Shifting our Final Exams Week Program Online: A Case Study at Claremont Colleges Library

Kirsten Hansen
Teaching and Outreach Librarian
The Claremont Colleges Library

Megan Donnelly
Teaching and Outreach Librarian
The Claremont Colleges Library

Abstract: During the Spring 2020 semester, The Claremont Colleges Library moved their popular May final exams week program online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift to an online program accommodated social distancing, supported student success, and promoted engagement between students and the library during a difficult time. This article is a case study authored by two of the librarians on the task force committed to organizing and managing the program. The authors connect the program to the relevant literature, detail aspects of the program including a social media campaign, an online scavenger hunt and a partnership with the colleges' counseling services, and offer practical suggestions for librarians seeking to offer virtual programming.

Keywords: Library programming, final exams programming, library outreach, library social media, virtual programming

The Claremont Colleges Library

The Claremont Colleges Library serves The Claremont Colleges consortium, which includes five undergraduate, selective liberal arts colleges and two graduate universities. The total student population is 7000 FTE, with nearly all of the undergraduate students living on campus all four years. The graduate student population is a mix of students who live nearby or in university-owned housing and those who commute into the colleges from further away. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in Spring 2020, no courses were

offered fully online at the undergraduate colleges. The graduate universities offered a limited number of online classes in some of their degree programs but remained focused on offering in-person learning experiences. Due to the overarching emphasis on an in-person, small class college experience, The Claremont Colleges Library's teaching, outreach, and programming efforts have historically been in-person, in-building, and synchronous.

Pivoting to Virtual: Moving a Popular Final Exams Library Program Online

The Claremont Colleges Library has organized and facilitated a final exams week program called "Night Owls" since spring 2015. During Night Owls, the library is open twenty-four hours a day and there is extensive programming to engage students with the library and help them combat the stress of final exams. This includes a craft night, afternoon snacks, pizza night, a late-night coffee cart, an "Owl See You in the Stacks" scavenger hunt, and final exams week social media campaigns.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Claremont Colleges moved all classes and activities online in mid-March 2020 and closed most buildings across the campuses including the library. This necessitated moving Night Owls to an online format during the May 2020 final exam period. In this article, two of the librarians involved with the revamped Night Owls program describe how they moved interactive final exams week programming online and how they assessed the outcomes. The online programming included a LibGuide that served as the "home" of the program, virtual de-stressing information and activities, online scavenger hunts using the library's catalog and website, and a social media campaign.

Literature Review

There is a small pool of literature about library programming during final exams week. A survey distributed by Meyers-Martin and Borchard (2015) via nine library listservs that included instruction, marketing, outreach, or public relations components provides an overview of the types of activities offered and the constraints faced by librarians who offer final exams week programming. According to the survey, the most common activities offered

were extended library hours; therapy animals; games; and arts and crafts. The most common limitations cited by survey takers were a lack of funding and a lack of staff (Meyers-Martin & Borchard, 2015). These findings are supported by practice-focused articles that report on individual library's experiences with finals week programming, including the University of Connecticut Library's experience with therapy dogs (Reynolds & Rabschutz, 2011) and Michigan State University Library's experimentation with a wide variety of final exams week programming (Flynn, 2017), as well as the activities offered by The Claremont Colleges Library during Night Owls.

Research also suggests that user-centered programming has the potential to increase student participation in final exams week programming; (Robison & Muszkiewicz, 2018) found that students who suggest or give feedback about what programs and activities are offered are more likely to attend. There is less literature regarding programs offered online during final exams, although the COVID-10 pandemic has increased publications documenting how libraries met their users' needs once moving to virtual services only (Walsh & Rana, 2020). Drexel University Libraries and University of California Riverside Library offered online final exams week LibGuides during Spring 2020, including tips for managing stress (Wells, 2020) and virtual escape rooms (University of California Riverside, 2020) in addition to academic resources. Online programming supports students in online and hybrid degree programs, as well as students on campus grappling with issues of accessibility and access to physical academic libraries.

Literature regarding library scavenger hunts is plentiful and includes both research-focused articles and practice-focused articles. Orientation-focused scavenger hunts may be integrated into a larger first year orientation program or be a library stand-alone; they often happen near the beginning of the academic year and are intended to orient students to physical spaces and resources in the library, and sometimes the wider campus. They range from low-tech, using pen and paper (Renner et al., 2016), to hybrid models that incorporate technology (Kasbohm et al., 2006). Higher tech orientation scavenger hunts might include augmented reality software (Kozak, 2019) (LaBrake & Deptula, 2018) (Santos & Esposo-Betan, 2018) (Smith & Hottinger, 2018) or specialized education software (Roth et al., 2016).

