

Scav Hunt at UChicago – Seeking Fun, Finding Tradition
April 29 through August 9, 2024

Intro Panel

Quirky, at times impossible, yet always fun, Scavenger Hunt—or Scav—has set UChicago students dashing on multiday searches for eclectic lists of miscellany since 1987. Simultaneously a break from coursework and a thinly veiled learning exercise, Scav has become an enjoyable rite of spring for undergraduates, as well as some graduates and alumni.

At the core of the game are intelligently playful scavenger hunt lists. Packed with plenty of tongue-in-cheek humor, often absurd and laced with pop culture references, each year Scav judges painstakingly craft “The List” and showcase a particular brand of brainy whimsy that aptly reflects both UChicago’s commitment to exploring intellectual curiosities and its irksome tradition of academic hairsplitting.

Truly inclusive, Scav does not require expertise. Generally played by groups coming together in residence halls, Scav promotes house spirit and is an immersive team building experience where neighbors scramble together, improvising and bonding over victories small and large. Beyond the dorms, Scav unifies the student body in a way that sports teams build school-specific spirit at some colleges. Students recognize Scav as uniquely UChicago and players back the game with fierce intensity and school pride.

For nearly four decades, Scavenger Hunt has evolved, adapted with technology, and garnered local, national, and international press, yet throughout time, it has retained its characteristic spirit of humor, playful rigor, and inclusion that reflects core UChicago values and has become an endearing student tradition. [1 introductory point for actually reading an exhibit introduction]

History and Founders Case

In 1986, University of Chicago third year undergraduate Chris Straus acted on an idea to hold a campus-wide scavenger hunt that nodded back to his childhood. Aiming high and envisioning a somewhat elaborate event, Chris recruited first year students Cassie Schraff, Diane Kelly, Rick Jeffries, and Nolan McCarty to help organize.

Throughout the academic year, the team met up weekly at the C-Shop (now Prêt a Manger) to plan the event over coffee and ice cream. From the start, wry humor, razor-sharp wit, and quirky bookishness drove discussions and pitches that prompted laughter secured a spot on the growing list.

Hoping for maximum participation, the Scavenger Hunt founders decided to hold the event in the spring between midterms and finals, May 7-10, 1987, when weather tended to be mild and students could set aside time to play.

Going into the event, about a dozen teams registered. Word spread and by Sunday, around 2,500 spectators and players from nearly forty teams showed up at Ida Noyes ready to show the five founding judges hundreds of items from the list.

Wildly successful, the Scavenger Hunt was energizingly chaotic, infectiously fun, and the turnout was stunning. In that moment, on May 10, 1987, with little discussion, the founders unanimously decided to plan another Scavenger Hunt for the following spring and unknowingly kick started a beloved annual student tradition that has evolved, yet, throughout the past thirty-seven years, remains essentially the same in spirit. [37 1987 points, which is 101.52 2024 points adjusted for inflation]

Christopher “Chris” Straus
Hitchcock Hall
Lab ’84, AB ’88 Biology, MD ’92
Professor of Radiology, UChicago Medicine

1st Member

Third generation UChicago faculty member, life-long Hyde Parker, and son of the College’s long-serving Dean of Students Lorna Straus (1967-1982), Chris’ UChicago affiliation runs uninterrupted from birth at Chicago’s Lying-In Hospital, K-12 at Lab, undergraduate years in the College, med school at Pritzker, and rising appointments at the UChicago Medical Center. With that deep pedigree, it is fitting that Chris was the visionary who organized this long-running goose chase through the University’s back yard.

Cassandra “Cassie” Scharff
Pierce, Shorey House
AB ’90 Public Policy, MBA ’93 University of California, Berkeley
Chief Branding Strategist, Cassandra Branding

2nd Member

New to college life and nursing fresh breakup wounds, Cassie was looking for social activities when her RA mentioned the scavenger hunt her friend Chris Straus wanted to organize. Intrigued, Cassie joined. As a karmic twist, the once heartbroken Cassie met her future husband Bob Hallberg, AB ’90, through the Scavenger Hunt and enlisted him to tabulate subsequent judging results on his Apple Macintosh computer. Cassie and Bob’s daughter, Athena Hallberg, AB ’21, continued the family Scav tradition and played for the South team.

Diane Kelly
Pierce, Tufts House
AB '90 Biology, PhD '97 Duke University
Senior Research Fellow, University of Massachusetts Amherst

3rd Member

Growing the Scavenger Hunt planning team, Cassie Scharff recruited new friend and fellow Pierce resident Diane Kelly. At home in the Reg, Diane enjoyed researching potential trivia questions that were a Scavenger Hunt staple before the internet. Through the Scavenger Hunt, Diane, too, met her husband Jim Cambias, AB '88, who was Chris Straus' roommate. Their daughter Emily Cambias, AB '18, became the first 'Scav Baby' and later claimed her birthright as a Scav captain when she led Burton Judson teams "Robespierre and the Reign of Cher" and "Marie Curie & the Free Radicals."

Richard "Rick" Jeffries
Pierce, Thompson House
AB '90 English, JD '93 Creighton University
Partner, Cline Williams Wright Johnson and Oldfather

4th Member

During his first quarter, Cassie Scharff excitedly approached Rick while he was eating lunch in the Pierce Tower dining hall and told him about the idea to plan a scavenger hunt for the student body. Perhaps feeling the start of a mild crush, Rick was charmed and joined the team. As time went on, Rick was all in and believes he typed up the first list on his Tandy TSR-80 computer and remembers drafting the group's first RSO constitution.

