



Journal of Library Outreach & Engagement

VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 2 | SUMMER 2021

Inside

- 1 Letter from the Editors
- 2 Feature Articles
- 40 Scholarly Article
- 110 Idea Lab



Journal of Library Outreach & Engagement

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Sarah Christensen
Matthew Roberts
Mara Thacker

EDITORIAL BOARD

Stacy Brinkman
Stephanie Diaz
Brianna McDonnell
Meaghan O'Connor
Elizabeth Pierre-Louis
Susan Schnuer
Kimberly Shotick
Katrina Spencer
Susan Wengler

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Gretchen Wieshuber

COPY EDITOR

Rudy Leon

PUBLISHER

Illinois Open Publishing
Network
1408 W Gregory Dr.
Urbana, IL 61801

EMAIL dtracy@illinois.edu

WEB iopn.library.illinois.edu

VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 2 | SUMMER 2021

Contents

FROM THE EDITOR

- 1 Letter from the Editors

EDITORIAL

- 2 Planning for Success: COVID-19 Outreach Experiences at Marshall University Libraries
- 8 Hiring Student Graphic Designers: Benefits, Challenges, and Lessons Learned
- 14 Health Promotion, Collaboration, and Outreach: Creating Space for Health Literacy at a Specialized, Academic Research Library
- 22 Organizing and Facilitating Critical Conversations around Systemic Racism: Opportunities and Challenges
- 30 Reaching Out while Looking Within: the #WellnessWednesdays Initiative at Texas Tech University

ARTICLE

- 40 Streamlining Support: Improving Outreach by Creating a Sustainable Events Framework
- 58 Library Liaison Services in US Community Colleges: Findings from a National Survey
- 78 Community Dialogues to Enhance Inclusion and Equity in Public Libraries
- 96 Too Big for the Library: Scaling Down Popular Outreach to Ensure Lasting Sustainability in an Academic Environment

IDEA LAB

- 110 Johannesburg Libraries as Change Agents for the Homeless: Digital Literacy Programs for Marginalized Communities



Letter from the Editors

FROM THE EDITOR

Sarah Christensen
Matthew Roberts
Mara Thacker

*University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign*

It's been a wild ride of a year. We envisioned publishing Volume 2, Issue 1 this spring, but the pandemic had other plans for us. So this has been a year of adjusting our own expectations and extending a little grace to ourselves, our authors, reviewers, and readers. With all of that said-- welcome to Volume 1, Issue 2!

As is to be expected, the COVID-19 pandemic looms over this issue and Dr. Kelli Johnson and Sarah Mollette's contribution specifically reflects on the evolution of library outreach during this public health crisis. Moreover, the pandemic's impact is noticeable in the submissions that we received relating to wellness and health literacy. On this topic, Billy Trinagli writes about the importance of health literacy, and Erin Burns wrote about virtual yoga sessions for a program designated #WellnessWednesdays.

But this issue addresses a variety of other significant concerns, including matters related to DEIA (diversity, equity, inclusion, and access) in academic and public libraries. For example, Crawl et. al write about organizing and facilitating critical conversations around systemic racism; and Anne Holland et. al write about using the Community Dialogue Framework to enhance inclusion and equity in public libraries. Holland's work is also notable for being one of our first peer reviewed pieces representing public libraries. And on the topic of firsts for the journal, Mary Wahl's article provides

previously absent data about the extent to which community college librarians fill liaison roles.

“These articles represent the journal's commitment to librarianship in all its forms.”

These articles represent the journal's commitment to librarianship in all its forms.

The issue still addresses academic librarians and their work. Terra Rogerson and Monica Ruane

Rogers investigate how to sustainably plan and implement library events and programs, and illustrate how it can be beneficial to scale down outreach programming to small, focused events that make a demonstrable impact on students, faculty, and academic staff. Similarly, Tess Colwell and Alex O'Keefe write about forming a programming team and developing documentation and workflows to create a more cohesive and sustainable outreach program for their library. Finally, John Jackson and Jamie Hazlitt talk about the benefits of hiring student graphic designers for outreach and marketing needs.

Looking to the future, we hope to experiment with alternative forms of peer review, including open peer review. These processes represent our commitment to advancements in scholarly communications and may serve as more equitable means to welcome librarians into academic publishing. In the meantime, keep sending us your submissions and enjoy the issue.

Warmly,
Sarah, Matthew, and Mara



EDITORIAL

**Dr. Kelli Johnson
and Professor Sarah
Mollette**

*Marshall University
Libraries*

Planning for Success: COVID-19 Outreach Experiences at Marshall University Libraries

Strategy and flexibility during the unexpected

“While library marketing, communications, and outreach were not a priority under previous library administrations, there were numerous librarians and staff from different departments interested and involved in these activities.”

The outreach experience at Marshall University Libraries & Online Learning (MU LOL) has evolved over the past several years into a robust multi-faceted, flexible program, which worked well during “normal times,” but also turned out to be adaptable during the COVID-19 pandemic. This article describes how MU LOL’s cross-departmental system has evolved, and how the finalization of its outreach plan led to a successful transition to online outreach in 2020. Specifically, the authors will address the history of

library outreach at the university, forming the outreach librarian position, the outreach librarian’s audit of current outreach practices, the creation of an outreach committee, and the development of the subsequent outreach plan guide.

Marshall University had a long-standing decentralized university communications system until 2014, when the university hired a vice president for communications and marketing. This position pulled together the siloed marketing efforts of campus departments and colleges. The

new university communications team (UCOMM), developed and led by the new vice president for communications and marketing, established branding guidelines and implemented new, coordinated marketing strategies.

The MU Libraries were enthusiastic about the unified communications and marketing strategy, as there had been an uneven history with library marketing. Generally, some departments would advertise materials, programs, and services while others chose instead to rely on word of mouth. While library marketing, communications, and outreach were not a priority under previous library administrations, there were numerous librarians and staff from different departments interested and involved in these activities. This resulted in a strong and active outreach program, but one that lacked a cohesive approach in terms of marketing efforts, assessment objectives, communication, and overall mission goals. Despite this disorganization, several efforts achieved a level of success.

In collaboration with a talented graduate assistant (GA) with a background in art, graphic design, and marketing, a team of librarians reinvigorated their Facebook and Twitter accounts, with funding provided by UCOMM. The librarians focused on getting students, faculty, and staff into the Drinko Library (the main campus library), and using the materials and services provided there. The GA noticed that students were checking in on social media when they went to Drinko, saying things like “Studying at the Drinko” and “Met John at The

Drinko.” With that information, they developed the “I♥The Drinko” campaign. Tabling events in busy student areas were held where branded swag—t-shirts, tote bags, water bottles, pens—was given away to anyone who liked and followed the library on social media. The campaign proved so popular, people who were not able to attend the tabling event contacted the library to ask for a tee-shirt. The other libraries on campus requested their own shirts and tote bags and held similar events. While the campaign ran only while that GA was employed, the student success librarian recently revived the campaign, and expanded it to “I ♥MU Libraries.”

Additionally, the library maintained a social media presence in the form of one main Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram account, with the Special Collections Library having their own separate accounts. This approach, despite personnel challenges and somewhat infrequent posts, was generally considered successful because of a rise in interest and attendance for library programs and other outreach endeavors.

In 2018, the library decided that to have a successful unified marketing strategy, a dedicated outreach role with marketing responsibilities was necessary, and its first outreach librarian was hired. This moved MU Libraries into an era of actively providing displays, events, and workshops to connect with students in ways previously overlooked. The incoming outreach librarian had two years of outreach experience at a previous institution which allowed for a quick transition into the role, but with the added benefit of fresh eyes.

The first step toward developing a cohesive outreach program was to audit the list of current and previous activities to understand the state of programming, and then meet with all librarians actively engaged in programming to hear more about their individual approaches and priorities. The outreach librarian accomplished this via formal meetings, informal conversations, and a review of assessment documents. That last component was difficult to achieve because the library had not been using a single assessment or data-collection platform. Therefore, the outreach librarian created an outreach statistics form using SpringShare’s LibInsight application, and librarians were encouraged to create assessments via SpringShare’s LibWizard application. The outreach librarian found that some activities were being coordinated to fill a need with a specific audience (for example, freshmen), but were not well attended. Other activities had high attendance numbers, but were lacking any clearly-delineated goals or formative assessment methods.

The second step was to use the information gathered in the audit to create an outreach plan that maintained a multi-department and multi-location approach while addressing problems of inconsistency. Essentially, any department could follow the plan—almost like a roadmap—to check all the boxes for programming which furthered the mission of the library, while also meeting the needs of the students, faculty, and community within its constituency. As one librarian could not be reasonably expected to intimately understand and address each individual department and/or location’s marketing needs, this strategy allowed for a cohesive approach while also leaving room for independence across departments. The plan clearly defined what types of activities and programming were considered outreach, how to determine goals and assessments, and how to plan the logistics of an event. It was around this time that the university as a whole requested that any programming done by campus staff or faculty have defined goals that matched the mission of the university, so this component was incorporated into the outreach plan draft.

A temporary ad hoc outreach committee was tasked with finalizing the outreach plan. Over the course of several meetings, the committee members, who had all been involved in their own departmental outreach efforts in the

past, provided feedback on the document draft and discussed edits, reviewed considerations regarding each unique library department and location, and ensured the university's policies were being addressed. When all considerations were finished, the outreach plan was considered finalized.

In addressing procedures for social media, the outreach librarian formed a second temporary ad hoc committee of interested colleagues, in response to the UCOMM liaison's (as part of a larger UCOMM effort) suggestion for an internal audit of the libraries' social media accounts. The UCOMM office believed the staggering number of overall university accounts was simply too high, with engagement and interaction numbers being too low. The library reviewed data for their Facebook and Instagram accounts, and the statistics revealed that the engagement and interaction numbers for the main library Facebook page did not warrant its upkeep. The Facebook page for the Special Collections department was allowed to continue, because of their unique collections—such as genealogy and local history—and wider community audience. At that time, the main library was not able to find any stats for their Twitter account, so the UCOMM liaison implemented the Falcon IO platform to monitor this, which the outreach librarian would review in 2021.

The committee agreed that the GAs, supervised by the outreach librarian, could run Instagram, while the outreach librarian would run Twitter. This division was made because the outreach librarian had already had been creating content for the Twitter account, and the GAs were more interested in Instagram. In spring 2021, the outreach librarian performed the new Twitter audit, and those statistics revealed that the library's Twitter account should be discontinued for the same reasons as its Facebook page. Despite a reasonable number of faithful followers of the library's main Twitter account, the majority of the currently-enrolled students were simply not seeing the content. In late summer 2021, the outreach librarian will work with all interested library staff to provide a "batch" of library content to their UCOMM liaison at the start of each semester for scheduled content to be posted to the university's Twitter account, using a single hashtag (#MarshallULibraries) with any emergency or event-specific information being added as necessary. This means that a larger number of currently-enrolled students will see library content, but scheduling and maintaining the account will largely fall to UCOMM, and not to library employees.

While information about services, resources, and events drove social media content planning, the outreach librarian and GAs also emphasized engagement with students. Asking for comments on events, for suggestions for prizes, and why students were in the library that day aided in informing future content as well as other library activities.

During late spring 2021, the outreach librarian began working with a public relations (PR) faculty member to create a student ambassador social media role for the library's Instagram account, to begin during the fall 2021 semester. The PR faculty member is in charge of student internships, which are required for that major and are credit-bearing. The goal is to create a Social Media Internship position for Instagram because the last of the library's social media-savvy GAs have graduated, and it is always risky to assume future students will have the necessary skills. This approach was recommended by the library's UCOMM liaison, whose offices successfully use a similar model for their own content. Because the PR students are required to complete 300 intern hours, the outreach librarian hopes that the same student could fulfil the role for a full academic year (fall and spring semesters).

With the outreach plan and social media goals established, the outreach librarian created a standing once-monthly meeting with the UCOMM liaison.

The outreach librarian hosts each meeting, and shares the recurring meeting invite with all library staff at the beginning of each semester so those with programming or marketing needs can attend.

These meetings have not only built a stronger relationship with the UCOMM liaison, but also a better understanding of the types of marketing services the university could provide. For example, “should this event be marketed to only undergraduate students, or the entire university?” And, “Does it require graphics only for digital signage, or printed materials as well?” Another example pertains to finances. For any outreach purpose, the library’s print needs are covered by the UCOMM office, rather than from the library’s budget, as are any physical materials, such as giveaways like ink pens and silicone straws, because they feature the university library logo.

These monthly meetings also make it easier to maintain a clear schedule of events. The outreach librarian sends monthly reminders for the meeting itself, in addition to reminders to anyone who had recently completed programming to input their statistics into the LibApps data form. The first 30 minutes of each meeting are used for internal library discussion, such as brainstorming and planning, and the UCOMM liaison attends the final 30 minutes to create the project tickets needed to start the process of print and/or digital content creation and distribution.

It was because of these efforts that MU LOL’s outreach approach was prepared to address the challenges of the global pandemic that began to affect the library in late winter 2020. A side-by-side glance at the library’s 2019 activities dataset versus the 2020 activities dataset is enlightening, as while the number of activities decreased (from 50 in 2019 to 26 in 2020), the attention to the needs of the students, the ongoing technological considerations, and the distinctive limitations inherent in conducting outreach during a pandemic resulted in a remarkable effort to connect with the campus community.

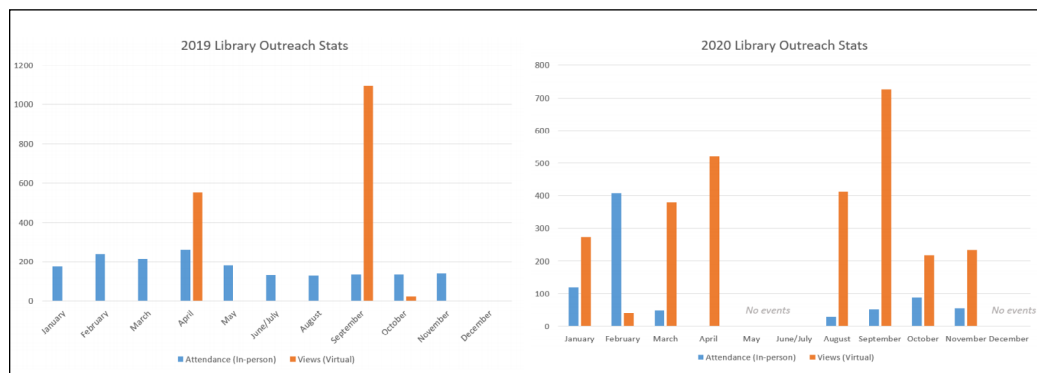


Table 1. Comparison of 2019 and 2020 Outreach Statistics. 2019 included 50 total events, 1,744 total attendance, and 1,672 total views. 2020 included 26 total events, 799 total attendance, and 2,807 total views.

At this point, the authors must point out an internal decision that was seemingly prophetic considering how much the world would change in early 2020. The outreach librarian transitioned from outreach into a new role: online learning librarian. This was because everything the librarian had been able to accomplish in outreach—creating the outreach plan, finalizing the social media tasks, and organizing the monthly UCOMM meetings—culminated in a significantly less urgent need for a dedicated outreach position. Because the main problem had been too many things happening at the hands of too many people in too many different ways, when that was solved and all policies and procedures were in place, the outreach librarian decided it was time to migrate to a new role that the library needed filled.

“Assessment programs are critical to growth, because to make decisions, you must know what has been done, whether or not it worked, and why or why not..”

In moving from outreach to online learning, with the librarian's outreach experience coupled with their passion and skillset for online technologies, they were able to easily translate in-person activities to online modules, guides, or meetings that lived on various virtual platforms. Because of their UCOMM liaison relationship, and because of the university's approach to innovation and technology, the librarian was always able to find answers to questions from either existing partnerships gleaned over the years at MU LOL, or partnerships that were generated while forming the outreach plan. In their first few months as the online learning librarian, they were also able to take advantage of the fact that the entire world had shifted its focus to being more successful in online education, and so there was no shortage of library-related virtual outreach ideas, resources, and DIY's for the librarian to stretch their online outreach skills regarding both mental health and academic support.

For example, a popular, recurring, in-person MU LOL event was Finals Week Stress Relief, which includes a schedule of activities that ranged from DIY activities (make your own stress balls with the provided materials and instructions) to staff-led activities (make a button, key-chain, or magnet with our machine while a librarian guides you). Previous stress relief activity examples included Legos and board games for checkout, a “relaxation station” with free snacks and supplies, a “meditation tent,” and a giant community coloring sheet.

When the campus closed in March 2020, the librarians wanted to provide stress relief activities (which were certainly needed more than ever) that students could do from home at the end of the semester. The solution was twofold: first, to create a LibGuide that housed several at-home stress relief options, and, second, to retain some level of consistency regarding the more popular events.

In their previous role as the outreach librarian, the new online learning librarian had already created a Stress Relief LibGuide, featuring the pre-COVID activity schedule. In spring 2020, they updated it to focus more on things students could do on their own, with one page featuring link-lists guiding students to activities they could do for no (or low) cost while the stay-at-home orders were in effect. These were divided into three categories: DIY, Relaxation & Calming, and, Just for Fun. Other pages featured planning pages encouraging students to stay on track during the hectic end of the semester, downloadable coloring pages, and links to some online jigsaw puzzles. The librarian also made sure to feature information about the university's counseling resources.

To retain some level of consistency that mirrored the most popular of the in-person events—the MU PAWS emotional support dog visits—the team coordinator for the MU PAWS dogs and handlers suggested creating videos that featured the dogs doing tricks or “recommending” stress relief activities, and a Zoom meet and greet was scheduled. An extension of the spring activities to the fall included an in-person scavenger hunt for students who had returned to campus, and three virtual yoga sessions led by a fellow librarian. It is clear from the attendance, views, and engagement data recorded in the individual activity data sets that the students were comfortable participating in these activities, and the librarians have decided to maintain the virtual events even when campus fully reopens.

Additional programming examples that were held virtually (synchronous) or online (asynchronous) after originally only being offered in-person include

escape room activities, a scavenger hunt using the Special Collections archives, career education week, art exhibits, and “snack chat” workshops. The online learning librarian continued to work with library colleagues to determine which events could be well-suited for a virtual component, and everyone planned their activities around the academic needs of the students while being considerate of the technological limitations that some students may have been experiencing.

Because the work had already been done to create a cohesive library-wide outreach plan, the online learning librarian could focus more on the new strategies necessary for the Research and Instruction Services team to continue providing academic support. This meant library colleagues could use the outreach plan to replace any in-person responsibilities with virtual outreach activities, which ultimately highlighted the growing number of online resources and services the library makes available to students and the campus community. Had the plan not been in place, the online learning librarian may have been stretched too thin in their desire to support colleagues, and could therefore have possibly ignored the very community which she needed to be focusing on.

The path to a unified outreach strategy was both complex and direct for MU LOL, but one which successfully includes staff and librarians from multiple departments across three libraries on two campuses. Of course, this process took time, collaboration, and buy-in from library administration. Institutions looking to create a library-specific outreach plan should connect that document to the strategic plan of their library and possibly even their institution, as goals and objectives can be easily linked with a holistic mindset. Additionally, assessment programs are critical to growth, because to make decisions, you must know what has been done, whether or not it worked, and why or why not. Lastly, developing partnerships with both library and non-library entities, such as the UCOMM liaison partnership detailed here, expand opportunities for connecting with your students, and may lead to new connections with your faculty, staff, and the surrounding community.

Supplemental Resources:

- While the MU LOL outreach plan is an internal document, the step-by-step guide for library employees can be viewed online:
<https://libguides.marshall.edu/outreach>.
- The Stress Free guide, which at the time of this writing also featured the list of activities for fall 2020, can be found online:
<https://libguides.marshall.edu/stress-free>.

Author Details

Dr. Kelli Johnson, Professor and Head of Collection Services, Marshall University: kelli.johnson@marshall.edu

Sarah Mollette, Assistant Professor and Research and Instruction Services Librarian, Marshall University: sarah.mollette@marshall.edu



EDITORIAL

Jamie Hazlitt and
John M. Jackson

Loyola Marymount
University

Hiring Student Graphic Designers: Benefits, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Extending the impact of outreach

For the past decade, the William H. Hannon Library at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) has hired student designers to meet the demands of the majority of its print and digital graphic design needs. From fliers and table-toppers to digital banners and animated gifs, student employees have been instrumental in the success of our unique and ever-evolving visual identity. Maintaining an engaging visual presence in both physical and digital spaces throughout the campus extends the impact of our outreach efforts, helping students connect library programming, services, and collections to their personal and academic needs. With this goal in mind, we systematically include the development of promotional materials in the early stages of designing new programs and outreach initiatives.

Before 2015, there was a lack of library literature on the importance of graphic design in library outreach (Douglas and Becker 2015, 460). The next year, Diana Wakimoto published her study on graphic design best practices in libraries, which provided more detailed information about how graphic design work happens in various institutions (Wakimoto 2016, 71). The results from that study indicate that most librarians do the work themselves, and there was no mention of the use of students for graphic design needs (it is worth noting, however, that the study did not focus exclusively on academic libraries). Other authors have highlighted the benefits of using students' graphic design work in libraries to promote community projects and foster student engagement (Oldenburg 2020, 7; Ballengee, Segoria, Sisemore, and Towerly 2019, 512).

Outside the studies referenced above, there is a dearth of literature that addresses the benefits of hiring (and paying) students to design outreach materials for the library. What follows is a summary of the William H. Hannon Library's success at working closely with students to create engaging and original promotional materials that support the messaging, programming, and other outreach needs of the library. We discuss the benefits and challenges of hiring graphic design students and offer a brief overview of what we recommend as best practices for managing these students.

The Benefits of Hiring Student Graphic Designers

The benefits of using student designers for outreach support outweigh many of the common challenges, which will be addressed later in this article. Students offer a fresh and contemporary aesthetic in the work they create. In

“From fliers and table-toppers to digital banners and animated gifs, student employees have been instrumental in the success of our unique and ever-evolving visual identity.”

our experience, their artistic eye is unburdened by the anxiety of influence, or the psychological burden of being seen as derivative or pigeon-holed into one particular style, often found in mid-career creators, even if they lack the benefits of experience. Combine this with the reality that new student designers need to be hired every 2–3 years as they matriculate, and we are able to add an element of flexibility (both a benefit and a necessity) to the library’s visual identity that enables us to stand out among our campus peers. Like many university libraries, we have campus-mandated branding rules and style guides for any official communications, particularly those that involve outreach into the local community. For on-campus outreach, however, we have some leeway, especially when our graphic design materials are developed by students themselves. Being able to use promotional materials in our outreach that are distinct from the “campus look” allows our messaging to stand out in an increasingly crowded communications space.

It is important to note the value we place on paying student designers for their work. It is not uncommon for undergraduate design students to have “real world” clients and projects that inform assignments in credit-bearing courses. For example, students in Graphic Design II at Loyola Marymount University have a poster design project connected to the university “Common Book” program, and the students’ final work is displayed in the library each year. This kind of partnership is mutually beneficial to the students and the library, even though it is unpaid. Less desirable are “design contests” (usually hosted by stakeholders outside of the classroom), where students are asked to develop and submit ideas for free, in the hopes of winning a small prize and getting the honor of having their work adopted by the client. Although this can be cost-effective, this practice diminishes the value of creative work, and it comes with no guarantee of an end-product that will meet the needs of the contest-holder.

For many small and medium-sized libraries with limited budgets, hiring a professional designer or asking a full-time library worker to dedicate a portion of their time to design work may not be a possibility; access to designers employed by other university departments may not always be available. For example, LMU has a well-funded and generously staffed marketing department, but their attention and resources are prioritized toward high profile initiatives. The university has an FTE of 9,577 students. On average, there are approximately 75 total students on the graphic design track. Of those 75 students, approximately a third are juniors or seniors with the necessary experience to take on pre-professional projects for the library.

On the surface, student assistants, especially those hired through college work-study, can offer a more affordable solution to meeting design needs than hiring new or using pre-existing full-time staff. It is worth noting, however, that industry rates for graphic design work are well above the rate typically offered to work-study students. If a library has the budget (and institutional permission) to pay these students more than the average rate for student employees, they are likely to attract and retain more skilled talent. Graphic design work requires a unique skill set that should be compensated accordingly.

There are benefits to the students as well. Student designers working in the library can build and practice skill sets applicable for a variety of future employment opportunities, and not only in the field of graphic design. As we will detail below, student graphic designers manage multiple projects with a variety of timelines, deliverables, and needs. They gain experience working with clients who have different sets of expectations and levels of involvement—especially if the student is creating outreach materials for a variety of units or initiatives within the library. In our experience, a successful student designer is one who is able to articulate their own ideas, empathize with and comprehend

the ideas of others, and craft those ideas into a message that is both clear and visually engaging at the same time.

The Challenges of Hiring Student Graphic Designers

The challenges that hiring student graphic designers brings to academic library outreach and marketing work are not all that different from the challenges a library faces when hiring students for other types of roles. Students' schedules are notoriously difficult to navigate and plan around. This is particularly problematic when we are working with hard deadlines, such as promoting an event or printing handouts for a workshop. To overcome this challenge, it is important to schedule projects well in advance and set clear expectations and boundaries for colleagues involved in the design process. We typically give our student designers at least two weeks to finish any project that requires developing a design idea from scratch (versus using a template). We also give our student designers flexibility in their schedule. As "a creative" (as they sometimes call themselves), their best work is often done at irregular times. Providing enough space for these moments to happen is important for giving students both the freedom and time to do their best work.

Of course, being students, they are not likely to be in our employ for long. Even if we are able to hire a talented first-year student, the maximum amount of time we will have with a student designer is three years. As a result, we have to onboard a new student designer every 2 years on average. However, since the best student designers tend to be those who have completed the core courses in their field, most of our student designers are seniors.

Best Practices in Hiring: Faculty Recommendations

Graphic design requires a very special set of skills. Depending on the size of the campus and the types of fine arts programs offered, the pool of students who have the requisite skills for graphic design work could be extremely limited or widely diverse. To overcome this challenge, we tap into the recommendations and expertise of our faculty colleagues in the studio arts to recruit skilled students. This strategy has never steered us wrong.

In particular, we reach out to faculty who teach the studio arts courses that cover the skills we are most interested in tapping: upper-level graphic design and typography courses. Classes such as history of design, multimedia design, and experimental design cultivate skills that may occasionally come in handy for library needs. Courses which dive into the essentials of layout and, especially, typography for two dimensional work cover the areas that we most desire in our outreach efforts: what and how to communicate. While the interplay between color, layout, text, and imagery is important, we have found that poor typography will most readily

sink a good design idea. For an academic library, most of our audience will be learning about our services, collections, and events through textual elements, so clear messaging is of the highest importance.

In the past six years, every student we have hired has had the recommendation of a faculty member who taught the student's Graphic Design II or Typography II courses. One additional benefit of hiring students who have completed these courses is that we are able to work with them using the methods and language employed by those same faculty, as we will discuss in the section on project management below.

“Courses which dive into the essentials of layout and, especially, typography for two dimensional work cover the areas that we most desire in our outreach efforts: what and how to communicate.”

Managing Student Designers

To meet the challenge of frequent turnover (with student designers graduating every couple of years), we have become adept at the onboarding process. The first two meetings with each designer cover a standard set of topics. After addressing administrative details like time cards and employee policies, we begin by discussing the typical types of deliverables the student will be expected to produce: fliers, half-sheets, large posters, button designs, web graphics, and social media graphics. We then review branding policies for frequently used materials, such as logos, images, and fonts. At this point, we usually introduce the student to some of the work created by previous student designers to show both the types of objects typically produced as well as the range of styles. Finally, we review the standard project management structure and workflow.



Figure 1. Posters Illustrating Various Student Designs, 2016-2021.

Each original design project begins with a standard set of instructions which includes the following information:

- A brief overview of the goals for these designs
- The target audience (e.g. students, faculty, etc.)
- Metaphors for inspiration and aesthetic (e.g. connection, conversation, growth)
- Expected deliverables (print vs. online, dimensions, resolutions, file size limits)
- Copy and other textual elements
- Links to required/recommended imagery
- Past examples (for annual or series events)

Having this information laid out in advance provides our student designer with the appropriate scope and expectations for their work. If specific deadlines need to be met or if there are milestones that need to be met along the way, those would be outlined here as well. While each piece of information is important in its own right, we have found that the metaphors are the most important to get right. This is a pedagogical technique we picked up from our graphic design faculty: what associations should the design evoke? What emotions and feelings do we want the viewer to experience? When explaining the significance of this information to colleagues, it can be helpful to refer to “the bouba/kiki effect” (Wikipedia 2021)—the concept that there are implicit connections between shapes and speech—to illustrate the importance of selecting visual elements with intention.

It is also important to provide students with both the tools and constraints of institutional design work: preferred fonts, approved logos, and a repository of high quality images. These resources and rules can usually be acquired from an institution’s central marketing office. Depending on how much approval is necessary for any graphic design work that the library puts out to external audiences, it is important to spend time reviewing branding guidelines and local policies for the use of institutional imagery.

To organize all this information, we use Trello, an online project management tool that allows users to collaborate using “boards,” “columns,” and “cards,” similar to analog sticky notes on a bulletin board. Our Trello board contains a column which lists information and links to all the resources mentioned above.

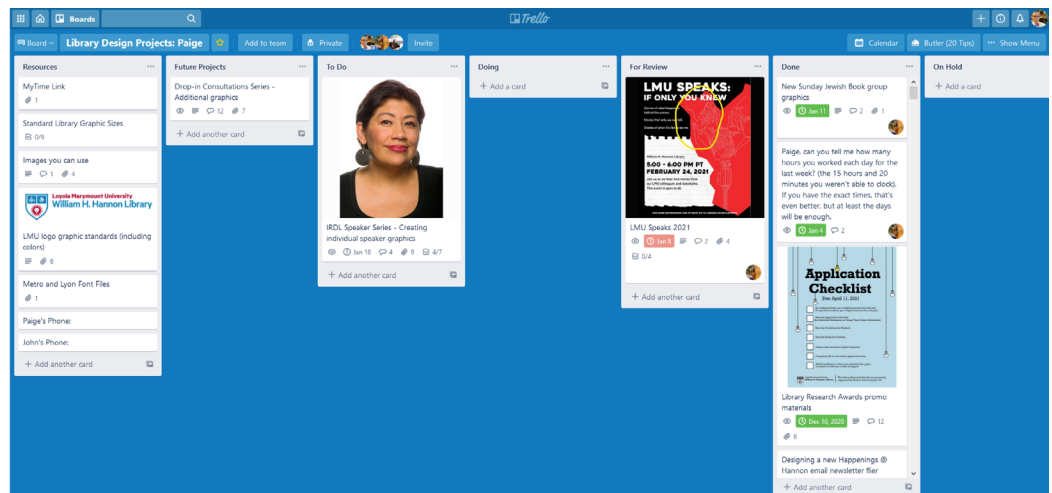


Figure 2. The “Library Design Projects” Trello Board.

Most of our “Library Design Projects” Trello board is dedicated to in-progress design work. There are six main columns: Future Work, To Do, Doing, For Review, Done, and On Hold. Each design project is listed on a card. This card contains the instructions, links to any needed files, a checklist of deliverables, and a deadline. As our graphic designer completes their work, they can ask questions or make notes using the commenting function. For example, when a project changes status, the student can attach their completed designs and drag the card from one column (Doing) to the next (For Review), which notifies their supervisor that the work is ready for them to review. If a draft needs additional work, the supervisor can add comments and move the card back to the To Do column.

Even before COVID-19, our graphic design students worked remotely, and on their own schedule, giving them the freedom to work when they are at their most creative. Using Trello allows us to easily keep tabs on their projects. When

providing feedback on a student's overall design, we try to limit the drafting stage to no more than two rounds of revisions. It can be easy to fall into the "just one more tweak" rabbit hole and so we create production timelines that build in time for two full rounds of work. Given the often limited timelines of our work, it is important to throw out undesirable design ideas early in the process so there is enough time to pivot to a new idea.

Conclusion

The practice and process of hiring student graphic designers requires the same attention to recruitment, onboarding, clear communication, project management, and constructive and productive feedback as that of our full-time professional staff. The return on investment can yield benefits for the library and the students alike. As it relates to outreach and communications work, the relationships between student graphic designers and library staff provide a flexible and ever-changing lens through which to see our work reflected in the eyes of our campus community. While the need to hire a student graphic designer may be one of necessity, it can simultaneously be a source of inspiration and creativity.

References

- Ballengee, Megan, Emily Segoria, Liz Sisemore, and Stephanie Towery. 2019. "Increasing Student Engagement." *College & Research Libraries News* 80 (9): 512–15. doi:10.5860/crln.80.9.512.
- Douglas, Veronica Arellano and April Aultman Becker. 2015. "Encouraging Better Graphic Design in Libraries: A Creative Commons Crowdsourcing Approach." *Journal of Library Administration* 55 (6): 459–72. doi:10.1080/01930826.2015.1054765.
- Oldenburg, Kristina. 2020. "Student Work in VCC Libraries: From Mannequins in the Library to a Car on the Third Floor." *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library & Information Practice & Research* 15 (2): 1–8. doi:10.21083/partnership.v15i2.5835.
- Wakimoto, Diana K. 2016. "Library Graphic Design Best Practices and Approval Processes." *New Library World* 117 (1/2): 63–73. doi:10.1108/NLW-07-2015-0049.
- Wikipedia, "Bouba/kiki effect," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bouba/kiki_effect&oldid=1008344178 (last modified February 22, 2021).

