CHAPTER 6

Instagram

6.1 CASE STUDY 1

Using Instagram to Engage Students During Library Orientation

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**Institution:** Walsh University, Brother Edmond Drouin Library; 2890 students (Fall 2015) including undergraduate and graduate students. Private, liberal arts college located in North Canton, Ohio.

**Campaign Purpose:** Bring all freshmen and transfer students into the Brother Edmond Drouin Library for an orientation during a themed “Library Week” and let them explore the library and meet their Personal Librarian via a structured “InstaHunt” using Instagram.

**Target Demographic:** Approximately 438 freshmen and first semester transfer students.

**Measure of Success:** Student engagement with Instagram during library week. Before Library Week, the Walsh Library Instagram account (@walshlibrary) had about 15 followers. By the end of the week, we had approximately 70, an increase of 466%. We were able to maintain this follow-ship throughout the semester. Our Instagram account currently has 113 followers (as of October 2017).

**Team:** Four librarians (Instruction Librarian, Student Engagement Librarian, Public Services Librarian, and Library Director); support from library staff and General Education 100/110 facilitators and instructors.
6.1.1 BACKGROUND

All incoming Walsh University freshmen and transfer students are placed into a General Education (GE) 100 (First Year Institute) or GE 110 (Study Skills) class. Since the 2014–15 school year, the same group of students, incoming freshmen and transfers, were partnered with their own Personal Librarian (PL) as a part of the Walsh University Personal Librarian Program. This program connects these students to the subject specialist librarian for their major who contacts them throughout the year via emails and newsletters promoting library services, tutorials, and resources.

Before the 2016–17 school year, librarians would occasionally be invited into GE 100/110 classrooms for a typical one-shot instruction session where we would be asked to cover a considerable amount of information, including the PL Program, in an hour or less. In an effort to try something new, the librarians created Library Week as a substitute for our previous involvement with the GE classes.

The objectives of Library Week were twofold: to provide an orientation for incoming freshmen and to welcome back returning students. For the new students we sought to establish a summer reading text that all students read, identify starting points for pursuing a research topic, and connect students to their personal librarian. We offered a welcoming atmosphere for our returning students by collaborating with campus partners to provide workshops and activities.

Working with the coordinators for the First Year Institute, which oversees the GE 100/110 classes, it was decided that having the students physically come to the library would be beneficial to them in their first year of college. This group of faculty and staff also wanted the library portion of GE 100/110 to be tied to the common text, Dead Man Walking by Helen Prejean, C.S.J.

6.1.2 LIBRARY WEEK

Our first Library Week was held during the fifth week of Walsh’s fall semester from September 26–30, 2016. We chose these dates for two reasons: it worked best with our GE instructors; and we had held informal welcome events for freshmen in previous years, but had small turnouts due to competition with other departments and campus players vying for student attention during those first two weeks of classes. The 2016 Library Week was deemed successful and another Library Week was planned for the same time frame—September 25–29, 2017.
The planning for Library Week began in Summer 2016. We chose to have an autumn theme and planned on decorating the interior of the Library with fall leaves, pumpkins, chrysanthemum flowers, and more. During the summer we had student workers decorate leaves and create signage for Library Week. One of signs read “Fall in Love with the #walshulibrary” and we encouraged InstaHunt users to use this to hashtag their images (Fig. 6.1.1).

We created much of the promotional materials ourselves using Canva and Adobe Photoshop Elements. Flyers went up in the Library and around campus with the Library Week lineup a week before the first event took place. Emails were also sent out with the flyer to announce Library Week to the campus.

The Library Week lineup included a jelly bean count contest that lasted the whole week and daily activities such as: a call number challenge; a Google power searching workshop; a collaborative program with the Career Center on finding jobs; a fun, ideal study space quiz; and more. The 2016 flyer can be seen in Fig. 6.1.2.

Figure 6.1.1 Our “Fall in Love with the #walshulibrary” sign promoted our hashtag and was hung from our second floor rail.
Anyone who participated in any aspect of Library Week was entered into a raffle drawing for a grand prize of a reserved study room for Finals Week. Additional prizes were donated and given away, including a Walsh University scarf and a Library Week mug filled with school supplies.
Of note, 438 freshmen or transfer students were scheduled to come to Library Week. We had 385 students come for a participation rate of 88%. A very short survey was included with the prize entry for participating in any Library Week event and 98% of students who completed the survey indicated they felt comfortable using the Library after participating.

6.1.3 THE INSTAHUNT

We chose to use Instagram over our other social media platform, Facebook. We chose Instagram because that was what our student workers said they were using and preferred. In addition, it seemed as if our Facebook account, though well established with over 250 followers, had a large alumni presence and less current undergraduates, our target group for Library Week and the InstaHunt. Over the summer the library had been doing some cosmetic upgrades including new chairs and lighting. Instagram was ideal because it let us take more photographs of the library’s new upgrades. We also took into consideration that a new building on campus would be attached to the library via a walkway, and Instagram was a good choice for documenting the construction progress.

The InstaHunt was designed to be a mobile photographic scavenger hunt where the students explored the library by taking pictures on their smartphones using the Instagram app. The GE students were assigned a worksheet to complete and the InstaHunt section asked students to find:

- something confusing,
- the best study spot,
- your group with a someone that works in the library (ask who they are and what they do!), and
- the strangest book in the library.

In addition to the InstaHunt, the worksheet asked students to use a library database, create a citation, and contribute to an interactive display. Students were required to turn this worksheet into their GE instructor for class credit.

The rest of the Walsh community, those outside of the GE classes, were able to voluntarily participate in their own InstaHunt on the Thursday of Library Week. Their scavenger hunt asked for five photos since this was the only activity asked of them (vs the GE students who had other tasks) and
Figure 6.1.3 2016 InstaHunt Library card. The dates were the only thing updated for 2017.
reflected our hope that they were at least minimally familiar with the library. It asked them to find:

- the best study spot,
- something confusing,
- reference desk,
- DVD you want to watch, and
- strangest book in the library (Fig. 6.1.3).

The students spent about 15–25 minutes exploring the library and taking pictures. Anyone who participated in the InstaHunt was asked to show the images or posts to a librarian or circulation desk student worker to receive a coupon for 10 free color prints to be used at any time during the semester and their entry form for the Library Week prizes. Because library staff did not have to check or ask about each photograph, the process of giving out coupons was not too time-consuming for staff.