Nolan McCarty
Pierce, Thompson House
AB'90 Economics, PhD '93 Carnegie Mellon
Susan Dod Brown Professor of Politics and Public Affairs, Princeton University

5th Member

Needing entertainment to counterbalance a tough first quarter at the College, Nolan quickly joined the Scavenger Hunt group when his roommate Rick Jeffries approached him. Drawn to the humor and thought driving list preparation, Nolan enjoyed trying to stump teams but found his niche as the fair Head Judge who reasonably allowed for partial credit for effort. Banding together to show group spirit, and to raise funds, Nolan recruited his high school brother Nathan to design the graphics for the first Scav t-shirts in 1989 and 1990.

ITEMS:

T-shirt, 1989

On loan from Nolan McCarty

The first Scavenger Hunt t-shirt, designed by judge Nolan McCarty's brother Nathan

UChicago's C-Shop, 1982

University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf2-03882

The founders met weekly at the C-Shop (now Prêt a Manger) for planning meetings.

University of Chicago Magazine

Summer 1988

Coverage of the second Scavenger Hunt in UChicago's alumni magazine

First Scavenger Hunt List, 1987

University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 6, Folder 2

Donated by Christopher M. Straus

Letter of Authenticity, 2022

University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 6, Folder 6

Donated by Christopher M. Straus

In 2022, founder Chris Straus gave Scavvies vintage copies of the first Scavenger Hunt list that the founders made at Kinko's in 1987 and marked those with red "copy" stamps to differentiate them from this yellowed original photocopy that he gifted to the University of Chicago Archives.

How to Play Case

How to Play

Every spring, Scav participants band together into teams. Historically, teams have been based on UChicago houses or dorms, but a team can be any group of people who register and complete items from the list. Lists include around 300 items that can range from trivia and gathering items, to feats of athletic ability and performance, to large 'showcase' items that require ingenuity and skillful planning.

There are some rules to follow:

- All items can be obtained and performed legally
- No sabotaging other teams
- Please don't shout at the judges
- All props must be mad props

Early lists were simply left in students' campus mailboxes in the Reynolds Club basement, but today list release is an event. Teams head to Ida Noyes Hall, many waving signs and chanting, for the list's debut at midnight. Teams might also have to solve a challenge to get the list—like digging it up on a beach or piecing together bits of shredded paper.

Teams have from Thursday to Sunday morning to procure or create their items in a chaotic whirlwind of 24/4 activity. On Sunday morning (Judgment Day), judges review the items and assign points based on how successfully an item fulfills the brief. Showcase items are judged first, then the rest of the items, page by page. The team with the most points wins. [1 point for participation]

So Why Play?

For early hunts, the reason to play was to win a 5-gallon bucket of ice cream by getting at least 100 points (and a single crouton, item 1988.172, was worth 100 points). In subsequent Scavs, unlike most competitive endeavors, the reason to play is not victory, but participation. Generally, no one really remembers who wins from year to year, though most have vivid memories of collecting or creating items. Scav also provides opportunities for anyone to participate. As founder Cassie Hallberg said, "Scav is super inclusive. Everyone from the athlete to the nerd has something to contribute." It doesn't matter what you might be good at, it will probably appear somewhere on the list, and you too can play and participate in Scav. [5 gallons of inclusive points]

ITEMS:

Wire Torso Form

2023.101 _____ Boulder? We hardly know 'er. Bring a convincing boulder to Judgment that transforms into a full-size woman. [12? we hardly points it]

On loan from Arianne Nguyen, created by Tomi Rossini and Arianne Nguyen

2010. _____ Four standing teammates form the noble steed. Atop them perches your player in his howdah, mallet in hand. You are now ready for a game of Human Elephant Polo at 4 pm on Thursday, on the Midway between University and Woodlawn. [φ points]

Photo courtesy of Jason Smith

A Schedule Breaking Down the Timed Events of Scav

Photo courtesy of Leila Sales

The National Scavenger, 1990

University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 6, Folder 4

Donated by Christopher M. Straus

Armadillo of Darkness

The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook, n.d.

University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 3 Folder 7

Donated by Emma Simpson

Scav Hunt Rules and Bylaws, 2023

Scav Team Application, 2023

1988.172 _____ A crouton (100 points)
1989.57 _____ 100 croutons (1 point)

List Case

The List

The list was born in the C-Shop in Hutchinson, where the founders sat around and tried to make each other laugh with outrageous ideas for list items. Items fell into eight categories: trivia, cheap and simple items, David Letterman-inspired “Stupid Human Tricks” (that evolved into Scav Olympics), large items (that morphed into showcase items), ‘make it’ items (which started the tradition of large builds), ‘go-find-it’ items to get people out and about in the greater Chicago area, road trip items, and the blood drive.

Today, extreme secrecy is involved in the development of the list. A panel of about fifteen judges meets in undisclosed locations from January-April to write, debate, and vote on items. At the end, they are left with the list—typically around 300 ostensibly feasible items. With the advent of the internet, judges needed to select items that couldn’t be solved with a simple Google search.

The list itself is peppered with running jokes, timely pop-culture references, and ties to a Scav theme song of the year. It has a distinctive voice that is quirky, with an undeniably intellectual slant. The judges deliberately include seemingly impossible ‘showcase’ or ‘moonshot’ items (that Scavvies sometimes get!), but overall the list is full of intentionally low-cost items – things that students can *scavenge* to obtain.

An archive of all past lists can be found at scavhunt.uchicago.edu. [2 points per searchable list]

ITEMS:

Signs, “Lake Park” and “We Want the List”

On loan from Snitchcock Scav

Students march with these signs to Ida Noyes Hall to get the list. Many signs contain inside jokes, like this one referencing the monotone recorded voice heard at the Lake Park pedestrian crossing on 55th Street.

Photo of Page Buddy

Photo courtesy of Nick Confrey

Teams typically break down the list by page, assigning one person to be the page captain. Here you can see an enlarged page of the list with notes about who will complete items.

