UC Santa Barbara

Title

Graduation Photo Booth

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Graduation Photo Booth

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PURPOSE

Promote the library as a partner in student success by celebrating graduation with college seniors.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Students, especially those who are graduating

INGREDIENTS

- Digital camera and tripod
- At least two staff (one to take photos, one or more to help with props)
- Props
  ◊ Graduation props: caps, gowns, stoles, leis, "class of" or "year" props (glasses, signs), faux diplomas
  ◊ Fun props: silly hats, ties, glasses, boa, masks
  ◊ Small portable whiteboard for personalized messages, whiteboard markers, and erasers
- Backdrop, preferably with library branding
- Handheld mirror
- Bobby pins to secure graduation caps
- Natural light
- Flickr, Instagram, or other photo-sharing site
- Photo release forms
- Handouts with web address to access or download photos
- Promotional materials: Facebook event and/or ad, posters, flyers, emails

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Call around and visit costume rental and party stores well in advance, in addition to your campus bookstore. If you're going to host the photo booth on a regular basis, consider investing in staples that you can re-use, though you'll have to buy class-specific props each year. You may be able to borrow some props from students. You can also make props, like faux diplomas (rolled up paper wrapped in a ribbon).
2. If you rent caps and gowns, make sure they look authentic and match the colors that your institution uses. Students won't want to pose wearing paper caps.
3. You'll need a surface and hooks to spread out and hang the props so students can see what's available and spend time choosing their favorites.
4. Figure out the traffic flow before the event.
   a. If you get a crowd, where will students line up so they don't block normal library traffic flow?
   b. Where will the props be located so that they're out of the way of the photos, but students can make selections before their turn?
5. Suggested DSLR camera settings: wide-angle lens, shutter speed of at least 1/200 to avoid blur because some people tend to move during the photo, aperture of f/5.6-8 to make sure everyone in larger group photos is in focus, all-points auto-focus.
6. Test the lighting in advance by taking sample photographs at the same time of day as your photo booth is scheduled.
7. Be prepared to also take photos with students' own phones.
8. Consider holding the photo booth during multiple time slots to accommodate class schedules.
9. Students will need to sign release forms if you are going to use the photos in library marketing materials.
10. Try to find lists and venues just geared to seniors to promote your event, like class groups on Facebook. Also, use your personal contacts and networks to get the word out.
11. Select hashtags to use in conjunction with the event (look for commencement-related hashtags already in use by the college and students) and pre-write them on your whiteboard so they will appear in the photos. Use them to promote the event in advance and when posting photos afterward.

12. After the event, post your online photo album to the library's social media sites.

CAUTIONS/ADVICE

Make sure that you're not in competition with anyone on campus offering a similar photo booth. We discovered that while there are plenty of photo opportunities for students on our campus with general university-branded materials, there are no other photo booths specific to the graduating class. That's why we chose to focus on props that clearly show the year. Position the photo booth in a highly visible and trafficked area in your library. Promote the event to library student workers who are graduating and ask them to help spread the word. Make sure you have a way to communicate to participants when and how they will find the photos after the event. If you offer any continued services to alumni, consider promoting them during the photo booth.

ASSESSMENT

Possible ways to assess the photo booth include measuring attendance as well as views and engagement with the photos you post online.

REFLECTION

Students spend a good deal of their time outside of the classroom in the library, but we rarely get to celebrate their accomplishments with them. Both students and library staff became teary-eyed at moments during our photo booth. Many students couldn't believe the library was providing the photo booth for free because they pay large sums this time of year for every graduation-related item and event. You can see one of our happy students in figure 110.1.

Figure 110.1. An excited graduating student.