

# Report on Libraries Outreach Activity: Dance Party! @ Odegaard

Amanda Hornby, Emilie Vrbancic, Linda Whang | Undergraduate Student Success Team, Odegaard Library

## Dance Party! @ Odegaard | Saturday, September 24th 2016 | 9:00 pm- 12:00 am

This event welcomed first year students to the Odegaard Undergraduate Library in an innovative, fun, and engaging way. Odegaard Library was transformed into a late night dance club complete with a DJ, dance floor, professional lighting, and free food on the Saturday night before fall quarter classes began.

### Goals and Outcomes

1. Create a fun, welcoming and positive library event for new undergraduate first year students.
2. Promote Odegaard Library as an academic and social resource for first year students.

### Partners

First Year Programs

### Resources

**Funding:** Funds spent on refreshments, decorations, DJ, giveaways including glowsticks and Kindle Fire tablets, custodial staff, security, Harry the Husky, professional furniture movers, and stage delivery fees. Funding was provided by the UW Libraries, UW Parents Collections and Programs Endowed Fund and First Year Programs.

**Planning Committee:** Emily Ruder, Harry Murphy, Linda Whang, Emilie Vrbancic, Doug Herstad and Louise Richards

**Event Staff:** 5 Odegaard staff, 2 UW-IT LT staff, 3-5 UW-IT LT student employees, 1 Suzzallo and Allen Research & Learning Services GA, 20 Dawg Daze Student Leader Volunteers, additional custodial staff, 1 UWPD officer

### Activity Overview

The overall goal of the Dance Party event was to foster a welcoming and positive student experience within the library and also highlight the academic and social sides of Odegaard Library. Since this event was the first of its kind, assessment of the event included headcounts, capturing whiteboard comments, social media analysis, observations and photo documentation, and staff reflection.

During the three hour dance party, we welcomed over 2,000 students into the library. We reached our maximum capacity of around 800 students within the first 20 minutes of the party and had a line of waiting students that reached out into Red Square. There was a constant flow of students entering and leaving the building and the party finished strong with about 600 students left at midnight. The DJ, himself a UW student, kept the crowd energized throughout the night and had a great effect on the level of energy and fun in the building.



Photo credit: [UW Student Life](#)



Photo credit: Doug Herstad, UW IT

We solicited feedback about the dance party and Odegaard through whiteboard questions, social media platforms, and paper contest slips. Overall, student's reactions and responses were enthusiastically positive, as demonstrated by the two tweets below.



[Original Video Post](#)

One of the most used words to describe Odegaard throughout the night was “lit,” describing that the library felt like a club on fire. On whiteboards, students described Odegaard as wild and crazy, but also as helpful and resourceful. This evidence, coupled with overhead comments such as “This is the Library?”, illustrates that students identified the juxtaposition of having a dance party in a normally quiet library space.

Observations, photo documentation, and staff reflection uncovered how students utilized the space throughout the night. Even though the dance floor was packed for the entire night, other spaces such as the atrium seating area, the cafe, and the seating areas in front of the Active Learning Classrooms were used continuously. Students were seen talking to friends in small groups, cooling off and taking a break from dancing, and enjoying snacks. Staff also observed that some students did not participate in the dancing, but still found the Library welcoming enough to hang out in the non-dance areas. Community building was evident throughout the night as students were seen introducing themselves to other students, shaking hands, and exchanging phone numbers.



Staff reflection identified many ways of improving the planning process, assessment, and student experience for the event. For example, the social media contest required students to post to a social media platform (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) with a photo or video of the dance party, tag it with #UWDawgDaze and caption it with what they like most about Odegaard. Very few students posted on social media, suggesting the contest was too cumbersome to be completed at this kind of event. We did offer a paper version of the contest to catch students who did not have social media accounts and received over 100 responses in a very short time. We concluded that the social media component of the contest did not elicit enough responses to offset the staff time to comb through different platforms looking for students' posts. In the

future, we can continue the contest but only with the paper feedback submissions. Staff members who attended the event also suggested that staff from other library branches and departments should be encouraged to work the event. Due to the overwhelming success of the event, it would be helpful to have more library staff to aid in tasks throughout the night. Reflection also revealed that staff and Dawg Daze volunteers need additional orientation prior to the event related to specific event duties but also on safety issues such as first aid kit locations and emergency exits.

## **Conclusions**

Given the assessment evidence, it is clear that the Dance Party was successful in promoting Odegaard Library as a fun, student-centered, and engaging space. During Dawg Daze students are overwhelmed with information about the university, extra curricular activities, and college life. By hosting the Dance Party, Odegaard Library is positioning itself to welcome students and show them that the library is not only here for their academic needs, but can also serve as a place in which they can belong, socialize, and find community.

The effort and skill of the planning team and First Year Programs was essential in putting on a successful event. The staff time and effort needed to plan and execute the event was very extensive, but it is outweighed by the high impact and value to first year undergraduate students. The support from First Year Programs was also essential in making this event a success. They promoted the Dance Party as a key Dawg Daze event, contributed refreshments, paid for the DJ, and provided event help through their enthusiastic Dawg Daze Student Leader Volunteers.

## **Recommendations & Resources Requested**

We recommend holding the Dance Party again for Dawg Daze 2017. In order to support this event, we ask that the following recommendations and requests be taken into consideration:

- Continue partnering with First Year Programs to plan and market the Dance Party.
- Increase funding from the UW Libraries for refreshments, decorations and building needs such as professional movers and custodial services.
- Encourage participation of staff members from across Libraries branches and departments.
- Review and refine assessment methods to take into consideration staff time and effort and the amount and relevance of data collected.
- Improve the staff and volunteer experience by providing better training for event duties and safety precautions.