



PERFORMING  
ARTS RESOURCES

THEATRE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

# SPONTANEOUS PEDAGOGY: FOSTERING DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THEATRE STUDENTS AND LIBRARIES

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This essay delves into the challenges of integrating library resources into the busy schedules of theatre students and proposes a solution centered on cultivating spontaneous pedagogical moments. Recognizing the need for a constant and dynamic relationship between the performing arts department and the library, the essay advocates for strategic initiatives such as pop-up libraries in high-traffic areas to provide immediate access to relevant materials. Extending beyond physical spaces these pop-ups activate participation from theatre students and faculty both as patrons and collaborators. By embedding themselves in the theatre department, the librarian aims to establish a continuous dialogue, understanding the unique needs of the theatre community and tailoring resources accordingly. This approach not only addresses the time constraints of theatre students but also enriches the educational experience through real-time engagement. Through discussion of the methods employed at Yale University, this essay emphasizes the significance of visibility and proactive engagement to create spontaneous learning opportunities. By fostering a dynamic relationship between theatre students and libraries, educators can enhance pedagogy, making educational resources more accessible and relevant in the ever-evolving landscape of performing arts education.

## Introduction

In the realm of theatre and performance studies, access to diverse and stimulating library resources is paramount. Yet, traditional library outreach efforts can fall short in physically intersecting with the daily lives of theatre and performance studies students and faculty. As a theatre and performance studies librarian starting a new job, I sought ways to quickly become an integral part of the campus theatre community and bring the library to the forefront of their minds.

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Enter the concept of pop-up libraries – dynamic, temporary library setups that move beyond the static, brick-and-mortar model. Pop-up libraries offer a fresh approach, allowing librarians to interact with students and faculty in unexpected spaces, fostering creativity and sparking curiosity.

This paper explores the potential of pop-up libraries tailored to theatre and performance studies, and how they hold the potential to enrich theatre research practices by placing a key collaborator front and center in their spaces. Through physical materials and online and on-demand demonstrations, the theatre librarian can more readily demonstrate to their patrons that libraries are dynamic and powerful tools for inspiration relevant to theatrical research. This case study explains how this initiative was implemented and the benefits it yielded. Additionally, there is a short section titled TL;DR before the conclusion that summarizes how you can implement a similar initiative at your own institution.

## **The Stakeholders**

Before becoming a librarian, I earned my BFA in theatre, toured with professional theatre companies, and performed for over a decade, working with various artists, including designers, musicians, and choreographers. In 2023, I was hired as the Arts Librarian for Drama, Theatre, and Performance Studies at Yale University's Robert B. Haas Family Arts Library, which serves the study of art, architecture, and drama. The library is centrally located within Yale's arts campus, surrounded by classrooms, studios, and theatres. Figure 1 illustrates where the drama buildings and classrooms are in relation to the Arts Library.

My role is dedicated to serving Yale students, staff, faculty, alumni, as well as independent researchers with interests in all things related to drama, theatre, and performance. I primarily interact with the Yale undergraduate department of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies (TDPS), the students participating in Yale School of Art's Undergraduate Productions (UP), and the graduate David Geffen School of Drama (DGSD) conservatory.

The TDPS department, with 55 majors as of June 2024, allows students to explore various creative roles both on and offstage. Additionally, the Yale School of Art's UP support shows for all students, offering training and technical resources for a wide range of performance genres. The UP oversees roughly 400 productions per semester, with around 2,500 students participating in performance activities. I assist students with a variety of research projects, examples including helping TDPS majors select plays for their senior theses, supporting students researching Puerto Rican swing dance, advising musical theatre writers, and guiding photography students on shooting production stills.

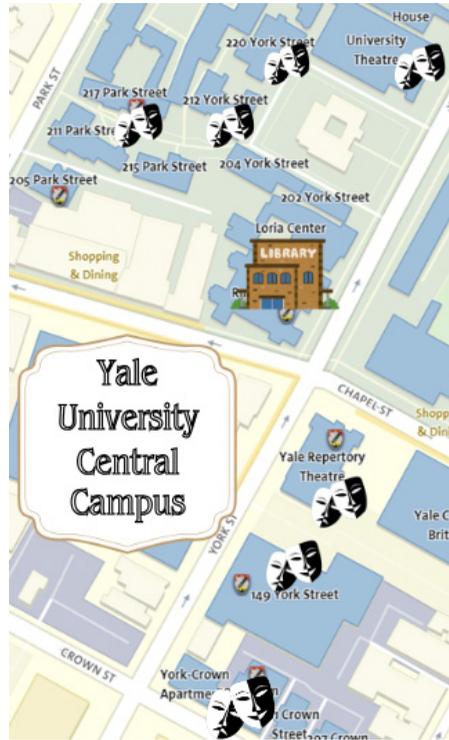


Figure 1. A multi-colored map of Yale's central campus with small drama mask icons indicating drama buildings and a library icon indicating the Arts Library.

DGSD is a three-year conservatory for theatre artists, technical interns, and research fellows, featuring eight different departments, each focusing on a specific element of theatre.<sup>1</sup> According to Anita Anton, in her dissertation 'Student Success and Satisfaction: Analysis of Students' Perception of A Theatre Conservatory Program,' conservatories such as Yale's thoroughly entrench students in theatrical training, capturing 'their daytime, free time, and every moment in between.' This level of training is only for students professing a demonstrable desire to become a working theatre professional.<sup>2</sup>

## The Problem

There are several barriers to embedding library fluency within Yale's theater community. I'll briefly explore three: library illiteracy, the vast scope of the discipline, and the schedule of the theatre community.

1. <https://www.drama.yale.edu/>.

2. Anita Anton. 'Student Success and Satisfaction: Analysis of Students' Perception of A Theatre Conservatory Program.' (PhD diss., St. Louis University, 2010), 7.

