POETRY AT PUL

DIGITAL OUTREACH WITH VISUAL POETRY COLLECTIONS

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WHAT IS VISUAL POETRY?
Visual poetry emerges from the concrete poetry of the 1950s and 1960s, and emphasizes the typographic, visual, and tactile qualities of language over its semantic meaning. Visual poetry is fundamentally an intermedial art form, drawing equally from art, literature, collage, and new media to reconsider the social context of communication. The visual poetry movement is international in scope, forging communication networks between artists and writers across North and South America, Europe, and Asia.

WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN?
While Instagram is a popular app with younger people, most of our audience, surprisingly, are older Millennials and Gen-X.

Hashhtags are an effective means of increasing engagement with a social media campaign. However, it’s more likely that these people interact with the posts for entertainment/visual learning, whereas people who “follow” our account are more likely to be local and visit the collection in person.

Cross-posting on Twitter, which has a large scholarly demographic, is potentially an effective means of reaching coinhabitants with a strong interest in and expertise in these materials.

Visually, the top posts tend to feature bold typography, high contrast, unique illustrations, inventive bindings, and other eye-catching elements. A seasonal post on concrete poetry voluntarism, also did particularly well.

Poetry on PUL posts receive substantial engagement from other library, special collections, and rare books accounts.

It is difficult to draw conclusions about the relationship between social media outreach and hands-on use of special collections materials. Social media offers a distinct way of engaging with library collections and campaigns should be tailored to the interests and behaviors of online audiences, and take the affordances of the platform into account.

Collaboration between a cataloger, who works closely with the collections, and communications/outreach staff, has been a successful model for organizing this project.

As institutions charged with supporting the information needs of public, academic, and special user-groups, and not as revenue-generating companies, we should seek to engage our patrons through personal and honest communication designed to anticipate, meet, and respond to user needs.