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Accessible, Sustainable Outreach: New Priorities for an Online Orientation Program

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Abstract: When paradigm-shifting events like the COVID-19 pandemic disrupt planning, as usual, libraries must rethink how they conduct traditional marketing and outreach activities like new student orientations. At Trinity University's Coates Library, the traditional in-person orientation shifted to an asynchronous, online format. This article will detail how this change led to the development of new and reusable digital content for sustainable teaching and outreach, prioritized accessibility, and offered an alternative means of program assessment. Further, these changes provided an opportunity to reexamine some of the library's previous goals and methods for first-year student outreach.

Keywords: New student orientation, COVID-19, accessibility, asynchronous, virtual outreach

New student orientation programs in academic libraries serve multiple purposes. Some are heavily instructional. Others focus more on library marketing and outreach. Many offer creative and professional opportunities for library staff or opportunities to collaborate across campus. While orientation programming is driven by organizational goals and desired student outcomes, it is also influenced by past approaches and current library and campus culture. As a result, library orientations not only reflect how the

program designers want students to experience the library, they also reflect how the library sees itself.

When paradigm-shifting events like the COVID-19 pandemic disrupt planning, as usual, libraries must rethink how they conduct traditional marketing and outreach activities like new student orientations. At Trinity University's Coates Library, incoming first-year students are required to attend an in-person orientation at the library. Amid uncertainties about the school's reopening plans for Fall 2020, and the ultimate decision by the university to pursue a hybrid model with some students attending virtually, the library orientation planning team shifted to an asynchronous, online format. This article will detail how this change led to the development of new and reusable digital content for sustainable teaching and outreach, prioritized accessibility, and offered an alternative means of program assessment. Further, these changes provided an opportunity to reexamine some of the library's previous goals and methods for first-year student outreach.

Literature Review

New student orientation programming has become a common form of marketing and outreach at academic libraries, as is reflected by a growing number of case studies in the literature. Academic libraries view orientation events as a way to "raise the profile of the library...in the minds of incoming undergraduate students" (Mills & Mitchell, 2009, 4). Rhoades and Hartsell (2008) point to new student orientation programs as an opportunity to proactively market the library's resources and services to students before classes have even begun.

Increasingly, libraries have focused on using orientation programming to make a positive impression on students, rather than offering extensive information literacy instruction. Themed orientation events inspired by luaus (Cahoy & Bichel, 2004), music festivals (Kelly, 2018), games (Miller & Cooper, 2014), escape rooms (Ruffin & Miranda, 2018), and reality television programs (Boss et al., 2015) have proven to be successful outreach programs for libraries to market their services to incoming students. Other libraries have emphasized personal introductions to librarians to alleviate library anxiety (Muszkiewicz, 2017). At Trinity University, past librarians partnered with residential life

student staff to help new students feel comfortable in the library (Donald, 2008).

While many case studies have been published sharing different approaches to in-person library orientation programs, few have examined virtual library orientation programming for incoming college students specifically through an outreach lens. Orientation videos have been effective for some libraries struggling to reach distance learners (Townsend, 2018). Ingalls (2015) points to brief instructional videos as an effective “stepping stone” to overcome library anxiety while acknowledging the drawback that online orientation materials do not provide personal interactions with librarians or the library’s physical space. Some libraries have found success integrating library orientation programs into their university’s learning management systems (Schrecker, 2017; Grant & Finkle, 2014). Farrell et al. (2011) noted that their online library orientation program provided increased flexibility for distance learning students.

With online programming comes unique challenges regarding the user experience and accessibility. The term “web accessibility” covers a broad range of issues, including limitations due to disabilities and situational barriers (such as internet bandwidth and device type). Kurt (2017) underscores both the crucial importance of accessible web content in higher education and the many ways in which university websites and resources remain inaccessible to individuals with a range of disabilities. Spina’s research (2019) explores the shortcomings of academic library websites, showing that few fully met the standards set by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) in their Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. Other scholars have applied WCAG and universal design standards to specific online library services; Stitz and Bluendell (2018) found extensive shortcomings in the popular LibGuide services, often used for information literacy programming. While little research has addressed web accessibility in a library orientation context, Sanchez-Rodriguez and LoGiudice (2019) recommend customizable orientation services that encourage user feedback to foster further accessibility.