During the InstaHunts, librarians observed students enjoying the activity and making comments such as, “oh, I would totally study here!” The students also found some pretty strangely titled books, such as Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears and Bring Me a Unicorn (not a children’s book), and one audio-visual item that ended up being weeded called Sports Sex-Ed Video. In addition, it was also nice for the librarians and staff to be able to meet some of the students and say hello. Although we always encourage students to reach out and visit their personal librarians or stop in for one-on-one consultations, they do not always do this. Plus, the directive for the GE students to find “someone that works in the library (ask who they are and what they do!)” allowed students to meet more than just their personal librarians, such as some of our technical services staff which have offices away from the main library area.

### 6.1.4 WHAT WORKED

- Having the InstaHunt be a part of something larger: Framing the InstaHunt as both part of Library Week and part of the freshmen GE 100/110 orientation really encouraged participation that we would not have seen if it was a standalone event.
- Letting the students explore on their own: The students seemed to really like that we encouraged them to go through the Library on their own. Rather than just listening to someone who represented the
Library, they truly were able to immerse themselves and find all the fun spaces within our two floors.

- Letting the students work in groups: Students enjoyed working together (though they sometimes argued over what was the best study spot) and this fostered camaraderie within the GE classes. Working together in pairs or groups also helps with issues if one student does not have a working phone with them during class time.
- Encouraging the students to meet faculty and staff who work in the Library: The faculty and staff were eager to welcome the students and expose them to the friendly and helpful atmosphere of the library. Students also were able to meet their Personal Librarian during the InstaHunt.

6.1.5 WHAT DIDN'T WORK

- Some students did not want to post on their Instagram accounts: One student told a librarian that there was a “rule” of “one [photo] a day is OK” meaning she did not want to post the four images that were part of the InstaHunt. For students without Instagram accounts or for those who did not want to post on their own accounts, we suggested they direct message to the Library’s Instagram account or email us.
- The preplanned hashtags: On the InstaHunt directions we suggested using the hashtags #walshulibrary and #libraryweek2016. A few students used these, but the majority did not. Some students made their own hashtags. During the marketing process for Library Week, we heavily marketed the Instagram account, but perhaps we should have marketed these hashtags as well.

6.1.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make sure you already have an Instagram account ready to go before launching a project like this. You may need permission from your Marketing department before creating a new social media account and you would not want to be delayed by this step. Having a few followers in place will also let you spread the word through the app itself.
- Marketing! Whether you are doing an Instagram-based scavenger hunt as a standalone event or as part of something larger, you will definitely want to market both the program and your Instagram account.
- Have a plan in place for students who do not have Instagram or do not want to put images on their own account.
• Track the numbers: If your goal is to gain more followers, make sure you write down how many you started with so you can track your growth.
• Do a practice run: We had a student worker do the InstaHunt in the weeks leading up to Library Week so we knew approximately how long it would take the students to complete and so we could ascertain if anything in the directions was confusing and needed to be reworded.
• Have a hashtag and promote it: Even though many students did not use the hashtags we suggested, it is still a good idea to promote one. Having a hashtag will make it easier to find images if your account is not directly linked to what is being posted.
• Make sure you have the support of your entire Library staff: We are very grateful to our library staff for their assistance during Library Week. The circulation supervisor provided student workers for decorating, handing out directions for Library Week events, and making sure students who participated in the InstaHunt received their prize entry and color prints coupon.
• Have a plan in place for responding to students’ posts: We responded to the posts about confusing things by clarifying what they were (see next section).

6.1.7 USING INSTAGRAM AFTER LIBRARY WEEK

There were a number of confusing things (either tagged with #confusing-things or labeled as confusing in emails or on their Instagram captions) in the library, so much so, that we decided to turn those pictures into a wall exhibit. Near the end of the semester we posted the images that had been tagged as being confusing to students and described what they were. For example, a mobile that hangs from the ceiling of the library was considered by many confusing. We provided the history of the artwork that was made by a former student (Fig. 6.1.4).

Our Instagram account has continued to grow. We also gained a considerable number of followers once we started posting weekly construction updates related to a new building, the Walsh University Global Learning Center, that is set to open on campus in April, 2018. We created the hashtag #viewfromtheredchair and we took the photographs from the same comfortable red chair overlooking the construction zone. Once construction expanded and the red chairs had to be moved, the
shooting location moved about 10 feet to the left and the hashtag changed to #viewfromtheglobe.

6.1.8 FINAL WORDS

Instagram continues to be a popular social media outlook for Generation Z undergraduate students. An Instagram-based scavenger hunt, or an InstaHunt, is a fun and imaginative way for freshmen and new students to experience and explore the library on their own in a structured, self-paced manner. In addition, having a hashtag specific to your library can encourage repeated posts even after your event.
6.2 CASE STUDY 2

Enhancing Your Instagram Following Through Interdepartmental Collaboration

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Institution: Mount Saint Mary College, 2700 (2014–15) students on one campus, one library location.

Campaign Purpose: Instagram Contest: Interdepartmental effort to increase student following on Instagram accounts and boost online traffic through incentive-driven contest.

Target Demographic: Students.

Measure of Success: Increased student engagement with the page (liking, sharing, followers, commenting on posts).

Team: One librarian, support from departments across campus.

6.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Mount Saint Mary College is a liberal arts institution located in the Hudson Valley region of New York state. The college has a number of traditional undergraduate degree programs, most notably Business, Education, and Nursing. In addition to these programs, the college also offers graduate degrees in the aforementioned areas.

With a Full Time Equivalents of 2200, the student body at Mount Saint Mary College consists of traditional, nontraditional, and accelerated students. In order to best disseminate information, the Kaplan Family Library at the college recognized the need to increase engagement on social media platforms. After informally speaking with traditional students in regards to the platform used most widely among their age group, the library learned that Instagram was the most popular as it provided information quickly in a photograph format. Therefore the Library set up an Instagram (IG) account in order to provide students with a variety of information about library services, programming, and any operational changes (such as hours), which may occur.
After a number of unsuccessful attempts to gain followers, the Library was stumped as to where and how to proceed to increase the numbers. Through general conversations with the college’s Writing Center, it was learned that they also had a low social media following. Curious as to whether other departments were experiencing the same issue, the two departments contacted other student support departments and found they had low numbers of Instagram followers as well. Through collaborations, brainstorming, crowdsourcing, and re-grouping, a number of departments worked together to successfully boost their IG followers.

6.2.2 THE DILEMMA

Impervious to the knowledge that other departments were struggling with gaining Instagram followers, the Library initially attempted to gain Instagram followers through one program-heavy week: MSMC Library Week. The Library heavily marketed its Instagram account through the weeklong programs and events. Even with the promotion and push of this new account, few followers were gained during that week. Not to be quelled by the low engagement, the Library continued to use the social media platform to update the few followers of upcoming programs as well as post live updates to the page during their programs. With still just 11 followers, the Library contacted the college’s Marketing department.

