What Everyone’s Yakkin About! 
or Why Your Library Should be on Yik Yak

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Presented at APLA Annual Conference, on May 30, 2016 in Halifax, NS
- Grenfell Campus is on the West coast of NL in Corner Brook (about 8 hours away from the St. John's Campus)
- approximately 1200 students
- Grenfell Library has Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, & Flickr, and MUN Libraries has a YouTube channel
What is Yik Yak?

-Free app for your phone available for iOS and Android (not blackberry)
-released in November 2013
-Developed by two 23 year old recent university grads
• Allows you to anonymously post comments or “yaks” or 200-character messages that can be seen by anyone else with Yik Yak within a 5 mile radius (8 km)
• Yik Yak only has your phone number (not visible to anyone)
• Completely anonymous
• Get a live feed of what people are saying around you
• Similar to an online bulletin board where people can anonymously post things
• Yaks expire – you only see the most recent (depending on how active your Yik Yak feed is, you might only see yaks from the past 24 hours
• At this point, is when people usually say “what a terrible idea – won’t this just get used for cyberbullying!”
• Yik Yak’s developers’ intended audience was university campuses
• They were actually taken aback when the app took off at middle schools and high schools and was in fact used in some fairly nasty ways
• So there were several famous cases in the US where middle schoolers or high schoolers got ahold of Yik Yak and were using it to write really mean things about their classmates

• In response, Yik Yak immediately used geofencing to block the app at middle schools and highschools
• Not the intended audience (app is 17+)

Yik Yak policy

- You do not bully or specifically target other yakkers.
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- Zero tolerance policy on using people’s full names and phone numbers.
- Don’t clutter people’s feed with useless or offensive yaks. If you see a useless or offensive yak make sure to do your part and downvote or report it.
- If your yaks continue to be downvoted or reported, you will be warned and then suspended.
- Ride the Yak.
• Yik Yak is also self-policing
• users can flag or down-vote posts they find offensive
• If a post gets five down-votes, it’s automatically removed
• There’s a word filter - posts with “egregious” language are removed by Yik Yak
• Repeat offenders can have their account suspended or be completely banned
• Both bomb threats & shooting threats have been posted on the app. In those cases, Yik Yak has worked with law enforcement to both report the threats and to share information about the user’s location when the threat was posted. In several cases, that has led to arrests of those users. The Yik Yak team has now developed protocol on how to handle similar situations.
• So I think Yik Yak has gotten a bad rap – the company endeavours to act responsibly


• Yik Yak is mainly used by university students
• As I’ve travelled over the past year, I check out Yik Yak
• In places where there isn’t a university or where I’m farther than 5 miles from a campus, there are hardly any yaks
• But when you’re near a university – Yik Yak is on fire
• they primarily yak about campus life
• Yik Yak promotes its service by saying - “Always know what's going on around you.”
• So as an academic library I thought I needed to check out Yik Yak and see if anyone was yakking about the library
• I have been monitoring it since last September, and whenever the library got mentioned, I would take a screen shot
• As I mentioned, Yaks expire
• So you do have to monitor it regularly – you can’t go back and search through Yaks
• And part of the appeal of Yik Yak is its immediacy, as I will talk about shortly so it is something you want to be checking frequently

• So do you want to know what they yakked about us?
• I have divided the types of Yaks I recorded into 7 categories (I totally made them up myself)
First category of Yaks I observed were Yaks that although they may reference the library, really aren’t super helpful.
• like shout-outs to library cuties
• Keep in mind, they’re not all gems
Category #2: Humorous Yaks

Ha!
And some are just funny
But it's interesting to realize that the library is an important part of campus life, because it does get yakked about a lot.
On the flip side of that – other yaks are serious and can tell us a lot about the mental state of our students and when they are feeling particularly stressed or overwhelmed.
Especially towards the end of semester
Many of the yaks are people asking questions about the library. I was really surprised at how frequently Yik Yak is used this way.
Questions about Library hours being the most popular
I like how the wrong answer got downvoted and corrected by other Yik Yak users. The community is quick to answer questions, and surprisingly accurately.
particularly curious about the library workers taking stats
In the third example, a Yik Yak user suggests the library’s Staple Station where they can access free supplies!
lots of questions about the very important topic of free snacks
Again, the questions get answered
One Yik Yak user actually took a photo of one of our posters to settle the question
Category #5: Suggestions

Sometimes there’s suggestions or comments
Yik yak can be like a virtual suggestion box
Yaks about the temperature were very helpful as we were accessing the building’s heating and cooling system at the time.
I was supposed to report times when the temperature was too hot or too cold to facilities and this was a great way to monitor how students were feeling about the climate control in our space.
And of course you see criticism and negative comments – that’s a part of it
All of ours are about noise and are usually students complaining about other specific students
What frequently happens with this type of complaint (someone yakking about noise) is a whole comment chain starts with students defending the library, reminding the person of our noise policy (third floor our silent study floor)
sometimes students will suggest going to library staff to resolve it
It was often a good opportunity for us to address noise issues
We would see the Yak and could then try to locate and approach that person (remind them of our rules about cell phones, etc...)
But many of the yaks were also really positive feedback!
• What students yak about can provide information about what programs or services are really successful with students
• For example - They especially love free food
• Even took a photo of the dietician’s booth we had at end of semester
Positive yak about Super Sunday program
They really liked our holiday decorations
Lots of yaks about our chocolate easter egg hunt in the stacks
Positive yaks about the therapy dog visits
Positive yak about the library’s therapy guinea pigs
One Yik Yak user was promoting our Happy Lights for us!
Positive yaks about specific library staff
Positive yaks that can remind you that everything you do is appreciated
Now I hope you’re curious to know what everyone’s yakkin about you!
I’d really encourage you to get on Yik Yak and see what your library users are saying about you.
It’s a unique way to gain insight into how people are using your library, what they really think of your space, your services, and it gives you a chance to Yak back!