Dance Party! @ Odegaard

Odegaard Undergraduate Library

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$2,501-5,000

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Byline

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The Dance Party! @ Odegaard event welcomed new first year students to the Odegaard Undergraduate Library at the University of Washington (UW) in an innovative, fun and engaging way. For the event, Odegaard Library was transformed into a late night dance club complete with a DJ, dance floor, professional lighting and free food on the Saturday night before classes began.

Library staff partnered with the UW’s First Year Programs to plan, advertise and execute the event. With over 2,000 students attending in just three hours, the dance party was a hit and the library was, as the students said, "lit"!

You can view the video produced by the DJ on YouTube here. (Skip to 3:15 to see the dance party in action.)

Advanced Planning

Each year before fall quarter classes begin, new students are welcomed to campus during Dawg Daze. Events for Dawg Daze include orientations to campus resources, student club activities, films on the quad and popular guest speakers. The UW libraries have always participated in Dawg Daze by planning a variety of events ranging from orientations and tours to Harry Potter Trivia.

First Year Programs approached Odegaard Library staff in spring quarter about holding a late-night Dawg Daze event to follow a talk featuring a popular YouTube celebrity. With permission from library administration, the planning team decided to throw a dance party. The goal of the event was to create a welcoming and positive student experience within the library while also ensuring that the students attending the preceding event had a safe and fun place to go at 9 p.m. on a Saturday.

We had never planned or executed an event of this size for students before, so the planning process involved ongoing meetings and communications with our partners including First Year Programs, library administration, the UW police department and libraries facilities. We took special steps to modify our automated lighting system to get the building dark enough for a light show. We also requested additional custodial services and hired a plainclothes police officer to provide additional security during the event.

A lot of effort and energy went into making sure that students would be safe, the building and services would run as normal the following week, and the planning team was documenting (and thereby prepared to demonstrate) the value of holding a “just for fun” type of outreach event at an academic library.

Marketing

Marketing was largely handled by our partners at First Year Programs through their Dawg Daze event programming and by the DJ himself. All incoming students

received a list of Dawg Daze events happening on campus, and the dance party was listed as a "key event" for students to attend. The dance party was also featured on the Dawg Daze website and app.

The timing of the dance party was planned so it would begin just as a popular event next door was finishing up. Students were then directed from the previous event to our dance party. Word of mouth and students inviting their friends once they were in the library were also very effective marketing strategies.

Odegaard staff did some promotion with posters in the two major campus libraries and a handful of social media posts a few days before the event. Although our posts only reached a few hundred people, students with connections to different communities (clubs, fraternities, sororities and dormitories) were able to get the word out much faster to large groups of people.

Budgeting

The dance party would not have been possible without the generous help of our campus partners. Our DJ, a junior at the university, was funded by First Year Programs. Additionally, First Year Programs also secured a sponsorship from Kind Bar, which provided over 1,000 Kind Bars as refreshments. In total, First Year Programs contributed approximately $1,200 to the event.

Odegaard Library expenses, which totaled approximately $3,000, included extra refreshments, glowsticks, an appearance by “Harry the Husky,” staffing, security, lighting rentals, professional movers and stage delivery fees. For cost-cutting suggestions, shop at discount stores like Costco and ask if staff could donate decorations for the night — their contributions may surprise you! Many of our staff members brought decorations from home and some were borrowed from other libraries to complete the "club ambiance" that we wanted for the dance. For example, a UW IT staff member involved in the planning process has a passion for music-responsive lighting. He generously allowed us to use his collection of LED lights to help turn our library into a club!

Day-of-event Activity

We planned on having six full time library staff, three to five library student employees and thirty Dawg Daze student volunteers in order to prepare for the anticipated number of attendees. Six staff members set up the space the evening before the event, which included moving furniture, posting signage, putting up decorations and lighting, and arranging the snack area.

The day of the event, we arrived three hours early to put the final touches on the space, unload more snacks and get our volunteers oriented. Managing around 30 student volunteers proved to be a more intricate task than expected. Student volunteers were asked to staff the doors; conduct headcounts of students entering and exiting the building; monitor the dark spaces of the library; make sure students didn't dance on tables; hand out snacks; and staff the bag check area.

Our student volunteers were essential in keeping everything running during the event. However, with overlapping shifts and volunteers arriving early or late, it was difficult to get everyone sufficiently oriented to their duties and to the space (including emergency exit procedures). We found it helpful that library staff chose an area of responsibility to ensure each area of operation was running smoothly.

Program Execution

Overall, the event went far better than any of us expected. Being a first-time event and a bit of an experiment, most of us planned for the worst-case scenario (nobody showing up, people getting hurt, etc.). However, we managed to hit our maximum first floor capacity (800) in the first 20 minutes of the dance party, resulting in a line that extended far beyond the front door.

