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# **The Reliability and Usability of ChatGPT for Library Metadata**

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## **Abstract**

At the end of November 2022, OpenAI launched ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence chatbot, and it quickly became a world-wide phenomenon. Instantly, it became a subject of controversy and concern as well as praise. Schoolteachers and professors grew worried as ChatGPT was used to create content for everything from high school assignments to scholarly works. Lazy writers aside, ChatGPT's output has often proved to be inaccurate to the point of complete fabrication. ChatGPT has also regularly misattributed the sources of its information, even giving the wrong author for large blocks of text.

With all ChatGPT's weaknesses, does it have any beneficial uses for catalogers and metadata professionals? As a field, information professions are regularly challenged to do more work, more accurately, in less time. Does ChatGPT offer any reliable, accurate services at this time to assist these professionals in completing their tasks?

This study seeks to evaluate the weaknesses and strengths of ChatGPT as it tries to perform three common cataloging/metadata tasks: 1) assigning classification numbers, 2) choosing Library of Congress subjects headings, and 3) harvesting keywords. Over the course of four months, it will ask ChatGPT a standardized list of questions on these topics. Then it will collate and evaluate ChatGPT's performance. In the end, this study will offer its findings as well as best practices for using ChatGPT in cataloging and metadata tasks.

# The Reliability and Usability of ChatGPT for Library Metadata

## Introduction

At the end of November 2022, OpenAI, an artificial intelligence research laboratory, released the product ChatGPT to the public. It quickly became the fastest growing app in the history of web applications (Gordon, 2023). It had over one million users in five days. Since then, the world has begun to see a revolution.

ChatGPT's origins began when a group of investors and computer scientists started OpenAI in 2015. Their goal was to create a generative artificial intelligence that could work in the background of other applications such as video games and websites. This became the series of "Generative pre-trained transformer" models, i.e., GPT-1, GPT-2, GPT-3, and GPT 4.

To explain, GPT software works like a human brain. Using the research of scholars like Geoffrey Hinton, the software would mimic a "neural network" (Metz, 2023). This type of neural-network-based software would draw on complex mathematics and statistics in order to mimic neurons in the human brain. Once this framework was in place, the software ingested enormous amounts of data and processed that data through pattern recognition. In essence, GPT was learning. Pattern recognition performance is better the more data that the system consumes; so, the creators of GPT fed this software a large amount of text both curated and from the Internet including Google, Google Scholar, and more (OpenAI, 2023). At this point, GPT could *generate* new text back to the user based on past patterns. One word at a time, GPT predicts the next word in a series based on these patterns until GPT finishes the task. This is an example of generative artificial intelligence. Since it uses a large amount of text, it is also called a large language model (LLM; *What is ChatGPT*, n.d.; Heaven, 2023; Cox & Tzoc, 2023).

When OpenAI released ChatGPT to the public in November 2022, it became the first way the public could access GPT software directly through a chat box. OpenAI had few expectations for their product. Jan Leike, the leader of OpenAI's alignment team, mentioned in an interview, "It's been overwhelming, honestly. We've been surprised, and we've been trying to catch up" (Heaven, 2023). However, since ChatGPT is so accessible and user-friendly, it has been used in diverse and creative ways. In academia, there are a broad range of uses for ChatGPT, from students plagiarizing assignments to science departments synthesizing large data sets.

ChatGPT has a remarkable ability to quickly process copious amounts of data and generate information from that data for its users. Unfortunately, its very strengths are its greatest weaknesses. For example, ChatGPT can quickly find the most common answer to a question, but if the information ChatGPT is accessing is wrong, then its answer will be wrong as well. It is only as smart as the humans entering information into the Internet. Also, many reliable sources are only available behind paywalls that ChatGPT cannot access. Despite these limitations, the creators of ChatGPT can create new parameters and upgrades to help it analyze and retrieve the most reliable sources of information even when a majority of the information available is inaccurate. In fact, ChatGPT has already had at least eight releases (*ChatGPT — Release Notes*, n.d.). But even then, there is a possibility for bias if the programmers create parameters in such a way.

Another common strength/weakness of ChatGPT is how its “brain” works through the process of pattern recognition. Alkaiissi and McFarlan explain ChatGPT is a “natural language generator.” Through the rules of language and pattern recognition, Chat GPT provides information one word after another into a response. In this way, ChatGPT can pull together many sources of information, but will sometimes create a pattern that does not exist i.e., it hallucinates (Alkaiissi & McFarlane, 2023). For example, ChatGPT will provide a reference for topics that looks completely logical with a notable author and publisher, but the title will not actually exist, and any links to that article may go to a different article. In contrast, on a different occasion, ChatGPT may provide a reference that is perfectly correct.