Using IG as the platform to reach incoming, current, and recently matriculated students, Marketing assisted the Library in gaining followers by posting photos from programming events to the college’s IG as well as used the Library’s signature hashtag (#msmclibrary) to encourage their followers to follow the Library’s page. However, it became apparent there was a disconnect between Marketing’s followers and the Library’s followers. In December 2016, the Library hosted the ever-popular therapy dogs event. Over the course of two hours, dogs were available for petting and hugging for stress relief before finals. While Marketing’s photo and hashtags of the canines elicited close to 300 “likes” on the college’s IG account, the Library’s IG received only three-four likes per dog picture. It was surmised that the lack of activity on the Library’s page was due to the library taking low-quality photos on a tablet and then uploaded to Instagram. Having used a professional camera, Marketing’s
photos were of better quality than the Library’s. With Marketing tagging the Library’s IG account, it was a shocking revelation that followers simply did not move on to the library’s page from Marketing’s page. In further conversations, the Library staff wondered if this was due to the student not being interested in the Library’s photos, not finding them to be relevant to their daily life, or simply feeling that any information about the library is simply found on the Library’s website. Either way, it was clear that a new initiative needed to be taken in order to gain followers.

As it turned out, the Library was not the only department on campus with a lack of social media followers.

Concurrently, the Writing Center was experiencing trouble gaining followers for their social media accounts. Prior to the collaboration, the Writing Center’s engagement on Facebook and Twitter had stagnated. Students who followed their Facebook and Twitter accounts rarely liked or retweeted any content the office posted. Their audience increasingly consisted of faculty and alumni, instead of the intended student audience. As a result, the Writing Center created an Instagram account. They quickly discovered that Instagram’s culture among the student demographic permits far more engagement. Students do not hesitate to like, comment, tag friends, or even repost content on Instagram. This was a stark contrast to Facebook culture among students, which, in the departments’ experience, has shifted to consuming content, not engaging with it.

6.2.3 PROPOSAL FOR COLLABORATION

Since they are located within the same building, the Library and the Writing Center have a strong relationship. Collaboration between these departments had occurred in the past, and the two offices continuously work together when assisting students with research and writing. When the Writing Center reached out to the Library to gauge whether the Library would be interested in collaborating on a social media initiative, the Library was happy to do so.

In addition to reaching out to the Library, the Writing Center also reached out to other departments on campus that had Instagram accounts. By the welcomed response, it was immediately apparent that social media engagement was an issue shared by departments across campus. An initial meeting date and time was set to begin brainstorming what would become a successful contest.
6.2.4 PLANNING

Although situated on a small campus, the attendees at the first meeting were unfamiliar with one another’s roles. A general meet-and-greet session began the meeting among the participating departments: Library, Writing Center, Campus Ministry, and Career Center. (The representative from the Study Abroad office was unable to attend this meeting.) Discussions began as to which population the departments wanted to reach. While each population on campus is important, the participating departments wanted to focus on student engagement and interaction. Therefore, it was decided that Instagram would be the focus as it was the most widely used platform that could be accessed without needing specific technology (e.g., smartphones to access Snapchat). The ability to update Instagram from mobile devices was ideal for the departments across campus.

In addition to deciding on the population and social media platform, the first meeting’s agenda also addressed the length of the contest, the incentives that would ensure contestant participation, the date of the contest, and the most budget-friendly methods of promoting the contest. With a further understanding of each person’s departmental duties, the group was able to divide the work among this informally dubbed “social media contest committee.”

6.2.5 SPEAK WITH TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC ABOUT CONTEST DESIGN

Wanting to showcase each department’s services, the social media contest committee decided that each participant must visit each department one time throughout the week. The contestants would take a selfie of themselves at a designated area within the department (e.g., Information Desk within the library), post that selfie, tag the department within the post, and also follow the department. The end result would be that the person would need to visit the five participating departments, upload five different selfie photos, tag each photo with the department’s IG handle, and follow each department. The agreed upon incentive for contestants was four Visa gift cards each in the amount of $50. Winners would be drawn at random on the Monday following the contest.

In order to stir up some excitement, the Library discussed this contest and the rules among the Student Library Advisory Group. This group,
fondly referred to as the “Library Knights,” meets once a month with the Outreach Librarian and Library Student Staff Coordinator in order to brainstorm ideas and provide input into library services and programming ideas. At this particular meeting, the librarian was merely relaying the contest rules and the opportunity for the students to win $50 gift cards when the students unanimously declared that they would not be participating in the contest. Stumped, the librarian asked the students what they disliked about the contest. After all, the Mount has a small campus and visiting each department to take a photo is not too daunting. The students provided insight into their social media lives; they did not want to flood their personal IG accounts with frivolous photos of departments across campus. They are selective with which photos are posted to their accounts and do not want to overload their accounts with dictionary selfies and other content that is as not meaningful to their lives (at least, on the surface) as people, food, and scenery. Accepting of this revelation, the librarian discussed what type of contest the students would participate in. The conversation centered mostly around the idea that the students enjoy having a social media presence, but do not want to be outwardly seen. Their accounts are private and they are selective. The Library representative took this information back to the Writing Center representative whom had received a similar reaction from the focus group he conducted. Thus, the second meeting of the social media contest committee centered around modifying the contest rules and procedures.

6.2.6 MARKETING

The Writing Center took on the task of creating a promotional flyer using Canva, an online graphic design tool with customizable templates. These flyers provided readers with the instructions on how to participate in the contest (see Fig. 6.2.1), and were then distributed across campus to be hung in common areas.

Additional marketing efforts included promotional Instagram posts prior to the actual event (seen in Fig. 6.2.2) and a slide on the digital signage in the Library as well as around campus. Furthermore, throughout the week, several of the participating offices directed students to the relevant department’s account. For example, on Monday, the Writing Center created a post directing students to follow the Study Abroad office’s Instagram account and “like” its contest photo. Most offices also mentioned the following day’s department in their contest photo post so
students could more easily keep track of which department they needed to interact.

The designated day of the week for the library was Friday. The Library’s corresponding Instagram post is depicted in Fig. 6.2.3.

6.2.7 WHAT WORKED

When the committee convened to finalize plans for the contest, they instead found themselves revamping the initial contest idea. The departments still wanted to showcase themselves as a resource for students, but needed to do so from a social media standpoint rather than the students physically visiting the departments. After some discussion, it was decided that each department would be assigned a day throughout the week to
Figure 6.2.2 Contest promotion post on Instagram.

