

**“We’re Still Here:”
Evaluating Academic Library Instagram Posting
During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

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Abstract: Academic libraries use social media to build community and increase visibility and engagement among followers—students, faculty, and staff. Instagram, in particular, is a popular social media platform used by a college-aged demographic. Academic library Instagram administrators create and maintain Instagram accounts to post visual content to promote the physical library and library services. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic closed the college campuses of the New York City-based City University of New York (CUNY) system to all but “essential staff” and compelled non-essential employees to work from home. During the first few months of 2020, college library Instagram administrators in the CUNY system considered how a once-in-a-century pandemic might affect the content of their Instagram posts and post frequency. The posts of Instagram accounts for eight CUNY libraries were this study’s subject. Data from each account’s Instagram posts were examined: images and captions, posting frequency, and the ways in which these accounts may have made a “pandemic pivot.”

Keywords: COVID-19, Instagram, virtual library, social media outreach

Introduction

Almost two decades after the social media and networking service Facebook first launched in 2004, academic libraries have accessed a variety of social media platforms to connect with their respective campus communities. Along with a website and presence in course management systems, social media is yet another way academic libraries can be "where students are." Launched in 2010, Instagram is a Facebook-owned social media platform. While Instagram's content can be accessed via a computer, it is only through its smartphone-based application that users can create posts (Wilkinson, 2018, p. 22). Unlike Facebook and Twitter, Instagram is a platform dedicated to posting visual content (Azwar, 2018): an original photograph or video, a screenshot of content accessible via smartphone, or a repost of another account's post, using a reposting application. The visual data alone conveys an Instagram post's message. Accompanying data like captions and hashtags are optional, although providing hashtags—essentially "metadata descriptors"—are generally viewed as necessary to optimize the reach and exposure of an Instagram post (Alfonzo, 2019, Post optimization section, paras. 2-3).

Similar to Facebook and Twitter, libraries use Instagram as a way to promote services and collections and to increase visibility and foot traffic. Unlike a library website that might have strict protocols for edits and may require content approval by college administrators, a library's social media account is usually run by one administrator who is able to post, update, and respond to comments throughout the day. While the aforementioned reasons a library maintains an Instagram account are compelling, this study is primarily concerned with library Instagram use in an emergency situation.

This article details the results of a study of the Instagram posts of eight campus libraries in the City University of New York system during a three-month period at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (West, 2020). This three-month period includes the date—March 22, 2020—when *The New York Times* reported that New York City had been declared an epicenter of the Covid-19 pandemic in the United States, with "increasing pressure on officials to take more drastic measures" in the face of the high positivity rates in the New York City region, which accounted for "half of the cases in the United States" (McKinley, 2020, para. 6). On March 20, 2020, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the "New York State on PAUSE" executive order, which required a "100 percent closure of non-essential businesses statewide," including the closure of

private and state educational facilities and the entire CUNY system to all but essential staff (*Governor Cuomo Signs*, 2020, para. 1).

Literature Review

According to the Pew Research Center, in 2021 “some 84% of adults ages 18 to 29” used some form of social media (Auxier & Anderson, *Social Media Use*, 2021, para. 4), with Facebook and YouTube being the most frequently used among all demographics (Auxier & Anderson, para. 2). From Pew’s data, “majorities of Americans ages 18 to 29 report they use Instagram or Snapchat,” with the “younger end of this cohort”—18 to 24—most likely to use Instagram (Auxier & Anderson, para. 12). College graduates used Instagram about 20% more than those with a high school education or less. (*Social Media Fact Sheet*, 2021, table 4). According to Wilkinson (2018), Instagram has been avidly adopted by college libraries to connect with their patrons and campus communities. Malik et al. (2021) also underscore that Instagram’s use by a young and diverse demographic makes it a vital tool of communication.

As academic libraries take the lead in campus-wide initiatives like scholarly communications and open educational resources, employing social media as a tool for promoting these initiatives has value (Howard et al., 2018). College students’ use of social media has increased along with academic libraries’ adoption of these services. In 2005, only 7% of 18 to 29-year-olds used social media, with this college-aged demographic reporting at that time their general unwillingness to engage with their campus libraries on social media (Howard et al., 2018). In recent years, however, studies have pointed to students’ growing openness to receiving social media-based communications from their college libraries, especially when these communications have to do with how a college library can help them succeed in college (Howard et al., 2018).

Purpose of Library Instagram

Doney et al. (2020) point out that librarians primarily use library Instagram accounts to create community connections, increase foot traffic in the library, and provide general library information. Wilkinson (2018) corroborates this in that the most common use of Instagram among librarians was to introduce and promote a “library’s services, resources, and spaces” (p. 22). Instagram is also used to increase engagement

and reduce library anxiety for first-year students (Wilkinson, 2018). Wallis (2014) used an Instagram-based mobile scavenger hunt to increase engagement and address library anxiety among first-year students during orientation week. The activity compelled students to explore a potentially intimidating college library space, create original content, and share it on Instagram instantly with an online audience.