Set of University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Lists, 1987-2023

QR code leading to Scav website’s list archives

List Page with Judge's Notes, 1990
University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 6, Folder 4
Donated by Christopher M. Straus

Early Ideas for List Items, n.d.
University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 6, Folder 1
Donated by Christopher M. Straus

Running Jokes
[26.2 points]

Mike Royko

The first running gag evolved over a decade into a lopsided grudge match with Mike Royko—*Chicago Tribune's* cranky Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist who often disparaged UChicago for being stuffy. Miffed and protective of campus life, judges hit back by involving Royko in repeated Scav items. Beginning in 1987, item #209 asked for Royko's signature on the front page of a *Tribune*. While he signed a copy for the first team to reach him, he shut his door to future involvement and judges continued to weave Royko-related items into lists. From Royko-autographed socks to translations of his articles into Pig Latin, digs at frenemy Royko appeared for years. In 1997, weeks after Royko's death, item #270 called for "A séance to contact the spirit of Mike Royko – adieu, sweet Royko, adieu..." [Press F points to pay respects]

Coleslaw

In 2005, judges innocently asked Scavvies "What's an acrostic?" and the first letter of each of the items on that page of the list spelled out B-R-I-N-G M-E C-O-L-E-S-L-A-W. Those that picked up on this got three bonus points for item #139 and helped kickoff a long-running inside joke that has made it to annual lists ever since. [139 super lucky acrostic win points]

Showcase Items†

Judges believe the impossible is possible and pepper lists with comically aspirational items that are not always out of reach for clever, resourceful Scavvies. Points for these items are commensurate with the legwork needed to obtain or achieve them. Some players focus on high-point showcase items to maximize scoring efforts during the four-day event. Earlier showcase items tended to center on procuring outrageous items and more recent showcase items involve building elaborate, often tech-heavy things during the short window of Scav. Showcase items are judged in a separate class before regular list items on Judgment Day and draw the attention of many. [500 points to go big or go home]

1988.39 _____ A live elephant (750 points)

1990.289 _____ A full sized, corporate blimp displaying only your team name (500 points)

1993.57 _____ A fully functional Soviet military aircraft with receipt (1999.99 points)

- 1993.153 _____ A flock of live sheep with a fraternity member as a shepherd (150 points)
- 1996.256 _____ A suspension bridge linking the sides of the Midway (200 points)
- 1999.288 _____ An Olympic medal (-100 points for bronze, 200 for silver, 400 for gold)
- 1999.40 _____ A nuclear reactor built in a shed (500 points)
- 2011.265 _____ A lion, tiger, or bear. With trainer. On campus. (125 points)
- 2015.190 _____ Build a working, mechanical UChicago themed slot machine (200 points)
- 2019.80 _____ Create ancient civilization-inspired musical contraption with technological interface (225 points)

ITEMS:

Photo, 1996

Photo courtesy of Fred Niell

1996.256 _____ Suspension bridge linking the sides of the “Great Depression” in the Midway. It must be able to support one person crossing at a time. (200 pts.)

Event Notice

“The Scavenger Hunt,” 1989

On loan from Diane A. Kelly

Photo by Matthew Gilson, 1997

Courtesy of Leila Sales

In part a nod to the outlandish 1988 item #39: A live elephant, this 1989 Scavenger Hunt advertisement specified that elephants would not be permitted inside Ida Noyes for judging for safety reasons. Later, in 1997, item #104 again asked for a live elephant and Scavvies wowed the judges and earned 500 points. Similarly, 2011 item #265 requested a lion, tiger, or bear, and Scavvies delivered a trained, caged tiger.

Judges Case

The Judgeship

The original judges were recruited by word of mouth, but these days, potential judges face an extensive application process. Candidates are given an item cut from a previous list and asked to explain why or why not the item is list-worthy. Selected applicants become judges for life, unless they quit, or are removed by a unanimous vote of the other judges.

Active judges, collectively known as the ‘Hot Side Hot,’ are responsible for creating lists and must consider several factors: health and safety, the reputation of the university, and practicality of items. Just trying to make each other laugh is not enough anymore. As Scav’s rules warn: “The Judges take no responsibility for your getting thrown into the clink—be it local clink, state clink, federal clink, or Colonel Klink. If you end up there, it is your fault.”

Scav is one of UChicago's 400-plus Recognized Student Organizations and the Scavenczar, a.k.a Head Judge, works with an advisor from the Center for Leadership & Involvement to secure space and negotiate funding from "Those Who Control the Cosmic Purse Strings" to ensure Scav runs smoothly. [126 points and counting, Your Honor]

ITEMS:

"Target: Judge" T-Shirt
University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 3
Donated by Emma Simpson

Judge Hat
Captain's Yacht Sailor's Hat, style worn by judges during Scav

Photo of Judge in Judge Hat and S.C.A.V. T-shirt, 2016
Photo courtesy Diane A. Kelly

Photo of Judges at Hutchinson Wearing Judge Hats
Photo Courtesy of Nick Confrey

RSO Re-Application, 2009
Courtesy of UChicago's Center for Leadership & Involvement

Head Judge's Notebook, 2012
Created by Leah Rand
University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 3
Donated by Emma Simpson
Super secretive notes for creating the list and judgment

Nuclear Case

The Nuclear Reactor
1999.240 _____ A breeder reactor built in a shed, and the boy scout badge to prove credit was given where boy scout credit was due. [500 points]

Of all the far-fetched, almost impossible items that have shown up on Scav lists over the years, one item stands out as being particularly legendary: the nuclear reactor built in a dorm room. In 1999, Justin Kasper and Fred Niell constructed the breeder reactor using scrap aluminum and World War II-era surplus vacuum tubes. Justin lost a coin toss, so it was assembled in his room. The most difficult part of the project was obtaining equipment sensitive enough to detect the profoundly miniscule amounts of thorium, uranium, and plutonium the reactor would produce. No one faced any real harm from radiation. After demonstrating that their reactor worked to an independent expert's satisfaction the night before, for Judgment they built a shed out of

drywall, dressed up in clean room 'bunny' suits, and displayed the apparatus inside. ['99 campus myth points]

ITEMS:

CRC Handbook of Chemistry and Physics, 53rd ed.