Figure 6.2.3 Library’s Instagram post for contestants to “like.”
promote their department. For example, if the Writing Center’s day was Monday, the following would need to occur:

- Writing Center posts a photo to Instagram with a particular caption specific to that department.
- Student follows the Writing Center’s Instagram page.
- Student “likes” the Writing Center’s post.

After the event, following the announcement of the winners, each department suffered a slow decrease in followers, who were exclusively interested in entering the contest. This was both disappointing and encouraging because it revealed that even students who were not interested in the department’s services considered the incentive, a $50 Amazon gift card, worth their time and effort to enter the contest. After about two weeks, the followings stabilized, and each department posted final gains of between 50 and 70 followers. For an event that required little work and virtually no financial cost, the return on investment was excellent.

While the contest was a success and each department increased its followers, it would be apropos to address the necessity of working with a cohesive group of colleagues. As stated earlier, this was the first time many members in the group met and worked with one another. The group was fortunate to have had hard-working members who understood the opportunity this would provide for their departments. In addition, complete transparency was a key factor in the success. Without the welcomed setting for comments and concerns, as well as the will to succeed, this contest may very well have flopped.

Another positive outcome of this contest was the positive relationships built among the departments. Professionals were able to learn each other’s duties and gain an underlying respect for one another. Recognizing individuals on campus or at campus events has been a pleasant result of working on this project.

Collaboration was also crucial in generating student engagement. While it would have been easy for students to ignore one department’s posts about a gift card giveaway, posts from five different departments were more likely to command students’ attention.

Although the group has not formally addressed the possibility of holding another contest similar to this one, after such a positive experience it is likely the group will reconvene to persuade another class of students to follow their departments on social media.
6.2.8 WHAT DIDN'T WORK

Assuming that students would utilize their social media in a particular way for a contest would have failed us had we not spoken with the student body about this. It is important to discuss the contest with the target demographic. While the contest was successful in the sense that students began to follow the Instagram pages, we lost many followers once the contest was over.

6.2.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

Working with a variety of departments remarkably helped the marketing and promotional process of the contest. While a library would certainly be able to undertake and adapt this contest for itself, it is highly recommended that a number of departments work together in order to be more visible to the constituents in those areas. It is also important to consider your target audience. The committee decided not to include the Alumni Affairs department, as we specifically wanted to strengthen the relationship between the participating departments and the current students.

6.2.10 FINAL WORDS

After several months of planning and revision, the IG Contest left each department with 50–70 new followers. For many of these departments, such as the Writing Center, this increase doubled its Instagram following, resulting in a substantial boost in digital visibility among students. Furthermore, the collaboration provided a professional network which department representatives could access to initiate future collaborations and projects. Moving forward, a few aspects of the event could have been improved.

Since the contest underwent a lengthy transformation before the structure and rules were established, the committee needed to push the event back by one month to allow time for marketing and promotional efforts to reach the student population. While readers of this chapter now have a guide to follow if they want to replicate this event, starting the planning process early is highly recommended.

One of the ideas that became evident during focus groups is that minimal effort from students yields the greatest success. The first concept for our contest required students to post a selfie of themselves; in
the final version, they could enter by tapping their touchscreens as little as two times per day. Those striving to increase student engagement online should lower their expectations of student participation. A student’s social media presence is a carefully curated representation of the best parts of their lives; they are not willing to spoil the reputation they have constructed for themselves online, even if there is a worthwhile prize.

On a similar vein, rules for the contest should be as clear and simple as possible. Even in its current form, the IG contest’s rules are clunky. They cannot be summarized in a single sentence, which makes communication and advertising more challenging.

The most vexing problem posed by the IG contest is its limited scale. As mentioned earlier, the simpler an event’s concept, instructions, and outreach is, the more successful it will be. Building on the IG Contest with more complexity would only result in a more confusing event. Thus, to improve on this event would require stripping away excess elements; however, since the contest was created with the modest goals of boosting online traffic and increasing IG followings, eliminating either of those requirements would have greatly hindered the success of this event. In this way, the IG Gift Card Giveaway is fixed in its scope.

That being said, several more offices at the Mount Saint Mary College have opened Instagram accounts since the committee started to plan the IG contest. Expanding the event to include these departments will not complicate the rules any further and can only help increase engagement. The social media committee is satisfied with the outcome of this event and is currently considering additional improvements with advice from our student body.
6.3 CASE STUDY 3

Student Social Media Representatives and Instagram: Connecting With the Campus Community Through Library Student Workers

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Institution: College of the Holy Cross Libraries in Worcester, MA; an undergraduate liberal arts school with 2900+ students and three library branches.

Campaign Purpose: We hired a student worker to post to the libraries' Instagram account, in order to feature our branch Music Library, to gain followers to our page, and inspire interactions on our posts.

Target Demographic: Students.

Measure of Success: Statistics associated with our account show that we gained a significant increase in both followers to our Instagram page as well as activity on our posts since hiring a student social media representative.

Team: One librarian and one student social media representative.

6.3.1 THE SITUATION

As the outreach librarian for the College of the Holy Cross Libraries, I oversee all of our social media accounts, which include Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. In the summer of 2015, I decided that I wanted more followers and post engagement on the libraries’ Instagram account. I was struggling to consistently generate social media content that was interesting, engaging, and featured topics not just in the Main Library, where my office is located. Our Instagram account accumulated new followers at a snail’s pace, and audience engagement with my posts was limited at best. I noticed that our campus Chaplain’s Office had a popular Instagram account with over 1000 followers, and nearly 100+ likes or comments on each of their posts. I met with the social media administrator for this popular account, and learned that they had one student social media representative working eight hours per week to generate content.
for their Instagram and Snapchat accounts. I decided to copy this idea, and hired a student social media representative to give a student voice and perspective to our Instagram account. My co-author for this chapter is a student worker in the campus Music Library. She was the student social media representative during the 2016–17 academic year.

6.3.1.1 Here Are Some Things to Consider/Steps You Can Take When Hiring a Student Social Media Representative

- Create an online application for the position in Google Forms. The application I use includes a lengthy description of the position duties and requirements, as well as information regarding password security, appropriate language, and content for posts. Additionally, there are a series of questions that ask the students what social media platforms they personally use, why they want work in the position, and what ideas they have for the libraries’ social media accounts.

- Advertise the student social media representative position to student workers already employed in the campus libraries. I asked my colleagues who supervise student workers to help promote this position to students they thought might be interested in this type of work. I also created flyers for my colleagues to pass out to the students, so they have written documentation about the position, as well as a link to the online application, and my contact information.

- Give the students ample time to apply for the position. I gave the students two weeks to apply for the position.