Author Details

Jamie Hazlitt, Associate Dean, Loyola Marymount University: j
amie.hazlitt@lmu.edu

John M. Jackson, Outreach & Communications Librarian, Loyola Marymount
University: john.jackson@lmu.edu



EDITORIAL

Billy Tringali
Emory University

Health Promotion, Collaboration, and Outreach: Creating Space for Health Literacy at a Specialized, Academic Research Library

Principles of partnerships

In the current American cultural climate—living through the COVID-19 pandemic—the ability to engage with and understand health resources is more important than ever.

Health literacy is a complex topic that broadly describes an individual's ability to process health information and use it to make sound medical choices. Many public libraries are currently engaged in health literacy work, as it falls easily within their scope of serving their communities (Flaherty and Miller 2016). Many academic librarians believe university libraries should be doing more to promote health literacy (Duhon and Jameson 2013).

The American College Health Association states that “the purpose of health promotion in higher education, as a field, is to support student success. Colleges and universities have a duty to help members of their community develop skills to optimize their well-being and to establish environments where health and well-being are recognized as critical components of students' ability to learn, work, enjoy, and contribute to the community” (American College Health Association 2019). Libraries, as places embedded in our communities, filled with information and information professionals, make an ideal space for this overarching national mission. Academic librarians can cite national support for engaging in health promotion activities to request time to work on these types of projects. Health literacy stands as target for collaboration. “As health literacy is a cross-cutting issue, addressing it should involve collaborations among a wide range of professionals” (Shipman et al. 2016, 206).

This paper connects academic librarians to the concepts of health literacy and health promotion through examples of collaboration with health experts, and turning an academic library into a built environment that facilitates the growth of health literacy skills.

Brief Definitions: Health Literacy and Health Promotion

The Committee on Health Literacy states “health literacy skills are needed for dialogue and discussion, reading health information, interpreting charts, making decisions about participating in research studies, using medical tools for personal or familial health care....” (Nielsen-Bohlman et al. 2004, 31). But what does health literacy entail? Nielsen-Bohlman et al. report that the Committee on Health Literacy used the NLM definition in their 2004 book *Health Literacy: A Prescription to End Confusion* (31–32). Health literacy can be defined as

The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions” (Ratzan and Parker 2000). In their piece on outreach for medical librarians, authors Parker and Krebs (2005) alter the wording of that definition to state that that health literacy is “the ability to obtain, process, and understand basic information and services needed to make appropriate decisions regarding health (S81).

Building from this definition, I approach health literacy from a health promotion perspective. In his brief article detailing the differences between health literacy and health promotion, Thomas Abel (2008) states:

Health promotion approaches do not focus on illness experiences or optimal use of medical services. In health promotion the focus usually is much broader and emphasizes healthy general living conditions and people’s chances to live healthy lives. Moreover, health promotion calls for improving the resources people need in order to be active for their health, their own personal health, the health of their families and communities, including the power to change things for the better In this perspective, health literacy refers to people’s knowledge about how health is maintained and improved in every day life Health literacy also includes the skills to obtain and use appropriate knowledge about health and its determinants (169–170).

Essentially, from the perspective of health promotion, health literacy empowers individuals to improve their own health and the health of their communities through resource access and education.

Initial Steps—Making a Strategic Collaboration

Emory University is a large, private university with eleven schools and colleges, with a total enrollment of over 15,000 students in 2019 (Emory University “Facts and Figures”). In relation to health promotion, Emory University notes on its website (under “Social Impact”) that it serves its global community through public health. “The university has myriad partnerships and programs—involving experts in public health, medicine, business, and law—designed to extend and improve lives in the US and countries around the world” (Emory University “Social Impact”). In the summer of 2019, I started working as the law librarian for outreach at the Hugh F. MacMillan Law Library, and quickly began attempts to establish my own partnerships with experts in public health, Emory University’s Office of Health Promotion..

“Academic librarians can cite national support for engaging in health promotion activities to request time to work on these types of projects. Health literacy stands as target for collaboration.”

Joyce Lindstrom and Diana Shonrock’s 2006 work on successful collaboration between librarians and faculty argues there are “four behaviors essential for successful collaborative teaching partnerships: shared understood goals; mutual respect, tolerance, and trust; competence for the task at hand by each of the partners; and ongoing communication” (19). However, Thacker and Laut (2018) argue there is an uncertainty around how much collaboration is needed for library instruction partnerships, stating that “despite the potential in collaboration, the literature has been somewhat ambivalent over the extent to which cooperation is necessary” (287). They follow this up with discussions of whether information literacy instruction should be “an embedded liaison or team-teaching model for individual courses, or a thoughtful one-shot library session,” requiring many institutions to adopt a more flexible approach (287). Additionally, the researchers highlight the importance of a first impression that demonstrates eagerness to collaborate (291).

Mygind and Bentsen (2015) argue that, “even when given a commonly shared system of expression, people . . . inhabit different worlds and therefore are not able to understand each other. In interdisciplinary work, where people have different horizons and terminologies, misunderstandings and conflict are therefore likely to occur” (122). From this, it can be argued that a certain level of humility must be accepted by librarians when approaching interdisciplinary collaboration. Health literacy experts, health promotion experts, and librarians come from a variety of backgrounds, and can fill in the gaps in each other’s skills, knowledge, and access to students. Collaboration is a blending of expertise combined with an ability to bend to someone’s greater knowledge, while still ensuring all inputs from all backgrounds are addressed. In my assessment, the best collaborations stand on four tenets: flexibility, respect, enthusiasm, and humility.

After completing this research, I drafted a strategy for initial collaboration with the Office of Health Promotion:

- Be open to any level of partnership
- Respect the time and expertise of the potential partner
- Express genuine enthusiasm for the potential collaboration
- Be humble in your own knowledge and open to learning

Before reaching out to the Office of Health Promotion, I investigated what types of health-related materials already existed within the library space. MacMillan Law Library has extensive resources relating to the law, legal theory, and how to pass law school classes, but had few resources relating to building resilience and stress management, and no permanent resources dedicated to

sexual health, nutrition, or sleep hygiene. Books related to stress, such as *How to Be Happy In Law School*, were shelved on the fourth floor, in between books about securing a job and studying for exams. The library hosted several destress-based events for students throughout the school year, the most important one being MacMillan Library’s biannual

“The best collaborations stand on four tenets: flexibility, respect, enthusiasm, and humility.”

destress event, Stress Busters. Arriving to my initial meeting with the Office of Health Promotion with definitive answers for what exactly the library was already doing as it related to health promotion built a foundation from which ideas and a potential partnership could grow.

During our second meeting, I insisted that the library was open to any level of collaboration, stating MacMillan Library would be grateful for any collaboration the Office of Health Promotion would be interested in, ranging from recommendations of resources supporting health promotion, through full involvement in Stress Busters. By following the steps laid out in my collaboration strategy, the first meeting between the Hugh F. MacMillan Law Library and the Office of Health Promotion was a great success.

Flexibility and Endless Opportunity

I first reached out to the Office of Health Promotion in September of 2019. My goal was to be as enthusiastic and flexible as possible in fostering a relationship with this office. I stated in my initial email that I was interested in forging a connection between our departments, interested in the types of resources they created, and interested in learning more about their services and resources.

Unbeknownst to the law library, the Office of Health Promotion had already done research on Emory Law’s students in 2017. This research indicated that law students rated themselves physically healthier than the rest of campus, but felt that they experienced more stress and high-risk alcohol use (Amposta et al. 2018). This research was done without collaboration from the law library, and

its discovery was an immediate benefit of my first meeting with the Office of Health Promotion. Simply by being open to working with the Office of Health Promotion, the law library was given immediate access to research that had already been done on our patron population.

This research indicated students needed resources on mental health and safe drinking habits, and the Office of Health Promotion agreed to provide dozens of booklets and health resources relating to various issues so that the MacMillan Library could make them directly accessible to students. A small table was set next to the circulation desk, near an area dedicated to a community puzzle, and this space became a permanent home for grab-and-go health promotion resources. As simple as this gesture might seem, Parker and Krebs (2005) argue “people of all literacy levels prefer materials that are simple and easy to understand.” (S83). This area soon became a center of great activity, with resources needing to be replaced several times each week. By this metric, the grab-and-go resources were a success.

This setup was later spotted and commented on by a member of Emory Law School’s Student Services Department, who noted they had a number of distress-related booklets they would be happy share with the library. Following the set guideline of being flexible to any and all levels of partnership, I accepted, and as a gesture of reciprocity forged a relationship between the Office of Health Promotion and the Emory Law School’s Office of Student Services. This connection led to a partnership between all three groups, in which the Office of Health Promotion wanted to provide safe-sex supplies and booklets on sexual education to MacMillan Library, but the library lacked space for both. Student Services offered to accept the safe-sex supplies while MacMillan Library accepted the resources, allowing all three partners to benefit.

Physically designating space which gave students access to health resources helped create a built environment in MacMillan Library, as evidenced by the speed at which health promotion resources were taken by students and needed to be replaced.

The “built environment” is a term used in public health to describe the relationship of health to the environment (National Center for Environmental Health 2011). Though it is more often used to describe the physical space of a city, Health Literacy: The Solid Facts (produced by the WHO), argues that “The interaction of settings, people and professionals is crucial” in developing health literacy (Kickbusch et al. 2013, 27). Using the term from a health promotion perspective, the library becomes a built environment which promotes and facilitates wellness literacy. By creating physical space for wellness resources, libraries can change the built environment to facilitate students engaging with resources and through that interaction, build wellness literacy.

From both a public health and a librarianship perspective, the idea of a built environment is not a new one. As much as librarians advocate that libraries are infinitely more than their spaces, and they most definitely are, it needs to be highlighted that the library is still often used as a physical space, and this physical space is essential to the health of the library’s community. The 2012 paper “Use of Library Space and the Library as Place” claims that “public libraries are used as meeting places to a great extent” (Aabø and Audunson 2012, 139). A Canadian piece discussing how users construct and behave in library spaces notes that patrons construct the library as “a truly public place, a place where they are free to both participate in and shape the services offered. In this study, the public library emerged as a modern day . . . main square, a community destination where people gather to read, share information, and interact with one another, without the constraints imposed by other quasi-public North American spaces” (McKechnie et al. 2004, 50). Library spaces are

unique because patrons interact with them so intensely, and this interactive environment makes the library an ideal place for health promotion. As Parker and Kreps (2005) argue “effective health communication is interactive and adaptive, utilizing many different channels of communication and operating across a number of different contexts” (S84). Even in discussions of architectural design, arguments for built environments are made. Haiping Li’s 2017 work, “Built to Succeed: Sustainable Learning Environment at UC Merced Library,” affirms that the physical design of the “Library is built to support active and constructive learning through its sustainable design as an open, collaborative and welcoming learning environment and it has become a sustainable environment that supports sustainable learning for the future” (178). MacMillan Library created a built environment in a number of ways, most notably through the dedication of space to health resources.

To help create a built environment, I began creating displays to highlight health-related resources, giving visibility to resources students might not otherwise engage with. I also began to incorporate health information in the bi-monthly bathroom newsletter. Both of these practices are supported by author Mary Flaherty (2018) in her book *Promoting Individual and Community Health at the Library*: “Displays are another opportunity for promoting health information, such as the use of simple plastic sleeves to display health news items in restrooms” (59).



Figure 1. A wellness resources display put up before Stress Busters.

For further assessment, I administered a two-question survey to students asking if they would like to see further health resources at the library. The survey was administered in person via a digital form on a laptop, near the entrance to the library, and collected no personal data about students. Students were asked “Would you be interested in seeing MacMillan Library build a wellness resource collection?” and were able to respond Yes or No. Of the 84 students who responded, 100 percent stated they would be interested in having a permanent collection of wellness resources. If the answer to the first

question was Yes, the next item prompt—"I would be interested in seeing books about"—offered numerous options students could select without limit. These options were: nutrition and/or cooking, sexual health, mental health, sleep hygiene, resilience or ability to deal with challenge, destress methods, substance abuse, alcohol education, and general wellness. Most students stated they wanted resources on nutrition (58%), followed by mental health (54%), and then sleep hygiene (54%). This surveying of students paved the way to dedicate shelving space to a new collection of books on the library's second floor, the same floor that holds booklets and resources on health promotion. The funding for these new materials was acquired through a grant I applied for through the Office of Health Promotion, further strengthening our relationship and collaborations in the creation of this built environment. That these books were placed on the same floor as our other health resources, instead of in the bookstacks elsewhere in the library, further facilitated the creation of a built environment.

The collaboration between the MacMillan Library and the Office of Health Promotion, and the creation of a built environment at MacMillan Library, led students to be exposed to more health literacy information. In response to this collaboration and the creation of a built environment, students rapidly claimed health resources and demonstrated overwhelming interest in health-related books being procured. Within the first two weeks that dozens of health resource pamphlets were placed in the library, I had to request more from the Office of Health Promotion, marking this collaboration a great success. Beyond resources, this partnership with the Office of Health Promotion led to more unique, health literacy-focused programming at Stress Busters, which students responded to positively. The Office of Health Promotion set up a table, staffed by two team members, offering health resources to students. This table was visited by more than 120 students over the course of the two evenings the table was staffed. In the long run, I hope this collaboration with the Office of Health Promotion, and the built environment that emerged from it, will benefit the lives of the students MacMillan Library serves. In the short term, this built environment has facilitated students' engagement with health resources, and through that interaction the library has built health literacy.

Conclusion

Academic libraries stand as a perfect venue to forward the necessary mission of health promotion. I hope that, by having laid out the guidelines I followed for successful outreach, I have inspired potential outreach plans in other libraries. I also hope that, in describing the growth that emerged from simply dedicating space in MacMillan Library to health resources, this paper can encourage librarians that participate in outreach and engagement to build partnerships with campus health offices and establish a built environment in their own library. Future research in this overlap of health promotion and librarianship may involve in-depth interviews with students over the course of a semester, and working with them and the Office of Health Promotion to establish a stronger timeline when health literacy programming may be most effective.

References

- Abel, T. 2008. "Measuring Health Literacy: Moving Towards a Health-Promotion Perspective." *International Journal of Public Health* 53: 169–170.
- American College Health Association. 2019. "Standards of Practice for Health Promotion in Higher Education." ACHA Guidelines (Fourth Edition). ACHA.
- Amposta, J., L. Greene, A. Patterson, E. Odunaiya, M. N. Carman-McClanahan, E. Lyles, D. Zhong, K. Chiseri, B. Benton, W. Swan, M. Passonno, and J. Duncan. 2018. "2017 Emory University National College Health Assessment Summary." Emory University Office of Health Promotion.
- Aabø, S., and R. Audunson. 2012. "Use of Library Space and the Library as Place." *Library and Information Science Research* 34, no. 2: 138–149.
- Duhon, L., and Jameson, J. 2013. "Health Information Outreach: A Survey of US Academic Libraries, Highlighting a Midwestern University's Experience." *Health Information and Libraries Journal* 30, no. 2: 121–137. <https://doi-org.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/10.1111/hir.12017>
- Emory University. N.D. "Social Impact." Emory University. Accessed February 10, 2021. <https://brand.emory.edu/source-book/narratives/social-impact.html>
- Emory University. N.D. "Facts and Figures." Facts and Figures. Accessed May 26, 2020. <https://www.emory.edu/home/about/factsfigures/index.html>
- Flaherty, M. G. 2018. *Promoting Individual and Community Health at the Library*. ALA Editions.
- Flaherty, Mary Grace, and David Miller. 2016. "Rural Public Libraries as Community Change Agents: Opportunities for Health Promotion." *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 57, no. 2 (Spring): 143–50. doi:10.12783/issn.2328-2967/57/2/6.
- Kickbusch, Ilona, Jürgen M. Pelikan, Franklin Apfel, and Agis D. Tsouros. 2013. *Health Literacy: The Solid Facts*. World Health Organization..
- Li, Haipeng. 2017. "Built to Succeed: Sustainable Learning Environment at UC Merced Library." *Library Management* 38, no. 2/3: 175–180.
- Lindstrom, Joyce and Shonrock, Diana D. 2006. "Faculty-Librarian Collaboration to Achieve Integration of Information Literacy." *Reference and User Services Quarterly* 46, no. 1: 18–23.
- McKechnie, L. E. F., P. K. French, G. R. Goodall, M. Kipp, D. L. Paquette, and J. L. Pecoskie. 2004. "Covered Beverages Now Allowed: Public Libraries and Book Superstores." *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science* 28, no. 3: 39–51.
- Mygind, L., A. K. Hällman, and P. Bentsen. 2015. "Bridging Gaps between Intentions and Realities: A Review of Participatory Exhibition Development in Museums." *Museum Management and Curatorship* 30, no. 2: 117–137. <http://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2015.1022903>
- National Center for Environmental Health, Division of Emergency and Environmental Health Services. 2011. "Impact of the Built Environment on Health." Center for Disease Control. <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/publications/factsheets/impactofthebuiltenvironmentonhealth.pdf>
- Nielsen-Bohlman, L., A. M. Panzer, and D. A. Kindig, (Eds.). 2004. *Health Literacy: A Prescription to End Confusion*. National Academies Press.
- Parker, R. and G. L. Kreps. 2005. "Library Outreach: Overcoming Health Literacy Challenges." *Journal of the Medical Library Association: JMLA* 93 no. 4 Suppl: S81–S85.

- Ratzan, S. C., and R. M. Parker "Introduction." In C. R. Selden, M. Zorn, S. C. Ratzan, and R. M. Parker. (Eds.). 2000 "National Library of Medicine Current Bibliographies in Medicine: Health Literacy." NLM Pub. No. CBM 2000-1. Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Shipman, Jean, Erica Lake, and Alice Weber. 2016. "Improving Health Literacy: Health Sciences Library Case Studies." *Reference Services Review* 44: 206–214. doi: 10.1108/RSR-03-2016-0022.
- Thacker, Mara L., and Julie R. Laut. 2018. "A Collaborative Approach to Undergraduate Engagement." *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 18, no. 2: 283–300. doi:10.1353/pla.2018.0016.

Author Details

Billy Tringali, Law Librarian for Outreach, Emory University:
william.tringali@emory.edu



EDITORIAL

Paige Crowl,
Melissa Hackman,
Erica Bruchko, Jina
DuVernay, and
Saira Raza

Emory University

Organizing and Facilitating Critical Conversations around Systemic Racism: Opportunities and Challenges

Creating a more equitable institution

Early in the spring semester of 2020, members of the professional development subcommittee of the Emory Libraries Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee began to organize outreach programming to engage and educate the library staff on DEI topics¹. The committee decided to hold a series of in-person discussions, with an inaugural session that would explore terminology commonly used when discussing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. The subcommittee planned to invite library staff to the discussions, titled “Coffee and Critical Conversations,” to create a space for them to talk openly and comfortably about DEI issues. Part of the marketing plan for Coffee and Critical Conversations was to entice library staff with complimentary cake and coffee in an effort to attract their attention and create a relaxing and appealing environment to discuss potentially stressful topics.

In March of 2020, before the discussion programming began, Emory University transitioned to virtual work and learning in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Despite this change and the inevitable uncertainty regarding the duration of remote work, the DEI subcommittee committed to facilitating the conversation series virtually. We began to consider new logistics and brainstormed ways to make the virtual environment as intimate and relaxed as the in-person discussions were designed to be.

The aftermath of the gruesome Spring 2020 murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, and other African Americans by police and self-proclaimed vigilantes prompted the subcommittee to change course. The group members came to a quick consensus that the focus of the conversations should go beyond DEI terminology, and that we needed

¹ Founded in 2017, the Emory Libraries DEI Committee supports Emory’s commitment to creating an inclusive environment for all, with special considerations for the needs and activities of the Emory Libraries. The DEI committee includes several subcommittees which focus on different aspects of the committee’s initiatives. The other subcommittees of DEI are outreach and engagement; communications; library spaces; peer engagement; education; and assessment. In addition to advocating for our colleagues to share their DEI-related projects with the wider library community through conference presentations and publishing, the professional development subcommittee also provides opportunities within the organization for staff to grow and develop the skills and knowledge required to create a truly inclusive place to work and learn.

to create an intentional space for library staff to talk about their feelings around social injustice toward African Americans and systemic racism in America.

Materials and Planning

As we entered the summer of 2020, we felt it was an opportune time to reflect on the impact of this moment and explore how we as a library community could address racism and oppression. When selecting materials for discussion, we kept in mind the racial composition of our staff, which like much of the profession is predominantly white. We chose to introduce more emotionally charged content gradually, guiding participants from defensiveness to openness. We settled on three session themes. First, we looked at bias and stereotypes and their effect on how we treat others. Our second theme was anti-racism and allyship, and the way privilege shapes our view of ourselves. The final session focused on our shared history of white supremacy, and the ways that our nation's past affects the present.

As a committee, we came up with ground rules for ourselves and for participants, drawing on the work of Susan A. Vega García from Iowa State University (ISU) Library's DEI committee². We established these ground rules and read them aloud at each session to ensure that people began with the same expectations of communicating with each other. This was especially important for attendees who had not participated in this type of facilitated group conversation on racism or social justice before. It was essential that all participants felt protected and empowered to share if they wanted to. To foster that feeling of safety and encourage leaning into discomfort, we cultivated an environment of respect and openness to others.

Our ground rules were:

- Own your intentions and your impact: See and acknowledge that your intentions and the impact of your words are not the same thing.
- Welcome multiple viewpoints. Make "I" statements. (For example: "You're being unreasonable" versus "I want to understand where you're coming from.") Don't speak for others.
- Be brave. Lean into discomfort. Listen actively, especially when you feel uncomfortable.
- Share the air: share and give space for others to do the same.
- Use both/and rather than either/or thinking.
- We only have a short time together. Please keep comments on track and avoid monologues. Let's all respect our short time together.
- Keep confidentiality. What is said here, stays here.

We took the modality of the content seriously and intentionally selected videos that brought in perspectives of experts with lived experiences dealing with racism and oppression. Videos are an excellent tool for sharing personal stories, as "media materials can be used positively to enable individuals to enter the lifeworlds of people who live in different cultures and societies and to appreciate their lives and cultures" (Kellner 2000). In a time where we were all isolated at home, we also used videos to allow connection and presence with

“...the focus of the conversations should go beyond DEI terminology, and that we needed to create an intentional space for library staff to talk about their feelings around social injustice toward African Americans and systemic racism in America.”

² An example of ground rules used by the ISU Library DEI committee can be found on their LibGuide for their discussion of Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility*:

<https://instr.iastate.libguides.com/c.php?g=869437&p=6240385>

authors and narrators in a more personal format than an academic article. We purposefully limited the length of media by choosing short videos (under 20 minutes) or identified brief portions of more lengthy interviews to reduce the time commitment required. We usually requested that participants view these videos in advance; however, we also added additional content, in some cases readings or short videos, for attendees to view during or after each session.

To identify materials, members of the subcommittee generated a list of potential videos related to our chosen themes, using circulating lists and media that group members had previously viewed. We discussed these suggestions during our weekly subcommittee meetings and chose content we found timely, provocative, and which fulfilled our goals. We chose meaningful themes but deliberately avoided abstract and theoretical materials because we wanted an accessible starting point for people from all academic backgrounds³.

Our final selections were as follows:

Session 1: To launch the series, we chose the 2009 TED Talk, “The Danger of a Single Story” by Nigerian author and activist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It explores what happens when people and their circumstances are relegated to one single, stereotyped narrative. After the discussion, we asked that participants watch a short video called “The Look,” a commercial for Proctor & Gamble, which illustrates the ongoing bias experienced by Black American men. This session guided participants to deconstruct stereotypes with storytelling.

Session 2: For the second session, we selected segments of an interview by Jemele Hill with Ibram X. Kendi, entitled “How to be an Anti-Racist,” from the Aspen Ideas Festival in 2019. Kendi introduces the notion of anti-racism and argues that to dismantle racism, we must actively and constantly critique it. We paired this with a short in-session video, “5 Tips for Being an Ally,” by actress and comedian Franchesca Ramsey. This session focused on activism and engagement in the movement for anti-racism.

Session 3: We chose to close the series with a short video from the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), entitled “EJI Confronts America’s History of Racial Inequality,” from 2015. The video shows historical images of racial inequality, depicting the continuity of racism in American culture. We also asked participants to discuss two articles on the recent debate in Congress over the instruction of African American history in public schools—particularly the teaching of *The 1619 Project* created by *New York Times* journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones. *The 1619 Project* materials emphasized how knowing our collective past brings clarity to persistent racial injustice in the present.

Once the group selected materials, we marketed the event with flyers designed in Canva and emailed communications to listservs. We invited employees from across the Emory Libraries and many of the people who participated in the discussions had never previously crossed paths⁴. To create a more comfortable and intimate environment where participants could be vulnerable and share their personal experiences, we implemented small breakout rooms—each with one facilitator and 5–7 attendees. The following indicated the total number of registrants for each session, one each in June, July, and August of 2020.

- Session 1: 51 participants
- Session 2: 33 participants
- Session 3: 44 participants

³ Curriculum materials are on the Coffee and Critical Conversations LibGuide at <https://guides.libraries.emory.edu/critical-conversations>.

⁴ Emory Libraries are composed of seven libraries serving Emory University’s colleges. We used the library-wide listserv to invite around 400 employees.

At the conclusion of each session, we requested that participants fill out a post-session survey which included a link to a LibGuide on Black Lives Matter⁵. The guide suggested further anti-racism resources for members of the Emory community and was intended to be a next step for those who wanted to learn more and take action on social justice. We also invited the library community to contribute resources of their own.

Despite having little prior experience with online facilitation, we challenged ourselves as a subcommittee to serve as discussion facilitators. Because of the immediacy and necessity of the program, we felt that it was critical to respond quickly to the social climate. After each session, the subcommittee met, discussed challenges and successes and reviewed feedback. Facilitators used this time to brainstorm solutions to issues that arose during their breakout sessions and share advice with each other. This time was also essential for providing emotional support to aid in recuperating from the emotional weight of leading challenging conversations together.

Challenges and Successes

We began each session with self-reflection. Once we shared the ground rules, we showed the Feelings Wheel developed by Willcox (1982) and invited participants to choose a word to describe how they felt that day. Facilitators encouraged flexibility in choosing a word: some attendees chose a word to describe their feelings in their personal lives, and others described their feelings about the state of the world. This activity was a low-stakes way of encouraging everyone to recognize their emotions before they engaged in an intense conversation. Mindfulness “encourages one to be aware of and observe one’s emotions as they arise without getting caught up in them or reacting to them” (Quinn 2017). Taking a few moments to step back mentally and identify our emotions before we began was a simple way to incorporate mindfulness. By modeling mindfulness, we hoped participants would in turn practice it when relating to their colleagues and communities.

Additionally, using the Feelings Wheel gave facilitators a quick picture of the emotions in the room and gave us a starting point for discussion. This was especially useful since the virtual environment made it much more difficult to read the body language of participants. If participants reported feeling “anxious” or “overwhelmed,” facilitators knew to approach topics carefully and give attendees extra time to consider the discussion prompts. If participants reported feeling “hopeful” or “interested,” facilitators could jump in with more high-energy discussion topics. We highly recommend using the Feelings Wheel or a similar tool to give participants language and latitude to begin self-reflection on their emotions, as it worked wonderfully in laying the groundwork for fruitful discussion.

It was crucial to maintain an attitude of openness and flexibility around the planning and organization of our sessions. At our first Critical Conversations session, we discovered that some attendees had not watched the assigned video. In one breakout room, none of the participants viewed the video and as a result had no context for the video-based discussion questions. We wanted to ensure that all who chose to attend could participate, so the facilitator offered some general discussion prompts. In response to this problem, we experimented with revising our format to make discussion participation more accessible. For our second Critical Conversations session, we selected a shorter video segment to watch in advance to decrease the time commitment required for viewing the content. After this, we watched the video for the third session as a group at the

5 The Black Lives Matter LibGuide link is <https://guides.libraries.emory.edu/BlackLivesMatter>.

beginning of the discussion segment. Our willingness to try new approaches led to better and more fulfilling experiences for attendees as more people were able to participate actively in discussion of the media.

We also took the time to review and incorporate the technological feedback we received throughout the event series, which led us to adjust the session format. Initially we locked the online room ten minutes after the start of the discussion to prevent distractions from late joiners, but some frustrated attendees reported they could not rejoin when technical issues caused them to be dropped from the room. We acknowledged this feedback and worked to find a better way to manage the technical challenges while preserving the emotional character of the discussions. At first, one of the facilitators managed the logistics as well, which meant they juggled running a discussion and letting people back into the meeting. This was difficult for that facilitator as it took them out of the headspace of leading an emotional conversation. Assigning a dedicated technology monitor (with no other responsibilities in the session) to handle the joining and manage the breakout-room logistics ended up providing a better experience for all involved and preserved the cohesiveness of the discussion.

We kept in mind that participating in conversations on tense and emotional topics like racism can be overwhelming. Many Americans are already uncomfortable addressing emotions with colleagues, and library workers face additional pressure to maintain a positive, courteous, and professional persona in the workplace (Quinn 2017). There was significant variability in how much

people were willing or in the right headspace to share, and this made facilitating conversations challenging at times. Some attendees just wanted to sit and listen quietly. Others felt defensive or uneasy. At the first Critical Conversations session, an attendee did not want to enter the breakout rooms for further discussion, and they left after the introduction. They shared in a subsequent session that they were uncomfortable with the topic and

“We noticed that the depth and quality of the conversations depended on the chance composition of the breakout rooms.”

had not been ready to share. Other attendees reported that the discussions were a truly emotional experience in addition to being educational, which was exactly what we aimed to accomplish. Attendees participated at their own level and on their own terms. According to the feedback from post-session surveys, this flexibility was an important element which resulted in repeat attendance, active engagement in the discussion, and an interest in more Coffee and Critical Conversations programming.

We noticed that the depth and quality of the conversations depended on the chance composition of the breakout rooms. We elected to split participants randomly into groups rather than assigning them in advance. This resulted in a diversity of perspectives and library roles of the attendees in a room, but it led to variability in the cohesiveness of groups. Some rooms were lively and participants engaged with each other and the facilitator with ease, but other rooms had a mismatch of personalities that created awkward silences. Facilitators prepared as best as they could for discussions, but in some cases the group dynamics proved to be difficult for dialogue.

We encouraged the use of video to allow participants to connect better and emulate an in-person gathering, but not everyone was willing or able to do so. Technical challenges and bandwidth limitations precluded some attendees from using cameras, but others chose to leave theirs off. The intensity of the topics and the global stress of the COVID-19 pandemic compounded the fragility that some attendees experienced. Keeping the camera off was an easy way to put a shield up between whatever emotions one may have been feeling and the eyes

of coworkers. We wanted all participants to feel comfortable and respected their choice to have cameras on or off. However, as we had limited experience with online facilitation, missing the shortcut of facial and physical cues sometimes made facilitation challenging. Some of this discomfort improved over time, as facilitators built trust with returning attendees, but we recognized that this is an inherent challenge of virtual discussions. Practice and preparation improved our skill at reading the room even without being able to see our participants.

We anticipated that we might receive pushback from the library community, but no one was hostile or resentful about the topic or its importance. This is likely because the conversations were optional and participants self-selected to attend. Many rooms had strong agreement that racism is an important issue that we are facing, but fewer were able to dig into self-reflection on the implications of their own whiteness. We work in a predominantly white organization, so most of our participants were white, and very few people were willing to be the first white person in a room to admit to their own racial bias lest they face contempt from colleagues. This said, some participants challenged themselves and discussed how they could address their own behaviors at work and in their personal lives.

Despite these obstacles, the Critical Conversations series had many successes, some of which exceeding our expectations. Notably, attendees expressed relief that they were not the only ones grappling with questions about incorporating anti-racism into their daily lives, and others expressed gratitude for the space to talk through power-laden topics. This feedback confirmed that there is demand in the library for critical dialogue and anti-racist programming, and that our intentional approach was successful.

We were also pleased that several attendees returned for multiple sessions. Familiar faces put participants at ease, allowing for continued engagement, and attendees could grow together in a community-supported context. Participants also expanded their own sense of community, as they met colleagues from other Emory libraries. This also allowed the DEI committee to engage and make new connections with staff. Several participants expressed interest in the DEI committee and joined after their experiences in the event series. We also considered it a great success that people communicated across different levels of the library hierarchy.

We encourage our fellow librarians to incorporate anti-racism into their outreach activities, both outside of the organization and within it. We created space where we could engage with each other and allow each of us to progress from being bystanders to active participants in this work. Instead of providing a script for being “not racist,” we strove to inspire participants to be introspective and cultivate empathy in their daily lives. Coffee and Critical Conversations was one small step in our efforts to dismantle the systemic racism in our institutions and workplaces.

