

# Positives of a Pandemic

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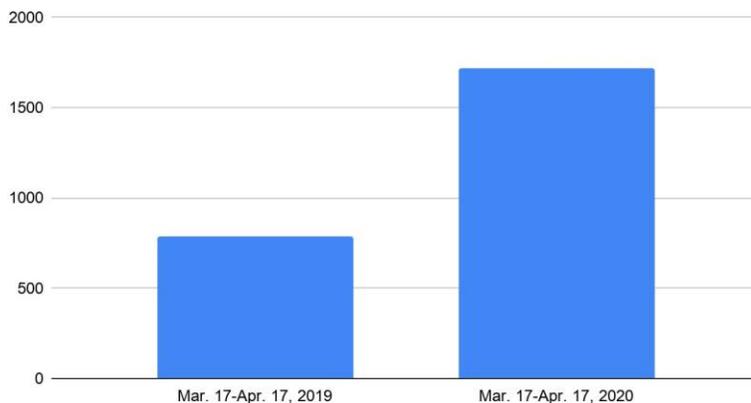
I won't sugar coat it - this pandemic has been terrible. Libraries have plenty to be positive about though! We have continued to serve our patrons in whatever way possible, including moving our programs to virtual venues like Facebook and Instagram.

Has this virtual programming actually been successful? Just look at the statistics for a resounding yes! According to Sprout Social management software, Harris County Public Library (HCPL), a public library system with 26 branches in the Houston area, gained 1,721 followers on Facebook and Instagram between March 17 and April 17. That's a high number by itself, but compare it to last year's increase during the same period. Last year, only 789 new social media followers were gained, meaning 118% more people started following HCPL during the pandemic (see graph). The library's virtual pandemic push worked.

Additional statistics reinforce the positive outcome of increased virtual outreach. Impressions, meaning the social media content loaded on a patron's device, numbered over 1.085 million for HCPL. This number is a 39% increase from last year's impressions (see graph). Engagements, meaning the patrons liked, commented on, or shared content, numbered 79,533 for HCPL compared to 50,274 the year before. Another increase, this time of 58% (see graph).

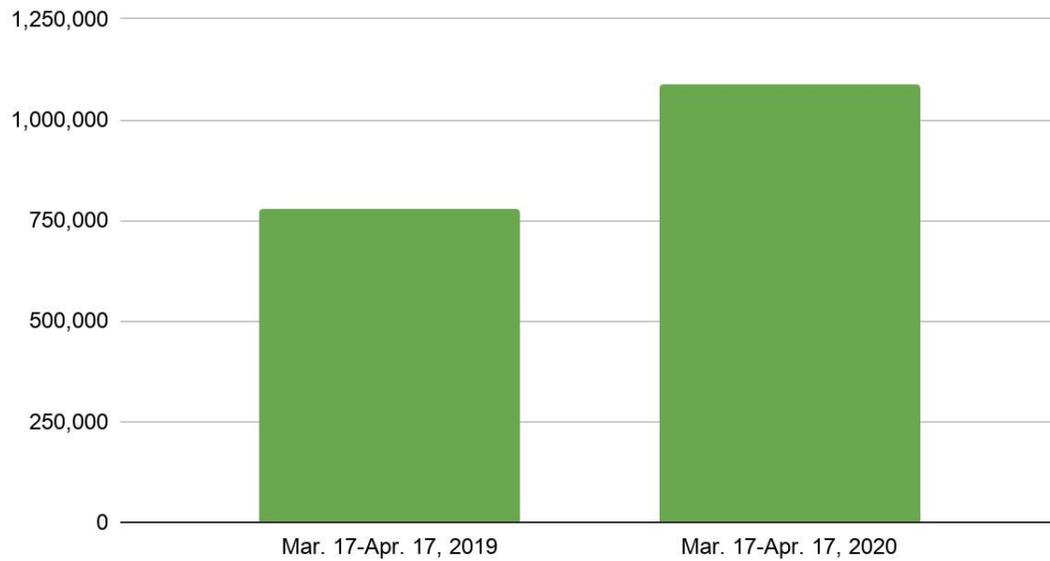
Libraries have moved online more during this pandemic, and patrons have followed. Virtual interactions with patrons are higher than ever. Where do we go from here? Public librarians have been thinking about summer reading programs and the role virtual interactions will play. For HCPL, safety dictates a virtual summer reading program, and the recent increase in social media followers have provided the foundation. The patrons have followed us online, so we know they will be there when we launch our virtual summer reading program.

