MSU Libraries Usage Data

Comparisons during Initial COVID-19 Closure, March - May 2020

Background

On March 16, 2020, Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed an Executive Order temporarily closing many public spaces, including academic libraries. All MSU Libraries employees who were able to work remotely began doing so on March 16th, and the Main, Business, and Gull Lake library branches were closed to patrons. During this time, the Libraries continued to offer existing online services, added new resources and services to support distance learning and instruction, and acquired and delivered physical materials when necessary.

This report examines the differences in how MSU Libraries' resources were used during the first three months of the COVID-19 pandemic (March - May 2020) compared to the previous two years.

Summary

This report serves as a way to compare many of the Libraries' usage data during the COVID-19 pandemic to previous years, and establishes a "pandemic baseline" to compare future semesters to. Though this data is often not sufficient to determine causes and effects of increases or decreases in usage, it helps identify trends to watch as the pandemic continues and we chart our course to a "new normal" on behalf of the MSU community.

Trends to study further:
- Highly increased usage of multimedia streaming packages
- Highly increased usage of lending books to patrons by mail
- Increased usage of resources that enable staff remote work, such as the digital repository
- Increased usage of chat reference
- Steady usage of MSU Libraries' website, LibGuides, and library search box
- Steady need for subject specialist assistance to faculty during the pandemic
- Slightly decreased usage of licensed e-resources (books and journal articles)
- Impact of transition from physical to virtual library instruction sessions in Fall 2020

Data

The data used in this report is available in spreadsheet form.

Website Use

Note about web usage statistics

Website usage statistics are gathered from Google Analytics. MSU Libraries typically reports "external use" of the Libraries' web resources, which is use of our resources by all IP addresses outside the building and staff IP ranges. Because many staff members worked remotely during the pandemic, and may not have been connected to the MSU Libraries' VPN for a staff IP address, more staff usage than usual may be present in the 2020 data.
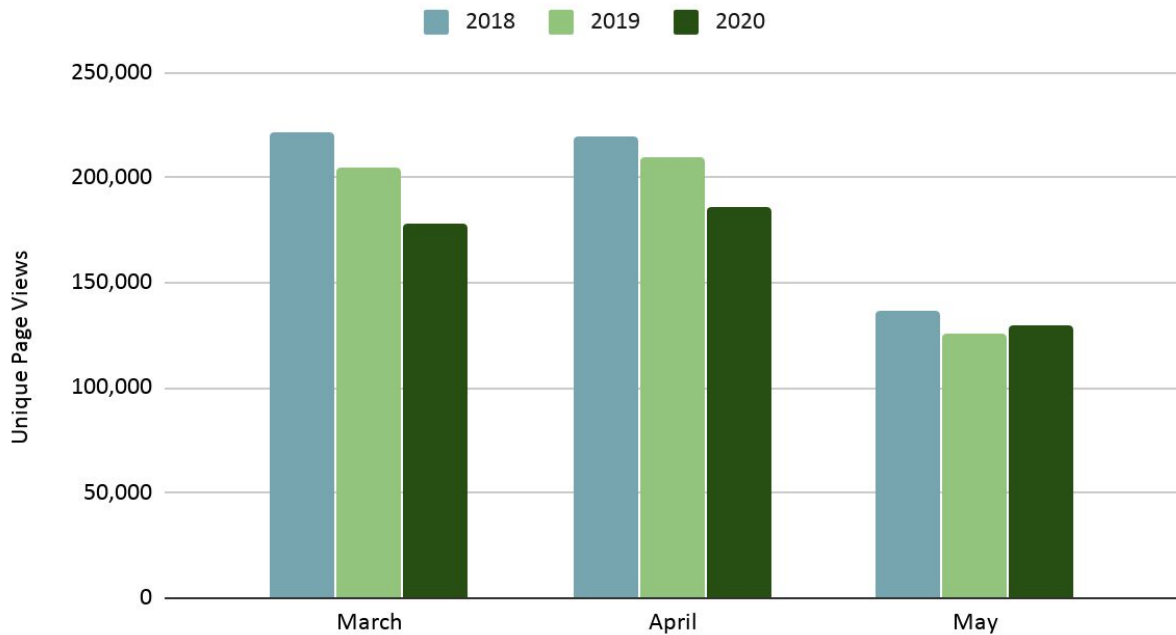
Page views are generally reported as "unique" page views, which is the number of times that a page was requested at least once per user session. Total page views are generally higher, as they separately count multiple views of the same page during the same session by the same user.

Main Website

Overall usage of the main Libraries website (https://lib.msu.edu) decreased in March and April compared to previous years, and returned to average levels in May 2020.

When the building was open in 2018 and 2019, FAQ pages about printing in the library regularly appeared in our top ten pages. Printing-related pages were used much less frequently with the building closed, and did not appear in the top ten in March-May 2020. New entries in the top ten for 2020 included the new COVID-19 Distance Learning Resources page, the Ask a Librarian link to contact librarians remotely, and the home page of the University Archives, which migrated to the MSU Libraries website in January 2020.
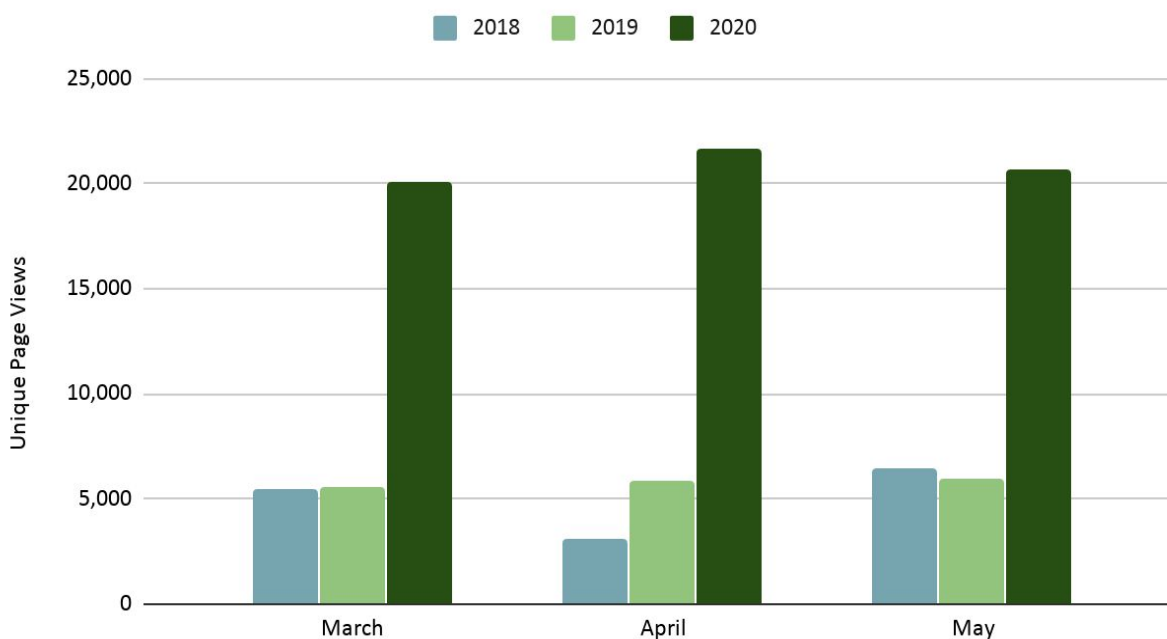
MSU Libraries Website: Total Unique Page Views