Training the student social media representative was easy and involved one face-to-face meeting at the beginning of the academic year. During this meeting, we discussed the libraries’ social media policy that includes information on appropriate content and language of posts, as well as how to handle any negative feedback they find on our site. I also shared the account password, and discussed account security with the student. Initially I had been slightly worried about sharing our Instagram login information with a student worker, but my colleague from the Chaplain’s Office assured me that he had not had any problems sharing login information with his student workers. To date, I have not had any problems either.

During our training meeting, we discussed the content that the social media representative would post to Instagram throughout the year. We decided that she would post to our social media sites every Monday, and...
focus on topics she found interesting in the Music Library for #music-monday. In addition, she interviewed a library staff member to introduce them to the campus with basic information and a photo. She emailed me these staff interviews, and I posted them at other times during the week, when I had open space in my daily social media schedule. To make this shared social media schedule easy to follow, I generated a daily list of posts for the entire semester using Google Sheets. The balance between my and Heather’s ideas provided direction for her to cover what I hoped she would advertise to her fellow students on campus, as well as generated content about topics that she believed would be interesting to our campus community, particularly her peers in the student body.

6.3.2 IN HEATHER’S WORDS: HER EXPERIENCE POSTING TO OUR LIBRARIES’ INSTAGRAM

6.3.2.1 Music Mondays

Music Mondays is a hashtag we created when we realized many students at our college did not even know the Music Library existed. Many students who utilize the Music Library for study or research are music majors or enrolled in a music class. Contrary to popular belief though, our Music Library is open to all students. We hoped that Music Monday posts would advertise the Music Library as a space for any student while also showcasing the services the Music Library has to offer. To make our posts more organized and easier to find on Instagram, I always used the hashtags #musicmonday and #hclibs. Occasionally, I used other hashtags relevant to the post, that way if people searched more general hashtags on Instagram, our posts would show up too.

Typically, I try to post about something relevant to a campus event or a holiday. For example, when the Theatre department was about open *Little Shop of Horrors*, I found the score in the Music Library and posted about it in an effort to generate student interest in the show. The week of St. Patrick’s Day, I posted about Celtic music housed in the Music Library. Between the number of likes and comments on these posts, it was obvious they were well-received by our followers. The most important thing is to post about something relevant or something students are interested in. The musical *Hamilton* is no longer new, but many students are still very interested in the show, and some classes at Holy Cross study it in their courses. When the Music Library acquired new *Hamilton* materials, I posted about them, and incorporated song titles in the caption.
I used multiple *Hamilton* hashtags because those were popular Instagram hashtags for people to search at the time (Fig. 6.3.1).

Generating posts based off previous student input is also a great idea. One time, Holy Cross’ student government association posted their weekly “What’s Wrong Wednesday” with a focus on the libraries. One student commented asking that the libraries make phone and laptop chargers available for checkout when students forget to bring their own. My supervisor (and co-author) replied to the comment, telling the student that the libraries already have phone chargers. That a student had no idea chargers were available at the libraries told us that we needed to advertise this service better. For Music Monday the next day, I photographed a friend using a library phone charger and used it to advertise this service on our Instagram.

6.3.2.2 Library Staff Interviews

I also conducted library staff interviews. Each interview lasted 10—30 minutes. Usually, I would ask the following questions:

- What is your position in Holy Cross Libraries?
- What are your responsibilities?
- How do you help students?
- What is your favorite thing about your job?
- What is your favorite thing about Holy Cross?

By keeping it limited to these few questions, I am able to better condense the interview into a readable Instagram caption that is short enough
that people want to read it but long enough to fit all the interview information I gather. I tried to keep the questions student-centered as students are our primary audience on our Instagram.

As for my advice to other student workers posting to a library Instagram account, the most important thing is making sure you are connecting to other students in a relatable way with your pictures and captions. As a Millennial, it is my observation that many Millennials care about their follower: following ratio; they want to be following the same amount of accounts (or less) than follow them. To protect the privacy of our students, we do not follow them back. This means we have to keep our students interested enough to keep following our account even though it may affect their follower: following ratio (Fig. 6.3.2).

6.3.3 ANALYZING SUCCESS

When I first hired a student social media representative in the Fall of 2015, our Instagram account had 224 followers, with an average of 5–10 likes or comments per post. Now, two years later, our account has 550 +
followers, and each post generally averages between 20 and 50 likes and comments per post. With over a 100% increase in followers and average post activity, I attribute a large amount of this success to having student-generated content on our page. Some of the student-developed posts have been our most popular, including an image of the Music Library’s vinyl record collection. I was only vaguely aware of this collection, and I would not have thought to create a post about it. Nevertheless, Heather knew that this topic would be of interest to her peers, and her post received nearly seventy likes in 1 week (Fig. 6.3.3).

**6.3.4 WHAT WORKED**

- The in-person meeting at the beginning of the semester sets the stage for the entire year. This meeting allows the student social media representative and me to discuss ideas and goals for the social media account.
- The cloud-based schedule hosted in Google Drive allows us to easily update information in real-time, therefore clearing up any confusion about what Heather should work on each week, whether it is something I want her to promote, or something she creates entirely on her own.
• Giving the student social media representative freedom to post about
topics she is interested in, not just what I want her to promote.

6.3.5 WHAT DIDN'T WORK

• Assuming organization and scheduling will just happen “organically.” I
had a student social media representative the year before. I did not
create a schedule of posts for this student, and therefore, I never knew
when he was going to post. Due to this lack of coordination, we often
posted on the same day, within minutes of each other. This left me
feeling like I had to scramble to create additional content.
• Not providing any topic suggestions to the student social media
representative. Without a post schedule, the first student social media
representative was often stumped for ideas. Instead of focusing on a
single library, I told him that he could post anything at all about any
of our campus libraries. The student ended up doing weekly inter-
views of other students studying in our main library, inspired by the
popular “Humans of New York” photoblog. This created very inter-
esting content that our followers did engage with, but these posts did
not promote the libraries’ services or collections.
• Assuming all students are interested in social media work. I have strug-
gled to hire a social media representative from our branch Science
Library. Student workers from that library have stated for the past two
years that they do not have enough time to commit to the position,
despite the fact that they would only need to work one hour per
week to create one or two posts. I have had success recruiting a stu-
dent social media representative from our Archives department thanks
to the head archivist specifically recommending the position to one
student they thought would be good for the position. I may try this
strategy for the Science Library in the future.