A social media study by Purdue University librarians found that, in general, most students want their college library to be represented on the same social media platforms they use to connect with their friends and peers (Howard et al., 2018). Similar to the activity detailed by Wallis (2014), University of Montana librarians encouraged engagement with first-year students by inviting them to post their own library-related photos and tag their college library's Instagram account (Wilkinson, 2018). Instead of content meant to solely entertain, surveyed students seem to be most interested in library social media posts containing useful information, such as "operations updates, study support, and events" (Howard et al., 2018, p. 10), "research techniques and tips, how to use library resources and services, library resource info [. . .]," library news, library and campus events, and non-library specific content like helpful websites and memes (Howard et al., 2018, p. 14).

As previously mentioned, the overriding context of this study is Instagram use in an emergency situation. While social media is notable for inaccuracies in the dissemination of misinformation, health professionals report that social media, including Instagram, can be highly useful for broadcasting medical information and health advisories and for forging professional relationships amid a global pandemic (Eghtesadi & Florca, 2020). Public health information on the topics of social distancing and mask-wearing are examples of health advisories that have been promoted via Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic (Eghtesadi & Florca, 2020). However, the use of social media to deliver current health information has provided foreground for the concern that vulnerable older populations, not on Instagram, might be left out of this information loop (Eghtesadi & Florca, 2020). The dissemination of health information is a high-stakes endeavor, as social media can be a powerful spreader of disinformation. Concurrent with this article's study, Malik et al. (2021) conducted a content analysis of four Instagram accounts of major health organizations (the World Health Organization, as one example) over almost the same designated period. Researchers found that all four organizations' Instagram accounts attracted a large number of followers and

engagement over this period of the pandemic, but that posts “lacked content under the theme of ‘clarification’ in the form of addressing misconceptions, myths, and fake news,” while foregrounding that there is a great opportunity for these types of Instagram accounts to “counter misinformation,” “rumors” and “unclear facts” (Malik et al., 2021, p. 6). Even so, the researchers concluded that Instagram is an “ideal venue for reaching youth in crises and emergencies, as this demographic does not rely on mainstream media as their main source of news information” (Malik et al., 2021, p. 8).

While not within an emergency context, Santarossa and Woodruff (2018) enacted a social media study to see how Instagram and Twitter might function as health promotion tools on one university campus. Students were invited and incentivized to share favorite health practices on their own social media accounts. While overall participation was low relative to the student population, the researchers concluded from the available data that Instagram and Twitter were potentially powerful tools for sharing health information.

Methods

Research Questions

The central motivation of this study was to look at how academic library Instagram administrators in one university system responded to the COVID-19 pandemic via their Instagram accounts. The study includes data from three full months of posts: from February 1, 2020, to April 30, 2020. Posts were designated as the images in each Instagram account's main feed. Instagram “Stories” ephemeral content was available for 24 hours, and was made accessible by pressing the profile portion of each account (Fonseca, 2019).

Research questions were designated as follows:

- **RQ1:** Which type of post category was used most frequently by libraries on Instagram pre-pandemic?
- **RQ2:** Which type of post category was used most frequently by libraries on Instagram during “pivot week” when campuses were transitioning from face-to-face to distance learning?

- **RQ3:** Which type of post category was used more frequently during the pandemic period, once campuses were locked down?
- **RQ 4:** Which post category was the most popular with Instagram accounts' followers as shown by the number of likes?

Identifying the Study Sample

This study focused its investigation on libraries within the City University of New York system. CUNY comprises 25 campuses, including junior and senior colleges, and separate campuses supporting a range of graduate programs (*Colleges & Schools*, n.d.). While CUNY's colleges and universities and the departments within them were found to maintain Instagram accounts, only library-specific Instagram accounts within this university system would be evaluated for inclusion in this study.

From the CUNY website, a compilation of 21 CUNY libraries was used as the governing list for the initial search of CUNY Library Instagram accounts (*College libraries*, n.d.). Each existing Instagram account was found by searching for each library by its official name and then using the college name as a keyword with "library" in an Instagram application's search box. Existing CUNY library Instagram accounts that were rejected from this study had no visible posts within the designated time frame. Eight CUNY libraries had Instagram accounts with main-feed content posted within this study's time frame. For greater simplicity in the presentation of data and for relative anonymity in the analysis of that data, the libraries were alphabetized by campus name and given an identifying letter: for example, Library A was the first Instagram account in the list.

Time Frame of Study

This study's designated time frame—February 1 to April 30, 2020—was established in order to track Instagram postings while the pandemic was still a developing story. The time frame included a "pivot week" from March 16 to March 22, 2020, which was when many college presidents within this system closed their respective campuses. The remaining campuses closed in the days following. The decision to delineate a "pivot week" in this study was to determine if Instagram posting during this week reflected the abruptness of the transition from face-to-face to remote learning.

Data Collection

Data collection took place in March and April 2021 and entailed scrolling through each of the eight feeds within the designated three-month time period. Posts date-stamped within the time frame were collected into a Google document and organized into eight sections representing each library. For each Instagram account, descriptions of all posts' visual content were recorded on the Google document. The captions created by each Instagram administrator and comments provided by each account's followers were copied and pasted. The number of "likes" each post had received was recorded. Instagram "Stories," posts lasting 24 hours and accessed by pressing on each account's profile picture, were necessarily excluded, as the Story content within the time frame would have disappeared by the time data was collected.

Research Data Analysis

Post data for all eight Instagram accounts were collected on one Google document. Post data included descriptions of each post's central "image," which is the defining characteristic of Instagram and the only element that is required for a post. Post data also included optional image captions, if present, and textual content like hashtags and comments posted by account followers.