References

- Adichie, Chimamanda. 2009. “The Danger of a Single Story.” Filmed 2009 at TEDGlobal. Video, 18:31. https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en.
- Equal Justice Initiative. 2015. “EJI Confronts America’s History of Racial Inequality.” Filmed 2015. Video, 3:58. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUwmz2QOp9Q>.
- Hannah-Jones, Nikole, Mary Elliott, Jazmine Hughes, and Jake Silverstein. 2019. “The 1619 Project.” *New York Times Magazine*, August 18, 2019.
- Kellner, Douglas. 2000. “Multiple Literacies and Critical Pedagogies.” In *Revolutionary Pedagogies: Cultural Politics, Instituting Education, and the*

- Discourse of Theory, edited by Peter Pericles Trifonas, 196–221. New York: Routledge.
- Kendi, Ibram X. 2019. “How to Be an Anti-Racist.” Filmed 2019 at Aspen Ideas Festival. Video, 17:30.
<https://www.aspenideas.org/sessions/how-to-be-an-antiracist>.
- Proctor & Gamble. 2019. “The Look.” Posted 2019. Video, 1:43.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aC7lbdD1hq0>.
- Quinn, Brian. 2017. “The Potential of Mindfulness in Managing Emotions in Libraries.” In *Emotion in the Library Workplace*, edited by Samantha Hines and Miriam L Matteson, 15–34. Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Ramsey, Franchesca. 2014. “5 Tips for Being an Ally.” Posted November 2014. Video, 3:31. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dg86g-QIM0>.
- Willcox, Gloria. 1982. “The Feeling Wheel: A Tool for Expanding Awareness of Emotions and Increasing Spontaneity and Intimacy.” *Transactional Analysis Journal* 12, no. 4: 274–276.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/036215378201200411>

Author Details

Paige Crowl, Teaching and Learning Librarian, Oxford College Library:
 scrowl@emory.edu

Erica Bruchko, African American Studies and United States History Librarian,
 Emory Libraries: berica@emory.edu

Jina DuVernay, Program Director, Engagement and African American
 Collections, Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library:
 jduvernay@aucr.edu

Melissa Hackman, Librarian for African Studies, Sociology, & Development
 Studies, Emory Libraries: melissa.joy.hackman@emory.edu

Saira Raza, Business Librarian, Goizueta Business Library:
 saira.raza@emory.edu

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Emily Lawson for her invaluable help with editing this article, and Susan A. Vega García, who was a wonderful resource on setting up a successful discussion group. We also want to extend our thanks to our facilitators, which includes the authors, Emily Lawson, Lyndon Batiste, and Chaun Campos. Finally, thank you to all Emory Libraries staff who attended the series and shared their stories with us.



EDITORIAL

Erin Burns

Texas Tech University

Reaching Out by Looking Within: The #WellnessWednesdays Initiative at Texas Tech University

De-stressing through yoga

Why yoga, why now?

Student mental health and wellness is a critical issue facing most academic institutions, especially since the COVID19 pandemic began in January 2020. At Texas Tech, students were sent home at the beginning of March 2020, and staff and faculty followed shortly thereafter. The campus reopened for the fall semester in August 2020, but students, staff, and faculty were required to wear masks at all times when on certain areas on campus and within buildings. Some in-person classes had reduced class sizes, and other courses were moved to either hybrid or online. Meetings of more than six people were moved online to Zoom, Skype for Business, or Microsoft's Teams.

This type of disruption, while mitigated through the above-mentioned

efforts, still affected the mental and physical health of the students at the university, and the faculty and staff who work for it. Wang et al. (2020) indicated that about 71 percent of students who participated in their survey at Texas A&M had increased levels of stress and anxiety since the pandemic began, and that 48 percent of those students showed moderate-to-severe depression. Thirty-eight percent showed moderate-to-severe anxiety symptoms, and approximately 18 percent experienced suicidal thoughts (Wang et al. 2020).

Research has also shown that the body holds on

to tension and trauma, and that exercise and other forms of gentle, mindful, movement can help to release and relieve the symptoms of tension and trauma (van der Kolk 2015).

Academic libraries have been providing movement-based programs and initiatives focused on reducing students' stress and anxiety since at least the early 2000s (Lenstra 2020). More recently, wellness rooms, quiet spaces, and movement-based programs are presented for use in academic libraries throughout the academic year (Rose, Godfrey, and Rose 2015; Kohut-Tailor and Klar 2020). Many of the movement-based programs also target students during high stress periods, such as midterms and finals (Lenstra 2020).

To frame these programming options, Hinchliffe and Wong's (2010) description of the "wellness wheel" framework provides a useful tool for

“Research has also shown that the body holds on to tension and trauma, and that exercise and other forms of gentle, mindful, movement can help to release and relieve the symptoms of tension and trauma.”



Figure 1: Texas Tech University's wellness wheel, RISE

situating academic libraries within other outreach initiatives. While primarily used in student affairs or other university departments, the wellness wheel shows facets of a well-balanced life. Texas Tech University's Risk Intervention and Safety Education (RISE) wellness wheel (Figure 1) displays the following facets of student wellness: emotional, occupational, social, spiritual, intellectual, environmental, financial and physical. The word "wellness" in academic student services spaces centers on the development of the whole person, so that wellness encompasses not only physical health, but also the importance of managing stress and emotions effectively and engaging positive relationships with others (Parker and Dickson 2020).

Yoga is one of the many wellness programs on the rise on college campuses and in academic libraries. The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society created a "Tree of Contemplative Practices" (Figure 2) and situated yoga among other movement-based practices, such as mindful walking, qigong, Aikido, T'ai chi and dance. Yoga helps people with resilience and emotional regulation (Sullivan et al. 2018), and reduces the physical symptoms of stress and anxiety (Pascoe, Thompson and Ski 2017).

Academic libraries reduce stress and anxiety and promote healthy physical and mental activity in their communities by providing unique spaces and initiatives which correspond with wellness wheel and the Tree of Contemplative Practices. Some patrons may also see academic library spaces as safer and less threatening than a traditional gym or studio space (Lenstra 2020). Through partnering with other campus entities, such as student affairs offices or student counseling centers, librarians create programs on how to live balanced lives, including regular physical activities as part of that balance (Lenstra 2020). Additionally, actively engaging with potential partners on campus, discussing physical wellness and activity, and communicating with students about the availability of such programs, delivers a greater impact in our students lives (Lenstra 2020).

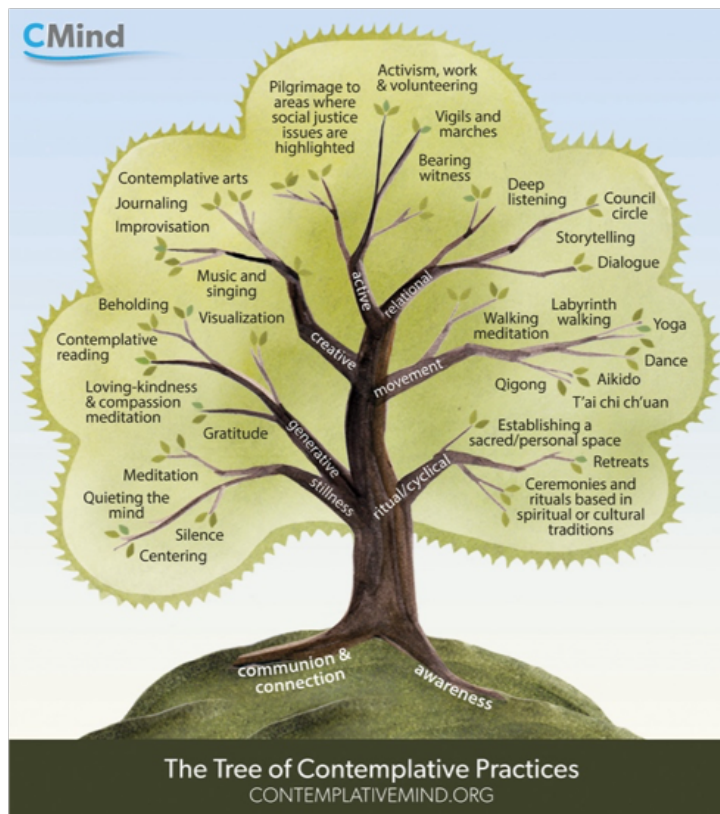


Figure 2: The Tree of Contemplative Practices, 2021

The exact number of academic libraries that engage their communities with yoga programs is currently unknown. However, Lenstra's (2017) survey on public libraries and yoga programs shows the popularity of yoga in Canadian and US public libraries. Lenstra (2020) lists at least 15 other academic institutions whose libraries offered yoga as a part of special programming as of the end of 2019, though his survey was informal. Further research demonstrates an increased awareness and use of yoga programs in de-stress activities at the end of

the semester in academic libraries (Lenstra 2020).

Specific yoga programs described in the library research and outreach literature discuss the merits of conducting such programs. To bolster wellness and connect to the health sciences community at the University of Utah, Casucci and Baluchi (2019) created a library yoga program which offered a trial of free sessions for 10 weeks during the summer of 2016 for health campus students and employees. The University of Alabama Libraries added a restorative yoga program in 2017 and allowed all members of the university to attend (students, staff and faculty), and transitioned to online sessions during the COVID19 pandemic (Jackson 2019; Jackson 2021). Other libraries have offered a yoga lecture and demonstration as part of a wellness series (Varman and Justice 2015). Cox and Brewster's (2020) survey of academic libraries in the United Kingdom showed that before the pandemic, six universities were offering yoga as a programming option. Their study also noted that these kinds of sessions halted with the shutdowns brought by the COVID19 pandemic, and that academic libraries in the UK became much more focused on easing student anxieties through making materials more available online and offering webinars on related topics, such as how to access materials remotely.

Yoga in academic libraries also serves faculty and staff. Several university libraries have developed yoga programs over the past 15–20 years specifically as a workplace initiative. Examples of libraries initiating these programs include The University of California San Diego Library's yoga program for employees in 2007 (Goodson 2013) and East Carolina University Libraries integrated yoga program for staff (Dragon, Webb, and Tatterson 2020).

#WellnessWednesdays at Texas Tech University

Before the pandemic, the Texas Tech University campus offered yoga classes through the student recreation center. While a great way to get students active,

this arrangement only serves the students who go to the rec center, those who were on campus, and those who were comfortable practicing yoga with others in an in-person setting. After the pandemic shutdown the campus in March of 2020, these sessions were cancelled and became inaccessible to students until the campus deemed it safe to resume in-person sessions spring of 2021. The recreation center and other departments have also offered yoga and other movement-based programs outside during nice weather, particularly during the several “student wellness days” the University held in March. None of these programs were offered online.

Fall 2020 #WellnessWednesday videos. Based on the research mentioned previously and the clear need for an inexpensive, online yoga program, I began to develop two different ideas based on yoga outreach programming for Texas Tech University. Still new to my position as a tenure-track STEM librarian, I decided to start slowly. Instead of holding an in-person event in the fall of 2020, I recorded 5 minute videos focused on breathing or yoga asanas (poses) that one can do in a chair. Recordings were done with a personal iPhone or university issued iPad Mini. The University Libraries Promotion and Marketing department created introductory and ending video clips, and I then added a standard warning slide (using Canva) about participating in a movement-based program. The University Libraries Marketing department strung these clips together using Adobe PremierPro or iMovie, exported them into a file format that could be used on social media, and shared them on its social media channels every other week starting in October. For our purposes, iMovie was much simpler to use for these types of short videos.

We decided on using the hashtag #WellnessWednesdays because of its alliterative nature. We also knew that I would be the one teaching full yoga sessions online, and we needed consistency and continuity in usage of the hashtag. These videos were recorded in the library at first featuring only the instructor (me!)—though by the end of October and into December, the city of Lubbock had a massive spike in COVID19 cases, so the remainder of the videos were recorded by me at my home. These videos were then shared via YouTube to the University Libraries’ social media channels with the hashtag and brief text about the benefits of study breaks. This text served as a reminder to students and others to take five-minute breathing or movement breaks during their peak study or work hours. By having these videos recorded, people could participate whenever they liked. Distributing the recordings via YouTube also allowed us to use the transcription AI in YouTube for captioning and accessibility purposes.

#WellnessWednesday Online Zoom sessions. During the spring of 2021, I offered and taught online yin and restorative yoga sessions via Zoom on Wednesday evenings. This type of yoga focuses on asanas which allow the body to relax using props such as pillows, blankets, blocks, etc. Yin yoga also focuses on stretching deeply, into areas and groups of muscles that may get ignored during a faster practice focused on strength. Both types of yoga develop appreciation for deep relaxation of mind and body, and can help participants cultivate skills of conscious relaxation, discover where one is holding tension in the body, and create the conditions necessary for the body to relax (Pranskey 2017; Lasater 2016; Lasater 2017).

The library marketed these Zoom sessions on TechAnnounce, the daily announcements email sent to the University community. The program was also placed on the library calendar, shared via social media posts, and announcements were made at library research instruction sessions and library workshops. Reminder emails were sent the day of, which contained the link to the session as well as the list of asanas. This allowed for participants to prepare

for the session with blankets, rolled towels, etc., if they so chose. We did not practice the same session twice, though many of the asanas were in multiple sessions. The general structure of the sessions is as follows:

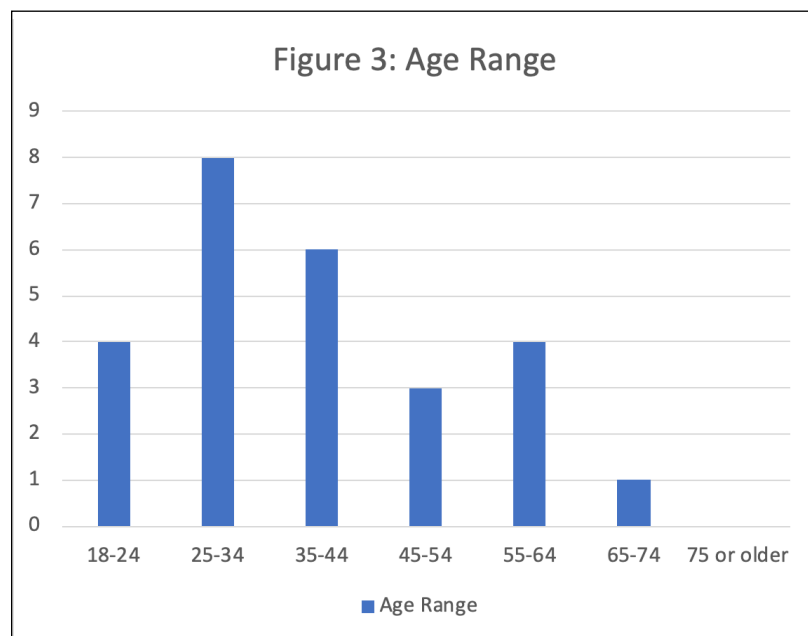
- Open the Zoom room about 10 minutes before the session was scheduled to start.
- Remind participants about the use of pillows, blankets, and rolled towels before starting the session.
- Remind participants that they do not have to have their camera on, and also to mute themselves during the session.
- Start the session with gentle moving aspects, focusing on the breath.
- Settle into the deeper stretches or relaxing asanas, and always end with a savasana (corpse) posture.
- During savasana, either read a poem or have the participants focus on their breath or a brief metta (loving-kindness) meditation, which is a type of meditation focused on compassion for oneself and others.

Assessment of the Program

Two types of assessment were employed in evaluating this program. The first was informal and based on my own experiences, reflecting on my own teaching and classroom dynamics. These classroom dynamics included participant feedback about asanas they enjoyed or how they felt after the session. This type of participant feedback allowed for smooth and flexible planning.

The first session had 17 participants from across the university. Over the next 14 weeks, the sessions averaged seven participants. Email reminders were sent to more than 70 participants by the end of the semester, as once a person signed up, they would stay on the email list unless they asked to be removed. As the semester went on, participation varied: during one session only two participants attended, because of a technical failure on my end, and there was a cancellation of a session because of the 2021 winter storm with widespread power outages.

I also developed a survey for a more formal assessment of the program. This survey allowed for participants to comment about the program and their encounters with yoga, and was based on Brems' (2017) scientific study of a



university yoga workplace wellness initiative. Owing to the nature of the research, an IRB for the survey was submitted and approved. I then distributed the survey after the spring 2021 sessions had been completed, at the end of the semester in May.

Figure 2. Age Range of Participants.

Participants were not required to take the survey and were allowed to skip any question.

Twenty-nine of the final 73 participants filled out the post-semester survey. Of the 29 respondents, four were faculty, four were staff, 15 were graduate students, and three were undergraduate students. The age range was 18–74 (the breakdown of ages is shown in Figure 3). Thirteen of the participants identified as white, five Hispanic/Latino, four Asian or South Asian, three Middle Eastern or North African, and three described themselves as multiracial or multiethnic. Twenty mentioned speaking English at home, but others also listed the following languages: Spanish, Bengali, French, Turkish, Armenian, Telugu, Portuguese, Farsi, and Swahili. Twenty-two of the respondents were female, two were male, two were nonbinary, though several other options for gender were included, and several skipped this question.

Twenty-two of the respondents heard about the program from TechAnnounce. Other responses indicated a friend or colleague had told them about it, they received graduate school emails, and an instructor announced it during a library instruction session. Most respondents (16) mentioned that they had come to 1–3 sessions, and nine said that they had come to 4–8. Only one person who took the survey said they came to 8–15 of the sessions.

When asked how important it was to have a regular yoga practice, 15 respondents said “extremely important” or very “important” (Figure 4). Twenty also mentioned that they have participated in yoga at studios or online before coming to the #WellnessWednesdays sessions, and five had not participated in any yoga before this program.

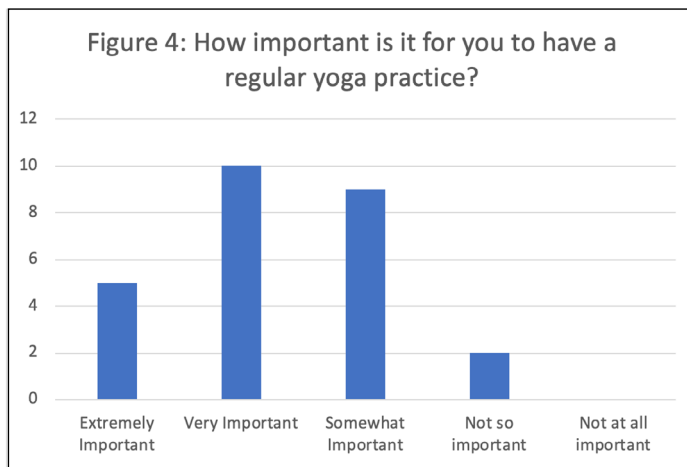


Figure 4. Importance of Yoga Practice.

When asked why they signed up for the sessions in an open-ended text box, 11 responses centered on some form of relaxation” or stress relief. Other respondents mentioned for their health, the importance of mental and physical balance, and the ability to practice at home. One mentioned that since they were an online student, it is “really nice to have a program offered that I could do remotely in the evening.”

Answers to an open-ended question about helpful aspects about the series varied as well, and included themes of mindfulness and relaxation, increased flexibility, online availability, and one “great to get my mind off school.” One participant mentioned that there was “no pressure to do everything perfectly or completely” while another went further and enjoyed “that the focus is on our own strengths, wellness, flexibility, etc. I like that you explain how to get into each pose as well as demonstrating it. I like that it was online and free because it made it easy to participate.”

One of the biggest barriers to coming to a session like yoga is creating the space within one’s own busy life. Many respondents mentioned that they were unable to attend more sessions because of class, dinner, work, or study time. Respondents were also asked about their barriers to trying a yoga session practice before the #WellnessWednesdays sessions. Although participants

mentioned time as a barrier (which included scheduling), they also mentioned the expense of online studio sessions. Others mentioned that while there were plenty of “athletic” versions of yoga, yoga sessions that focused on relaxation or breathing were not being offered often enough. Participants also wrote about being self-conscious about limited abilities, the inability to slow down, and a lack of motivation.

Reflection

Yoga programs can be a low-cost yet high-impact program with regards to its popularity and benefits. Those who attended regularly want the program at Texas Tech University Libraries to continue. Students who were unable to attend all the sessions because of their class or work schedule concurred and wanted the program and sessions to be offered. Students or faculty who were already distance learners or teachers before the pandemic were happy that a program was freely available to them. Many of the participants appreciated the online aspect of the sessions because it allowed them to participate however they might wish without feeling the pressures to be “perfect.” Currently, the Texas Tech University Library has started the yoga sessions for summer over the next 13 weeks. Zoom now offers closed captioning for all their sessions, which was not consistently available for all sessions during the spring of 2021. Participants can also add gender pronouns to their names upon sign-in for trans and nonbinary inclusivity.

Time is still a significant barrier to participating in a program like yoga. Students, staff and faculty have varying schedules. During certain times of day or busier times during the semester, it can be difficult to come to a session. Additionally, one needs to have a stable internet connection, and this might not always be available. While participating online can cut down on things like travel time, setup time, etc., it could also be easier to not participate when busy with other obligations. This finding reflects the Brems (2017) study that also mentioned time as a significant barrier to participation in yoga sessions, even if sessions are freely available.

The #WellnessWednesdays program and its effects adds to the growing evidence that these types of movement-based programs are valuable. These programs can be an effective means of outreach to student, staff, and faculty communities who might not have the chance to go to a yoga class from a regular studio, and they also have beneficial impacts on mental health and wellness in these populations. Campus departments like the student counseling center, student recreation center, or student affairs maybe willing to help with these programs as well. Offering a cross-campus yoga outreach initiative would be a nice way to make new connections at the institution, especially if the campus departments use the wellness wheel framework. By offering yoga as an outreach program at our academic libraries, we can begin to offer programs which can also have a larger impact on the lives of those who participate by reducing their stress and anxiety.

Yoga as an outreach program helps our academic communities by creating and allowing for spaces that can relax and restore the body and mind. We make yoga more inclusive and accessible by offering these programs for free, online, or both, to our communities during high stress periods, such as midterms or through our finals week de-stress events. These therapeutic wellness initiatives should be embraced as another way to support our academic communities.

References

- CMind. 2021. The Tree of Contemplative Practices [Illustration]. The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society.
<https://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree>
- Dragon, Patricia M, Katy Webb and Rebecca Tatterson. 2020. "Om Nom Nom: Integrating Yoga with Your Lunch Break" in *The Library Workplace Idea Book: Proactive Steps for Positive Change*. Edited by Heather L. Siebert, Amanda Vinogradov, and Amanda H. McLellan, . ALA Editions: Chicago.
- Goodson, Kymberly. 2013. "The Benefit and Implementation of an Employee Yoga Program." In *Job Stress and the Librarian: Coping Strategies from the Professionals*, edited by Carol Smallwood and Linda Burkey Wade, . Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc.
- Henrich, Kristin. 2020. "Supporting Student Wellbeing and Holistic Success: A Public Services Approach." *International Information & Library Review* 52(3): 235–243. DOI: 10.1080/10572317.2020.1785171
- Hinchliffe, Lisa Janicke and Melissa Autumn Wong. 2010. "From Services-centered to Student-centered: A "Wellness Wheel" Approach to Developing the Library as an Integrative Learning Commons." *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 17: 2–3, 213–224.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2010.490772>
- Lasater, Judith Hanson, 2016. *Relax and Renew*. Shambala Publications.
- Lasater, Judith Hanson. 2017. *Restore and rebalance*. Shambala Publications.
- Lenstra, Noah. 2017. "Yoga at the Public Library: An Exploratory Survey of Canadian and American Librarians." *Journal of Library Administration* 57: 758–775. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2017.1360121>
- Lenstra, Noah. 2020. "Student Wellness through Physical Activity Promotion in the Academic Library." In *Student Wellness and Academic Libraries: Case Studies and Activities for Promoting Health and Success*, edited by S. Holder & A. Lannon. Chicago: ACRL.
- Jackson, Millie. 2019. "Providing a Space to Rest: Weaving Restorative Yoga into the Strategic Plan." In *Recipes for Mindfulness in Your Library*, edited by Madeleine Charney, Jenny Colvin and Richard Moniz, . Chicago: ALA Editions.
- Jackson, Millie. 2021. "Join Me Online: Supporting Faculty and Staff Wellness in the Age of Zoom." *C&RL News* 82(3): 10–110. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.82.3.108>
- Kohut-Tailor, Jessica and C. Lili Klar. 2020. "Growing Collaborative Outreach Efforts to Support the Well-Being of Communities: De-Stressing on Campus." *Journal of Library Outreach and Engagement* 1(1): 6–12.
<https://doi.org/10.21900/j.jloe.v1i1.463>
- Morgan, Randa Lopez. 2020. "Supporting Student Wellness and Success through the LSU Libraries Relaxation Room." *Journal of Library Outreach and Engagement* 1 (1): 104–114. <https://doi.org/10.21900/j.jloe.v1i1.469>
- Parker, Maggie M., and Sonya Dickson. 2020. "Student Wellness: Exploring Personality Priorities and Perceived Wellness Among University Students." *The Journal of Individual Psychology* 76(3): 245–257. doi:10.1353/jip.2020.0027.
- Pascoe, Michaela C., David R. Thompson, and Chantal F. Ski. 2017. "Yoga, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction And Stress-related Physiological Measures: A Meta-analysis," *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 86: 152–168.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psyneuen.2017.08.008>.
- Pransky, Jillian. 2017. "Why Restorative Yoga Is the 'Most Advanced Practice' Plus, 4 of Its Biggest Benefits," *Yoga Journal*. August 7.

<https://www.yogajournal.com/poses/types/restorative-types-of-yoga/why-restorative-yoga-is-the-most-advanced-practice/>

- Ramsey, Elizabeth and Mary C. Aagard. 2018. "Academic Libraries as Active Contributors to Student Wellness." *College & Undergraduate Libraries* 25(4): 328–334. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2018.1517433>
- Rose, Crystal, Krista Godfrey and Kathryn Rose. 2015. "Supporting Student Wellness: De-Stressing Initiatives at Memorial University Libraries." *The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research* 10(2): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v10i2.3564>
- Texas Tech University RISE. 2021. Wellness Wheel [Illustration]. Texas Tech University. <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/rise/DimensionsofWellness.php>
- Sullivan, Marlysa B., Matt Erb, Laura Schmalzl, Steffany Moonaz, Jessica Noggle Taylor, and Stephen W. Porges. 2018. "Yoga Therapy and Polyvagal Theory: The Convergence of Traditional Wisdom and Contemporary Neuroscience for Self-Regulation and Resilience." *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 12(67): 1–15. doi:10.3389/fnhum.2018.00067
- Van der Kolk, Bessel. 2015. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Penguin Publishing.
- Varman, Beatriz G. and Adela V. Justice. 2015. "The Unfunded Worksite Wellness Program." *Journal of Hospital Librarianship* 15: 284–295. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15323269.2015.1049065>
- Wang, Xaomei, Hegde Sudeep, Son Changwon, Keller Bruce, Smith Alec, Sasangohar Farzan. 2020. "Investigating Mental Health of US College Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Cross Sectional Survey Study." *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 22(9): e22817. doi: 10.2196/22817

Author Details

Erin Burns, Assistant Librarian, Texas Tech University: Erin.Burns@ttu.edu



ARTICLE

Tess Colwell and

Robert B. Haas Family
Arts Library at Yale
University

Alex O'Keefe

School of the Art
Institute of Chicago

To cite this article:
Colwell, Tess and
Alex O'Keefe. 2021
"Streamlining
Support: Improving
Outreach by Creating
a Sustainable Events
Framework." *Journal of
Library Outreach and
Engagement* 1, no.2:
40–57
DOI:
10.21900.j.lloe.v1i2.818

Streamlining Support: Improving Outreach by Creating a Sustainable Events Framework

ABSTRACT

Outreach programming in academic libraries includes hosting and marketing library events. At the Robert B. Haas Family Arts Library at Yale University, events were previously executed ad-hoc and by only a few librarians. The Arts Library formed a programming team to streamline this work for greater efficiency, promote collaboration, and better serve their patrons. The group developed a framework for library events, including workflows and documentation guidelines. This article outlines the process of forming the group, establishing workflows and procedures, and takeaways from one academic year of implementation. We provide a top-level model for coordinating events systematically, highlighting Fall 2019 Reading Week as a case study for using the framework for live events. We additionally discuss adapting the model to fit remote and outside events during spring 2020. The authors conclude with a list of suggestions and considerations for librarians contemplating a similar approach for their events and programs.

KEYWORDS

academic libraries, outreach, strategic planning, outreach programs, library events

Hosting programs and events is an established practice for many academic libraries. Programming provides opportunities to highlight services and collections, connect patrons to library staff members, and foster a sense of community in the library space. After several years of creating and hosting occasional ad-hoc events, staff at the Robert B. Haas Family Arts Library (Arts Library) expressed a strong desire to expand these offerings both for patrons and a wider audience. Moreover, there was a need for more cohesiveness around events for both the Arts Library and the Arts Library Special Collections (ALSC) within it. Recognizing that one person could not fulfill the initiatives alone, the librarians formed a new strategy in the summer of 2019: a programming team.

Starting the group and establishing programming workflows occurred primarily over the summer, and procedures were adjusted as events occurred in fall 2019. This article traces the entire first academic year of the programming team, but centers around in-person events within that timeline. The bulk of these events were scheduled before the COVID-19 pandemic which hit midway through the spring 2020 semester. The pandemic caused widespread closures, cancellation of all in-person events, and reduced resources (both staff time and budgets). In the spring and fall of 2020, however, the Arts Library hosted

programs virtually, adapting as many others did in such extraordinary times. As a result, the procedures for library events have gone through many iterations, challenges, and changes since the team's formation. Because the workflows were established to be flexible and fit a range of scenarios, environments, and events, they were able to successfully evolve with new circumstances, collaborations, and goals. The authors hope that after sharing about the Arts Library programming team's experiences and discoveries, others can adapt these methods to fit any library size, budget, and programming style.

Literature

In reviewing literature around the topic of a programming team, the authors quickly discovered the common issue of myriad definitions and inconsistent terms applied to outreach in academic libraries. Diaz's (2019) concept analysis broadly defines any initiative by library staff "to advance awareness, positive perceptions, and use of library services, spaces, collections, and issues" as outreach (191). Carter and Seaman (2011) note a divide pertaining to outreach, observing "two distinct, yet interconnected types of outreach activities: (1) services offered by libraries and (2) promotion of these services" (163). This discussion focuses on the first type, however it should be noted when reading the following sections that the programming team itself uses "outreach" in alignment with the second type (promotion). Moreover, this discussion uses Eshbach's (2020) definition of programming in academic libraries "as a strategic, intentional series of meaningful, educationally purposeful out-of-classroom experiences designed to encourage and promote student academic and social engagement" (4).

Moving beyond definitions, the literature around collaboration in academic libraries largely highlights the positive results that come from fruitful partnerships. Many focus on building relationships with non-library partners (such as student groups, other departments, or external organizations), or offer case studies focusing on how a group executed specific collaborative events. No matter the context, there is often an emphasis on these efforts cultivating opportunities to share or optimize resources, reach common goals, build community, and enhance project outcomes. Atkinson (2018) notes that "collaboration can provide efficiency savings, streamline work processes, and free up staff time for more value added activities" (223), and further indicates the positive by-products for staff members, who "can learn from each other and develop a greater knowledge and understanding of services and responsibilities inside and outside their department" (224). These many benefits highlighted in the literature were noted among the incentives to form a new programming team early in the planning stages.

However these discussions also present the challenges of collaboration in the library context, such as resource scarcity. For instance, Saunders and Corning (2020) point out that "lack of resources, including budget and staff time can often get in the way of collaboration" (455). Collaborators must additionally navigate expectations in this shared work, especially when working outside of one's own department. Langley, Gray, and Vaughn (2006) warn that "it can be a major hurdle for the project's participants when different people and different departments have different styles of approaching work and getting work done" (6). In the context of outreach programming, thorough documentation

// Because the workflows were established to be flexible and fit a range of scenarios, environments, and events, they were able to successfully evolve with new circumstances, collaborations, and goals. //

throughout the process is also often emphasized; as Demeter and Holmes (2019) suggest, “whether working alone or as a programming group or committee, having those references for the future can make planning easier over time and can become a guide for future staff” (48). All these factors were weighed and considered as the framework for a collaborative programming team was formed, particularly when the team worked with those outside the group.

While strategies for fostering successful collaborations and overcoming these challenges are discussed throughout the broader literature, outreach programming case studies often note the collective work required but place stronger emphasis on the process and outcomes of event execution. In reviewing the second category, Bastone (2020) observed: “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” (25). Some case studies address the workflows in their library to aid in top-level, collaborative planning, such as Gillum and Williams’s (2019, 239–240) “life cycle of library programming” or Mitola’s (2018, 11–12) co-curricular outreach plan’s proposal process. However the overall emphasis on the execution of specific events makes it difficult for those seeking nuts-and-bolts style advice when creating larger plans. Sharing more top-level models will help library staff find methods that work for their context, filling “the gap in the literature regarding how to create outreach programs that are efficient and effective” (Bastone 2020, 24). This discussion seeks to strike a balance between case study and top-level framework, providing a scalable, sustainable model for collaborative programming and event execution.

