

Scholarly Commons Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)

1. Unit Narrative

The operations of the Scholarly Commons were profoundly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. To protect the health and safety of the Illini community, in-person drop-in services were halted and staff worked remotely for the duration of the fiscal year. The Scholarly Commons offered most services via an online model while also supporting digitization efforts and limited in-person assistance to expand access to library technologies and collections. Staffing transitions and 220 renovations were a dominant focus in planning and activities. Major activities and accomplishments of the unit are noted below in connection with the primary strategic direction (SD) advanced by each.

SD1: Pro-active and trusted partners in scholarship, discovery, and innovation

- The Scholarly Commons provided access to scanning technology by appointment and loaned the unit's new Bookeye 4 KIC Scanner to Digitization Services to assist with rapid scanning of materials for ingestion (in part) into the HathiTrust Emergency Temporary Access Service. Though access to hardware was limited due to the pandemic, Scholarly Commons staff and graduate students offered appointment-based scanning on the first floor of the Main Library in support of research and learning needs, facilitating and guiding digitization for approximately 16 patrons.
- We provided staff support for the contactless circulation desk in the Marshall Gallery during the pandemic. The interim head, Geographic Information Specialist, and graduate assistants volunteered for two-hour shifts weekly to help with understaffed circulation needs. Staff were also trained as Wellness Advocates in order to serve in this capacity.
- Many consultation services transitioned online with relative ease, and we added virtual drop-in hours to our service offerings by embedding a chat widget on our website and guides. We continued to offer expertise and facilitate access to the expertise of our library and campus partners via email and online consultations.
- The unit continued to contribute three desk hours per week to the Main Library's virtual Information Desk.
- Scholarly Commons software was made available for remote use through Citrix. Citrix data reveal 322 successful sessions with 144 unique users for the Scholarly Commons desktops that were available through UIUC Anyware during Spring 2021. We do not have Fall 2020 data.
- The Scholarly Commons has a small budget (\$3,000/annually) to manage a collection of primarily print materials (e.g., software instruction manual, data visualization books) to support user exploration of advanced software and inspire ideas for research projects and data visualization. The Interim Head and Digital Scholarship Liaison collaborated with Circulation to move this collection to the Main Stacks.
- The Data Purchase Program (~\$30,000/annually) executed no purchases of datasets. Although multiple informal inquiries were made by researchers regarding the Library's current or potential ownership of specific data sources, most inquiries involved subscription databases rather than

outright purchases of data. No official purchase request forms were received.

- In collaboration with the Office of Undergraduate Research and the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (LAS), the Digital Scholarship Liaison and Instruction Librarian continued development of a workflow to collect and archive undergraduate theses and capstone projects using Vireo, which the Graduate College uses for dissertations and masters theses. This was a continuation of a pilot with LAS and included collaborating with staff from Scholarly Communication and Publishing to upgrade the Vireo software.

SD2. Transformative learning experiences

- Events and programming, such as the Savvy Researcher workshop series and Image of Research competitions, pivoted to a fully online model. The Savvy Researcher workshop series was offered fully online for the first time in program history. We worked with partners within the library and across campus to offer 108 workshops via Zoom. Additionally, the Digital Scholarship Librarian worked with Research and Information Services and other library staff to assess and map workshop offerings to the research lifecycle.
- Renovation continued in the new public space throughout the fiscal year with the expectation that the space in Main Library 220 would be ready for “soft launch” by the start of Fall 2021. Vendor delays with the audio/video equipment in 220 prevent use of the presentation space for an unknown period.
- Loss of the unit’s Office Manager position over the summer significantly decreased the number of employee hours available to staff a service desk. To expand access to Scholarly Commons spaces and technology to the extent possible while working within strained staffing parameters until Undergraduate Library staff join the Scholarly Commons team, the unit planned to pilot an open doors approach to Room 220. The room will be open for patron use during all Main Library operating hours, allowing everyone in the University of Illinois community greater access the Scholarly Commons specialized software and hardware, collaboration rooms, flexible study spaces, and scanning equipment.
- Planning for Fall 2021 over the summer revealed that many Scholarly Commons partners intend to continue operating virtually in the next academic year, though the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning will begin to provide in-person statistical consultation services in the 220 collaboration rooms beginning on August 30, 2021.

