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Program Model: Finals Week Pet Grams

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Finals Week Pet Grams [1]

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many academic libraries were faced with the challenge of supporting academic success while most students were off-campus and taking online classes. Many outreach librarians turned to virtual programming.

Pet Grams were developed as a way to reach out and connect virtually with patrons, no matter their location. The main outcome for Pet Grams is to share kindness and motivation during a stressful time in the semester, especially for students but also for other community members who may also need support.

Audience
College Students

Popular Topics
Social-distancing programs
Virtual
Community Engagement

Budget
Free

Advance Planning
While brainstorming Fall 2020 finals week programming ideas, the Outreach & Evening Librarian at McDaniel College's Hoover Library came across a Facebook post [2] from Unleashed Pet Rescue and Adoption advertising their Howl-O-Ween Puppy Grams fundraiser. She immediately thought she could adapt this program as a virtual, asynchronous alternative to the library's usual therapy dog event.

In early November, she reached out to Keystone Pet Enhanced Therapy Services (KPETS), a local organization that typically visits campus for therapy dog events, and to library staff to solicit pet photo submissions using a shared Google Folder. Six Pet Gram templates were

created in Canva, and, with the help of a student employee, these photos were added to the design. A form [3] was created to collect Pet Gram requests from students, staff and faculty, and an email template in which the Pet Grams would be sent was drafted. While this planning process took about two weeks initially, preparations in future semesters (Spring 2021 and Spring 2022) took less time because the email template, graphics, and form easily could be edited and reused.

When the Student Outreach Librarian at UNF's Carpenter Library learned of Hoover Library's idea for Pet Grams, she quickly wrote a proposal and submitted it to library administration to host their own effort in Fall 2020. In November 2020, the outreach team asked for pet photo submissions from library staff and quickly designed the Pet Gram graphics in Canva.

Each Pet Gram from Hoover Library and the Carpenter Library includes a photograph of a library pet, a colorful and seasonal or thematic background, library logo, and a motivational saying, such as "You Can Do It!" or "Keep Going!"

Marketing
Hoover Library began advertising the call for Pet Gram requests at least one and a half weeks before finals week began. A promotional image and link to the submission form were shared on social media (Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter), in a weekly newsletter, in daily campus announcements, and in an email sent to faculty and staff.

The Carpenter Library accepts Pet Gram requests two weeks before the Monday of Finals Week, and the submission form [4] is promoted heavily to students, faculty and staff. Pet Grams are promoted on social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) as well as in official university communication channels such as the weekly e-newsletter. Pet Grams are also featured prominently on the library website [5] and shared with campus departments and partners. Additionally, due to word of mouth, Pet Grams have become more popular on campus.

Budget Details
Because Pet Grams are designed in Canva and sent via email and/or Instagram Direct Message (DM), they are completely cost-free.

Day-of-event Activity
Hoover Library began sending Pet Grams to recipients on the Monday and Tuesday of finals week via email and, during Spring 2021, Instagram direct message (DM). The Outreach & Evening Librarian sent all of the emails and DMs personally, half on Monday and half on Tuesday. This process took about an hour each day.

Due to the volume of requests, Carpenter Library staff (three or four people) split up the number of Pet Grams to send via email on the Monday of finals week. This process typically takes three or four hours per library staff member, depending on the number of staff involved.

Program Execution
Hoover Library set goals of 50 Pet Gram requests in Fall 2020 and 70 in Spring 2021, and both goals were surpassed. The library received many emails and direct messages in response to the Pet Grams, expressing how fun they thought this idea was, that it made their day, that it was just what they needed at the end of a tough semester, etc. One Pet Gram recipient, a college staff member who is also a KPETS volunteer, wrote: "I just wanted to say how much I

love the pet-grams, such an awesome way to end the Fall Semester. Thank you for organizing this – it brought smiles to the HR Team."

Carpenter Library Pet Gram requests included multiple recipients, such as a professor who wanted to send Pet Grams to all 200 students in UNF's Honors College. In Fall 2020, the Carpenter Library received 182 form requests and sent Pet Grams to 478 recipients. In Fall 2021, the Carpenter Library received 307 form requests and sent Pet Grams to 447 recipients. Selected responses include one response from a faculty member: "Omg I love you both and I love the library. I had no idea there were pet grams. My heart is bursting." Another Pet Gram sender responded: "Thanks so much for sending out these fun pet grams to our students! I appreciate the creative ways that the library has found to connect our campus community."

Advice
Pet Grams might seem like a large investment in time and effort, but once the requesting and sending processes are decided, most of the hard work is already done. Pet Gram graphics are fun to create, but gathering high-quality pet photos from library staff might take time, so we recommend sending out the call for photos and designing the templates early.

Consider giving Pet Gram senders the option of including a personal message to the recipient.

If multiple staff members are sending Pet Grams to recipients, we recommend creating a template for everyone to use.

Send the Pet Gram from an official library email address or social media account and make sure to add library branding and contact information to the Pet Gram email message so recipients know who to thank (the library)!

About This Library

Library Name
Thomas G. Carpenter Library and Hoover Library

Library Type
Academic / College

Library Description
The University of North Florida's Thomas G. Carpenter Library is located in Jacksonville, Florida, and serves approximately 17,000 students, 580 full-time faculty, and 1,250 other employees. The Carpenter Library provides informational resources, services, and events throughout the academic year to support student success and engage with its users.

McDaniel College is a private, liberal arts college in Westminster, Maryland which serves 1,681 undergraduate and 1,208 graduate students. As the core of scholarly interaction for the college community, Hoover Library provides equitable access to diverse resources, instruction, and programming to enable engagement and scholarship.

Related Programs
Stress ReDUCKtion [6]
BookFix [7]
Library Literary Contests [8]

Program Date
Fall 2020, Spring 2021, Fall 2021, and Spring 2022.

Source URL: https://programminglibrarian.org/programs/finals-week-pet-grams

Links
[1] https://programminglibrarian.org/programs/finals-week-pet-grams
[2] https://www.facebook.com/UnleashedPetRescue/posts/3566321470077666/
[3] https://hoover-mcdaniel.libwizard.com/f/finals-petgram
[4] https://unf.libwizard.com/f/petgram
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