Background

The Arts Library is one of 15 distinct libraries within Yale University Library (YUL), housing approximately 125,000 print volumes onsite along with ALSC’s rare and unique materials (with over 200,000 additional books and periodicals housed offsite). Digital resources are available to patrons through the Arts Library Digital Collections and subject-specific database subscriptions. The Arts Library supports students, faculty, and staff in the history of art department, and the professional schools of art, architecture, and drama, as well as Yale College undergraduates studying those same disciplines, through collecting and providing research services.

Though the Arts Library benefits from being part of a wider YUL support structure, outreach and programming initiatives are often developed locally to support a specialized user base. Arts Library programs proceed from this vision statement: Arts Library public events are a vehicle for outreach that builds community, reflects the diversity of the patrons we want to reach, and builds awareness of library collections by providing learning opportunities through showcasing library collections. With a total of five permanent librarians and ten additional library staff members, the Arts Library developed an internal programming team composed of both librarians and staff to foster a sustainable and collaborative approach.

Laying the Foundation. Two arts librarians were chosen to serve as co-leaders of the programming team in its first semester. Both librarians had experience leading the social media team and running programs for the library, including the annual Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon, Reading Week programming, an Art Book Fair panel event, and Transcribe-a-thons for Ensemble@Yale (a project to unlock Yale’s theater history through crowdsourced transcription of theater programs). They used their combined experiences to form the charge, goals, and priorities for the group’s first semester.

Additionally, in these early stages the co-leaders had a model of success to build from in the established social media team. The Arts Library social media team was a small working group composed of librarians and library services staff who shared the responsibility of developing content, posting, and monitoring social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). After the team's efforts for the September 2018–March 2019 period, average likes increased on Facebook and Instagram, and followers increased on each platform (+6% on Facebook, +12% on Twitter, and +42% on Instagram). Arts librarians hoped that working from the collaboration and careful planning implemented in the social media team model would yield a smoother, more cohesive approach to events and outreach.

Creating the Charge. The Director of the Arts Library asked the co-leaders to create a charge for the programming team composed of librarians and library staff. The final version states that the group is “charged with developing a sustainable approach to event programming based on the Arts Library programming vision statement. This will include coordinating, assisting, and publicizing Arts Library events and exhibits.” The co-leaders also outline responsibilities for the group in the charge, which include specific duties focusing on themes to support Arts Library programming through organized and consistent event documentation, dedicated promotion plans (working with the social media team), and coordinated and collaborative event execution.

The programming team consists of a librarian team leader (in a one-year, renewable term), two additional librarians, up to three library staff members, and the Kress Fellow for Art Librarianship (an annual 10-month fellowship for a new professional). A call is issued in June of each year, and standing team members rotate off if there are new volunteers in any category (with July marking the beginning of a term). During the first year, the term began in July 2019 with the approval of the initial charge and the start of the fiscal year.

Building the Team. In order to build on existing practice, the librarians serving on the initial team included those who had conducted previous programming (the associate director for Access and Research Services and the associate director for ALSC) as well as the co-leaders. A call was issued through an email to the Arts Library staff listserv for additional members. Two library access services assistants volunteered. Two additional team members were added shortly after they were hired in the Arts Library that summer, including the 2019–20 Kress Fellow in Art Librarianship, and the senior administrative assistant. With the full team assembled, meetings began in early August 2019.

Establishing Workflows

The team was feeling the pressure of a fast-approaching fall semester, and met three times that August to establish workflows. Throughout this period the co-leaders proposed and refined workflows with the team. While the charge included exhibits, the team determined that ALSC exhibitions did not fit within the emerging workflow. There was already a documented process for exhibit production in place, so the team's role would be to lend support for events such as opening receptions (which would be treated like any other event in the workflow). The results of this collective work were four major components: the programming team calendar, a prescribed document filing system, an event workbook, and an event worksheet.

Infrastructure of Organization: Calendar and Filing System. Before the programming team's formation, there was no uniform approach to internally sharing events or recording event information. To keep team members and all library staff informed, the first task was to establish a new programming calendar for the Arts Library. After discussing the best approach using existing

**Streamlining
Support: Improving
Outreach by Creating
a Sustainable Events
Framework, *continued***

library communication practices, the senior administrative assistant created a shareable Outlook calendar where team members could add programs. This calendar includes any events or exhibitions hosted by Arts Library staff, whether hosted in the library or other locations. As the calendar was being established, the team discussed how best to create internal documentation and workflows.

A new, standardized approach to storing collaboration files for Arts Library programming was the next step. Using Box, the primary file and document sharing platform used in the Arts Library, the team created a new space for programming files and consolidated existing files. Everything previously stored in the team's top-level folder in Box was moved to the "ARCHIVE Pre-AY2019" folder to create a fresh start. The new filing system facilitates better organization, efficiency, and transparency. Figure 1 depicts the final system for programming team file organization, naming conventions, and required contents. For the file and document naming conventions in the figure, the abbreviations mean:

- AY: Academic Year
- YY.MM.DD: Last two digits of the year, followed by month and day digits
- []: Represent less structured files or folders which are optional

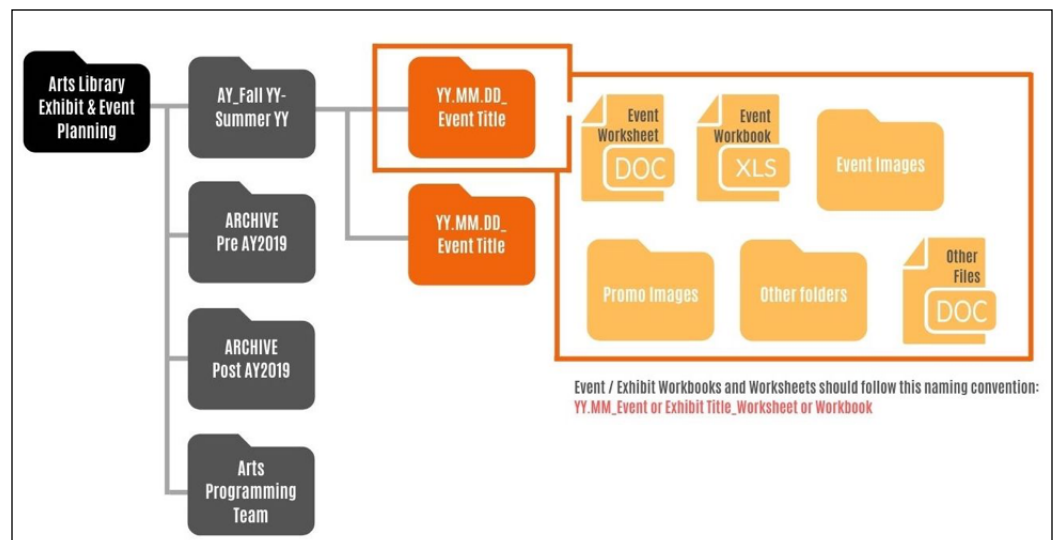


Figure 1. Diagram of the Arts Library programming team's documentation folder structure.

While this granular filing approach can seem overly prescriptive, the collaborative aspect of the programming team model required conventions to help everyone effectively navigate each other's information, both for upcoming and past programs. This approach facilitates faster and easier access to the collective memory inherent to programming initiatives. Concurrently to creating these conventions, the team defined the roles of event runners and event supporters.

Event Runners. During the early months of the team's formation, there were many conversations related to defining expectations and roles for members. The co-leaders realized that some members had joined thinking the group was only in charge of generating new ideas, rather than providing support to both new and existing initiatives. The team was not expected to fill the calendar with events, but rather to focus on thoughtful events that serve the library's unique patron base. The team co-leaders shared the proposed events with the Arts Library director for final approval. The "event runner" model helped to create

clearer guidelines for event management. Any member of the programming team could volunteer to be an event runner, and lead an event from idea to post-event cool-down notes. It was the responsibility of each event runner to seek input or support from the programming team at any stage of the process, including event planning and day-of-event support. Event supporters were responsible for assisting event runners with planning and event support, such as distributing flyers and taking photos during the event. Event runners were responsible for filling out required information in the event workbook and worksheet as described in the following sections.

Event Workbook. The event workbook is the primary tool for event runners to plan their events, capture important information, and make notes. It provides a uniform approach to planning, while simultaneously aiding in event workflows and creating documentation along the way. These steps make recurring events easier, as team members can get started quickly rather than reinventing successful tactics.

The workbook is an Excel document with seven spreadsheets: Cover Page, Budget, Outreach Timeline, Event Prep Checklist, Event Timeline, Cool Down, and Formulas. Each spreadsheet serves a specific function, but using various Excel formulas optimizes interoperability through auto-generated or connected information between the sheets. This interconnected information makes Excel ideal for these pieces of the event planning process.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Title	TITLE			
2	Month		*For Month: Use numbers only!		
3	Day				
4	Year		*For Year: Type the full year		
5	Time Start				
6	Time End				
7	Location				
8	Runner(s)				
9	Support				
10	Social Media				
11	Brief Description				
12					
13					
14	Attendee Count 0		*This pulls from the Cool Down tab automatically		
15	Budget Used 0		*This pulls from the Budget Used automatically		
16					

Cover Page Budget Outreach Timeline Event Prep Checklist Event Timeline Cool Down Formulas

Figure 2. Cover Page tab of the Event Workbook spreadsheet.

The **Cover Page** tab (see Figure 2) prompts event runners to plug in top-level information about their event, including the event title, date and time, location, people providing support (from both the programming and social media teams), and a brief description. The cover page also pulls the final budget and attendance number from other sheets in the workbook, making it the fastest glimpse at the event. The **Budget** tab is a standardized table for event runners to plug in needed supplies, expected cost, and final cost once the supply order is complete. This helps with event workflows around budget approval and ordering, but also creates records of what was purchased and for what purpose, in case of repeat or similar events. Both of these tabs are the first requirements for any higher-level review that might need to occur in the early stages of planning. The team does not have a set annual budget, rather event budgets are approved case-by-case by library administration. The workbook helped to initiate a more formal process for budget approval and ordering.

B	C	D	E	F
2 Months before	11/2 Planning	Draft all event copy using the Event Planning Worksheet before submitting YUCal request		
2 Months before	11/2 Planning	Prepare any event images for web use / flyer designs		
2 Months before	11/2 YUL	Submit YUL Calendar Request		
2 Months before	11/2 Email	Email staff event information with YUCalendar link when ready		
2 Months before	11/2 Social Media	Reach out to Social Media Team leader to add your event to their planning meeting agenda		
1 Month before	12/2 Social Media	Initial social media posts should happen (copy & images should be prepared for team to use)		
1 Month before	12/2 Physical	Work with admin assistant to get flyer on Loria lobby screen		
2 Weeks before	12/18 Physical	Hang any physical flyers		
2 Weeks before	12/18 Email	Save the date email to any target markets		
1 Week before	12/25 Physical	Make whiteboard sign advertising event and roll in front of entrance/exit		
1 Week before	12/25 Social Media	"Next week" social media reminders should go out (copy & images should be prepared for team)		
1 Week before	12/25 OPAC / YUL	Ask partner accounts to share social media post (send link right after posted)		
1 Week before	12/25 Social Media	Good time to check in that there is a social media team member signed up for event		
1 Day before	12/31 Email	"Tomorrow" reminder emails to target market groups		
1 Day before	12/31 Email	"Tomorrow" reminder email to staff list		
1 Day before	12/31 OPAC / YUL	Ask partner accounts to share social media post (send link right after posted)		
1 Day before	12/31 Social Media	"Tomorrow" social media reminders should go out		
Day of	1/1 Social Media	Live event social media posts by coordinated social media team member		

Figure 3. Outreach Timeline tab from the Event Workbook spreadsheet.

The **Outreach Timeline** tab (see Figure 3) provides a comprehensive list of every outreach task for an event runner to coordinate. It includes typical tasks, such as sharing the event to the shared calendar, getting the event on the institutional calendar, working with the social media team, and creating physical advertisements. The team worked together to come up with all typical tasks, and put them into categories based on ideal deadlines (3 months before, 2 months before, 1 month before, 2 weeks before, 1 week before, 1 day before, and day-of). The power of the outreach timeline tab comes from its auto-generated deadlines. Using the date plugged in to the cover page, formulas for each category create the ideal due date immediately. Event runners can then plug those tasks into their personal calendars to stay on track. The **Formulas** tab of the spreadsheet includes a list of these categorical formulas so that anyone can customize the list with additional tasks without needing Excel formula knowledge.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	This table is for tasks that must be done in advance of the event				
2	Done	Who	When	Due Date	Task
3	X	AOK	2 Weeks Before	12/18	EXAMPLE TASK (remember formulas on Cover Page)
4					Recommended: Make Noise Warning Sign & Send link to Sandy
5					Recommended: Make event sign-in sheet
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					
21					

Figure 4. Event Prep Checklist tab from Event Workbook spreadsheet.

The Event Prep Checklist tab (see Figure 4) provides a simple table for a to-do list before the event day. This includes what each task is, who will perform it, when it is due, and when it is completed. This is most useful for collaborative events where more than one person is performing support tasks, as the event runner can quickly glance at the progress of event prep using this tab in the

workbook. While this seems unnecessary if a solo event runner performs all the tasks, creating an event prep checklist provides clear steps to repeat the same event in the future. Similarly, the Event Timeline tab is a task list for the event day. This allows event runners to get more granular and focused, providing a column for estimated time it would take to complete each task to help them plan their day.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	This table is for tracking any cool down tasks (some recommended tasks are included)								
2	Done	Who	Task						
3			Thank you emails to staff who pitched in						
4			Record Assessment #s (attendees, etc) below						
5			Share event report with programming team (to be shared at all staff)						
6			Get all event images and file in Box						
7			Work with Social Media Team to make FB album (if applicable)						
8			Scan and file any physical items (sign-in sheets, etc)						
9			Add event to Libinsight						
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									
16									
17									
18									
19	Highlight indicates required tasks								
20	ATTENDEES:								
21	Total Attendees (not including Co-Runners / Support)								
22	Types: [Examples - Faculty, Staff, Student, Public, Alumni]								
23									
24	COOL DOWN NOTES:								
25	Add your notes here (just put them in the A cells)								
26									
27									
28									
29									
30									
31									
32									

Figure 5. Cool Down tab in the Event Workbook spreadsheet.

The **Cool Down** tab (see Figure 5) captures final notes about the event, and provides a standard task list. This list includes sending thank you emails to anyone who helped with the event, sharing a brief event report with all Arts Library staff, filing images in Box, scanning and filing any physical items, and adding the event data to LibInsight (a tool to capture various library data and statistics). The sheet also requires entering the total number of attendees as well as demographic notes (students, faculty, staff, alumnus, and members of the public) when known. The final area of the sheet is designated for freeform cool down notes. Event runners are encouraged to record any lessons learned, successful strategies, or things they would try differently at future versions of the event.

Event Worksheet. While the event workbook is a powerful event planning tool, it does not serve all necessary functions for an event. Specifically, generating event text and promotional information is not ideal in Excel. Therefore, the second tool for any event runner is the event worksheet (see Figure 6). Event runners are required to fill out the “Who” and “Event Description” fields for the Yale University Calendar & Events page. The rest is optional, but areas are provided for social media and email copy, and freeform event planning notes that do not quite fit in the workbook.

Event Title

Weekday, Month Day, Year | 00:00-00:00 PM | Location

Who

Runner(s):

Day-of Event Support:

Social Media:

Event Description

Event Planning Notes

[Free space for event planning notes / brainstorming / etc]

Event Promo – Social Media

- Initial Post (Recommended 1 Month in advance)
- “Next Week” Social Media Reminders
- “Tomorrow” Social Media Reminders

Event Promo - Emails

Save the Date Emails

[List title]

[List title]

“Tomorrow” Emails

[List title]

[List title]

Figure 6. Event Worksheet template.

The social media section is quite robust, prompting the event runner to pre-plan event advertisements for all platforms one month before the event, the week before the event, and the day before the event. The intent is to minimize social media team members’ work, as well as ensure they present the event accurately. On the day of the event, a member of the social media team helps to share live updates using Instagram stories, without requiring event runner oversight.

Email planning is designed for any event runner who wants to reach out to specific faculty members, departments, or mailing lists to spread the word about the event. It provides space to draft the text, which is especially helpful when an event runner wants review by a colleague before sending, or when another team member is distributing the message. This section is not required, but many use this strategy for promotion.

Documentation. With so many workflows to keep track of, the team recognized that steps could easily be missed as everyone settled in to the new process. To help members stay on track, the programming team **Best Practices and Workflow document** was created. This documentation has sections for the programming team’s vision statement and charge, event resources, workflow definitions, a top-level checklist for event runners, and best practices the group discovered along the way. The bulk of the documentation is under the “Workflows” section, which provides detailed notes on each step of the process should an event runner need a refresher. The “Event Runner Responsibilities” section provides a top-level checklist for event runners with an overview of the full process. The final workflow for the programming team defined in that section is:

- Create event folder in the proper AY folder in the “Arts Library Exhibits and Events Planning” folder in Box
- Create and work through the Event Workbook
- Create and work through the Event Worksheet
- Add the event to the programming team calendar on Outlook
- If ordering items, email the programming team leader and the senior administrative assistant once the budget tab of the workbook is completely done
- Continue working through the workbook/worksheet tasks as needed until the event
- Run the event
- Complete required tasks in the Cool Down tab of the workbook

While the workflow was tweaked and defined as the first few months of fall semester progressed, by the end of the semester, the team was ready to adapt these methods to run a multi-day, collaborative event series with multiple event runners under one umbrella.

Case Study: Designing and Executing Fall 2019 Reading Week

Before Reading Week, event runners on the programming team ran other events that neatly fit into the workflow documented. These included a new Photobook Club series, Ensemble@Yale volunteer events, and an Art Book Fair panel. These events allowed the team to keep adjusting the workflow and templates along the way, developing a well-designed practice specific to the needs of event runners. However, the team had ambitions for a larger event series that did not fit the existing workflows quite as easily: fall 2019 Reading Week. The adaptability of the workflow, which was designed to be flexible to any event, was put to the test as the programming team set out to manage eight different events and execute passive programming over a one-week period.

Background. At Yale University, Reading Week is the period of study just before final exams. Classes do not meet, and students use the time to study and complete papers. The Arts Library had offered Reading Week events before fall 2019, but they were often planned by one person. In spring 2018, Reading Week programming expanded to become more work than an individual could take on. With the new team model, the original event runner and the team began discussing ideas earlier in the semester.

Early in the planning stage, the team co-leaders discussed an emphasis on creative activities as self-care, recognizing an Arts Library-specific opportunity to provide wellness activities through making. Lotts’ (2015) pop-up making spaces were particularly helpful examples of short events that “give [patrons] the opportunity to take a break and let their hands do the thinking, while they learn about the possibilities of the library” (75). Other reading, exam, or finals period examples mentioned implementing creative play, many noting passive programs using play dough, coloring books, or other crafts (Hiebert and Theriault 2012; Flynn 2017; Kelly 2016). In reading Meyers-Martin and Borchard’s (2015) study, the co-leaders felt reinforced in the observation that these creative activities could “have a positive impact on student health, wellness . . . and academic achievement” (521). Rather than emphasizing educational goals, these events sought to give back to the students and create a positive library environment.

As planning began, the team decided that some of the favorite programs would be repeated (a therapy dog visit, “Long Night Against Procrastination,” the asynchronous craft/coloring station, and puzzles around the space), but the team wanted to experiment with other options. Over the course of fall

**Streamlining
Support: Improving
Outreach by Creating
a Sustainable Events
Framework, continued**

programming team meetings, members were encouraged to pitch ideas for new events. Enlisting multiple event leaders for the series gave agency to individuals running the events, divided the labor effectively, and unified the team and its vision. Ultimately, the team added offerings to the passive programming (new puzzles and architecture Lego sets), repeated two existing events, incorporated one outside event, and developed five new events run by a mix of six different librarians and staff members, including colleagues from outside of the programming team and the Arts Library.

The Plan. In total, the team promoted eight events for Reading Week, as well as the asynchronous activities around the library. Along with the aforementioned repeated Reading Week events, the Arts Library already hosted an outside group for weekly meditation sessions and decided to include it under the self-care theme (even though it was not put on by the programming team). The five new events included a zine workshop, making hand-pressed buttons, a paper-box workshop, an ask-an-archivist session (which included creating paper chairs using designs in the archives), and a finale event to create a finals self-care kit. The physical library space was also changed during this period with the addition of balloons, signs, and activities placed throughout the library.

To pull this off successfully, the workbook and worksheet had to be adapted to support multiple events under one umbrella. Rather than creating separate event workbooks for each individual session, the level of collaboration and joint task tracking for Fall 2019 Reading Week made a single workspace necessary. The team added a 'sub events' table to the cover page tab in the events workbook (see Figure 7), where each event runner added their event's title, day, time, location, and collaborators. The following sections outline the team's execution of the workflows, as well as outlines additional adjustments made for the event workbook and worksheet to be optimal for this multipronged event series.

Cover Page

Title READING WEEK - MAIN DATES								
Month	12	*For Month: Use numbers only!						
Day	09							
Year	2019	*For Year: Type the full year						
End Date	12/13/2019							
Location	Multiple Locations in Haas							
Runner(s)	Tess - primary / Maria & Allison / Alex							
Support	Programming team - all hands on deck							
Social Media	Multiple people							
Brief Description								
See Worksheet - too many descriptions (not one-off event)								
Attendee Count	53							
Budget Used	\$14.31							
Sub Events					Attendees excluding event runners			
Day	Time	Runner(s)	Where	Title	Attendees	Other Notes		
12/9/2019	10:00 - 11:00 AM	Tess	By New Books	Gideon the Therapy Dog	n/a	Time is set		
12/9/2019	1:00-2:30 PM	Jessica	Great Hall	Ask an Archivist/Saarain Chair Building	6	Don't need coffee at the event. Students only watched first five minutes of animal videos. They were very focused!		
12/10/2019	7:00 - 10:45 PM	Allison	Classroom -119	Long Night Against Procrastination		Small attendance, but we got enough pages to make the mini-zines. Finished, pre-folded zines seem to go quickly from the desk! (A lot of students expressed excitement over them at the finale, where they were an item to take for self-care kits.)		
12/10/2019	12:00 - 2:00 PM	Alex	Great Hall	Make a Zine	4	Reoccurring - but add to posters		
12/11/2019	12:00 - 1:00 PM	Non-Arts	Classroom -119	Meditation	6	Students were less interested in cookies, then buttons. Low turnout, but those who participated stayed for awhile.		
12/11/2019	2:00 - 3:30 PM	Tess	Classroom -119	Buttons and Cookies	6	Wrapping paper works for making organizers. Purchased paper was too soft (difficult to fold). Book used: The Art of the Fold (in Haas Arts Lib collection).		
12/12/2019	2:00 - 3:30 PM	Allison / Maria	Great Hall	Folded Paper Organizers	4	Super successful! Lots of interested students who decorated bags and expressed gratitude for the event taking place. Lots of people who are not in the arts but appreciated the creative self-care option. Ran out of 26 notebooks, but had plenty of everything else. Stress balls were a big hit!		
12/13/2019	11:00-1:00 PM	Tess / Alex	Great Hall	Make A Self Care Kit				
All Week All the time		By New Books / On library tables		Passive programs		Puzzles, coloring books, origami		

Figure 7. Reading Week Event Workbook Cover Page tab.

Budget & Ordering. For the programming team's first semester, a variety of materials were ordered for both general programming use and fall 2019 Reading Week. Event runners submitted budget requests through the event worksheet.

The team leaders reviewed all requests and submitted a final budget to the senior administrative assistant. Reading week purchases included items for decorating the space (balloons, streamers, colorful paper for signs), new items for passive programming (puzzles and Lego kits), and craft supplies needed for each event (see Figures 8 and 9). Many of these purchases had surplus to what was needed for fall semester, and were ordered to be reused in spring (and beyond, for some items). Based on the needed supplies for all the events, the Reading Week budget was roughly \$500, with the expectation that the supplies would cover a full calendar year of Reading Week programming (with some supplies reusable the next calendar year as well).



Figure 8. Fall 2019 Reading Week decorations on display next to the craft/coloring station at the Arts Library.

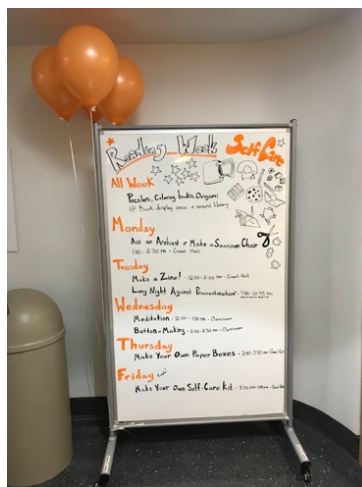


Figure 9. Fall 2019 Reading Week advertisement with decorations at the Arts Library.

Promotion. Promotion for fall 2019 Reading Week events included social media posts, print flyers distributed in the building, an ad on the digital lobby screen, and emails to library colleagues, targeted student groups, and the Yale University communications team. However, the advertisement of Reading Week events was too complex for the existing outreach timeline tab in the Event Workbook or the Event Worksheet's sections. Instead, promotional tasks were added to the Event Prep Checklist tab, where it was faster for team members to filter for their initials and see all their assigned tasks at once. The tasks and auto-generated recommended deadlines from the original Outreach tab were consulted to make sure steps were not missed when moving them to the Event Prep Checklist tab.

Each event had its own, brief description for social media advertisements, but Fall 2019 Reading Week was advertised holistically everywhere else. New subsections were added to the Event Worksheet for event runners to write their social media text, while the co-chairs drafted overarching Reading Week text in the typical sections. Event flyers (see figure 10), physical advertisements, and initial social media advertisements highlighted the entire week with an accompanying description that provided an overview of events to come. The full schedule of events was shared with other units hosting Reading Week events in their spaces and were also incorporated into a YUL Reading Week poster. This promoted Arts Library programs broadly across the library system. The co-leaders of the programming team split promotion responsibilities for the event and had support executing them from the programming and social media teams as needed.

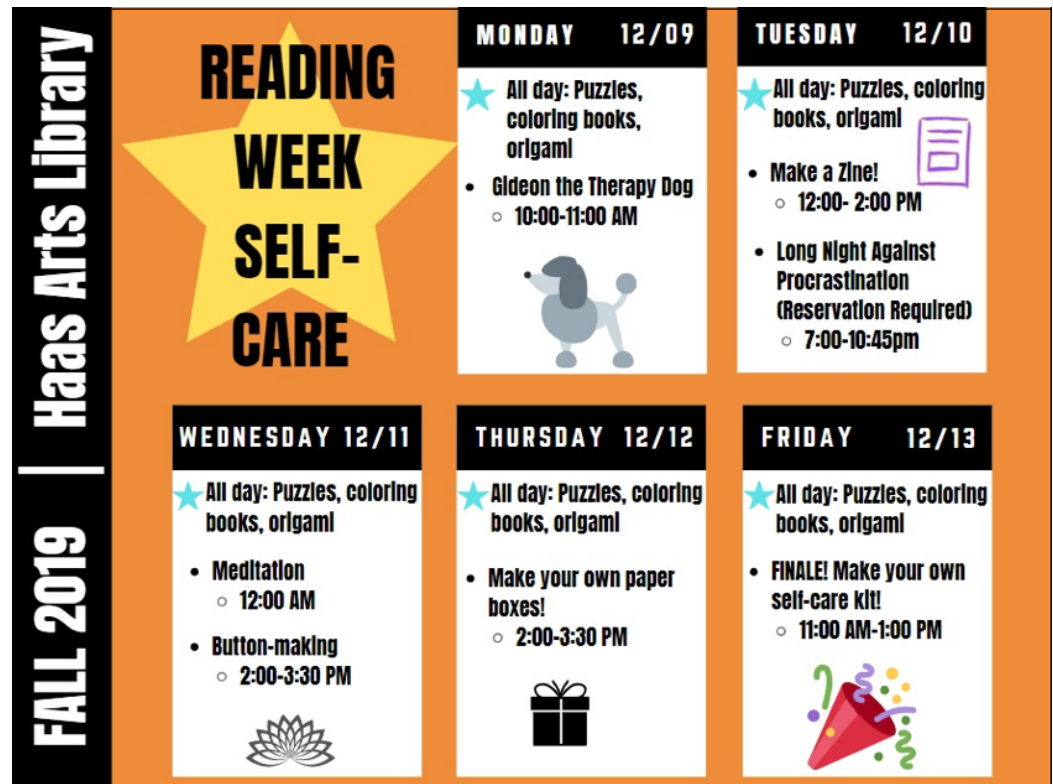


Figure 10. Flyer for the Fall 2019 Reading Week series.

Event Prep. As with the other sections of the workbook, the Event Timeline tab typically used for planning day-of tasks was transformed for fall 2019 Reading Week. Since this series of events had many event runners (some of whom were not programming team members), a printable checklist was requested. The new workbook tab broke down typical, top-level tasks required for each Reading Week event. Tasks were broken into the week before the event, the day before the event, the morning of the event, 30–60 minutes before the event, during the event, 30–60 minutes after the event, and before the conclusion of Reading Week. The nature of this time-specific list highlights the complexity of making sure each event was run consistently. Using the printable format made it easier for any event runner to follow steps and fit neatly into the programming team framework for event planning, note taking, and assessment. Event prep tasks for each event runner (or teams of event runners) included:

- Making custom noise warning signs using a premade template
- Confirming their event post was distributed on social media on time
- Updating the large, rolling whiteboard at the entrance with their event ad day-of
- Prepping the physical space (moving tables, gathering supplies, etc.)
- Recording attendees and taking photos during the event
- Cleaning up and returning all unused materials to storage properly after the event
- Performing typical assessment tasks (LibInsight logging and image filing)

Ultimately, the co-leaders checked that all assessment and post-event tasks were performed in the week after the series concluded.

Collaboration. The programming team was built with a collaborative approach in mind, to maximize resources and staffing while working toward the shared vision for programming at the Arts Library. The event runner structure was helpful in delegating tasks and giving team members ownership of individual events during fall 2019 Reading Week, but coordinating so many

event runners on one series required new levels of coordination between members. Asynchronous communication using the event workbook was crucial to successful execution between face-to-face programming team meetings.

Beyond collaboration within the team itself, Reading Week allowed for colleagues outside of the Arts Library to easily join the initiative by using the workflow established through the printable event checklist. A colleague from Yale's Manuscripts & Archives co-led the "Ask-an-Archivist" Reading Week event with an ALSC archivist (who was not a member of the programming team). Though the turnout of six patrons was not as high as they had hoped for this pilot event, the archivists commented on how it provided an opportunity to connect students with the collection materials in a new, fun way. For the co-leaders, it also served as an example of how the programming team workflows provided flexibility and could be useful to others outside of the Arts Library team.

Event Assessment & Notes. The final checklist includes making cool-down notes, recording the number of attendees, and gathering all event photos and documents in one location. Event runners were encouraged to document assessment notes immediately after the events to capture insights and reflections while they were fresh. As with other areas of the workbook, the Cool Down tab was transformed into a group checklist to make sure each task was performed for each event. Rather than trying to capture notes in that space, new sections were created in the Event Worksheet. The Finals Self-Care Kit event had a cool-down note that captured all angles of what someone in the future may need, providing qualitative assessment, event feedback, and notes for future supplies: "Super successful! Lots of interested students who decorated bags and expressed gratitude for the event taking place. Lots of people who are not in the arts but appreciated the creative self-care option. Ran out of notebooks, but had plenty of everything else. Stress balls were a big hit!"

Takeaways from Reading Week 2019. The programming team was excited and pleased with the impact of the newly formed events workflow during fall 2019 Reading Week. In total, there were 53 participants across seven events (excluding the outside meditation session). The Finals Self-Care Kit was the most well-attended, topping at 26 students. Students responded positively to the Reading Week decorations and events. One student asked a staff member, "Is this for us? We really appreciate it." The impact went beyond the Arts Library, as colleagues from across YUL took notice, commenting on the fun theme and variety of events.

After the first successful series run by the programming team, only a few minor changes were considered for future events. The group received feedback that signs placed around the library warning students about potential noise disruptions during the event times were discouraging rather than encouraging of participation. The team agreed to adjust the language of the signs and reduce the number placed around the library. Additionally, the budget workflow had to be tweaked and modified as the team hit challenges with vendor ordering and communication. Some event runners reported low turnout, but the main goal of fall 2019 Reading Week was for individuals to perform self-care activities. Since all attendees seemed positively engaged in and impacted by the events, the team did not see the low numbers as negative, but rather as opportunities for growth in the future.

Adapting the Workflow

The Arts Library programming team workflow and documentation was developed for in-person library events and programs. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led to library closures and budget reductions. Library staff

were tasked to quickly adapt nearly all services to the online environment. This was a significant change to how services were provided, including outreach. During this period, the programming workflow was put to the test, then adapted and modified to fit many different scenarios—including online events and committee programs.

Remote Events. Placing in-person events on hold during spring 2020 provided a unique opportunity to rethink how the Arts Library and YUL events were planned and developed. Initially, arts librarians canceled previously scheduled in-person events and started brainstorming: how can we provide meaningful event programming in the remote environment? Looking again at the programming team documentation and workflow, it was clear that the framework could be adapted and used, regardless of the event location.

