



# HARRY RANSOM CENTER

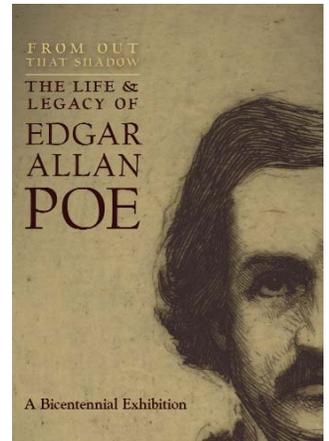
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

## Poe Mania: From Goth to Geezer A Case Study

### Summary

The Harry Ransom Center, a humanities research library and museum at The University of Texas at Austin, sought to bring awareness and excitement among physical and virtual audiences to its fall 2009 Edgar Allan Poe exhibition. Holding one of the most extensive Poe collections, the Ransom Center had the opportunity to share the author's manuscripts, books, art and personal effects, with many being displayed for the first time.

Recognizing that Poe could resonate with goth to geezer audiences, the Ransom Center's public affairs and marketing teams planned and executed a promotional campaign the week before the exhibition's opening that contributed to enthusiasm, word of mouth, and media coverage. Combining outreach to the public and select press through social media and traditional communication channels produced the Center's most successful coverage and awareness of an exhibition prior to its opening.

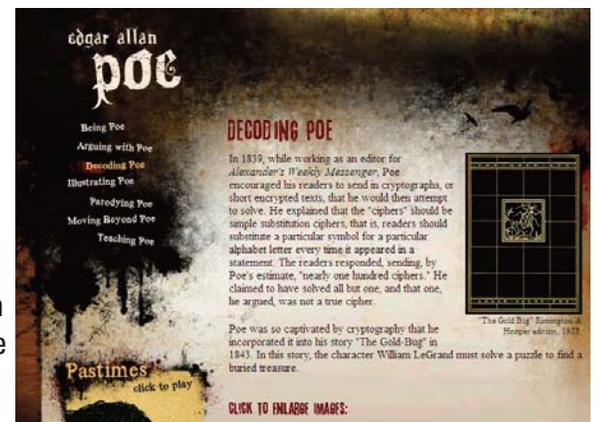
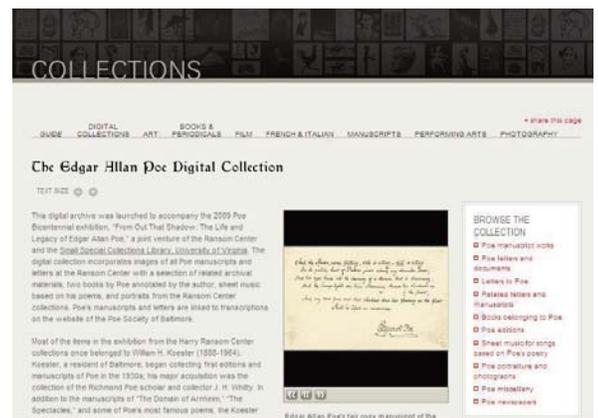


### Situation Analysis

In 1966, the Ransom Center acquired the majority of its holdings that document Poe's career as a writer, his romantic relationships and mysterious death, the decline and rehabilitation of his literary reputation and his profound influence on mystery and detective fiction and other genres.

With its first-ever exhibition celebrating Edgar Allan Poe, the Ransom Center believed that it could share and introduce Poe-related content with physical and virtual visitors the week before the exhibition opened.

With Poe being perhaps the most widely read American author of the nineteenth century, the potential audience was diverse in age and also extended beyond those that would be able to visit the exhibition in-person. With the Center digitizing its entire Poe holdings, the exhibition provided the occasion to unveil its digital collection (<http://research.hrc.utexas.edu/poedc/>) of 4,000 images of more than 200 Poe materials. An additional virtual resource to debut alongside the exhibition was the online Poe Project (<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/poeproject>), where people could learn more about Poe's works and submit one's own parodies or decode cryptographs.



## Research/Planning

Since the exhibition was on display in spring 2009 at the University of Virginia (UVA), the Ransom Center approached UVA to determine what items resonated with visitors as well as gain feedback and comments.

The Ransom Center's promotional plan included touting the digital collection of Poe materials, the ability to decode cryptographs, the opportunity to parody Poe, a video preview of the exhibition, and behind-the-scenes photographs of the exhibition and its installation.

The Ransom Center researched and devised a target media list, wanting to focus its press outreach on select outlets, ranging from blogs to broadcast. Other research involved reports on search engine keywords and rankings through Marketleap.

For social media outreach strategy, the Ransom Center engaged SocialAgency (<http://www.socialagency.com/>). With its Spredfast tool (<http://spredfast.com/>), the Ransom Center could manage, monitor, and measure its social media efforts across multiple channels. The tool also allows scheduled content, real-time monitoring, and select metrics, which could track engagement. SocialAgency also researched keywords, search terms and websites associated with Poe, and provided recommendations for Facebook ad strategy.

