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Patron Driven Programs: Successes and Lessons Learned from Turning the Library Over to Students for a Week

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Patron-Driven Programs:

Successes and Lessons Learned from Turning the Library Over to Students for a Week

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Background:

- Valparaiso University is a private, midsize, comprehensive university in the Midwest, with an 2015-2016 student enrollment of 4,544.
- Average door counts for the Christopher Center for Library and Information Resources (CCLIR) increase 35-40% during week before finals.
- The Christopher Center Library Services has experimented with offering de-stress programming for a number of years.
- In December 2014, we implemented a new initiative, December De-Stress, to provide a week of passive programming during the end of the fall semester, to low interest.
- For December De-Stress 2015, we decided to turn the tables and let students generate their own programming ideas.

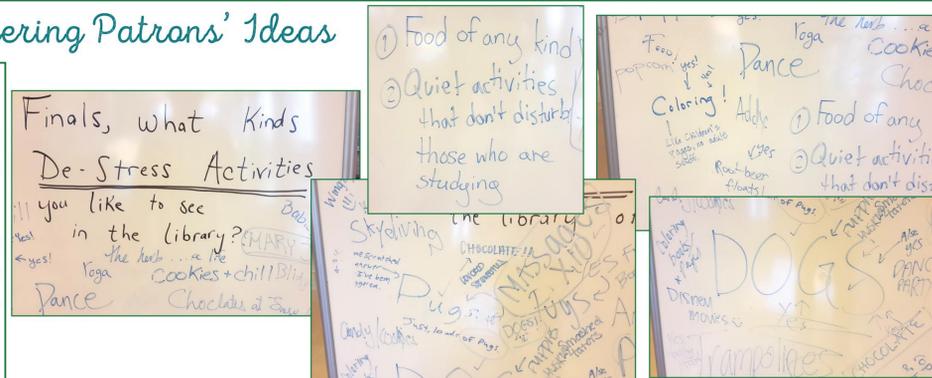
Self-Determination Theory

- Students are more likely to engage with, and participate in, activities whenever they have more choices and input in the planning process.
- Self-determination theory holds that people are intrinsically motivated by activities that they find enjoyable or interesting, and they are extrinsically motivated by incentives, such as food or money.
- Without the possibility of external rewards, students will need to find activities personally interesting in order to be motivated to participate.
- Library programs should appeal to students' three basic psychologically motivating needs: competence, connectedness, and autonomy.

1 The Process: Gathering Patrons' Ideas

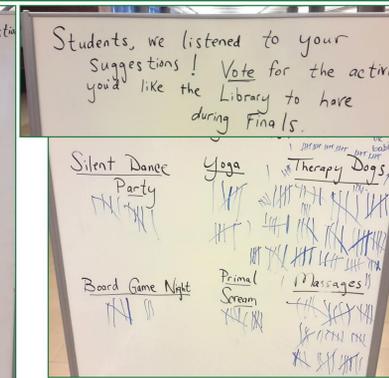
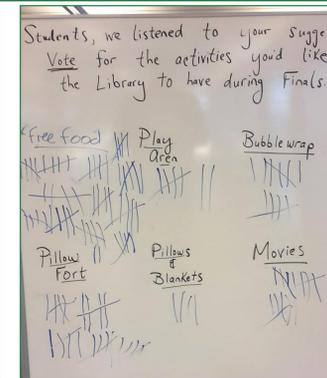
A Culture of Whiteboards

- Librarians have a successful track record of using whiteboards as part of programs in the past
- More responses from students are gathered from anonymous whiteboard responses than any other method



Idea-Generation Stage

- Whiteboards were placed in the lobby of the CCLIR a month before finals, asking "During Finals, what kind of de-stress activities would you like to see in the library?"
- Students being students, some ideas (babies, wings, "Mary J", skydiving) were not taken seriously
- After a week, results were compiled by theme and feasibility



Voting Stage

- Whiteboards were once again placed in the lobby, where students could vote on 6 passive and 6 active programming ideas
- Next was trying to make the students' top choices a reality

Considerations

- It's unfeasible to implement every single idea
- It felt slightly disingenuous to filter students' suggestions
- Filtering was a necessity based on practical considerations like budget and space

2 The Product: Active and Passive Programs



Active Programs

- Board Game Night: with snacks provided
- Therapy Dogs: Provided courtesy of a local church ministry; came on 3 separate occasions
- Yoga in the Library: Collaboration with campus's Recreational Sports, who provided yoga mats and instructor
- Primal Scream: At a designated time, students were led outside the building, screamed for 30 seconds and came in for hot chocolate and cookies
- VisBox Gaming Nights: run by a graduate student, on 4 separate occasions



Passive Programs

- Blanket Fort: An entire lounge was transformed into a space for building blanket forts; couches, cushions and sheets were provided
- Playspace: Makerspace was created on the loudest floor in the library; included Playdough, coloring sheets and crayons, bubble wrap, board games, and button making templates



Timing and Considerations

- Events were scheduled the last week of classes rather than actual finals week, which has more student use
- Many programs were made possible by collaborating with on- or off-campus partners like Res Life and Lutheran Church Charities (therapy dogs)
- Be prepared for a possible lack of buy-in from groups outside the library



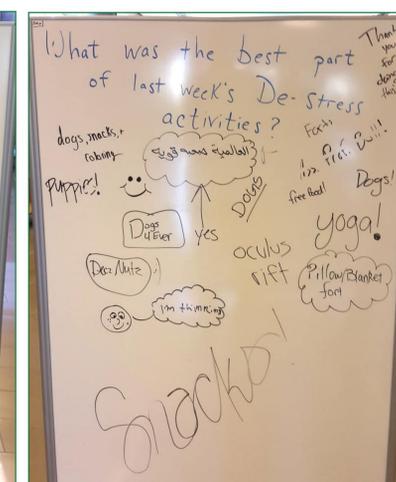
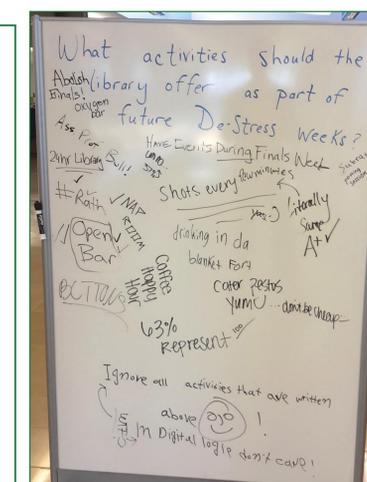
3 Outcomes: Participation and Assessment Feedback

By the Numbers:

Response was overwhelmingly positive!

Attendance of Programs:

- Board Game & Playspace Launch: 150
- Therapy Dogs (combined): 550
- Yoga in the Library: 10
- Primal Scream: 20
- VisBox Gaming Nights (combined): 70
- Blanket Forts: At least 4 distinct forts were created, with countless inhabitants
- Playspace: 200 +



Assessment Feedback:

Following the success of December De-Stress 2015, we once again used whiteboards to gather patron feedback and suggestions for next time. Patrons expressed their gratitude for the de-stress programming and an enthusiasm for the next iteration.



Advice on Organizing Patron-Driven Programming

Communication is Key!

- Between departments of the library
- Between the librarians and the on- and off-campus partners
- Between the library and the students

Legal Concerns

- Universities may have animal policies that require you to obtain special permission before bringing an animal on campus

Get Creative!

- Don't be discouraged by a small or nonexistent budget
- Tap your campus resources
- Raid the library office supply closet for makerspace supplies
- Provide new opportunities by looking at existing resources in a new light

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