stress. Doing this benefits the library as well as the students. It brings positive attention to the library and challenges the outdated idea of what a library is and what it can do. As our public libraries are turning into community centers, academic libraries can become the community centers for their campuses. The addition of a Relaxation Room in an academic library can be a great way to not only engage students who are already in the library but also to help students overcome their library anxiety, to support student wellness, and to present the library as a third place. Libraries have always helped to support students educationally, but as the needs of students have grown, it is incumbent on libraries to grow as well.

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## Appendix

### Spring Midterms 2016 Survey

Did you enjoy your time in the Relaxation Room?

Yes

No

What did you like best?

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What would you like to see in the future?

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If you would like to be included in a drawing for a chance to win a small prize, please fill out your name and email.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_





# ARTICLE

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# Institutional Repositories for Public Engagement: Creating a Common Good Model for an Engaged Campus\*

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## ABSTRACT

Most higher-education institutions strive to be publicly engaged and community centered. These institutions leverage faculty, researchers, librarians, community liaisons, and communication specialists to meet this mission, but they have largely underutilized the potential of institutional repositories. Academic institutions can use institutional repositories to provide open access and long-term preservation to institutional gray literature, research data, university publications, and campus research products that have tangible, real-world applications for the communities they serve. Using examples from the University of Minnesota, this article demonstrates how making this content discoverable, openly accessible, and preserved for the future through an institutional repository not only increases the value of this publicly-engaged work but also creates a lasting record of a university's public engagement efforts and contributes to the mission of the institution.

## KEYWORDS

institutional repositories, public engagement, common good, preservation, academic libraries

Beginning with the Morrill Act of 1862 and again through the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, the US federal government sought to transform American universities into institutions focused on "civic purposes and engagement with the public by implementing initiatives that would enhance their overall direct contributions to America's contemporary society" (Furco 2010, 376)<sup>1</sup>. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, universities worked at the local and national levels to reaffirm and re-center public engagement as an essential part of the mission of higher education. These initiatives brought public engagement to the highest levels of a university, thereby institutionalizing this work rather than having faculty or campus centers support the public-service mission on an individual or ad hoc basis.

\* The authors delivered an earlier version of this article as a conference presentation at Open Repositories 2018 at the University of Montana, June 4-7, in Bozeman, Montana.

1 The authors acknowledge that the federal lands provided to educational institutions through the Morrill Act and other land-granting acts of Congress, including to the University of Minnesota, were forcibly acquired through cession from Indigenous people.

Enabling public-engagement work requires strong institutional support. But even with that support the question remains, how does a university present a more holistic picture of its community partnerships and *institutionalize* public engagement into something much more integral and essential to campus (and local) culture? The answer may lie in the recognition, dissemination, and preservation of the outputs of community-based research, not only from individual faculty members but also from publicly engaged students, staff, and campus units. A resource like an institutional repository (IR) affirms a university's commitment to public engagement through its guarantees of open and persistent access. This improved access to the content produced by public-academic partnerships through IRs helps institutionalize public engagement in higher education and provides a conduit between campus units and community partners.

This paper demonstrates the benefits of an institutional repository that aligns with the public-engagement mission of the institution, rather than focusing primarily on the exhibition of individual scholarly works. The academic library does more than simply provide open access to the contents within the repository; it inserts a layer of trust between the university and the community that is based on access to the work in conjunction with the permanency of the resource. By highlighting the trustworthiness of the repository, libraries add to the transparency of the institution, which in turn strengthens community partnerships. The example from the University of Minnesota demonstrates how, with a commitment to the preservation of institutional works beyond faculty scholarship, a publicly engaged repository serves as a common good for both the university and the wider community. The authors build on prior discussions of IRs and engagement by describing this common good model and providing three methods for how the IR can encourage publicly engaged campus offices to contribute community-focused content. As a result, the common good model leverages the services and frameworks of the IR's digital access and preservation to support campus engagement activities in local communities.

## Campus Public Engagement

Academic institutions, whether public or private, often share the tripartite missions of teaching, research, and outreach. Andrew Furco (2010) posits that public engagement is not solely a piece of the outreach mission; at an engaged campus, public engagement is a component of each of the three missions:

- Community-engaged *teaching* incorporates educational opportunities that focus on the application of classroom content in community environments.
- Community-engaged *research* seeks out community participation not as the subject of study but to better align research to community needs and to incorporate community expertise.
- Community-engaged *service* and *outreach* provide valuable experiences that yield similar opportunities for reward as professional service.

A key metric of how well an institution meets its mission is how well the output of an engaged campus persists and permeates throughout the community, contributing new knowledge and modeling best practices (Stanton 2007).

Nearly all higher-education institutions have embraced programs, centers, and offices that are publicly engaged and community-centered. These units leverage faculty, researchers, librarians, community liaisons, and communication specialists to create, promote, and disseminate research products that have tangible, real-world applications. For example, the

University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), founded in 1968, connects Minnesota communities, nonprofit organizations, and local businesses to the resources of the University. CURA has long recognized the need to ensure that knowledge created through these partnerships transfers back to local communities; it was one of the first research units on campus to create a website during the mid-1990s in order to publicly disseminate their research results (CURA 2007, 32). Such efforts by university programs like CURA demonstrate that there are "huge numbers of academic units that curate collections of information" and it is not just libraries and archives that are concerned with stewardship (Lynch 2003, 329).