Context for Change

Planning in the spring of 2020 for any future event was marked by uncertainty and anxiety. Trinity University—a small, private, residential liberal arts university in San Antonio, Texas with an enrollment of 2,400 students—made the decision to continue offering in-person classes for Fall 2020, alongside hybrid and exclusively online options. While first-year students were prioritized for on-campus learning, some opted to enroll exclusively in remote classes, and the orientation events for all first-years would be mostly virtual. Anticipating this outcome, the library orientation planning team elected to shift from an in-person event to an all-virtual option. While the pandemic was certainly the driver of this change, it was not the only factor. The library’s instruction team had also been working over the year to develop a suite of digital, reusable learning objects for a variety of instructional needs. Still, the shift to a fully virtual orientation model was mainly driven by health and safety concerns arising from the COVID-19 pandemic for students and staff alike.

Publicity strategies to encourage orientation attendance were also impacted. Though the library orientation had long been designated a “required” new student orientation activity on the comprehensive campus orientation schedule, outreach and marketing efforts were still necessary to encourage attendance. Close collaboration with campus orientation organizers afforded opportunities for outreach through mailings, printed schedules, and email communication. These continued, as did library-led outreach strategies, such as reminder emails to all first-year students from the First Year Experience (FYE) Librarian. However, many more personalized forms of outreach relied on in-person efforts and the convenience of a small, residential campus. For instance, first-year students’ course registration conveniently occurred in the library, so librarians were able to remind students about orientation while they were in the building. Signage and orientation-related decorations also drew attention to the event. Since the reach of in-person publicity strategies and staff capacity for implementation was limited for Fall 2020, the orientation planning team opted to focus on marketing via the official campus orientation portal, the library’s social media accounts, and emails from the FYE Librarian directly to new students.

While the FYE Librarian led the library orientation planning, the opportunity to serve on the library’s planning team was open to all library staff. Membership varied slightly year to year, and as a result the orientation

events' look, feel, and features did as well. However, an overarching goal remained constant: to provide students with a warm welcome to the library and a positive feeling about the people, space, and resources available. It also made sense to frame orientation as an outreach effort since the library had many other avenues for more focused information literacy instruction, especially to first-year students. In addition to a strong information literacy presence across the curriculum and first-year experience courses, new students also completed a short research assignment as part of the university's summer common reading program, "Reading TUgether." Facilitated by the FYE Librarian using the university's course management system, the assignment asked students to use library databases to research a topic of interest related to the common reading book, then write and post a short reflective reading response. With the knowledge that new students were introduced to library resources through these and other avenues, the in-person orientation focused more on the library as a welcoming space and library staff as friendly and helpful people.

Setting Goals

Given 2020's public health reality, the decision to shift to a virtual orientation was the easy part. But how could such an orientation communicate the value of the library as a place? What about the use of the orientation as a time to initiate relationships and lay the groundwork for deeper connections between students and library staff? These questions mirror the challenges faced by many universities. In thinking through these challenges, the team agreed on the following goals:

Minimize information overload. Overwhelming students with too much information would not create a sense of comfort with the library. To this end, the team decided to avoid much discussion or instruction of how the library "typically" operated. Instead, they prioritized providing information about how the library was operating for Fall 2020.

Foster connection and accessibility. Whereas "connection" at an in-person event often takes place via real-time conversation and interaction, an asynchronous virtual orientation requires an alternative approach. The planning team decided to take a step back and first focus on access. In a digital environment as in a physical one, accessibility and an inclusive vision are the

precursors of connection. A virtual orientation program posed different challenges for accessibility than one in the library's physical space; students may be completing the activities with hardware and bandwidth limitations, as well as neurodiversities or physical disabilities that require the use of screen readers or other assistance. Students may need to access the content differently based on a greater variety of living situations, with some on-campus and some learning remotely all around the world. Pursuing accessibility became a key feature of virtual programming and the primary way to welcome everyone's participation in an online environment.

Prioritize sustainability. The planning team recognized that library staff, as well as incoming students, were stressed by the conditions of the pandemic in a variety of ways. Short, stand-alone orientation modules could be used again and potentially ease future workloads. Creating reusable pages prioritized sustainability and caring for each other at a time when library staff were under unusual demands at work and home.