Pivoting: Spring 2020 Reading Week. Before the pandemic, Reading Week planning was primarily done at the local library level. While cross-promotion and some event overlap did occur with other YUL libraries, the majority of the planning and programming was executed by the individual units. As the Arts Library looked to execute spring 2020 Reading Week during the pandemic, a new opportunity arose: could libraries across YUL collaborate on an online Reading Week program without the typical limitations of physical spaces?

With that goal in mind, a small group was formed to plan a remote event series. Using the workflow, workbook, and worksheet developed by the Arts

Library programming team, a group of five librarians representing four YUL libraries developed a remote Reading Week program that included a LibGuide with study tips and asynchronous programming, as well as a series of synchronous virtual events that included virtual therapy dog events, virtual crafts, and virtual game nights. The group agreed on some adjustments to workflow by removing items from the Outreach tab and Event Prep Checklist tab specific to in-person events. The Budget

tab and tasks specific to physical promotion (creating flyers, hanging flyers across campus, etc.) were removed from the workflow. Using the workbook and worksheet, planning and delegating tasks worked seamlessly. This was the first time a collaborative approach to Reading Week occurred across the library units., and having the workflow already in place made the process easier and more efficient. With each event runner recording cool-down and assessment notes, the group generated useful data to assist with future Reading Week planning and collaboration.

Beyond the Arts Library. Following a successful attempt to reimagine and modify the existing programming team workflow during the remote Reading Week, additional opportunities to take advantage of this framework arose when planning for other remote events, including YUL committee events. The Reference, Instruction, and Outreach Committee (RIO) facilitates training and events for YUL librarians to share their work and learn from each other. When planning for virtual programming, one of the arts librarians who serves on the committee proposed an “Events Working Group” building on the success from the programming team structure. Using the basic Event Workbook and Event Worksheet once again, the framework was adapted to fit the needs of the committee and facilitate event planning, documentation, and reporting. Adapting this model to the RIO committee proved that the framework could exist without the programming team structure.

// While pivoting programming from entirely in-person to virtual proved challenging in many respects, the foundation and structure built by the initial iteration of the programming team made the process smoother. //

While pivoting programming from entirely in-person to virtual proved challenging in many respects, the foundation and structure built by the initial iteration of the programming team made the process smoother. The framework has proven to be flexible, adaptable, and useful regardless of event limitations, context, or locations.

Takeaways & Conclusion

The development of the programming team and workflow proved to be the successful and sustainable approach to programming that Arts Library staff hoped for. While the programming team did not have precedent for how to execute their vision beyond the social media team's model, a path was forged through feedback, a team mentality, and open dialogue. Getting consensus from the team in each stage of development created the optimal workflow for the Arts Library that proved adaptable beyond that context. Moreover, opening monthly meetings with check-ins helped refine group strategies and goals as the teams' first academic year progressed.

The tools created by the team maximized efforts and resources whether running solo or collaborative events. The outreach timeline saved event runners from scrambling to remember who to contact or where to share event details (which was previously challenging). Consistent filing for all event documentation proved to be the most helpful component of the programming team, specifically for recurring events and future planning.

When adapting a similar framework to another library, the authors suggest a few broad considerations:

- **Resources:** Evaluate all resources you have for programming. This includes time, people, and financial considerations.
- **Audience:** Who are you trying to reach with your programming? Knowing your audience is critical to developing programs that are successful, sustainable, and beneficial.
- **Goals of your library:** What are you trying to achieve with your programming? Does your planned programming align with your specific goals?

Once those foundations are laid, creating a workflow that directs resources to efficiently meet those goals and help that audience should have some common guiding questions:

- **How can you create support?** If you have more than one person who is able to form a team, how can you create a mutually supportive environment? If you are often a solo event runner, is there support you are lacking that you can find ways to resource?
- **What information is important to record for the future?** If you were to run this event again, what information would you need and how can you record it along the way? If you wanted to share highlights of the event, would you be able to do so using this workflow?
- **Where can you create standard checklists?** Are there components of running events that rarely change? What should every event runner do after an event? Is outreach something you can create a common timeline for?
- **How can you maximize collective memory?** What style of documentation is going to be the most clear and useful for you and others? Who should contribute to capture important information and data?

The success of the programming team at the Arts Library is largely owing to having a group of supportive colleagues who are able to openly communicate as they work toward a common goal. The impetus for the team model was a need for consistency and event support, both of which were achieved through

the development of team practices throughout the first academic year. No one could foresee the necessary changes that would come with the global pandemic in spring 2020, but the important groundwork laid by the team weathered those challenges and proved the versatility of a carefully constructed, team-oriented workflow.

References

- Atkinson, Jeremy. 2018. *Collaboration and the Academic Library: Internal and External, Local and Regional, National and International*. Kidlington: Chandos Publishing.
- Bastone, Zoe. 2020. "Creating an Outreach Plan That Accounts for the Seen and Unforeseen." *Journal of Library Outreach and Engagement* 1 (1): 24–40. <https://doi.org/10.21900/j.jloev.v1i1.471>.
- Carter, Toni M., and Priscilla Seaman. 2011. "The Management and Support of Outreach in Academic Libraries." *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 51 (2): 163–71. <https://doi.org/10.5860/rusq.51n2.163>.
- Demeter, Michelle, and Haley K. Holmes. 2019. *Library Programming Made Easy: A Practical Guide for Librarians*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Diaz, Stephanie A. 2019. "Outreach in Academic Librarianship: A Concept Analysis and Definition." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 45 (3): 184–94. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2019.02.012>.
- Eshbach, Barbara E. 2020. "Supporting and Engaging Students through Academic Library Programming." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 46 (3): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2020.102129>.
- Flynn, Holly. 2017. "Beyond Therapy Dogs: Coordinating Large-Scale Finals Week Activities." *Public Services Quarterly* 13 (2): 117–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15228959.2017.1303419>.
- Gillum, Shalu, and Natasha Williams. 2019. "Promoting Library Visibility Through Creative Programing." *Medical Reference Services Quarterly* 38 (3): 236–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02763869.2019.1623616>.
- Hiebert, Jean, and Shelly Theriault. 2012. "BLASTing the Zombies!: Creative Ideas to Fight Finals Fatigue." *College & Research Libraries News*, October 1, 2012. <https://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/article/view/8832/9452>.
- Kelly, Katy. 2016. "Finals Week: We'll Be There for You." *Programming Librarian* (blog). May 16, 2016. <https://programminglibrarian.org/blog/finals-week-we%E2%80%99ll-be-there-you>.
- Langley, Anne, Edward Gray, and K. T. L. Vaughan. 2006. *Building Bridges: Collaboration Within and Beyond the Academic Library*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing.
- Lotts, Megan. 2015. "Lego® Play: Implementing a Culture of Creativity & Making in the Academic Library." *ACRL Conference Proceedings*, 409–18. <https://doi.org/10.7282/T3C53NJD>.
- Meyers-Martin, Coleen, and Laurie Borchard. 2015. "The Finals Stretch: Exams Week Library Outreach Surveyed." *Reference Services Review* 43 (4): 510–32. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RSR-03-2015-0019>.
- Mitola, Rosan. 2018. "Plan, Prioritize, and Partner: A Model to Create Successful Outreach Programs and Events." In *Successful Campus Outreach for Academic Libraries: Building Community through Collaboration*, edited by Peggy Keeran and Carrie Forbes, 3–17. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Saunders, Laura and Sean Corning. 2020. "From Cooperation to Collaboration: Toward a Framework for Deepening Library Partnerships." *Journal of Library Administration* 60 (5): 453–469. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2020.1729623>.

Author Details

Tess Colwell, Arts Librarian for Research Services, Robert B. Haas Family Arts Library at Yale University: tess.colwell@yale.edu

Alex O'Keefe, Research and Instruction Librarian, John M. Flaxman Library, School of the Art Institute of Chicago: a.okeefe0@gmail.com



ARTICLE

Mary Wahl

Pasadena City College

Library Liaison Services in US Community Colleges: Findings from a National Survey

To cite this article: Wahl, Mary. 2021 "Library Liaison Services in US Community Colleges: Findings from a National Survey." *Journal of Library Outreach and Engagement* 1, no.2: 58–77
DOI: 10.21900.j.jloe.v1i2.807

ABSTRACT

Evidence shows that community college librarians provide a range of liaison services; however, such services specific to community colleges are rarely discussed in the scholarly literature. This article summarizes the results of a 2019 survey of US community college librarians regarding their liaison efforts. Survey results confirm that a range of liaison work is being performed by community college librarians, including liaising with academic units (e.g., natural sciences division, business division) as well as other campus units, such as counseling, distance education, and first-year experience programs. The findings suggest that the majority of community college librarians provide liaison services, often to more than one liaison area, and that most liaison areas are engaged in some way, though an increase in engagement is desired. Data regarding approaches and operations were also gathered, and a number of opportunities for further inquiry were identified.

KEYWORDS

community college librarians; liaison librarians; library liaison services; community college outreach; survey research

Library liaison programs provide specialized, often discipline-specific, expertise to meet the information needs of higher education library users. Such programs serve as valuable resources in academia, most notably by providing students with specialized instruction and research assistance, and by collaborating with faculty in areas such as collection development and the creation of custom digital learning objects. Despite its history, the precise definition of *liaison program* or *liaison librarian* is rather difficult to pinpoint because of the fluidity and adaptability such work requires. Additionally, recent literature suggests that liaison librarianship is going through something of a renaissance, making the definition a moving target. Generally speaking, however, liaison work involves a librarian being "assigned to a specific client base (a school, department, college, research center, or co-curricular unit) in a personalized, relationship-centered system of service delivery" (Church-Duran 2017, 258). Though factors such as the type, staffing, budget, and mission of an organization will certainly affect what liaison programs may entail, one thing is certain—library liaison efforts play an integral role in meeting the information needs of students and faculty.

From a high-level perspective, liaison programs support many types of colleges and universities similarly, providing librarians who act as both collaborators and personal guides to the institution's library resources and

services. However, different types of educational institutions have distinct user groups with specialized needs, making it likely that liaison efforts at different types of institutions will look different from one another. Many librarians at four-year universities are subject specialists, requiring expertise in specific disciplines, whereas librarians at community colleges typically serve as generalists. Many universities have a large quantity of research output, whereas community colleges traditionally focus on teaching. Thus it is logical to expect that library users at community colleges would need very different things from a liaison program than users at four-year universities.

Perusing community college library websites, as well as performing web searches using terms such as *librarian liaison* and *community college*, reveals that many community college libraries have liaison librarians and programs in place. However, a scan of the literature reveals that liaison services are most often studied in the context of four-year universities and research institutes. The current state of collaboration and outreach between librarians and subject faculty within community colleges is consequently undefined; there is little discussion of factors such as user needs being met, successes being made, and work that remains to be done. This makes the task of comparing liaison activities between universities and community colleges a challenge. It also means that a community college library newly embarking on implementing a liaison program currently has little evidence or scholarly discourse to follow.

Literature Review

Library liaison services for academic institutions are well documented in the scholarly literature and have been for decades. Librarian liaisons “representing the needs of the faculty and students to the library,” as well as the usage of the library to its users, have been discussed as far back as the 1970s (Kranich et al. 2020). The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) in particular has published three surveys on the topic of liaison librarianship since the 1990s as part of its *SPEC Kits* series (Latta 1992; Logue et al. 2007; Miller and Pressley 2015). These surveys provide a thorough look into liaison efforts at ARL member libraries, with the third survey focusing on the evolution of liaison librarianship specifically.

Several activities stand out as core to the role of liaison librarian. Collection development for an assigned subject area is one

long-standing responsibility associated with this role. In fact, it has been tradition that liaison work be “rooted in the subject bibliographer whose expertise was focused on collection development” (Mays 2019, 1). The role of library instruction, “especially as a partnership between library and academic staff,” is also a core role for the liaison librarian (Rodwell and Fairbairn 2008, 118).

Outreach and advocacy are central to the role as well, wherein the librarian “prioritizes making connections with people and . . . promotes the work of the library to its potential users” (Cooke et al. 2011, 6).

Interestingly, the role of the liaison librarian is evolving. In addition to the core activities noted above, literature published since the early 2000s points out the importance of liaison efforts related to research and scholarly communication, particularly at universities with high-ranking Carnegie classifications (i.e., R1 universities). At these institutions, liaison librarians provide guidance and outreach for activities, such as the moving of student and faculty research into an institutional repository (Cooke et al. 2011, 19), as well as bibliometric services in which librarians assist with “tracking of . . .

“From a high-level perspective, liaison programs support many types of colleges and universities similarly, providing librarians who act as both collaborators and personal guides to the institution’s library resources and services.”

citations as evidence of [faculty] research productivity and its impact” (Rodwell and Fairbairn 2008, 120). Librarians are even at times collaborators on research proposals, “especially where there may now be requirements for applicants to address up-front issues around the capture, storage and dissemination of the research resulting from the grant funding” (120). Indeed, the liaison librarian role is “increasingly expressed through greater involvement in . . . supporting faculty research” (Silver 2014, 9).

Perhaps because of this evolution, the topic of revising existing liaison programs appears often in the literature of the last decade. In fact, it is not uncommon to find terms such as *evolving*, *re-visioning*, and even *extreme makeover* in the scholarly discourse (Johnson 2018; Banfield and Petropoulos 2017; Ippoliti 2017). Indeed, many academic libraries are redesigning their liaison programs to make them less structured toward serving specific disciplines, and more focused on multi-disciplinary areas such as research data management and data visualization. For example, the Humanities, Social Science and Education Library at Purdue University has moved away from a liaison model based on subject expertise to one that accommodates the need for specialists in subject-neutral skills such as data, digital humanities, and GIS (Heyns 2017). Academic libraries are also adjusting liaison programs to focus more on intangible activities like personal development and relationship-building. The main library for the West Research Campus of East Carolina University has revised its required liaison competencies to make them less task-oriented and more amenable to goal-setting and training (Shirkey, Hoover, and Webb 2020). Even the revision of job descriptions for liaison librarians has been discussed in the literature. In the case of Grand Valley State University Libraries, the librarians found that the liaison librarian position description in use had “stayed static” over the years, while the “responsibilities [had] evolved” (Rosener et al. 2016). A new position description was then written to reflect current practices.

A number of challenges in liaison librarianship are documented in the literature, most notably the difficulty involved in codifying immaterial activities such as collaboration and forming relationships with others outside the library. This leads to a related challenge in liaison work—that of assessment. Evaluation of liaison work is difficult as much of it centers on the unquantifiable notion of relationship-building. Nevertheless, a number of libraries and librarians have developed innovative ways to capture measurements of this aspect of the job. For example, the Rutgers University Libraries have developed a set of “impact indicators that document how liaisons can self-assess” their liaison work (Kranich et al. 2020). Sample indicators include whether a librarian was invited to participate in a project or other undertaking, and to what degree a librarian feels they are engaged with the academic life of students and faculty in their liaison areas. User perception surveys are also often undertaken; for example, a survey was conducted at Loughborough University Library in which librarians surveyed and conducted in-depth interviews of subject faculty to determine the perceived value of their liaison services; many librarians noted the difficulty in assessing the added value of this work (Cooke et al. 2011). Cooke et al. (2011) further note how liaison work is difficult to measure “in the absence of any before and after benchmarks, or any clear boundaries to the activities or end products impacted by the role” (14).

Studies that touch on liaison work at community college libraries can be found in the literature, though not in abundance. For example, Contrada (2019, 13) describes staffing and budgetary challenges commonly found at community colleges, resulting in there not often being “enough staff to designate each with a field or trade. Instead, community college librarians must be able to liaise with faculty and students in any field of study.” Case studies can also be found

that describe embedded librarian efforts at two-year colleges (Kesselman and Watstein 2009; Hales, Ward, and Brown 2009). However, discussion of liaison work with regard to community college libraries and librarians is sparse in comparison to that of universities. Additionally, the most recent literature appears to focus more on liaison work as it applies to research and scholarly communication activity. This pushes the current study of liaison programs further from the arena of community colleges, where the focus is more on teaching and establishing critical thinking skills.

Thus, a key question presents itself: what is the state of liaison librarianship within community colleges? Below are findings from, and discussion of, a research study on the current state of liaison librarianship in community college libraries in the US. The study addresses three research questions:

- What is the extent to which community college librarians provide liaison services?
- What are the demographics (particularly student FTE and staffing size) of community college libraries and librarians providing liaison services?
- What do liaison services entail at community college libraries?

Methodology

Study Population. The population under study consists of librarians employed at community colleges in the US. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 5,624 librarians, curators, and archivists (3,569 full-time and 2,055 part-time) were employed at two-year, associate degree-granting colleges in the US during Fall 2018¹. To invite community college librarians to participate, a description and link to the survey was shared to national, regional, and state email lists and online discussion forums whose readership emphasized academic librarians².

Survey Design and Distribution. The author designed the survey, in part, based on questions and ideas gathered from surveys found in the literature, most notably three surveys created by the ARL and administered to its membership as described in *SPEC Kit* numbers 189, 301, and 349 (Latta 1992; Logue et al. 2007; Miller and Pressley 2015). The survey consisted of 28 questions regarding demographics, liaison areas, responsibilities, coordination, assessment, training, and challenges. Questions were primarily multiple choice and “select all [options] that apply” in nature, with one open text question at the end. Not all survey questions were required, and respondents were allowed to skip questions. The survey was pretested with six librarians (four community college librarians and two university librarians) via 30-minute phone interviews; the survey was then further refined. A version of the survey focused on librarians employed at California community colleges was also used before national distribution³.

The online data collection tool SurveyMonkey was used to create and administer the survey. The survey remained open for four weeks, from April 6 to May 5, 2019; reminders were sent to email lists and discussion forums during the week of April 29, 2019.

1 Numbers were gathered from NCES Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) summary tables. Search criteria included: Title IV participating; US only; Highest degree offered: Associate’s degree; Institutional category: Degree-granting, associate’s and certificates; Year: 2018.

2 See Appendix A for the list of email lists and discussion forums to which the survey was shared and Appendix B for the recruitment message used.

3 Results from this California-specific survey were presented by the author as a poster at the 2019 California Library Association annual conference, Pasadena, CA. See Appendix C for the complete survey instrument used for the study.

Results

The survey received 242 responses. Twenty-nine participants responded that they did not provide (or plan to provide) liaison services (Q4) and were consequently taken to the end of the survey. These participants were eliminated from the dataset (leaving 213 responses), except to provide estimates of the response rate, and the percentage of US community college librarians with liaison roles.

Assuming the study population consists of 5,624 individuals, 242 participants constitutes a response rate of 4.3%. Not all participants responded to every question; consequently, results for questions are discussed in terms of the number of responses to that particular question rather than the total number of survey participants. The number of responses received varied across questions, and this amount is included for each question in the sections that follow.

Survey data were analyzed in 2020. During this time, it was found that Q24 of the survey—an open-ended question that asked respondents to describe up to three challenges faced in relation to liaison services—had garnered 1–3 responses from 175 participants, for a total of 436 challenges. After a preliminary review and coding of the responses, it was found that the challenges provided were more multifaceted than had been expected. Thus, because of the number of responses and the complexity of their content, data and discussion of the Challenges section of the survey (Q24) are not included below and will be analyzed in a separate paper, to give the topic more in-depth attention.

Demographics. Demographic information obtained by the survey includes full-time equivalencies of students (FTE) at the respondent’s college, the number of full-time librarians employed, and the respondent’s job position (see Table 1). The US state in which respondents are employed was also obtained. Overall, responses were received from librarians in 36 of 50 states in the US.

As shown in Table 1, about a third of the respondents (n=63, 34%) are at institutions with 1,001–5,000 FTE students, while another third are at institutions with 5,001–10,000 FTE students (n=58, 31%). About 21% (n=40) are at institutions with 10,001–20,000 FTE students, followed by additional FTE categories in lower frequencies. In regard to the number of full-time librarians employed at the respondent’s library, the category with the highest frequency of responses was 4–6 full-time librarians at 39% (n=73). This was followed by libraries

Characteristic	Frequency	% of Respondents
Number of FTE students		
< 1,000	8	4%
1,001–5,000	63	34%
5,001–10,000	58	31%
10,001–20,000	40	21%
20,001–30,000	8	4%
> 30,001	5	3%
Not sure	6	3%
Total	188	
Number of full-time librarians employed		
None	1	<1%
1–3	55	29%
4–6	73	39%
7–10	33	17%
11–15	18	10%
16 or more	7	4%
Not sure	1	<1%
Total	188	
Job position		
Full-time librarian	170	90%
Part-time librarian	16	8%
Prefer not to answer	2	<1%
Total	188	

Note: Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants (n=188)

with 1–3 full-time librarians (n=55, 29%), and libraries with 7–10 full-time librarians (n=33, 17%). The majority of respondents were full-time librarians (n=170, 90%).

Overview of Liaison Services. When asked “As part of your role, do you provide (or plan to provide) liaison services to one or more areas at your college?” (Q4), the majority of respondents (n=213, 88%) reported yes. About 12% (n=29) reported no; these participants were redirected to the end of the survey. Participants who reported yes were presented with the remaining survey questions (i.e., questions 5–28).

Q5, which asked whether the participant’s library provides liaison services to academic units, received 205 responses. Of these, the vast majority (n=197, 96%) reported yes, leaving about 4% (n=8) who reported no. Q6 asked whether the participant’s library provides liaison services to other college units (e.g., clubs, first-year experience programs, distance education programs). This question also received 205 responses, of which about 70% (n=144) reported yes, 24% (n=50) reported no, and 5% (n=11) reported not sure. When asked about what these other campus units are (Q7), 146 participants responded with a variety of units (see Figure 1). Respondents who liaise with distance education and first-year experience programs, as well as writing or tutoring centers, showed up in the highest frequency. The category “Other” included high school dual enrollment programs, honors societies, athletics programs, and satellite campuses.

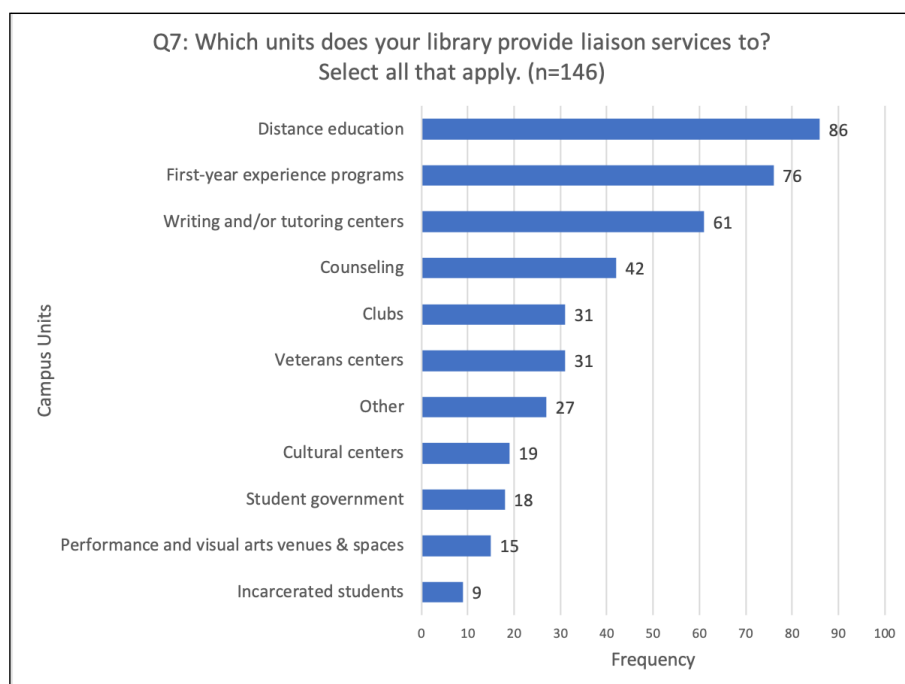


Figure 1. Q7 Results

Outreach and Engagement. Data regarding outreach and engagement was obtained through the *Liaison Area Participation* and *Liaison Services Offered* sections of the survey. When asked “Are the faculty, staff, or students in your liaison areas engaged in the services you provide?” (Q8), 199 responses were received. Of these, about 54% (n=108) reported that some of their liaison areas have been engaged, while 40% (n=80) reported that most have been. About 6% (n=11) reported that no one in their liaison areas has been engaged. Q9 asked if respondents were actively seeking ways to increase engagement from faculty, staff and students in their liaison areas, to which 198 responses were recorded, with the majority (n=180, 91%) reporting yes, and about 9% (n=18) reporting no.

Respondents reported informing their liaison areas of services in a variety of ways (see Figure 2). Q10 received 202 responses, of which the majority of respondents (n=181, 90%) reported that they inform their liaison areas via email. As shown in Figure 2, at least half the respondents also reported informing their liaison areas by meeting with faculty individually (n=159, 79%), attending meetings (n=140, 69%), using promotional flyers or brochures (n=109, 54%), attending special events (n=107, 53%), and attending new faculty orientations (n=101, 50%). The responses in category “Other” included informing those in their liaison areas via LibGuides, embedding in online courses (i.e., in a Learning Management System), and via library webpages geared specifically toward faculty.

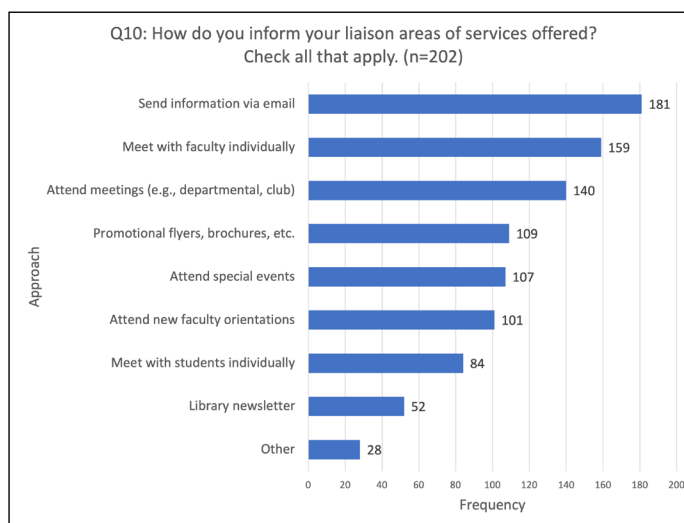


Figure 2. Q10 Results

When asked about the liaison services offered to their liaison area(s), 192 participants indicated a variety of services (Q17; see Figure 3). The majority reported that they offer collection development (n=172, 90%), library instruction (n=172, 90%), and outreach (n=163, 85%) as well as reference and research consultations (n=157, 82%). Creating digital learning objects for liaison areas (n=146, 76%) and communicating a liaison area’s needs to the library (n=134, 70%) were also highly reported. About half the respondents (n=91, 47%) also reported embedding services into courses managed through a Learning Management System (LMS). Fifteen respondents (8%) selected “Other”; these responses primarily involved finding or providing Open Education Resources (OER) and consulting on textbook selection. When asked whether their library has a publicly available webpage describing its liaison services (Q18), 190 participants responded. About 48% (n=91) reported no, while 45% (n=85) reported yes; another 7% (n=14) reported that they were not sure.

Coordination and Responsibilities. Questions from the *Liaison Responsibility Assignment* section of the survey collected data regarding how liaison responsibilities are coordinated and distributed among library staff. Q11 asked whether liaison responsibilities were a primary or secondary responsibility, to which 194 participants responded. Of these, just over two-thirds (n=133, 69%) reported that their liaison responsibilities were of a secondary nature, while just under one-third (n=61, 31%) reported that it was of a primary nature. When it came to the question of *which* librarians have liaison responsibilities (Q12), 195 survey participants responded, with over half (n=112, 57%) reporting that *all* librarians have such responsibilities, and a quarter (n=50, 26%) reporting that *most* librarians have such responsibilities. Another 15% (n=29) responded that

some librarians have such responsibilities, while 2% (n=4) reported that they were not sure.

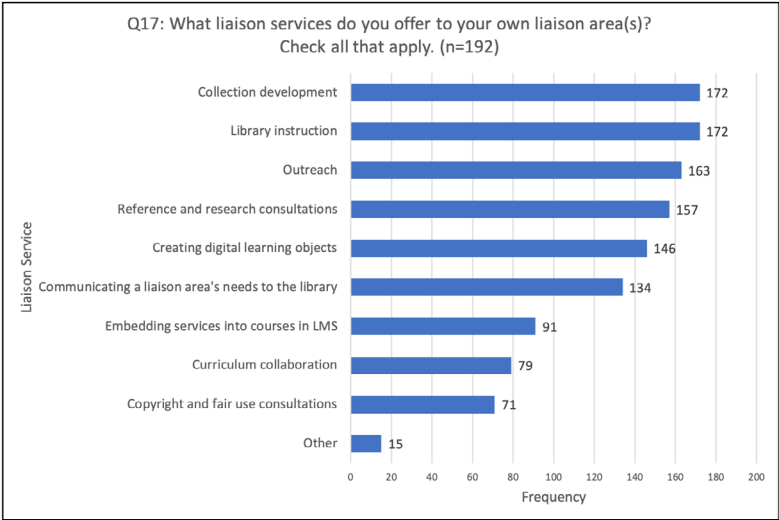


Figure 3. Q17 Results

When asked “How are librarians’ assigned liaison areas determined in your library? Check all that apply” (Q13), 195 participants responded by indicating a variety of factors (see Figure 4). Nearly half these respondents (n=88, 45%) reported that librarians collaboratively select areas. Nearly half (n=85, 44%) also reported that areas are distributed in such a way as to balance liaison responsibilities, and that librarians’ subject expertise was factored in (n=84, 43%). Responses to the “Other” category included indications that a librarian’s liaison areas could be assigned according to a librarian’s location or cultural competency; some notes also indicated that the respondent is a solo librarian, and so serves as a liaison to all campus units (see Figure 4).

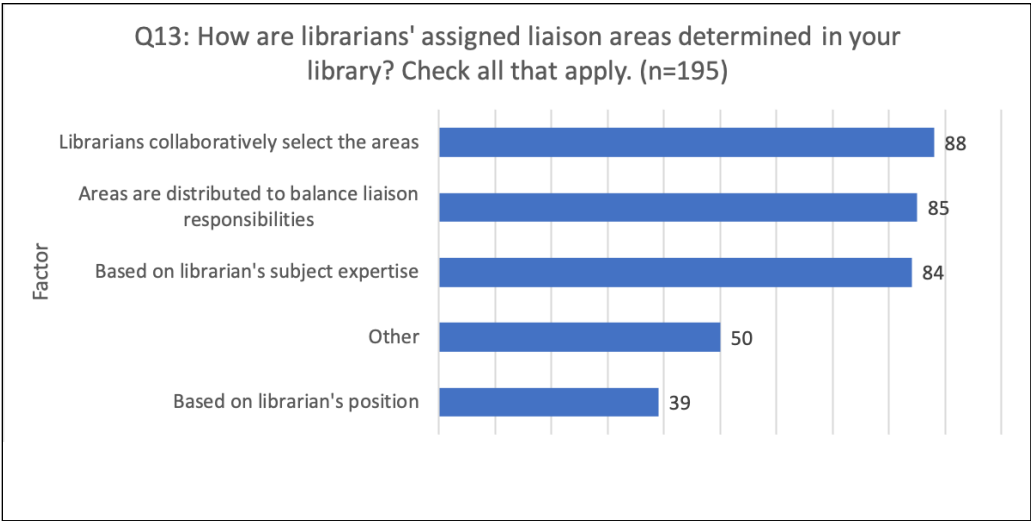
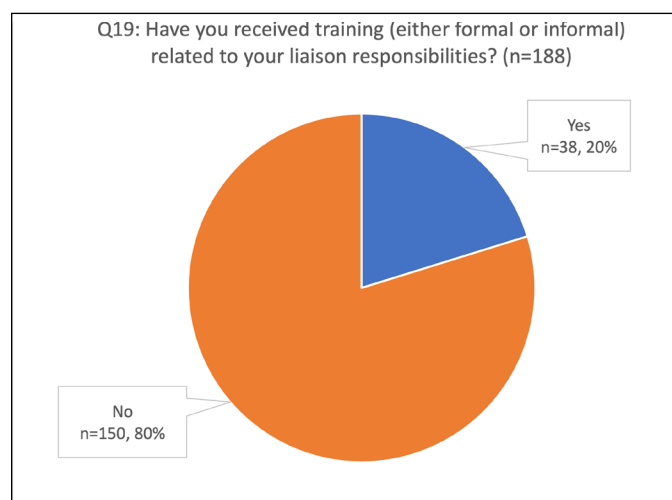


Figure 4. Q13 Results

Q14, which asked how many liaison areas were assigned to a librarian, received 194 responses. Just over half these respondents (n=100, 52%) reported that *all* liaisons are assigned more than one area; by contrast, about 32% (n=62) reported that some liaisons are assigned more than one area while others are assigned only one. About 6% (n=12) reported that all liaisons are assigned only one area. Another 10% (n=20) reported that they were not sure.