The entire Google document was then scanned for recurring language and topics. Three separate documents were then created to group the collected data from each period of the time frame: Pre-Lockdown, Pivot Week, and Pandemic, and posts in each time period were hand counted. Emerging language and topics were recorded, and posts were tentatively grouped by topic.

Codes for the Collected Data

In 2020, Doney et al. conducted a content analysis of library Instagram accounts in one university system in the U.S. state of Idaho. In order to categorize their data, they used codes created by Stuart et al. (2017) for a content analysis of Instagram accounts of universities based in the United Kingdom. Doney et al. (2020) adapted Stuart et al.'s (2017) codes to be more library-specific. Doney et al.'s "library specific" codes were as follows: "Crowdsourcing" posts that ask viewers for interaction and/or feedback within the Instagram app; "Humanizing" posts that contain elements of "warmth, humor, or amusement" within both the image and caption; "Interacting" posts that contain candid photos of library or library-adjacent events; "Orienting" posts that

situate the library within a larger community context; “Placemaking” posts that situate the library as a physical place; and “Showcasing” posts that highlight library collections and services, including the presence and visibility of librarians (Doney et al., 2020, p. 5).

Coding Revisions for This Study

As the Instagram data for the CUNY libraries in this pandemic-era study were examined and organized, it was posited that Doney et al.’s (2020) codes might need revision, particularly in the Pivot Week and Pandemic portions of each account’s timelines. In these sections, posts were constructed of data that referenced more than one category in approximately equal measure. In other words, individual Instagram posts seemed to be attempting to fulfill many implied objectives at once. For this reason, the Instagram posts of this study were more accurately coded by using “hybrid posts” created by combining Doney et al.’s (2020) individual codes as deemed necessary. As an example, posts that described library services but also included the language defined as “compassionate outreach” were coded “Humanizing/Showcasing.” In posts with this particular hybrid code, posts that promoted particular library services had been deeply contextualized in the language of “helping” and concern.

Findings

The focus of this study was to track how Instagram posts’ content and frequency evolved over three months during the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in the United States. Over the course of the designated three months, the total number of posts from all eight of the library’s accounts was 189. Table 1 below displays post counts for each section of the three-month timeline: Pre-Lockdown, Pivot Week, and Pandemic. Posts across all library Instagram accounts more than doubled from the Pre-Lockdown month to the Pandemic month, underscoring the sense of urgency to connect with students in the context of an unprecedented emergency.

Table 1. Post Totals by Library

Library	Pre-Lockdown	Pivot Week	Pandemic	Total # of Posts
A	7	4	11	22
B	0	0	9	9
C	0	0	2	2
D	1	11	24	36
E	16	6	26	48
F	13	2	9	24
G	10	3	8	21
H	4	1	22	27
Post Totals	51	27	111	189

Pre-Lockdown

Analysis of posts from February 1 to March 15, 2020 answered Research Question #1: Which type of post category was used most frequently by libraries on Instagram in the “pre-lockdown” period?

Six of the eight libraries in the sample posted in the pre-lockdown period for a total of 51 posts. There were 15 posts in the “Placemaking” category (Appendix Table 2). These posts included images and captions presenting the library as a specific building and/or destination point. Topics covered in this category included specific references to the library building, photos and/or screenshots of the exterior and interior of libraries with captions inviting Instagram followers to visit the building during posted library hours. Other topics covered in this “Placemaking” were holiday closures, the circulation and reference desks, physical study rooms/areas, stacks, and library renovations. In week three of the Pre-Lockdown period, posts displayed growing awareness about the pandemic: posts of foreboding, and “intimations of an emergency.” These posts eschewed humor or aesthetic concerns in order to impart information directly: a screenshot of updated portions of the library website showing changes

to library hours, information about emergency library closures, and off-campus access to services.

There were nine posts in the “Interacting” category in this Pre-Lockdown period. According to Doney et al.’s (2020) coding definitions, these posts include candid photographs of participants at library events and photos of event-related elements like refreshments or giveaways (Doney et al., 2020, p. 6). Regarding this study’s sample, posts in this category were comprised of photos of students at campus funding rallies, students in the library on the first day of the semester, and near the end of this period, a photo of a faculty member at a library classroom whiteboard showing his fellow faculty members how to move their classes entirely on Blackboard.

Coding categories with zero results in this period included “Crowdsourcing” posts that would have invited participation from Instagram account followers in the form of comments, or other manifested interactions within the Instagram application: emojis, direct messages, hashtags, or tags.

Pivot Week

Analysis of this sample’s posts from March 16 to March 22, 2020, answer Research Question #2: Which type of post category was used most frequently by libraries on Instagram during the “pivot week,” when campuses were transitioning from face-to-face to distance learning?