6.3.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The idea for student social media representatives was inspired by another
campus office’s popular Instagram account. We suggest that you follow as
many campus departments, offices, sports teams, and club accounts as you
can find. Monitor what they are doing with their accounts, and engage
with the content they post. Note what works and what does not work
for their accounts regarding content, language, style, etc. Keep in contact
with the account administrators to share ideas, and possible collaborations. You never know when the opportunity to promote each other’s resources or collaborate on a campaign may arise.

Give your student social media representative a loose schedule of posts to market the library and its services. Be sure to allow enough room in the schedule for the student to generate their own ideas. The content that is fully generated by your student social media representative may prove to be the most popular content on your site.

### 6.3.7 FINAL WORDS

By hiring a student social media representative, our followers and interactions on Instagram have increased by at least 100% in two years. Through the student-generated content on Instagram, the student body can relate to what their peers post on our site, and the librarians can learn what library topics interest the students on campus.
6.4 CASE STUDY 4
Are We Failing at Instagram?
Matthew Blaine and Jacalyn Kremer
Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT, United States

**Institution:** DiMenna-Nyselius Library, Fairfield University; 5137 students (2016–17).

**Campaign Purpose:** Instagram Assessment Study to determine effectiveness.

**Target Demographic:** Students.

**Measure of Success:** Increased engagement by undergraduates.

**Team:** One librarian, one social media coordinator, support from a library student worker.

6.4.1 INTRODUCTION

At the DiMenna-Nyselius Library at Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT, we maintain three social media accounts: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Understanding who our followers are on the three accounts is key to generating targeted, engaging content for each platform. Over the past two years, approximately 60% of all our new followers chose to follow our Instagram account, 20% chose Facebook, and the remaining 20% chose Twitter. This large increase in Instagram followers compared to the other social media platforms is not surprising when you look at our student population. At Fairfield, our undergraduates are traditional college age students in the age range of 18–22 years old and comprise 80% of our total student population (Fairfield University, 2016). In addition, our undergraduate population is 61% female and 39% male (Fairfield University, 2016). This aligns with Instagram’s demographics where 59% of Instagram users are ages 18–29 and the majority are women (PEW Research Center, 2017).

Since Fairfield University turns over its undergraduate population every four years, it is key we pay special attention to the social media platforms that are most popular with incoming classes. Although our three social media accounts have approximately an equal number of followers, the vast majority of the library’s social media followers who are current students follow the library’s Instagram account. This drove us to position our Instagram channel as the main channel for reaching current students.
and relegated Facebook and, to a lesser extent, Twitter into legacy channels for alumni, as well as outlets for maintaining faculty and staff connections. Consequently, we allocate more staff time to Instagram in order to create frequent and original photo and video postings targeted to our current students.

Our increased focus on Instagram led us to prioritize the evaluation of our Instagram postings and videos to determine what we are and, more importantly, what we are not doing well. How do we judge when we are successful or when we fail? Certainly, the increase in our number of followers is one indication of success. In July 2014 we had 356 Instagram followers, increasing 223% to 1149 as of July 2017. Consequently, based on the number of followers, we were achieving some success, especially since Instagram users see every post from the accounts they follow. One question is, though, are they just scrolling past our content without looking at it? We wondered if we could go beyond the number of followers and learn more about how our students are engaging with the content.

A review of our DiMenna-Nyselius social media policy shows our goals for our social media accounts go beyond the number of users. Our policy states “... our goals are to create awareness and to invite conversation on library and higher education matters. Maintenance of a social media account requires generating interesting, engaging, and useful content relevant to the library, posting this content regularly, and responding to questions and/or comments” (DiMenna-Nyselius Library, 2014). We wondered if these stated goals are quantifiable and assessable. Is it even possible to assess content as “interesting,” “engaging,” or “useful”?

### 6.4.2 ASSESSMENT STUDY

In the summer and fall of 2017, we carried out an assessment study of our Instagram account focusing on the concept of engagement in order to determine what we are doing well and where we could improve. We quantified “engagement” as follows:

- **Images**: Likes + Comments
- **Videos**: Likes + Comments + Views
- **Stories**: Views only

We began by looking at the 140 image and video posts that we had created for the two-year period between July 2015 and July 2017. In addition, we analyzed 10 stories from the one-month period of October 2017. Due to the limited availability of analytics tools for Instagram at the
time, we manually entered information pertaining to the posts’ content, date/time of posting, number of likes, and number of comments into an Excel spreadsheet. For video posts, we also recorded the number of views the post received. For Stories, we only looked at views since that is the only data that Instagram records. It was time consuming to gather engagement data manually, so we can understand our relief when we discovered we could streamline the data-gathering process by changing our account to an Instagram Business account. In addition to providing all the engagement data we needed, Instagram Business also provides metrics on the average age, gender, and location of your followers, and time and day of week when they are most active. It is free to switch to Instagram Business and easy to comprehend with built in explanations of what the data means.

We analyzed the data to determine the engagement for each post. Since the number of followers of the Instagram account was not static but rather was increasing during the study’s time period, we knew it was important to look at the engagement number in relationship to the number of users. For example, if two posts received the same amount of engagement but the total number of followers was less at the time of the first post, then the first post received higher engagement per number of followers than the other post. To take into account the changing number of followers over the time of the study, we divided the engagement number by the total number of users at the start of each academic year in order to weigh the engagement by the number of followers. We picked the start of the academic year since most of our increase in followers occurred at the first-year students’ orientation at the beginning of the academic year. We then classified each post by category to see what categories had better engagement than other categories and, perhaps even more importantly, what categories had the least engagement. We note here it was possible for a single post to be classified under multiple categories.

We developed the following categories:

1. Building (interior and exterior),
2. campus life, such as orientation events,
3. collections,
4. events in society,
5. animals, includes our much loved therapy dogs at finals,
6. hours,
7. library events,
8. library services,
9. throwback/nostalgia, and
10. feel-good/humor.
We created these categories to encapsulate all of the content we posted on Instagram while making the categories as general as possible. Some of the categories are self-explanatory, like building that contains images of our library building, hours that includes posts about changes to our operating hours, or collections that contain posts highlighting library material. Some might not be immediately obvious though. Throwback/nostalgia relates primarily to content that comes from our Archives and Special Collections, which was featured heavily last year as Fairfield celebrated its 75th anniversary. Events in society covers national holidays, trending topics, or national news stories, while campus life describes content related to anything Fairfield. Feel-good/humor describes content developed with the primary function of getting our followers to smile, regardless of whether or not the content was meant to be informative. Now that we have established the categories, let us bring them to life with data.

As you can see from Fig. 6.4.1, the highest number of Instagram posts fell into the events in society, collections, and campus life categories. Our least used categories of posts are animals, hours, and throwback/nostalgia.