## Library Literacy

Upon starting, I assessed the library's visibility among faculty and students. Students in theatre management, technical design, directing, and playwriting had limited experience with library resources. While acting students knew of the library's resources, they reportedly struggled to integrate them into their creative work. Design students often relied on internet research outside of the library's resources. Dramaturgy students were the most familiar with research methods and library skills. In meetings with faculty members I learned that several, including departmental chairs, had never used the library's resources. One faculty member even expressed a fear of libraries due to negative childhood experiences, echoing Kasia Leousis's assertion in her article 'Outreach to Artists: Supporting the Development of a Research Culture for Master of Fine Arts Students,' that cultivating library advertisement and approachability was key for art students as they are 'often intimidated by the library.'<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, the library can often seem to be speaking another language regarding information organization, and translating research practices into the library can be its own challenge. Scott Stone delves into the challenges of discoverability within a library's collection. Many academic libraries, including Yale's, utilize the Library of Congress organizational system, which does not always group theatre materials together and categorizes plays by various criteria such as time period, author, and country of origin.<sup>4</sup> This can be confusing for patrons and the process of discovery can be complex and time-intensive. While locating known plays is relatively straightforward through the library website, uncovering lesser-known works poses a greater challenge for patrons. Though theatre research reaches beyond playscripts, an obvious example is discovering new plays. 'How do those wanting to discover plays exploring a specific theme (e.g., abortion, civil rights, queer life), plays in a specific setting (e.g., contemporary vs. historical), or plays by a specific grouping of playwrights (e.g., Black playwrights, female playwrights, trans playwrights, etc.)—find them?'<sup>5</sup>

To offer an opening into library research and practices at the graduate level, the drama librarian provides first-year students with an orientation, though follow-up is left to the students. Undergraduates, who can only declare their major late in their sophomore year, are less likely to be aware of the subject librarian or library services unless introduced through a class. Both graduate and undergraduate students reported that despite Yale University libraries' vast resources, they

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3. Kasia Leousis, 'Outreach to Artists: Supporting the Development of a Research Culture for Master of Fine Arts Students.' *Art Documentation: Bulletin of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 32, no. 1 (April 2013): 25.

4. Scott Stone, 'Performing Arts Libraries,' *Notes* 80, no. 2 (2023): 284–85.

5. See note 23 above.

often felt overwhelmed and resorted to purchasing materials online or seeking them through informal channels, such as putting out calls via student email lists.

I don't mean to paint a bleak picture of theatre students' research habits and library literacy. It is important to note that creative research is almost never as straightforward as checking out a book, reading it, and creating a performance from that one research interaction. Laura Dimmit Smyth, Ian Moore, and Kodi Saylor note in their article, 'Looking for Pictures of Clouds': Defining the Unique Research Needs of Creative Communities,' that often artists don't recognize what they do as research, it's just 'part of their practice,' making the relevancy of the library difficult to articulate.<sup>6</sup> The struggle is not only parsing the language of a library, but also understanding how their own research practices can be enhanced by it.

## Scope of the Discipline

Frequently humanities librarians are given the liaison position for the theatre department as an extra subject responsibility. This is often done out of necessity for budgeting reasons, but it is important to note that many academics do not know how varied and multi-faceted theatre research truly is. As any seasoned theatre instructor or practitioner understands, research needs of theatre artists span a broad spectrum. Scott Stone, in his work on performing arts libraries, delineates these varied requirements. Costume designers often seek historical information to grasp the societal context of a play's setting, along with historically accurate images and contemporary references for mood boards. Scenic designers may delve into architectural details to craft modular or movable sets, and the corresponding technical designer actualizing the sets will need mechanical insight. Sound designers, juggling roles as composers and curators, require open-access resources and a grasp of copyright and licensing. Lighting and projection designers frequently explore color theory and psychology to evoke specific moods onstage, considering cultural nuances.<sup>7</sup>

Historical specificity is an important goal of drama practitioners of all types. James Peck highlights that, by delving into historical context, students engage in emotionally, intellectually, and morally complex explorations of characters, relationships, and events.<sup>8</sup> This research can look like examining paintings from the American Revolutionary era for insights into soldiers' daily routines, informing actors' physicality and gestures such as where a soldier may keep his tobacco

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6. Laura Dimmit Smyth, Ian Moore, and Kodi Saylor. "Looking for Pictures of Clouds": Defining the Unique Research Needs of Creative Communities.' *College & Research Libraries* 83, no. 3 (May 2022): 403.

7. Scott Stone. 'Performing Arts Libraries.' *Notes* 80, no. 2 (2023): 282.

8. James Peck. 'History in the directing curriculum: Major directors, theory and practice.' *Theatre Topics* 17, (1) (Mar 2007): 33-35.

pouch when they are fiending for a smoke. Similarly, exploring brightly illustrated books on Native American folklore provides visual cues for projection designers seeking to evoke a particular aesthetic. These examples illustrate how historical context enriches the creative process, fostering deeper connections with characters and narratives onstage.

All of these modes of research can certainly be discovered on the internet, but the amount of incredible resources, databases, historical primary sources, archives, and professional knowledge an institute like Yale provides access to and curates is a well that cannot go untapped. Even at a university with a quarter of the funding that Yale has will still have more resources in its library than most students could explore throughout their entire academic career, not to mention the expertise of librarians to help them navigate it. As Bonnie Marranca notes in her article, 'Theatre and the University at the End of the Twentieth Century,' at no other point in their lives will students have 'so much material readily accessible in one place at one cost.'<sup>9</sup> At the same time, however, the sheer volume of resources available can be overwhelming. Yale University Library's total collections contain fifteen million print and electronic volumes in more than a dozen libraries and locations.<sup>10</sup> This is a blessing and a curse for a librarian marketing library resources. While dizzyingly exciting to explore, compartmentalizing this vast array of options can be mentally exhausting.

## Schedule of the Stakeholders

Anecdotally, many circulation staff reported seeing very few theatre students in the library in comparison to the other departments that the Arts Library serves. From my own experience in receiving formal theatrical training at various institutions, considering the demanding schedules of both students and faculty is important. Anton writes about the all-consuming scheduling of theatre-making, often prohibiting students from even attending social or community events outside the discipline.<sup>11</sup> In their research they cite a theatre conservatory student who mentioned that the way their days are scheduled 'makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible to spend time away from the theatre. It can be a grueling, if not all-encompassing routine.'<sup>12</sup> Yale's graduate students are in class each weekday until 1pm, followed with rehearsals, performances, production meetings, or actively constructing, man-

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9. Bonnie Marranca. 'Theatre and the University at the End of the Twentieth Century.' *Performing Arts Journal* 17, no. 2/3 (1995): 55.