New Approach, New Tools

The three goals outlined above drove the planning and creative process for the library's first virtual orientation. Even so, starting from scratch with new tools, challenges, and opportunities required an initial period of experimentation. The team discussed and trialed several options over a few weeks, including lighter game and story-oriented themes, similar to the approaches described in earlier case studies. However, as the summer wore on, the team questioned this approach. The worsening pandemic, a summer of particularly heightened racial unrest and injustice, and the uncertainty of fall plans led the team to wonder what would "feel" right for students in such unprecedented times. A more straightforward and streamlined approach in the form of a set of asynchronous learning modules housed on a single platform would be adaptable to any reopening scenario. The activities could be completed by students on-campus, remote, or a mix of both.

As the Coates Library homepage is powered by WordPress, the themes and styling of that site could be replicated on the orientation website. This produced a cohesive brand experience for the incoming students from their very first interaction with the library. Content on a WordPress site is easy to edit and update, which was essential when library access policies were

changing on a day-to-day basis. The team initially considered using LibGuides, a platform that all were familiar with, using to create asynchronous guides to library resources. However, WordPress allowed a greater amount of design flexibility, while producing a fully responsive site and a more consistent visual connection to the library's website.

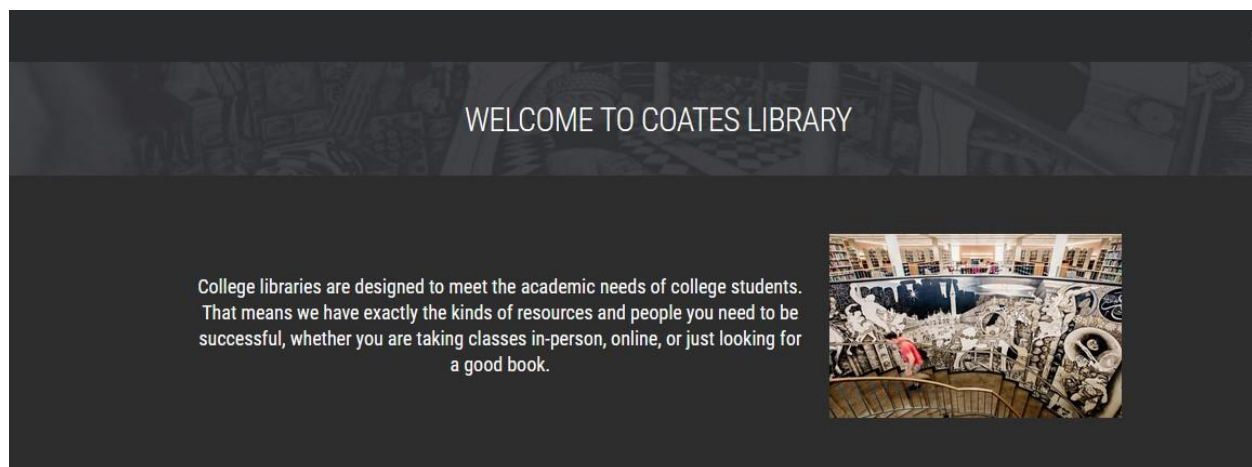
Some sections of the orientation website used ThingLink, an online tool for creating interactive annotations on web images (<https://www.thinglink.com>). Although free accounts are available for educators, the new student orientation team opted to purchase a premium account. The premium account included a higher number of pageviews allowed and removed the ThingLink watermark from embedded images, among other features. Team members created annotated images in ThingLink, which were then embedded in the WordPress site using basic HTML. Although the annotated images in both modules were designed to be viewed on a desktop browser, ThingLink images and annotations are mobile-friendly. ThingLink is also compatible with accessibility software like Immersive Reader. While the same information could have been conveyed using annotated screenshots created in any desktop publishing software, the interactive buttons created in ThingLink provided a sleek and professional experience for the new students. They also minimize the amount of information displayed by putting students in control of whether they click on the icons for additional content, or not.