For Facebook ads, the goal was to connect with people who were not already associated with the Ransom Center, specifically by touting Poe Mania and encouraging people to become fans.

Wanting to give the pre-promotion campaign its own identity, the Ransom Center branded it as Poe Mania, including a graphic identity to appear alongside the campaign content. Limited to a week's time, Poe Mania would divulge daily online content celebrating Poe, with a hyperlink to each day's reveal.



Various distribution channels would be engaged for the daily distribution, and social media posts would be created to tout upcoming reveals as well as the current day's feature. Press outreach would begin a month's time prior to the launch of the campaign and, include mailings and follow-up to select media. An assessment would also be made of what day's reveal may be of most interest to particular media outlets.

## Execution

Press materials concerning Poe Mania were mailed to 22 outlets, with the first mailing containing only a small stuffed raven along with a note that stated "Poe is coming soon..." A few days later, the outlets received a follow-up mailing that included specifics about Poe Mania, including each day's reveal, access to images, and news releases.

Promotion of Poe Mania on the Ransom Center's Facebook and Twitter pages began the Friday before the launch of the campaign with the message of "Tap, tap, tap... a mere 72 hours until the launch of Poe Mania." Each day's new content was touted on these outlets the day before it became live; thus, creating two tweets or Facebook posts for each reveal.



The Ransom Center also promoted each day's reveal on its home page and within global promo boxes on its website. Each day's material was added to the Poe exhibition clearinghouse web page (<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/poe>) so that when someone visited the site they were able to view and access the daily content. Communication about Poe Mania also occurred in the Ransom Center's blog, monthly eNews, targeted emails to specific constituencies, and the university's website.

Two of Poe Mania's reveals allowed additional outlets for promotion, including a video posting on the Ransom Center's YouTube channel and photographs on the Center's Flickr page.

On Facebook, paid ads targeted people who lived in the U.S., spoke English, and had noted interests, specifically those who like archives, Baltimore Ravens, classical literature, cryptograms, cryptography, Cure, detective stories, Edgar Allan Poe, Edgar Allen Poe, education, goth, gothic, horror, Joy Division, libraries, literature, Marilyn Manson, museums, mystery books, Nine Inch Nails, parody, Poe, poetry, raven, reading, reading books, Red Lorry Yellow Lorry, short stories, Simpsons, Siouxsie Banshees, Sisters Mercy, tell tale heart, Twilight, Twilight movie, Twilight saga or Twilight series.

Posts on Twitter and Facebook were created with input from a range of staff, and planned and scheduled ahead of time. The posts included:

**On Friday, August 28:**

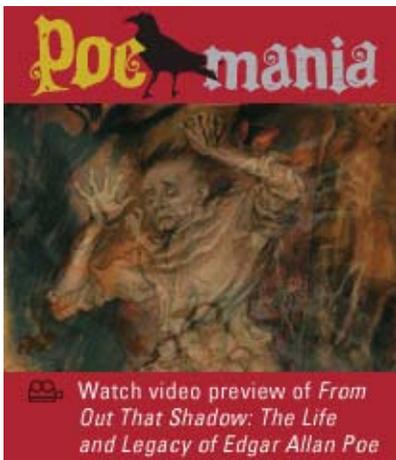
Tap, tap, tap... a mere 72 hours until the launch of Poe Mania.



**On Monday, August 31:**

Passionate about Poe? This exhibition preview video will get your heart pumping faster...louder...THU-THUMP! <http://bit.ly/16Ygv9> #poemania

Even "The Simpsons" riffed on Poe. You'll have your chance tomorrow. #poemania



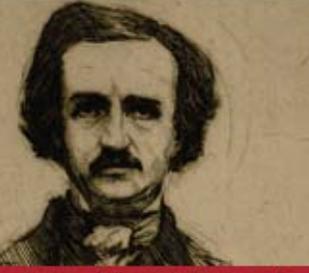


Create your own parody of "The Raven" for the chance to win prizes

**On Tuesday, September 1:**

Parody Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" for the chance to win a Poe-centric prize. <http://bit.ly/1018yQ> #poemania

Poe Mania: Stay tuned tomorrow for a sneak peek at the exhibition.