SD3. Societal and global impact

- The Scholarly Commons celebrated our [ten-year anniversary](#) in October 2020 with an online presentation by Thomas Padilla, Interim Head of Knowledge Production at the University of Nevada and former Scholarly Commons graduate assistant. Additionally, the tenth anniversary webpage featured an interactive map and timeline. The map showcased where former Scholarly Commons graduate assistants are now working and was developed by the Geographic Information Specialist and graduate assistants. Additionally, two graduate assistants collaborated on creating an interactive timeline showcasing the history and various events held in the Scholarly Commons in its ten-year history.

- The Scholarly Commons website received 13,634 page views during FY21, 3554 of which were of the main page. The tenth anniversary web page in particular received 484 views, 150 of which occurred the day the Scholarly Commons shared the link publicly, with 47 views the day of Padilla's presentation.
- The annual graduate and undergraduate Image of Research competitions continued online in partnership with the Graduate College and Office of Undergraduate Research, respectively. We received 60 submissions from undergraduate students and 5 from graduate students. The Scholarly Commons provides significant support for this program, both financially and administratively.
- The Scholarly Commons co-sponsored [GIS Day](#), and the Geographic Information Specialist served on the planning committee and assisted in the event's transition to an online format. Over 70 attendees participated in the keynote, networking event, and virtual student poster competition. GIS Day brings synergies in research and education across campus. Additionally, it is helpful for students to find career and internship opportunities in a group discussion format.
- The Data Discovery and Business Librarian continued participation in the ITHAKA S+R study on "Supporting Big Data Research." This work involved conducting interviews with 15 UIUC researchers over Zoom in Fall 2020, analyzing the transcripts from those interviews in Spring 2021, and drafting a report to be reviewed by ITHAKA S+R. Release of both the local and national (20+ institutions) reports are anticipated in October 2021 and will have an impact in determining how the Scholarly Commons will support Illini data needs as our unit adjusts to new staffing, space, and support models.
- The Geographic Information Specialist served on the planning committee for the first-ever Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) GIS Conference, which was held virtually. It included a keynote address, presentation sessions, lightning talks, social hours, map gallery, mapathon, and trivia night. The conference provided a great opportunity for geospatial information users and educators in Big Ten institutions to present their work, exchange information, and develop potential collaborations. It also attracted hundreds of participants outside of the BTAA network.
- The Geographic Information Specialist helped to advance the BTAA Geospatial Data Project by collaborating on the creation of a series of tutorials for teaching and learning about maps, geospatial data, and GIS techniques. These tutorials cover a range of activities designed to meet the needs of instructors and students in a wide range of disciplines (e.g., public health, urban planning, environmental studies, history) and levels of competency in geospatial data retrieval, use, and analysis. Instructors and students of UIUC can use those tutorials in their online/in-person classes during the pandemic.
- The Geographic Information Specialist also collaborated with staff from the Mortenson Center to update and maintain the Mortenson Center Associates Map. This program is meant to offer individuals working in a library setting outside the United States an opportunity to explore current issues and trends in the library field and engage with librarians implementing cutting-edge programs and services. The map is used to show all the associates of Mortenson Center worldwide in the past.