## **The Role of Academic Libraries in Public Engagement**

Any campus unit that supports the university's mission can support an engaged campus; academic libraries are no exception. Granting non-campus communities access to academic library collections is considered by some to be the "earliest and most popular form of community outreach" for academic libraries (Hang Tat Leong, 2013, 223). A 2009 survey exploring the "emergent concept of 'public engagement' at the institutional level," sent to over a hundred US and Canada institutions in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), found that libraries consider many of their traditional outreach programs that provide community members access to services to be "public engagement" (Walter and Goetsch, 12).

Academic libraries do more than offer community services. The library has the "unique role and potential in supporting community engagement activities" by providing open access to and long-term preservation of institutional outputs, including material which is of benefit to communities outside of academia (Winston, 2013, 89). This is important as scholarly outputs may end up outside the public view and out of the hands of the community that helped generate that knowledge. And, just as lack of recognition for faculty participation is a major impediment for institutionalizing community engagement (Jaeger, Katz Jameson, and Clayton 2012), so too is the unavailability or ephemeral nature of reports provided only to the funding body or community agency (Stanton 2007). It is the latter concern that libraries are uniquely positioned to address with preservation and access.

Online content lacks permanency. Files posted to a website may be replaced or removed without notice, while the web pages themselves may move or be taken down, resulting in broken links that lead to a 404 error page. The text of a web page may change over time to a degree that it ceases to represent the original content. In a study of content drift over time, Jones et al. (2017) found that over 75 percent of the web content referenced by scholarly articles had changed from when they had originally been cited. Similarly, Oguz and Koehler (2016) found evidence of "URL decay" where only two URLs out of set of 360 were still active after approximately twenty years. Documents hosted on university websites might not be migrated to new websites, thus the continuity of access to older online files can be threatened (Bicknese, 2004).

The potential loss of public reports and community-centered publications requires an institutional solution. Miller and Billings (2013) suggest that libraries can find "new ways to document information on community engagement and can assist in the formulation of mechanisms and policies that will allow this work to be more broadly disseminated and more consistently valued (109)." Doing so ensures the continuity of a university's record of public engagement and can reassure community members that the university is committed to preserving the legacy of that work. For example, CURA, referenced earlier, began partnering with the University of Minnesota Libraries in 2007 to

make the results of their work as broadly available as possible by leveraging the institutional repository. In 2015, CURA worked with the University of Minnesota Archives to conduct a full-scale digitization of its entire publication record since 1968. At the project's completion, over 1,600 current and historical publications were added to the institutional repository. While CURA provided access to the content on their website, the institutional repository offered sustainable stewardship and permanency to the online content.

The ARL survey report briefly notes that "other digital library services, such as institutional repositories, may also be integrated into campus engagement efforts" (Walter and Goetsch 2009, 14). They point to the University of Massachusetts Amherst (discussed below) as one example but provide no further guidance as to how IRs might support public engagement, or what factors must be present in a repository to do so.

## **Seeing IRs as a Common Good**

In her discussion connecting digital libraries and the common good, Deanna Marcum (2001) explains that "pursuing the common good involves thinking about how the various parts and their interrelationships can be maintained, developed, and corrected so that the whole community flourishes in a way that enhances the well-being of its various parts" (73). Libraries have a part in this as libraries "are reaching new audiences, becoming publishers themselves in order to distribute materials more widely, and defining what a digital library will be. And, in the process, they must consider how the common good is maintained in a digital environment" (75). Institutional repositories originated out of this common good digital environment and are well suited to house the publications, reports, and related content produced by public-engagement partnerships.

Clifford Lynch (2003) defines an institutional repository as a "set of services that a university offers to the members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members" (328). A core belief in the development and design of IRs, both in their services and technology, is that their content is meant to be freely shared so that communities beyond the university may have access (Crow 2002). Novak and Day (2018) note that Lynch "moves the discussion of IRs beyond software to an organizational responsibility to steward an institution's digital assets" (158). For IRs that adopt this model of access and stewardship, the types of material found in the repositories include traditional scholarly works published elsewhere but made available as open-access copies, as well as non-traditional scholarship (also known as gray literature), institutional publications, and research data (Lynch 2003, Bicknese 2004, Miller and Billings 2012, Marsolek et al. 2018).

Margaret Heller and Franny Gaede (2016) reason that institutional repositories that provide "access to people who would otherwise lack it is a crucial role for libraries in sustaining the public sphere" and that "libraries fail to make the argument for why they are a social good if they ignore the altruistic impacts of repositories" (2). This altruistic motive of access, Heller and Gaede argue, "is a critical part of preserving the public sphere"; they stress that "we, as librarians, must build and assess our open-access initiatives with the understanding that they are a vital public and social good" (4). Yet, open access is not the only function of an IR and not the only common good it provides the community. Novak and Day view preservation in addition to access as "paramount services for the IR" and that stewarding material against the risk of digital loss is the main reason to establish an IR (2018, 159). Concurrent with the early development of repository systems, those charged with preventing the

loss of cultural memory through digital archives also approached their work as a public good (CLIR 2002). The preservation of cultural and institutional materials requires a series of actions including appraisal, acquisition, description, and arrangement, all of which are closely aligned with the services of institutional archives and mirrored in the functions of institutional repositories (Bicknese 2004).

Institutional repositories are based on the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) reference model, which provides a framework for a set of tools and services focused on *authenticity* and *trustworthiness* (Bantin 2016). Authenticity is determined by an IR's chain of custody, the processes and policies that oversee changes to or withdrawal of deposited materials. Authenticity ensures the document is what it purports to be. Trustworthiness describes the confidence in the repository. In 2002, the Research Libraries Group (RLG) published its *Attributes and Responsibilities* of a trusted digital repository.

The report explains that "institutions responsible for the preservation of nondigital material already tend to enjoy a fairly high level of public trust because libraries have reliably preserved a large amount of the human record over time" (9). The public will trust academic libraries in the management, preservation, and continued access to digital material "so long as they sustain reliable access to information" (9).