Information literacy-focused scavenger hunts are typically integrated into a class and ideally have learning outcomes related to information literacy beyond orienting students to library spaces. There is much discussion about what makes information literacy-based scavenger hunts effective or ineffective. McCain (2007) posits that librarians often dislike scavenger hunts but that there is not enough research to ascertain that they are educationally ineffective. Rugan & Nero (2013) suggest that working with faculty members to align scavenger hunts with course objectives leads to better learning outcomes and Denton (2019) provides an example of a successful course-integrated scavenger hunt that follows this blueprint. Library scavenger hunts may also be integrated with final exams programming. The only example in the literature that the authors found of this type of hunt was Prichard and Brazer's "Finding the Finals Fairy: Outreach and stress release during finals," which served as inspiration for the library's in-person Night Owls scavenger hunt during fall 2019 (Prichard & Brazer, 2020).

Most of the literature deals with scavenger hunts that take place at least partially in the "real world"; students participating in augmented reality scavenger hunts use mobile devices to superimpose images over the physical space in which they are located. However, (Whitt, 2020) describes Morehead State University's Camden-Carroll Library 2019 remake of a virtual tour into a self-driven virtual scavenger hunt. The scavenger hunt was built with the goal of giving distance students the same sense of participation in the scavenger hunt that on-campus students had. With the general shift to online services during the COVID-19 pandemic, we hope to see more libraries harness a variety of tools to move their scavenger hunts online. As (Whitt, 2020) demonstrates, virtual scavenger hunts have benefits beyond the circumstances of COVID-19.

Regarding online programming in general, public libraries lead the way. Many public libraries have been offering hybrid physical/digital summer reading programs for years, including the New York Public Library (Brantley, 2015). The Ann Arbor District Library's Summer Game in particular is extensive, long-running, and while it includes in-person components, can be played successfully entirely online (Landgraf, 2011). The Night Owls Task Force used the Summer Game's digital badge and scavenger hunt system as inspiration for a digital scavenger hunt when it became clear that the Night Owls program would need to move online for Spring 2020 Game (Ann Arbor District Library, 2020).

The Night Owls social media campaign was a key component to maintaining a sense of community while students were socially isolated and quarantined to prevent the spread of COVID-19. There is library literature that explores the role of social media building a sense of community and how students receive social media posts with this intent. Gruss, Abrahams, Song, Berry, and Al-Daihani (2020) define a library community building post as, "one that has no particular relevance to the organization's main function, and serves only to create a common personal connection among audience members through shared symbols or concerns" (p. 209). This aspect was apparent in the content of the Night Owls social media campaign, as well as the LibGuide, which encompassed wellness information, de-stressing tips, outlets, and reminders of life at The Claremont Colleges. This information was shared during a stressful time due not only to COVID-19 but also finals week exams.

After assessing the social media campaign, the task force found that the community building posts were popular among students and had received more engagement than all previous posts on the library's social media channels. Gress et al. analyzed library social media posts with evidence of community building and found that these posts promoted engagement with increasing comments by 51% and increasing shares by 39% (2020, p. 215). In another study analyzing library community building with social media, Stvilia and Gibradze (2017) found that social media posts related to building and maintaining connections in the community were most popular with students (p. 260). These studies assert that building a sense of community with social media is received well by library users and is consistent with the assessments of the Night Owls social media campaign.

As mentioned previously, the content of the social media campaign included wellness information, de-stressing tips and outlets, and reminders of life at The Claremont Colleges to build a sense of community. The task force chose to include this information to provide support for the emotions that usually come up during final exams, as well as the compounded stress of taking final exams online during the pandemic. In their earlier study, Stvilia and Gibradze (2014) found community building social media posts included, "providing emotional support and congratulating students on various achievements (e.g., completing exams)" (p. 138).

There is literature that explores how libraries play a role in wellness initiatives and reflects the task force's collaboration with wellness experts around campus. While academic libraries have not generally been included in wellness initiatives, they are in fact strategically placed on college campuses to play an essential role (Ramsey & Aagard, 2018). By parlaying their reputations as trusted information providers and community centers, academic libraries can partner with more traditional campus health providers to be active and effective participants in this essential form of outreach (Ramsey & Aagard, 2018, p. 330).