SD4. Strategic investments for a sustainable library environment

- A recommendation to integrate the Media Commons into existing Scholarly Commons spaces on both the second and third floor of the Main Library was approved by Executive Committee. Over the summer, logistics of implementing space and technology transitions moved to the purview of the Head of the Scholarly Commons in collaboration with Media Commons staff, and staffing and workspace logistics moved to the purview of the Staffing Integration Subgroup. Planning will continue into the next fiscal year.
- The Scholarly Commons provided pre-professional job opportunities for five graduate assistants who are active content creators for the unit. They regularly produce blog posts, podcasts, guides, and other information materials that benefit the global research community. This year, graduate assistants produced 3 podcasts episodes, maintained a social media presence on Twitter and Facebook with 63 tweets that had 53,047 impressions and 15 Facebook posts that reached 1,883 users, and wrote 28 blog posts on topics ranging from the Art Institute of Chicago's public API to instructions on making slideshow presentations accessible.
- Graduate assistants played an integral role in reviewing and reporting on unit data to drive data-based decision making. The two primary areas of focus were on website content and GA training activities.
- As part of the transition to Room 220, the Scholarly Commons graduate assistants, with support from the Social Sciences Librarian, conducted an accessibility audit of its physical and digital spaces in the fall of 2020. This report concluded that while the Scholarly Commons' physical space was fairly accessible, edits could be made to the Scholarly Commons' website to make it more updated and consistent.
- A subgroup of graduate students, Scholarly Commons staff, the Media Commons Coordinator, and the User Experience Coordinator collaborated to begin a redesign of the Scholarly Commons website. An assessment of DeskTracker data from September 1, 2019-January 29, 2020 and January 1, 2021-June 26, 2021 was conducted by a graduate assistant to capture approximately six months of data both before and during the pandemic. It provides valuable insight into how the Scholarly Commons consultation services were impacted by the pandemic. Continued assessment of how questions come in and the nature of patron requests will play a key role in staffing decisions as the two Commons merge and will continue to provide a meaningful opportunity for Information Sciences students to collect, analyze, visualize, and report on data essential to the Library's mission.
- Termination of the office manager position left a gap in managing the graduate assistant training series. Additionally, the Scholarly Commons' reopening in Main Library 220 and the expected merger of the Media Commons into the Scholarly Commons will require the unit to update its policies and training practices. To accommodate the loss of staffing to support this area, we transitioned to a peer-to-peer model for the training and professional development of the new student cohort with second-year graduate students playing a lead role in assessing, revising, and coordinating the program.

Goals

The Scholarly Commons accomplished the three goals set forward in last year's unit report:

1. Hired a new permanent Head of the Scholarly Commons, Michelle Reed, who joined the Library in March 2021.
2. Celebrated the ten-year anniversary of the Scholarly Commons.

3. Moved some public operations into the new Scholarly Commons space in Room 220.

Key goals for the next fiscal year include the following:

1. Complete website assessment and redesign process in collaboration with the User Experience Coordinator and Information Technology and launch new Scholarly Commons website.
2. Continue the process of integrating the majority of the Media Commons staff, services, and equipment into the Scholarly Commons.
3. Develop and implement an assessment plan for the 220 public space in collaboration with the Library's assessment team.

2. Statistical Profile

Facilities

User seating counts and facility hours are not applicable due to COVID-19 closure.

Personnel

Leadership transitions, the Undergraduate Library Integration Project, and independent decision-making by parties external to the operations of the Scholarly Commons posed significant challenges to communication and group cohesion. The search for the Head of the Scholarly Commons was successful with Michelle Reed starting in the role in March 2021. Dwindling gift funds necessitated the termination of the Scholarly Commons office manager position held by Emilie Staubs effective July 2021. Emilie provided a vital backbone of support for Scholarly Commons services, the bulk of which were to be absorbed by staff from the Undergraduate Library impacted by the Library Integration Project. Delays in the integration project's timeline eliminated the opportunity to train new staff prior to Emilie's departure and required delegation of administrative and clerical duties to existing Scholarly Commons faculty, staff, and graduate assistants. A new position (Unit Spaces and Technology Support Specialist) was approved to assist in the day-to-day operations and troubleshooting of Scholarly Commons technology and public spaces; the position will also provide support for the Media Commons and will play a key role in continuity of services as Media Commons technology, services, and staff are relocated to the Main Library and the unit is absorbed administratively into the Scholarly Commons.

The Scholarly Commons employs five graduate assistants (1.75 FTE) from the School of Information Sciences. The graduate assistants provide significant support for the unit's service desk, offer learning opportunities to patrons, and complete various digital projects, as described in Section 1 of this report. The graduate assistant budget is funded with State of Illinois funds; additionally, the Scholarly Commons was allotted 600 hours (\$14,232) in state funds for graduate hourly in Summer 2021.

- Michelle Reed, Head, Assistant Professor (1.0 FTE) (March 2021 - present)
- Sara Benson, Interim Head, Assistant Professor (1.0 FTE) (June 2020 – March 2021)
- Merinda Hensley, Digital Scholarship Liaison and Instruction Librarian, Associate Professor (1.0 FTE)
- Carissa Phillips, Data Discovery and Business Librarian, Associate Professor (.5 FTE)
- Wenjie Wang, Geographic Information Specialist, Academic Professional (1.0 FTE)