MSU Libraries Website: Ten Most Visited Pages, March-May			
Rank	2018	2019	2020
1	Home Page	Home Page	Home Page
2	Your Library Account	Your Library Account	Your Library Account
3	Library Hours	Library Hours	Health Sciences Digital Library
4	Health Sciences Digital Library	Health Sciences Digital Library	Resources > Articles
5	William C. Gast Business Library	William C. Gast Business Library	Library Hours
6	MSU Print FAQ	Resources > Articles	Resources
7	Resources > Articles	Resources	University Archives
8	Resources	Poster Printing FAQ (Plotting)	Ask A Librarian
9	General Rules and Regulations	MSU Print FAQ	William C. Gast Business Library
10	Meeting Spaces	Veterinary Medicine Resources	COVID 19 > Online and Distance Learning Resources

Digital Repository

Overall external usage of the digital repository website (https://d.lib.msu.edu) increased significantly compared to previous years. Two factors likely contributed to this increase, but it is difficult to know how much each contributed. The first factor is that library staff who work on the repository were working at home, and would have been counted as external usage if not on the VPN. The second factor is that a few students began working remotely during this time on quality control for the Electronic Theses and Dissertations collection in the digital repository, which greatly increased traffic to that collection.

MSU Libraries Digital Repository: Total Unique Page Views
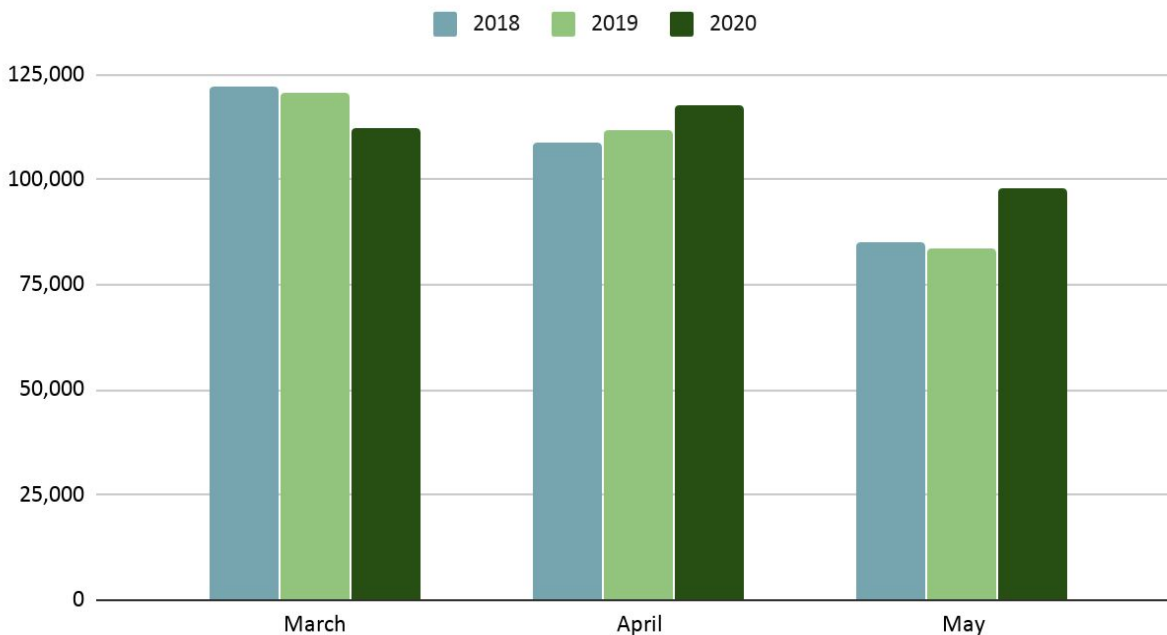

Libguides

The MSU Libraries Libguides saw steady usage, without any dramatic changes in 2020. Two new COVID-19 related Libguides were published during March - May 2020, and received the following amount of views:

- COVID-19 & Coronaviruses - Health Research, Data, Video, and Ebook Resources (Published 4/6/20, 206 views before 5/31/20)
- COVID-19 Datasets and Analysis (published 5/19/20, 0 views before 5/31/20)

MSU Libraries LibGuides: Total Page Views

There was a slight decrease in LibGuides usage in March 2020, followed by slight increases in April and May 2020. The top ten LibGuides did not change significantly during this period either, with the exception of increased usage of the Mendeley LibGuide compared to previous years.

10 Most Frequently Accessed Libguides			
Rank	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
1	Electronic Resources	Electronic Resources	Electronic Resources
2	Native American Studies Research Guide	Grants and Related Resources	African American Studies Research Guide
3	African American Studies Research Guide	African American Studies Research Guide	Native American Studies Research Guide
4	Electronic Medical Books	Native American Studies Research Guide	Detailed Land and Property Information in Michigan
5	Detailed Land and Property Information in Michigan	Detailed Land and Property Information in Michigan	Electronic Medical Books
6	How to Cite Data	Electronic Medical Books	Grants and Related Resources
7	Finding Faculty Salary	Finding Census Tract Data	Finding Census Tract Data