A Modular, Asynchronous, Online Orientation Website

The orientation website included a short welcome statement at the top, with instructions for navigating the orientation content below [Figure 1]. The content was divided into five modules, or pages, arranged in a grid, with each module designed to take three to five minutes at most to explore. Arrows at the bottom of the pages encouraged students to move from one module to the next, but since each module was self-contained, students could also explore in their way. Most of the modules focused on library services that would be used by both in-person and remote students. They also emphasized information that the incoming students had asked about as a part of their summer research assignment. In this way, the orientation combined information the planning team deemed essential alongside answers to users' questions.

Finding Library Resources. In-person events had placed a high priority on orienting students to the library building. Since not all first-year students would be on-campus, the planning team focused instead on providing an overview of the library website, highlighting essential online service and access points. Using ThingLink, the interactive annotations drew students' attention to the most important features of the library homepage, such as the catalog and database search bars, librarian contact information, the interlibrary loan page, citation guides, and current library hours [Figure 2].

Figure 1. *Welcome to Coates Library Orientation Website*



Click through the pages below. Each page should take 3-5 minutes to explore. At the end of this virtual tour take a short quiz to be entered to win a GrubHub gift card.






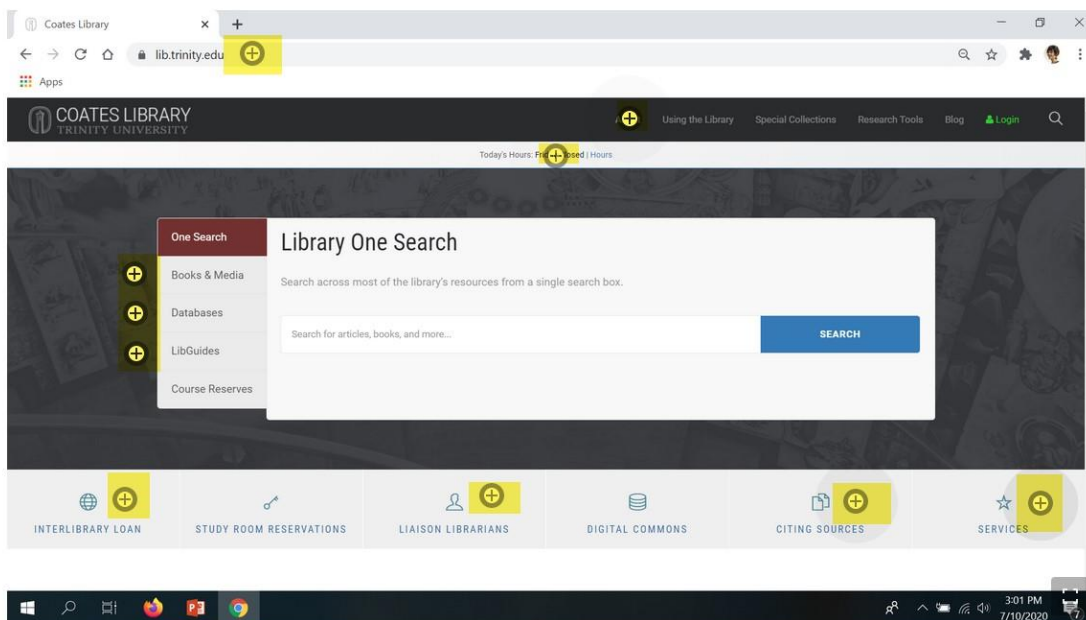
 FINDING LIBRARY RESOURCES We'll show you how to use the library website to find the resources you need.	 THE LIBRARY CATALOG You've found something interesting in the library catalog...now what?	 FAQs You asked, we answered: library FAQs.
 USING THE LIBRARY ON-CAMPUS What you need to know to use the library building on campus this fall.	 USING THE LIBRARY REMOTELY What you need to know to use library resources remotely this fall.	 ENTER TO WIN Did you finish exploring our site? Enter here for your chance to win a GrubHub gift card. (Open to incoming first-years only).

Figure 2. *Interactive Annotations of the Library Homepage*

Whether you're on or off-campus, the library website is the best place to gain access to databases, books, and more, plus get research help.

Click on the + symbols in the picture below to learn more about our website features. This tutorial works best on a desktop, but can be viewed on a mobile device.



The Library Catalog. The planning team wanted students to see their interests reflected in library collections. This catalog module showcased a

diverse selection of books, with a prompt for students to choose one and explore further if they wished. For each book, a screenshot of the title's catalog entry was annotated to help orient students to the library catalog, explaining features such as subject headings and call numbers. While the primary goal was to encourage students to simply connect their interests to library materials, these ThingLink annotations also offered interested students the option to learn more about navigating library collections.