- Emilie Staubs, Academic Hourly (1.0 FTE). Paid from gift funds.(Departed July 2021)
- Abigail Sewall, Graduate Assistant (.25 FTE)(August 2019 - May 2020)
- Michael Steffen, Graduate Assistant, (.50 FTE)
- Ben Ostermeier, Graduate Assistant, (.25 FTE)
- Sarah Appedu, Graduate Assistant, (.25 FTE)
- Mallory Untch, Graduate Assistant, (.50 FTE) (August 2019 - May 2020)

User Services

- Circulation: 1
- Reference Interactions: 255
- Workshop Sessions: 108
- Workshop Participants: 669

3. Appendices

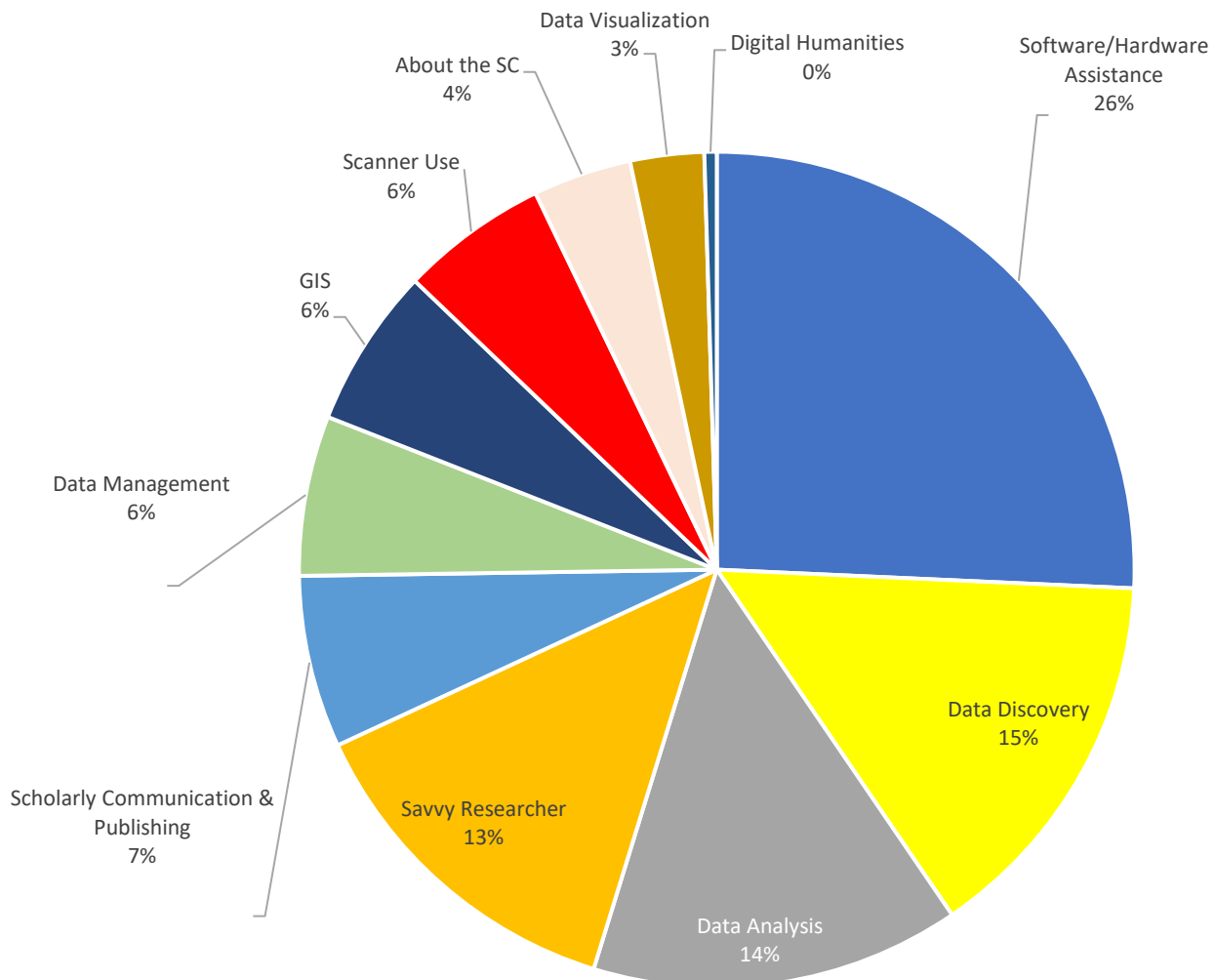
- Scholarly Commons Data Visualization (Fiscal Year 2021)

