

“Coming Out of COVID” UVic Libraries Strategic Directions Impact Fund 2022-2023:  
Final Summary Report

A. Organizational and Grant Information

**Institution:** University of Victoria Libraries, Victoria BC, V8W 3H5

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**Project Title:** Library as a place: An audio tour of UVic Libraries

**Funding Period:** July 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023

**Award Amount:** \$8,000

B. Project Summary

During COVID, library users keenly felt the loss of the Libraries as physical spaces. Our project sought funding to gather qualitative data from students on their relationship to the physical spaces of UVic Libraries. User narratives about the use of the physical library, as well as ambient sounds of library life, were recorded as audio. Collecting this type of data can inform a more personal understanding of the range of users the Libraries serve and the needs that the physical space fills. With this data, online and in-person auditory exhibits will be developed to illustrate the value and impact of the Libraries’ physical spaces and to inspire the UVic community of its potential for connection, inclusion, and creativity. This knowledge can then be leveraged in future initiatives to improve services and provide more welcoming and inclusive physical spaces for users. By using audio recordings in the exhibits, we also want to foreground the voices of library users themselves.

C. Funded Activities

The award period of this grant was focused on project planning and completing the data collection stage of our research project.

Our project team was assembled to gather a range of expertise and knowledge of the Libraries, digital tools, and media recording.

**Project Team:**

- Bill Blair (Music and Media Librarian)
- Matt Huculak (Head, Advanced Research Services)
- Shahira Khair (Organizational Analysis Librarian, co-Principal Investigator)
- Samantha MacFarlane (Special Projects Administrative Officer, co-Principal Investigator)
- Rich McCue (Manager, Digital Scholarship Commons)
- Emily Nickerson (Business and Law Librarian)
- Cairo Sanders (Data Analyst)

With our award funding, we purchased the audio-visual equipment needed for data gathering.

### **Equipment List:**

- Rode Compact Wireless Microphone System II
- H4N Pro Recorder/USB Audio Interface
- Kingston 32GB MicroSD and SD card reader
- Zoom Recorder Windscreen
- Zoom H3-VR Virtual Reality Handy Audio Recorder
- AudioTechnica ATH-M50X Headphones (x2)
- Sony Digital Camera Package
- Selfie Stick
- Otter.ai annual subscription

Upon study completion, this equipment will be donated to the Libraries’ collection of AV equipment and made available for loan by UVic students and researchers.

Data collection included an online survey, 30-minute scheduled interviews with students in the Libraries’ podcast studio, and roving interviews throughout William C. Mearns Centre for Learning - McPherson Library, Diana M. Priestly Law Library, COVE, and the Student Union Building. We also recorded ambient audio throughout the Libraries.

### **Compensation for Interviewees:**

- \$10 Starbucks gift cards for roving interview participants (25 total)
- \$50 Thrifty Foods gift cards for long-format interview participants (15 total)

Ethics approval was received for our research project (Application 22-0489) in October 2022. We subsequently began advertising our study and released our survey to recruit participants for our long-format interviews.

Participant engagement in our various initiatives was as follows:

### **Recruitment Survey:**

The survey ran from November 17, 2023 to December 10, 2023. The survey was built and distributed on SurveyMonkey.

- 179 Respondents
- 145 undergraduate students (81%), 28 grad students (16%), 6 alumni (3%)
- Top 3 faculties: Law (27%), Social Sciences (23%), Science (20%)

### **Individual Interviews:**

From the pool of survey respondents, 15 participants were selected to participate in our long-format interviews and user profiles. Interviews were all completed throughout the month of March 2023.

- 4 Graduate Students (Business, Science, Fine Arts, Human Social Development)
- 3 Law School Students
- 8 Undergraduate Students (Science x3, Humanities x2, Social Sciences, Engineering, Education)

### **Roving Interviews:**

- 27 interviews were completed between November 2022 and February 2023.
- Participants were sampled from throughout Mearns-McPherson Library and Priestly Law Library, as well externally from the Student Union Building and COVE.

Raw data collected from interviews in the form of audio files (\*.MP3) are being transcribed into text files (\*.txt). Data from the online questionnaires submitted by interviewees was exported into a text file (\*.csv). Images collected from the library and long-format interview participants was also recorded digitally (\*.TIFF and \*.RAW).

Rather than hire a student to support transcription, we purchased an Otter.ai subscription resulting in a substantial reduction from our initial expected budget.

Interview transcripts will be kept for their potential reuse by internal employees of the library. Data from roving interviews will be de-identified, but will include some information about interviewees (e.g. age, program of study) that is low risk for reidentification. Data from the individual interviews will include identifying information about participants, collected and shared with their consent.

### **D. Outcomes**

As we are currently in the process of interview transcription and have not yet begun any substantial analysis, the full impact of our research study is not yet determined. However, anecdotally, the process of engaging students and hearing the breadth of their lived experiences and the role the Libraries play in their lives has been impactful for the team members involved in data collection (Emily, Matt, Sam and Shahira.)

Most of the students we spoke with visit the Libraries daily, with some spending 12 hours per day (!) at some point during the year inside the Libraries. The amount of available space open to student use on UVic’s campus is very limited, making the Libraries key physical spaces supporting learning and research, but also relaxation, leisure, and socialization. Throughout their university experience, the students we spoke with had formed very personal and unique relationships to the Libraries and described a sense of ownership over particular spaces they enjoy spending time in. The Libraries’ role in community building is very strong, with many interviewees describing friendships and support networks fostered and nurtured by the spaces. The convergence of a range of support services in a single space is impactful for many users, in particular first year and international students.

As we continue with the analysis and then exhibit creation, we look forward to spotlighting some of these unique stories about the relationship between UVic students and the Libraries. We expect them to be very impactful for the university community at large, but also instrumental for demonstrating the importance of our physical spaces to university administrators and prospective donor communities.

E. Budget

Item	Description	Date	Cost
H4N Pro Recorder/USB Audio Interface (\$249.99) + Rode Compact Wireless Microphone System II (\$329) + Kingston 32GB Micro SDHC 80R CL10 W/Adapter (\$13.50)	Recorder, dual microphones, and SD card required for roving interviews.	September 29, 2022	\$664.32
Thrifty Food gift cards (\$50 x 15)	Compensation for long-form interview participants.	November 15, 2022	\$750.00
Starbucks gift cards (\$10 x 25)	Compensation for roving interview participants.	November 15, 2022	\$250.00
SD card reader	SD card reader needed for transferring student interview audio files from SD card.	November 18, 2022	\$20.22
Zoom recorder windscreen	Zoom WSU-1 microphone windscreen. Needed for recording ambient sounds. Shipping fee was refunded because shipping was delayed.	November 24, 2022	\$44.78
Otter.ai annual subscription	Subscription for transcription software. Required for transcribing student interviews.	December 2, 2022	\$134.87 (\$99.99 USD)
ZOOM H3-VR Virtual Reality Handy Audio Recorder + AUDIO-TECHNICA ATH-M50X Closed-back Dynamic Headphones	Recorder needed for recording ambient audio. Headphones needed for checking sound levels during interviews.	January 12, 2023	\$621.43
Headphones, selfie stick, camera	Sony DSCRX100M3 Vlogging Kit, LED Tripod Selfie Stick, Audio-Technica ATH-M50X Headphones. Headphones needed for checking sound levels during interviews. Camera and selfie stick needed for photographing interviewees.	February 24, 2023	\$1,211
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$3,697</b>