The task force collaborated with the campus Monsour Counseling and Psychological Services (MCAPS) to provide expert wellness and de-stressing advice. Making this collaboration apparent in both the social media campaign and the LibGuide also contributed to community building and the authority of the information shared, thus cultivating trust. Ramsey and Aagard (2018) found that library collaborations with campus wellness partners such as counseling centers enhanced the reputation of the library as an information center that contributes to student wellness (Ramsey & Aagard, 2018, p. 330). This has the potential to make student audiences more receptive to the library. Ramsey and Aagard (2018) also suggest that libraries focus on stress relief during finals week exams (p. 332). This directly applies to the content of the Night Owls social media campaign and LibGuide. The task force collaborated with students to produce the content for the social media campaign. This was a viable project for students while working virtually from home. Hagman and Carleton (2014) discuss how they collaborated with student workers to produce social media content and envision their presence on social media platforms. This lessened the burden on librarians, as social media was only a small portion of their normal job duties (Hagman & Carleton, 2014, p. 238). Salomon (2013) also found that collaborating with student workers on social media provided time for librarians to perform other essential tasks. The Night Owls social media campaign was produced with assistance from the Research, Teaching, and Learning Services Division's student assistants. Although the students did not produce the original content for the campaign, they assisted librarians in creating images and captions for content. Long before this social media campaign, student assistants informally offered librarians advice about the popularity of social media platforms among undergraduate students and have proved to be an asset for the library's engagement with social media.

The Project

Like many other colleges and universities, The Claremont Colleges faced massive upheaval during the COVID-19 pandemic. Library staff worked hard to stay connected to students and with final exams looming, the Night Owls Task Force sought to translate in-person Night Owls programming to an online environment. One of the most important facets of Night Owls is that the building is open twenty-four hours a day for students to study. This was de facto in force, as all of the library's digital materials are available at all times. However, with the building closed and students away from campus, there was much that the Task Force could not replicate such as snack breaks, in-person craft night, pizza night, and the late-night Refuel Cart that delivers coffee, snacks, and good cheer to studying students.

The Night Owls Task Force convened to discuss how to support students virtually during Reading Days and final exams. Ultimately, the Task Force decided to build a guide for self-care in the form of a LibGuide, to move the scavenger hunt online, and to create a social media strategy centered on de-stressing and self-care tips.

Virtual Finals Night Owls LibGuide

All of the virtual programming for Night Owls was hosted on a Springshare LibGuide on the library's website. A LibGuide is an easily editable webpage that aggregates information and resources related to a specific topic; they are used by many academic libraries to build web pages for specific disciplines or programs. LibGuides are part of a larger suite of products offered by Springshare, a library-focused software vendor. The Claremont Colleges Library subscribes to many Springshare products, and several were used to develop the Virtual Night Owls program, including the LibWizard library assessment tool used to create forms, quizzes, and surveys.

The Virtual Finals Night LibGuide contained basic information about Night Owls and library services during the COVID-19 pandemic, de-stressing activities and resources, and directions and links to the virtual scavenger hunt. Much of the content of the LibGuide overlapped with that of the social media campaign. The LibGuide was made discoverable in a few different ways: on the library website homepage as a "News & Events" item; and linked to on the library's permanent Night Owl's webpage. Links to the LibGuide were also shared on the library's Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook social media channels.

Figure 1. Homepage of the Finals Week Virtual Night Owls LibGuide

The first page of the LibGuide contained basic information about Night Owls, including a description of the program, links to library social media channels for additional Night Owls content, a link to the COVID-19 Library Updates and Resources page, and a link to schedule a research appointment with a librarian. The purpose of this content was to introduce the concept of virtual Night Owls and to help students get started with Night Owls (see Figure 1).

The de-stressing resources page of the LibGuide contained self-care tips created by the consortium's official counseling and psychological services, Mounsour Counseling and Psychological Services (MCAPS). MCAPS also gave the Task Force general information about mental health services available to students through MCAPS during the COVID-19 pandemic. This proved to be a fruitful collaboration and established the beginnings of an outreach relationship between the library and MCAPS. This area of the guide also contained links to free mindfulness and meditation resources, library leisure reading collections, as well as games, apps, puzzles, and coloring pages. It also included a link to schedule a research appointment with a librarian.

The virtual scavenger hunt page of the LibGuide contained a description of the scavenger hunt, simple directions, a schedule of the scavenger hunts with links to each scavenger hunt Springshare LibWizard form, and a link to schedule a research appointment with a librarian.