Scholarly Commons Data Visualization

Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)

Questions and Consultations

Questions Asked by Service Type



Time Spent on Scholarly Commons Questions

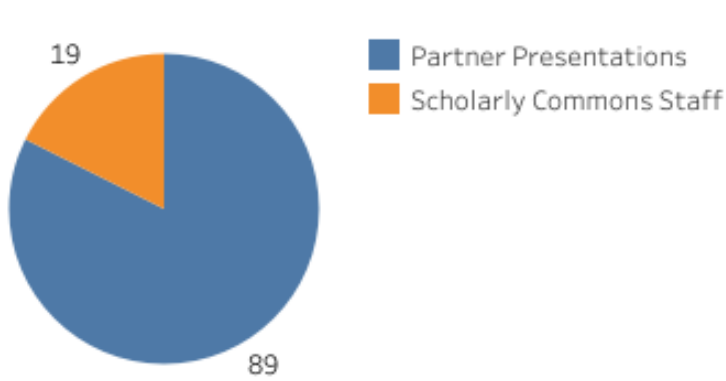
Time spent	Count
1-3 Hours	28
5-15 Minutes	80
15-30 Minutes	39
30 Minutes- 1 Hour	27
<5 Minutes	75
>3 Hours	6
Total	255

Types of Questions Asked

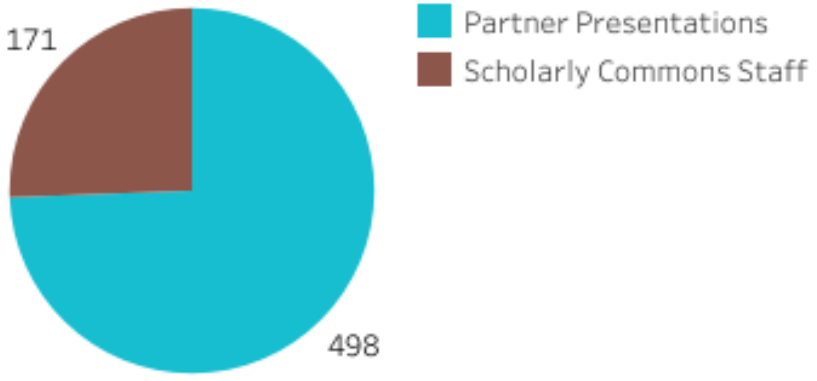
Question Type (Question ..	Count
Data Assistance	67
E-resource access proble..	1
Finding Specific Library M..	4
Library Policies and Servic..	71
Other	40
Ready Reference	1
Reproduction Request	1
Research Assistance	20
Technical Issues (printers..	50
Total	255

