

Flipping a Student Rave into a Library-Sponsored Event

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PURPOSE

Library pranks, raves, and flash mobs have become increasingly popular in academic libraries. This recipe provides step-by-step instructions on how our library turned this unofficial library rave into a collaborative library party.

TARGET AUDIENCE

College and university student groups. They may be official student organizations or a group of students interested in hosting a social event.

INGREDIENTS

- Sponsoring student organization
- Friendly librarians or library staff
- Space in the library suitable for a party
- Library giveaways
- Snacks

INSTRUCTIONS

Gather Ingredients

1. Identify the sponsoring student organization.
2. Watch social media channels to identify student sponsors or approach them after an “unofficial” rave has occurred. In our case, the rave sponsors belonged to the student satirical newspaper. One of the organizers was also a library student worker.
3. Invite student organizers to meet with

you. Make sure that the meeting invitation doesn’t suggest any punitive action but rather sponsorship by the library.

4. Offer library space, support, and resources for the event.
5. Establish a date, time, and expectations
6. Provide incentives for a partnership like giveaways, prizes, or snacks.

Whet Their Appetite

1. Establish a theme for the event. Students have hosted a speakeasy-themed party, a holiday bash, a western hoedown and a luau in our library.
2. Have the sponsoring student organization create the marketing materials and release them over social media. The library can link to student marketing, retweet it, or like it via social media. The student-led status of the event is important for success.

Cook the Main Course

1. Help students set up in the party space. This may involve rearranging furniture and decorating with twinkle lights.
2. Schedule library volunteers. Depending on the level of involvement desired by the student organization, librarians may be able to help. Our students have been comfortable with librarians handing out sodas and hosting games, including a Plinko board and spinning prize wheel.

3. Enjoy the smell of success while you watch the students participate and have fun in the library! Some of them are depicted in figure 89.1.



Figure 89.1. A costumed participant at the 2016 Mugdown Hoedown event in Texas A&M University Evans Library.

Top it Off With Sweets

Many student organizations don't have funding for promotional materials. If your library can afford some prizes or giveaways, make them available at the event. Our library has given away everything from T-shirts to library pens. We often bring library swag that is left over from other events, using the opportunity to clear out stock.

ADVICE

At Texas A&M University, a student group commandeered a group study room and created a student rave, or dance party, during finals week. Library security broke up the event but not before the corresponding YouTube video had gone viral and the idea of a library party during finals had taken root in the student population.

There is prestige to holding "unofficial" events in libraries. Students want to feel like they are doing something just a little bit naughty. Avoid the urge to take over the event. Providing students with the space, snacks, and background guidance will ensure that students still feel ownership of the event.

Set clear ground rules. Meet with student organizers prior to the event and make sure that expectations for the use of space, equipment, and length of time are clear. Students don't always communicate well within their student organizations, so setting ground rules early in the process helps avoid issues down the line.

Students may not be aware of university policies. For instance, our students wanted to create a fake bar where they would mix "mocktails" during the event. However, mixing drinks, even non-alcoholic ones, is prohibited according to campus food preparation and distribution policies.

ASSESSMENT

Over the course of three semesters, we have used several assessment methods.

- Event headcounts: How many students attended and was there an increase over previous semesters?
- Social media analytics: Did the event trend on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.?
- Whiteboard walls: Put out a whiteboard and markers and record student feedback about the event.