Cleveland, OH: Chemical Rubber Co., 1972

On loan from Fred Niell

Fred and Justin used this reference book to determine the feasibility of their reactor plan.

Gauges

On loan from Fred Niell

These same WWII-era surplus aircraft gauges created the alpha source of radium for the reactor. After Judgment, the reactor and isotopes were disposed of in accordance with all applicable regulations.

"The Radioactive Boy Scout" [reproduction]

Harper's Weekly, November 1998

The item was inspired by the *Harper's Weekly* article "The Radioactive Boy Scout," which describes the reactor David Hahn built to earn a Boy Scout badge.

Radioactive Waste Disposal Bag

On loan from Fred Niell

Radiation Area Sign

On loan from Fred Niell

HAZMAT Suit

Fred and Justin wore suits like this to Judgment.

Photo of Fred Niell and Justin Kasper during Judgment

The Core: College Magazine of the University of Chicago, 2019

Photo by Buffy Wajvoda

Traditions Case 1

Scav Olympics

As the internet eclipsed trivia-style questions, items asking players to race, perform, and endure proliferated. By 1996, the Scav Olympics debuted as an official category and became the area of the list that focused on items of skill, often designed for multi-player participation. Originally judged on Sunday morning, by its second year, organizers moved the Scav Olympics to Saturday, before the final push for Judgment. Scav Olympics has become a pillar event packed with zany contests where teams get points based on players' performances in madcap events like rounds of lubed Twister and backward Pogo Stick racing. [10 points for gold, 5 for silver, 2 for bronze]

ITEMS:

“Flatbread” Photo

2017, Scav Olympics item #6

Photo by Joel Wintermantle

“Gentlemen’s Duel: Churro Fencing” Photo

2017, Scav Olympics item #1

Photo by Joel Wintermantle

“Office Sprace” Photo

2005, Scav Olympics item #4

Photo courtesy of Leila Sales

“PIE FIGHT!” Photo

2008, Scav Olympics item #3

Photo courtesy of Leila Sales

Pickle Pop Event at Scav Olympics

Chicago Maroon, v. 129: 48

May 15, 2018

There Ain’t No Party Like...

For a few years, between 1999-2007, teams were tasked to host parties on the quad. In 1999, list item #338 earned teams up to 600 points for a BYOBus (Vengabus) party. Teams rented school buses and RVs and the epic bacchanal united teams, increased student participation, and sparked a legendary tradition. In 2006, prompted by weather, organizers wrangled space inside Cobb Hall. Indoor debauchery with damage to classrooms could not be swept up as easily as outdoor festivities. Icarus hit the sun and the neutered 2007 party, with security checks and limited drink tickets, was dismal. Since then, Scav parties have been notably tamer. [Party like it’s 1999 points]

ITEM:

“Scav party in Cobb shut down”

Chicago Maroon, v. 117: 49

May 16, 2006

Scav Theme Songs

In 1998, judges began selecting annual Scav theme songs that get referenced as hints to help Scavvies complete items. Not explicitly stated, today’s judges drop clues to songs via social media and the web. [10 earworm points]

2023: Akiko Wada, "KANPAI FUNK"
2022: The Billboard Hot 100 Number Ones of 2022
2021: Tame Impala, "Elephant", as covered by The Wiggles
2020: Daði Freyr, "Think About Things"
2019: The Black Eyed Peas, "Pump It"
2018: Ethel Merman, "Everything's Coming Up Roses" (Disco Album version)
2017: Carly Rae Jepsen, "Store"
2016: Wang Chung, "Everybody Have Fun Tonight"
2015: Hoobastank, "The Reason"
2014: Tegan and Sara feat. The Lonely Island, "Everything is Awesome"
2013: Quad City DJs, "Space Jam"
2012: Buddy Holly, "You're So Square (Baby I Don't Care)"
2011: The Foundations, "Build Me Up Buttercup"
2010: Adriano Celentano, "Prisencolinensinainciusol"
2009: Queen and David Bowie, "Under Pressure"
2008: The White Stripes, "Conquest"
2007: Maldroid, "Heck No! (We Won't Listen to Techno)"
2006: Scorpions, "Rock You Like a Hurricane"
2005: The Beach Boys, "I Get Around"
2004: Junior Senior, "Move Your Feet"
2003: Kenny Loggins, "Danger Zone"
2002: Andrew W.K., "Party Hard"
2001: The Charlie Daniels Band, "The Devil Went Down to Georgia"
2000: Positive K, "I Gotta Man"
1999: Vengaboys, "We Like to Party"
1998: Weather Girls, "It's Raining Men"

Blood Drive

The Scav Blood Drive is almost as old as Scav itself, beginning with the second annual Scavenger Hunt in 1988. Taking various forms over the years, from bloodmobiles, to a donation center out on the quad, to the DCAM blood donation center today. [minimum 12.5-13.0 iron points]

ITEM:

Photo of student donating blood

Chicago Maroon, n.d.