Digital Scavenger Hunts

The Night Owls Task Force wrote six themed scavenger hunts and released them one per day over the course of final exams week, using the Ann Arbor District Library's Summer Game as inspiration. Links to the scavenger hunts were added daily to the Night Owls LibGuide and posted to multiple social media channels. The themes of the scavenger hunts all connected to the library or The Claremont Colleges; scavenger hunt themes included local history, the library's course readings program, owls, the library's institutional repository, stress and self-care, and the Dean of The Claremont Colleges Library. The Night Owls Task Force used the scavenger hunt themes to connect the virtual Night Owls program to previous in-person programs (such as a scavenger hunt about owls) and to showcase library resources (the course reading program and institutional repository scavenger hunts.)

The basic layout of each scavenger hunt was a LibWizard quiz (part of the library's Springshare package of products) that provided users with clues that led them to codes hidden in the library catalog and website. For example, the first clue in the scavenger hunt about the city of Claremont and The Claremont Colleges was:

> "Pomona College was the first college to be founded, but it didn't start in Claremont. Enter the first town that Pomona College was located in and the year that it was founded in Library Search and then find a book about the history of the college. Look for your first code under View Description in the catalog record."

The user then searched Pomona 1887, for the city Pomona College was founded in and the year of founding, in Library Search. This search brought up a book about the history of Pomona College, in which the clue was hidden.

The code hidden in the catalog record was Night Owls: FIRSTAMONGEQUALS (see Figure 2.) The hidden codes were short phrases in all caps, so that they would stand out from the rest of the catalog record or web

page; feedback early in Night Owls led the Task Force to add *Night Owls:* before each code to make it clearer to users. This formatting also made the scavenger hunt more accessible to users using screen readers. The LibWizard quiz used conditional logic to display the next clue to users only after they provided the correct code for a clue. Each scavenger hunt had an introduction, four clue and

Subjects:	Pomona College (Claremont, Calif.) History.
	Pomona College (Claremont, Calif.)
	Pomona College, Claremont, Calif History.
	History.
Genre:	History.
Notes:	**The Claremont Colleges Notes:**
	Night Owls: FIRSTAMONGEQUALS
Bibliography:	Includes bibliographical references (pages 593-598) and index.
Database:	WorldCat
Additional physical form entry:	Online version:History of Pomona College, 1887-1969. (644243032), Lyon, Elijah Wilson, 1904-

code pairs, space for students to enter their name and email address for the raffle drawing, and a conclusion.

Figure 2: Example of scavenger hunt code in the Description portion of catalog record for a print book held by The Claremont Colleges Library. Red highlight added in article.

Building the scavenger hunts was not complicated but there were many moving parts. The Night Owls Task Force developed and documented a workflow for how to create a scavenger hunt in order to ensure that all parts were completed before going live (see Figure 3 below for the full scavenger hunt workflow.)
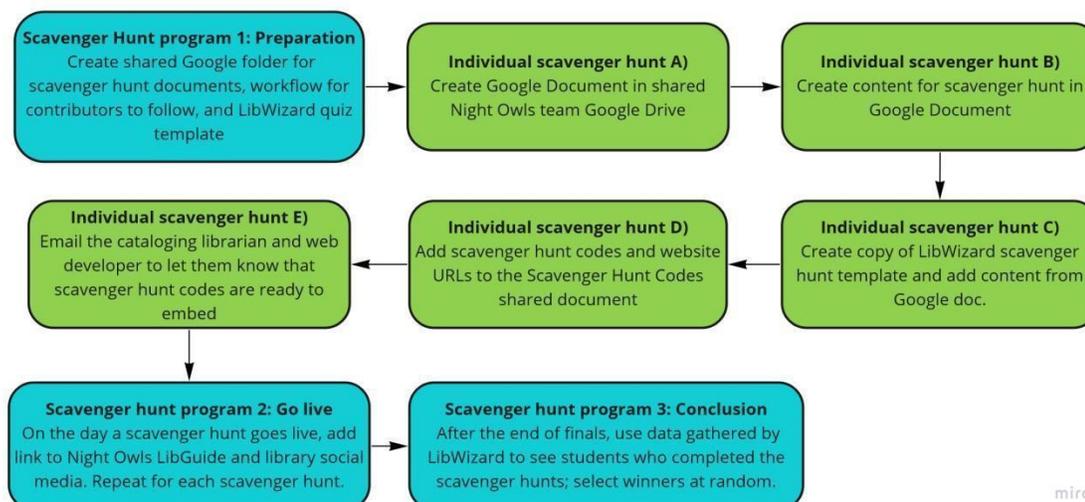
Figure 3: Online Scavenger Hunt workflow

