Library Yoga:
Experiences with virtual yoga programming at the Brock University Library

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Agenda

Why Library Yoga?
A little bit about me & my motivations

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Scheduling
Promotion

The Research Survey
The Survey
Results & Feedback

Thoughts for the Future
Wellness Programming & Partnerships
Why Library Yoga?

A bit about me & my motivations:

• Yoga instructor of 6 years, practitioner for 17 years
• Eager to share mindful strategies & movements that have helped me both as a student and as a librarian
• Big goal: humanizing the academic library!
The Program

Design

• Designed by a certified instructor to be done in any kind of clothing and within limited space/the workspace

• Intended to address common points of physical and mental stress in students (i.e. tension in back, shoulders, neck, feelings of overwhelm, etc.)

• Blend of live sessions & recordings on YouTube
The Program

Scheduling
• Scheduled during lunch hours on Wednesdays for half an hour
• Run at targeted points of the term to offer sessions during times of transition and times of stress
• On average, 7 sessions were run per term

Fall Welcome x3
Fall Midterms x2
Fall Finals x2

Winter Welcome x3
Winter Midterms x2
Winter Finals x2

Plus!
• 2-5 minute Library Yoga “Shorts”
• SWAC Instagram interview for Wellness Wednesday
• Night Against Procrastination special events
The Program

Promotion

• Events added to campus digital event hub, ExperienceBU (and later pushed in “Get Involved” newsletters to students)
• Shared on social channels by the Library and partners
• Included in updates to faculty & personal librarian emails to students
• Mentioned in my introductions to classes
The Program

Explore the playlist at bit.ly/LibraryYoga

Library Yoga

37 videos • 804 views • Last updated on Apr 6, 2022

Why practice yoga in the library? Yoga and mindfulness practices offer a necessary break from our work and studies. Mindfulness practices that incorporate movement, like yoga, also provide the tools to release some of the signs of stress that come with our work and studies. We've all probably had the following experiences:

- You're doing research and getting frustrated at not finding exactly what you're looking for right away. It's getting hard to focus because you're feeling overwhelmed.

Explore the playlist at bit.ly/LibraryYoga
The Research Survey

- Eager to know what kind of impact this programming is having on the community!
- Received ethics approval in November 2020
- Conducted a survey using Qualtrics in January 2021
- Results published in July 2021
Results & Feedback

Survey Participants (Total = 14)

- Undergraduate: 8
- Graduate: 3
- Faculty: 1
- Staff: 1
- Librarian: 1

Undergraduate Year

- First year: 4
- Second year: 2
- Third year: 1
- Fourth year: 1
Results & Feedback

Emerging Themes

• Stress relief
• Community building
• Advocacy & outreach

More detailed analysis can be found in the published article:

Results & Feedback: Stress Relief

Word cloud generated from responses to “What drew you to Library Yoga?”
Results & Feedback: Stress Relief

- All survey participants indicated that they were stressed.

How would you rank your stress levels during this academic year?

- Not stressed: 0
- Moderately stressed: 6
- Stressed: 5
- Very stressed: 3
Results & Feedback: Stress Relief

- All survey participants indicated that they were stressed.
- 13/14 participants indicated that their stress levels were different from previous years, and indicated that this was either “definitely” or “probably” related to their experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.

How would you rank your stress levels during this academic year?

- Very stressed: 3 respondents
- Stressed: 5 respondents
- Moderately stressed: 6 respondents
- Not stressed: 0 respondents
Results & Feedback: Stress Relief

Has Library Yoga impacted your stress levels?

- Yes: 8
- Maybe: 5
- No: 1

“the stress of school and the pandemic still prevails, but library yoga decreases the amount of stress that I feel in that moment and throughout that day”

“it allows me to take time to myself, away from my studies, to relax”

“made me feel better physically and mentally”

“I feel more relaxed and refreshed, prepared to learn”

“the livestream and me participating helped me reduce my stress for that day”
Results & Feedback: Community Building
“I liked the option of having a scheduled break that would allow me to connect with others and get physical movement into my day.”

“It was something that I could join and be a part of”

“Made me feel part of the community”

“it is very valuable to have these types of interactions online during a very difficult time in the world”

“allowed me to work out anonymously behind a computer screen while enjoying the shared experience with people like myself with a common interest in libraries and learning more about fitness, wellness and keeping well during challenging times”

“virtual programs like library yoga allow me to connect to the library any time, from any device including my smart phone.”
Results & Feedback: Advocacy & Outreach
“transcends negative stereotypical images of what a library is [...] I thought librarians wore glasses, never worked out, didn't care about fitness or wellness, but library yoga helped me with stress, allowed me to meet really neat librarians and made me feel better about myself while seeing a different side of the library and librarians.”

“The conversation helped me to learn about what librarians are and do.”

“I liked seeing that Brock has yoga available within the library space, as the library is seen as a quiet place to focus, and yoga requires quiet and focus as well.”
Results & Feedback

Word cloud generated from responses to “Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with Library Yoga?”

enjoy
instructor
great
enjoyable
experience
conversational
connect
easy
help
group

Results & Feedback

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“It is in my calendar. I look forward to it and schedule around it if possible. So yes, having one, two or a third repeated session gives me the flexibility to get things done, work around meeting and classes, and then enjoy working out with others when possible. It is now strangely the best part of my week I look forward to every time. It brings a smile to my face every time.”

“I really enjoy it and can't wait to practice in person!”

“I enjoyed learning yoga very much and the instructor was so great! When it ended, I even purchased my own mat and starting doing YouTube yoga lessons”
Library Yoga since the survey...
With another year, I’ve learned:

Attendance is consistently highest during the first month of the term, not during end-of-term crunch times!

A follow-up, informal survey indicated evenly split interest in an in-person session; half of respondents wanted to attend in person, and half wanted all sessions to remain virtual.

Online polling tools offer more opportunities for anonymous, but synchronous interaction at the start of a session.

After greater university news promotion, an increased number of faculty have begun participating and sharing the classes with their students!
Thoughts for the Future
More wellness programming

There is a place for wellness in the library!

- Virtual (and possibly in-person) yoga classes are of interest
- To support in-person classes and wellness on campus, a future library project could be a new lending program for resources like mats and yoga blocks
- Encouragement cards distributed during exam season with chair yoga illustrations and breathing exercises (and a link to our exam survival guide!) continue to cultivate a caring and holistic library space
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Continuing programming like this may be possible with staff expertise and/or in partnership with:
• Student Wellness
• Recreation
• Community yoga studios
Thank you!

LET’S HAVE A CONVERSATION 😊

IG: @chelsea.onthebrightside
https://chelseahumphries.wixsite.com/yoga
Related Reading