University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf7-04601-002

QR Code

If you are able, please consider donating blood:

<https://www.uchicagomedicine.org/give/give-blood>

Judges' Meals

"We Judges have been looking a bit scrawny lately" 2010.61

In 2006, item #286 called for culinary challenge based on the popular 90s Japanese cooking show *Iron Chef*. Scavvies were asked to prepare "a feast worthy of viceroys" for an elaborate communal potluck dinner. The scrumptious event reappeared as part of the road trip prep meeting for a few years and evolved into the Scavvenfeast dinner, which is now a Saturday night highlight where teams prepare multicourse tasting menus based on the current year's theme. After judges sample the courses, Scavvies snack on the leftovers. During 2020's quarantine, when dinner parties were virtual, list item #31 asked people to share food photos on Instagram. [5 points as part of this balanced diet]

ITEMS:

2023.45 _____ Scavvenfeast may be fun for the adults, but the Scavvenkids are super bored. To help the kids feel more engaged, present your Scavvenfeast menu in Kids Menu form, with crayons and games included. [3.5 CHKNM NUGGIES points]

Scavvenfeast Menu

On loan from Arianne Nguyen, created by Gayathri Rao

Judging Scavvenfeast Photo

Image courtesy of Snitchcock Scav or Arianne Nguyen

Captains' Breakfast

Thursday morning, hours after list release, judges cater coffee and pastries and meet with team captains to answer questions and clarify list items. As tradition holds, judges include a list item asking captains to wear themed outfits to breakfast. With little time for prep, teams scour the list for this item immediately after list release and rush to outfit their captain in time for the morning meeting. [9 am rise and shine points]

ITEM:

Cape, 2022

2022.175 _____ The costuming in Starlight Express sure was fan-track-stic, but we're still rail-ing from the fact that they were missing a key feature: capes! Get it? Capes. . . with trains?! Not just any trains, but everlengthening trains, with new train car additions displayed at every Captain's appearance throughout the Hunt. This Groundhog Day, at 3:10 to Punxsutawney, your Captains should arrive dressed as their favorite real or fictional train that's ready to hit the big stage. 3:10 to Punxsutawney will be hosted in Hutch Commons. Choo-choo-choose wisely! [λ points]

On loan from Danny Vesecky, created by Lillian Hermes and Lila Alonso

Scav Speak

Over the years, players and judges have adopted terms and phrases specific to their Scav-related experiences. The name of the event itself evolved from the Scavenger Hunt to Scav in the mid-90s. Illustrating how language responds to group speak, here are some insider terms co-opted into the Scav lexicon: [Duo-lingo points]

Train wash – a poorly made item that technically completes the judges’ instructions but is not truly what was desired, term adopted when an item asked players to take something through the CTA’s train washing depot, but someone ran items through a shower

Boat sink – an item that is thoroughly well made, more so than its point allotment would warrant

Hot Side Hot and Cold Side Cold – ‘Hot Side Hot’ are active judges who run Scav and the ‘Cold Side Cold’ are non-judges who help with administrative tasks. The twin terms reference McDonald’s experimental packaging for its fizzled McD.L.T. sandwich that boasted side by side compartments to keep burger ingredients separated by temperature.

List release – 12:00 am Thursday of Scav when the judges make the year’s list available

Judgment, Judgment Day – last event where points are awarded, initially known only as “the judging”

Fourdays – Thursday through Sunday of Scav, where time runs together

Showcase items – elaborate or nearly impossible items commensurately awarded a large number of points, noted on lists by: †

Roles

- Scavenczar – head judge
- Sir Ector – archivist
- Keeper of the Scrolls – list tracker
- Minister of Propaganda – Scav’s public image burnisher

Contractions

MacPierce – residents of Maclean and Pierce banded together after those dorms closed

Snitchcock – blending of neighboring dorms Snell and Hitchcock

Phrases

“Feels like Saturday night of Scav” – a point of exhaustion and near despair

“No fucking limit” – judges’ caveat to award infinite additional points for superlative performance of an item

“Random guy on a bike” footnotes – proactive judges’ warning that points won’t be awarded for circumventing the spirit of an item, coined after a guy riding a bicycle won a Mario race car rally

ITEM:

Photo of McD.L.T. Box

Photo from the National Museum of American History, JN2012-0711

Dual compartments keep the hot side hot and the cold side cold

What's in a name?

By the mid-90s, Scav team names became playfully esoteric and more elaborate than simply adopting an affiliated dorm name, such as:

Viagra Falls (Burton Judson, 1998)

Housing Sold Me Out (Shoreland, 2006)

John Boyer’s Science Warriors (MacPierce, 2009)

Enrico Fermi’s Scarlet Sex Machine (Breckinridge, 2010)

Sisyphus and the Rolling Stones (South, 2012)

Scav Trek: The Prior Generation (GASH, 2020)

To All the Valois I’ve Loved Before (Valois Bois, 2021)

Bold of you to assume we have pants on (MacStrongin, 2021)

We hope this Scav team finds you well in these difficult times (I-House, 2020)

Armadillo of Darkness (Snell-Hitchcock 2005)

Hooked on Phoenix (Max Palevsky, 2010)

Logging, Pimping, and Your Pal Jim Nondorf: A Trainwash to the Stars (Maclean, 2014(2))

Road Trip and Judgment Case

Road Trip!

Scav's legendary road trip started accidentally and was inspired by the item #175 on the first list, asking for "A 5 cent returnable soda can...100 pts." Judges knew that local Hyde Park grocery store Mr. G's had accidentally gotten a soda shipment with out of state bottle deposit stamps, but were surprised at how many students drove to Iowa for cans. Judges quickly realized Scavvies would travel for points, and the annual road trip was born.