When asked “Do staff in your library (i.e., paraprofessionals) have assigned liaison areas?” (Q15), 194 participants responded, with the majority (n=172, 89%) reporting no, while about 9% (n=17) reported yes and 2% (n=5) reported that they were not sure. When asked “As a whole, how are liaison services run at your library?” (Q21), 187 survey participants responded, with over half (n=107, 57%) reporting that each liaison manages their own liaison services. Almost a third (n=57, 30%) reported that liaisons collectively and collaboratively coordinate liaison efforts with one another, leaving about 12% (n=23) who reported that liaison services are coordinated by a single person (e.g., dean, chair, liaison coordinator) for the library.

Training and Assessment. Data regarding training for and evaluation of liaison work was obtained through the *Training and Coordination and Assessment* sections of the survey. When asked “Have you received training (either formal or informal) related to your liaison responsibilities?” (Q19), 188 survey participants responded, with 80% (n=150) reporting no, and 20% (n=38) reporting yes (see Figure 5). Twenty of the participants who reported yes



also supplied additional information about the kind of training received. About half these described taking coursework in the discipline to which they were assigned, to gain subject expertise. The remaining responses described learning via informal on-the-job experience, by brainstorming with colleagues, and by completing training while in prior jobs as librarians at four-year institutions.

Figure 5. Q19 Results

When asked whether any assessment (either formal or informal) of liaison efforts had been taken (Q22), 189 survey participants responded, with more than two-thirds of participants responding with no (n=132, 70%) and 14% (n=26) responding with yes; another 16% (n=31) responded that they were not sure. Twenty participants who responded with yes supplied further information (Q23). Fourteen of these indicated that user surveys are taken by faculty, while three mentioned that a librarian’s own qualitative reflection is called for as part of tenure review. The remaining responses were off topic for the question at hand.

Discussion

One of the primary objectives of conducting this research was to collect baseline data on the extent of liaison librarianship taking place in US community colleges. Based on anecdotal evidence, the author surmised that many community college librarians did such work. It is eye-opening to see that, indeed, the majority of survey respondents (88%) either provide or plan to provide such services. Additionally, it is informative to see that out of these respondents, 92% liaise with academic units and 67% also liaise with non-academic units. These outcomes alone provide a significant benchmark for liaison librarianship and related programs in community colleges in the US.

Another goal of this study was to collect demographic data on community college libraries and the librarians who provide liaison services. Looking at a high-level, bird's eye view of the demographics, over two-thirds of respondents (68%) work at libraries with only 1–6 full-time librarians. As there are often more than six main subject divisions at a college, this does raise the question of whether community college librarians' liaison assignments are typically to broad subject divisions rather than individual subject departments within those divisions. If so, this would indicate a significant difference from liaison librarianship at the university level, where a librarian generally liaises with one or more individual departments or majors.

One particular data point that stands out is that nearly a third of participants reported that their liaison responsibilities are of a primary nature. Before the survey the author assumed that this number would be much lower, given that community college librarians traditionally serve as generalists. Though it was assumed that many community college librarians act as liaison librarians as *part* of their responsibilities, in fact nearly a third of respondents act in this capacity as a *primary* responsibility. This suggests that community college liaison staffing has more in common with university liaison staffing than assumed. It would be interesting to learn the subject areas of those community college librarians who have liaison roles as a primary responsibility—for instance, would there be a trend in terms of the subject areas (e.g., nursing and other health sciences) that require a full-time, dedicated liaison librarian at community colleges?

Also of interest was how the vast majority of respondents reported that either *some* or *most* of their liaison areas have been engaged (n=188, 94%, for the two categories combined), which would indicate a level of success in the outreach efforts of community college librarians. It is encouraging to learn of such a high response rate for engagement. However, as noted in the literature review, it is difficult to determine accurate measures of success when it comes to concepts such as engagement and relationship-building. Additionally, the vast majority of survey respondents (n=180, 91%) reported that they are actively seeking ways to increase engagement from their liaison areas. This may indicate that, while there is engagement in liaison efforts, there is still much to be accomplished. Furthermore, the term “some” is not quantified in the survey question, and “most” could mean anywhere between half and all liaison areas. Assessment of the liaison services of community college libraries thus represents an opportunity for further inquiry.

Just under half the survey respondents (n=85, 45%) reported that their library has a public-facing webpage describing their liaison services, even though the vast majority provide (or plan to provide) such services. The author had presumed that the number of libraries with webpages on this topic would be higher and more aligned to the number of those offering liaison services. It is not clear from the data why the number of those with webpages is not higher, though this could be related to a lack of staffing power (39% of respondents are employed at libraries with 4–6 full-time librarians; 29% have only 1–3). It could also be related to the fact that, as 57% of respondents reported, liaisons often self-manage their liaison work (i.e., liaison services are not a unified effort). Further examination of this topic may present an opportunity for research. Content analysis of community college library webpages that provide information regarding liaison services may also represent an additional research opportunity.

Limitations. It is worth noting that, while promoting the survey via email lists and discussion forums, the author received several emails from community college librarians asking for clarification on terms like *liaison librarian*, and whether the work they do fits the requisite criteria. Though this only occurred

a small number of times, it does raise the question of whether the idea of liaison librarianship might not be as well-known in the context of community college libraries as assumed. Another possibility is that the term *liaison librarian* is simply not used to describe such work in community college libraries. As previously mentioned, the survey instrument used was pretested by community college librarians, each of whom was familiar with liaison librarianship. Furthermore, the term *liaison services* was operationalized in the survey's introduction. It is still worth noting that it is currently unknown how familiar community college librarians are with the term *liaison librarianship* and whether differences in terminology would have an effect on survey results. The fact that 88% of the survey respondents reported that they provide liaison services might be related to this, in that it is possible the percentage is high because librarians unfamiliar with *liaison services* terminology mistakenly believed the survey was not relevant to them and so did not participate.

Lastly, as is often the case with survey research, it was challenging to attempt to make all the individuals in the study population aware of the online survey. As shown in Appendix A, the survey was sent to dozens of library-related state, regional, and national email lists and discussion forums. Some lists are part of professional organizations while others are not. It is possible that many community college librarians do not belong to such lists and so would not have seen the survey recruitment message, which may have had an impact on the response rate.

Conclusion

Overall, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on the current trends of library liaison services in this US. Before this study, a significant amount of scholarly discourse had been written on liaison librarianship at four-year universities and other research institutions, but mention of liaison efforts as they apply to community college libraries was rare. Consequently, while evidence indicated that community college librarians provide liaison services, the extent and nature of such work remained largely undefined. The data presented here fill this gap and suggest that, in fact, the majority of community college librarians provide liaison services, and that a range of liaison work is being performed by community college librarians.

“The data presented here provide a first look at the extent to which community college libraries provide liaison services, the demographics of those libraries providing it, and what these efforts entail.”

Community colleges are a large and essential component of the higher education system in the US, and having research on how community college libraries are reaching out to and serving their users is extremely valuable. The importance of this study is that there is now stronger evidence of liaison services at community college libraries to draw from. The data presented here provide a first look

at the extent to which community college libraries provide liaison services, the demographics of those libraries providing it, and what these efforts entail. Having this baseline data lays the groundwork for future studies such as the comparison of liaison activities between universities and community colleges. In addition, libraries investigating liaison services particular to community colleges now have evidence and scholarly discourse to follow.

References

- Banfield, Laura and Jo-Anne Petropoulos. 2017. “Re-Visioning a Library Liaison Program in Light of External Forces and Internal Pressures.” *Journal of Library Administration* 57 (8): 27–845.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2017.1367250>.

- Church-Duran, Jennifer. 2017. "Distinctive Roles: Engagement, Innovation, and the Liaison Model." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 17 (2): 257–271. <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2017.0015>.
- Conrada, Chelsea. 2019. "Reference and Instruction Literacy in the Community College Library." *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 59 (1): 12–16. <https://doi.org/10.5860/rusq.59.1.7220>.
- Cooke, Louise, Michael Norris, Nial Busby, Thomas Page, Ginny Franklin, Elizabeth Gadd, and Helen Young. 2011. "Evaluating the Impact of Academic Liaison Librarians on Their User Community: A Review and Case Study." *New Review of Academic Librarianship* 17 (1): 5–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2011.539096>.
- Hales, Karen, Randall Ward, and Annalaura Brown. 2009. "Collaboration and Outreach in a Small Junior College Library." *Community & Junior College Libraries* 15 (1): 9–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02763910802629306>.
- Heyns, Erla P. 2017. "Re-Envisioning a Traditional Liaison Library Model to Accommodate the Digital Scholarship Needs of Users." *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries* 6 (3): 409–422.
- Ippoliti, Cinthya. 2017. "Extreme Makeover: A Blueprint for Redefining the Role of the Liaison Librarian in the Academic Library." *International Information & Library Review* 49 (4) 304–309. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10572317.2017.1383743>.
- Johnson, Anna Marie. 2018. "Connections, Conversations, and Visibility: How the Work of Academic Reference and Liaison Librarians is Evolving." *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 58 (2): 91–102. <https://doi.org/10.5860/rusq.58.2.6929>.
- Kesselman, Martin A. and Sarah Barbara Watstein. 2009. "Creating Opportunities: Embedded Librarians." *Journal of Library Administration* 49, no. 4: 383–400. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930820902832538>.
- Kranich, Nancy, Megan Lotts, Jordan Nielsen, and Judit H. Ward. 2020. "Moving from Collecting to Connecting: Articulating, Assessing, and Communicating the Work of Liaison Librarians." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 20, (2): 285–304. <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2020.0015>.
- Latta, Gail F. 1992. *Liaison Services in ARL Libraries: SPEC Kit 189*. Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, Office of Management Services.
- Logue, Susan, John Ballestro, Andrea Imre, and Julie Arendt. 2007. *Liaison Services: SPEC Kit 301*. Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, Office of Management Services.
- Mays, Antje. 2019. "Dangerous Liaisons: Brainstorming the 21st Century Academic Liaison." In *Proceedings of the Charleston Library Conference*, Charleston, SC, November 5–9, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.5703/1288284317044>.
- Miller, Rebecca K. and Lauren Pressley. 2015. *Evolution of Library Liaisons: SPEC Kit 349*. Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, Office of Management Services.
- National Center for Education Statistics. n.d. "Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System." Accessed December 28, 2020. <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>.
- Rodwell, John and Linden Fairbairn. 2008. "Dangerous Liaisons? Defining the Faculty Liaison Librarian Service Model, its Effectiveness and Sustainability." *Library Management* 29 (1–2): 116–124. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01435120810844694>.
- Rosener, Ashley, Emily Frigo, Mary O'Kelly, Elizabeth Psyck, and Kim Ranger. 2016. "A Tale of Two Position Descriptions: Writing a New Liaison

- Librarian Position Description." *Library Leadership & Management* 30 (4): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.5860/llm.v30i4.7174>.
- Shirkey, Cindy, Jeanne Hoover, and Katy Webb. 2020. "Doing the Work: Crafting and Implementing Liaison Competencies." *College & Research Libraries News* 81 (11): 538–540, 549. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.81.11.538>.
- Silver, Isabel. 2014. "Outreach Activities for Librarian Liaisons." *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 54 (2): 8–14. <https://doi.org/10.5860/rusq.54n2.8>.

Author Details

Mary Wahl, Technical Services Librarian, Pasadena City College, Shatford
Library: mwahl@pasadena.edu

Appendix A: Listservs & Online Discussion Forms

- ACRL-NW
- ALA Connect
- Academic Library Association of Ohio
- Alabama Library Association (ALALA-L)
- Alaska Library Association
- Arizona Library Association, ACRL Chapter
- Arizona Community College Library Consortium
- Arkansas Library Association
- California Community College Librarians (CCLibrarians-ALL)
- CARL
- CARLI
- CALIX
- California Library Association, Academic Interest Group
- CoALA
- Community & Junior College Librarians (CJCLS-L)
- CONNTECH
- CULIBS-L
- CULS-L
- CTCRT-L
- Hawaii Library Association
- Idaho Library Association
- Idaho Academic Librarians Chapter
- Illinois Library Association
- Kansas Library Association, College and Universities section
- Kentucky Library Association, Community & Technical College Round Table
- LIBS-OR
- Maryland Library Association
- Mississippi Library Association
- Missouri Library Association
- Montana Library Association
- New England Library Association (NELA)
- New Mexico Consortium of Academic Libraries
- North Carolina Library Association
- North Carolina Community College Library Association
- North Dakota Library Association
- Oklahoma Library Association
- Pacific Northwest Library Association
- Rhode Island Library Association
- South Carolina Library Association
- Southeastern Library Association (SELA)

- Tennessee Library Association (TLA-L)
- Texas Library Association, College and University Libraries Division
- Utah Library Association
- Vermont Library Association (VTCSL)
- Virginia Library Association
- West Virginia Library Association
- Wisconsin Library Association
- Wyoming Library Association

Appendix B: Recruitment Message

Subject line:

Library Liaison Services at Community Colleges survey - call for participation!

Message:

Help inform the current landscape of library liaison services at community colleges! If you are a librarian at a community college in the US, you are invited to participate in a brief survey about liaison services. The survey includes 28 questions and is expected to take 5-10 minutes to complete.

About the study: Though the topic of library liaison programs is well established in the literature, not all types of academic institutions are discussed, and community colleges are notably absent. Anecdotal evidence shows that many community college librarians provide a range of liaison services; This study aims to understand the scope of these efforts.

This is where you come in! Please consider completing the survey and sharing your experiences regarding liaison efforts at your college. Your participation in this survey is voluntary, and no sensitive information will be gathered. The survey has been reviewed by the Office of Institutional Research at Pasadena City College. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, you may contact the Office of Institutional Research at (626) 585-7759. For questions regarding the study, please contact me (contact information provided below).

You may begin the survey by going to this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GRKZTYT>. The survey is open through April 30, 2019.

Thank you for your consideration!

Kind regards,

Mary Wahl

--

Mary Wahl, MLIS
 Technical Services Librarian
 Pasadena City College, Shatford Library
 1570 E. Colorado Blvd.
 Pasadena, CA 91106
mwahl@pasadena.edu
 (626) 585-7756
orcid.org/0000-0001-7871-3842

Appendix C: Survey Instrument

Welcome to the Library Liaison Services at US Community Colleges survey. Your participation will help inform the current landscape of library liaison services provided at community colleges.

For the purposes of this study:

- Liaison services is used to generally describe efforts that involve librarians communicating and/or collaborating with students or faculty in a targeted discipline or other campus unit. It includes efforts such as outreach, attending departmental meetings, soliciting input for collection development, and embedding services into online courses. These efforts do not necessarily need to be part of a formalized liaison program. They are often targeted to a particular subject area (e.g. Math, Journalism), but can also be targeted to other campus units such as clubs, first-year experience programs, and distance education.
- Liaison area is used to generally describe the discipline, program of study, or other college unit that a librarian liaises to. It includes subject areas (e.g. Math, Journalism), broader academic divisions (e.g. Social Sciences, Business), and other units such as clubs, first-year experience programs, and distance education.
- US community colleges refers to public community and junior colleges in the 50 states and Washington, D.C.

No sensitive information will be gathered as part of this survey. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and no risks are anticipated for you as a result of participating. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the survey at any time.

If you have questions about the study, you may contact the following researcher:

Mary Wahl, MLIS
Technical Services Librarian
Pasadena City College, Shatford Library
1570 E. Colorado Blvd.
Pasadena, CA 91106
mwahl@pasadena.edu
626-585-7756

The survey has been reviewed by the Office of Institutional Research at Pasadena City College. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, you may contact the Office of Institutional Research at (626) 585-7759.

1. I have read the information above and voluntarily agree to participate in this survey.
 - o Yes, take me to the survey.
 - o No, I decline to participate. [If selected, respondent was disqualified]

Background Information

2. Are you currently employed as a librarian at a community college in the United States?
 - o Yes
 - o No [If selected, respondent was disqualified]

3. Where is your library located? If employed at more than one, select the one that you have worked at more during the 2019 calendar year.

[Select state from drop-down list]

4. As part of your role, do you provide (or plan to provide) liaison services to one or more areas at your college?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No [If selected, respondent was taken to the end of the survey and the response was recorded]

Liaison Areas

5. Does your library provide liaison services to academic units (e.g. departments, divisions, areas of study)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. Does your library provide liaison services to other college units (e.g. clubs, first-year experience programs, distance education)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I'm not sure

7. If yes, which units does your library provide liaison services to? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Clubs
- ☐ Counseling
- ☐ Distance education
- ☐ First-year experience programs
- ☐ Incarcerated students (current or former)
- ☐ Performance and visual arts venues and spaces
- ☐ Student government
- ☐ Veterans center
- ☐ Writing and/or tutoring centers
- ☐ Other (please specify) [Free form text box]

Liaison Area Participation

8. Are the faculty, staff, or students in your liaison areas engaged in the services you provide? Select the option that best describes participation.

- ☐ Yes, one or more individuals from most of my liaison areas have been engaged.
- ☐ Yes, one or more individuals from some of my liaison areas have been engaged.
- ☐ No, no one has been engaged.

9. Are you seeking ways to increase engagement from your liaison areas?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10. How do you inform your liaison areas of services offered? Check all that apply.

**Library Liaison
Service in US
Community Colleges:
Findings from a
National Survey,
*continued***

- ☐ Send information via email
- ☐ Attend meetings (e.g. departmental, club)
- ☐ Meet with faculty individually
- ☐ Meet with students individually
- ☐ Attend new faculty orientations
- ☐ Promotional flyers, brochures, etc.
- ☐ Attend new special events (e.g. technology fair, student research events)
- ☐ Library newsletter
- ☐ Other (please specify) [Free form text box]

Liaison Responsibility Assignment

11. Please indicate whether your liaison responsibilities are a primary or secondary responsibility.

- ☐ Primary
- ☐ Secondary

12. Please indicate which librarians in your library have liaison responsibilities.

- ☐ All librarians
- ☐ Most librarians
- ☐ Some librarians
- ☐ I'm not sure

13. How are librarians' assigned liaison areas determined in your library? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Based on librarian's subject expertise
- ☐ Librarians collaboratively select the areas
- ☐ Based on librarian's position
- ☐ Areas are distributed to balance liaison responsibilities
- ☐ Other (please specify) [Free form text box]

14. How many liaison areas are assigned to a librarian?

- ☐ Some liaisons are assigned to more than one area, some are assigned to only one
- ☐ All liaisons are assigned more than one area
- ☐ All liaisons are assigned only one area
- ☐ I'm not sure

15. Do staff in your library (i.e. paraprofessionals) have assigned liaison areas?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I'm not sure

16. If yes, please briefly describe staff roles that have liaison areas.

[Free form text box]

Liaison Services Offered

17. What liaison services do you offer to your own liaison area(s)? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Outreach (e.g. updating liaison area on new library resources)

- 0 Library instruction
- 0 Collection development
- 0 Reference and research consultations
- 0 Creating digital learning objects (e.g. online tutorials, course guides)
- 0 Other (please specify) [Free form text box]
- 0 Embedding services into courses in LMS (e.g. Canvas, Moodle)
- 0 Communicating a liaison area's needs to the library
- 0 Curriculum collaboration
- 0 Copyright and fair use consultations

18. Does your library have a publicly available webpage describing its liaison services?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I'm not sure

Training

19. Have you received training (either formal or informal) related to your liaison responsibilities?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

20. If yes, please briefly describe the training you received.

[Free form text box]

Coordination and Assessment

21. As a whole, how are liaison services run at your library? Select one choice below that best describes the situation at your library.

- ☐ Liaison services are coordinated by a single person (e.g. dean, chair, liaison coordinator) for the library.
- ☐ Liaisons collectively and collaboratively coordinate liaison efforts with one another.
- ☐ Each liaison self-manages their own liaison services for themselves.

22. Has there been any assessment (either formal or informal) of liaison services at your library?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I'm not sure

23. If yes, please briefly describe the assessment.

[Free form text box]

Challenges

24. Please briefly describe up to three challenges you face related to liaison services.

[Free form text box #1]

[Free form text box #2]

[Free form text box #2]

Background Information

**Library Liaison
Service in US
Community Colleges:
Findings from a
National Survey,**
continued

25. Approximately how many full-time equivalent (FTE) students are enrolled in your college for the 2019 spring semester?

- ☐ <1,000 FTE students
- ☐ 1,001–5,000 FTE students
- ☐ 5,001–10,000 FTE students
- ☐ 10,001–20,000 FTE students
- ☐ 20,001–30,000 FTE students
- ☐ > 30,001 FTE students
- ☐ I'm not sure

26. How many full-time librarians are employed at your library?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1–3
- ☐ 4–6
- ☐ 7–10
- ☐ 11–15
- ☐ 16 or more
- ☐ I'm not sure

27. Which of the following best describes your position?

- ☐ Full-time librarian
- ☐ Part-time librarian
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Additional Comments

28. Please enter any additional comments you have regarding liaison services at your library.

[Free form text box]



ARTICLE

**Anne Holland and
Stephanie Vierow-
Fields**

Space Science Institute

Zachary Stier

Ericson Public Library

Jen Jocz

*Education Development
Center*

Lindsay Gypin

University of Denver

To cite this article:
Holland, Anne, Jen
Jocz, Stephanie Vierow-
Fields, Zachary Stier,
and Lindsay Gypin. 2021
"Community Dialogues
to Enhance Inclusion
and Equity in Public
Libraries." *Journal of
Library Outreach and
Engagement* 1, no.2:
78–95
DOI:
10.21900.j.jloe.v1i2.856

Community Dialogues to Enhance Inclusion and Equity in Public Libraries

ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, public libraries have shifted from quiet repositories of knowledge to raucous centers of public engagement. Seeking to fill the educational and social gaps left by other informal education organizations (such as museums and science centers) public libraries are hiring social workers, running accessible makerspaces, developing English language learner (ELL) programs, facilitating hands-on STEM activities, providing information about community resources and social services, delivering summer meals, and much more. But what are the next steps needed to continue this high level of engagement? Through the Community Dialogue Framework (Dialogue), libraries engage with their communities to reach groups not currently benefiting from library services, provide equitable access to resources, develop new partnerships, and—in the time of COVID—began to address the digital divide in their communities. While most library staff agree that providing equitable services is key to their mission, it is perhaps harder to articulate how this can be done. This article provides an overview of the literature that contributed to the development of the Community Dialogue Strategy, and provides actionable advice and lessons learned for conducting Dialogues. An examination of forty public libraries' engagement with and learning from Dialogues was conducted using a qualitative approach and reflexive thematic analysis. An account from a librarian who hosted multiple Dialogues is also presented as a first-person narrative describing their methods and successes using the tool. Library staff at any stage of their community engagement journey can use this paper to understand the benefits and practical considerations for conducting Dialogues, find recommendations for relevant research, understand the basics of conducting Dialogues, and understand the next steps in this emerging component of librarianship.

KEYWORDS

public library; community; conversation; equity; inclusion

As I pull into the library parking lot, I pass a large group of homeless patrons who very patiently wait in a neat and orderly line for the library to open. It's always a rush to get the best chairs, and this library has some comfy ones! I decide since I'm so early to take a short little nap. I'm awakened to screaming and pounding on my car. The security guard is about to break my window, Narcan in hand, afraid that I'm a patron that has overdosed in the parking lot. He's had to administer Narcan twice in the last month, and it terrifies him every time. I'm here for a conversation about local health needs, to help the library identify like-minded organizations in the community they can reach out to. Before I'm even in the door, I get a lesson about dire health concerns for the community's large homeless population, that the library faces every day in addition to their packed program schedule.

—Anne Holland, personal memo, 8/30/2019

The above interaction occurred before a Community Dialogue (hereafter referred to as simply “Dialogue”) at a Colorado library. The Dialogue was part of the Discover Health/Descubre la Salud traveling exhibition (funded by the National Institutes of Health and ran by the University of Denver Anschutz Medical Campus), which provided Colorado libraries with engaging, relevant, and useful health information for their patrons. As evidenced by the security guard’s quick response, this library was already aware of specific local health concerns, but the purpose of the Dialogue was to go beyond awareness and reactive planning to identifying organizations in the community that could contribute their efforts and benefit from the work the library was already doing.

The success of the Discover Health Dialogues led the Space Science Institute to expand Community Dialogues, with funding from the National Institutes of Health, NASA, and the National Science Foundation (NSF). With each new Dialogue within this program there was an increase in participants, and more importantly, of diverse participants. Word spread that someone was listening. The project team/authors realized the potential these conversations had to leverage various education and evaluation frameworks to best make use of participants’ time and expertise.

Community Dialogues are informal, flexible conversations between library staff, leaders in the local community, and key stakeholders (Holland and Dusenbery 2018; Holland 2016). Unlike focus groups that address a specific service or idea, Dialogues are more open-ended conversations that solicit informed opinions on the services community members want or need, allowing for flexible and iterative conversations. Dialogues can highlight a host of issues and concerns for the libraries’ communities, including access to STEM programming, social justice issues, or environmental concerns. Dialogues transcend current library offerings and the desires of the most active patrons by reaching out to populations who are not using library services, or who may not even feel comfortable walking in the door.

This article provides a review of the literature and research which contributed to the development of the Dialogue framework by the Space Science Institute, a first-person narrative from a public librarian who frequently uses Dialogues, an in-depth discussion from project evaluators of results from Dialogue research and evaluation (including themes identified through case studies, interviews, and observations), and plans and recommendations for future research. When framed around enhancing STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programming for the community, Dialogues also empower libraries in their partnership and relationship building.

Literature Review

Equity in Public Libraries. Dialogues seek to connect public libraries to their communities, and to ensure services being provided are well matched to the needs of the community. According to R. David Lankes (2012), “Bad libraries build collections. Good libraries build services. Great libraries build communities.” Public libraries operate at the intersection of knowledge, service, and community. They provide free access to books, learning opportunities, programs, job services, and a safe place to rest (American Library Association 2015). Libraries are a conduit to information, encouraging social inclusion

// Through the Community Dialogue Framework (Dialogue), libraries engage with their communities to reach groups not currently benefiting from library services, provide equitable access to resources, develop new partnerships, and—in the time of COVID—began to address the digital divide in their communities. //

and equity, fostering civic engagement and community involvement, and contributing to the economic vitality of communities (American Library Association 2015). Our information-focused society uses access to technology and information as a gate-keeping mechanism, preventing individuals who do not have access or knowledge from accomplishing the most basic tasks (Pew 2013). Libraries offer internet connection for job seekers, tools for homeless patrons to fill out social services paperwork, and English language services for immigrants as they acclimate to their new environments (Usherwood 2016). Public libraries are often the only option for free internet in small and rural communities where broadband is still not universal (Real, Bertot, and Jaeger 2014).

In addition to providing basic information and internet services, libraries increasingly consider the intersections of their patrons' identities. This may include building collections and programs from an indigenous perspective (Thorpe and Galassi 2018), addressing the social determinants of health (Whiteman et al. 2018), providing avenues to combat food insecurity (Williams, Freudenberger, and Fesemyer . 2019), or even placing social work services in residence at public libraries (Johnson 2019).

Equity is an important focus in public libraries, as they continue to work with, rather than just for, their communities. However, there are still challenges to overcome. Libraries hosting technology and makerspace programs encounter barriers when patrons feel like they do not know enough to participate; bilingual storytimes remain empty when Spanish-speaking patrons feel unwelcome; potential volunteers avoid sharing their skills because they do not know the wide breadth of library programs. Addressing these inequalities will come from understanding, acceptance, and engagement with these communities through conversations (such as Dialogues) and outreach (Shtivelband, Wallander-Roberts, and Jakubowski, 2016).

Community Conversation in Libraries. The literature on community conversation in public libraries reveals several themes, the most relevant being that libraries are trusted nonpartisan centers who facilitate community-building between various underserved and privileged groups. Lor (2018) argues that "libraries provide continuing access to the records of our time. As a nonpartisan space, a bit boring perhaps, but trustworthy, the library provides a space for reflection, a haven for civility and rationality, and a home for contrarian thinkers" (317).

Research on engagement of various minority populations through conversation-based library programming has been completed with veterans (Brown 2015), racial minorities (Everett 2018), persons experiencing homelessness (Africawala 2015; Honisett, Short, and Schwab 2018), and recent immigrants (Johnston 2016; Johnston and Audunson 2019). Several studies note that while conversation-based library programming has clearly been successful, empirical evidence is needed to understand why this is so (Johnston 2016). The Research and Evaluation section of this paper describes some progress in this area, and the personal account from Dr. Zachery Stier of the Erickson Public Library provides examples of recent Dialogue work and introduces promising engagement techniques.

Methods used to facilitate conversation-based library and museum programming include the Harwood Method (American Library Association 2015), the Museum of Science Boston Community Conversation series (Museum of Science 2021), Intergroup Dialogue (Damasco 2019), conversation-based programming and Intergroup Contact Theory (Johnston 2016; Johnston and Audunson 2019), Coffee and Conversations (Africawala 2015; Honisett, Short, and Schwab 2018), and Silent Dialogue (Everett 2018). Each of these

conversation methods was created to address specific concerns either in the community or the hosting venue. For example, Intergroup Dialogue “intentionally surfaces issues of power, privilege, and systemic oppression around social identities as being central to both the content and process of dialogue” (Damasco 2019, pg. 14). Similarly, the Coffee and Conversations program has the aim of “providing a space for open dialogue on topics that unite us, rather than divide us” (Africawala 2015).

By far the most commonly used conversation method in public libraries is the “Libraries Transform” initiative that was developed by the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation (Harwood Institute) in collaboration with the American Library Association (American Library Association 2015). Libraries Transform is a public awareness campaign that includes a Community Conversation Workbook created by the Harwood Institute to encourage libraries to “turn outward” to authentically engage with community members (American Library Association 2015).

All these methods have contributed to the Community Dialogue model described in this paper, and the authors would like to stress that each method can be extremely beneficial if the library and community have the appropriate time, resources, and support to manage it. The Dialogue framework is meant to be an engaging and flexible process that can complement other, more in-depth, programs (such as Harwood), or more informal methods (such as Conversation Cafes). In short, there is no one “right” answer to using Dialogue in community engagement, and we encourage library staff to consider using the flexible Dialogue model as a first step, and potentially incorporate other methods as they get deeper into the work.

Empowerment Evaluation and Participatory Action Research. The concepts of Empowerment Evaluation (Fetterman 1994) and Participatory Action Research (Lewin 1946) have greatly influenced and inspired the development of the Community Dialogue framework. Rather than relying on outside entities to visit an in-situ environment, pass their judgment, and leave, these methodologies rely on the skills, knowledge, and relationships of local participants to build an understanding of community which will directly and positively impact that community, not solely other researchers. This is not to say that the Dialogue model is an evaluation or research activity, simply that the theoretical framing of these models is well suited to the intentions of library staff conducting these activities.

Empowerment Evaluation, characterized by a collaborative methodology, focuses on self-determination in an evaluative setting (Patton 1997; Fetterman 1994). It formulates relationships between stakeholders, evaluators, and the community through evaluative concepts and techniques that create a synergistic approach to projects or programs where all parties are actively engaged (Secret, Jordan, and Ford 1999; Fetterman et al. 2017; Fetterman and Wandersman 2005). This approach also shifts authority from the evaluators to the interested groups to choose criteria, collect the data, and disseminate the reports (Stufflebeam 1994; Everhart and Wandersman 2000; Fetterman et al. 2017). This process “is explicitly designed to serve a vested interest” (Fetterman 1994). We see this as a key component of Dialogue. The purpose of these conversations is not necessarily to hear all sides, or to make sure everyone is receiving the same services. They are explicitly intentional about digging deep into community challenges and identifying groups who need extra support and resources.

Similar to Empowerment Evaluation, Participatory Action Research puts the stakeholder (library staff or community member) in the driver’s seat of assessment. When Lewin first wrote of this in the context of racial tensions in 1946, he noted that “There exists a great amount of good-will, of readiness to

face the problem squarely and really to do something about it. If this amount of serious good-will could be transformed into organized, efficient action, there would be no danger for intergroup relations in the United States.” (pg. 37)

Action Researchers do not believe apathy is the problem in our communities, but rather that people simply do not know how to make a difference or with whom they should work. Action Research brings the work to the community, rather than conducting it on the fringes. In the Dialogue framework, it is especially relevant to consider the goals of Critical Participatory Action Research which aims to go beyond active participation to a more nuanced understanding of practice and the invisible conditions that shape current actions and processes (Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon 2014). Understanding these conditions requires iterative, and oftentimes difficult, conversations which foster empathy. Again, the goal is not for library staff to become researchers, but rather to approach community conversations with a critical lens that allows library staff to understand and act on community needs, library deficits, and uncomfortable questions. The authors find the principles of Empowerment Evaluation and Participatory Action Research provide library staff with the necessary internal agency and targeted direction to allow them and their community partners to visualize the potential of their partnerships and actions.