A publicly engaged campus is characterized by the "*authenticity* and *genuineness* with which community engagement is integrated into the research, teaching, and service mission of higher education institutions" (Furco 2010, 387). While similar to the terminology that defines trusted repositories, the use of *authenticity* and *genuineness* is specific to public engagement. Authenticity is embodied in the reasoning behind a university's involvement with a community and the weight it places on the subsequent education or research. Genuineness is the result of the equal partnership between university and community members, their equal contribution, and the acknowledgment of the expertise the other brings to the work (387). Furco concludes that "authenticity and genuineness are essential ingredients for securing sustainable and effective campus/community partnerships as well as for building a strong engaged campus" (387).

What *authenticity* and *trustworthiness* in institutional repositories and *authenticity* and *genuineness* in community engagement share are the commitments to transparency and to leveraging the infrastructure of the academic institution for mutually beneficial partnerships and sustainable outcomes. Shortly after the adoption of IRs at several North American universities, Clifford Lynch and Joan Lippincott (2005) observed

considerable interest in institutional repositories in the context of public, state-supported institutions as a vehicle for public engagement and for communicating the intellectual and artistic contributions of the university to the people of the state; these have clear parallels to the national-level discussions taking place outside the United States about the role of the institutional repository in structuring information flow and communication between universities and the publics that support them (found under "National Policies and Institutional Repositories").

Institutional repositories, while not a catalyst for public engagement, serve the common good by ensuring authenticity and trustworthiness in the management of public scholarship. IRs participate in a reciprocal trust that is vital to public engagement.

Examples of IRs at state-supported institutions demonstrate how some university repositories serve as vehicles for public engagement and provide a space for the engaged campus to fulfill its mission. The first example comes from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where librarians and outreach



staff created a space in their IR designed to “establish a dedicated institutional archive of university-community partnerships that would allow faculty to build their individual portfolios while creating a greater institutional capacity to demonstrate the scope and value of work with external partners” (Miller and Billings 2012, 117). The implementation team worked with faculty and researchers connected to community-engaged projects in a pilot effort to select materials for inclusion in the repository. The intended outcomes of the project included advancing university goals in public engagement, promoting gray literature through institutional exposure, and incentivizing faculty with reward structures. Content submitted by faculty were assigned one of three categories that reflected elements of the university’s mission statement in order to better illuminate the ways “community engagement generates activities and products related to all areas of the institution’s mission” (116). A review of the project concluded that “repositories have the potential to make complex information about engagement with community partners more visible, more valued, and more thoroughly understood” (119).

The second example of repository-based engagement focuses on community-generated contributions rather than faculty portfolios of external partnerships. In her article on IRs and community engagement, Amanda Makula (2019) highlights three separate projects that utilized IRs as a means of outreach to local communities. Central Washington University, Boise State University, and the University of San Diego are representative of engaged campuses leveraging their services to incorporate community-created works into the repository, stretching the commonly defined boundaries of IRs. Makula argues that this expansion of an IR’s function should find its “purpose not from the library community, but from their parent institution” (para. 8). Makula identifies that purpose in the University of San Diego’s strategic plan, which describes the university as an “anchor institution for our local community” (para. 9). The IR is reimagined as “a bridge between the University of San Diego and the outside world” and as a method “to build and nurture institutional-community relationships, foster collaboration, and cultivate goodwill” (para. 12).

What these examples highlight are repositories illustrating relationships between the institutions and the communities they serve and are supported by (Makula 2019). In the Amherst example, the content is primarily faculty-authored works that are included in the repository to raise awareness of an individual’s—and, subsequently, the institution’s—role in public engagement. In the University of San Diego example, the repository is open to members of the community to deposit their works so as to preserve the cultural history of the community in which the institution resides.

The University of Minnesota presents another method by which academic institutions can fulfill their public-engagement missions through their institutional repositories—a method that has not been explored extensively in the literature. Rather than seeking faculty scholarship or community-created contributions, the repository seeks to permanently capture content produced by university-community partnerships—the studies, reports, plans, newsletters, information sheets, and data sets that are not found in the published academic literature or through a library’s catalog. While this content can be found physically in offices, storage spaces, or within the collections of the university archives, it is also prevalent within the digital output that is found at all levels of the institution. The extent of digital information on websites, servers, and personal computers represents the problem of “little archives everywhere” and highlights a preservation concern for those who create and utilize born-digital content as to whether it “will be accessible as time passes and technology changes” (Dunnam et al. 2005, 5). Thus, the preservation function of

institutional repositories serves institutional goals “where the end-user in mind is not the faculty, but the institution” (Novak and Day 2018, 164).

## Supporting Public Engagement at the University of Minnesota

The Digital Conservancy, administered by the University of Minnesota Libraries, is an institutional repository program launched in 2007 with a focus on digitally collecting the University’s broad institutional output, including administrative and archival material of historical importance; it serves as the “digital arm” of the University Archives. Because of the ongoing work of repository staff and liaison librarians, many publicly engaged units across the University of Minnesota turn to the Digital Conservancy for the necessary infrastructure to house, preserve, and make their research products freely available for the common good. In their roles, repository staff and liaisons promote the repository’s potential to content authors and contributors by relating “the benefits of the repository to their constituency groups and serving as a champion and advocate” (Callicott, Scherer, Wesolek 2016, 161).