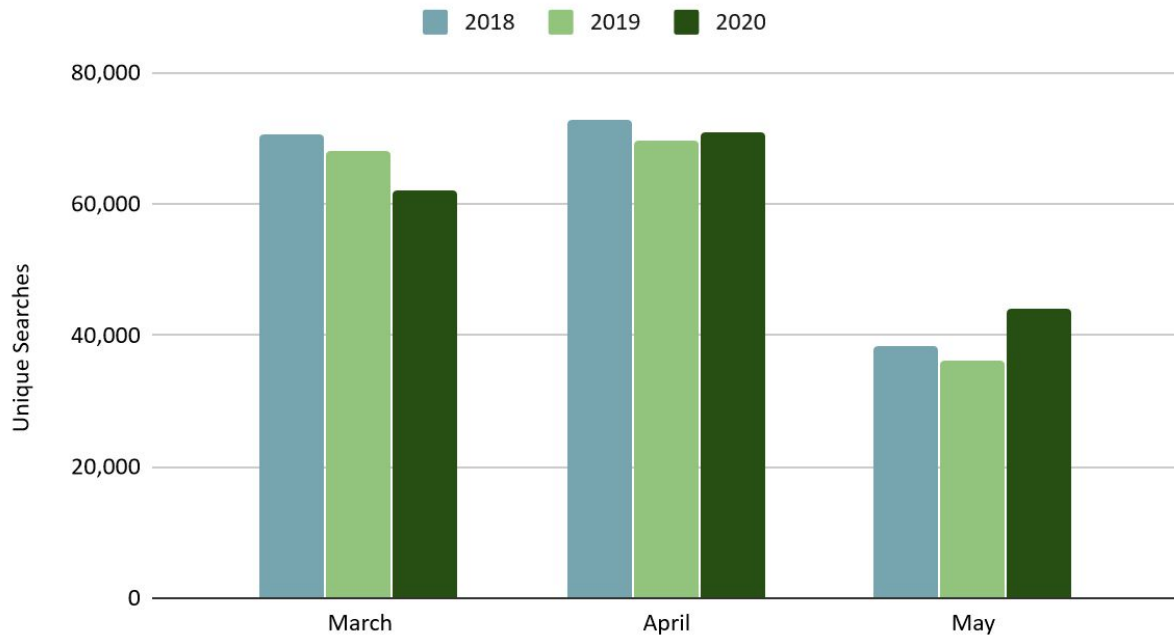|			
	Information		
8	Publishing and Book Design Basics	Finding Faculty Salary Information	Mendeley
9	Finding Census Tract Data	How to Cite Data	How to Find Data & Statistics
10	How to Find Data & Statistics	How to Find Data & Statistics	Finding Faculty Salary Information

Resource Discovery

Main Library Website Search

The main search box on the library home page searches a collection of resources including the library catalog and journal articles from MSU Libraries' subscriptions. These total searches decreased slightly in March 2020 compared to previous years, but returned to average levels in April 2020, and increased from average in May 2020.
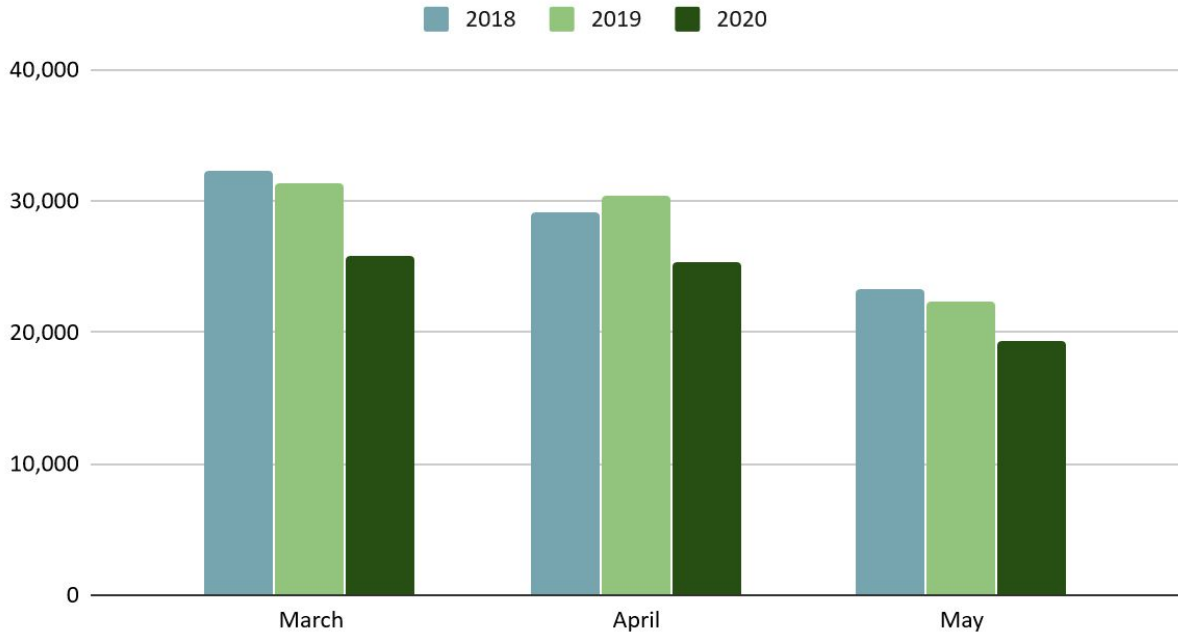