10. <https://catalog.yale.edu/environment/yale-university-resources-services/libraries/#:~:text=Yale%20University%20Library%20comprises%20collections,Bass%20Library.>

11. Marranca, 'Theatre and the University,' 57.

12. Anton, 'Student Success,' 85.

aging, running, or producing shows sometimes until 11pm. Weekends are often devoted to eight hours or more a day spent in the theater. When one considers the need for sleep, homework, and meals, it is easy to understand why students might perceive that they do not have extra time to visit the library.

While the undergraduate program is not a conservatory, the absence of minor degrees at Yale means many students are juggling double majors. Of the 55 declared TDPS majors in May 2024, 36 of those students had an additional major. This dual-major commitment further strains their schedules, making it even more challenging to find time for library visits. Though the arts library is located in the middle of all theater facilities on the Yale campus, it is not situated within any of these buildings, and its entrance is located within the art history building and does not clearly announce itself as a library from the outside. Literally, it is out of sight and often out of mind.

## The Pop-Up Library Initiative

Recognizing the urgency to establish a tangible presence within the students' realm—to not only become a familiar face quickly but also to make the library more visible and accessible—a dynamic solution was imperative. Thus, the Pop-Up Library Initiative was conceived. This initiative aimed to be a dependable resource that is accessible on the students' terms. By bringing the library to them, we can literally and metaphorically open its doors, making it a more integral part of their daily lives.

The idea of a site-specific pop-up occurred to me as one of the best strategies to embed myself within the theatre departments. Erin O'Toole, Rebecca Barham, and Jo Monahan in their article, 'The Impact of Physically Embedded Librarianship on Academic Departments' summarize being an embedded librarian as possessing the capability to provide subject-specialized experience-related research and essentially acting as a departmental 'teaching partner.'<sup>13</sup> Dana Gerberi and Julie M. Taylor define a pop-up library as 'the temporary activation of a space, piquing curiosity through surprise encounter. Ideally they 'lead to the formation of memorable experiences' for those who might not be library regulars.<sup>14</sup> Pop-ups are not a new concept, appearing in various forms such as bookmobiles, roaming libraries, and embedded models. In recent years, pop-up libraries have become a trending form of outreach for both public and academic libraries, aiming to increase exposure.

13. Erin O'Toole, Rebecca Barham, and Jo Monahan. 'The Impact of Physically Embedded Librarianship on Academic Departments.' *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 16, no. 3 (2016): 531.

14. Dana Gerberi and Julie M. Taylor. 'Popping up in Unexpected Places: Posing a Pop-Up Library to Healthcare Staff.' *Medical Reference Services Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (October 2020): 372.

## The Proposal

I formally received approval to set up pop-ups from both the graduate and undergraduate theatre departments, but through guidance from my more tenured arts librarian colleague, the liaison for Art, Art History, and Architecture, I wrote a formal proposal to utilize a lobby area not owned by the drama school in a building where many classes and rehearsals for the drama school took place. What made this space particularly exciting was that it housed Yale's Center of Collaborative Arts and Media (CCAM), a relatively new program focused on film, AI in the arts, motion-detecting technology, projection, lighting and sound art/design, and other forms of interdisciplinary creative collaboration. CCAM hosts annual symposiums on various artistic topics, announces residential scholars and fellows, and provides opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and potential conversations among outside students and media with the otherwise siloed drama department. The opportunity for the pop-up to help facilitate cross-disciplinary exchange seemed particularly exciting.

### Arts Library Pop-Up Project Proposal at CCAM

<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	Arts Library Pop-Up		
<b>LOCATION</b>	Lobby of Yale Center for Collaborative Arts and Media (CCAM) located at 149 York St.		
<b>PROPOSED START DATE</b>	Monday, September 11th, 2023	<b>PROPOSED FINISH DATE</b>	May 13th, 2024
<b>LIBRARY CONTACT</b>	Erin Carney	<b>TITLE</b>	Arts Librarian for Drama, Theatre, and Performance Studies
<b>EMAIL</b>	erin.carney@yale.edu	<b>PHONE</b>	203.432.2672

<b>SUMMARY</b>	<p>The Arts Librarian for Drama, Theatre, and Performance Studies proposes to maintain a consistent weekly presence for the interdisciplinary students, fellows, artists, researchers, faculty, and staff of the Yale Center for Collaborative Arts and Media (CCAM) and the David Geffen School of Drama students and faculty. The librarian will be available for research inquiries and needs, questions regarding interacting with the Yale library's website and services, and accessing and discovering creative inspiration.</p> <p>Weekly, the librarian will bring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new and diverse curated selection of physical library books for students based on the subjects of sound art/design, lighting, projection, multi-media and visual arts, performance art, theatre craft</li> </ul>
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(Contd.)