The inception of the Digital Conservancy began with a 2005 exploratory report that focused on the challenges in collecting and preserving the digital output of the University at all levels of the institution. The report emphasized that it is the University’s “public responsibility to store this information for the public good, the public benefit” (Dunnam et al. 2005, 46). The Digital Conservancy maintains a strong focus on the institutional output of the University, well beyond the traditional scholarly content that is generally considered the domain of IRs (Bicknese 2004, 89). With over 80,000 records at the time of this publication, only about 11 percent of the content in the Digital Conservancy represents previously published articles, preprints, and book chapters. Of the ten most common types of content in the repository, only one (articles) would be traditionally considered “scholarly,” while the remainder demonstrate the range of works produced or sponsored by the University (Figure 1). These works include administrative documents,

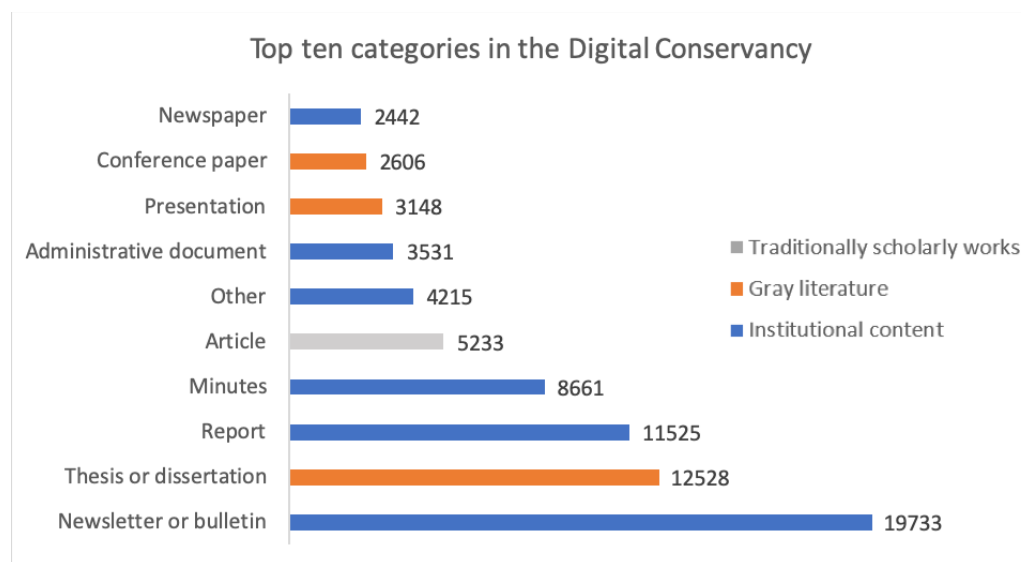


Figure 1: The top ten most frequently assigned categories in the University Digital Conservancy, as of July 2020. The single category that would traditionally be considered “scholarly” is highlighted. The items within these ten categories make up approximately 90 percent of the total content (n = 82,524) in the Conservancy. The type *Other* represents 4,200 items of which nearly 40 percent are part of the University Extension collection and consist of institutional content such as informational booklets, fact sheets, and educational guides.

committee minutes, assessment reports, and informational bulletins, as well as gray literature such as conference papers, presentations, and theses or dissertations (Marsolek et al. 2018). Two of the Conservancy's partnerships exemplify successful connections between publicly engaged campus units: CURA, mentioned above, and the University of Minnesota Extension service. Like CURA, the Extension service connects communities in Minnesota to the resources and research of the University. Both organizations acknowledge the importance of documenting engagement over time to demonstrate how the "collective impact through published accounts of community engagement promotes awareness and generates community support" (Hunzicker 2017, 99). These two units see the Digital Conservancy as a program they can leverage to make their ongoing output immediately and permanently accessible to the communities they serve. Their decision to use the institutional repository, rather than relying on less stable means, communicates the authenticity/trustworthiness of the university and the authenticity/genuineness of the partnership and its sustainability.

The University of Minnesota Extension service was established by state legislation in 1909 to "publish frequent home education bulletins" that "shall be sent free to all persons resident within the state who shall request said bulletins to be sent to them" (Minnesota Revised Laws Supplement 1909). Past and current Extension content is deposited to the Digital Conservancy as a modern method by which Extension can continue to provide its research freely to the public and to expand their reach globally, while also avoiding the potential of loss that occurs when campus websites undergo frequent migrations. The Conservancy further provides access to digitized historical bulletins from Extension that would otherwise be difficult to locate through library catalogs or access physically.

In both the Extension and CURA examples, the ability of the Conservancy to remove their website hosting concerns, and the ease with which they can upload content, proved to be valuable features of the repository. Furthermore, the inclusion of both programs' digitized historical publications demonstrates their long record of publicly engaged research at the University.

## **Methods to Support Publicly Engaged Campus Units**

The University of Minnesota's experience can be applied to other programs looking to expand their institutional repositories to support a publicly engaged campus. These methods include scoping IRs beyond faculty scholarship, supporting distributed deposit, and preserving campus content.

### ***Scoping IRs beyond faculty scholarship***

At the 2017 executive roundtable for the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI), participants reaffirmed the purpose of institutional repositories is "to capture all types of content produced by the institutional community, particularly material at the greatest risk of being lost" (CNI 2017, 5). Yet, despite understanding the "wealth of digital and digitized archives from various sources," roundtable participants remained unsure if institutional archives and records should go into the institution's IR or some other platform (4). The focus of the Digital Conservancy's recruitment strategy remains centered on content that documents the university's activities as well as the institution's broad research portfolio. In other words, the publicly available, university-produced reports and community-centered publications that would traditionally go to the University Archives in paper form are core to preserving the record of the university's engagement mission in the IR.