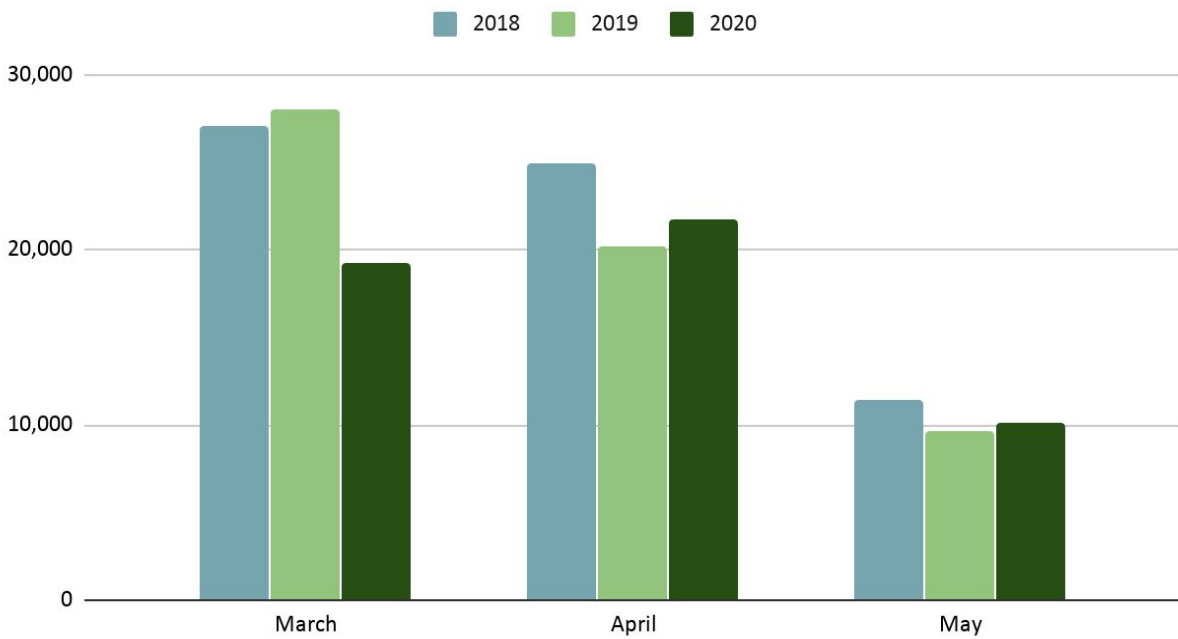Searches in the Main Library Search Box

Catalog and Summon Searches

The catalog is available to search directly on the "Books & Media" tab on the Libraries home page, and our article indexes can be searched directly in the "Articles" tab through the Summon interface. Catalog searches were lower than in the two previous years in March, April, and May.

Searches in Summon decreased compared to average in March 2020, and returned to near-average levels in April and May 2020.

MSU Libraries Catalog: Total Unique Searches
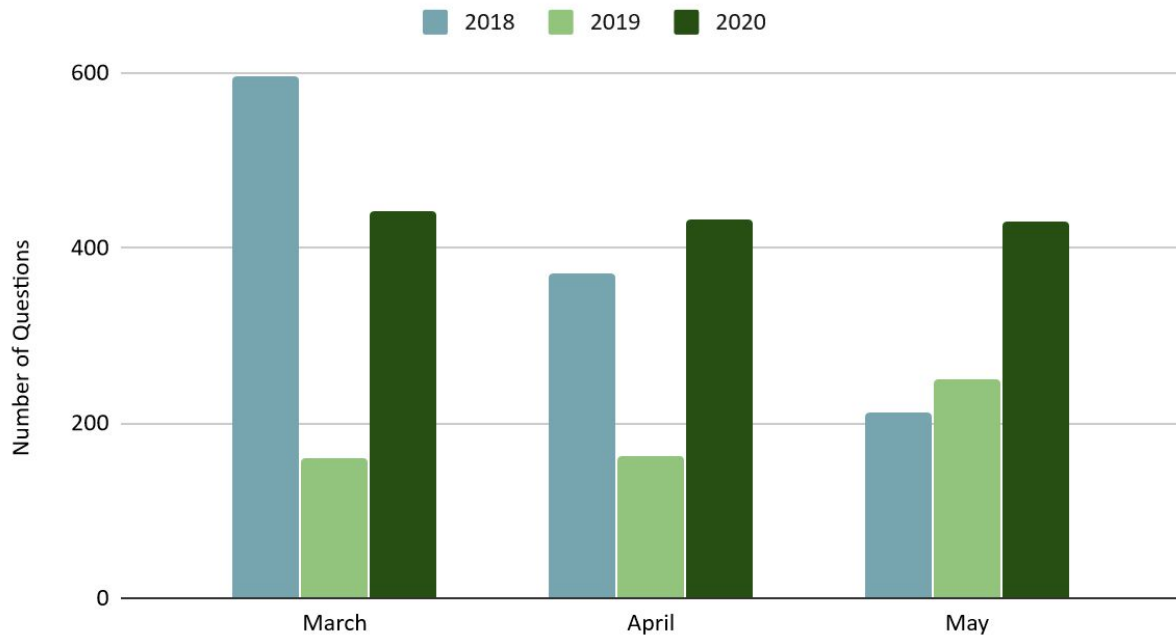

MSU Libraries Summon: Basic Searches

Research Assistance

Desk and Chat Reference

The closure of all MSU Libraries branches meant that there were no reference desk services provided in the second half of March, April, and May. Chat reference remained available through the Libraries' website. Chat reference interactions had consistent usage numbers in March, April, and May 2020, and more people used chat in April and May 2020 than in those months in previous years. MSU Libraries also used different chat platforms in each of the three years reported, and the platform itself may have affected usage patterns.
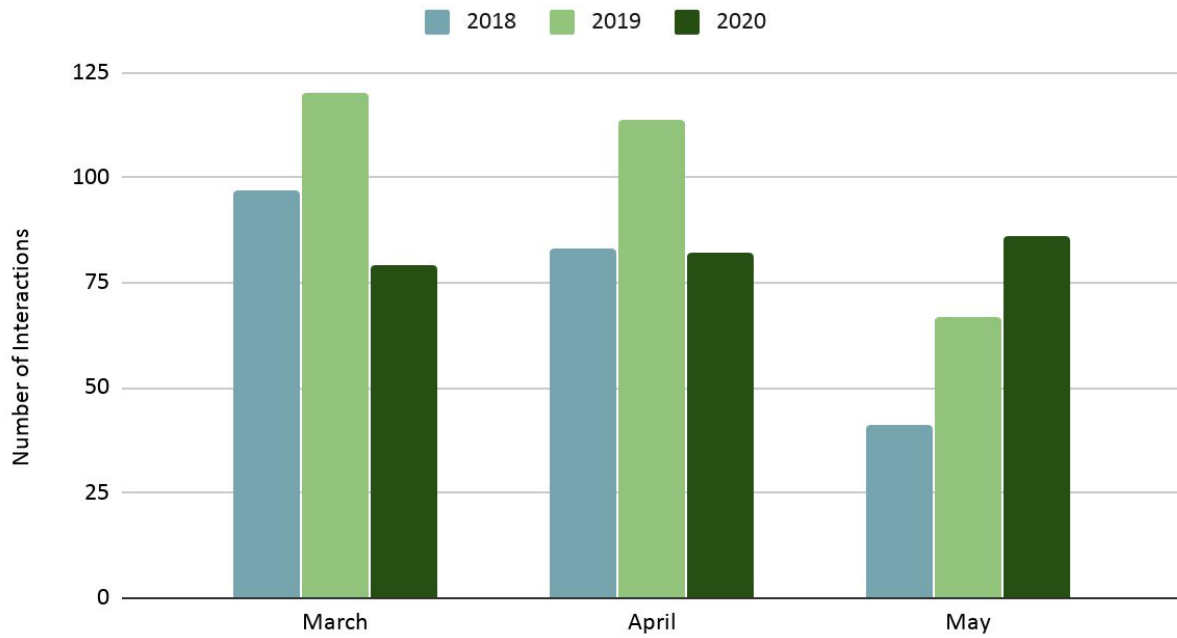
Chat Reference Questions