The first step to building a scavenger hunt was to create the content for the hunt in a Google document. This included the introduction for each scavenger hunt, four clue and code pairs, the URL for the webpage or catalog record in which the code would be embedded, a hint for each clue, and a conclusion. Because each scavenger hunt had many parts, it was easier to build the content in a Google document and transfer it to a LibWizard quiz than it would be to build directly in LibWizard. After creating the content in a Google document, the Task Force member creating the scavenger hunt copied the LibWizard scavenger hunt quiz template and entered the scavenger hunt content. Using a template saved a lot of time and confusion, particularly because setting up the necessary conditional formatting took trial and error. Once the LibWizard quiz was complete, the codes for the scavenger hunt were embedded in the website and catalog with help from the library's cataloging librarian and web developer (see Figure 2 above for what the codes looked like once embedded.)

On the day that each scavenger hunt was released, a link to the LibWizard quiz was added to the Night Owls LibGuide. The Task Force made the scavenger hunts discoverable by publishing them as an event on the library's calendar and by posting a link to each scavenger hunt on social media. The Task Force also dropped hints about the scavenger hunt codes on the library's social media feeds to keep users engaged. Once a scavenger hunt was released, it remained active until the end of the Night Owls program. At the end of final exams, a Task Force member drew raffle winners at random for each

scavenger hunt from among the students who completed the scavenger hunt. The raffle prize was a $25 Visa online gift card which was emailed to the student winner. Anyone could play the scavenger hunts, but only students were eligible for the raffle drawing; library staff ensured that only students were part of the raffle by requiring that they use their school email address when adding their name and email to the end of the scavenger hunt quiz (see Figure 3 above for full scavenger hunt workflow.)

Social Media

The Task Force sought to create an extensive social media campaign for the virtual Night Owls program in order to promote virtual engagement from users. The campaign was posted to the library's Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter social media channels. The content of the campaign reflected that of the LibGuide, including basic information about virtual Night Owls, de-stressing information and resources, and scavenger hunt information.

The Claremont Colleges Library established a social media presence on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter prior to the pandemic. During the fall 2019 semester, the library started to share regular, on-going, social media campaigns in addition to other promotional content. Some examples of previous campaigns are the #ResearchTips campaign and the #PrivacyLiteracy campaign. During this time, the library's Research Teaching and Learning Services Student Assistants informally gave feedback and guidance to librarians for building a successful social media presence. Student Assistants collaborated with librarians to brainstorm ideas for campaign content and generated images and captions for pre-determined content by librarians. Prior to the fall 2019 semester, the library appeared to post more sporadically. A social media policy was drafted in 2015. However, the policy is now outdated. The library has 1, 201 followers on Instagram, 1, 184 followers on Twitter, and 1, 153 followers on Facebook as of October 28, 2020.
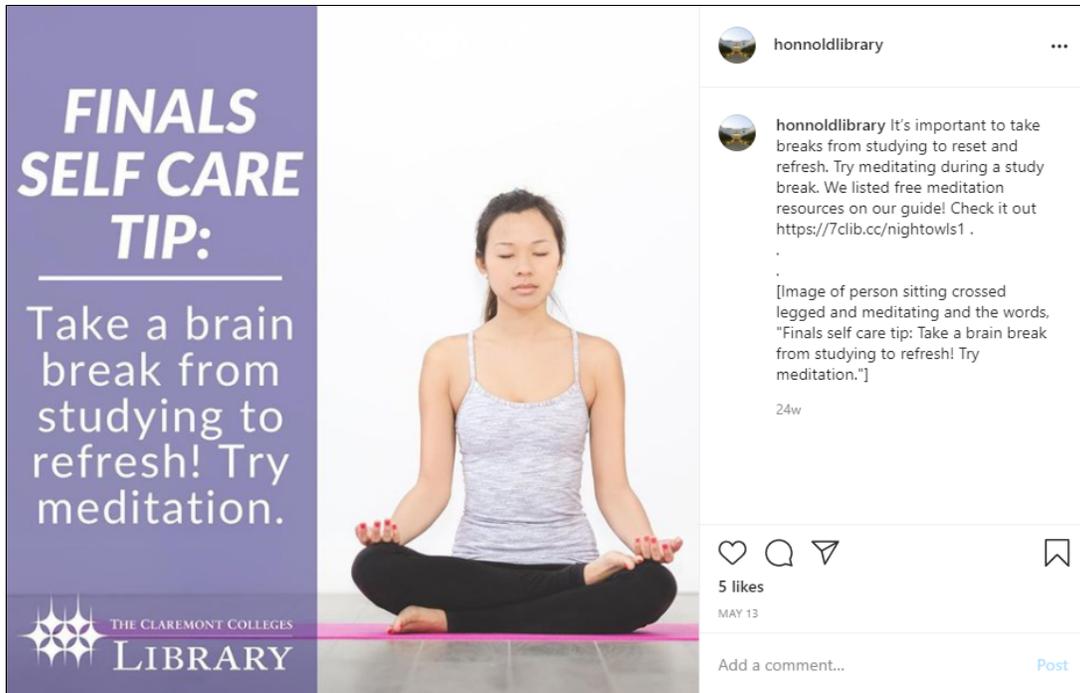
Figure 4: Screenshot of social media post in Night Owls Campaign. The bracketed text in
this Instagram post caption illustrates how the campaign was made accessible to patrons using screen readers.

