

Friday Polls: How to Gather Student Feedback During a Pandemic (and Beyond)

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Background

Before the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Towson University Albert S. Cook Library marketing team would get feedback from students using a variety of in-person methods. These included focus groups and whiteboard question prompts where students could free-write their responses. When the university moved to a remote learning environment, these assessment options were no longer available. We then turned to social media to fill the gap. We used Instagram Stories to create and launch Friday Polls, a series of interactive questions that enabled us to engage with students and obtain their opinions about the library.

Concept

Friday Polls are a series of poll questions posted to Instagram Stories every Friday. Each Friday poll begins with a branded image indicating that this story is part of our polls series. Then the story provides some details about the theme of the questions or we just begin with the questions if the theme is obvious. Instagram provides for four types of questions:

- Slider (Users indicate how much they like something)
- Poll (Users provide their choice between two options)
- Quiz (Users try to answer a question correctly)
- Questions (Users type in a response to a question)

We typically ask three or four questions and we try to make them each a different type.

We have used Friday Polls for two assessment-related purposes:

1. To get a sense of students' knowledge about our collections and services
2. To get students' feedback on what they would like to see at the library

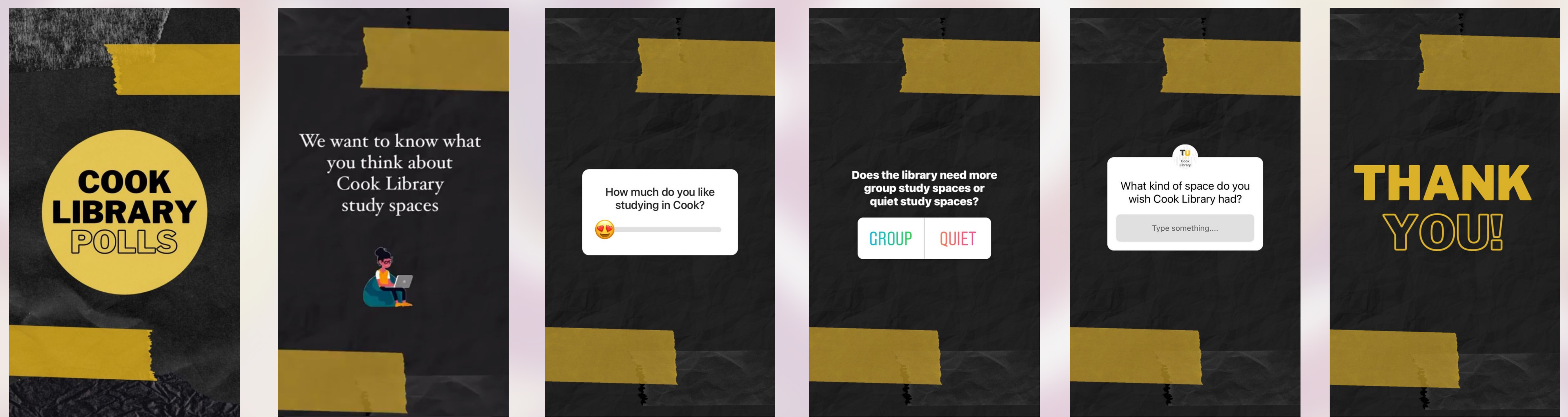
For the first purpose, we typically would ask two questions related to a theme and the last question centers on knowledge of library resources. For the second purpose, the whole poll will ask users to give their opinions about a group of related resources. We used this type to ask about how safe students felt being in the library during the Pandemic.

We then make sure to archive the story so we can review and share the results after the story has expired after 24 hours.

Conclusions

We used Friday polls during the Pandemic to get feedback from students about their knowledge of library services, resources, and spaces. If the poll results suggested that a particular service, resource, or space was unfamiliar, we would then promote it using social media and/or other communication channels. In the cases where we asked for student feedback, that feedback was shared with Library Administration and used in planning and decision-making. Even though Instagram Story users are likely not a representative sample of library users, Friday Polls did provide us with a quick snapshot of how our community was feeling during the Pandemic. We will continue to use this tool to get quick student feedback when our campus returns to in-person learning in the fall.

Sample Poll



We ran this poll in April 2021 to get a sense of how students felt about Cook Library spaces.