Legend: 2018, 2019, 2020

Subject Specialist Interactions

Subject specialist interactions remained consistent throughout the shutdown. May 2020 saw an increased number of subject specialist interactions compared to previous years. The majority of reported subject specialist interactions occur via email, which allowed these numbers to remain consistent despite the shutdown.
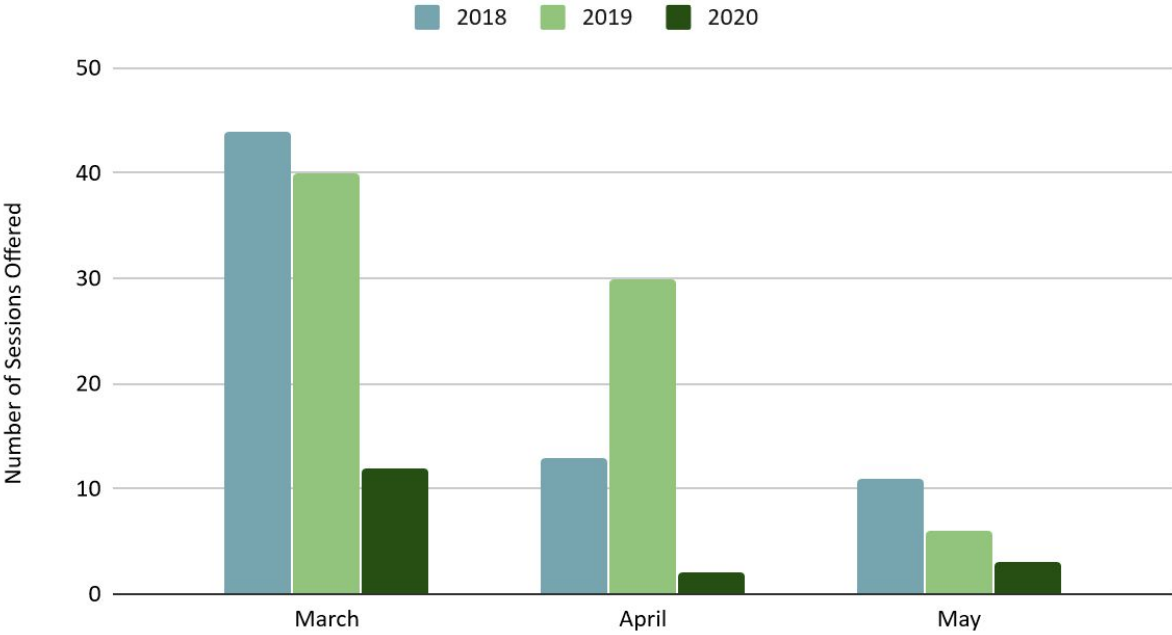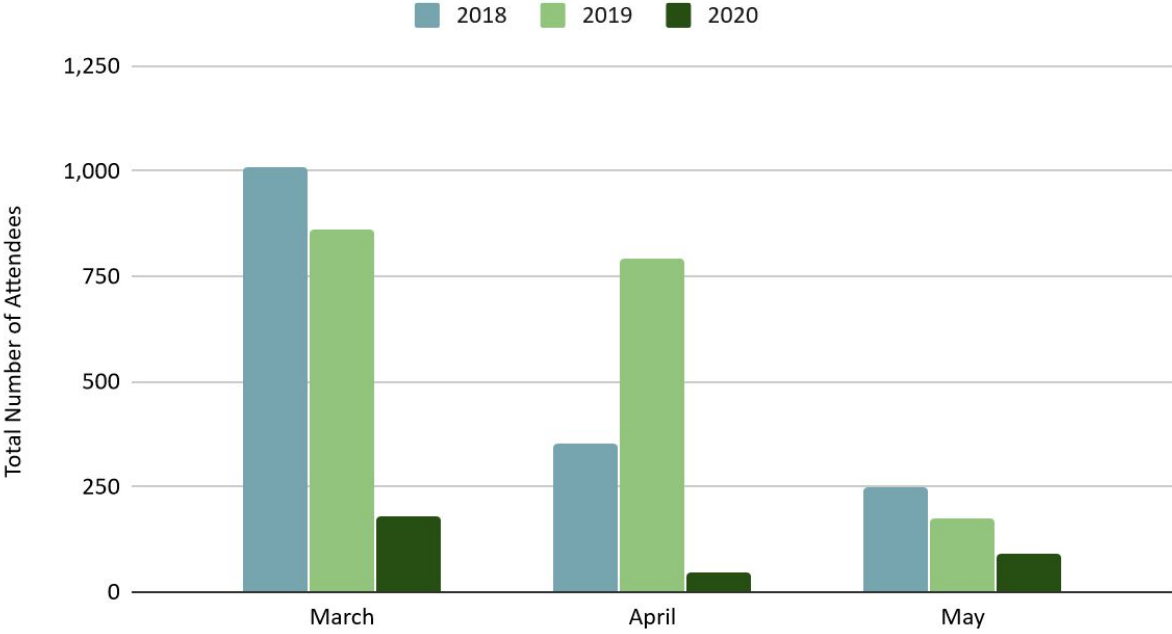
Subject Specialist Interactions

Instruction

All in-person library instruction sessions were discontinued during the shutdown, resulting in a significant decrease in both the number of sessions offered, as well as overall attendance.