	<p>and production, dance, and other resources intended to intrigue, inspire and delight students. All materials will be available to check out for members of the Yale community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A laptop for research demonstrations and to showcase streaming services and other multimedia resources accessible through the library’s website.</li> <li>• Free arts library swag (small notebooks, pencils, stickers, and bookmarks)</li> </ul>
<b>DESIRED OUTCOMES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To advance CCAM’s efforts of connecting artists across disciplines with creative research and ideas</li> <li>• To provide on-site research support for artists, students, faculty, and staff</li> <li>• To offer inspiring and exciting resources and materials to the Yale community</li> <li>• To highlight the libraries’ services and collections</li> <li>• To foster and build a strong relationship and creative conversation between CCAM-affiliated artists, the David Geffen School of Drama, and the Arts library</li> </ul>
<b>PROJECTED SCHEDULE</b>	<p>Mondays from 1:30–3 PM September 11th, 2023–May 13th, 2024, excluding university-wide holidays.</p>
<b>PROJECTED TEAM AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS</b>	<p>This project will not require materials, effort, or resources from CCAM or the David Geffen School of Drama, other than providing access to the lobby of 149 York St and approximately 8’ by 4’ of space for the librarian, signage, a folding table, and a book cart. The library will provide signage, equipment, a book cart, and library materials. If a folding table is not available at CCAM, the library can provide one as well.</p>
<b>LITERATURE SUPPORTING POP-UP LIBRARIES IN DEPARTMENT SPACES</b>	<p>Barnett, James, Stephen Bull, and Helen Cooper. ‘Pop-Up Library at the University of Birmingham: Extending the Reach of an Academic Library by Taking ‘The Library’ to the Students.’ <i>New Review of Academic Librarianship</i> 22, no. 2/3 (April 2016): 112–31. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2016.1168307">https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2016.1168307</a>.</p> <p>Gerberi, Dana, and Julie M. Taylor. ‘Popping up in Unexpected Places: Posing a Pop-Up Library to Healthcare Staff.’ <i>Medical Reference Services Quarterly</i> 39, no. 4 (October 1, 2020): 370–81. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/02763869.2020.1826227">https://doi.org/10.1080/02763869.2020.1826227</a>.</p> <p>Leousis, Kasia. ‘Outreach to Artists: Supporting the Development of a Research Culture for Master of Fine Arts Students.’ <i>Art Documentation: Bulletin of the Art Libraries Society of North America</i> 32, no. 1 (April 2013): 127–37. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1086/669994">https://doi.org/10.1086/669994</a>.</p> <p>Smyth, Laura Dimmit, Ian Moore, and Kodi Saylor. ‘“Looking for Pictures of Clouds”: Defining the Unique Research Needs of Creative Communities.’ <i>College &amp; Research Libraries</i> 83, no. 3 (May 2022): 393–415. <a href="https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.83.3.393">https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.83.3.393</a>.</p> <p>Woznicki, Lisa M. ‘Transposing the Tradition: Providing Embedded Reference Service to Music Students.’ <i>Music Reference Services Quarterly</i> 20, no. 2 (April 2017): 69–90. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/10588167.2017.1309933">https://doi.org/10.1080/10588167.2017.1309933</a>.</p>

As outlined in my proposal, I aimed to make the pop-ups as unobtrusive and non-labor intensive as possible for the hosting site. Though they had furniture available, I offered to provide additional furnishings if needed and was flexible about stationing myself in whichever area best suited the site's schedule. Due to multiple directors and administrators overseeing the space, the most time-consuming part of the process was in waiting for the proposal to be reviewed during one of their staff meetings to receive final approval. After approval was granted for the times, days, and durations, I began visiting once a week on the set day.

## Location

My final site selections for pop-ups can be seen in Figure 2.

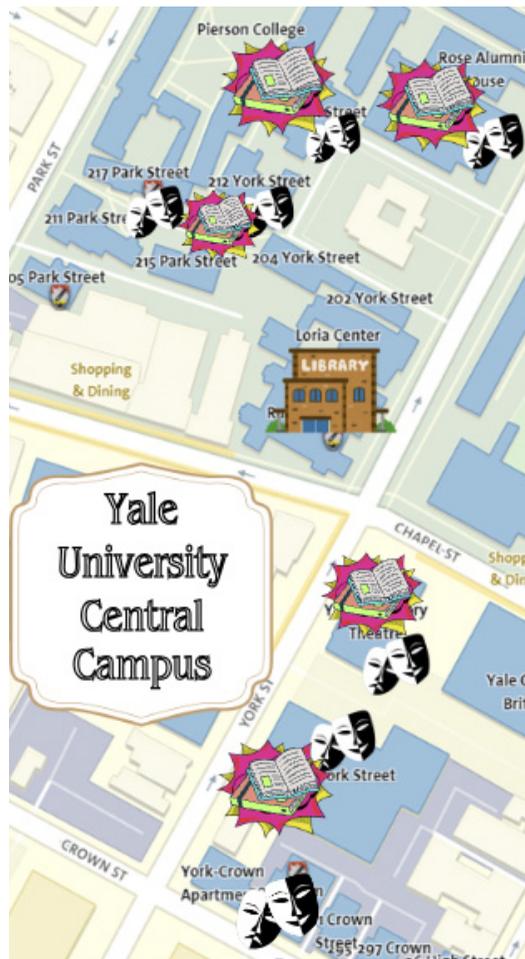


Figure 2. The same map from Figure 1 with small book icons overlaid where pop-ups occurred.

In Helen Power and Sharon Munro’s chapter ‘Move Out and Move In: An Embedded Approach To Liaison Roles Pop-Up’, one of their key tips is to find a high traffic area for the pop-up site.<sup>15</sup> To determine the most suitable locations I met with a myriad of stakeholders. This involved discussions with facilities managers to outline my intentions, health and safety coordinators familiar with the busiest areas under their jurisdiction, department administrators aware of class schedules, associate deans overseeing student life and rehearsals, and current and former students to identify the highest traffic intersections for students and faculty to engage in potentially low-pressure yet highly convenient interactions. Additionally, I conducted several site visits to different buildings, lobbies, and hallways.

Ultimately, I developed a rotating schedule between five specific sites. These sites were the Yale Repertory’s August Wilson Lounge, a Green Room in the University Theater, the lobby at Yale’s Center for Creative Arts and Media



Figure 3. Instagram post of the librarian hosting a pop-up library outside, sitting behind an array of brightly-colored books. Photo Credit: David Geffen School of Drama Instagram story (@geffenyale).

15. Helen Power and Sharon Munro. ‘Move out and move in: An embedded approach to liaison roles.’ In *Approaches to liaison librarianship: Innovations in organization and engagement*, ed. Robin Canuel and Chad Crichton (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2021), 103.

(where the proposal was for), the entryway to the main hub of the undergraduate department of Theatre at 220 York Street, and a well-trafficked walkway outside of the Yale Cabaret on sunny, fair-weather days (see Figure 3). I selected these locations strategically within the theater district of Yale's campus, where I knew the majority of classes took place or the most foot traffic passed through due to ongoing or upcoming productions.

## The Set Up

Some of my favorite pieces of guidance for setting up the pop-up were gleaned from more of Power and Munro's tips:

- Make the displays eye-catching.
- Have a laptop at hand for introducing online library resources.
- Don't overload the display with handouts.
- Have fun, library-branded freebies.
- Bring food.
- Incorporate themes (optional).<sup>16</sup>

Gerberi and Taylor echo the supplies recommendations, but also advocate bringing a certain attitude, specifically, 'being enthusiastic and approachable. The impact of a friendly smile cannot be underestimated.'<sup>17</sup>

Initially I brought a rolling cart full of library books, but I soon realized that bringing a smaller, carriable selection was much more practical. As I established a routine, my go-to was bringing between 8–15 circulating books of various sizes. My laptop was an essential tool, enabling me to check books out (and sometimes in) for patrons, answer shorter reference questions, schedule future research appointments, demonstrate tasks on the library website, and record attendance and interaction statistics in LibInsight.