Using the Library Remotely. While much of the orientation content focused on online resources, the “remote use” page highlighted three main service points: where to find librarian contact information, how to access ebooks and other electronic resources, and additional instructions for off-campus resource access. Recognizing that students would likely interact with some modules and not others, the planning team used the modular approach to reiterate key services in different ways and formats.

Library FAQs. As part of the Reading TUgether assignment, incoming students had reported that they wanted to better understand the difference between high school and college research, keep from feeling overwhelmed while doing research, and find out how to access library databases. Library staff had casual conversations on these topics via the Zoom conferencing app, which were recorded and then edited for length. Videos were then uploaded to YouTube and embedded in the WordPress site. Not only did these videos answer some of the incoming students' most pressing questions, but they also portrayed a sense that the library's staff are helpful and approachable.

Using the Library on Campus. Only one, text-based module was devoted to information solely about using the library in-person; it contained frequently updated information about accessing the building, safety precautions, and changes to available services. This module also linked to the library's social media channels, encouraging students to follow for up-to-the-minute information [Figure 3]. These modules were complimented by one more page, a short Google form that reinforced the most essential information about the library from the orientation content and included an assessment of student comfort using library resources. Students were incentivized to complete the assessment with an entry into a raffle to win GrubHub gift certificates.

Assessment Results

There are many potential forms of assessment for library outreach efforts, and past orientations had included a variety, from qualitative online surveys to 2-3 word whiteboard responses to headcounts and in-person observation. In 2020, the strain of the pandemic on students and university staff alike limited assessment options. Students were already being surveyed more than usual about their needs and preferences in the shift to hybrid learning. University-wide orientation plans were shifting weekly as the pandemic evolved over the summer. Given the goals and format of this year's orientation alongside the constraints of the time, the team focused on three types of assessment: web analytics, one user-focused survey question, and self-reflection.

Figure 3. *Text-Based Module Focused on Using the Library In-Person*

WELCOME TO COATES LIBRARY: USING THE LIBRARY THIS FALL

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed so much about how we're able to meet the needs of Trinity's faculty, staff, and students. We hope that we can return to our traditional service model much sooner than later, but for now, here are the basics that you'll need to know:

Use of the library's spaces: The library can be entered only by using your Tiger Card. Use of all our interior spaces will follow the university's requirements for social distancing and hygiene, and compliance with these guidelines will be enforced. Signage will indicate traffic flow through the building as well as seating limitations and areas that are off-limits. There are spaces reserved around the building for attending virtual classes, as well.

Access hours: Most days the library is open from 8:00am to 10:00pm. The library's website always has an up-to-date calendar of operational hours: <https://lib.trinity.edu/hours/>. This page includes hours for the Tiger Learning Commons (including the Writing Center), ITS, Ricoh Print Center, and Starbucks.



Getting your hands on stuff: We're here to connect you with the materials you need! You can look up physical holdings like books and DVDs in our [classic catalog](#) and check them out at the circulation desk. If you need something we don't own, we can still probably get it for you through our [interlibrary loan service](#). Heads up: for everyone's safety, materials will be quarantined for 72 hours after they are returned to the library.

Getting research help: You can get quick assistance at the access services desk by the main entrance. For more involved help, it's best to reach out to the liaison librarian who covers the relevant academic discipline and make an appointment with him or her. You can find a [list of these librarians here](#).

For more information, you can always [visit our website](#), email us at asklib@trinity.edu, or call us at 210-999-8127.

And don't forget to follow [@coateslibrary](#) on Twitter for up-to-the-minute information about hours, services, and more!

Using web analytics for assessment has many benefits. Advantages include comprehensive data about the number of pageviews overall and on specific pages, the movement of users from one page to another, and length of time spent on a page. That said, web analytics does not tell us why users engage with specific content or what they thought about it. Despite these drawbacks, the library planning team appreciated the ability to use web analytics to better understand which modules were viewed the most (as measured by page views) and when and how users interacted with a virtual orientation platform (date viewed, time on page, behavior flow).