**Follower Growth**



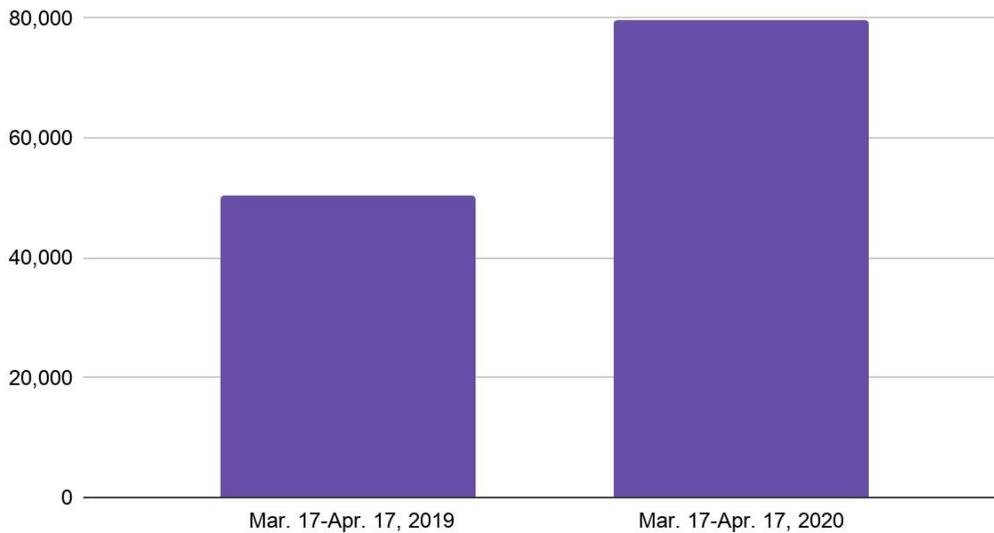
Graph showing follower growth increase on Harris County Public Library Facebook and Instagram platforms during a month of the 2020 pandemic and during the same time period in 2019