I also brought library swag, including brightly colored stickers, pencils, library zines, and candy. The candy proved to be the most enticing, serving as a good ice breaker for students and faculty alike. If they looked harried, a pleasant 'You look like you might need some candy to get through your day,' was usually a great way to start a conversation.

I had an 8" by 11" sign, shown in Figure 4.

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16. Power and Munro, 'Move Out,' 111.

17. Gerberi and Taylor, 'Popping up in Unexpected Places,' 373.

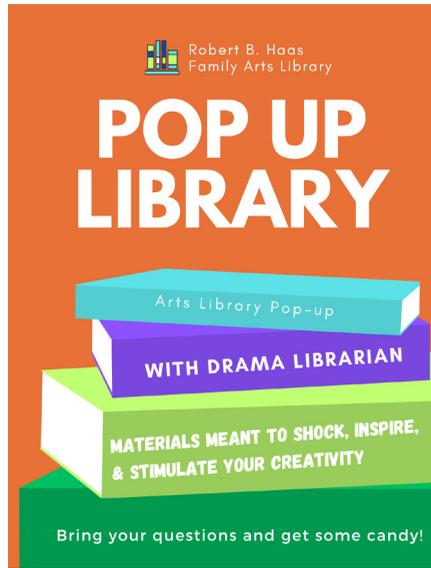


Figure 4. Brightly colored sign reading: 'Robert B. Haas Family Arts Library; Pop Up Library; Arts Library Pop-up with Drama Librarian; Materials Meant to shock, inspire, and stimulate your creativity; Bring your questions and get some candy!'

CCAM's preference was to position me near their lending library, which was undeniably aesthetically pleasing (see Figure 5), but not directly in anyone's walking path.



Figure 5. Picture of librarian sitting behind table laden with books in front of pleasingly-lit bookshelves.

As the semester progressed, I gradually inched closer to being in direct sight of the door, experimenting with the placement of my chair to maximize visibility to passersby.

The selection of books varied depending on my evolving objectives, ongoing classes, students' needs, and my own inclinations. For pop-ups aligned with specific classes, such as a creativity in technology course, I brought a diverse array of art books, sketchbooks, and multimedia resources. During periods when actors were engaged in reading plays for showcase scene selections, I focused more on playscripts. Regardless of the theme, I always aimed to include visually appealing and eclectic books by diverse authors, artists, and playwrights. While it might seem intuitive to pack the selection primarily with plays, practical stagecraft texts, and theoretical works on theatre, I endeavored to consider what would not only be appealing but also creatively invigorating for my patrons (see Figure 6). Smyth, Moore, and Saylor cited inspiration being identified as a research need of creative communities by 23 respondents in their study on creative research needs for artists.<sup>18</sup> The authors drew importance to inspiration being 'inherently interconnected with the concepts of browsing and interdisciplinarity.'<sup>19</sup>

I tried to keep this consideration in conversation with the previously discussed schedules many of my patrons were keeping. Yale students work on assignments, rehearse, and are in class for long hours. Yale faculty juggle professional commitments, often commute from New York City and find themselves just as exhausted. In this context, offering patrons something delightful to physically engage with, even if it's entirely outside of projects they are working on, can be considered successful curation.



Figure 6. A close up of a pop-up display with many exciting theatre and art books.

18. Smyth, Moore, and Saylor, 'Looking for Pictures,' 401.

19. See note 15 above.

Additionally, these displays serve as a respite from the overwhelming experience of navigating a library's extensive collection or facing an empty search bar on the library website. As one student aptly noted in Stephanie Beene, Amy S. Jackson, Sarah Kostelecky, and Todd Quinn's article 'Reach Out! Highlighting Collections and Expanding Outreach to Non-Traditional Communities across Academia,' '[the pop-up library] is cool because sometimes it's overwhelming to go into the library. [...] It's cool to have [a] curated collection to browse through.'<sup>20</sup> A subject-specialist curating library material can be a huge relief.

## Marketing

Deciding when and how to market the Pop-up Library initiative was a topic I deliberated on extensively. James Barnett, Stephen Bull, and Helen Cooper describe the buzz surrounding their successful pop-up instances, highlighting that many of the most memorable interactions occurred with students who stumbled upon the Pop-Up Library unexpectedly.<sup>21</sup> There's an undeniable punk-rock vibe to this approach, reminiscent of the Itinerant Poetry Library's ethos, as Sara Wingate Gray explains, emphasizing the importance of serendipity in the search process, noting that sometimes patrons find creative or spiritual sparks purely by accident.<sup>22</sup>

The whimsical joy of students discovering the Pop-up Library without prior knowledge is undeniably satisfying for both them and me. However, it soon became apparent that students, faculty, and staff actively sought out the pop-up when they were aware of its schedule. At the beginning of the fall semester, I announced the time and location of my pop-up, prompting one student to meet me at the library, assuming it was my starting point. They accompanied me to the pop-up site, eagerly discussing their research interests along the way. Throughout the session, they patiently worked with me through their query, as well as understanding that I needed to assist other patrons. Ultimately, I was able to locate the original screenplay they were seeking from a Midwestern repository, much to their delight.

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20. Stephanie Beene, Amy S. Jackson, Sarah Kostelecky, and Todd Quinn. 'Reach Out! Highlighting Collections and Expanding Outreach to Non-Traditional Communities across Academia.' *Reference Librarian* 60, no. 1 (January 2019): 46.

21. Barnett, James, Stephen Bull, and Helen Cooper. 'Pop-Up Library at the University of Birmingham: Extending the Reach of an Academic Library by Taking "The Library" to the Students.' *New Review of Academic Librarianship* 22, no. 2/3 (April 2016): 127.

22. Sara Wingate Gray. 'Reference Librarianship On The Fly: Taking the Librarian Out of the Library'. (paper presented at Annual IFLA General Conference and Assembly, Helsinki, Finland, 2012), 7.