Research and Evaluation Procedures

History. Community Dialogues began as a simple conversation to inform the design of the National Institutes of Health sponsored bilingual Discover Health/Descubre la Salud traveling library exhibition. Library staff eagerly contributed to the evolution of community conversations by using knowledge of their local communities to elicit collaborators who were instrumental in

“The authors find the principles of Empowerment Evaluation and Participatory Action Research provide library staff with the necessary internal agency and targeted direction to allow them and their community partners to visualize the potential of their partnerships and actions.”

identifying both library and community needs around local health topics (Holland 2016). It was clear from these early Dialogues that a more robust evaluation of their efficacy and potential was needed. This section describes the research and evaluation of Community Dialogues that were part of the NASA Science Mission Directorate-funded *NASA@ My Library* program (Fitzhugh 2021) serving 75 public library locations, as well as the National Science Foundation-funded *Project BUILD* program serving 12 public library locations (Jocz 2020).

NASA@ My Library provided support to state library agencies and individual public libraries to provide NASA STEM content, programs, and activities to patrons. As part of *Project BUILD*, library staff created engineering checkout kits for patrons and formed partnerships with local engineers, who co-facilitated hands-on engineering programs for elementary-aged children. A key component of both programs was to provide service to groups typically underrepresented in STEM. Dialogues offered library staff an opportunity to increase their understanding of STEM expertise in their communities and to connect with potential partners serving diverse audience segments who may not take full advantage of library services.

Data Collection Methods and Sample. The specific goals and features of Dialogues are unique to individual libraries. Additionally, the overall approach to Dialogues evolved organically over time as more was learned by the project team about how libraries were thinking about, implementing, and using Dialogues. Therefore, *NASA@ My Library* and *Project BUILD* evaluators used an emergent qualitative approach to gain an understanding of library

staffs' experience with and feelings about Dialogues, and the influence the Dialogues had on their work. The evaluators, which included Jen Jocz, chose this approach because it allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of participants' unique, personal views and experiences, and produce rich descriptions of these thoughts and experiences (Merriam & Tisdell 2016), and to allow for flexibility in the types of data being collected. Evaluators obtained interviews and reflections about Dialogue activities from 40 public library staff across two projects. Library staff participating in the *NASA@ My Library* project were asked to complete a detailed reflection report after each Dialogue they facilitated. This report asked library staff to describe how they organized and facilitated Dialogues, including who they invited and what they hoped to achieve. They were also asked to reflect on the outcomes of the Dialogue, including key takeaways and next steps. Finally, library staff were prompted to think specifically about how they felt the Dialogue framework allowed them to reach underserved audiences and how they might improve upon this in future conversations. In total, 28 reflections reports were received from 27 public library systems across the United States between June 2017 and March 2019. The reflection report template is provided as an appendix.

Library staff from all six libraries participating in Project BUILD were interviewed about their experience with the project, including questions focused on their Dialogue experience, ways their library benefited from hosting Dialogues, and questions seeking suggestions for how the framework could be improved. A total of 13 library staff from six public libraries across the United States participated in virtual interviews between December 2019 and February 2020 (the interview instrument is provided as an appendix). In-person observations occurred at eight sites, with participants ranging from three individuals at the first site to 15 at the last.

Project BUILD and *NASA@ My Library* evaluators collected data from a diverse set of libraries ranging from small rural libraries to large urban library systems. Although the overarching aim of better understanding and reaching underserved audiences was common to all Dialogues, participating libraries had their own unique goals for their Dialogues. While convenience sampling was used for this study, the findings are strengthened by analyzing data collected over time from libraries representing a range of environments.

Data Analysis. Evaluators used Reflexive Thematic Analysis to gain a detailed look experiences of library staff engaging with and learning about their communities through Dialogues. This type of thematic analysis was selected because of its versatility, allowing themes to be constructed based on data rather than on predetermined, theoretical assumptions (Braun and Clarke 2019).

Reflection reports, open-ended survey responses, and interview transcripts were analyzed to identify themes describing experiences of library staff following the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019). These steps involved (1) familiarization with the data, (2) creation of initial codes, (3) identification of broader patterns to generate initial themes, (4) review and refinement of themes, and (5) development of a detailed analysis of each theme. Although not included in the thematic analysis, observation notes were used to triangulate and provide additional examples of identified themes.

Results. Each *NASA@ My Library* site was required to conduct at least one Dialogue in support of their program. Additional Dialogues were supported and encouraged. Based on results from the final survey, the majority of libraries (61 percent) hosted one Dialogue, with 39 percent hosting two or more.

Results from thematic analysis were organized into four themes describing library staffs' experiences of organizing, hosting, and reflecting on their Dialogues. Themes address the ways libraries benefited from hosting Dialogues

as well as practical considerations for organizing and structuring Dialogues. A summary of the themes is shown in Figure 1 below.

<i>Theme 1</i>	<i>Community Dialogues bring diverse groups together to raise awareness of community needs and how to better reach undeserved audiences</i>	To ensure a variety of perspectives are heard, library staff need to take steps to bring diverse groups to the Dialogue. This gives community members a voice, allowing them to share their thoughts and experiences. It also allows library staff to better understand the challenges faced by different groups in their community, including challenges that impact their ability to participate in library programs and access library resources.
<i>Theme 2</i>	<i>Community Dialogues help identify shared goals and ways participants can work together to address community needs</i>	Dialogues allow library staff to communicate their library's goals and commitment to serving their community, while also giving community members and organizations a chance to share their assets and expertise. In this way, Dialogue participants can identify ways they can work together to address community needs and better reach underserved audiences.
<i>Theme 3</i>	<i>Reflecting and acting on key takeaways from Community Dialogues takes effort, but can lead to changes in library programming and practice</i>	The Dialogue is just the beginning; the real work takes place after its completion. Dialogues often raise important topics and takeaways. However, to make actual change, library staff must reflect on what they heard during the Dialogues, identify the key lessons learned, and plan and execute follow-up actions.
<i>Theme 4</i>	<i>A library's own community should be taken into account when considering the use of Community Dialogues</i>	How a library approaches their Dialogue depends on who they hope to engage with, for what purpose, and how they might connect with these individuals or groups. Considering the format and location of the Dialogue, taking time to explain the purpose of the Dialogue and build trust--creating a welcoming environment--can make participants feel more comfortable.

Figure 1. Dialogue Themes

Theme 1: Community Dialogues Bring Diverse Groups Together to Raise Awareness of Community Needs and How to Better Reach Underserved Audiences. By bringing together a variety of individuals—for example, schoolteachers, government officials, local community groups, cultural organizations, and parents—community members shared thoughts and experiences with library staff that raised awareness of challenges their community faced. Library staff described how the Dialogues highlighted the challenges different groups in

their community experience and how those challenges have impacted their ability to participate in library programs and access library resources. For example, library staff described learning about transportation challenges, language barriers, and the need to hold events at a time and place where they are most likely to engage their target audiences. They also received suggestions for how to market their services to the community better by using different publicity methods (e.g., social media vs. printed flyers) or promoting directly to specific groups in the community (e.g., parents or schools).

However, ensuring there are diverse perspectives represented at Dialogues relies on bringing different groups of people to the table and knowing how to reach them. Libraries can start to address this concern by employing existing contacts to gather ideas for individuals or specific groups. Publicizing the Dialogue through various communication channels can increase the library's reach for varied audiences who may use multiple platforms. Email can be a good first step, but following up with personal phone calls can add another layer of engagement and increase participation. Alternatively, libraries may choose to reach out with mailings on official letterhead requesting follow-up communication (e.g., a phone call or virtual teleconference). Some libraries also found that radio or social media was a better way to reach certain audiences. Using Dialogue attendees' own relationships and networks can further expand the reach of the library by asking who should also be at the table. These individuals can then be invited to future conversations or engaged in another way. The way the library reaches out will ultimately depend on the unique characteristics of their community, and the specific audience they are trying to reach. While networking is a time-consuming process, these are important steps to ensure diverse groups within the community attend and are heard—either at the same Dialogue or separately, ensuring the inclusion of a variety of perspectives. It is also very important to actively engage your participants, rather than passively distributing flyers and hope for participation. Discover Health libraries used this strategy and were more often satisfied with the results than libraries from other programs who had open invitations.



Figure 2. Feedback from Community Dialogue hosts (left) and a Dialogue at the Broward County African American Research Library (right), photo credit Beatrice Chavez, NCIL@SSI

Theme 2: Community Dialogues Help Identify Shared Goals and Ways Participants Can Work Together to Address Community Needs. Dialogues provide an avenue for participants to begin identifying how they can work together to address the needs identified in the Dialogue process. Library staff can communicate their library's goals, exhibit commitment to serving their community, and highlight resources and services their libraries offer. Community leaders and organizations can similarly share their knowledge and discuss to partner with the library to better serve the community. (The Reflection section of this article provides an example of how one library implemented this theme.)

Libraries can identify partners for increased promotion and outreach as a shared goal. For example, community groups could advertise library resources to their members or physically bring them to the library for programs. Conversely, the library could bring programming or resources to audiences at a particular community organization. This can be especially useful in helping library staff reach out to specific audiences in their community, including underserved audiences.

Partnerships can be identified by library staff and Dialogue attendees that may lead to co-planning or co-presenting programs. For example, in the evaluation of *Project BUILD*, some libraries connected with local STEM experts (e.g., from local astronomy clubs, local universities, community colleges) who presented programs at the library or shared resources for library programming. Libraries may also identify community events to participate in or work with community partners to arrange their own large-scale event.

As an example, one *Project BUILD* library hosted several Community Dialogues with the purpose of organizing a local science festival, an idea that originated at their first Dialogue. This YES!fest (Youth Engineering and Science Festival) included engineering partners and local STEM organizations. The festival attracted around 500 attendees, helping demonstrate to community members and organizations that the library is committed to supporting STEM learning in the community in ways that go beyond books and resources traditionally associated with a library. One library staff member explained that some in the community had "pigeonholed libraries as all about reading, and not necessarily reading to learn and learning on the larger scale" and the Dialogues and YES!fest "changed how people see us filling our role in the community."

Theme 3: Reflecting and Acting on Key Takeaways from Community Dialogues Takes Effort, But Can Lead to Changes in Library Programming and Practice. Key takeaways from Dialogues helped inform changes to library programming and



Figure 3. Over 30 organizations participated in the Yes!Fest event, providing engineering activities and opportunities to the community. Photo Credit Beatrice Chavez, NCIL@SSI

practice. These takeaways included: a better understanding of the needs of the community, creation of new ways to conduct outreach, and the identification of potential community partners and collaborators. Libraries need to allot time to reflect on what they heard at the Dialogue and invest in intentional and realistic outcomes. These could include following up with potential partners, discussing what was learned with library directors or staff who can help move ideas forward, or planning more Dialogues and other strategies to gather additional feedback (e.g., surveys, community talk-back boards, etc.). One example from a Dialogue in support of *Discover Health/Descubre la Salud* highlighted a simple change that led to a stronger outcome. The library used a grant to build a Spanish-language children's nook but were disappointed it remain unused. A participant pointed out that the sign above the nook was in English, and it was not clear it was meant to be used by Spanish-speaking patrons. In a town where most Spanish speakers are recent immigrants from Mexico, an invitation to participate (including welcoming signage at the front door) was crucial to increase participation by the stakeholders who represented the local county Immigration Services Office. Other participants who worked closely with these populations agreed, and because of the conversation within the Dialogue, the library made signage and promotional items that explicitly welcomed Spanish speakers to the library and its reading nook, increasing participation from the intended audience.

Theme 4: A Library's Individual Community Should Be Taken into Account When Considering the Use of Community Dialogues. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to Dialogues. Libraries need to take into consideration the specific audiences they hope to engage with, for what purpose, and how they might connect with these individuals or groups. Working with, not for, these groups is crucial. The format or location of a Dialogue may not be immediately appealing or comfortable for some community members, especially those from underserved groups. Attendees may be frustrated and hesitant to participate in a Dialogue if they have previously taken part in similar conversations without seeing follow-up actions.

Before the Dialogue, libraries need to invest time identifying the groups they want to connect with and clearly explain the purpose of the Dialogue to members of those groups. This is often best accomplished through one-on-one interactions and may require multiple discussions to build trust and buy-in from the invitees. Similarly, steps should be taken to help participants feel comfortable during the Dialogue. These steps could include offering refreshments, providing established ground rules, and planning ample time at the beginning of the Dialogue for participants to network with each other. It may also be helpful to hold multiple Dialogues to foster trust between participants. This provides the opportunity for the library to share outcomes from previous Dialogues to demonstrate how participants' thoughts are being put into action.

It may be advisable to hold the conversation away from the library if the goal is to reach community members who do not feel comfortable in the space. Although there are advantages to libraries hosting their own Dialogues (such as communicating the library's commitment to serving their community), there are also benefits to taking advantage of community conversations already taking place. If a conversation is currently underway, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. In one example of this, a *Project BUILD* site was interested in learning more about youth and youth service organizations. Instead of hosting the Dialogue at their library, library staff incorporated it into one of their city's Youth Round Table events. The Youth Round Table is a municipal standing committee designed to address the needs of youth in the community. In the

words of the library staff, this was an exciting venue to host their Dialogue because “the Youth Round Table gives the library access to a highly motivated group of people who can help us gain access to our target groups.” By bringing the Dialogue to the group, the library staff were able to build a relationship dynamically and intentionally.

Reflections and Promising Practices in Hosting Community Dialogues

The following reflective firsthand account from Zachary Stier of the Erickson Public Library (Boone County, IA) highlights the process of planning and conducting a Dialogue, as well as next steps to ensure that the information gathered is acted upon. After the statement from Dr. Stier, we present observations collected by NASA@ My Library and the Project BUILD programs and evaluation teams.

In February of 2018, Erickson Public Library conducted our first Community Dialogue as part of the NASA@ My Library program. The objective for this dialogue was to meet with our local community stakeholders to discuss how this grant could positively impact STEM engagement in our community. In preparation for this dialogue, the following steps were taken:

1. Library staff, including the director and members of the board, met to discuss the library’s current STEM programming for early learners through young adults. We focused on the diversity of current programs (such as the inclusion of STEM in reading programs, the use of technology, and diversified learning opportunities like science experiments or virtual and augmented reality).
2. We then completed a stakeholder audit to better understand and categorize current library partnerships with organizations, schools, and businesses. The initial stakeholder audit found that current library partners included public and private schools, an elderly volunteer program, local community college, area education, childcare, a local extension office, city council officials, and community-based services for persons with disabilities. The audit also helped us identify potential future partners outside of the community including state universities, state science center, early childhood association, public television, and the state library.
3. Finally, we sent invitations to existing and future partners based on the results of the stakeholder audit.

Now that we’ve conducted multiple successful Dialogues, we suggest that invitations be delivered as formal emails that include the following components: A purpose statement for the reason the Dialogue will be conducted; three to four working goals that will be accomplished by the Dialogue; the date for the Dialogue; and a ‘hook’ on why a stakeholder should participate in the Dialogue, including the value and expertise they can personally provide to the Dialogue. Other outcomes from this Dialogue included stakeholders reflecting and brainstorming on new STEM opportunities for early learners and adults in our community, many of which have come to fruition. Partners have committed to staying in contact with each other to make sure those ideas become a reality for our community.

I believe community dialogues are the fuel that sparks conversation on topics that can be uncomfortable, but necessary. Through this experience, stakeholders are responsible for identifying community concerns, to wrestle with difficult questions and realities, and to begin laying the foundation on what they aspire the community to be.

Dialogue Promising Practices. The biggest question in getting started with Dialogue is “who to invite?” A suggestion from a librarian who has conducted multiple Dialogues was to follow in the footsteps of Mr. Rogers and “find the helpers.” The Erickson Public Library took this advice to heart and invited a diverse set of community leaders, movers, and shakers to their three Dialogues. Their stakeholders included Iowa Science Center staff; Area Education staff; local STEM Council members; local community colleges; state library staff; principals, elementary grade teachers; Boone Schools Innovative School Leaders; Erickson city council members; Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children; various Iowa Library Associations; the Engineering Department at Iowa State University; parents; and local television representatives.

In general, involving community leaders is an important step to facilitating dialogues that lead to actionable and achievable outcomes. These leaders can include school administrators, Parks and Recreation Department staff, WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) employees, Refugee Services, and other public officials. In addition to these obvious choices, participants can also include community movers and shakers that may not have an “official” title: people who know what is going on and are trusted voices who can represent the community. For example, homeschool influencers, a waitress at the local diner, a Little League coach, and retired NASA engineers factored heavily in recent Dialogues, showcasing the breadth of knowledge and commitment in these communities.

Dr. Stier suggests the following activities as options to make the most of everyone’s time during an in-person Dialogue. Based on observations of many other Dialogues in the NASA@ My Library, Discover Health, and Project BUILD programs, the project team and evaluation partners support these suggestions:

- Host a tour: Use the opportunity of having new audiences in your building to provide a brief tour of the library and discuss your services and resources. This can generate further conversation on how you and a stakeholder can develop a mutually beneficial partnership.



Figure 4. Infographic illustrating steps taken in The Community Dialogue Pathway. These steps aren’t necessary synchronous. They are meant to be repeated and iterated on as necessary. Provided by Dr. Zachary Stier.

- Keep the conversation moving and flexible: A Dialogue should not be scripted—encourage and allow the discussion to evolve organically. It is helpful to have prompt questions to move the conversation forward; however, if a stakeholder provides a response that helps to further the conversation, it is advised that you proceed with that new direction. This is a conversation, not a presentation!
- Provide a Community Dialogue packet: Send participants a digital or hard copy of relevant documents and ideas before the Dialogue. Also provide extra paper, writing materials, sticky notes, and snacks.
- Document: With permission, take a photo of stakeholders to aid in documentation of the Dialogue. Include comments and quotes from stakeholders. Consider using giant sticky notes that participants can take photographs of as they leave.

Recommended Dialogue Next Steps. The conversation does not end when the Dialogue does. In addition to writing notes and providing them to participants, ensure that the momentum of the Dialogue continues. It is extremely important that participants feel empowered to contribute to the next steps of the process, and feel like partners, not just invitees. Simple actions such as thank you letters or acknowledgement in a newsletter can increase buy-in and future participation. Consider the following questions when planning next steps:

- What comments and experiences were expressed that could generate a partnership opportunity in the future?
- Based on the topic of the Dialogue, in which areas are the library and other participant organizations doing well? Where might each organization benefit from support?
- Based on the responses from the Dialogue, what are action steps that can be taken by stakeholders to improve in these areas?

Future Research Directions

During the current global pandemic, libraries that have previously participated in Dialogues have begun to investigate the efficacy of conducting virtual Dialogues. Online Dialogues can, for example, focus on equitable programming in the face of the digital divide, service organizations working together to leverage their assets, and ways to support public schools. The authors recommend additional research on virtual Dialogues to understand if they can also be used to provide more equitable access to the conversations. The authors also recommend the collection of more quantitative data that investigates the nature of conversation programs currently happening in public libraries and other informal education organizations. The discussion of conversation models in the literature review provides a foundation for identifying possible targets. The authors are currently using the results of the NASA@ My Library and Project BUILD programs to create the observation and survey protocols for Dialogues that will be conducted in the new NSF funded STEAM Equity program. This program expands upon prior Dialogue work, with each library conducting three to five Dialogues in support of their goals of creating more equitable STEM/STEAM programming for their diverse patrons.

Limitations

The current study was limited to in-person observations at fewer than a dozen sites, and the remainder of data was gathered by post-Dialogue reflection forms and interviews. A more in-depth study using extensive observational data (including frequent follow-up interviews of both library staff and Dialogue participants) would provide a clearer picture of the role of Dialogues in promoting equitable practices to public libraries and their communities.

Conclusion

Conversations with patrons are a common library practice, but Community Dialogues that purposefully seek out those unheard in the library space strengthen libraries' roles in engaging their entire community. Libraries can be empowered to move conversations beyond their walls to the whole community, while doing so in a way that is uncomplicated yet engaging. It does not matter if conversations are about increasing STEM programming, building community partnerships, or providing services to homeless patrons. What is important is having actionable conversations with diverse stakeholders and feeling confident the library can, and should, be at the center of these conversations. The following key aspects and lessons learned from conducting and evaluating Dialogues show how they are an invaluable tool for libraries at any stage of their engagement journey to take the next step in working with their communities.

- Dialogues are a flexible and effective tool to empower library staff to engage with diverse community members to search for the answers to their questions within their own community. They help library staff gain an awareness of what they can do in their own practice as well as through working together with diverse community members.
- Dialogues provide the foundation for strong relationship building, linking the library to community partners and organizations that they may not normally work with to impact a wider reach.
- Dialogues give libraries opportunities to increase their reach to underserved audiences or find solutions to a community issue.
- Dialogues are customizable and can be used by library staff for a wide range of topics, from social justice to environmental challenges, to reaching audiences not currently using library resources.

The inclusion of the Dialogue approach in the everyday work of public libraries has potential and power as an additional tool in libraries' missions to address issues of equity and access in individual communities. Libraries do not have to do this work alone. Community leaders and organizations are there to support you in this shared mission. Let them.

"The health of our civilization, the depth of our awareness about the underpinnings of our culture and our concern for the future can all be tested by how well we support our libraries." —Carl Sagan

NASA@ My Library is based upon work funded by NASA under cooperative agreement No. NNX16AE30A. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of NASA@ My Library and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Project BUILD is supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant Number DRL-1657593. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

References

- Africawala, Jasmine. 2015. "Coffee & Conversation." Programming Librarian. <https://programminglibrarian.org/programs/coffee-conversation>.
- American Library Association. 2015. "Libraries Transforming Communities." Tools, Publications & Resources. 2015. <http://www.ala.org/tools/librariestransform/libraries-transforming-communities>.
- Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2019. "Reflecting on Reflexive Thematic Analysis." Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health 11(4): 589–97.

- Brown, Chris. 2015. "Conversation-Based Librarianship: A New Potential for Community Knowledge." *Journal of Library Administration* 55(6): 483–93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2015.1054768>.
- Damasco, Ione T. 2019. "Creating Meaningful Engagement in Academic Libraries Using Principles of Intergroup Dialogue." in *Libraries Promoting Reflective Dialogue in a Time of Political Polarization*; edited by Andrea Baer, Elyssa Stern Cahoy, Robert Schroeder; 13–32. Chicago, Illinois: Association of College and Research Libraries
- Everett, Stephanie. 2018. "Visualizing the Silent Dialogue about Race: Diversity Outreach in an Academic Library." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 44(4) : 518–52
- Everhart, Kevin, and Abraham Wandersman. 2000. "Applying Comprehensive Quality Programming and Empowerment Evaluation to Reduce Implementation Barriers." *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation* 11(2): 177–91.
- Fetterman, David M. 1994. "Empowerment Evaluation." *Evaluation Practice* 15(1): 1–15. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0886-1633\(94\)90055-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0886-1633(94)90055-8).
- Fetterman, David M., Liliana Rodríguez-Campos, Ann P. Zukoski, and Contributors. 2017. *Collaborative, Participatory, and Empowerment Evaluation: Stakeholder Involvement Approaches*. Guilford Publications. 2017.
- Fetterman, David M., and Abraham Wandersman. 2005. *Empowerment Evaluation Principles in Practice*. Guilford Press.
- Fitzhugh, Ginger, Jocz, Jen, Liston, Carrie. 2021. "NASA@ My Library Summative Report." ncil.spacescience.org/papers
- Holland, Anne. 2016. "Front-End Evaluation: Report from the Discover Health/Descubre La Salud Community Dialogues." <http://ncil.spacescience.org/images/papers/DH%20Community%20Dialogues%20Report.pdf>.
- Holland, Anne. 2018. "A Community Dialogue Guide for Public Libraries." May, 2018. <http://www.starnetlibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Community-Dialogue-Guide100418.pdf>
- Holland, Anne, and Dusenbery, Paul. 2018. "Community Dialogues in Informal Science Institutions." *Informal Learning Review*, no. 152: 21–24.
- Honisett, Amy., Short, Rachel, and Schwab, Kate. 2018. "Building Community at the Library with Coffee and Conversation." *OLA Quarterly* 23(4): 20–25.
- Jocz, Jen, Greller, Sarah. 2020. "Project BUILD Summative Evaluation Report." <https://www.informalscience.org/project-build-summative-evaluation-report>
- Johnson, Sarah. "Partnering for Social Justice." In *Social Justice and Activism in Libraries: Essays on Diversity and Change*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc, Publishers. 2019.
- Johnston, Jamie. 2016. "Conversation-Based Programming and Newcomer Integration: A Case Study of the Språkhörnan Program at Malmö City Library." *Library & Information Science Research* 38(1): 10–17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2016.02.001>.
- Johnston, Jamie, and Ragnar Audunson. 2019. "Supporting Immigrants' Political Integration through Discussion and Debate in Public Libraries." *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 51(1): 228–242.
- Kemmis, Stephen, Robin McTaggart, and Rhonda Nixon. 2014. "Introducing Critical Participatory Action Research." In *The Action Research Planner: Doing Critical Participatory Action Research*, edited by Stephen Kemmis, Robin McTaggart, and Rhonda Nixon, 1–31. Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4560-67-2_1.

- Lankes, David. "Beyond the Bullet Points: Bad Libraries Build Collections, Good Libraries Build Services, Great Libraries Build Communities." n.d. Accessed March 25, 2021. <https://davidlankes.org/beyond-the-bullet-points-bad-libraries-build-collections-good-libraries-build-services-great-libraries-build-communities/>.
- Lewin, Kurt. 1946. "Action Research and Minority Problems." *Journal of Social Issues* 2, no. 4: 34–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1946.tb02295.x>.
- Lor, Peter Johan. 2018. "Democracy, Information, and Libraries in a Time of Post-Truth Discourse." *Library Management* 39(5): 307–21.
- Merriam, Sharan, and Tisdell, Elizabeth. 2016. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Museum of Science. 2021. "Coronavirus, a Community Conversation." <https://www.mos.org/mos-at-home/town-hall/community-conversation-coronavirus>.
- Patton, Michael Quinn. 1997. *Utilization-focused Evaluation: The New Century Text* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Pew. 2013. "Library Services in the Digital Age." <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2013/01/22/library-services/>
- Real, Brian, John Carlo Bertot, and Paul T. Jaeger. 2014. "Rural Public Libraries and Digital Inclusion: Issues and Challenges." *Information Technology and Libraries* (Online); Chicago 33, 1: 6–24.
- Shtivelband, Annette, Wallander-Roberts, Amanda, and Jakubowski, Robert. 2016. "STEM Equity Report, Datum Advisors, Research Evaluation Consulting." <http://ncil.spacescience.org/images/papers/STEM-Equity-Informal-Learning-Settings-122316.pdf>
- Secret, Mary, Audrey Jordan, and Janet Ford. 1999. "Empowerment Evaluation as a Social Work Strategy." *Health & Social Work* 24 (2): 120–27.
- Stufflebeam, Daniel L. 1994. "Empowerment Evaluation, Objectivist Evaluation, and Evaluation Standards: Where the Future of Evaluation Should Not Go and Where It Needs to Go." *Evaluation Practice* 15(3): 321–38.
- Thorpe, Kirsten, and Monica Galassi. 2018. "Diversity, Inclusion & Respect: Embedding Indigenous Priorities in Public Library Services." *Public Library Quarterly* 37(2): 180–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2018.1460568>.
- Usherwood, Bob. 2016. *Equity and Excellence in the Public Library: Why Ignorance Is Not Our Heritage*. Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, Ashgate, Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315580173>.
- Whiteman, Eliza D., Roxanne Dupuis, Anna U. Morgan, Bernadette D'Alonzo, Caleb Epstein, Heather Klusaritz, and Carolyn C. Cannuscio. 2018. "Public Libraries As Partners for Health." *Preventing Chronic Disease* 15. <https://doi.org/10.5888/pcd15.170392>.
- Williams, Amber, Erica Freudenberger, and Cindy Fesemyer. 2019. "Food for Thought: Feeding Mind and Body at Public Libraries." In *Social Justice and Activism in Libraries: Essays on Diversity and Change*. (pg. 39). Edited by Sue Epstein, Carol Smallwood, and Vera Gubnitskaia. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc, Publishers. 2019.

Author Details

Anne Holland, Community Engagement Manager, Space Science Institute:
aholland@spacescience.org

Jen Jocz, Senior Research Associate, Education Development Center:
jjocz@edc.org

Stephanie Vierow-Fields, Education Coordinator, Space Science Institute:
svfields@spacescience.org

Zachary Stier, Head of Children's Services, Ericson Public Library:
zstier@boone.lib.ia.us

Lindsay Gypin, Data Services Librarian, University of North Carolina at
Greensboro: lagypin@gmail.com

Appendix A: Project BUILD Staff Interview Protocol

1. In what ways has your library benefited from hosting Community Dialogues?
 - Prompt: In what ways did the Community Dialogue strategy help your library better understand or meet the needs of your community (including reaching underserved audiences)?
 - Prompt: Have you made new community partners as a result of the Community Dialogues? If so, how have you worked with them following the Community Dialogues?
2. In what ways, if at all, can you see your library using the Community Dialogue strategy in the future?
 - Prompt: In what ways do you see any barriers or challenges that may prevent your library from hosting additional Community Dialogues?
3. Are there any resources that you would have found useful? Did you use the Community Dialogue Guide and, if so, what did you think (how did you use it, what did you find useful, what would you change)?
 - Prompt: What suggestions would you offer other libraries interested in hosting Community Dialogues?
4. Aside from Community Dialogues, what other strategies did your library use to ensure Project BUILD activities met the needs of your community (for example, promotion or outreach to specific audiences, adaptations or modification to Project BUILD activities)?

Appendix B: NASA@ My Library Dialogue Reflection Form

- Date/Time
- Location
- Names of Organizers/Facilitator(s)
- Number of attendees
- What community groups or target audiences attended? What types of institutions were represented at your event?
- What strategies did you use to recruit participants (for example, a flyer, email, phone call, etc.)? Which were most effective?
- What did you hope to achieve for your library through the Community Dialogue event?
- In what ways did you involve NASA partners (e.g., Solar System Ambassadors, Night Sky Network)?
- If you had a PowerPoint presentation or other materials, please attach copies. If not indicated in the provided materials, please also list the questions that you asked at the Community Dialogue.

- What strategies do you feel were most conducive to productive conversation?
- What were the key takeaways from the discussion?
- Which potential collaborations are you most excited about? Why are they particularly exciting?
- What are your next steps/plans to follow up with participants?
- In what ways do you feel that the Community Dialogue model is effective for reaching underserved audiences? What would you do differently to better reach underserved audiences?



ARTICLE

**Terra Rogerson
and Monica Ruane
Rogers**

*California University of
Pennsylvania*

*To cite this article:
Rogerson, Terra, and
Monica Ruane Rogers.
2021 "Too Big for
the Library: Scaling
Down Popular Library
Outreach to Ensure
Lasting Sustainability
in an Academic
Environment." *Journal
of Library Outreach and
Engagement* 1, no.2:
96–109*

*DOI:
10.21900.j.jloe.v1i2.466*

Too Big for the Library: Scaling Down Popular Library Outreach to Ensure Lasting Sustainability in an Academic Environment

ABSTRACT

Outreach is necessary to further the visions and missions of many university libraries, including Manderino Library at California University of Pennsylvania. In the library's efforts to gain a larger user base on campus, it collaborates with academic departments to create and hold large, well-attended events that require high levels of staffing and hours. After analyzing chat and reference statistics, gate counts, and database usage, librarians found that large and successful events do not increase usage for other library services. As a result of this, we advise caution when planning outreach events and suggest that librarians work with their fellow collaborators to determine their collective goals before committing the library's resources to these efforts. This article explores the value of hosting events that eventually leave the library once they become popular.

KEYWORDS

outreach, faculty collaboration, college clubs, academic libraries, student engagement

The mission of California University of Pennsylvania (from the university's website, accessed July 7, 2020) is "to provide a high-quality, student-centered education that prepares an increasingly diverse community of lifelong learners to contribute responsibly and creatively to the regional, national and global society, while serving as a resource to advance the region's cultural, social and economic development" ("Mission Statement, Vision and Legacy" 2020). To this end, the library develops and hosts events for students that promote academic learning and a collegial campus community. Because of budget constraints and other factors, it became important to collaborate with other non-curricular campus departments to continue quality programming for Cal U's students. However, such efforts produced a number of challenges, including questions about the sustainability of such partnerships.

California University of Pennsylvania has a student population of approximately 6800, with general enrollment numbers that have been declining since 2013. Manderino Library's outreach programming, which began in earnest in 2010, has seen increased participation in events despite fewer students on campus. As fewer patrons entered the library building or used its collections, the main goals of library programming have been: to have patrons see a space that is welcoming and inviting; to have them learn about materials and services that may be of interest to them; and to get them to return to the library and use these spaces, collections, and services in the future.

Scholarly relationships are only one portion of outreach at Manderino Library. These are exemplified by the liaison program, wherein librarians collaborate with assigned academic departments for bibliographic and information literacy instruction. However, in order for students to see the library as a welcoming place—to use our computer labs, study spaces, and “just for fun” collections like movies, video games, and board games—the outreach librarian and other library employees organize non-academic, entertaining, and relaxing events. This maps to the overall goal to promote the library as a viable, welcoming, and usable space for the campus community. However, even with extensive planning, advertising, and enthusiasm, it is notoriously difficult to persuade students to attend functions on this majority-commuter campus. Librarians now know that the best way to ensure large groups of students will come to library programs is to work with other campus organizations that can draw from their membership for attendees. Thus, holding events in conjunction with other non-curricular units is the lifeblood of programming at Cal U’s library. Student clubs receive funding for programming, and the library partners with several of these organizations to facilitate events both within the library and across campus. These clubs provide funding for food, entertainment, and other amenities for events (such as hosting a massage therapist for the week before finals). However, once these events become successful, the clubs often seek larger, newer campus venues to host their component of the program.