The total number of Pivot Week posts in the sample numbered 27. Three of the eight libraries showed evidence of a “ramping up” of post frequency, with Library D being the most dramatic example: This account had one post in the six six-week “Pre-Lockdown” period and then, markedly, eleven posts during “Pivot Week.” Two of the eight libraries in the sample had no posts in this period. Of the six libraries that posted that week, “Showcasing” was the most popular category with six posts total. “Showcasing” posts included photos and screenshots with accompanying captions highlighting library services like “24/7 chat” services, access to now entirely remote librarians, and links to hastily created research guides or heretofore overlooked ones. For the first time, “Zoom” and “remotelibrarians” were terms included in posts. Other Pivot Week posts that included “Showcasing” were hybrid posts. These were “Orienting/Showcasing” (1), “Humanizing/Showcasing” (1), and

“Humanizing/Placemaking/Showcasing” (1). These posts highlighted specific library or library-related services but were also interwoven with other concerns. For example, the aforementioned hybrid post “Orienting/Showcasing” was a webpage screenshot on accessing free Wi-Fi from a commercial company: the library was showcasing an emergency-related service provided by an outside source the library could no longer provide to its community. Another post coded “Humanizing/Placemaking/Showcasing” was a website screenshot that contained information about remote library services. The accompanying caption illustrated all three portions of this hybrid code at once. It expressed concern for students (“Humanizing”); referenced the library as a place (“ONLY the library reserve computer room will be open”); and displayed information about library reference via email and chat, as well as a link to a blog promising more information on library services (“Showcasing”).

Posts partially coded with “Humanizing” had captions that included language like “stay safe,” “stay healthy,” “so sorry,” “don’t panic,” “we are here for you,” “You got this!,” and so on. Remaining posts in this subcategory had to do with compassionate, Covid-related changes to long-standing library policies, such as information about the “auto-renewing of book loans” and “no more late fees.”

Pandemic

Posts in the final portion of the three-month timeline of this study—from March 23, 2020, to April 30, 2020—answer Research Question #3: Which type of post category was used most frequently by library Instagram administrators during the pandemic period?

“Humanizing/Placemaking/Showcasing” posts appeared prominently in this period (13 posts), but the most popular posts of the 111 total posts in this period were “Humanizing/ Showcasing.” This hybrid code was applied to posts whenever the advertising of library services was mixed in with language of “concern and care” (25). Thirteen of the posts coded “Humanizing/Showcasing” were self-portrait photos—or “selfies”—of librarians at home or librarians working from home with pets often prominently featured in the librarians’ respective workspaces. Captions for these conveyed approachability and familiarity, including the first names of librarians and the names of pets. In these posts “Humanizing” and “Showcasing” are conflated: “Librarian [. . .] and his kitty [. . .] are standing by to help answer your questions,” and “Librarian [. . .]

is getting a lot of attention from his cute dog 🐶 while helping [. . .] students from his home computer.”

Non-hybrid posts were scarce in this period, with two posts for “Crowdsourcing” and one for “Placemaking.” Table 2 displays the full results of the coding during each period of the time frame.

Table 2. *Library Instagram Coding Results*

Lib.	Pre-Lockdown	Pivot Week	Pandemic
A	Interacting: 4; Orienting: 2; Humanizing/Crowdsourcing: 1	Humanizing/Placemaking: 2; Humanizing: 1; Orienting/ Showcasing: 1	Orienting 4; Humanizing/ Showcasing: 2; Placemaking: 1; Showcasing 1; Crowdsourcing/Humanizing: 1; Humanizing/Orienting: 1; Humanizing/Placemaking/ Showcasing: 1
B	No posts.	No posts.	Orienting: 5; Showcasing: 3; Humanizing/Showcasing: 1
C	No posts.	No posts.	Humanizing/Showcasing: 1; Orienting/Showcasing: 1
D	Interacting: 1	Showcasing: 4; Orienting: 3; Humanizing/Placemaking: 1; Humanizing/Orienting: 1; Humanizing/Placemaking/ Showcasing: 1; Orienting/ Showcasing: 1	Showcasing: 12; Interacting: 3; Humanizing/Orienting: 2; Orienting: 2; Orienting/ Showcasing: 2; Humanizing/ Placemaking: 1; Humanizing/ Showcasing: 1; Humanizing/ Placemaking/Showcasing: 1
E	Interacting: 3; Orienting: 3; Placemaking/Showcasing: 2; Orienting/Showcasing: 2; Interacting/Humanizing: 1; Humanizing/Orienting: 1; Humanizing/Placemaking: 1; Showcasing: 2; Placemaking: 1	Humanizing/Placemaking/ Showcasing: 2; Crowdsourcing/ Humanizing: 1; Humanizing/ Orienting: 1; Humanizing/Showcasing: 1; Humanizing: 1	Humanizing/Orienting: 7; Humanizing/Showcasing: 5; Crowdsourcing/Humanizing/ Orienting: 4; Humanizing: 2; Crowdsourcing/Orienting: 3; Orienting/Showcasing: 2; Crowdsourcing: 1; Humanizing/Interacting: 1; Showcasing: 1

F	Placemaking: 4; Showcasing: 4; Interacting: 3; Orienting: 1; Showcasing/Placemaking: 1	Showcasing: 2	Showcasing: 7; Interacting: 1; Orienting: 1
G	Placemaking: 8; Humanizing/Showcasing: 2	Humanizing/Showcasing: 1; Orienting/Showcasing: 1; Placemaking: 1	Showcasing: 5; Humanizing/Showcasing: 3
H	Humanizing/Placemaking: 1; Interacting: 1; Interacting/Humanizing: 1; Placemaking: 1	Placemaking: 1	Humanizing/Showcasing: 13; Orienting: 7; Humanizing/Placemaking: 1; Humanizing: 1
Top Posts	Placemaking: 15; Interacting: 9	Showcasing: 6	Humanizing/Showcasing: 25; Showcasing: 15

Engagement Along the Timeline

Research Question #4: Which post category was the most popular as manifested by the number of views or “likes?”