Early in the development of the IR program at the University of Minnesota, University Archives staff made a significant effort to digitize university-produced publications available in the archives and to incorporate them with their more recent, born-digital counterparts in the repository (Moore 2014, 2). Content in the Digital Conservancy dates back to 1851; over thirty thousand records represent content that has been digitized either by the Libraries or campus partners. The effort focused on populating the repository in order to encourage continued submissions by collaborating campus offices, which is based on the experience that a well-populated repository strengthens the incentive for others to contribute content (Devakos, 2006, 175; Moore 2014, 11). This approach was particularly effective for Extension: today it is the third most populated collection in the Conservancy. Shortly after the Conservancy launched in 2007, librarians who worked closely with Extension began to identify, digitize, and upload Extension's historical publications to "extend the reach of this knowledge geographically, removing barriers and boundaries to its discovery and use" (Mastel 2015, 2). Liaisons then worked with Extension staff to encourage self-deposits of recent, born-digital Extension materials; the two methods now work in tandem to continually expand the Extension collection.

### *Supporting distributed deposit*

Ruth Kitchen Tillman points out a common theme regarding faculty self-deposits into institutional repositories: "faculty do not deposit their works in them" (Tillman 2017, 3). To encourage faculty self-deposit, the Amherst initiative relied on an implementation team of librarians and outreach staff to usher faculty through the process. When staff for this pilot was redirected, it became clear that faculty deposits would be "difficult to maintain and impossible to expand without the benefit of dedicated staffing" (Miller and Billings 2012, 117). This example supports Tillman's assessment survey (2017), which concludes that the additional support needed for even willing faculty contributors to self-deposit is an unsustainable effort unlikely to lead to satisfactory self-deposit rates. Rather than funnel IR submissions through individual faculty self-deposit or a small number of repository staff or designees, repository technology can support the distribution of responsibilities, including selecting items for submission and uploading the content (Devakos 2006, 174). This type of self-deposit can be undertaken by campus units through their communications staff, research associates, community specialists, and others who create content—all without requiring repository input or guidance. At the University of Minnesota, we consider this a distributed deposit.

A significant number of repository uploads to the Digital Conservancy come directly from a distributed-deposit model that rewards content contributors with timely dissemination of information. This distributed model empowers the staff of contributing departments, research centers, and administrative offices to contribute content at or near the point of creation. These deposits are not the scholarship of individual faculty; they are the research and technical reports, educational bulletins, newsletters, and annual reports produced by contributing institutional offices. As of July 2020, the Digital Conservancy has approximately three thousand registered campus users contributing almost two hundred items per month. The yearly rate of contributions via distributed deposit is roughly half of all annual deposits to the repository.

For campus centers and offices that use their websites as clearinghouses to distribute information, it is not the concept of open access that brings them to the institutional repository—they have been providing public access all along; it is the permanence of the item and persistent access to it. University websites are ephemeral, and the websites of major colleges and departments frequently undergo transitions to new platforms or upgraded versions. Links to reports and other documents may break as the site URL changes; files may not always transition to the new platform. Most approaches to web archives focus on the systematic crawling and wholesale capture of websites. The web-crawling technology that captures these websites can also be used to identify, appraise, and collect web-based content—such as reports, publications, or other files hosted online—that is at risk of loss and suitable for the repository. By moving this content into the IR, individual units like CURA and Extension no longer have to worry about the long-term preservation of the files; they can instead link directly to the persistent URL of their material in the repository. The CNI Roundtable (2017) found that “for institutions that are doing systematic web archiving (either for institutional reasons, such as archiving images of the institutional web space as part of the local archive, or in support of faculty research initiatives) this work is typically siloed away from the IR strategy” (10). Systematic web archiving does not need to remain siloed from the IR strategy. It can, in fact, be a channel for repository growth.

Content preservation also enables the IR to take an active role in file mediation. The IR can offer, for example, Optical Character Recognition (OCR) in older digitized content, which increases the usefulness of these documents to the end-user. The project to digitize and make available CURA’s publication library also included evaluating previously digitized or digital publications already available on their website. CURA and archives staff reviewed the digitized surrogates to decide if rescanning would be warranted. Their concern was twofold: the accurate representation of the publication and its reliability in the hands of the user—in other words, the authenticity and trustworthiness of the repository’s content was at stake. Similarly, Extension sought to preserve datasets in the Digital Conservancy (which includes the Data Repository for the University of Minnesota, or DRUM). As with other digital content, data is often stored in a precariously managed patchwork of systems, which may not provide long-term preservation or open access to those seeking the content (Mastel 2015, 3). Additionally, centralizing these materials in an IR enables users to search all of the available research and documentation in a single location and discover connections that may not otherwise have been visible.

### **An Engaged Campus Repository in Practice**

What does the implementation of a distributed deposit of publicly engaged research by a campus research center look like in the repository? Campus units can upload reports as soon as they are finalized without having to go through a prolonged publishing workflow, resulting in the timely dissemination of relevant materials. In his discussion of the importance of open access to public health research, Bicknese provides a contemporaneous example of the 2003 SARS outbreak and the benefit repositories provided to the public health community in combating the epidemic (2004, 83). A recent example from the Digital Conservancy involves the timely submission of informational bulletins to assist rural communities responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. University Extension researchers working with community partners on local sustainability projects (University of Minnesota Extension 2020) formulated instructions for

creating affordable, nutritional, fourteen-day quarantine meal kits based on common food items stocked in rural grocery stores; a separate set of instructions guided stores in how to set up contactless pickup.