For a first-year class of 640 students, the orientation website received over 1,000 pageviews from August 1st to August 18th. Of the 385 page views for

the orientation landing page, 264 were unique pageviews. The pageview day index indicates that students took advantage of the asynchronous orientation style to complete their orientation at their convenience. While over 100 views occurred on August 3rd, the day that the campus new student orientation organizers pushed out information about the library's orientation and other campus events via email newsletter, there were also over 200 pageviews on August 7th and over 100 again on August 8th [Figure 4]. Filtering the library website's Google analytics data to focus only on the new student orientation pages also indicates whether users viewed the pages via mobile or desktop. Of the 218 unique user IDs viewing NSO web content, 66 were on mobile devices (28.95%). This data shows that the website succeeded in providing "anytime access" for new students in a variety of learning environments.

The committee was also encouraged by the behavior flow from one page to the next. Since the site was built with modules, there were several pages of content available. How would students respond? Of the 264 unique sessions that started on the landing page, 134 continued to another page on the site. The "behavior flow" chart below shows how long many users stayed on through multiple pages in a single session. Seventy-five sessions, or 28% of the initial unique page view sessions, were still on the site after viewing more than five pages of content. Perhaps most encouraging were time-on-page statistics, with an average time of 1 minute, 19 seconds per page [Figure 5].

Figure 4. *Library Pageview Statistics by Date*

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Day Index	Pageviews
8/1/20	14
8/2/20	9
8/3/20	135
8/4/20	47
8/5/20	64
8/6/20	35
8/7/20	259
8/8/20	117
8/9/20	79
8/10/20	41
8/11/20	67
8/12/20	36
8/13/20	20
8/14/20	35
8/15/20	30
8/16/20	16
8/17/20	33
8/18/20	4

□

Figure 5. Library Website Time-on-Page Statistics



ThingLink and YouTube statistics also provided information about user interactions. ThingLink statistics were in line with overall website statistics; as compared to the 264 unique sessions on the orientation website, the annotated library website image, which featured 10 ThingLink pop-ups with explanatory text and additional information, had 235 views. The seven library catalog record pages had between 16–40 views for 175 total views of catalog record pages. This was still more engagement than the videos, which received the least attention. The three videos had a combined total of 73 views; the most popular video (26 views) was “High School vs. College Research,” with 26 views. While the average viewing time for each video was shorter than the length of each video, it was still over three minutes of watching.

The planning team was surprised to see that the reach of a virtual orientation was very similar to past in-person events. Given the timing of the pageviews on days of other new student orientation activities and the timing of the email announcement to new students advertising the orientation, it is likely that a large number of the page views were from new students. Attendance at library orientation events in recent years was typically between 300–400 students; the total number of unique sessions on the orientation website was 264, of a possible 640 new students. Also similar to in-person events, there was a smaller number that not only attended but engaged deeply in the orientation. As noted above, 75 of the unique sessions remained on the site through at least five pages of content.

By the end of the orientation period, 76 responses to the survey were received, representing approximately 12% of the first-year cohort. 69 of the students (91.8%) responded that they felt more comfortable (giving answers of a 4 or 5 on the Likert scale) using the library's resources after completing the online orientation, while six reported no change in their comfort level. While assessing comfort before and after going through the orientation website would provide a clearer sense of whether the website itself increased student comfort with the library, such an approach was difficult to reconcile with an asynchronous modality, where students were encouraged to come and go from the site as needed. Interestingly, the number of surveys completed closely matches the number of highly engaged users (who viewed several pages of content). It is possible that this small cohort, who viewed more modules, felt more comfortable with the library's resources than those who only viewed one or two pages and did not complete the survey. However, that is not known for sure and as such is a limitation of the assessment methods chosen.

Lessons Learned

The ultimate goal of assessment is an improvement, and to this end, self-reflection is an essential form of outreach assessment (Farrell and Mastel, 2016). Reviewing big-picture goals and identifying successes and opportunities for improvement complements web analytics and user surveys. Self-reflection and conversation among the planning team were especially important after making such radical changes to the orientation format. Of the three major goals—minimize information overload, foster connection, and accessibility, prioritize sustainability—some were more successful than others.