Students were bubbly and excited as they walked in, grabbed their glowsticks (all 1,200 of them, which were gone in about 15 minutes) and headed to the dance floor. There was a buzz of energy and a positive vibe throughout the night. Students were generally respectful of library space and each other. We saw many first year students introducing themselves, shaking hands and exchanging numbers. A feeling of community seemed to pervade the atmosphere. (View additional photos provided by the UW Student Life photographers.)

Over the course of the three-hour event, over 2,000 students came through Odegaard's doors. Many staff members overheard positive comments, such as "This is lit!" and "I love dancing, this is so cool!" Student and staff interactions with the DJ were also extremely positive.

The undergraduate experience team in Odegaard Library is currently piloting a program of outreach assessment. The program of assessment uses a mixed-method approach in order to inform program improvement for and to demonstrate the value of undergraduate student outreach activities. The assessment methods used to evaluate the dance party included observation analysis; capturing student comments through social media and on whiteboards; and staff/volunteer reflections. The assessment data provided us with a well-rounded view of the successes of the dance party and also revealed areas in need of improvement. We will be using the data in the coming months to communicate with our stakeholders and to plan, hopefully, for an annual dance party event. Overall, we received enthusiastic and positive feedback from students who attended the dance party.

Thanks to our extensive preparation, we achieved our goal of creating a positive experience in the library for first year students. This will hopefully make for a memorable and lasting impression that gets them to come back to the library in the future!

Advice

Set expectations of the staff time and energy needed to plan and execute this kind of event. Make sure there is enough staff help so a handful of staff members don't end up doing the majority of the work. Plan ahead for adequate compensation time, if necessary.

Be flexible! The event was much more popular and successful than anyone hoped, but it came with an added cost of managing a larger number of students than expected. Being adaptable in the moment was essential in managing the size of the dance party and making sure everyone was safe and having fun.

Cultivate partnerships within and outside of the library. Reach out to partners with whom you already have a relationship but also think outside of the box in order to extend your reach and support for your program. Maintain clear and continued

communication with partners and stakeholders so that everyone knows what tasks they are responsible for, and be sure to share the results of your collaborated efforts with all parties involved!

For more information about this event, please contact us at ougl@uw.edu.

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Supporting Materials

Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images





Image





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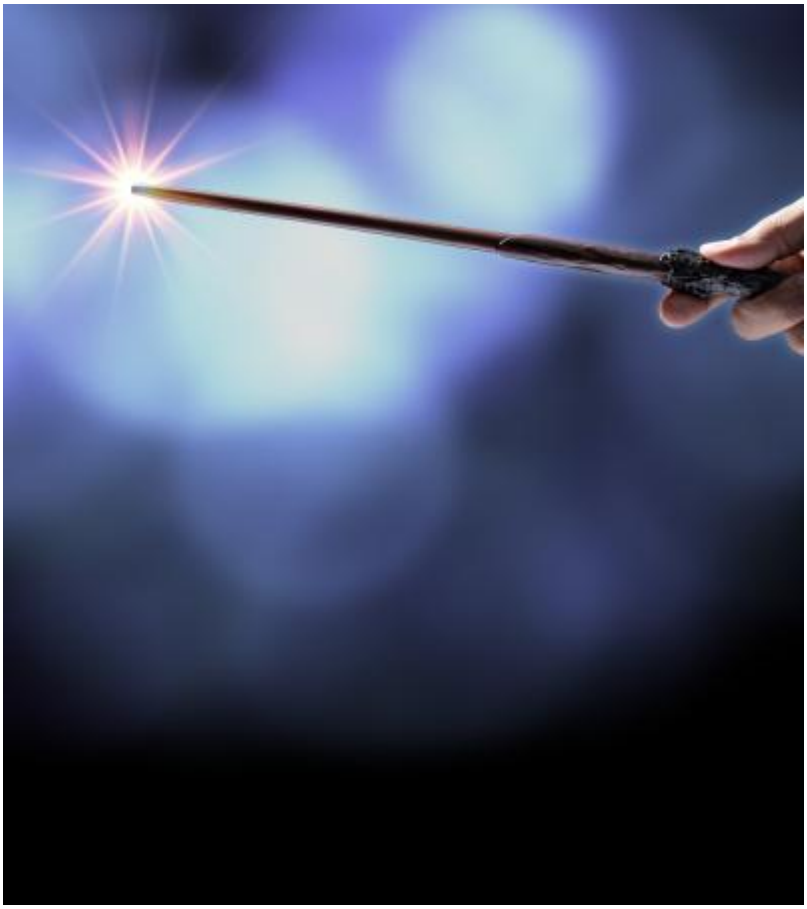
Mar 19, 2015
Children (9 and under)+ | $
Image



Open Mic

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational
Apr 24, 2015
Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | $$$
Image



Harry Potter Yule Ball

Audiences:

Young Adult (17 - 20)
Oct 29, 2015
Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | $$
Image



Heroes and Villains Teen Dance

Audiences:

Young Adult (17 - 20)