The most common evidence of engagement with Instagram posts is “likes.” A follower of an Instagram account “likes” a post by touching the heart-shaped icon below the lower right corner of the image on the Instagram app. Posts of photos/screenshots display the number of “likes.” Posts can also be “unliked.” Video posts do not display the number of “likes,” only the number of views. Just as only one “like” can be registered per post per account, only one “view”—at least three seconds—can be counted per Instagram account. Of the 189 total Instagram posts among the eight libraries over this three-month period, only a handful were video posts, but the video posts, based on view counts, displayed numbers far higher than “like” counts. Library D’s Pivot Week “Orienting” post of a Covid-19 themed infographic showing the effects of social distancing had 56 likes. On the same day, Library D’s “Humanizing/Orienting” video of the college president addressing the campus community on the first day of distance learning had, as of this writing, 152 views. While these two posts had the highest post counts in the sample, notable was Library H’s “Humanizing/Showcasing” pandemic post of a photo of a librarian working from home with a pet cat “standing by to help answer your questions” with 43 likes. As a point of comparison, Library H’s Instagram post on March 10, the first Covid-themed post of this library, only received seven likes.

Doney et al. (2020) noted the difficulty of assessing the accomplishment of a library’s social media goals, because so much of an Instagram viewer’s engagement with

a post is passive. In other words, a patron might enjoy a post but not record engagement by “liking” that post or commenting on it; positive markers for engagement cannot be holistically assessed by likes and comments (Doney et al., 2020, p. 2).

In the process of addressing the research questions of this study, the first Covid-related posts were collected. Most of the first posts that mention the pandemic in some fashion are in the Pre-Lockdown period, with the earliest one featuring a rendering of a Covid-19 molecule with a link to health information in the caption, posted on February 27, 2020, predating by approximately a month the *New York Times*’ announcement of New York as a pandemic epicenter. Library C’s first Covid-themed post comes late in this timeline, April 28, 2020. This post’s code is non-hybrid “Humanizing;” messages of compassion and concern comprise the image—“We’re still here!”—and the caption: “I hope you’re all hanging in there during this (sic) stressful and chaotic times. Remember [we are] here for you and are wishing the best for you all.”

Table 3. *First Covid-10 Posts of Library Instagram Accounts*

Lib.	First Mention of / Allusion to the Covid-19 Pandemic
A	<p><i>Pre-Lockdown: 3/12/2020</i></p> <p><i>Code: Humanizing/Crowdsourcing</i></p> <p><i>Image: Photo of a large white sheet of paper with text: “Even though most classes are online, I need the library because”</i> Caption: “Stay safe”</p> <p><i>Likes: 15</i></p>
B	<p><i>Pandemic: 4/7/2020</i></p> <p><i>Code: Showcasing</i></p> <p><i>Image: Infographic about Spring Break. No caption. Hashtags: #springbreak2020 #[collegeinitials] #[collegenname] #repost #staysafe #springrecess #[univinitials] @college</i></p> <p><i>Likes: 18</i></p>
C	<p><i>Pandemic: 4/28/2020</i></p> <p><i>Code: Humanizing</i></p> <p><i>Image: App-created graphic of a stack of books with Text: “We’re still here! Chat with us about how you’re doing and what you’re reading”</i> Caption: “I hope you’re all hanging in there during this (sic) stressful and chaotic times.</p>

	<p>Remember [we are] here for you and are wishing the best for you all.” <i>Likes: 13</i></p>
D	<p><i>Pivot: 3/18/20</i> <i>Code: Humanizing/Showcasing</i> <i>Image: Screenshot of Library website information on library hours and services.</i> <i>Text: “We hope you are all safe and well. Starting tomorrow ONLY the library reserve computer room will be open. For all reference needs please use the email or chat options. The library also has many online services for you.”</i> <i>Likes: 17</i></p>
E	<p><i>Pre-Lockdown; 2/27/20</i> <i>Code: Orienting</i> <i>Image: Repost of Covid-19 molecules</i> <i>Text: “Concerned about the coronavirus? Here are some tips and information from NYC Health Department: link”</i> <i>Likes: 9</i></p>
F	<p><i>Pre-Lockdown: 3/12/2020</i> <i>Code: Placemaking</i> <i>Image: Photo of a seagull on a beach</i> <i>Text: “Library Closed...More Details to Come”</i> <i>Likes: 15</i></p>
G	<p><i>Pre-Lockdown: 3/14/2020</i> <i>Code: Placemaking</i> <i>Image: Photo of library building</i> <i>Caption: Important! Hours ① Announcement: The Library will be closed on Saturday 3/14 and Sunday 3/15. We will reopen Monday, March 16th for regular service until further notice. Stay tuned to our website”</i> <i>Likes: 27</i></p>

H	<p>Pre-Lockdown: 3/10/2020</p> <p><i>Code:</i> Humanizing/Placemaking</p> <p><i>Image:</i> Stock image of adults working on desktop computers</p> <p><i>Caption:</i> "The [event] originally scheduled for Wednesday, March 11, is postponed. The event organizers made this decision out of an abundance of caution, after evaluating the most recent public health recommendations regarding Coronavirus and the nature of the event."</p> <p><i>Likes:</i> 7</p>
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Discussion

An Instagram administrator in the library is surrounded by a plethora of material from which to draw for social media posts. There is a steady stream of visuals to capture, caption, and share on social media platforms, from students, colleagues, collections, and library and campus events, to the physical presence of campus and the interiors and exteriors of the library building itself. The most prominent finding of this study was that with few exceptions, posts increased after campuses were closed. One might infer from this that, in spite of the lack of daily visual inspiration during lockdown, there was more motivation to post once the physical space was out of reach.