The Night Owls social media campaign was shared via Tweets, feed posts on Instagram and Facebook, and Instagram stories. To promote engagement the polling feature on Instagram stories was utilized and captions for feed posts often asked questions to solicit answers from users. For example, "How are you caring for yourself during finals week? Tell us in the comments below." Each post was made accessible for users using screen readers by including text to describe the image in the post in the caption. The Night Owls Task Force attempted to make a Facebook Event page for the program but was unsuccessful due to user error and the way the library Facebook account is set up.

The campaign was designed by a Night Owls Task Force member and a Research Teaching and Learning Services division student assistant, with assistance from other Task Force members in generating posts. The posts were drafted in a Google Doc that was accessible to the authors and the student assistant. The document contained context for the project, a description of the project with a link to the library's style guides, and a due date for the project.

Individual posts were generated in a table with columns for images, image descriptions, post captions, and the date and time the post should be added to social media. The Task Force member managing social media added post dates and times, image descriptions and captions for each post. The authors and the student assistant then created images for each post using Canva and accessible text to describe each image and added them to the document. After posts were completed, they were scheduled using Hootsuite, a social media management platform.

Assessment

The virtual Night Owls program cost $245, far less than the library spends each semester on the in-person Night Owls program. The only thing purchased specifically for the online Night Owls program was Visa gift cards for the scavenger hunt raffle winners. The total amount of staff time spent on virtual Night Owls was also less than the in-person Night Owls. Library staff members who are not on the Night Owls Task Force did not participate in virtual Night Owls because the activities which they are usually recruited for, such as snack breaks and craft night, could not happen in a virtual environment. Additionally, the library building was closed and there was no need for overnight staff for extended library hours. The Task Force spent less time planning than in a normal semester because of the smaller scope of the program. However, the increased engagement with social media took substantial staff time and will be factored into planning in the future. Quantitative assessment was possible because of the metrics built into the Springshare products and the social media platforms that the library uses.

Finals Night Virtual Night Owls LibGuide

Over the course of one week of reading days and finals, the Finals Week Virtual Night Owls LibGuide had 883 distinct visits. Visits to the LibGuide peaked with 241 views on May 11th, 2020 halfway through the Night Owls week. The Get Started page had the most views at 367. This was the front page of the LibGuide, and so this is an expected result. The Virtual Scavenger Hunt page had 324 views in total, while the De-Stressing Resources page was viewed 153 times.

Scavenger Hunts

In total, users visited the six online scavenger hunts 170 times and the scavenger hunts were completed 117 times by 46 unique users; 29 students completed at least two scavenger hunts. The scavenger hunts had a completion rate of 68% and engagement was highest with the earliest scavenger hunts. Possible explanations for this include that students were most interested in the scavenger hunts earlier in the final exams period and that earlier scavenger hunts had a longer window of opportunity for users to complete them because scavenger hunts remained active for the remainder of finals once posted. While the Night Owls Task Force did not collect statistics for the Fall 2019 in-library scavenger hunt, the format of the digital scavenger hunt likely allowed for great numbers of students to participate. During the in-person scavenger hunt, Night Owls Task Force members hid six plush owls around the library on three different days, for a total of 18 hidden owls. Once all of the owls were found, the scavenger hunt was over for the day. By contrast, unlimited numbers of students could participate in the online scavenger hunts since they remained open throughout finals.