## Impressions

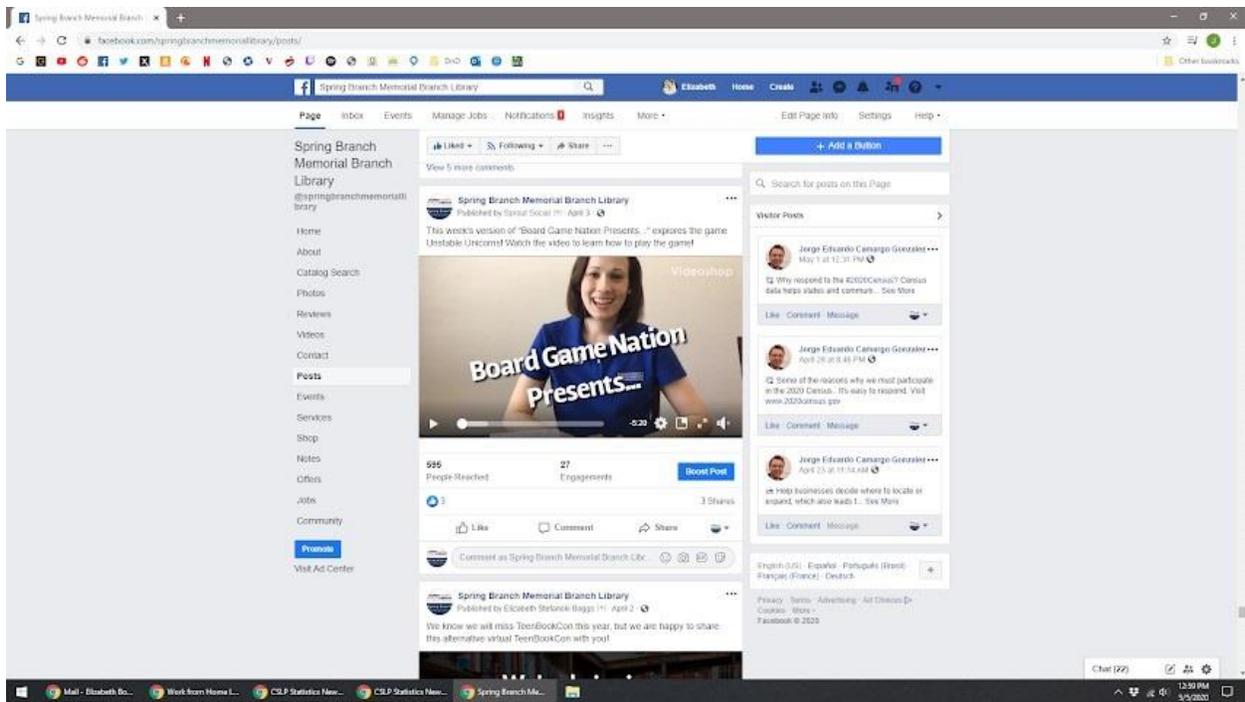


Graph showing increase in impressions on Harris County Public Library Facebook and Instagram platforms during a month of the 2020 pandemic and during the same time period in 2019

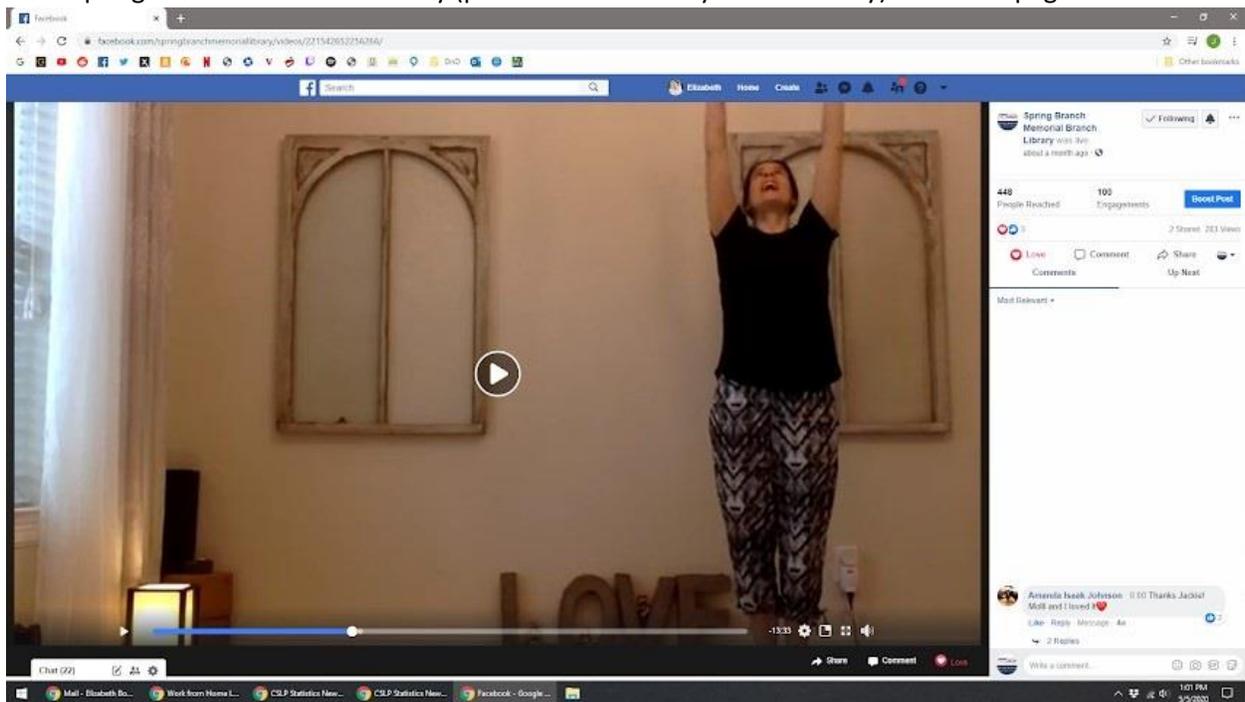
## Engagements



Graph showing increase in engagements on Harris County Public Library Facebook and Instagram platforms during a month of the 2020 pandemic and during the same time period in 2019



Screenshot of a virtual gaming program for teens from Spring Branch-Memorial Library (part of Harris County Public Library) Facebook page



Screenshot of a virtual yoga program for toddlers from Spring Branch-Memorial Library (part of Harris County Public Library) Facebook page