### **Thesis**

With this understanding of ChatGPT, can librarians utilize it to perform metadata tasks in their libraries? How can ChatGPT’s strengths assist catalogers and metadata librarians in their work? What are the pitfalls of using AI to complete metadata tasks, and can information professionals avoid these pitfalls? Over the course of the last four months, the author has asked ChatGPT a standardized list of questions on metadata topics and has collated snapshots of that data over time. Using this bank of information, this study evaluates the weaknesses and strengths of ChatGPT as it tries to perform three common cataloging/metadata tasks: 1) assigning classification numbers, 2) choosing Library of Congress subjects headings, and 3) suggesting keywords.

### **Classification**

In early March 2023, the author received an email from Clarke Iakovakis, Scholarly Services Librarian at Oklahoma State University, wondering how well ChatGPT did at assigning Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) numbers to a book about trade in ancient Rome (C. Iakovakis, personal communication, March 13, 2023). This was an interesting question with multiple aspects to consider. First, the quality of ChatGPT highly depends on the type of prompt the user asks. The process of asking for a useful, detailed prompt is called “prompt engineering.” In fact, the more details the user supplies the better the answer. Several professionals have begun to teach prompt engineering like Dave Birss and Steve Hargadon (Birss, 2023; Hargadon 2023). They encourage being polite to ChatGPT and to specify an audience, length, and context for a dependable answer. If the user does not exactly receive the answer they were seeking, they can modify that answer with a follow-up question. In this case, the colleague formed his prompt carefully and asked ChatGPT to give the information in the form of a chart with a labeled topic and descriptive rationale.

## Figure 1

### ChatGPT Prompt and Dewey Decimal Classification Table from March 13, 2023

CL provide three dewey decimal classification numbers down to the thousandths place for a book about trade in ancient rome? provide the results in a table with the headings: number, topic, rationale

Number	Topic	Rationale
937.06	Trade in ancient Rome - general	This number falls under the main class for history of ancient Rome, which is 937. It is further classified by adding a decimal point followed by a number to denote a specific aspect of the topic. 06 is used for trade and commerce.
382.09	Economic history of Rome	This number falls under the main class for commerce, communication, and transportation, which is 380. It is further classified by adding a decimal point followed by a number to denote a specific aspect of the topic. 09 is used for economic history.
330.937	Ancient Roman trade and commerce	This number falls under the main class for economics, which is 330. It is further classified by adding a decimal point followed by a number to denote a specific aspect of the topic. 937 is used for ancient Roman trade and commerce.

Therefore, the possible Dewey Decimal Classification numbers for a book about trade in ancient Rome are 937.06, 382.09, and 330.937.

At first glance, the answer by ChatGPT looks accurate and professional. The chart is easy to read, and while the rationale sounds convincing, it has errors that a professional cataloger would observe (see red circles). ChatGPT's first error is the line "06 is used for trade and commerce." The "06" in this context identifies a period of ancient Roman history, specifically the Roman Empire from 31 B.C.E. to 476 C.E. The second error happens in the topic heading for the Dewey number 382.09. The rationale is mostly correct, but WebDewey, the authoritative source for DDC numbers, would describe this topic closer to the "History of International commerce (Foreign trade)" (*WebDewey*, n.d.). The third row has a rationale that is almost correct. A more appropriate label for the topic of 330.937 would be the "economics of ancient Rome." The last issue in this response is when ChatGPT creates a conclusion that claims that these are *the possible* DDC numbers for a book about trade in ancient Rome. There could indeed be other possibilities. It was the prompt that asked for three examples.



On the positive side, none of these call numbers are completely wrong. A professional cataloger might use 937.06 or 330.937 depending on their collection. The author (without ChatGPT) would likely have chosen 937.06 because there are many items on the Roman Empire in that section of the library at her university. However, at a university with a larger classics collection, a different cataloger might have chosen the Dewey number, 381.0937. Using WebDewey, 381 is the Dewey number for trade, and the .093706 specifies ancient Rome during the time of the empire (*WebDewey*, n.d.). Unfortunately, ChatGPT makes its mistakes with such an authoritative voice that a novice might not question the response and accept it as accurate.

When a user recognizes that ChatGPT has made a mistake, there is a feedback system. See the blue circle in Figure 1. The user may click the thumbs up, or thumbs down and then provide additional feedback in a popup window. (For this study, the author did not use this feedback method with ChatGPT because she wanted to see how ChatGPT changed over time without her intervention.)

## Figure 2

### *ChatGPT Prompt and Dewey Decimal Classification Table from June 1, 2023*

Here are three Dewey Decimal Classification numbers down to the thousandths place for a book about trade in ancient Rome, along with their corresponding topics and rationale:

Number	Topic	Rationale
382.509	Trade in ancient Rome	The number 382 represents international commerce, and adding .509 further specifies Rome.
937.06	Economy of ancient Rome	The number 937 refers to ancient Rome, and adding .06 indicates the economic aspect.
930.2	Roman civilization: Commerce	The number 930 is for ancient history, and .2 denotes the specific topic of commerce.

