Chapter 8
You Can "Like" It on Paper Too:
Reaching Digital Students through Analog Displays

Rachael Muszkiewicz
Valparaiso University, USA

ABSTRACT

In response to literature on libraries as space and the Millennial generation, this chapter speaks to the importance of the academic library as both social and communal space and how to communicate with today's college students. These case studies illustrate that students can be reached through analog displays, building an unconscious community between students as a group and students with the library. Community built within the academic library is discussed in light of these analog displays, the current library literature and via sociological positions. It is concluded that although it is thought that students want digital or online communication only, the highest amount of interaction with displays come from the traditional, analog elements.

INTRODUCTION

Research and information are increasingly being discovered online. Many students may never enter the library building, yet still use databases and other parts of the online library. However, students continue to use physical academic libraries as they did when the building was still the revered heart of the campus, to study. Nevertheless, questions remain: how can the library reach out to these young students, who grew up entrenched in technology and how can librarians reach them on a personal and physical level if the literature and popular culture suggest that they only want to communicate digitally, in an online format? One answer lies in the library display. While displays are mostly seen in the realm of public or school libraries, they can be equally important to academic libraries. What is more familiar in academic library displays is the presenting of the library's collections, rare books, and other materials that showcase what the library has to offer. Rarely are displays purely lighthearted or playful, produced for the express reason of stress relief and entertainment within the library. Displays come in various shapes and

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sizes and can take place in the physical realm as well as the digital world. College students, especially Millennial students, respond surprisingly well to physical displays that use analog types of interaction.

When Valparaiso University's Christopher Center for Library and Information Resources (CCLIR) produces displays with interactive analog elements, and in this case analog is defined as not digital or computer-centric, each has proven more popular than their digital counterparts. Students appear to respond with more enthusiasm to the analog components. Analog displays garner a personal connection with student patrons, and show students that the library wants to interact with them. Even on a basic level displays can build community. Analog displays demonstrate student engagement with the physical space of the library and contribute to the academic library being a value added space on campus. Student engagement also leads to a feeling of goodwill between students and the library. This level of communication between the library and the student body can only be experienced if a student steps into the building. This chapter will review the literature regarding displays in libraries. It will detail the current student body, Millennials, and determine what they want and expect within the physical library building. In-person, analog displays will be compared and contrasted with online, digital displays. The chapter will detail display processes and case studies of displays produced at the CCLIR, and then discuss them within the contexts of libraries, sociology and community.

BACKGROUND

The Study of Space

Grayton (2008) defined both social and communal activity within library space: "Communal activity in academic libraries is a solitary activity: it is studious, contemplative, and quiet. Social activity is a group activity: it is sometimes studious, not always contemplative, and certainly not quiet" (p. 60). Social activity is seen in specific spaces and functions. The ubiquitous coffee shop, group study rooms and common spaces clearly invite a different type of behavior than what would be seen in a traditional library. This is what the literature says the Millennial Generation requires, and many libraries have responded. Communal activity, consisting of quiet study and contemplation amongst an environment conducive to such, is a conditioned desire. Many academic libraries, influenced by information commons trends, have renovated or created facilities to focus on this social space. Traditional study carrels were traded for long multi-seat tables and individual study rooms were adjusted to accommodate larger groups. These changes were an assumed necessity, but there is little evidence that these changes enhance the library itself or the students' usage of it (Yoo-Lee, Lee & Velez, 2013).

The Christopher Center for Library and Information Resources (CCLIR) opened in 2004 on the Indiana campus of Valparaiso University. It replaced the old Moellering Library and every measure was taken by library services' faculty and staff to make it the most student-centric building possible. Both student views and the most current research were taken into consideration, shaping design elements such as the amount of natural light, and the number of study rooms. A decade ago, the literature recommended information commons, and scholars discussed changes in the physical space through design and planning; the accommodation of changing technology was key (MacWhinnie, 2003). Thus, the CCLIR has many of those aspects in its design, such as a coffee shop and other social areas as well as group study rooms. Much thought also went into different aspects of noise level within the building; currently the third and fourth floors are the quiet floors while the first and second remain noisier and more social.

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