

1500% increase

Emerging theme of togetherness



Re-framing the digital library



INTRODUCTION

- The long-term nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many public libraries to re-evaluate their traditional use of social media.
- The majority (over 80%) now use social media to both keep stakeholders informed of emerging changes, and to deliver some of their new digital programming.¹
- This on-going study explores three social media platforms used by a large Canadian public library in order to better understand the impacts of the pandemic.

BACKGROUND

- Research into social media use within public libraries has tended to either focus on it for marketing and engagement or for providing best practice recommendations.
- Very little of the research looks at providing virtual programming beyond reader's advisory and even less of it explores multi-platform comparisons.
- "Despite libraries providing much needed services and resources to community members after natural disasters, their use of social media platforms as a tool remains overlooked."²
- COVID-19 has created an opportunity for libraries wherein social media is less of an option for promoting services and more of a necessity for providing them.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What types of pandemic-related information and/or services is VPL providing via Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube?
- What types of virtual programming is VPL offering on these platforms?
- How has the content changed on these platforms between 2019 and 2020?

METHODOLOGY

- This study utilizes Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis³ to examine content posted to VPL's Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube accounts between February 1st and June 30th in both 2019 and 2020.
 - The themes will then be compared to see what, if any, changes have occurred.
- VPL was chosen because:
- It has been studied before and found to have a robust social media presence.^{4, 5, 6}
 - During the first wave of the pandemic, the province of British Columbia had to contend with not only the first large outbreak of COVID-19 in Canada, but also the fourth largest provincial case count (sixth per capita) and fourth largest death count (fifth per capita) in Canada.⁷
 - VPL is the third largest library system in Canada; it serves a culturally diverse population across 21 locations, which makes it a prime location for potential innovation.^{8, 9}

| YouTube Coding 2019 | | | | |
|---------------------|--|---|--|---|
| Date of Post | Initial Descriptive | Synthesis | Initial Codes | Larger Theme |
| 05-04-2019 | "morph - Freedom" (38s) ➔ promo for morph exhibition ➔ Jane Eyre quote ➔ woman from Syria ➔ experiencing freedom in Canada for first time | -Advertising exhibit -freedom | -Advertising exhibit | Advertising The promotion of exhibits, events, programs, pilots, etc. within the library |
| 23-05-2019 | "A Bloom with a View" (6s) ➔ promo for Central Library's rooftop garden | -Advertising VPL's rooftop garden | -Advertising place | |
| 27-05-2019 | "Escape the Everyday" (35s) ➔ promo for Central Library's rooftop area Activities include: ➔ Instagram photos ➔ reading ➔ painting club, painting ➔ garden ➔ view ➔ photography ➔ jumping, dancing, playing | -Advertising rooftop garden (fun, dynamic place) -Library activities | -Advertising place -Advertising programs/activities | |

Figure 1: Example of thematic analysis

RESULTS

- Preliminary YouTube results show:
 - a significant increase in use
 - a shift from advertising towards virtual programming and resource-related information (particularly for children and those seeking employment)
- Preliminary Instagram results show:
 - a potential re-framing of VPL's digital library (from resources to place)
 - an emerging theme of togetherness (shaped by a need to express solidarity, caring, and longing for one another)
- Preliminary Twitter results are still in-progress.

LIMITATIONS

- The results of this study are limited because data could not be obtained for VPL's Facebook account.
- Therefore, an all-inclusive understanding of the impacts of the pandemic on the library's social media practices cannot be achieved.

CONCLUSION

- Overall, this study could lead to new policy recommendations and updated best practices for public libraries' social media use.

| | Number of Posts by Platform Per Year | | | | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|------|---------|------|---------|------|
| | Instagram | | Twitter | | YouTube | |
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2019 | 2020 | 2019 | 2020 |
| February | 20 | 17 | 149 | 154 | 0 | 0 |
| March | 25 | 20 | 161 | 117 | 0 | 1 |
| April | 22 | 18 | 144 | 77 | 1 | 6 |
| May | 21 | 19 | 186 | 87 | 2 | 18 |
| June | 21 | 15 | 173 | 75 | 0 | 23 |
| TOTALS | 109 | 89 | 813 | 510 | 3 | 48 |

Table 1: Total number of posts by platform, year, and month



Figure 2: Instagram posts demonstrating the "togetherness" theme

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