Judges also recognized that UChicago students didn’t go off campus much, and Scav’s road trip was a way to get students out into the larger Chicago area and out of the city entirely. The maximum distance for the road trip is 1,000 miles from Chicago. In true Scav fashion, some items didn’t make sense until you were driving to the main destination. For instance, in 1995 item #206 required parking tickets from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New

York, and Ontario. These could easily be obtained while traveling to get item #292: The tackiest Niagara Falls souvenir you can find. [66 get your kicks points]

Map with 1,000-mile radius, destinations pinpointed with select photos

ITEMS:

“Road Trip Before the Road Trip” Photo

Photo courtesy Diane A. Kelly

Peter “P.R.” Goldstone, Cassie Scharff, and Chirstopher Straus (left to right) scouting road trip items in Wabasha, Minnesota in 1990

Road Trip CDs

University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 3

Donated by Emma Simpson

Marshall’s Mackinac Island Fudge

1988.38 _____ A pound of Mackinac Island Fudge [30 pts.]

Judgment Day

Traditionally took place on Mother’s Day, because, well....

[IMAGE]

In the first year, Judgment Day, aka the awarding of points, was, simply, a big mess. The founders admit they had no idea what they were doing. Judging and tabulating took many hours, partially because there were many more participants than they expected. Each judge focused on one team and considered all of their items, and each judge had their own criteria for awarding points, which meant there was little consistency.

The next year, they decided to get serious about judging, and streamlined operations. Cassie Scharff’s future husband Bob Hallberg had a suitcase-sized computer, and created a spreadsheet to assist with the scoring. This was an improvement, but more needed to be done. Eventually, each judge adopted one page of the list, usually one they wrote, and scored those items for each team.

Thanks to the early judges’ groundwork, Judgment is efficient today. Teams are asked to organize their items by page, with completed items highlighted. Judges hold up numbers indicating which page they are ready to judge, and teams beckon the appropriate judge to score their items. Judges may award partial points when deemed appropriate. The last two entries in the official rules state:

13. Decisions. All decisions of the Judges are final. Final.

14. Final. See Decisions. [45 minimum to no fucking limit reckoning points]

ITEMS:

Mother's Day Post

Valois Boys Herald, No. 3517

Photo of Judges at Judgment Day, 2016

Photo courtesy Diane A. Kelly

Photo of Student Judge (left) with "Celebrity Guest Judge" Ted O'Neill, Dean of Admissions
University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf7-06018

Photo of Judgment Day

Photo courtesy of Nick Confrey

Handwritten Invitation to Judgment, 2012

Created by Jennifer Gibson

University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 3

Donated by Emma Simpson

"Go-Kart" Photo

2016.54 _____ You little rascals made a pedal powered go-kart that seats two? Let's see what it can do and, of course, if it can look good doing it. [250 points based on aesthetics, mechanism, placement in the race, and course objectives]†

Photo courtesy of Nick Confrey

Nick Confrey pedaled this kart to Judgment

"DED" Photo

Scavvies Nick Confrey and Emilee Urbanek collapsed from exhaustion at Ida Noyes Hall during Judgment

Photo courtesy of Nick Confrey

Scav Wedding Case

Not on the List: L<3ve

Love stories have always been a part of Scav, and in 2015 an actual wedding appeared on the list. Longtime Scav judge Christian Kammerer, AB '03, SM '06, PhD '09, and Emily Pelka, AB '09 enjoyed Scav so much they wanted to get married during it.

Christian remembered the traditional Friday night party during the Scavs of his undergrad years, which the university curbed after the "legendary Cobb party of 2006," and wanted to recreate a big Friday night event. Luckily, his intended was not a big fan of traditional weddings. This is where being a Scav judge came in handy. Christian asked fellow judges to create what would be called the Scavvenwedding list.

As promised on the Scavinvitation, the whole ceremony was “super normal and classy” and culminated, of course, with the newly married couple crowd surfing down the aisle. [all rise for 15 marriage points, or forever hold your peace]

ITEMS:

Picture of wedding

Scavvenwedding, 2015

University of Chicago News Site

Scavvenwedding Wedding List, 2015

Page 1

iPad Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXaRg4sxtLE&t=28s>, University of Chicago News Site

Pandemic Case

Pandemic Years

The COVID-19 pandemic upended life and routines around the globe and prompted creative work arounds. Dedicated Scavvies looked to Zoom, Dropbox, and email to facilitate virtual scavenger hunts in 2020 and 2021. Lists from those years focused on things players could reasonably do, research, or create without breaking shelter in place orders or going against CDC guidelines. Lists remained playful with plenty of humorous salutes to pandemic life that kept time spent indoors tolerable and fun. Though road trips were not possible either year, cleverly, in 2021, Scav Olympics reappeared virtually in *Minecraft*. [it’s only 14 points of quarantine, right?]

ITEM:

Zoom Scav Meeting Screenshot

May 15, 2020

Photo courtesy of Nick Confrey

Folding@home

In 2020, in lieu of the blood drive, Scavvies could be part of the Folding@home crowdsource effort to run virtual simulations to accelerate the understanding of SARS-CoV-2 mechanisms and work towards the development of COVID medications.

ITEM:

Dataset Visualization

Folding@home Consortium, 2024

Scavenger Hunt Origins Case

Scavenger Hunt Origins

American gossip columnist, actress, and society hostess Elsa Maxwell (1883-1963) is credited for introducing modern scavenger hunts to partygoers in Paris in 1927 and popularized them upon her return to New York City in the 1930s. The idea spread, and periodically throughout the 1930s and 1940s student groups, sororities, and fraternities at the University of Chicago participated in scavenger hunts. In 1982, UChicago's Inter-House Council organized a small, one day scavenger hunt event for students living in the dorms. [50 OG Scavvie points]

ITEMS:

Carl Van Vechten (1880-1964)

Portrait of Elsa Maxwell on the deck of the ocean liner Conte di Savoia, May 16, 1935

Carl Van Vechten Photograph Collection 1932-1956, Box 3, Folder 34-A

Elsa Maxwell (1883-1963)