The weekly announcements of the pop-up location and time had another happy outcome: a notable increase in general reference engagement from theatre students. Following these announcements, many students would reply with reference questions, send emails expressing gratitude for the initiative, or leave amused comments on the library memes I included (see Figure 7). Moreover, the announcements served as a helpful reminder for students to incorporate the library in their practice.

Here is a sample email announcement sent to undergraduates, graduates, and faculty during the spring semester:

*Good morning and happy Monday!*

*I hope to see you at the first arts library pop-up of the semester/2024!*

*I'll be in the lobby of 149 York St (CCAM) from **1:30–3pm** this afternoon with plays, books, and materials meant to inspire and stimulate! Come say hi, ask for help, or grab some candy 😊*

*If you miss me, feel free to email me to set up an appointment, or look for my announcement of where I'll be next week!*

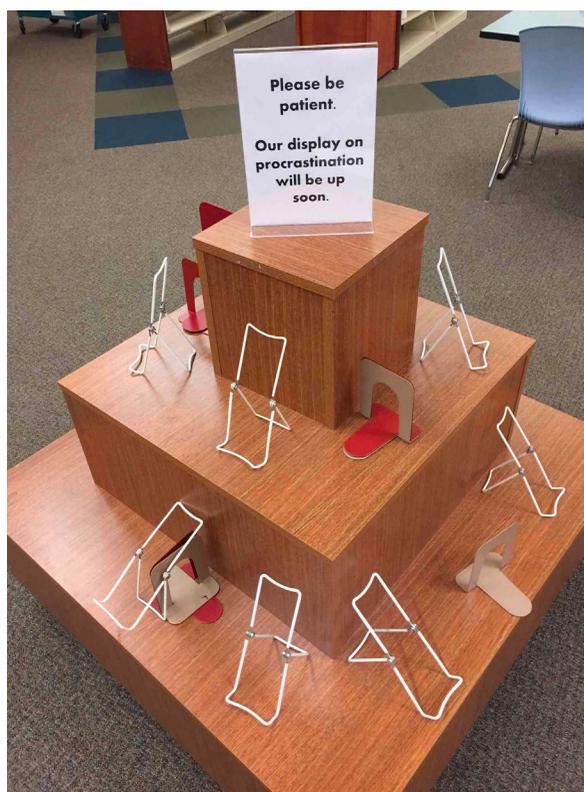


Figure 7. Alt text: library meme on procrastination. Photo credit: <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1667244443359079&set=ecnf.1220373471>.

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There is much potential for consistent communication and email outreach from the library. O'Toole, Barham, and Monahan mention that, in the first month of each semester, their biology librarian contacts faculty members teaching courses in closest proximity to the pop-ups and requests to visit their classes. These visits last 10 to 15 minutes and are mainly intended to introduce the students to the librarian, the Librarian on Location service, and the course guide if there is one for the class.<sup>23</sup> In my own missives, I have included announcements for new databases, featured resources, and other ways to highlight resources the patrons might not know about.

**Data**

In terms of data, the quantitative analysis reveals promising trends (see Figures 8 and 9). Over the Fall 2023 semester there were 231 visitors to the pop-ups, increasing to 264 in the following spring, despite having fewer pop-ups that

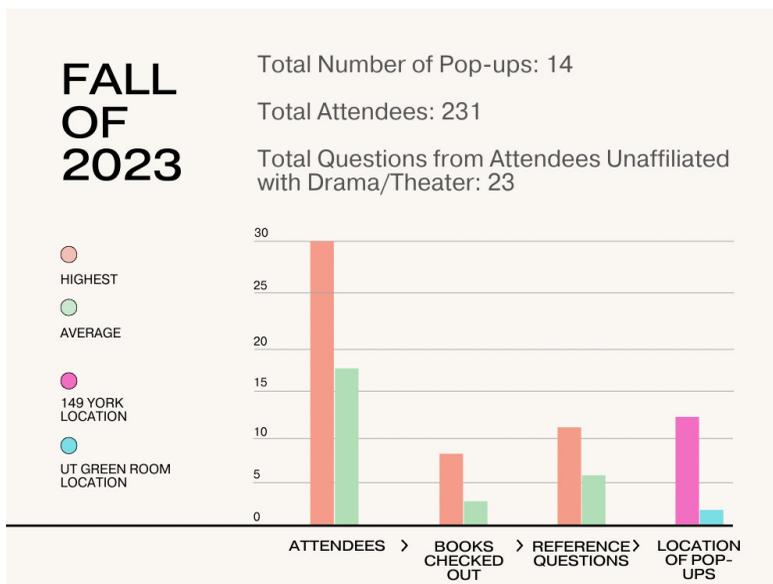


Figure 8. A bar graph showing statistics for Fall of 2023.

23. O'Toole, Barham, and Monahan, 'The Impact,' 535.

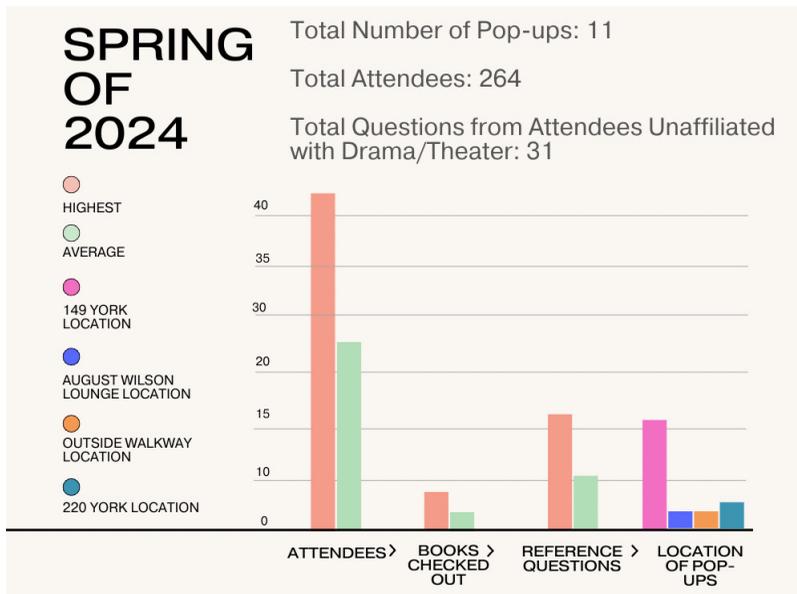


Figure 9. A bar graph showing statistics for Spring of 2024.

semester. The average number of visits per pop-up rose from 17 in the fall to 25 in the spring, indicating growing interest and engagement. Similarly, the average number of books checked out per pop-up increased from three in the fall to four in the spring.