Please note that while these numbers and topics provide a general direction, there might be variations in the Dewey Decimal Classification system depending on the specific classification scheme used by a library or organization.

The author used the same prompt again on June 1, 2023. See Figure 2. ChatGPT performed worse on this task than it did before. On the first row, “.509” does not specify Rome. The DDC number “382.5” is for import trade and “09” refers to the history of a topic. The second row makes the same mistake as it did in March. The third row does not even exist in the current Dewey Decimal System (*WebDewey*, n.d.).

There was one improvement. In the blue circle of Figure 2, ChatGPT creates a much better note describing its limits. This note does not indicate that ChatGPT might have difficulty assigning Dewey numbers, however, it does warn the user to evaluate its answer.

Users of ChatGPT can understand these weaknesses when they remember how both Dewey and ChatGPT work. WebDewey is a subscription-based resource. ChatGPT cannot directly access WebDewey and its content without permission. ChatGPT is trying to create DDC numbers based on what is widely available on the Internet. Often it cannot even access the information housed on library catalogs unless that catalog is integrated with a search engine. A programmer could train ChatGPT to create better DDC numbers, especially if ChatGPT had access to data about the Dewey Decimal System. ChatGPT also may have made mistakes because of its pattern recognition capabilities. It is possible ChatGPT chose these answers because they were either more numerous than other data points, or ChatGPT could not determine a pattern in the data that it had to create DDC numbers accurately.

### **Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)**

DDC numbers are behind a paywall. Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) are not. They are readily available online. And while one cannot use a search engine to find Library of Congress catalog records directly, anyone can find the Library of Congress catalog online and then search for individual records. There are no legal/monetary barriers to access. However, the author does not know if ChatGPT has access to these records and to what extent.

Last year, Charlene Chou and Tony Chu used BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers), a product similar GPT but created by Google, to assign LCSHs to metadata records in Project Gutenberg, an e-book collection. Their hope was to automate the subject indexing for this and other digital library collections that were missing subject information. The initial set up for using BERT was complex, and the average librarian would find it difficult to replicate. However, the project was successful, and BERT created usable LCSH for over 95% of the records they tested (Chou & Chu, 2022).

BERT was able to reliably choose LCSH. Could ChatGPT assign subject headings as well? In April 2023, the author expanded the study to include the analysis of ChatGPT's ability to choose Library of Congress Subject Headings. Maintaining the topic of trade in ancient Rome, the author chose the work *Trade-routes and commerce of the Roman Empire* by M. P. Charlesworth as a baseline for ChatGPT performance, and ChatGPT performed considerably better at this task than with DDC numbers.

Over decades, catalogers at the Library of Congress have created four records for different editions of the book mentioned above. The most complete record that they created was <https://lccn.loc.gov/79118637>. It has three LCSHs.

1. 651\_0 Rome -- Commerce -- History.
2. 650\_0 Commerce -- History -- To 500.
3. 651\_0 Rome -- Economic conditions -- 30 B.C.-476 A.D.

The three other Library of Congress records for this book had the LCSHs:

1. 651\_0 Rome -- Commerce -- History.

2. 650\_0 Commerce -- History.
3. 651\_0 Rome -- Economic conditions.

The author gave ChatGPT the prompt “Provide three possible Library of Congress subject headings for a book about trade in ancient Rome. Provide the results in a table with the headings: subject heading, rationale.” With this prompt, ChatGPT suggested almost the same LCSHs as the Library of Congress records.

**Figure 3.**

*ChatGPT Results for the Prompt “Provide three possible Library of Congress subject headings for a book about trade in ancient Rome. Provide the results in a table with the headings: subject heading, rationale.” (April 3, 2023)*

The screenshot shows a ChatGPT response in a table format. The table has two columns: 'Subject Heading' and 'Rationale'. There are three rows of data. Below the table is a feedback bar with the text 'Was this response better or worse?' and buttons for 'Better', 'Worse', 'Same', and a close button 'X'. There are also thumbs up and thumbs down icons in the top right corner of the response area.