![Total number of image and video posts by category](image)

**Figure 6.4.1** Total number of image and video posts by category.
6.4.2.1 Image Assessment

We analyzed the image posts independently from the videos and stories posts. We ranked the image posts by weighted engagement and then looked critically at the posts in the top 20% and also the bottom 20% of engagement. In other words, we isolated the 24 posts with the most engagement and 24 posts with the least engagement. We further examined these top and bottom posts by looking at what percentage of posts in a category fell into these 24 top or 24 bottom posts. See Figs. 6.4.2 and 6.4.3. For example, six animal posts were in the top 24 posts. In total, there were only eight posts

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**Figure 6.4.2** Percent of posts in top 20.

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**Figure 6.4.3** Percent of posts in bottom 20.
in the animal category so 75% (6/8) of the animal posts were in the top 24 engaged posts. What can we say? People love animals. Fig. 6.4.2 also shows strong engagement on building pictures as well as those posts in our feel-good/humor category. We see especially low engagement in the collections category where only 3% of the posts made it into the top engaged posts.

An examination of Fig. 6.4.3 shows the image posts associated with the categories of hours, library events, and collections received the lowest engagement.

### 6.4.2.2 Video Assessment

There were significantly fewer video postings than images during the study’s time period. Since the total number was small (22 videos), we decided to examine the top 50% based on weighted engagement versus the bottom 50%. Fig. 6.4.4 shows the percentage of posts in a category that fell into the top 50% of engagement. Like our image posts, we see high engagement with videos in the building category. The next most engaged categories, campus life and library services, are surprisingly different from what we saw when we examined our top engaged categories for images. We did not have any videos that fell into the categories of animals or throwback.

A review of Fig. 6.4.5 shows the category with the least engagement is the same for videos as with images with the categories of hours, library events, and collections getting the lowest engagement.

### 6.4.2.3 Stories Assessment

Instagram Stories get deleted after 24 hours. We had only 10 stories to analyze because that is how many we were smart enough to save.
Therefore, our assessment data is limited, but our findings here align with our overall findings. Using the same categories that we used for our image and video assessment, we found that the stories fell into the following categories: library events five times, campus life four times, library services three times, collections two times, events in society two times, and feel-good/humor one time. We did not have any stories that fell into the categories of building, animals, hours, or throwback. Some stories fell into multiple categories. Since users cannot actively ‘like’ or comment on Stories, we could only look at views to quantify engagement. In general, the engagement numbers were on par with our video posts in that they averaged an engagement rate of 26% (the average engagement rate for video posts was 27% when just considering views). The difference in engagement numbers between the most engaging stories post and the least engaging stories post was much smaller than the difference between the highest and lowest image posts or video posts. This suggests Stories might have a steady engagement rate regardless of category.

### 6.4.3 DISCUSSION

Let us start the discussion of our study by addressing the question posed in the title of this chapter: Are We Failing at Instagram? The concept of whether or not we are failing at a social media platform can seem marginally abstract; however, it is indeed an important question to answer because we have to justify the expenditure of valuable, limited staff time. If these endeavors are not productive, there is no point doing them.
In looking at the charts depicting the top and bottom 20% of image posts, we see some noticeable trends in what is and what is not popular among our followers. Engagement is disappointing when we post content in the collections category (new additions, displays of materials), library services (research appointments, research prizes, or reference desk assistance), and hours (changes for holidays, vacations, etc.). Posts in the library events category, including finals events, also often fell into our bottom 20%. We quickly noticed these categories all contain information-heavy content that we feel duty-bound to share and promote to our followers. We observed similar results in examining the top and bottom 50% of video posts, in that posts related to our hours, library events, and collections had low engagement. This led us to ask ourselves the unsettling question: how do we respond to the evidence that our students are not engaging with our posts centered on the academic library’s core functions?

It is discouraging to see our followers do not care enough about our collections, events, services, and hours to engage with it, especially when we had been following the best practices in literature that encourage us to share this type of content (Booker & Bandyopadhyay, 2013; Zohoorian-Fooladi & Abrizah, 2014). The academic library brand is built on excellent collections, research support services, and library as place. Our failing efforts on Instagram in the categories of collections, library services, and hours are, therefore, particularly disheartening. This leads us to wonder whether or not our presence on Instagram is valuable and worth maintaining.

Should we use social media to reach our students in the areas we care most about such as our excellent collections and valuable services, or should we reconsider the type of content we post in order to engage more with them? The majority of today’s first-year college students were born in 1999 or 2000, so they were approximately five years old when Facebook was released in 2004 and 11 years old when Instagram came out in 2010. Their lives, specifically how they interact with each other and with information, have been profoundly influenced by these social media platforms and therefore, if we want to engage with our students, it makes perfect, logical sense to connect with them on these platforms. It is imperative though that we re-evaluate the content of our postings.
6.4.4 HOW CAN WE IMPROVE?

If we are, indeed, failing at Instagram by posting unengaging content, how can we correct this and use this communication tool effectively? To begin to answer this question, let us look at our successful posts, including both images and videos. It comes as no surprise to us that our most popular posts are the ones in the animals category that feature the therapy dogs we have visit during finals. That is common social media knowledge: dog and animal pictures are always going to be successful on Instagram (the common trope of the internet is that it is just a place for people to distract themselves with cat pictures). Beyond that category, however, we see that pictures of the building are popular, as are campus life related posts (these include pictures of students, campus-centric events, and anytime we have a visit from the school mascot). This makes sense, too, as it confirms to us that our student followers like seeing things related to their lives at Fairfield. Moreover, those posts that fell into the categories of building, campus life, and animals were always successful regardless of the format (images, videos, or stories).

What about the content that fell into the poorly performing categories though? After all, the main reason that we initially signed up for Instagram was to share information on our collections, services, events, and hours, and we dedicate a significant amount of time and energy (and therefore money) to these efforts. Through our analysis, we now recognize that certain content works better as an Instagram image or video or story, so choosing the right format is important.

6.4.4.1 When to Choose Videos

On video posts, Instagram displays the number of times the post was viewed rather than how many times the post was liked. Image posts display the number of likes. In order to have an Instagram page that outwardly displays a consistently high engagement rate, we decided to post content related to our poorly performing categories as videos. These videos were getting over 100 views and that looked significantly better than only a handful of likes. Although this might seem like a superficial experiment to make our page look more ‘popular,’ it did have measurable benefits in that more of the video posts related to library services were ranked in the top 50% and fewer were in the bottom 50%, unlike our image posts in that category, which were consistently in the bottom percentiles.
We recognize the higher engagement rate to be a reflection on how video posts can be more eye-catching than just a still image. For example, at the beginning of every fall semester, new students need to know where the IT office is in order to register their computers. Last year, instead of doing what we have done in the past and just post a photo of the door to the office, we made a time-lapse video of the route from outside the library building to where the IT office is located in the building. This video was among our most popular videos with over 350 views.