Library Instruction Sessions
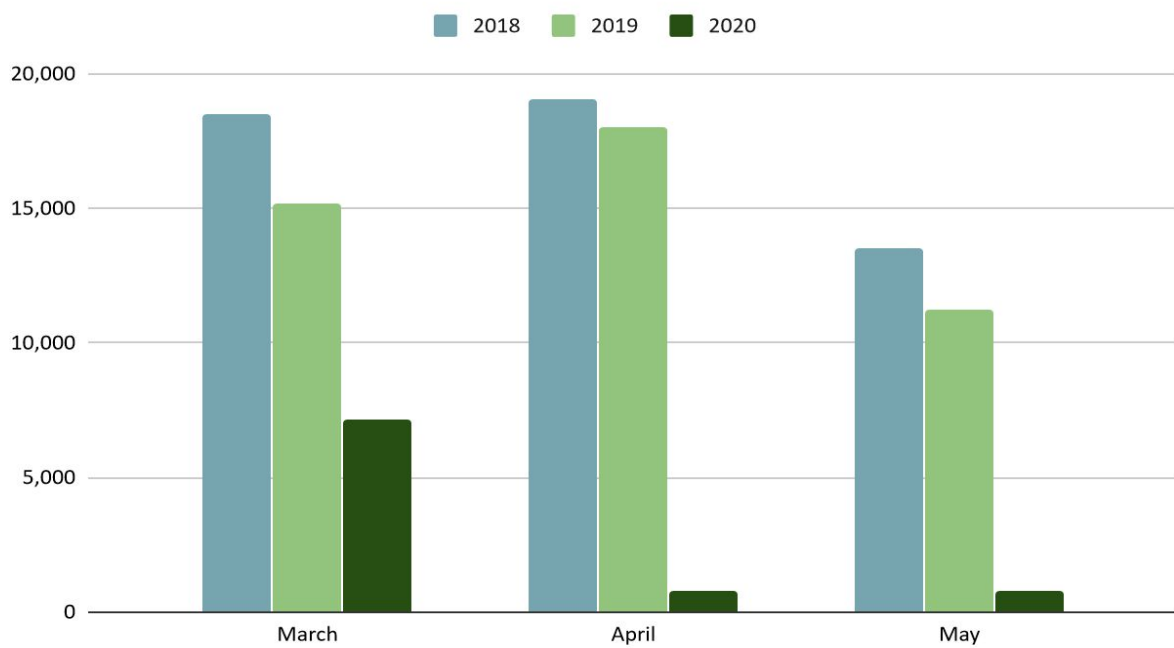

Library Instruction Session Attendance

Resource Use

Circulation of Physical Materials

All MSU Libraries branches closed to the public on March 16th, 2020, which severely decreased the number of physical materials that were checked out from the Libraries. The Libraries were able to continue to mail a limited number of books and other materials to MSU faculty, staff, and students.
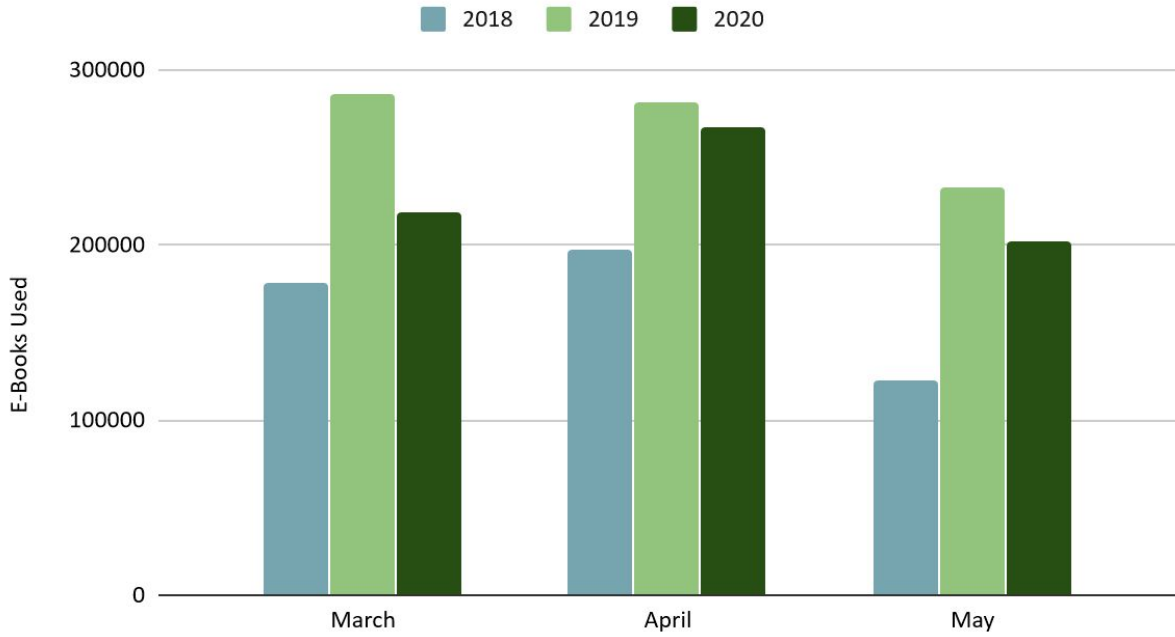
MSU Libraries Physical Material Checkouts

Legend: 2018, 2019, 2020

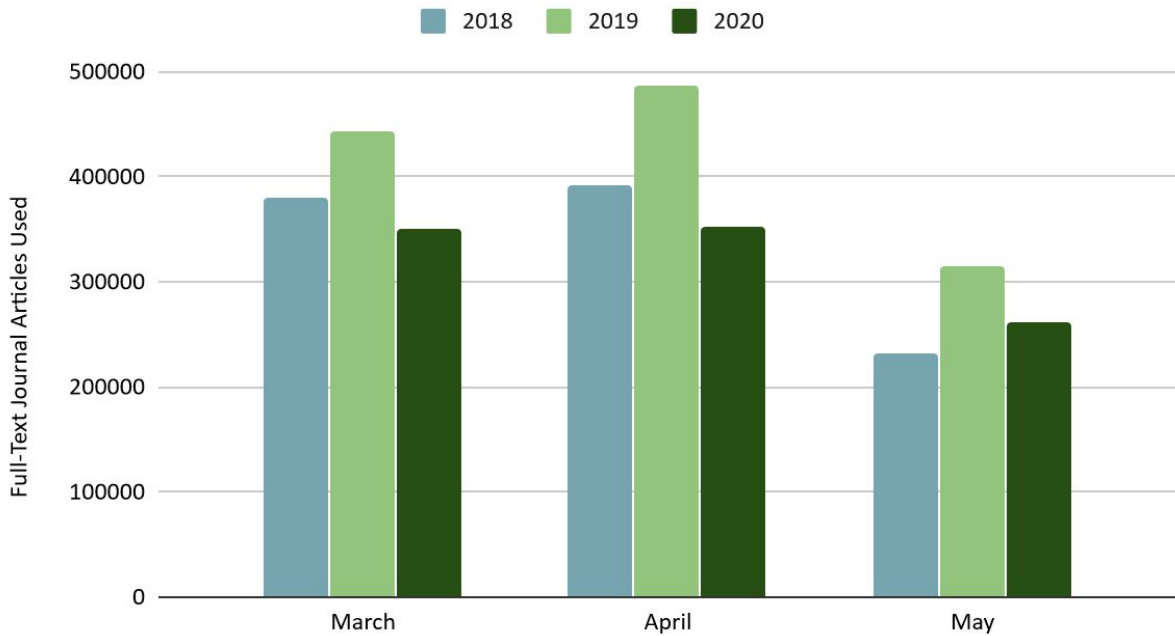| Month	2018	2019	2020
March	~18,500	~15,100	~7,100
April	~19,000	~18,000	~700
May	~13,500	~11,200	~700