LibWizard metrics permit account holders to see how users accessed the scavenger hunt: 78 accessed the LibWizard quiz from the Finals Week Virtual Night Owls LibGuide, 14 from Facebook, 8 from the library's LibGuides homepage, and 3 from Twitter. The remaining 11 entries did not register referral data (see Figure 5 below.) Qualitatively, the Night Owls Task Force received positive feedback from the library staff who played the scavenger hunts, a very appreciative email from a graduating senior who said that the scavenger hunt helped with her sadness at missing her last Night Owls on campus, and a report from a librarian that a student she met with for research support played the scavenger hunts each day and enjoyed them.
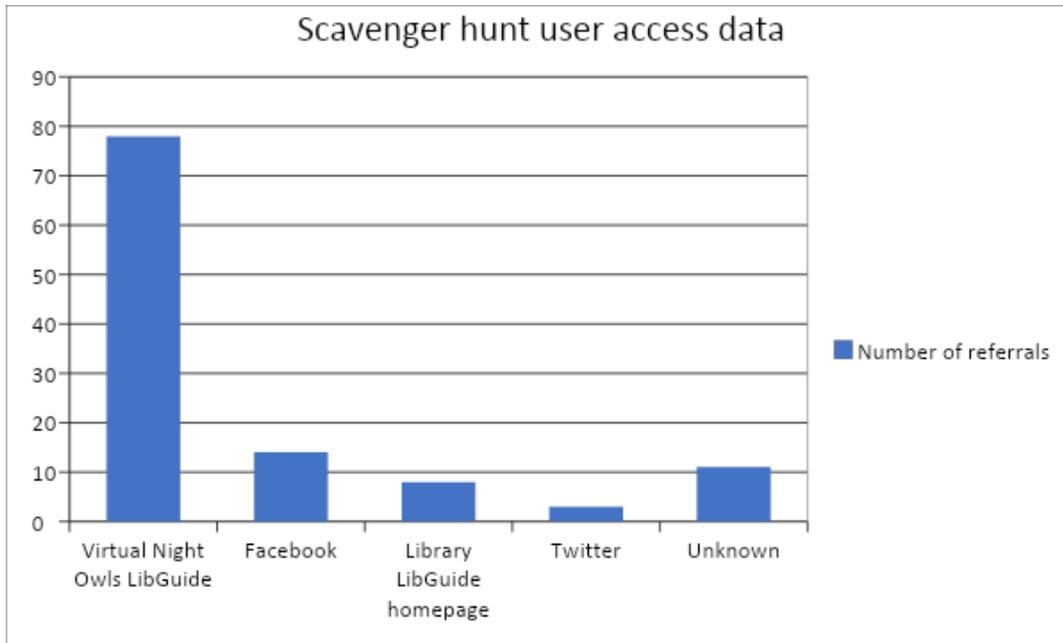
Figure 5: LibWizard provides referral data for how users accessed the scavenger hunts, above.

Library Social Media Campaign

On Instagram, the campaign included 19 stories and 14 feed posts. The post announcing the virtual scavenger hunt received the most engagement with 52 likes and no comments. Instagram indicated that this post performed better than all previous posts on the account. Posts of library pets, solicited from library staff in place of therapy dogs, were also popular. These posts received 15 likes, 29 likes, and 28 likes. The last pet post received one comment from the official Claremont Graduate University account. Analytics for Instagram were collected from the "Insights" tool on the app and from monitoring the account. The Task Force was unable to collect any analytics from the Hootsuite platform where posts were scheduled because the library subscribes to a free account which does not include analytics. On Twitter, 14 tweets were posted for the campaign. On average tweets received around 2 likes and 2 retweets. The library Twitter account received 7 new followers during the campaign. Twitter analytics were collected by monitoring the account and posts, as well as the "Analytics" feature on the app.

On Facebook, 14 posts were posted for the campaign. These posts received a total of 203 post engagements which was a 47% increase from previous content. The posts that received the most engagement on Facebook were of library pets. The Facebook Event page received no attendees, aside from the pseudo-personal account administrator page, due to posting and account set up errors discussed previously. Facebook analytics were collected from built-in analytics available on the app.

