

Megan S. Donald, Karen D. Harmon, and April J. Schweikhard

# Find Your Place

## Enhancing library relevance and involvement within a campus community

In May 2011, the Schusterman Library opened its newly constructed building on the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa (OU-Tulsa) campus. In order to introduce OU-Tulsa students, faculty, and staff to our new library, a week-long series of events was scheduled and executed during our first semester of operation. The event series was titled Find Your Place.

This article discusses the events associated with Find Your Place and the significant planning involved. In addition, for those interested in implementing similar programming events, we offer guidance and suggestions on how you can promote and brand events designed to enhance library relevance and involvement within their communities. Lastly, we examine the short-term and long-term impacts of Find Your Place.

### How it all began

OU-Tulsa is a community-based university. The 22,000 square foot facility is home to approximately 2,800 students, faculty, and staff. OU-Tulsa is a branch campus of the main OU campus and the OU Health Sciences Center and is thus home to both academic and health sciences programs. Subsequently, a major component of the university's strategic mission is to create an inclusive campus culture that engages OU-Tulsa students, faculty, and staff through interdisciplinary activities. In order to contribute to this goal, the Schusterman Library decided to host a week of themed activities during our first semester of opening. In addition to encouraging interdisciplinary activities, these events

would introduce the OU-Tulsa community to our new library.

A committee consisting of library faculty, staff, and graduate assistants was formed to plan this series. This diverse representation was imperative to the success of the committee. First and foremost, the committee was commissioned to establish the theme of our activities. The planning committee ultimately decided to create fun, informal events to attract members of the OU-Tulsa campus to the new library. The committee selected a "library as place" theme that would incorporate social media and location-based technology and, in turn, introduce the library as an integral component of the community. As a result, Find Your Place was selected as the overarching title.

Next, the planning committee identified the specific activities that would be included as part of Find Your Place—20x20 digital presentations, a letterboxing workshop, a geocaching hunt, a social media lunch, and a final workshop conducted by our library director. One-to-three members were assigned to each event to plan, coordinate, and execute the activities. These events were chosen in order to emphasize the library as a physical and virtual place and to promote its value as part of the OU-Tulsa community.

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For example, letterboxing, geocaching, social media, and the 20x20 presentations incorporated specific physical or virtual components of the library, such as the new digital gallery and the library's Twitter account. Additionally, each of the events highlighted various aspects of the library's role in creating an inclusive campus environment. Therefore, the objective of the activities was to encourage OU-Tulsa students, faculty, and staff to "find their place" within the Schusterman Library either physically or virtually.

Initially, we had difficulty securing 20x20 presenters. Our calls for submission through the campus e-mail electronic lists and advertisements in the weekly newsletter did not garner much reaction; however, our campus public relations officer was personally invested in this event and called upon specific campus members to participate. By the time of the actual event, we had ten presentations covering a wide range of topics, including Frisbee golf, Mexican food, comic books, and gun collecting. In addition, our presenters represented a variety of disciplines and



Stewart Brower, director of the Schusterman Library, entertains the OU-Tulsa campus with his 20x20 presentation on comic books titled, "How I wasted part of the 1970s & most of the 1980s." 20x20 was part of the library's Find Your Place event series.

### **20x20 digital presentations**

The 20x20 event was our most well-attended Find Your Place activity. For this event, we solicited OU-Tulsa students, faculty, and staff to create 20 PowerPoint slides covering any topic. Each participant was then given twenty seconds per slide to present on his or her topic (hence, the name 20x20). The event was held at noon in the library's new Arts and Information Digital Gallery. The digital gallery features five plasma television screens on which the presentations were displayed. The 20x20 event offered the opportunity to promote the features of the library's new gallery and facilitate interdisciplinary participation.

departments, such as Community Medicine, Public Affairs, and Urban Design.

This fun event was very well received, as participants enjoyed seeing their colleagues and peers present in this informal manner. For this event, we attracted around 50 attendees. The key to attendance was our presenters. Each presenter brought his or her colleagues and friends, which inevitably increased attendance size. Attendees were encouraged to bring their lunches, and the library provided drinks and cookies. In addition, gift certificates donated by local restaurants were awarded as door prizes. The entire event lasted nearly an hour and a half; for future

events, six-to-eight presentations would be better suited for the lunchtime hour.

### **Letterboxing and geocaching**

Desiring actively to engage the campus community, two of the events were recreational. Letterboxing and geocaching are modern-day treasure hunts. The library included both activities in Find Your Place in order to direct our users and members of the public to specific locations within our new building and throughout campus. Less technological

GPS, smartphone, tablet) to locate geocaches whose coordinates are posted on a Web site. A geocache is similar to a letterbox; however, instead of a stamp, the container hides trinkets of nominal value, like stickers or erasers. Upon locating the cache, geocachers sign the logbook and trade a trinket they brought for one inside the cache. Geocachers can also log their latest finds virtually by creating an online account.

As with the letterboxes, caches were hidden around the campus in preparation for



Schusterman Library employees find one of the geocaches hidden throughout the OU-Tulsa campus. A geocaching scavenger hunt was one of the activities included in the library's Find Your Place event series.

and much older than geocaching, letterboxing involves hiding a container (i.e., letterbox) whose contents include a log book and a stamp, and then posting clues to its location on a designated letterboxing Web site. For this event, three letterboxes were placed at significant but often overlooked landmarks on campus. One of these letterboxes is actually hidden within the library, cataloged, and searchable in the OPAC. After a workshop explaining the hobby and discussing equipment needed, attendees set out to locate a letterbox.

Geocaching is a high-tech treasure hunt using a GPS-enabled device (e.g., handheld

the evening hunt. This event consisted of a workshop introducing the game, jargon, and free geocaching apps. While the attendees brought their own smartphones, the library also provided one for lending. As the sun began to set, the newly initiated geocachers embarked on their first hunt, equipped with smartphones, flashlights, and trinkets for trading. For some, it was their first time using a GPS app.