E-Books and Online Journal Articles

MSU Libraries subscribes to vendor resources that provide access to ebooks and full-text online journal articles for users affiliated with MSU. Usage of ebooks decreased in March 2020 before returning to levels that were similar or a little lower than 2019 in April and May. Online journal article usage was lower in March and April than in both previous years, and was lower than 2019 in May. Online multimedia streaming packages are a relatively small part of MSU Libraries' offerings, but their usage showed large increases between 2019 and 2020. Data for this area was compiled from selected major publishers and platforms and is not comprehensive.
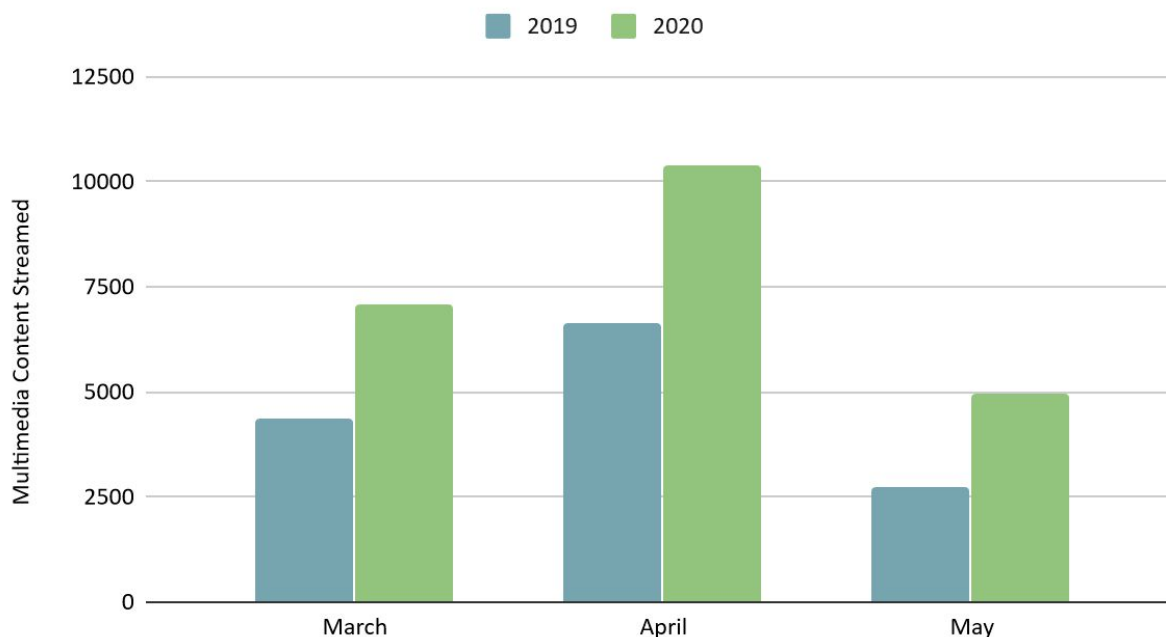
E-Book Usage

Online Full-Text Journal Article Usage

Licensed Multimedia Streaming Usage

Interlibrary Loan (ILL)

Interlibrary loan activity decreased both for items borrowed and lent compared to previous years as many partner libraries were no longer participating in interlibrary loan, but we were able to sustain delivery activities for many patrons who required physical materials from MSU's own collection. In order to support social distancing measures and comply with statewide and campus shutdowns, the MSU Libraries instituted a new program of mailing materials to patrons, rather than the usual process of patrons needing to come into the Libraries to pick up physical materials from other institutions. Mailing had been a minor part of our operations before, but during the first three months of the pandemic, 1,684 items were mailed to patrons. The Libraries also saw a large increase in electronic document delivery requests compared to previous years.
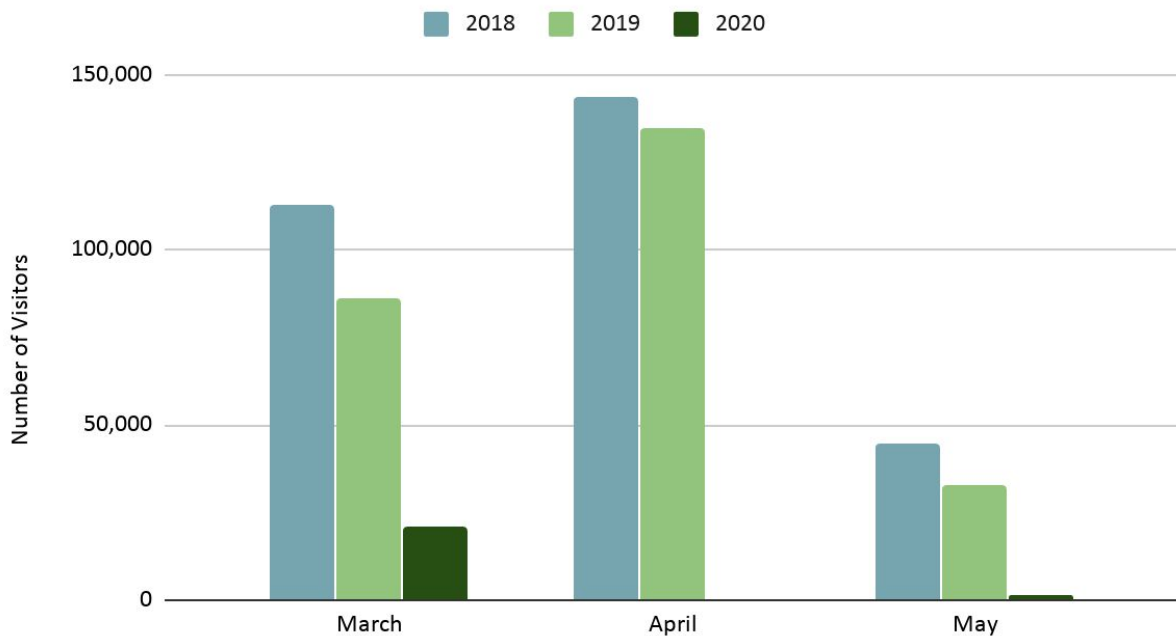
Interlibrary Loan	Mar-May 2018	Mar-May 2019	Mar-May 2020
Borrowing: Total Requests Sent	4,311	3,969	2,765
Lending: Total Requests Received	7,567	11,686	7,572
Lending: Requests Filled	7,563	6,857	4,084
Lending: Requests Unfilled	4	4,829	3,488
Items Mailed	No data	84	1,684
Document Delivery (Electronic): Total Requests Received	1,367	1,529	2,763