6.4.4.2 When to Choose Stories
The engagement that we were able to see on our stories is fairly on par with our permanent video posts, so we consider Stories to be another useful tool in pushing out promotional content or other material that might fall into one of the lesser engaging categories of posts (hours, library events, collections, library services). Since stories disappear after 24 hours, it is great for information that quickly loses its relevancy, like posts about operating hour changes due to inclement weather, giveaways, events, etc. Stories, in general, is a way for someone to share what they are doing in the moment while the main, permanent feed is a place to share what has already happened or something that is not necessarily tied to a moment in time.

6.4.4.3 When to Choose Images
Even with the new, flashier ways to use Instagram, there are still plenty of opportunities to use it as it was originally designed as a platform to post still images. Essentially, anything that fell into the most popular or most well-engaged-with categories is what you should still be posting as static images. Content that can be visibly appealing like photos of the building or the campus on a beautiful day should always be posted as static images. Photos of therapy dogs and animals and popular campus-related events like orientation are great candidates for image posts. These categories were among our most engaged with perhaps because they are already esthetically appealing and are not too heavy-handed with marketing and promotions.

Posts we categorized as having a feel-good/humor factor were often well received. These posts include humorous and fun topics, like when we posted about the summer fad of 2016, *Pokémon Go*. These posts did not always promote anything library related, but instead added to the overall campus conversation that happens daily on Instagram. This high
engagement tells us a lot about the voice and tone that we should use on Instagram. This, we posit, is where we should be focusing more of our attention and why it is in fact important to be on Instagram. The objective might not be to use Instagram as a marketing tool for traditional library offerings, but rather use it as a communication tool to further establish our presence as part of the ongoing conversations on campus.

6.4.4.4 Other Ways to Improve Engagement

When thinking through what works, one of our best practices centers on our relationship with our university’s social media coordinator. This relationship manifests itself in several different ways depending on the platform. On Twitter and Facebook, the university account will share content that we provide them or will directly retweet or repost our original posts. Typically, we will ask them to share information about our events and resources. On Instagram, it works a little differently because there is not a built-in reposting tool, so sharing other accounts’ posts is not as easy. Instead, we will “takeover” the university’s Instagram account for an event or other happening that we are hosting, meaning that the manager of the university account will give us a password to the account and we will post directly to their followers. In doing so, we are able to reach a much larger audience of their 10,000 followers, which dwarfs our respectable 1000+ following. This “takeover” is actually a fairly common practice for businesses on Instagram, so users are accustomed to it.

The results are measurable, as seen by looking at when we took over the university’s Instagram account during first years’ orientation this past summer. After a long day of orientation activities, the new students finish their day registering for classes at the library. After they finish, they exit the building full of relief and excitement, both of which are further agitated by a crowd of orientation leaders cheering them on and congratulating them on a successful orientation. The library staff is there as well to join in congratulating the students and to pass out some freebies such as buttons, travel mugs, and other swag. Fig. 6.4.6 shows two screenshots of similar posts that we shared on our own Instagram account (on the left) and on the university’s Instagram account (on the right). The content of the posts was nearly identical, but we were able to reach roughly 10 times the amount of people when we used the university’s account. The significance of this cannot be understated. In terms of maximizing our reach, this is a sure-fire way to go and we will undoubtedly utilize this outlet again in the future.
6.4.5 WHAT WORKED

- Animals and feel-good/humor-type posts, as well as images and video posts that related back to the university, are the most engaging.
- Posts associated with our university brand were popular, including those of easily recognized buildings, the mascot, and pictures of students.
- Creating videos and using Stories made the more mundane posts more visually appealing.
- Partnering with the university’s social media accounts led to increased reach.

6.4.6 WHAT DIDN’T WORK

- Following what were some of the so-called best practices on Instagram by libraries was not productive, in that image and video posts related to hours, events, and collections received the least amount of measurable engagement.
• Image posts related to library services got little engagement.
• Video posts related to library events got less engagement than image posts about library events.
• As an outreach tool, using the Library’s Instagram account alone does not get the message out.

6.4.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

• Switch your Instagram account to an Instagram Business account in order to effectively gather engagement data. Update an Excel doc or Google Sheet regularly (month over month, week over week, etc.) with statistics on your account, drawing from Instagram Business analytics.
• Post less–engaging content (hours, collections, and services-type posts) as videos or stories rather than as static images.
• Super important posts might best be done by the main college/university account that has more followers. Take over your college/university’s Instagram account to reach more people.
• Post more feel-good content and animal photos and videos when you can.
• Use images and videos that align with and display your college/university brand.
• Consider the mix of your content. Is it all about hours, services, and collections? Broaden your content to include animals that you might have around the building (our campus is full of wild turkeys and deer), feel-good/humorous topical posts, and beautiful campus life pictures including your library building.

6.4.8 FINAL WORDS

There is an inherent danger in using Instagram, in that we might seem like an uninvited guest to a party that nobody wants to talk to or worse, someone who barges in and ruins a fun conversation. The data supports this, as it shows that when we post about something relatable or fun/light-hearted, the engagement is usually high. In contrast, when we post something that we are trying to promote or that is related to the core mission of the academic library, the engagement is disappointing. It is a harsh truth, but an important observation and one that we feel is necessary to understand how to be successful at using Instagram. Based on our data, if we continue to post content that falls into those high engagement
categories and keep a tone that is friendly and fits within the campus conversation, then we will see better engagement and consider our efforts successful. Indeed, we are still using Instagram as a marketing and outreach tool, but instead of directly marketing our collections and services, we are marketing our presence as an integral part of campus life. This is akin to the approach we see in corporate marketing. Companies promote their brand and the lifestyle that they are selling through their products, rather than the actual products themselves. We can think like this too and consider what our “library brand” is and what lifestyle we are trying to communicate to our students.

As an academic library, we claim our identity as the intellectual heart of the university and we believe this applies to all academic libraries. Students see the library as the place they go to anchor themselves in order to focus and study, and we promote those lifestyle behaviors by posting visual reminders of how, if students come here, they will find a beautiful, calming space where they can work to achieve academic success. Everything we do, including our collections, services, and events, is built to support that lifestyle. By choosing more engaging content and adjusting the ways that we present content, like using more visually appealing videos or stories, we are promoting the totality of the library experience.

REFERENCES