How to Do It; or, The Lively Art of Entertaining

Boston: Little Brown, 1957

BJ2021.M3 1957 Rare

The Helen Lee Memorial Fund

Ando Case

Ando Section: General Items

Rocking Centaur

2023.92 _____ A rocking centaur. [31.5 points]

On loan from Snitchcock Scav, created by Tomi Rossini

Oversized Opera Lorgnette, aka "Longnette," Glasses on Stick

2023.207 _____ Lorgnette? More like longnette! [8.1 glasses and stick points]

On loan from Snitchcock Scav, created by Pavlik Braverman

Sign "Collective Effervescence"

On loan from Snitchcock Scav

Émile Durkheim presents his concept of "collective effervescence" in *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*—a longtime staple on UChicago's Core reading list—to describe a phenomenon that may happen when groups participate in communal actions where "the effervescence often becomes so intense that it leads to outlandish behavior; the passions unleashed are so torrential that nothing can hold them." In ways, this aptly describes Scav fervor.

Sign "I do not think..."

On loan from Snitchcock Scav

Ohio State Flag Dress

2023.117 _____ A dress, the front of which is solely composed of an appropriately sized and oriented Ohio flag. [8 pointy bits on your tits points]

On loan from Elizabeth Harrison, created for IHouse team "We Need a Captain and a Name"

Ando Section: Chopsticks

2023.98 _____ It is said that in hell, people are forced to eat using three-foot-long chopsticks. They starve for all eternity. In heaven, people are given the same chopsticks but they feed each other. Be at the Chinatown MingHin Cuisine at noon on Friday with your three foot long chopsticks and an open and generous heart. [5.5 points]

ITEMS:

Chopsticks

On loan from Snitchcock Scav, created by Sarah Grannis

"Three Feet of Heaven" Photo

Snitchcock Scavvie Lev Copelan being fed an eggroll

Image courtesy of Snitchcock Scav

Ando Section: Pulp Grouping

2021.200 _____ And yet a trace of its true self exists in the false self. Blend up a copy of *Doing Honest Work in College* and repurpose the pulp into Lipson's lesser known, definitely not plagiarized work: *Doing Dishonest Work in College*. [7 points]

As requested, Scavvies blended a copy of the go-to citation manual *Doing Honest Work in College* to create a tongue-in-cheek alternate self-published version *Doing Dishonest Work in College*. [-10 librarian points]

ITEMS:

Charles Lipson

Doing Honest Work in College

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008

PN171.F56L56 2008 c.3 Gen

Pulp

On loan from Arianne Nguyen, created by Anneke Thorne

Pulp made from a blended copy of *Doing Honest Work in College*

Sticker

Doing Honest Scav in College

On loan from Arianne Nguyen, created by Anneke Thorne

Anneke Thorne
Doing Dishonest Work in College
Chicago: Self-published, 2021
On loan from Arianne Nguyen, created by Anneke Thorne

Ando Section: T-shirts

T-shirts identify judges and teams, are sold to raise funds, and double as affordable souvenirs that sometimes survive past college years. [2 for \$20 points]

Top Row
"4th Annual Scavenger Hunt"
Designed by Nathan McCarty, 1990
On loan from Nolan McCarty

"Crescat Snellentia Vita Hitchcockatur"
On loan from Snitchcock Scav

"May 2014 (0)"
University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 2
Triskaidekaphobia, the fear of the number thirteen, is behind listing Scav 2013 as 2014(0)
Donated by Grace James and Ben Umans

"-- butt's up? butts up! --, ScavHunt 2006"
University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 4
Donated by Emma Simpson

Middle Row
"Damn You, Breckinredge!" [sic]
University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 1
Donated by Stephen Marrone

"University of Chicago, Scavenger Hunt 2009"
University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 2
Donated by Grace James and Ben Umans

"Mendicant Cingulata"
On loan from Snitchcock Scav

"Rasputin and the All Tsars"
University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 1
Donated by Stephen Marrone

Bottom Row

“Scav Hunt, I’m Judge”

University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 2

Donated by Grace James and Ben Umans

“Bill Nye & The Science Lies”

University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 1

Burton Judson Scav team shirt, 2013

Donated by Stephen Marrone

“Engineering At The Snell-Hitchcock Institute of Technology”

On loan from Snitchcock Scav

Students embedded a coded message in this shirt’s print

“5th Annual Scavenger Hunt”

University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Collection, Box 7

Donated by Christopher M. Straus

Ando Section: Press and Awards

“The Hunter Games”

The New Yorker

July 2, 2012

AP2.N59 v. 88:19, Gen

Still from Episode of QI

September 30, 2021

Series S, Episode 4

Image from YouTube

UChicago’s Scavenger Hunt was a question on British quiz show *QI (Quite Interesting)*

DVD

The Hunt: Four Days of Insanity: The World’s Largest Scavenger Hunt

Chicago: Periphrastic Films and Fire Escape Productions, 2002

GV1202.T7H958 2002 c.2 ArcMon

Guinness World Records

Securing preeminent pop culture accolades, Scav held Guinness’ record for world’s largest scavenger hunt between 2011–2014. Scav earned the title by shattering Guinness’ official record, then held by 212 school children from St. Anthony’s Catholic School in Ontario, Canada. Needing to follow the format set by the category’s inaugural champs and register more participants, Scav judges set up a special hour-long sub-event on Friday, May 6, 2011 with a 23-

item list that 924 participants completed within the boundaries of the quads while also earning points for their “real” Scav tallies. [4 glorious years of world record points]

ITEMS:

Framed Certificate, 2011

University of Chicago, Scavenger Hunt, Collection, Box 2

“After 25 years, a world record”

Chicago Maroon, v. 122: 45

May 6, 2011

List and Answer Key for Scavenger Hunt World Record Attempt, 2011

Rules and Schedule for the Scavenger Hunt World Record Attempt, 2011

Ando Section: Leila Sales

Leila Sales

Dewey House

AB 2006 Psychology

Author, editor, story creator

Not on the List: Betrayal

Leila Sales chose to attend UChicago because of Scav and she was an enthusiastic participant and judge. Years into her writing career, she revisited a longstanding idea to write a book about Scav and began collecting Scavvies’ stories and photographs. The book was such a niche topic that it was a hard sell, but in 2019, UChicago Press published *We Made Uranium! And Other True Stories from the University of Chicago’s Extraordinary Scavenger Hunt*.