As information professionals, librarians are well-aware of the phenomenon of information overload but struggle to balance it with the impulse to share knowledge and help patrons. What seems like a reasonable amount of information to someone deeply familiar with the library may still be overwhelming to a new student. In this case, it is difficult to know whether students found the amount of content on the orientation website overwhelming or not. While some modules, such as Library FAQs videos, did exceed the intended time-on-page of 3-5 minutes, it's interesting to note that students who did view those videos did so for roughly the intended amount of time. In addition, it may be that students made use of the modular approach

exactly as it was designed to work—by picking and choosing the content they wanted to explore, even if that did not mean looking at all the modules. In reflecting on this, the planning team recognized that building the site modularly shifted the focus away from conceptualizing the site as a whole. Building in a longer period of feedback and discussion between the creation of the online modules and their implementation might have allowed for more attention to the total amount of information on the website. At the same time, the website analytics also illustrate that students make their own choices to manage information overload; many more viewed just one or two pages of the site, not every page. This is important for librarians to keep in mind in designing future website-based orientations.

The shift to an online format, and the early move away from a game or story-based framework, also influenced the type of information on the orientation website. Most of the content is explanatory and offers one-way communication from the planning team to viewers of the site. Past in-person opportunities to engage students by asking questions or chat informally were missed, especially when conceptualizing orientation as an outreach event. Outreach involves active listening as well as sharing information and advertising opportunities. Hopefully, future iterations of the online orientation will find opportunities to engage more actively with students.

The videos featuring librarians responding to student questions were the only points in the orientation where students could see librarians' faces and hear their voices. They were filmed as informal conversations, in part to reflect the fact that they provided answers to questions new students had asked over the summer. Given these motivations, the low video viewings were disappointing. At the same time, having the analytics data about average viewing time will help librarians create more effective videos in the future. Other efforts to foster a connection to the library, such as by asking students to choose a book of interest to them while exploring the catalog, were more successful than the videos by quantitative measures of engagement. However, a more qualitative assessment would be needed to understand the degree of connection students felt as a result.

While efforts to connect with new students were mixed and difficult to assess, the accessibility of the orientation website was an improvement over past in-person events in many ways. Before 2020, the library had never

considered offering an online version of their orientation program. As a part of a residential university that does not typically offer online or hybrid undergraduate courses, emphasizing the “library as space” made sense as the main focus of an orientation event. Unfortunately, not enough consideration had been given in the past to the accessibility issues posed by an in-person orientation: students were expected to navigate between activities spread across three different floors of the building, within the time constraints of a packed orientation schedule. Post-pandemic orientations may return to marketing the “library as place” once again. However, this time it will be with a more critical evaluation of physical accessibility.

In contrast, the online orientation program was much more accessible to students of all abilities, though it did assume a functional internet connection. The website used a responsive design that allowed it to be viewed from a computer or mobile device. Videos were captioned and all images had alt texts inputted to assist students with visual impairments. There were no time requirements put in place, allowing students to stop and resume the orientation as needed. The emphasis on electronic resources meant that the focus was on resources that could be used by all students, including those who cannot physically access all the library’s resources.

Having the opportunity to build a new orientation program from scratch provided the library team with insight into the importance of keeping accessibility issues in the forefront when designing future outreach activities, whether virtual or in-person. Going forward, the orientation team intends to be more deliberate in designing an accessible online program: any future virtual orientations will be designed to more closely align with the W3C’s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 (<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21>). In addition, collaboration with the university’s office of student accessibility services will be another important step in understanding and welcoming the needs and experiences of a diverse range of students.

In evaluating sustainability from a staff perspective, the new orientation was an improvement. Previous in-person orientations had become two-day, all-hands-on-deck events, with the majority of the library’s employees required to help staff tables and activities. The online orientation program shifted the workload. Instead of being broadly dispersed across the library, volunteer members of the orientation team created most of the content, minus

the contributions of the librarians who appeared in the videos and the Digital Technologies Librarian's technical support. While some library staff had enjoyed working past new student orientation events and meeting new students, others welcomed the shift to virtual, particularly those who preferred not to work in a public-facing role or were facing unusual demands on their time due to the pandemic. The success of the program showed that, at a time when many were struggling to cope with remote work and dependent care, it was still possible to put on a successful outreach program with fewer library employees involved.