These were the first documents related to the COVID-19 pandemic added to the repository in March 2020; they were downloaded 3,958 times in their first ten days and accessed from communities as far away as Iran. Additional pandemic-related content that has been deposited since the onset of COVID-19 in North America includes strategies for remote classroom learning and an initial analysis of the pandemic's economic impact. These examples demonstrate the value of the institutional infrastructure paired with university-community expertise in providing timely, persistent access to novel research designed to mitigate a public health crisis in communities with limited resources, and in preparing the broader population for economic and educational disruptions.

## Conclusion

Academic institutions have well-established missions to engage local citizens and strengthen ties with the surrounding community. Heather Joseph sees institutional repositories as "integral to the mission of the larger body in which they are housed," and asserts that they must "be able to demonstrate their clear value" (Callicott, Scherer, Wesolek 2016, 326). Although the CNI report suggests that libraries are still debating whether a repository "should be focused on discovery, access, and/or preservation" (2017, 7), the Digital Conservancy's role at the University of Minnesota demonstrates how an institutional repository focused on preservation can be a conduit for public engagement and an expression of the institution's mission. For university programs, preserving works of community-engaged research and public scholarship in an IR that is open to everyone provides transparency and adds to the overall public discourse within the larger community. This, in turn, supports the trustworthiness of the university as a committed partner and the genuineness of that commitment. Furthermore, IRs support the timely addition of content from these campus units by a distributed-deposit method that allows campus units to upload their materials directly.

The permanency, authenticity, and trustworthiness of an IR program enable it to provide resources for citizens who might not otherwise have access to traditional scholarly communication channels; institutional repositories democratize content for all. The Digital Conservancy and institutional repositories like it are not just containers for scholarly content or tools for open access. Rather, they play a strategic role in public engagement for their institutions and their libraries. By acting as a common good to showcase, contextualize, disseminate, preserve, and institutionalize this content, IRs support the research, teaching, and outreach mission of an engaged campus, provide a service as a public good, and contribute to an informed citizenry in society.

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# Idea Lab: Outreach in the Time of a Pandemic

## IDEA LAB

### Introduction to Idea Lab

*Meaghan O'Connor, DC Public Library*

The Idea Lab within JLOE is a space to center the voices of library practitioners, with a focus on emerging practices and experimental approaches. This inaugural Idea Lab is dedicated to the creative and inspiring ways that libraries are connecting with their communities - either virtually or socially-distantly - while prioritizing health and safety for customers and for library workers.

“Public Libraries are a last refuge for the most vulnerable members of our communities”

The worldwide shut down of physical library locations brought public attention to what the library community has long known—that public libraries are a last refuge for the most vulnerable members of our communities. Many libraries quickly and successfully pivoted to digital services and virtual programming, all the while understanding that these services don't meet the needs of some of our most regular customers. People who rely on public libraries for a human connection with a staff person or another customer, internet access, a cool space on a hot day, or something as simple as a water fountain.

So how have libraries responded to this urgent need to recreate our outreach and engagement strategies when our buildings are off limits and human connections are necessarily distanced by six feet or mediated through a screen?

At the District of Columbia Public Library, we're building on a foundation of strong partnerships to stay connected, deliver programs, and provide updates about library services. This looks like conducting virtual outreach through partners like the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Washington and their Clubhouse in Your House initiative and other community organizations. We're also developing downloadable kits that partners can use to lead their own programming while taking advantage of library resources. We're putting together programming packages and book giveaways that we can deliver to a central location - like DC Housing Authority or a summer meals distribution site - for a partner to distribute to their constituents. We know that there are critical gaps that we aren't able to safely support right now. But I've never been more proud of the ingenuity and compassion of my team, my library, and of libraries around the world.

### Opportunity Hides Behind Adversity

*Dianne Connery, Pottsboro Library*

Opportunity hides behind adversity. And have we ever had some adversity lately?! I was really moved by what one of our regular patrons shared with me recently. She talked about how access to the internet will be the difference between her five boys missing a year of school and having those same boys thrive. Three of her sons have a variety of challenges - ADHD, stutter, autism, and dyslexia. The family has been coming to the library for years, and the boys are exceptionally polite. Their father takes the one car to work M-F. They do not

have internet in their rural neighborhood (satellite is the only option where they live—too expensive and not adequate bandwidth) nor a computer. Because of Covid-19, it is unlikely the sons will be able to go to school in person. The boys need specialized education that the mom doesn't feel equipped to provide. Oh, she earned her GED 3 years ago and needs job skills. I worry. How will a family like that ever get out of the hole they are in?

The library staff was able to refurbish a donated computer from a local business and loan them a hot spot. This is a start, but it isn't the real solution. Through reaching out to a local wireless internet service provider and to a national non-profit, Gigabit Libraries Network, we have identified funding to put up a small tower in their neighborhood which will make it possible for everyone to have access. That includes the grandmother down the road, who can't read, who is raising her dyslexic 7 year-old granddaughter.

In this rural library, outreach and engagement are on a whole new level now because the needs are so great. Outreach is coordinating local businesses and churches to leave their WiFi on in their parking lots. Engagement is bringing together the stakeholders who know what the issues are and can make things happen. We've always been close to the community, but now outreach means looking beyond our city limits for long-term solutions to help patrons reach their aspirations. Much of the staff's time is spent in national, even global, Zoom meetings about universal broadband and advocacy. Using a map of low-income students' homes without broadband, we are coordinating efforts with ISPs, ISDs, and non-profits to build the infrastructure for these students to have in-home internet. While waiting for more funding we've been able to launch neighborhood access stations – similar to parking lot Wi-Fi, but within walking distance for those who do not have transportation. They deserve an equal right at education. We understand we are at a turning point, and libraries are making a choice right now. Rural libraries are in a position to transform lives and communities. We must know what people in our community need and work with other organizations to make it happen. There is opportunity.