The book had a wonderful reception, with events on campus and at the Seminary Co-op, where Leila reminisced with her former professors and many book contributors. Sadly, the book did not inspire a Scav item that year, which Leila confesses, “felt like a betrayal.” The editors of *The Valois Boys Herald* agreed and wrote an editorial. [3.15 Et tu, Brute? points]

[IMAGE]

Text of editorial

Valois Boys Herald, May 12, 2019

2019.2 ____ Last year, the last Item on the list asked for a prediction for this year’s list. If you made an accurate prediction about this year’s list, you’ll receive points. [p points]

ITEMS:

We Made Uranium! And Other True Stories from the University of Chicago's Extraordinary Scavenger Hunt

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019

LD936.W46 2019 UCPress

Ando Section: GISH

Dmitri T. Krushnic, aka Misha Collins

Dodd-Mead House

AB, Sociology, 1997

Actor, director, producer, New York Times best-selling author, and activist

Global Impact of Scav

Actor Misha Collins loved Scav as an undergrad. He enjoyed the whole experience – the ingenuity, the teamwork, the confidence building, and especially the subversive tone of the list. His Scav experiences inspired him to create the Greatest International Scavenger Hunt the World Has Ever Seen (GISHWHES, later shortened to GISH). From 2011 to 2020, he enlisted his sizeable international social media following to participate in GISH. Proceeds supported charitable endeavors, namely the work of Random Acts—the nonprofit Misha founded in 2010.

“GISH challenged hundreds of thousands of people in over 110 countries to create art, positive mayhem, and a lasting difference in the world. Together, GISH participants raised millions of dollars for charities and amassed eight Guinness World Records—all while encouraging people to push their personal boundaries, create bizarre art, and make a game out of doing good.” -- gish.com [110 philathro-points]

ITEMS:

Graphic of GISH Accomplishments

Courtesy of Misha Collins

Charities that Benefitted from GISH

Courtesy of Misha Collins

Photos from Past GISH Events

Courtesy of Misha Collins

Four Guinness Records Certificates, 2011-2013

On loan from Misha Collins

iPad: Video by Misha Collins

Courtesy of Misha Collins

GISH Video Items and Video Message by Misha Collins

Courtesy of Misha Collins

1. Perfectly cosplay with five of your friends as the Blue Angels fighter jet squad. Perform a dramatic formation maneuver for an unsuspecting crowd. Bonus points: Complete this Item at an air show.
2. This submission may be 25 seconds or less. Recently a former NASA engineer created the world's largest NERF gun (<http://nerdist.com/former-nasa-engineer-builds-worlds-largest-functional-nerf-gun/>). We think he didn't try hard enough. Show the world that you can out-do his efforts. Your submission must clearly surpass his effort or you will receive no points.
3. It's another boring trapeze teleconference. Business attire required.
4. Fill hundreds of balloons with helium, tie them to a decorated Christmas tree and watch the tree float away. Tree must be a real pine tree (not faux) and must be at least 5 feet tall. The video must show the tree floating off and should be 40 seconds long.
5. Video message from Misha Collins

iPad Video:

Scavengers, 2008

Donated by David Franklin

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

SCRC curators Christine Colburn, Patti Gibbons, and Chelsea Kaufman, and all Scavvies past, present, and future offer sincere gratitude to the founders of the Scavenger Hunt: [5,000 campus legend points]

Chris Straus

Cassie Hallberg

Diane Kelly

Rick Jeffries

Nolan McCarty

We also gratefully acknowledge the following people for making this exhibit possible: [an infinite amount of gratitude points]

Lila Alonso
Ruby Baer
Terry Banks
Tsolmon Batgerel
Carolyn "Crayola" Bolger
James Bradley
Pavlik Braverman
Jimmy Brown
Chandler Calderon
Tonia Campbell
John Carey
LeeAnn Celapino
Misha Collins
Nick Confrey
Lev Copelan
Amber Cullen
Sean Daily
Tempris Daniels
Doc Films
Brittany Eads
Kathleen Feeney
Dave Franklin
Sam Friedman
Gabi Garcia
Elena Gdula
Chris George
Sarah Grannis
Tyler Groshong
David Hall
Elizabeth Harrison
Lillian Hermes
Grace James
Justin Kasper
Stephen Marrone
Drew Melman-Rogers
Danielle McConnell
Fred Niell
Arianne Nguyen
Helena Perez-Stark
Chris Plotner
Gayathri Rao

Tomi Rossini
Leila Sales
Tahoe Schrader
Cat Scharon
Audrey Scott
Robert Shepard
Emma Simpson
Jason Smith
Isaiah Terry
Anneke Thorne
To & Through Project
Snitchcock Captaincy
UChicago Center for Leadership & Involvement
UChicago's Urban Education Institute
Ben Umas
Danny Vesecky
Buffy Wajvoda
Naomi Wilfred

Advisory Label

Is this exhibit for me?

This exhibit, like Scav itself, might not be for everyone. Echoing Scav's general warning:

“Please be aware that a few Items will probably include strong language or reference things that are NSFW [not safe for work]. Some Items will be about topics like alcohol or sexy art, and some will be about building things that could be dangerous. So we suggest you talk with a trusted adult about what Items make sense for you.”