Starting during Pivot Week, when most campuses were at least partially closed, the Instagram administrators of this study populated their respective feeds with stock photos captured from the Internet and "images" where the text-based information dominated. After "Lockdowns," feeds consisted of infographics from the web, images made from graphic design phone applications, and screenshots of portions of their own library websites. The latter underscores the idea that crucial slices of information about library and campus services were the most important content to post at the time. New, original images after campus closures were created by librarians working from home, such as photos of their home work spaces, their pets, and even selfies. These were then presumably forwarded to the Instagram administrator, and the first evidence of more than one librarian contributing to a library's Instagram account.

The data underscores that more frequent posting after lockdown was directly related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Once the library and campus became inaccessible, freshly populated Instagram feeds revealed an urgency to create a sense of place. In the

case of two libraries, dormant Instagram accounts were revived during the Pandemic portion of these library's first posts on April 28, 2020, and featured the prominent text "We Are Still Here!" Connections among a campus' various Instagram accounts were more frequent with the librarian Instagram administrators of this sample reposting content from other campus offices, conveying a coordinated effort to establish community and foreground even more spaces of support in a now wholly remote campus.

In all cases, the use of post hashtags increased over the course of the timeline and sometimes told a story parallel to what was being told in an image and caption. For example, Library B's first mention of the pandemic was on April 7 in a post that did not refer to the pandemic either in the image or caption, but alluded to it only via one of the post's hashtags: #staysafe. Despite the fact that best practices for Instagram foreground the necessity of Instagram hashtags in order to promote and classify posts, and to attract followers who can search for relevant accounts (Wetta, 2016, p. 31), library Instagram administrators, presumably trained in subject heading systems, did not hashtag Instagram posts in any organized fashion. Indeed, librarian Instagram administrators mimicked the colloquial, idiosyncratic manner of hashtagging that characterizes non-professional/personal Instagram accounts. For example, one of Library D's "Pandemic" posts had 19 hashtags, with the majority of them mimicking casual language: "#wegotthis," "#wearehereforyou." In addition, the compassionate messaging of these "Pandemic" hashtags were scattered among the posts of all eight of these Library Instagram accounts: "#wearestillhere," "#staysafe," "#weareheretohelp," "#weareinthistogether," "#thiswillpass," and "#stuckathome" (Appendix Table 1). Given the context of the early pandemic, these hashtags seem to underscore a perceived need among the administrators of these accounts to emphasize empathy, considered a "key component for helping professionals" (Bodaghi et al., 2016, p. 89).

Limitations/Further Research

While the process of observing content according to predetermined procedures can lead to helpful conclusions (Riff et al., 2014), there is much that is missing in the pandemic Instagram narratives of these eight libraries. Further research could entail interviewing each Instagram account administrator(s) to determine their relative

priorities, influences, and biases relevant to updating and/or reviving these accounts, as campuses made the pandemic-compelled transition to distance learning. Likewise, the followers of this study's Instagram accounts could be surveyed and interviewed. "Content we wanna see" was one comment that an Instagram user applied to a post near the end of the three-month timeline. More information about what account followers might find most helpful or relevant from library Instagram feeds as campuses remain closed would be valuable data.

Posts' "Likes" and "View" counts have some value, but do not answer what might be this study's central questions: How did the engagement of the account followers evolve over this study's timeframe—one marked by a swift transition to all distance learning in one of the main epicenters of a global pandemic? To reference this article's title, did their library's Instagram account succeed in creating a crucial sense of place for them in the absence of a physical library or campus? What Instagram content is wanted or needed as steps are made to open campuses again?

Although the sample size was relatively small, the many components of an Instagram post make for much observable data. Part of the difficulty of this study was settling on a point of focus. For example, more attention could have been spent analyzing other modes of engagement with these Instagram accounts, most particularly followers' comments. Aforesaid Instagram "Stories," known for their most robust user engagement, could be a subject for another study on library outreach (Fonseca, 2019). Finally, further research could be done regarding what could be called the current demographic limitations of Instagram. In other words, what could library outreach in this context look like to older students who may never be comfortable using the Instagram application?

Conclusions

Given the data regarding the popularity of Instagram among college students, it seemed helpful for college libraries to have, if not an Instagram presence, some form of social media presence, especially as Covid-19 kept physical campuses closed for a year and counting. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, college librarians recognized social media's value for outreach and marketing, but during the pandemic, it became a crucial point of contact, and a possible virtual site of connection and comfort. However, only

30% of the libraries in the university system of this study maintained a library Instagram account.