View photos of the installation of *From Out That Shadow: The Life and Legacy of Edgar Allan Poe*

**On Wednesday, September 2:**

Be the first to see installation photos of the Poe exhibition. <http://bit.ly/4f5jW3> #poemania

Get your detective caps ready! (You'll need them for tomorrow's reveal.) #poemania

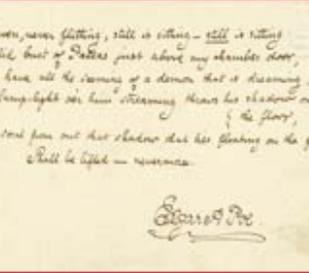


Decode Poe by solving cryptographs

**On Thursday, September 3:**

In the spirit of detective story pioneer Poe, decode cryptographs on the Poe Project website. <http://bit.ly/sjgLU> #poemania

Save time tomorrow to view more than 4,000 images of Poe material, including his correspondence. #poemania



View items from the Poe digital collection

**On Friday, September 4:**

Quoth the tweeter, Evermore! Web feature launched: 4,000 Poe images: manuscripts, letters, newspapers, more. <http://bit.ly/cgml8> #poemania

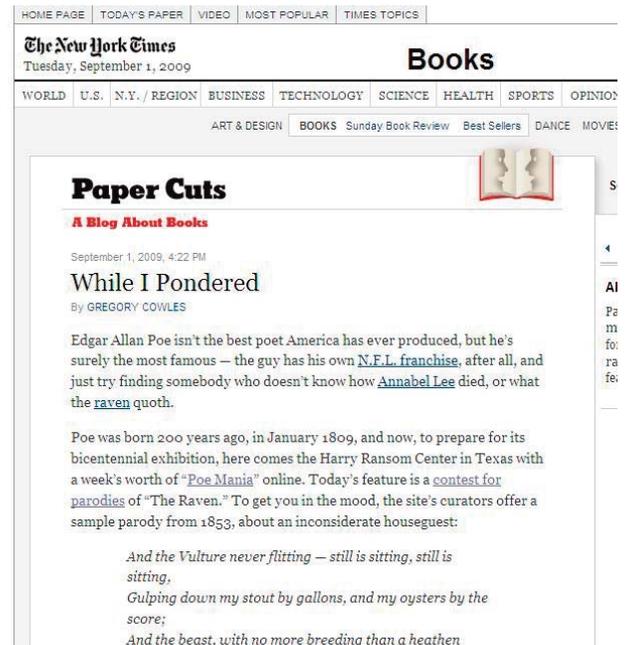
## Evaluation

Poe Mania effectively engaged and energized new audiences, allowed two-way communication, and contributed to the Poe exhibition's reach and exposure. Combining outreach efforts to press and social media, the Ransom Center's Poe Mania campaign achieved and contributed to the following:

- 59 percent of targeted media covered Poe Mania
- increased first week's attendance from prior two exhibitions by 52 and 84 percent
- increased Ransom Center's Facebook fans by 39 percent
- Facebook ads resulted in 745 clicks at an average of .54 cost per thousand impressions
- surpassed goal for Facebook and Twitter clickthroughs by 343 percent, achieving 1329 clickthroughs during three weeks
- obtained more than 34,000 pageviews of the Poe digital collection website during its first three weeks
- obtained more than 3,000 pageviews of the Poe Project website during its first three weeks
- obtained 396 views of YouTube exhibition preview video during the first two weeks, surpassing goal of 250 views
- obtained 4,937 pageviews to the Poe exhibition clearinghouse web page during the exhibition's first three weeks, an increase of 60 and 65 percent from prior two exhibition clearinghouse web pages
- met goal of appearing on first page results for "Poe exhibition" on AOL, Google, Lycos, MSN, Netscape, and Yahoo
- the first public program relating to the Poe exhibition revealed that attendees learned of the event through varied sources, including word of mouth, the Ransom Center's communication channels, the university, and media.

Cost for the campaign was \$992, and included Facebook ads, stuffed ravens, graphic design for logo and mailing costs. Absent from these costs is a fee associated with the services of SocialAgency since the Ransom Center served as a beta client.

While pleased with the campaigns results, the Ransom Center learned several things and will address them in future efforts, including placing greater emphasis on Twitter, expanding the campaign from a week's time, planning a hashtag strategy, integrating more calls to actions in posts, and incorporating engagement statistics from Facebook (likes and comments) and Twitter (retweets, mentions, and followers) as part of the evaluation. The Ransom Center's team included Alicia Dietrich, public affairs assistant; Christine Lee, marketing director; and Jennifer Tisdale, public affairs director. Ken Cho was the primary contact with SocialAgency.



### Edgar Allan Parody

By Jason Boog on Sep 01, 2009 04:23 PM

Ever since he published "The Raven" in an 1845 edition of the *New York Evening Mirror*, **Edgar Allan Poe's** famous poem has been the target of endless tributes, imitations, and parodies.



To celebrate the September 8 opening of a 2009 bicentennial exhibit on Poe, the Harry Ransom Center is encouraging writers to compose a parody of "The Raven" for fame and prizes on the website. For inspiration, they uncovered what must be the oldest Poe parody, an 1853 poem entitled, "The Vulture: An Ornithological Study."

Here's more on the contest, from the Poe Mania site: "Write your own parody of 'The Raven' based on something from your daily life and submit it to poe@hrc.utexas.edu. We will post our favorites here. Submissions become property of the Harry Ransom Center for use on this website or in other Ransom Center materials. All submissions will be entered into a drawing for a copy of 'Great Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe.'"

Contests 0 Comments Share 2 retweet

