

## 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.<sup>1</sup>
- 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."<sup>2</sup>
- 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 analysis<sup>3</sup> to examine content posted to VPL's Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube accounts between February 1<sup>st</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>4, 5, 6</sup>
  - 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.<sup>7</sup>
  - 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.<sup>8, 9</sup>

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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Sam A. Vander Kooy (he/him)  
 University of Western Ontario,  
 Faculty of Information and Media Studies  
 svande88@uwo.ca