This study's data strongly suggested that most library Instagram administrators revisited their library social media marketing imperatives during this three-month period, as the pandemic progressed in New York City. This "revisit" seems to have translated, in most cases, into increasing the frequency and variety of posts, with an emphasis on posts that address many concerns at once. This Instagram "revisit" seems to have translated into an Instagram revival, with two of the eight existing, but dormant, accounts being reactivated. While this study was focused on visible Instagram data only, further research might examine the level of Instagram post coordination, if any, that transpired among the eight libraries. Likewise, information could be gathered on individual campus social media policies and plans, and if respective plans were amended in response to the emergency. This study was undertaken by one of the library Instagram administrators and has not been shared with her Instagram administrator colleagues.

Librarian Instagrammers had an unprecedented opportunity to market library services to their campus communities, especially students. This marketing, as supported by the data, began to take the form of providing personal outreach in a profound emergency that not only shut down a major university system, but a major U.S. metropolis, and eventually, most of the world. An example of a post from this study that perhaps best exemplifies the tone and concerns of pandemic Instagram posting follows. The post from Library A's feed featured a photo of a book cover from their collection. The post caption opens with a quote from this book:

"With practice, one may learn to accept the feeling of groundlessness without existential fear." Some of you may remember our "tip of the day" board near the library entrance. We didn't always update it every day . . . and I haven't always updated this space every day. But every day I think about [our] students and send out a little wish that you are safe [. . .].
#missyou

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Appendix

Table 1. Hashtags by Library

Lib.	Pre-Lockdown	Pivot	Pandemic
A	<p>#fund[univsystem]now #highereducationactionday #[collegename]incrisis</p>	<p>Posts/No hashtags</p>	<p>#fund[univ]now #[univ]rising #fullfunded[univ] #makebillionariespay #sanitize[universityinitials] #trustscience #dontpanic #covid_19#[collegename] #remotelearning #2020Census #CensusDay #[collegename]learnfromhome #chatwith[collegename]librarians #[collegeinitials] #library #[collegeinitials]chatwith[collegename]librarians #[collegename]doyourresearchfromhome #[collegename]libraryarticles #fund[univ]now #real[univ]esp #[univ]rising #fullyfund[univ] #librarymagic #missyou</p>
B	<p>No posts</p>	<p>No posts</p>	<p>#springbreak2020 #[collegeinitials] #[collegename] #repost #staysafe #springrecess #[systeminitials] #onlinelearning #remotelearning #[collegelibrary] #onlinelearning #researchhelp #askalibrarian #askusanything #weareheretohelp #covid19 #stuckathome #thiswillpass #livechat #askalibrarian #askus #researchhelp #24hours #librariansrock #askaquestion #virtualreference #remotehelp #wearestillhere</p>

			<p>#weareinthistogether #librariesofinstagram #librariestransform #librarystrong #librariesstrong #thankyourlibrary #wearestillhere #csilibrary #findyourlibrary #thankslibraries #findyourplace #nlw #nlw2020 #nlw20 #EarthDay2020 #virtualarborday #arborday #sustainableliving #sustainability #virtualconference #undergraduate #undergraduateresearch #undergraduates #[cityname] #virtualconferences #streamingvideo #filmplatform #documentaryfilm #documentaryfilms</p>
C	No posts	No posts	#NationalPoetryMonth
D	One post/no hashtags	<p>#[libraryname] #[collegename] #my[collegename] #[collegename]students #librariesofInstagram #[libraryname] #[collegename] #my[collegename] #[collegename]students #librariesofInstagram</p>	<p>#[collegeinitials]students #[collegeinitials]faculty #[collegeinitials]community #socialdistancing #[collegeinitials]students #[collegeinitials]faculty #[collegeinitials]community #librariesofinstagram #flattenthecurve #healthcareprofessionals #free #[newspapername] #[newspapername] #streamingvideos #documentaries #specialcollections #fraudandswindles #cardtricks #cointrick #magicians #revealingsecrets #my[collegename] #librariansofinstagram #history #educatingforsocialjustice #[collegename]</p>

#[collegename]library
 #thelibraryishereforyou
 #askalibrarian #distancelearning
 #calfskin #marbledpapers
 #giltedges #prisonerswritings
 #france #manuscripts
 #criminology #virtualreference
 #wearehereforyou
 #go[collegemascot] #wegotthis
 #boardgames
 #mansionofhappiness
 #vicesandvirtues #leisuretime
 #history #womenshistorymonth
 #digitalcollections
 #internationalassociationof[. .
 .]records #iawp
 #MilitaryPoliceSchool
 #crimescenedrawing
 #prisonersofwar
 #preservingevidence
 #crowdandmobpsychology
 #principlesofsurveillance
 #useofchemicals
 #applicationofforce
 #specialcollections #militarypolice
 #training #handbooks #crime
 #[cityname #[notablefigure]papers
 #[policeforceinitials] #detective
 #homicidesquad
 #waterfrontsquad #bombsquad
 #radicalsquad #socialjustice
 #criminaljustice #criminalhistory
 #policehistory #[city]history
 #[policeforce]history #mugshots
 #rapsheets #criminalinvestigation
 #documents
 #[NotableFigure2]papers
 #NotableFigure
 #assistantdistricattorney
 #homicidedivision #[cityname]
 #districtattorney #organizedcrime
 #[geographicalareaname]