Events

Savvy Researcher Workshops

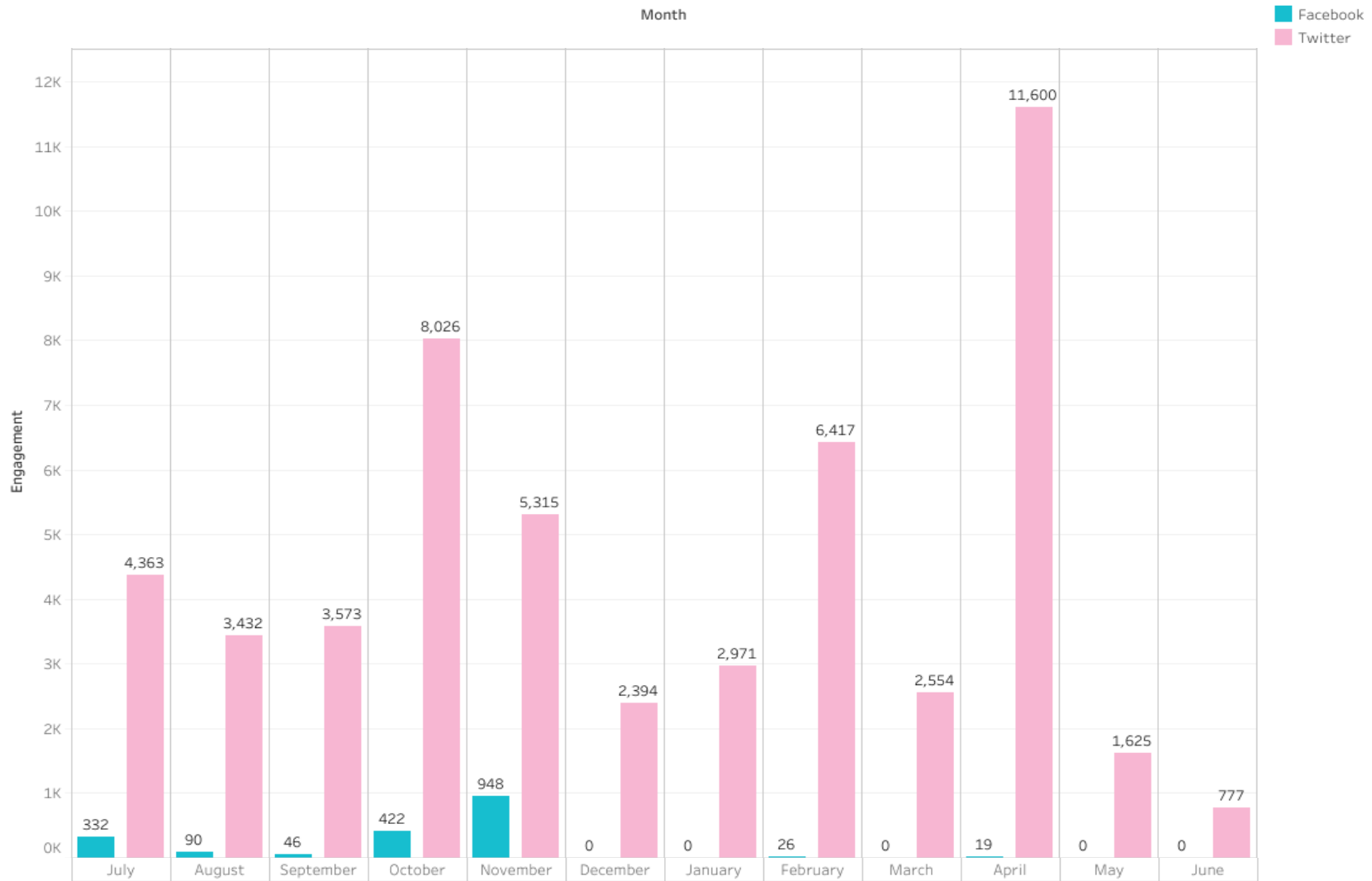


Workshop Participants

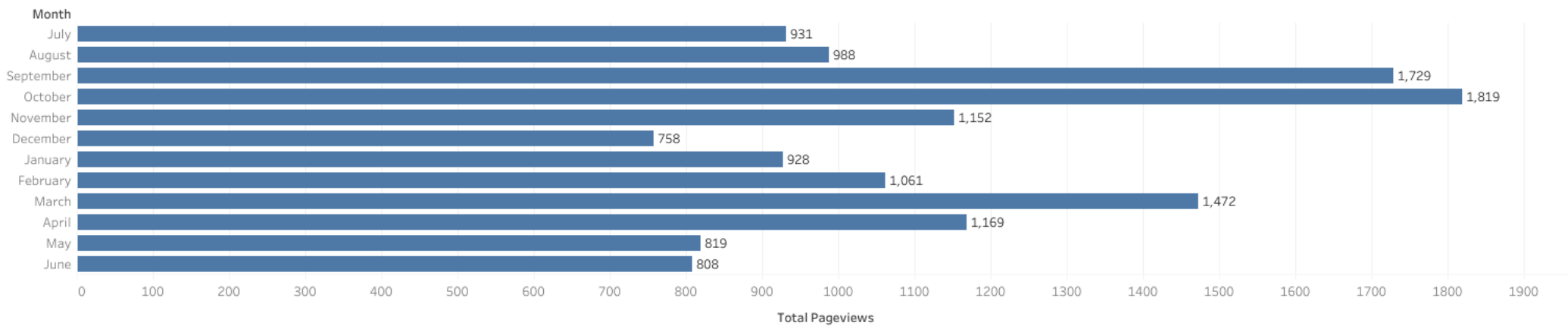


Access and Engagement

Scholarly Commons Social Media Engagement



Scholarly Commons Website Page Views by Month



Scholarly Commons Anyware Access Usage by Month (Spring 2021 Only)