Future Directions

Along with many other institutions, the Fall 2020 semester was a time of change and challenge for The Claremont Colleges. All five undergraduate colleges were fully online for the Fall 2020 semester while the graduate universities developed hybrid online programs with limited classes held on campus. All seven institutions committed to ending classes at Thanksgiving break, thus shortening the semester by several weeks. At the time of writing, it is unknown whether students will be back on campus for the Spring 2021 semester, but it seems increasingly unlikely.

The library building was closed during the Fall 2020 semester and library staff continued to work from home aside from very limited in-building staffing for book scanning, mailing, and socially distanced pickup. The Night Owls Task Force will continue virtual Night Owls programming during the Fall 2020 semester and beyond in order to build connections between the library's physical building and online collections and expand access to the Night Owls program for students who cannot or do not want to be present in the building, including off-campus, commuting graduate students.

An additional consideration for an eventual hybrid online and in-person Night Owls program will be budget. The Claremont Colleges Library spends a substantial portion of the programming budget on Night Owls each semester. The Task Force was able to offer $25 Visa gift cards as raffle prizes during the Spring 2020 online Night Owls because there were no other costs apart from staff time associated with the online program. Once the campuses resume on-campus classes and the library resumes some form of in-person Night Owls, $25 Visa gift cards may not be a sustainable prize for the online scavenger hunt because the programming budget also needs to pay for

in-person components. The Claremont Colleges Library was severely impacted by budget cuts brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and the entire programming budget is much smaller than it was in previous semesters. The Night Owls Task Force will need to find a lower-cost alternative to the gift cards that is still valued as a worthwhile raffle prize by the students. Options include smaller cash amounts or fewer, but larger, raffle prizes.

One aspect of the in-person Night Owls program that was largely missing from the virtual iteration is the involvement of library staff from all levels and departments across the library. The Night Owls program provides staff who do not work directly with students an opportunity to meet them face-to-face, which in the past has been rewarding for everyone. In the future, the Night Owls Task Force plans to include the wider library staff in virtual programming, including writing scavenger hunts and playing a role in the Night Owls social media campaign.

The virtual Night Owls program did not include any synchronous activities due to time restraints during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spring 2019. The Task Force hopes to provide synchronous virtual activities during the Fall 2020 semester such as community Zoom study rooms, virtual game nights, and virtual craft nights. Incorporating virtual synchronous activities will provide more opportunities for students to engage with the library and with each other, fostering a sense of community as the in-person Night Owls program did while students and staff remain safely distanced from each other. The Night Owls Task Force plans to incorporate informal qualitative assessment in future virtual Night Owls activities, as well as continuing to collect and assess quantitative data.

Recommendations for Other Libraries

The authors encourage librarians at other institutions to implement similar programs. Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, online programming can increase access to library programs for distance learning students, students with disabilities, and busy students who want to participate in library activities on their own time, rather than the library's schedule. Additionally, virtual programming is flexible and can stand alone or be an add-on to existing programs. Below are recommendations for creating a successful online program with less stress for library staff.

Begin planning well ahead of time. The online Night Owls program was very successful, but Task Force members felt crunched for time. The authors suggest building in longer deadlines than seem necessary, particularly if the library staff running the program need support from library or campus staff.

Clearly delegate tasks. Virtual programming can have a lot of moving parts and deciding and documenting which library staff are in charge of what parts of the program early in the planning process saves a lot of headaches and a lot of emails.

Involve student workers in the programming. The authors found that having student workers create posts for social media helped to balance workflow for the librarians, but there are many ways to get student workers involved. This also provides an opportunity for students working remotely.

Be transparent and communicate with collaborators about how programming will be promoted. Virtual visibility and promotion are essential for programming that is completely online. Document how and where the programming was promoted so that gaps are visible and can be resolved in future programs. Additionally, documentation can serve as guidelines to follow in the future to streamline the communications workflow.

If the library staff running the online program are also tasked with posting to library social media, be aware of how social media platforms are set up to prevent issues with posting. Collaborate with the library staff who handle social media ahead of time to troubleshoot potential problems.

Be clear about what the budget is and how you plan to spend it from the very beginning, both with library administration and within the planning group. This is especially important if the online program is being added to an existing library program with a preexisting budget.

Show appreciation for library staff volunteers and collaborators from outside the library at the completion of the program. Recruiting volunteers and outside collaborators involves building goodwill with the program. The task force distributed thank you notes and small gifts to volunteers to ensure they knew they were appreciated (and hence more likely to volunteer next year).

Acknowledgements

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