Reaching undergraduate students can get a bit dicey—we don’t want Google to have a Monopoly on their academic research!

Follow along to learn how the University of Waterloo Library’s Communications Team and Student Engagement Committee leveled up student outreach.

Get ready for some Serious Fun!

**THE BRAND**

A key function of academic libraries is to support the success of undergraduate students, but this comes with a number of hurdles; academic libraries are often perceived as stuffy and intimidating institutions, and the range of services and resources available are often unknown to undergraduate students.

University of Waterloo’s Library Communications Team and Student Engagement Committee set out to define a brand strategy specifically for student-focused communications and outreach, to break down those barriers and get students hooked on the Library.

**THE BRAND**

Includes web and social media content, events, wellness programming, passive and active programming, and a unique staffing model - all designed to promote the Library’s expertise, services and resources in a way that appeals to students, finding them in the physical and digital spaces they inhabit.

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Peer-to-peer connections

The Library Ambassadors program hires students with little to no work experience, but a lot of passion for the Library and University. These students take that passion – and intensive Library outreach training – across campus, into their classes and online, creating a peer-to-peer platform for introducing students to all the Library has to offer.

Wellness

While all of the Library’s events and activities contain educational elements, wellness is also an important component to Library outreach. Activities such as therapy dogs, healthy snacks, and Harry Potter parties might get students into the Library for the first time ever, and foster connections between students and staff, and make students feel cared for.

Wellness events engage students with different spaces in the Library, increase the approachability of the institution, and create a comfort level with staff. Reinforcing the importance of taking study breaks and maintaining health during the most stressful times of the year also promotes sustainable study habits.

Social media

Knowing that Instagram was the Library’s fastest-growing social media platform, social media managers focus energy on producing fun and graphic content that is accessible and relatable to undergrads, employing memes and other pop culture references.

Creating engaging tidbits that give clues to the different services available in the Library has resulted in high engagement with students on social media - making a game out of educating users about Library services.

User-generated content has proved to be an effective and efficient way of building followers. Create-your-own meme contests provide a quick, fun and rewarding way for Library users to share their Library knowledge, while providing the Library with an opportunity to promote copyright through the use of Creative Commons images.

Events

Moving active and passive programming has had success in engaging a wide variety of users. These dynamic experiences support the Library’s welcoming image and a vibe that lets students know the Library is for everyone, and not just a specific type of student.