Building Use

Main Library Gate Count

The MSU Main Library closure led to gate count totals that were much lower than typical spring months. While the majority of Library staff shifted to working from home, a few designated essential staff members continued to work in the Main Library. In May, staff from MSU's Infrastructure, Planning, and Facilities department and hired third-party vendors began accessing the building with increased frequency to complete various space and building-related projects.
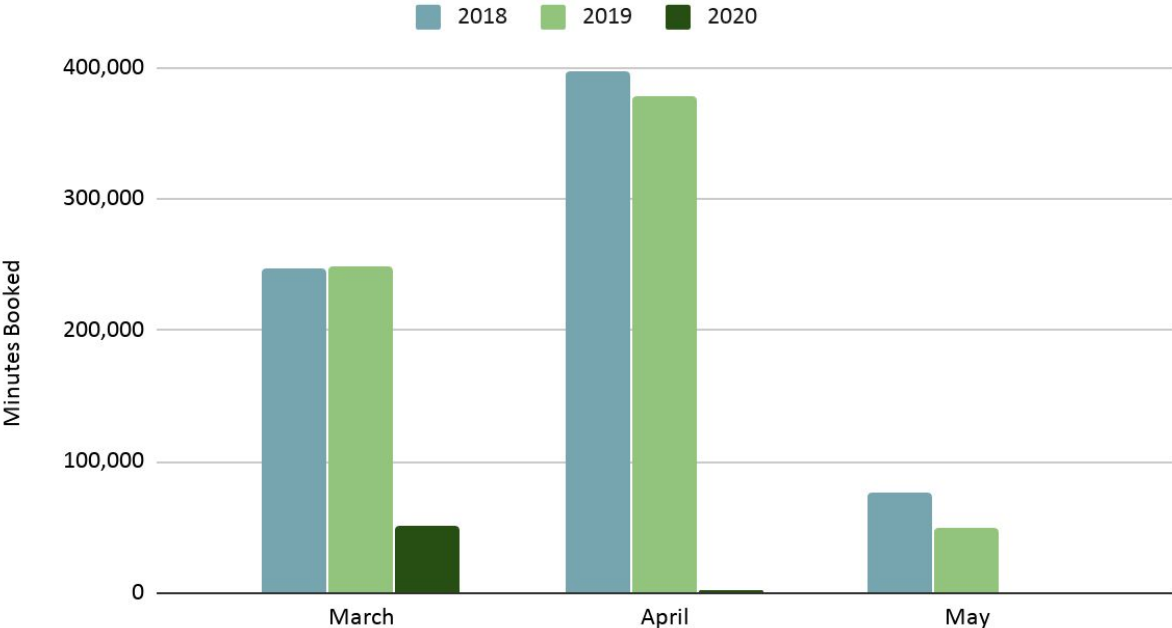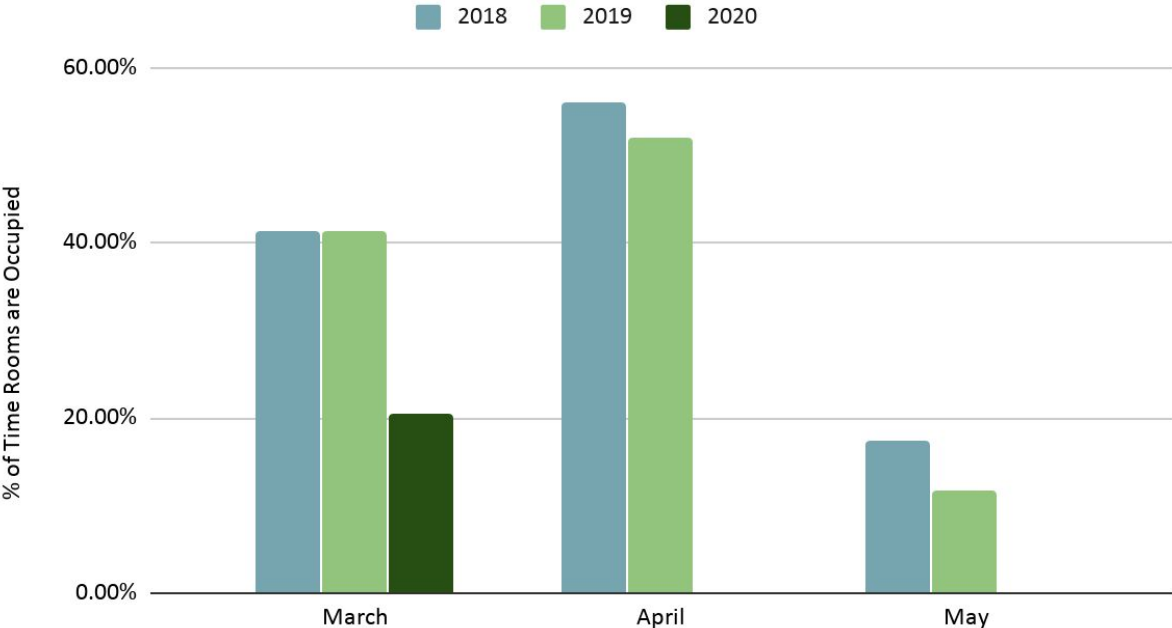
Main Library Gate Count

Room Reservations

Room reservations decreased compared to averages in 2018 and 2019, both in total time booked, and in the percent of time all rooms were occupied from reservations. There were a handful of room reservations made for the month of April and May, which are shown here, but were not fulfilled due to the Libraries' closure.

Room Reservations; Time Booked (Mins.)

Room Reservations; Occupancy Ratio

Events

Upon closure of the MSU Libraries' in-person operations, all in-person events were cancelled. This resulted in a significant decrease in events offered by the Libraries compared to previous years.

Events