### **Social media and cool sites**

At a social media lunch, library staff presented an overview of the various social media accounts that may be used to interact with the

library virtually: Twitter, Facebook, Foursquare, Delicious, and WordPress. As social media continues to gain prominence among students, these various accounts can provide the library additional modes of communication with our users. In the workshop, the features and purposes of each social media venue was highlighted. Based upon questions raised by students in attendance, in the future this workshop will be structured around the use of one form of social media (e.g., how to set up and use a Twitter account). The food for the lunch was provided potluck style by library faculty and staff. In addition, we promoted a special Foursquare mayoral competition. The Schusterman Library created its own Foursquare location, and our mayor at the end of the week would be invited to lunch with the president of OU-Tulsa.

We also held an event in which our director shared several fun and useful Web sites. This informal event encouraged discussion and offered the opportunity for library outsiders to interact with our director. It also included the announcement of the library's Foursquare mayoral competition winner and his opportunity to attend lunch with our campus president. A range of faculty, staff, and students attended the event, which created an eclectic setting. Much conversation ensued, and the hour went by quickly. This event, or one very much like it, will be included next year.

## Promoting find your place

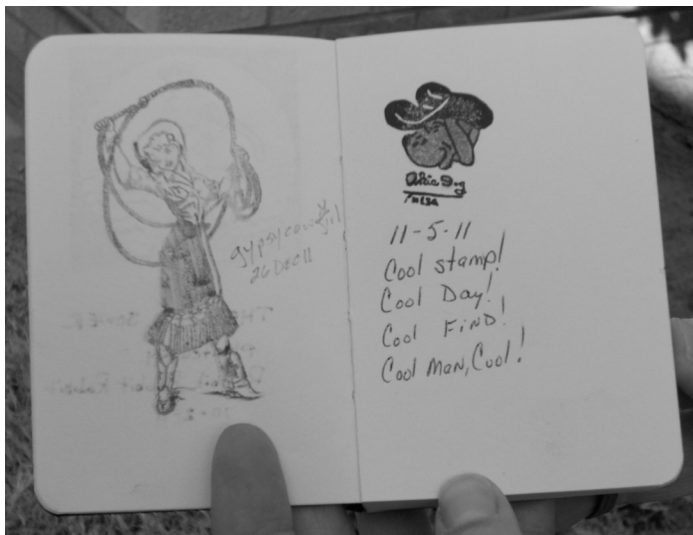
Traditionally, promotion has not been considered one of the library's strengths; however, marketing was an essential component to our Find Your Place initiative. In order to promote the events, we used print, digital, and social media announcements. To gain consistency, we created a logo that was included on all announcements. Flyers were given directly to students who attended library training sessions and were also positioned strategically throughout campus. Additionally, announcements

were displayed through digital signage within the library and across campus. All print and digital promotional materials were in place two weeks before our events.

Similarly, e-mail

announcements were distributed prior to and during the week of Find Your Place to the OU-Tulsa community. The social media used included Facebook, Twitter, and blog posts. Continuous updates over a two-week period encouraged attendance for those active within these social networking sites. Finally, the week before the event, we announced Find Your Place with sidewalk chalk throughout campus. This was a great way to catch the eye of the campus community as they traveled about.

While we did an excellent job branding Find Your Place with our logo, flyers, digital signage, and even sidewalk chalk, some students were still unaware of the activities. A suggestion to improve notification efforts



Letterboxers leave their mark on the OU-Tulsa campus, part of the Schusterman Library's Find Your Place event series.

would be to begin promotion a month before the events and seek aid from your Student Affairs department. Also, when planning events, include the pre-involvement of the campus community much like our 20x20 event. Involving professors and prominent staff in the events encourages a higher turnout, as many students and staff desire to network outside of the normal day-to-day setting.

### Assessment and lessons learned

Ultimately, the value of any library event is assessed by its short-term and long-term impact. In the case of Find Your Place, both were positive. Short-term, the Schusterman Library's new digital gallery received increased awareness after the very successful 20x20 event. The library has already been asked by university staff to host a second 20x20 event. As a result of this greater awareness and interest, more people will visit the library to view the gallery's current exhibits hosted in this space. In addition, this event encouraged participation across campus as OU-Tulsa students, faculty, and staff interacted in an informal environment to share their presentations.

There has also been a positive long-term impact. In preparation for the social media lunch, the library created a Web page highlighting the various social media tools discussed. Another long-term impact was the establishment of the library as a Foursquare destination. Also, letterboxers and geocach-

ers, many of whom may have been unfamiliar with OU-Tulsa, now have a reason to visit the campus. As of May 2012, 64 geocachers have signed the logbooks and 8 letterboxers have stamped the letterbox hidden within the library. Therefore, we are continuing to explore and offer new ways for users to interact and communicate with the library.

It is difficult to know when to hold an event. While we chose the first week in October in order to allow students time to become accustomed to their schedules, we may consider hosting these activities earlier in the semester, when new students are still becoming familiar with the campus and library services. Additionally, we will probably condense the events into one full day, scheduling four-to-six events so that attendees can come and go as their time permits. After attending one event they will likely stay for more, as we found that several attendees returned for other events later in the week.

In conclusion, Find Your Place not only introduced the campus community to our new facility, it also gave the library an opportunity to support the institution's strategic goals. Our weeklong series of informal events brought together diverse groups of students, faculty, and staff to interact together within the library. Taking into consideration the successes achieved and lessons learned, we look forward to the planning and implementation of next year's Find Your Place events. *~*

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*("A programmatic approach" continued from page 585)*

### Further reading

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