			<p>#murderinc #amazing #collection #rare #[academicdisciple] #rarebooks #ohiopenitentiary #robertfoulkes #London #1679 #[prisonname] #digitalcontent #internetarchive #[periodicaltitle] #[notablefigure] #[municipal-service] #digitalcollections #librariansofinstagram #[notablefigure] #warden #singsing #photographs #documents #mugshots #penologist #prisonreform #[state]prison #history #[city]history #prisonhistory #librariesofinstagram #librariansofinstagram #[collegemascot] #archives #digitalcollections #[campusbuilding] #original #faculty #libraryname #librariesofinstagram #my[collegename]</p>
E	<p>#blackhistorymonth #valentinesday #mardigrasbeads #studentorientation #newstudents #libraryinfo #collegelife #womenshistorymonth #shirleychisholm</p>	Posts/No hashtags	<p>#motivationalmusicmonday #staysafe #flattenthecurve #coronavirus #handwashingsong #handwashing #antiviral #quarantine #covid_19 #covid19 #parenting #parentingishardwork #lovealwaysfromjapan #japan #ウイルス対策 #preventativemeasures #EveryoneCounts #Census2020 #StandUpBeCounted #2020census #dailyofficehaiku #dailyhaiku #haikuaday #haikupoetry #haikupoem #haiku #poem #poetry #poemsofig #instahaiku #poetryporn #poemsporn #writer #poemsofinstagram</p>

			<p>#poetrycommunity #poetrygram #poetrysociety #poetrychallenge #poetrylovers #instapoem #poetryisnotdead #poet #writers #distancelearning #remotelibrarianing #collegelibrarians #selfcare #quarantinelife #distancelearning #nationalpoetrymonth #tseliot #thewasteland #aprilisthecruellestmonth #[collegeinitials]spirit #[collegeinitials]spiritday #collegename #socialdistancing #remotereference #nationalpoetrymonth #haiku #moretocome #haiku #haikucontest #nationalpoetrymonth #pandemicpoetry #confuciusquotes #poeminyourpocketday #poeminyourpocketday #nationalpoetrymonth</p>
F	Posts/No hashtags	Posts/No hashtags	Posts/No hashtags
G	#[CollegeLibrary]services #[CollegeLibrary]renovations	#COVID19	#[collegename]students #[collegelibrary]services #libraryservices #[collegename]leaders #[collegename] #[collegename]library #campuslife #[collegename]studentaffairs #lehmanuncy #studygram #[collegename]ga #[collegename]acc #[collegename]sga #[universitysysteminitials]
H	Posts/No Hashtags	Posts/No Hashtags	#[collegeinitials]makers #[Placename]COVID

Table 2. Instagram Post Coding Results

Lib.	Pre-Lockdown	Pivot Week	Pandemic
A	Interacting: 4; Orienting: 2; Humanizing/ Crowdsourcing: 1	Humanizing/Placemaking: 2; Humanizing: 1 Orienting/Showcasing: 1	Orienting 4; Humanizing/ Showcasing: 2; Placemaking: 1; Showcasing 1; Crowdsourcing/ Humanizing: 1; Humanizing/ Orienting: 1; Humanizing/ Placemaking/Showcasing: 1
B	No posts.	No posts.	Orienting: 5; Showcasing: 3; Humanizing/Showcasing: 1
C	No posts.	No posts.	Humanizing/Showcasing: 1; Orienting/Showcasing: 1
D	Interacting: 1	Showcasing: 4; Orienting: 3; Humanizing/ Placemaking: 1; Humanizing/Orienting: 1; Humanizing/Placemaking/ Showcasing: 1; Orienting/ Showcasing: 1	Showcasing: 12; Interacting: 3; Humanizing/Orienting: 2; Orienting: 2; Orienting/Showcasing: 2; Humanizing/Placemaking: 1; Humanizing/Showcasing: 1; Humanizing/Placemaking/ Showcasing: 1
E	Interacting: 3; Orienting: 3; Placemaking/Showcasing: 2; Orienting/Showcasing: 2; Interacting/Humanizing: 1; Humanizing/Orienting: 1; Humanizing/Placemaking: 1; Showcasing: 2; Placemaking: 1	Humanizing/Placemaking/ Showcasing: 2; Crowdsourcing/ Humanizing: 1; Humanizing/Orienting: 1; Humanizing/Showcasing: 1; Humanizing: 1	Humanizing/Orienting: 7; Humanizing/Showcasing: 5; Crowdsourcing/Humanizing/ Orienting: 4; Humanizing: 2; Crowdsourcing/Orienting: 3; Orienting/Showcasing: 2; Crowdsourcing: 1; Humanizing/ Interacting: 1; Showcasing: 1
F	Placemaking: 4; Showcasing: 4; Interacting: 3; Orienting: 1; Showcasing/ Placemaking: 1	Showcasing: 2	Showcasing: 7; Interacting: 1; Orienting: 1
G	Placemaking: 8; Humanizing/Showcasing: 2	Humanizing/Showcasing: 1; Orienting/Showcasing: 1; Placemaking: 1	Showcasing: 5; Humanizing/ Showcasing: 3
H	Placemaking: 2; Interacting: 1; Interacting/Humanizing: 1	Placemaking: 1	Humanizing/Showcasing: 13; Orienting: 7; Humanizing/ Placemaking: 1; Humanizing: 1

Top Posts	Placemaking: 15; Interacting: 9	Showcasing: 6	Humanizing/Showcasing: 25; Showcasing: 15
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