### **Outreach in time of confinement: One example in Haiti**

*Elizabeth Pierre-Louis, Program Coordinator, Fondasyon Konesans ak Libete FOKAL*

In Haiti, on March 19th, 2020, a presidential decree closed all schools, universities, churches, limited transport, reduced the workload of civil workers, closed the international airport and imposed a curfew. As a national foundation, [Fondasyon Konesans ak Libete](#) providing public reading services, we felt compelled to close to the public until an unknown date.

It was not the first time we were forced to close quickly and for a long length of time. In 2019, due to socio-political instability, schools and many businesses were closed for almost a trimester. But here it was at international scale with frightening repercussions. FOKAL has a network of 17 community libraries across Haiti and provides them with financial and technical support. We organized distance work and thought about how to keep our public, patrons occupied, informed but also entertained. We decided to offer online content, recommendations, critiques, poetry, downloadable books, as well as original creations.

Already in 1997, the library program had re-discovered a gem, the adaptation of the Lafontaine Fables by Haitian lawyer and author, George Sylvain in 1901: *Fables de La Fontaine racontées par un montagnard haïtien et transcrites en vers créoles /The Lafontaine fables told by a Haitian mountain peasant and transcribed in creole poetry*. First the work was in public domain and most of the French XVIIth century fables (themselves adapted from Aesop and other Greek and Roman Antiquity poets) were once again adapted, this time to the Haitian context in

early XIXth century creole. A weeklong festival was created then, a reedition of the book with the addition of the modern Creole and spelling and glossary. Fast-forward to 2018, when we decided to focus more activities with local content to young children and a play/musical “Lafontaine d’après Sylvain” was created using these adapted fables. The audience from “7 to 99 years old” loved it, the play toured the country, performed in several schools and auditoriums. Recently we worked with a young animation designer and launched last week a short animation film “Kòmè lasigal ak sò fwonmi” (La cigale et la fourmi) one of Lafontaine most famous fable last week.

This original online content is part of the collection that we are building during the COVID era to make more books on different formats accessible to all age groups. We are working on online theater plays, debate, songs as well as reading chapters of books in the public domain.

We feel very privileged to share this [short animation film](#) with you. Other short animation films will follow.

## Amplifying Our Voice

*Jason Kuscma, Executive Director, Toledo Lucas County Library*

Like many organizations, Toledo Lucas County Public Library (TLCPL) relies on a mix of on-site interactions and print materials, robust website content, social media, earned media, paid media placements, email, and digital signs to stay connected with the community about all of our services and programs. When we closed our locations in March in advance of Ohio’s stay at home orders, we responded with increased attention to social media, website content, and email and have seen the increased eMedia circulation that other libraries have reported.

However, we also needed to consider how we could communicate TLCPL’s unmistakable positive presence in the community while customers couldn’t be in our vibrant and welcoming spaces. Given the trajectory of COVID-19, we additionally needed to think about a long-term shift in communications outreach with an emphasis on creatively amplifying our message. Here are a few of our tactics:

[Sageloves2eat](#): We invited a local teen who regularly posted about books on her Instagram page to be a social media influencer for TLCPL’s Summer Read program. She posted about how and why to join as well as provided fresh perspectives from her own reading.



[@sagelovestoeat](#): It’s my favorite time of the year! The Summer Read at the @ToledoLibrary is back! earn prizes!



[@sagelovestoeat](#): Currently Reading: Tyler Johnson Was Here by @mrjaycoles. Really good so far. It’s a page turner.

TLCPL usually connects best with teens in our spaces, so enlisting a teen social media connection helped amplify our message. This builds on our overall socialmedia influencer plan that allows us to engage with audiences who typically don't follow us.

[Your Chapter Awaits community art project:](#) One of our key previous projects was creating and printing a 64+ page seasonal program guide. Without customers in our buildings and drastically reduced programming profile, we reallocated this budget to a community art project. We invited local visual artists and a local poet to create artworks that reflected ideas important to them with the Library as the common thread. We printed posters and small stickers to distribute for free at all of our locations. Most importantly, all the artists and a curator who assisted us distributed the posters throughout the community at local Boys & Girls clubs, coffee shops, restaurants, stores, and more. A major regional outdoor shopping center printed even larger posters and displayed them in store windows. Instead of sharing our message by ourselves, we had an entire creative team helping us.

[Amplifying storytimes:](#) TLCPL positioned our virtual storytimes as [Saturday Morning with the Library](#) to build on data suggesting that nostalgia is a powerful force during COVID as people seek comfort with familiarity. In addition to storytimes, each week we provide singalongs, magic shows and more. In keeping with amplifying our message, special guest storytimes feature local celebrities who then share the storytimes on their own communications channels to reach more people in our community.

Looking beyond our traditional channels will continue to be a focus to ensure our relevancy and importance to the community is ever present.

## **70 stories for Children: From Librarians with Love**

*Melania Butnariu (Brasov County Library, Romania) and Dr. Claudia Serbanuta (Progress Foundation, Romania)*

This Idea Lab is dedicated to the power that love and dedication for library users has in bringing together people, building trust and putting forward innovative ideas.

As the pandemic wave reached Romania, at the beginning of March 2020, the first decisions put in place by authorities to assure social distancing included closing the schools and libraries. In a matter of days, public librarians were left with a limited way of connecting with their public. In the absence of online library services, for a number of weeks, the librarians struggled to connect with the public using alternative solutions. Among the ideas put to work, the one implemented by librarians for their children audience won the heart of everyone: a marathon of story-reading for children!