Furthermore, the average number of reference questions taken at each pop-up doubled, with six in the fall semester to 10 in the spring, indicating that patrons were learning what type of questions to bring (see Figure 10).

Having a librarian present in their space encouraged students to seek assistance for a wide range of queries, many of which might have been overlooked or deemed too minor to warrant a visit to the circulation desk, such as borrowing limits, interlibrary loan requests, and database recommendations. Moreover, I was able to inform them about additional support channels like the library chat and the general questions email for further assistance for when I was not physically present.

I was artistically excited through the more complex and intellectually stimulating questions that emerged. For instance, when assisting a student in sourcing visually captivating Russian maps from the early 20th century for an upcoming Chekhov production, with attention to aesthetic. Another memorable instance involved aiding a student in discovering Irish plays featuring a specific dialect, with serendipity intervening, as another student browsing the selection happened to be from Ireland, offering invaluable insights into relevant playwrights. These instances underscore the collaborative nature of librarian-patron interaction.



## **Popping Up as a Holistic Practice**

As discussed in the next section, I was invited to many community events, showings, parties, and faculty meetings as a result of the pop-ups, quite literally because it occurred to faculty, staff, and students in the moment to invite me. But I would be remiss to not mention that popping up is a wider scope of becoming an embedded librarian in a creative department. Popping up as a practice not only facilitated spontaneous interactions, but also positioned me as a more integral part of the creative community. Leousis lists strategies for becoming a roaming librarian that emphasize the importance of active engagement within the department and the value of regular interactions with students and faculty beyond traditional library spaces.<sup>25</sup> Power and Munro include this in their wonderful list of pop-up tips as well:

- Attend public events, open houses, etc.
- Attend relevant meetings for liaison areas.
- Make use of networking opportunities at these events.<sup>26</sup>

There was not a single event (community program, faculty meeting, theater show) I attended where someone didn't approach me with some small question or query relating to the library, or email me after the event and noted that their question had occurred to them because they had seen me somewhere. As highlighted by Barnett, Bull, and Cooper, my willingness to actively engage with the community helped kindle the reciprocal nature of outreach efforts.<sup>27</sup> By being present at these events, I not only made myself accessible but also cultivated a sense of trust and familiarity among faculty and students, which ultimately encouraged them to include me.

## **Resulting Opportunities**

Beene, Jackson, Kostelecky, and Quinn emphasize the value of pop-up locations as platforms for natural conversations and connections within academic communities.<sup>28</sup> Through my presence at these pop-ups, I had the opportunity to engage in discussions with peers and colleagues, fostering connections that extended beyond casual interactions. This led to a range of organic opportuni-

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25. Leousis, 'Outreach to Artists,' 132.

26. Power and Munro, 'Move on,' 109.

27. Barnett, Bull, and Cooper, 'Pop-Up Library,' 114.

28. Beene, Jackson, Kostelecky, and Quinn, 'Reach Out!' 45.



Figure 11. Five students gathered around a pop-up exhibit.

ties that further demonstrated the library's involvement within the department and the broader campus community.

Here are some of the resulting opportunities that arose from my time at the pop-ups:

- The Arts Library was invited to host additional pop-ups for CCAM's semi-annual Symposiums and professional summer 'CCAMP,' which sponsor international performance artists and guests (see Figure 11).
  - Ambassadors from the Yale University Art Gallery and the Yale Center for British Art attended symposiums and met the librarian, leading to proposed pop-ups at their own institutions in conjunction with the arts library.
- The graduate School of Drama requested collaboration on a pop-up for the Chinese New Year programming, hosting arts and crafts for local New Haven families.
- The Arts Library was invited to participate in the School of Art's open house in Fall 2024, collaborating with various Yale arts organizations to introduce freshmen and first-year students to the Yale arts scene.
- The librarian was asked to lead research sessions for actors, organize tours of the Beinecke's archives and the Medical Library's archives, and host a pizza party lunch on the library roof during the graduate drama school's community days, with over 50 students attending.
- The librarian received invitations to attend end-of-semester or in-class showings and performances, as well as free tickets to contemporary New York shows from faculty.

- The librarian was invited to CCAM fellows' final showings.
- The librarian was invited or was given video access to undergraduate students' senior theses and asked for feedback.
- The librarian was requested to present at informational sessions for incoming undergraduate performance studies seniors on their research options.

## The Future

It's been gratifying to witness the success and productivity of this pilot program. I'm enthusiastic about its continuation. Reflecting on its outcomes and feedback, I have several ideas for enhancing the future program:

- Implement a systematic approach to themed displays: Creating themed displays can be time-consuming, but I aim to streamline the process through preparing material lists during quieter periods and utilizing student workers to assist with pulling materials, particularly during the summer months.
- Incorporate archival and non-circulating materials: Expanding the range of materials available at the pop-ups to include archival surrogates and non-circulating items will enrich the research experience for patrons and offer opportunities for future research projects.
- I would like to use the pop-up as a vehicle for future research down the road, such as offering user surveys about library services and potential new library resources.<sup>29</sup>
- Create discipline-specific zines: Building on the positive response to the Library 101 zine, I intend to develop zines tailored to each theater discipline, providing concise and engaging resources for research exploration.
- Enhance signage: To improve visibility and accessibility I hope to invest in larger signage that can be prominently displayed in frequented areas and easily deployed during pop-up sessions.
- Foster collaboration with subject liaisons: Partnering with subject liaisons during specific times in the semester when students are working on particular shows or subjects, such as collaborating with the Slavic studies librarian for Chekhov-related projects, to enhance the relevance and impact of the pop-ups.
- Explore opportunities for student activism: Inspired by the role of libraries in supporting free speech movements, such as the Occupy Movement's 42

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29. Abbazio, Jessica M., Karen Majewicz, and Deborah K. Ultan. "'The Pop-up Exhibitory': Collaborative Library Outreach for Performing Arts Audiences." *Public Services Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (July 3, 2023): 185.