While the activities and handouts created for past in-person orientations were purposefully designed to be single-use, the online, asynchronous format offered the chance to develop reusable content. Fortunately, there were several opportunities for re-use almost immediately. The ThingLink annotated website module was quickly turned around and modified for use in new faculty orientation, which occurred the week after the new student orientation. The Q&A videos were shared via library social media, providing another channel for engaging with orientation content. The library's access services staff expressed interest in using the ThingLink-annotated library catalog pages for student worker training.

Piloting a new approach to new student orientation just before an intensive instruction period also allowed librarians to test-drive new technology. For instance, ThingLink proved to be an effective way to annotate screen captures for asynchronous delivery and was used in subsequent LibGuides and tutorials. As librarians thought about other means of presenting asynchronous materials, particularly videos, the usage statistics from the orientation videos provided helpful data about the length of time students engaged with the materials. Thus while reusability was a valuable goal, the chance to learn and practice new skills in a very different environment emerged as another important consideration. As Booth (2009, p.102) writes about the use of emerging technologies in libraries, "in order to create effective library technologies it is imperative that librarians better understand the communities we serve in order to inform an ongoing cycle of innovation. Active experimentation must be involved in this process, which requires the acceptance of risk, and organizational cultures that enable iterative approaches to service development."

Changing the library's orientation program provided an opportunity to re-think connections to other library goals and university initiatives. As Farrell and Mastel (2016) note in their discussion of library outreach assessment strategies, outreach goals should be tied to institutional goals. In this case, more intentionally linking elements of new student library orientation, the research assignment component of the university's common reading program for incoming students, and course-integrated First Year Experience information literacy instruction may offer additional ways to build connections to first-year students and scaffold learning and outreach. To aid in this effort, next year's library assessment plan for the year brings the summer reading program and orientation effort into one objective, tied to the university's current Quality Enhancement Plan focused on first-year students.

Finally, sustainability can also be evaluated from a marketing perspective. In this case, as in the past, the majority of the planning team's effort and energy went into designing and building the new orientation website, which is itself a form of library outreach and marketing. However, while the team coordinated with new student orientation planners across campus to market the site and to reach out directly to new students via email, more could be done to draw attention to the orientation content. If the team can reuse content from the site in future years, it may free up time and energy to engage in additional marketing and outreach efforts.

Conclusion

Making a shift from physical to virtual helped the planning team realize that the goals set for a virtual program—minimizing information overload, fostering connectivity and accessibility, and prioritizing sustainability—should be goals of every library orientation program, regardless of format. Orientation programming should be accessible to all students, whether in the virtual or physical environment. Finding sustainable solutions to make the best use of staff time and energy, as well as the library's financial resources, should remain a priority.

Reimagining the library's new student orientation provided an opportunity to reprioritize. There is always more information to share than can be learned or consumed in a short orientation timeframe, in-person or online. Students are often overwhelmed by other campus orientation events

when they encounter the library component. For this reason, an asynchronous virtual program may have advantages for students, who can choose when and how long to engage. Librarians can then use analytics and assessments to make more informed choices about how to engage students via web content.

During these unprecedented times, the planning team was determined to minimize demands on staff time and energy. Perhaps there are opportunities to maintain this perspective going forward as well. While dependent care issues, remote work challenges, and pandemic anxiety are all obvious burdens on staff time and energy, less apparent are the day-to-day challenges many may be facing in “normal” times. Librarians often feel that they are being asked to do more with fewer resources; planning for an outreach activity like new student orientation is also an opportunity to develop materials that can be used in instruction and outreach throughout the year.

Lastly, the planning team must continue discussing, defining, and exploring assessment options for affective outcomes such as “welcome” and “connection,” whether in the physical library or a virtual orientation. Better defining these terms for a virtual realm is the next step in creating ways for students to experience the connective potential of the library online. Given how well the online orientation addressed previous accessibility concerns, it is likely that a virtual component will continue to be offered for students with disabilities even when in-person events are once again possible. Because accessibility is a component of being truly welcoming and inclusive, more must be done in future iterations of the virtual orientation to better align the online program with the WCAG 2.1 standards and to elicit feedback from a wide range of users, including those with disabilities. It should remain a primary objective for all library outreach programming—virtual or in-person—to be fully accessible to and inclusive of all students.

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