When the State of Emergency was declared the librarians, who previously worked in projects that were implemented nationally, activated their online connections and opened their network in support for librarians nationwide. One such effort gathered together, as a WhatsApp group, the librarians working with children on the project "Friendship on a String" coordinated by the Center for Excellence in Children's Services from Brasov County Library. Besides the original 55 librarians that joined the group before March, by May the group had over 100 users and was buzzing with links to free resources and webinars that librarians could use to reach out to children in their communities.

As the International Children's Day was approaching, Melania Butnariu, the administrator of the WhatsApp Friendship on a String group and the host of the Marathon, put to practice a quote from Lidia Kulikovski, a library guru and mentor to many librarians from the region: "A librarian who does not innovate is like a car without an engine." Here is Melania's take on this event:

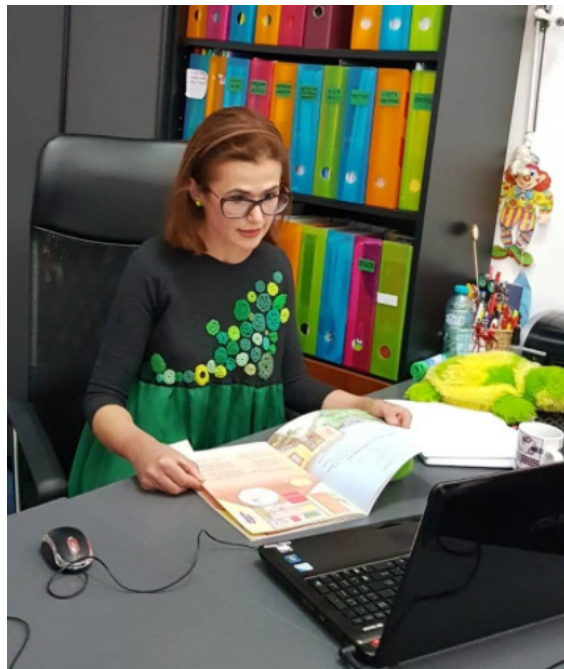


Starting with this idea, sometime before the 1st of June, I proposed to carry out an activity together with librarians from our group and they agreed to give it a try, because what would June 1st, the International Children's Day, be in our libraries without stories? We wanted to do an online story-reading marathon. The emotional response of librarians was so strong that, even though we have not worked together before and some had little experience with online platforms like Zoom, more than 90 librarians expressed interest in participating and a strong team of eight librarians volunteered their time and expertise for coordinating the effort to bring this idea to life. With an ad-hoc team, an inexistent budget and a lot of love the Marathon took place within a week.

From 10AM to 6PM, 70 librarians from 2 countries, Romania and Moldova, read 70 stories live on Zoom with an amazing energy and with an extraordinary desire to deliver the stories, to share their love for books and reading and also to manifest their love for children. The whole marathon was broadcast on the page created for this event, a page that gathered over 25 hundred likes. The video of the marathon had a reach of over 50 thousand, with a total of almost 50 thousands minutes watched by the public.

We had some blessings from above as we managed to pull it through with some intense practice time, and no technical difficulties. After 8 hours of broadcasting live, when the participants met on the Zoom session we cried of joy, we laughed of joy, we congratulated ourselves and we screamed "Incredible!!! We did it!!! Our efforts were not in vain!!! We are a great team!"

Special thanks to the small team that made this possible - 7 members from different institutions were there with me, day and night, in bringing this dream to life: Mariana Marian (Sălaj), Cristina Maria Olaru (Focsani), Maria Truță (Arad), Margareta Tătăruș (Focsani), Mihaela Doina Stanciu (Brăila), Claudia Șerbănuță (București) și Vlăduț Andreescu (Târgoviște).



[Seventy Stories for Children Facebook Page](#)

[Full marathon Recording](#)

[YouTube channel](#) where all individual stories will be posted

# Upcoming Events



CALENDAR

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## November 9, 2020

### ■ JLOE Scholars Panel Discussion, 11:00–12:00, CST

- Erik Moore, University of Minnesota, "Institutional Repositories for Public Engagement"
- Kelly Safin; Renee Kiner, University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg, "Campus Engagement: Faculty Recognition and the Library's Role"
- Beth Scarborough, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, "Beyond the Myths: the American Civil War in History and Memory"
- Jessica Kohout Tailor; Lili Klar, Clemson University, "Growing Collaborative Outreach Efforts to Support the Well-Being of Communities"

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## November 12, 2020

### ■ JLOE Scholars Panel Discussion, 1:00–2:00, CST

- Randa Lopez Morgan, Louisiana State University, "Supporting Student Wellness and Success through the LSU Libraries Relaxation Room"
- Sierra Laddusaw; Jeremy Brett, Texas A&M University, "Convergence: Bringing Libraries and Popular Culture Conventions Together"
- Chandler Christoffel, University of Georgia, "The Capturing Science Contest: an Open-Ended Approach to Promoting STEM Communication"
- José Rodriguez, Georgia State University, "Establishing Outreach Programs: a Study of Effective Outreach Programs and Support Groups in Academic Libraries"
- Elizabeth Pierre-Louis, Fondation Connaissance et Liberté / Fondasyon Konesans Ak Libète (FOKAL), "Outreach in Time of Confinement: One Example in Haiti"
- Dianne Connery, Pottsboro Library, "Opportunity Hides behind Adversity"

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## December 10, 2020

### ■ LIS Research Fundamentals Round Table, 12:00–1:00, CST

Join Dan Tracy, Lisa Hinchliffe, and Jen-chien Yu in a discussion about designing and writing LIS scholarship. Topics covered will include the literature review, research methodology, and what editors look for in a manuscript.