“After analyzing chat and reference statistics, gate counts, and database usage, librarians found that large and successful events do not increase usage for other library services.”

Over the past decade, Manderino Library held various events and displays in conjunction with fifteen different curricular and non-curricular units. Many of these partnerships lasted several semesters and some even continue to this day. However, those clubs and departments that moved their programs to other venues on campus usually did so because their event became very popular—and in some cases too popular—for the library, a cramped building that has not seen a major renovation since the 1970s.

When programming opportunities move to an alternate location on campus, this negatively affects library gate counts. Like many libraries, outside administrators often evaluate Manderino Library on the sheer number of people it brings into the building, and so high-volume single-day events boost those counts. One philosophical question Manderino Library grapples with is what to do after large-program partnerships end. Should the library continue to identify campus allies with whom to hold ever larger events, or does doing so merely artificially boost gate count numbers? Do students return in the weeks after an event? Do they use collections or library support services if these are promoted during an event? If programming supports other library functions—such as circulation and access to online information—then it does not need to be an end in and of itself.

This article examines two events in-depth: the Liberal Arts Festival and the Harry Potter Festival. One of these events overwhelmed the library’s resources, negatively impacting the general functions of the building. And the other became too big for the California University of Pennsylvania campus itself. The library combats these issues by “scaling down”; however, lingering questions remain about the loss of foot traffic to the building and the sheer volume of people who will see our displays and collections and learn about our services.

Literature Review

At California University of Pennsylvania, librarians develop and lead a variety of popular outreach initiatives that raise the library's profile across campus and in the community. However, a review of library literature recommends that more work needs to be done to illustrate how outreach programs translate into library usage. As German and LeMire (2018) state, "[a]lthough outreach is a common activity in academic libraries, little has been written about strategies for assessing library outreach efforts" (66). Concepts like exposure, awareness, and visibility to the community at large seem to be the largest talking points. Much has also been stressed about collaboration with outside departments. As Faulk (2018) states, "[f]aculty are interested in developing their awareness of the information landscape but want to know a resource's connection to their curriculum before adoption. The majority . . . cited the importance of outreach activities in creating awareness of library resources," (194). Libraries strive to reach to collaborate with other campus departments, but not much information is available on the pitfalls of doing so and how to avoid them, or "how to evaluate the return on investment for the Libraries' outreach activities in service of meeting student success goals" (Santiago et al. 2019, 359).

It is increasingly necessary to connect library outreach efforts to the greater mission of the university, just as it is important to assess these programs to ensure that they align with campus goals. "Outreach is most effective when tied to institutional goals. To measure success we must begin with a goal in mind, as this can help staff prioritize activities, budgets, and time," (Farrell and Mastel 2016, para. 2). Outreach is tied to Cal U's institutional goals, but does this necessarily justify the time and effort put into an event, especially if those events ultimately leave the library when they become too successful?

Hallmark, Schwartz, and Roy (2007) emphasize this assessment of success, saying, "[i]t is critical for every marketing and outreach activity to include a method of measurement and evaluation that is built into the front-end of the activity before it takes place," (94). Surveys and attendance tracking create a good picture of how students feel about the events the library offers. At Manderino Library, however, once programs become too large and expand outside the immediate scope of the library, librarians have less control over their message to students about the library and its significance, and it is difficult to measure such exposure beyond how students feel about a program.

A case can be made that by holding large-scale events, libraries exhibit their financial viability to the administration and campus community. Delaney and Bates (2015) outline the financial benefits of library services, observing that, "While librarians are good at evidence-based performance indicators and evaluating services, the issues of equating value or defining impact are more difficult. Yet, by showing value and impact the future for libraries would be more secure" (40–41). Manderino Library spends a significant amount of time and effort on outreach. The events and services offered no doubt translate as valuable to the campus community, but it is more difficult to assign their tangible impact on student education and academic goals. By collaborating with other departments, librarians attempt to enhance the library's reputation as an academic service.

Collaboration with academic and staff departments is incredibly valuable to the library. But it is also important to consider how such collaborative partnerships function. For partnerships to be effective, librarians need to focus on programming that ultimately benefits, rather than depletes, their organization. As Shapiro (2016) illustrates:

Maybe it's not about proving our utility or selling our services. More likely, it is a matter of reformulating our goals and redirecting our energies Why not encourage academic libraries to support the creative process by becoming intellectual incubators that nurture new ideas, multidisciplinary collaboration, discovery, and the entrepreneurial spirit. It is an opportune time for academic libraries to consider repositioning themselves and investing in a variety of new and promising programming and technology initiatives to reignite interest among core users as well as capture the attention of the wider community (26).

Shapiro's article is a call to action for librarians. Libraries scramble to prove their worth to administration and take advantage of any and all opportunities to advertise their collections and services to students and faculty. However, these occasions for outreach do not necessarily translate into impactful and measurable value. For Manderino Library, collaboration with other departments and groups on campus has been a fruitful way to promote liaison work and create a collegial atmosphere, but the high cost may not be worth the end result. In some cases, we have had to scale up or scale down events to maintain our presence on campus, but still offer programming that is manageable for the library itself.

Scaling-up Events

Day of the Dead / St. George's Day / Liberal Arts Fest. Manderino Library partnered with the Hispanic Student Association, the Modern Languages Club, and the Department of Art and Languages to hold a Dia de los Muertos (Mexican Day of the Dead) event in November, 2015. A Cal U Spanish instructor organized the first of these Day of the Dead events. The Hispanic Club and Modern Language students made all the decorations as well as Mexican food and pastries, and the library provided space and helped decorate and clean up after the festival. The library put together a display of books and other materials related to Hispanic heritage, and library student workers helped serve food—in costume and full Day of the Dead makeup. The single-day program drew a crowd of approximately 500 participants from the Cal U community.

The aforementioned clubs and a private donation funded the 2015 Day of the Dead (November 1). The large number of students entering the library on a single day meant the program was a success, and librarians immediately began looking for grants to fund a similar project the next year. Luckily, the Spanish professor wanted to hold another event in conjunction with her classes, this one in recognition of a holiday celebrated in Barcelona, St. George's Day (April 23), and hoped the library could collaborate.

The outreach librarian began working with the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research to identify outside funding sources. Even though they faced funding challenges, the library and faculty organizers worked to build a program that represented the many aspects of St. George's Day—a medieval holiday celebrated with the exchange of books and roses. To accomplish this feat, the organizing committee opened St. George's Day to more clubs and departments, including the Medieval Club, the Arabic Club, and the English Department. This outreach expanded the event's scope, drawing attention from students and members of the community who might otherwise not have attended the event.

Librarians brought local authors to campus for the day to set up tables where they could sell their novels and worked with the Parking Office and Campus Police to secure single-day permits for guests to park on campus. Librarians and student workers also arranged tables of library books promoting different genres, and adding to the Barcelona-like atmosphere. A librarian created a logo for the festival which featured a dragon and a rose on a shield, in the colors of

Cal U, and this logo was used in all advertisements as well as throughout the building on festival-related tables and displays. Library staff and volunteers from various classes and clubs worked for days before the festival, moving furniture and decorating the entire first floor of the building to resemble a bookseller's paradise in the middle of a medieval castle. St. George's Day was an even bigger hit with the campus community than the Day of the Dead and drew a crowd of about 700 students, staff, and faculty. The Office of Sponsored Programs and Research at Cal U closed in 2016, making it more difficult to identify and apply for funding outside the university. In 2016, the university hired a new president, and the library's Day of the Dead event (assisted by the Hispanic Club) was held in her honor that fall. Given the festival's importance, the university awarded the Hispanic Club extra funding for the event, which drew approximately 1,000 people. This event was very similar to the Day of the Dead program held the previous year but on a larger scale with more food and every spare inch of space decorated.

Because of a successful track record, Manderino Library once again held the St. George's Day festival several months later in spring 2017. With funding from the College of Liberal Arts and a large number of campus organizations as partners, St. George's Day drew a crowd of 1,000 people. Even university administration took notice of these events, and several deans and the Provost showed up to take part in the festival.

In fall 2017, St. George's Day and the Day of the Dead celebrations transformed into the college's first annual Liberal Arts Festival. The College of Liberal Arts and Administrative Affairs provided funding to hold the program, which served as a recruitment event for the university. The university bused in students from local high schools and offered free lunch (served in the library). Taking accurate gate counts for a festival this large was difficult; however, the best tally library staff could manage shows the event drew over 1,200 people to Manderino Library for the day.

For the Liberal Arts Festival, a library staff member created all the graphics and programs, and the outreach librarian created a website for the event, designed print and online surveys, installed displays of library materials relating to Liberal Arts classes, and gave talks to potential Cal U students about the collections and services offered in the library. Most of the food was cooked by the same Spanish instructor who had originally thought-up the idea for the Day of the Dead, and her classes as well as library student workers served the food. Library staff and faculty were on-site during the day to manage crowds, direct exhibitors to their assigned areas, answer questions, and continually count attendees.

The next program of this size was the second annual Liberal Arts Fest, held in October of 2018. This time, the festival brought 1,500 people, including Cal U students, faculty, and staff, as well as local high school students, to Manderino Library. The organizing committee spent months gathering exhibitors from the campus community and designing floor plans and decorations. Students created artwork for the event, and faculty cooked food. Setup for this program took two days, and a group of employees and volunteers completed the tear-down the same day as the festival. The committee erected tents and set up chairs outside the building entrance to offer overflow seating for the luncheon. The library brought in electricians to ensure the bands outside the entrance would have proper electricity for the day, and stepped-up crowd control to ensure everyone had somewhere to sit for lunch and no one trampled the equipment. In conjunction with Liberal Arts Festival, which covered the first two floors of the building as well as the lawn and concrete pad outside the library, Cal U also hosted a gallery show of Cuban artists in Manderino

Library's third floor art gallery. With so many departments and clubs joining in the festivities, and the presence of physically active events, the space was cramped. One student got hurt during a Judo demonstration and part of the medieval sword fighting had to be held indoors due to the weather.

Library staff always collect data before, during, and after any program at

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Neutral	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The invitation, program, agendas and directions were clear and easy to understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Liberal Arts presentation sessions were appropriate in length.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The activities were engaging and meaningful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The food was good-tasting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The program was well-organized and the activities flowed well.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I had ample opportunities to actively participate in the program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would like to attend a program like this next year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
After attending the program I feel that I have learned something new or important about other cultures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FOR CAL U STUDENTS: Programs such as the Liberal Arts Festival would persuade me to take a Liberal Arts class.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: Programs such as the Liberal Arts Festival would persuade me to apply to CalU.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 1. Survey from 2018 Liberal Arts Fest. California University of Pennsylvania, Manderino Library.

Manderino Library. Gate counts and head counts are taken during events and compared to similar days in previous years, either in weeks during the same semester or the same date in previous semesters. To judge whether outreach efforts have an impact on print materials circulation or electronic resource usage, librarians weigh circulation statistics and library website hits before and after events both large and small. Library employees often give surveys to attendees—for example, five-point surveys were given to all festival-goers at Liberal Arts Fest to assess program quality (see Figure 1).

More granular appraisal of these results is presented below. For the Liberal Arts Fest, participants described that the library's involvement in the event improved their cultural competency and facilitated engaging and meaningful activities. However, the library scored less highly in areas related to organization and the ability to understand directions and agenda. The three floors meant the different parts of the program were scattered and hidden from each other, and many attendees completely missed the Cuban art in the third-floor gallery. Space was an issue for this excessively large one-day outreach effort.

Following the success of the events, the university requested that the Liberal Arts Fest Organizing Committee move the festival to the Convocation Center, the campus's 142,000 square foot multipurpose arena. The organizers of this event always felt the library has a more academic feel than a sports and executive conferencing center. Plus, if Liberal Arts Fest remained in the library, clubs and faculty could keep the costs for the day down by cooking all the food, as opposed to going through the contracted dining services as would be required in another venue.

If the Liberal Arts committee held this festival outside the library, then the library employees would lose out on their parts in coordinating these events and the library itself would lose an amazing opportunity to use the library as a dynamic space. Many campus facilities, such as the Convocation Center, have their own staff of organizers who schedule events, make floor plans, arrange catering, make graphics, and advertise. These are the functions librarians provided for programming efforts held within Manderino's walls. Librarians would also miss the opportunity for impromptu talks with attendees about library services, and potential patrons would not see library displays and collections that are not a part of whatever limited materials could be brought to an alternate location for the day.

However, space not only became an issue for the festival attendees, but also for the Dean of the Library, who was hard-pressed to maintain daily operations throughout this event's disruptions. In 2019, the College of Liberal Arts finally yielded to administrative pressure and moved this festival to the Convocation Center. Library personnel could not design, organize, advertise or assess the event. In fact, the library's only contribution to the day was to staff a booth exhibiting a collection of textbooks for Liberal Arts classes.

Overview: Harry Potter Festival. There are events that are too big for the library, and then there are events that are too large for the university. One such program was the planned 2017 two-day Harry Potter Festival. A faculty member in the Cal U English Department conceived the idea and received a grant for programming it. From the library's perspective, this collaboration promoted the library as a community space, the joys of reading, built the staff's relationships with the rest of the campus employees, and enhanced the overall visibility of the library itself. The event included local businesses, public libraries, area

“Within a few short weeks, over 3,000 attendees signed-up for the Harry Potter Festival and it immediately became a massive and exciting undertaking. The entire campus became involved—including Liberal Arts faculty, students of all majors, and staff members in various departments—lending their Harry Potter expertise, paraphernalia, fan art, and more.”

high schools, and an academic conference that showcased Harry Potter sessions from presenters chosen from all over the country.

The library was to be the festival's home base, with several events taking place over the course of two days. Librarians helped to plan the event, organized, recruited, and managed volunteers, and created decorations. Within a few short weeks, over 3,000 attendees signed-up for the Harry Potter Festival and it immediately became a massive and exciting undertaking. The entire campus became involved—including Liberal Arts faculty, students of all majors, and staff members in

various departments—lending their Harry Potter expertise, paraphernalia, fan art, and more.

However, the sheer number of potential attendees who wanted to attend this festival led to its downfall. As talks among university administration and event organizers illustrated, it quickly became clear that the school did not have the facilities to accommodate such a large, multi-venue event. In a scramble, the Cal U English Department downsized this program to a one-day conference with area high school students and California University students, cutting out the larger city of California and its business completely.

Because Manderino librarians did not write the grant and were not in charge of how the money was spent or allocated, the library had very little to do with the overall decision-making for this festival. While the event was still a success in that the conference was well-attended, university administration eliminated the library's part in it. This meant that all the work-hours—librarian, work-study, and administration included—were spent without much library usage

or exposure in return. This event crystallized the idea that while collaboration is sometimes necessary and often beneficial, librarians need to have a clearly defined role, a vested stake in the outcome, and vocal support from their own administration to become involved in larger events.

Scaling-down

Harry Potter Festival to Harry Potter Escape Room. Students were still enthusiastic for a Harry Potter-themed event after the university canceled the original Harry Potter Festival. This was especially true among student workers in Manderino Library, one of whom had worked for a Harry Potter event at her community library the previous summer. Combining the contemporary zeal for escape rooms with the theme of Rowling's novels, librarians held a more measured event in Manderino Library. This escape room had no curricular agenda; instead the outreach librarian envisioned it as an entertaining way for the university community to interact with library spaces and collections. The goals fulfilled part of the library's mission to promote the campus experience of students, and engendered goodwill among students, staff, and faculty. The assessable outcomes were whether attendees enjoyed the escape room, would attend other library programs, and would return to the library again for other purposes because of it.

For this program, library faculty and student workers used a large multipurpose study and conference space on the third floor. This space was semi-enclosed by cubicle walls, and featured a gallery system as well as furniture and glass shelving. The library collaborated with the Theatre Department, who lent props for this event (their students and faculty were, consequently, one of the largest pools of attendees to the program). Librarians and student workers decorated every square inch of the conference room as scenes from the books, including hanging candles in the Hogwarts dining room, a Gryffindor common space, and Platform Nine and Three Quarters.

This Harry Potter Escape Room was the perfect test for Manderino Library's plan to scale down a large festival and host an intimate program entirely under the library's control. It was a much smaller event than the Harry Potter Festival and was advertised only on campus. Student groups needed to reserve a timeslot to participate, further decreasing the likelihood that the event would become too popular for the library to sustain. Because of the nature of an escape room, only one group could complete the challenge at a given time, so the online reservation system turned away anyone who attempted to reserve the same time allotment as another group. In all, 110 groups attempted to reserve a timeslot, and 25 were accepted by the system and completed the escape room.

Though the escape room featured only one room in the library, library staff still spent days elaborately decorating it, thus turning a beige library study room into the set of Hogwarts. The outreach librarian sourced props from the Theatre Department and student workers hauled them across campus. Other library staff gathered books from throughout the library and made many trips up and down a stepladder to hang candles and other ornamentation from the ceiling.

Running the escape room also took a coordinated effort between librarians and student workers. After setup, the decorations remained in place for the rest of the semester; however, the escape room still needed to be reset after every session. This process alone took a full 15 minutes, or more if a group contained more than four people because extra players got bored and tore the room apart instead of playing the puzzles and looking for clues. After quickly realizing attendees became destructive when they could not figure out a puzzle, the outreach librarian required one library worker to stay in the room with

participants so they could answer questions and give hints if players became frustrated or stumped.

Luckily, during this particular semester the library had a plethora of dedicated student workers, many of whom were fans of the Harry Potter series and two of whom eventually went on to study library science at the master’s level. Without their help, it would not have been possible to hold a free program that required so many personnel hours. Still, it was difficult to offer time slots for this escape room during the evening hours that many players wanted to participate, because most student workers ended their shifts by 6 pm. Student workers and librarians volunteered extra time to run this event, in part because it was just so much fun.

The Harry Potter Escape Room was, in many respects, a successful outreach effort. 440 people wanted to participate in it and over 100 partook in the event. Eighty percent of attendees were Cal U students and the rest were faculty and local high school students. Over 90 percent of attendees enjoyed the program and said that they would return to the library again because of it. Those who did not enjoy it noted that group sizes for the puzzles were too large—an issue which was discovered and controlled for several days into running the event. Despite this program’s success, librarians learned a hard lesson about the enormous amount of time and work required to plan, manage, and routinely reset this type of program. Even though librarians had attempted to scale down this event, it was clear they had not gone small enough. When the student workers who volunteered extra time graduated at the end of the semester, it became apparent that the library would not have the staff to run an escape room again.

Results

Scaling down programs to more manageable efforts allows Manderino Library to provide quality outreach experiences for Cal U students while keeping each event’s footprint contained and manageable. When surveyed, most students favorably rate library programs; they enjoy the experience of attending and feel they have learned something new during the program. And

Festival	Questions Per	Month	
Day of the Dead November 2, 2015		October 237	November 160
Day of the Dead October 11, 2016	September 315	October 177	November 163
St. George’s Day April 27, 2017		April 193	May 61
Liberal Arts Fest October 5, 2017	September 200	October 179	November 150
Liberal Arts Fest October 2, 2018	September 271	October 208	November 129
No Large Event Spring 2018		April 182	May 44
No Large Event (Liberal Arts Fest held in Convocation Center) Fall 2019	September 294	October 237	November 160

Figure 2. Reference statistics. California University of Pennsylvania, Manderino Library.

respondents to Manderino Library's 2018 LibQUAL+ survey, which asked a local question about library programming that promotes cultural awareness, felt that the library exceeded their minimum desire for these types of events.

Outreach—especially in the form of events—has a strongly positive effect on the sentiments of library patrons at Cal U. In a survey given to 2018 Liberal Arts Festival attendees (with 272 respondents), 87 percent of those surveyed felt the activities they encountered that day at Manderino Library were engaging and meaningful. Furthermore, 86 percent of respondents wanted to attend programs like this festival in the future.

Programming did not have a discernible positive effect on reference transaction numbers through the LibAnswers and LibChat systems. As tabulated in the library's LibAnswers online platform, in the month before the first Day of the Dead event in 2015, Manderino Library's Online Reference Desk received 237 questions, and in the month after it received 160. Similar drops

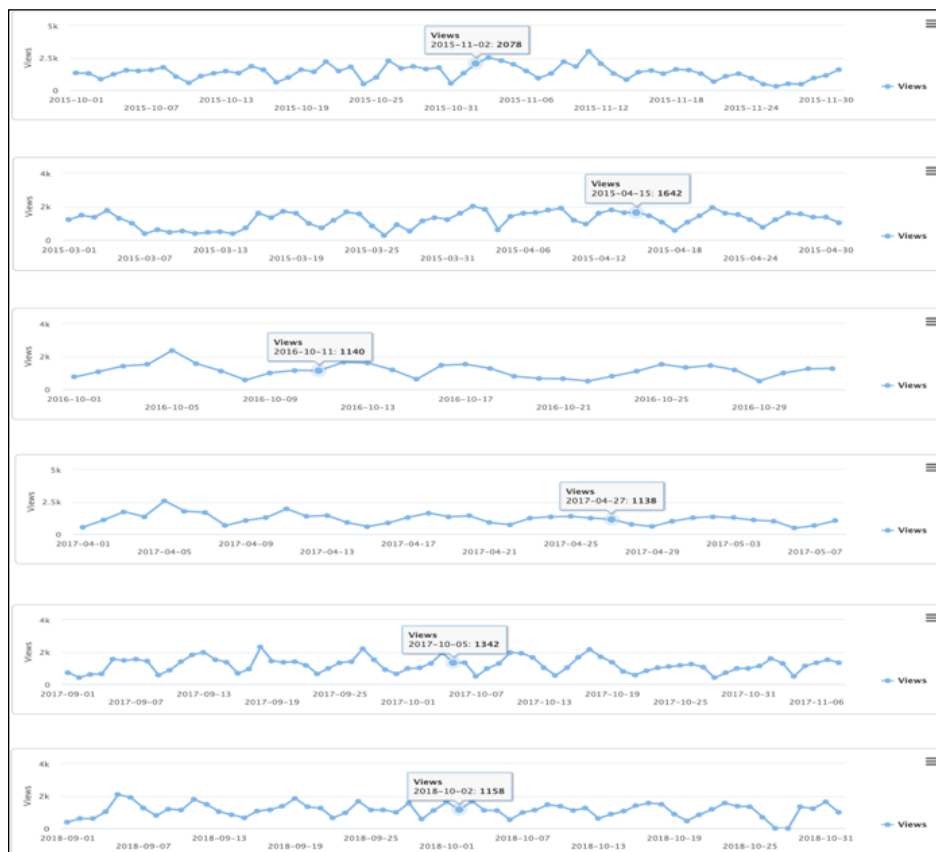


Figure 3. Library website hits. California University of Pennsylvania, Manderino Library.

were seen in 2016 (315 questions in the month before Day of the Dead to 177 in the month after), as well as before and after Liberal Arts Fest in 2017 (200 before and 179 after), and 2018 (271 down to 208).

Numbers for St. George's Day show an even more drastic fall, from 193 questions in the month before the 2017 festival down to 61 afterward (2016 statistics cannot be assessed because of the timing of the event date in the middle of the month). In the semesters after these events—when the library did not hold large-scale outreach productions—the statistics show similar trends in online reference questions.

There was no increase in online usage of the library's website after large-scale events, either. Graphs of the library's web traffic look similar from semester to

	Day of the Dead (2016)	St. George's Day (2017)	Liberal Arts Fest (2017)	Liberal Arts Fest (2018)
2 weeks prior	4901	3985	4086	4328
1 week prior	4928	3974	4490	4337
EVENT	5715	5405	7344	6436
1 week after	3747	4827	4450	4155
2 weeks after	5110	3440	4339	4133

Figure 4. Gate count statistics. California University of Pennsylvania, Manderino Library. Event Weeks are shaded and in bold

semester, regardless of whether a significant outreach effort was accomplished. Dates of festivals appear with the views count on the following graphs:

Large events give a temporary—sometimes only day-long—bump in gate counts. This could be because of the extreme disruptions to normal library operations that come along with hosting such immensely popular programs. Library patrons are often upset that the areas they typically use—and expect to be quiet—are being decorated and filled with lots of noisy music and festival-goers.

Gate count data from early years show a muddled picture. Recorder error is suspected and thus data from Academic Year Fall 2015–Spring 2016 have not been included in the following table.

According to gate count data, no long-term increases in patronage to the library are seen in the weeks after festivals. In fact, as enrollment decreased across campus, library patron numbers from semester to semester and year to year also declined. Programming does not appear to have a significant effect on Manderino Library's circulation statistics. However, the system the library uses to track circulation only shows check-in dates, whereas it would be more helpful to see if books were checked out during or directly after a program.

Conclusions

It is obvious that large-scale library outreach positively affects attendees' perceptions of the library, although further testing is needed to determine what emotions—such as feelings of acceptance, enjoyment, or belonging—these efforts engender in patrons. It is also currently unknown whether the short talks about library services given during programs decrease students' feelings of library anxiety, or even if they encourage patrons to return for information, help, or to use the library as a place.

The numbers of students who attended the library's outreach programs and initiatives—and the overwhelmingly positive feedback (86 percent of respondents rated Stress Relief Week as an enjoyable event and 90 percent of the Harry Potter escape room respondents felt similarly about that program)—indicates the library enriches the student experience through its programming. In fact, comments from attendees who rated these programs negatively mentioned that there were too many participants and not enough resources, such as too few puppies during Therapy Dog events or puzzles that only required the collaboration of 2 or 3 people during the Harry Potter Escape Room.

When the library is solely in charge of hosting events, it is better able to maintain control over the size of the program's footprint and gather manageable attendee numbers. Even though outreach efforts hosted by the library alone do not draw the huge gate counts that collaborative partnerships attract, they are more manageable and equally beneficial to the students. The library could bolster its mission by holding many small events that target specific user populations. Of course, these would not reach as broad an audience as large events, and consequently may not make as strong of an impact on the campus. Librarians should also look for funding in the form of grants to provide stable resources that are not tied to any club, department, or the university itself deciding to take an event away from the library.

Even though outreach does not make a significant impact on other library functions—such as information access in the forms of online usage or print circulation—they do promote the campus experience to our students and should be continued for that reason. In Manderino Library's case, taking on larger events with a wider student and faculty reach is impossible without collaboration and funding from other departments.

Moving forward, Manderino Library will be taking a proactive and considered approach to collaborative outreach. As the library strives to expand its reputation on campus and further its mission, it will seek out departments and services that wish to hold events that are equally beneficial to all involved. This is the best investment of the library's limited time, resources, and budget. Starting from ground zero on programming each year is its own challenge, and to break that cycle the library must seek funding from partnerships that are long-lasting, strong, and sustainable. Most of all, Cal U librarians have learned to be more mindful in choosing and creating the types of collaborative opportunities in which to take part so that the library's voice is heard and librarians' time and effort are spent toward the goal of delivering a dynamic library experience to the campus community.

References

- Brinkman, Stacy, and Frances Weinstein Yates. 2008. "Promoting Partnership." *College & Research Libraries News* 69, no. 3: 147.
- California University of Pennsylvania. n.d. "Mission Statement, Vision, and Legacy." Accessed January 18, 2021. <https://www.calu.edu/calu-difference/mission.aspx#:~:text=The%20mission%20of%20California%20University,resource%20to%20advance%20the%20region's>.
- Delaney, Geraldine, and Jessica Bates. 2015. "Envisioning the Academic Library: A Reflection on Roles, Relevancy and Relationships." *New Review of Academic Librarianship* 21, no. 1: 30-51.
- Farrell, Shannon L, and Kristen Mastel. 2016. "Considering Outreach Assessment: Strategies, Sample Scenarios, and a Call to Action." In *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, May 4, 2016. <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2016/considering-outreach-assessment-strategies-sample-scenarios-and-a-call-to-action/>
- Faulk, Nick. 2018. "What Faculty Have to Say about Library Outreach: A Rural Community College Survey." *College & Research Libraries News* 79, no. 4: 193.
- German, Elizabeth, and Sarah LeMire. 2018. "Sharing the Value and Impact of Outreach: Taking a Multifaceted Approach to Outreach Assessment." *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 44, no. 1: 66-74. doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2017.11.001.

- Hallmark, Elizabeth Kennedy, Laura Schwartz, and Lorie Roy. 2007. "Developing a Long-Range and Outreach Plan for Your Academic Library." *College & Research Libraries News* 68, no. 2: 92.
- Santiago, Ariana, Emily Vinson, Mea Warren, and Ashley Lierman. 2019. "Evaluating Academic Library Outreach to Determine Return on Investment for Student Success." *Journal of Library Administration* 59 no. 4: 359–72. doi:10.1080/01930826.2019.1593709.
- Shapiro, Steven D. 2016. "Engaging a Wider Community: The Academic Library as a Center for Creativity, Discovery, and Collaboration." *New Review of Academic Librarianship* 22, no. 1: 24–42.

Author Details

Terra Rogerson, Online Librarian; American Public University / Instructor;
Duquesne University: rogersont@duq.edu

Monica Ruane Rogers, Assistant Professor; Research, Assessment, and Outreach
Librarian: ruane@calu.edu



IDEA LAB

Jeff Nyoka

*City of Johannesburg
Libraries, South Africa*

Johannesburg Libraries as Change Agents for the Homeless: Digital Literacy Programs for Marginalized Communities

The Human Sciences Rescue Centre estimated that by 2020, South Africa had 200,000 unhoused people, who lose their homes due to a variety of factors, including housing shortages, unemployment, and rapid urbanization. The 2020 employment rate in South Africa was estimated to be at 29 percent, with the COVID-19 pandemic leading to an increase in job losses. The city of Johannesburg, with a population of more than 4 million, is home to an estimated 15,000-plus homeless people.

“In addition to traditional physical spaces and programs, COJ libraries introduced eLearning Services to ensure the inclusion of Johannesburg residents in the digital society and to enable social cohesion.”

The city of Johannesburg (COJ) libraries directorate under community development is mandated to offer a wide range of programs and services focused on poverty alleviation, safety and security, inequality, homelessness, illiteracy, and general skill development (including ICT skills), among other issues. In addition to traditional physical spaces and programs, COJ libraries introduced eLearning Services to ensure the inclusion of Johannesburg residents in the digital society and to enable social cohesion. In COJ libraries, eLearning services

are defined as the support and access provided by the libraries through the availability of information and communication technology (ICT) tools. eLearning services consist of free Wi-Fi, eLearning classrooms with laptops in selected libraries, desktop computers with public access to the internet in 60 percent of libraries, and digital literacy training. More than 300,000 library users have accessed the eLearning services (excluding those accessing free Wi-Fi outside the library walls) since 2016.

Digital Literacy for the Homeless

In 2019, as part of Librarians Day celebrations, the COJ libraries eLearning unit encouraged librarians from different regions to address digital inclusion, particularly for marginalized communities such as senior citizens, the homeless, and the physically challenged. This movement was also in response to the UN call for libraries to meet Sustainable Development Goal 11—Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Johannesburg is an industrial city with a multicultural community, migrating from different South African regions and surrounding countries, mostly in search of jobs or business opportunities. Some of them face challenges and become homeless; unemployment is the main cause of homelessness in Johannesburg. Randburg Library, situated within a busy municipality center, is one of the COJ regional branch libraries that embraced the idea of assisting marginalized communities. Randburg Librarian Mr. Matete Lesele had observed

that some homeless individuals frequented the library to read newspapers. He decided to approach a few of the gentlemen and introduced them to the computers and internet under a program he termed Project Masterplan, aimed at giving them a purpose of reintegrating them to society. Through word of mouth, the group increased to between 10 and 15 individuals daily. Mr Lesele introduced them to online courses, job hunting skills, and finding articles to read online. He also attempted to engage other external stakeholders to fund sponsorships for food parcels or clothes. This project was at its early stages, and it was disrupted by branch library closures on the March 27, 2020 due to COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

COVID-19 has not only affected this group of the homeless, but it delayed plans to further expand the program to other libraries. While awaiting libraries to fully reopen for all services, the eLearning unit is drafting a revised plan for introducing digital skills to the homeless in various regions where they can gain job-hunting skills, access motivational content, and be part of the community by visiting libraries.

Funding for public libraries is generally a challenge, and therefore COJ Libraries are also constantly searching for sponsorships to support the marginalized communities' program, particularly for post-COVID-19 library services that will involve the use of technology.



Figure 1. Houseless People Using WIFI Outside the Library



Figure 2. Seniors from the Library's Computer Skills Training



Figure 3. Brainstorming at the Goethe Institute on Librarian's Day

Author Details

Jeff Nyoka, eLearning Manager. City of Johannesburg Libraries:
jeffny@joburg.org.za or jeff.nyoka@yahoo.com



**Journal of Library
Outreach & Engagement**

Illinois Open Publishing Network
123 Main Street
Anytown, IL 60808

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 75
CHAMPAIGN, IL
61820