on-site libraries in 2011, I envision leveraging the pop-ups to support student activism and provide resources for advocacy efforts, while respecting the principles of academic freedom and open discourse.<sup>30</sup>

## TL;DR: How to Apply This to Your Institution

### Are you a faculty member or student?

1. **Get familiar with your subject specialist:** Oftentimes drama and performance studies librarians are juggling multiple subjects, so try to locate who your department liaison is. Sometimes this is the music librarian or humanities librarian.
2. **Inquire about existing initiatives:** Ask your librarian about their outreach initiatives. Maybe pop-ups are already happening elsewhere on campus and your department can simply be plugged into their circuit.
3. **Offer assistance:** If your librarian is overloaded (so many of us are under-resourced), suggest the possibility of involving library student workers or paraprofessionals to manage pop-ups on a regular basis. Some library presence is better than none, and small questions can still be answered!
4. **Communicate your needs:** Share with the librarian the types of resources you'd like to see offered and suggest suitable days, times, and locations for pop-ups.
5. **Provide information:** If you're unsure about logistics, connect the librarian with individuals who may have relevant knowledge or insights. The more information you can provide, the easier their lift will be to get it started.
6. **Consider funding options:** If the library has budget constraints, offer to coordinate funding for enticing pop-up materials out of your department's budget (Signage, candy, etc.).
7. **Spread the word:**
  - a. If you're a faculty member, inform your colleagues and your students when the pop-ups are happening. Explain to the students the types of questions and research guidance they can bring to the pop-up.
  - b. If you're a student, attend and bring friends! These are for you. Many of my students will come as a group, pick up a book and look through it together.

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30. Gray, 'Reference Librarianship,' 13.

### Are you a librarian?

1. **Identify underrepresented departments or demographics:** Look into departments or student groups that are not frequenting the library. This could involve interviewing faculty, administrative assistants, senior students, and other stakeholders to understand their habits and needs.<sup>31</sup>
2. **Research high-traffic areas:** Gather information on areas frequented by the identified departments or demographics. This could involve speaking to faculty, staff, and students to determine popular locations on campus.
3. **Establish an ideal schedule:** Determine optimal times for pop-up events, such as midday lunch hours or during class transitions when students are most likely to be passing through high-traffic areas.
4. **Contact relevant gatekeepers:** Reach out to individuals responsible for managing the selected spaces to ensure awareness and obtain any necessary approvals or permissions.
5. **Write a proposal:** If required, draft a proposal outlining the purpose and logistics of the pop-up events. Emphasize minimal effort required from the space or department, aside from providing time and space for the librarian.
6. **Create your display:** Decide on the types of resources to provide, balancing practical texts with materials to delight and inspire patrons. Prepare signage, gather materials, and consider offering snacks or candy to attract visitors.
7. **Be bold and approachable:** Engage visitors in conversation, projecting a friendly and approachable demeanor. Act as a beacon for exciting materials and helpful information, encouraging people to seek you out.
8. **Follow up with visitors:** After pop-up events, follow up with visitors who might have had more in-depth questions to offer additional resources and to thank them for attending and gather feedback on their experience.
9. **Maintain consistent data:** Keep detailed records of interactions and observations during pop-up events to identify trends and inform future strategies. This could involve tracking attendance numbers, reference inquiries, and feedback from visitors.

Examples of data kept from a particular pop-up that is then translated into LibInsight can be seen in Figure 12.

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31. Beene, Jackson, Kostelecky, and Quinn, 'Reach Out!'

Patron	Type of Question	Department	Question	Date	Notes
staff	services	ccam	schedule of pop up	22-Jan	first pop-up of the year
student	services	acting	inter library loan	22-Jan	actors hungry for plays for showcase
student	reference	acting	plot of play	22-Jan	149 york
student	reference	acting	plot of play	22-Jan	monday afternoon
student	reference	drama unknown	shakespeare theory	22-Jan	sent email
student	services	unknown	what types of materials do you bring	22-Jan	brought 14 books
student	reference	playwriting	accessible theater	22-Jan	
student	feedback	acting	appreciated reference	22-Jan	
student	feedback	directing	thank you for doing the pop up	22-Jan	
student	reference	health students	directions to a class	22-Jan	
faculty	services	acting	setting up a library meeting	22-Jan	
Faculty	feedback	dean	love marketing for pop up	22-Jan	
Faculty	feedback	artistic director	love marketing for pop up	22-Jan	
Faculty	feedback	undergrad theater	love marketing for pop up	22-Jan	
student	reference	health student	directions	22-Jan	
			<b>total visitors</b>		43
			<b>total books checked out</b>		4
student	resource discover	drama unknown	streaming national theater plays	30-Jan	149 york
faculty	feedback	drama unknown	love the pop up	30-Jan	tuesday morning/afternoon
staff	feedback	drama	thank you for your help	30-Jan	brought 23 books
student	space	ccam	restroom	30-Jan	sent email
student	services	drama	where can I return books	30-Jan	here for ccam class
student	services	ccam	are these books available to check out?	30-Jan	
student	services	ccam	can I check this book out?	30-Jan	
faculty	reference	ccam	did students engage with the pop-up?	30-Jan	
student	space	ccam	restroom	30-Jan	
staff	services	ccam	collaborating for an art gallery	30-Jan	
faculty	services	dramaturgy	exhibit in ccam and years after	30-Jan	
student	services	theater undergradu	setting up a research appointment	30-Jan	
student	reference	theater undergradu	finding resources for senior project	30-Jan	
			<b>total visitors</b>		29
			<b>total books checked out</b>		5

Figure 12. Examples of data kept from a particular pop-up that is then translated into LibInsight.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, pop-up libraries offer a dynamic opportunity to bridge the gap between departments and the library, fostering stronger relationships with subject specialists and enhancing the overall academic experience. Even if pop-up events occur infrequently their impact can be significant. By shining a serendipitous light on the library, students and faculty are encouraged to view the library as an accessible and exciting resource. Whether it's a weekly, monthly, or semesterly occurrence, pop-up libraries have the power to inspire curiosity, facilitate connections, and empower individuals to explore the wealth of resources available to them.

The pop-ups can represent a tangible manifestation of the library's commitment to engagement and outreach.

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