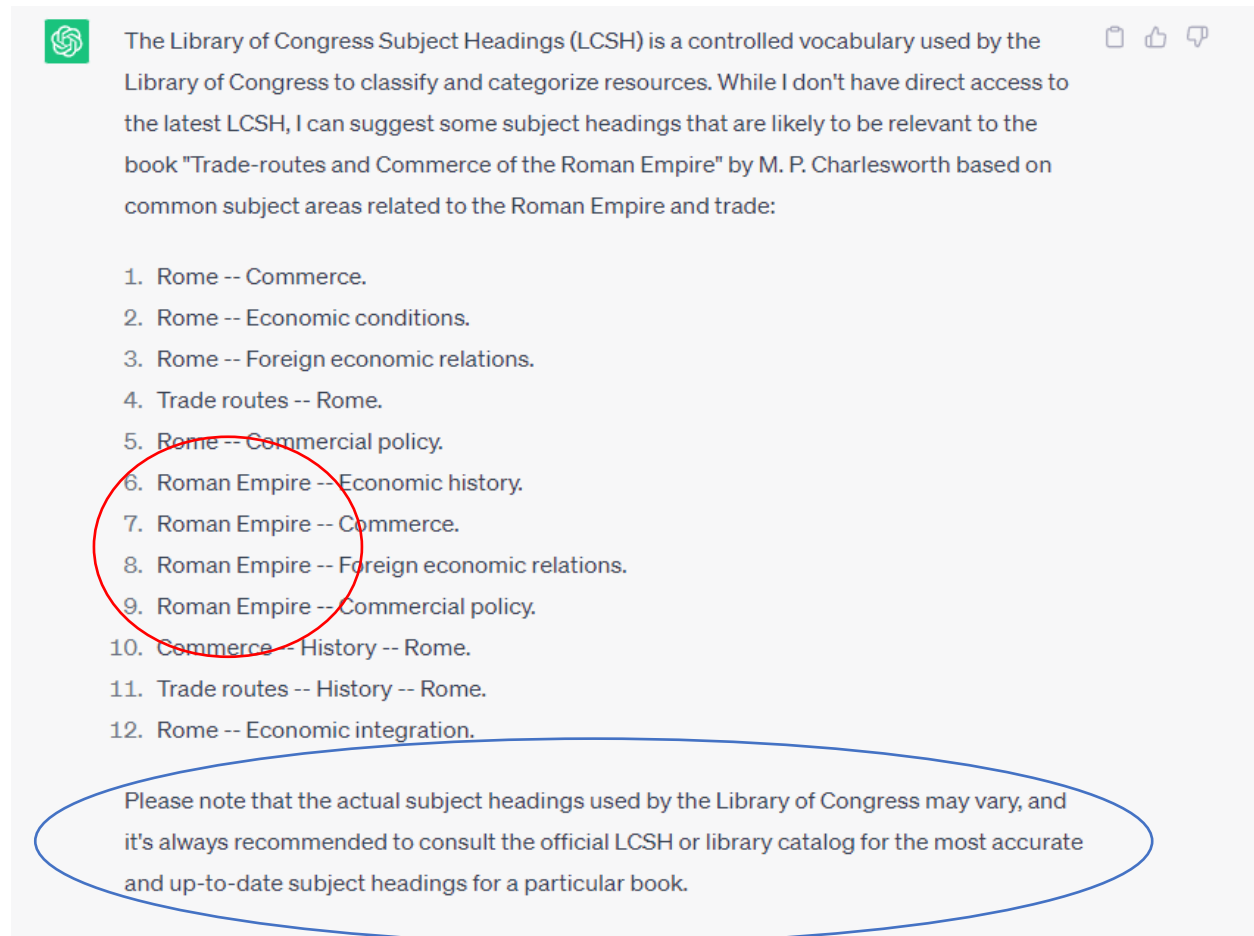
Subject Heading	Rationale
Rome -- Commerce -- History	This subject heading accurately describes the main focus of the book, which is trade and commerce in ancient Rome.
Rome -- Economic conditions	This subject heading covers broader economic conditions in ancient Rome, including trade and commerce, as well as other economic factors such as agriculture and taxation.
Rome -- Foreign economic relations	This subject heading is relevant if the book explores Rome's trade and economic relations with other ancient civilizations and empires. It focuses specifically on Rome's economic relations with other countries or regions, rather than on its internal economic conditions.

ChatGPT supplied two of the exact LCSHs as the group of three Library of Congress records, and it supplied an equally valid subject heading that Library of Congress did not include. In fact, since ChatGPT did not have more description in the prompt, it would not have been able to create more detailed LCSHs than it provided.

Later in June 2023, the author asked ChatGPT to complete a slightly different prompt, “Assign Library of Congress Subject Headings to Trade-routes and commerce of the Roman Empire by M. P. Charlesworth.” In this case, ChatGPT provided more options but not all of them were authorities maintained by the Library of Congress.

## Figure 4

*ChatGPT Response to the Prompt “Assign Library of Congress Subject Headings to Trade-routes and commerce of the Roman Empire by M. P. Charlesworth.” (June 1, 2023)*



The Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) is a controlled vocabulary used by the Library of Congress to classify and categorize resources. While I don't have direct access to the latest LCSH, I can suggest some subject headings that are likely to be relevant to the book "Trade-routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire" by M. P. Charlesworth based on common subject areas related to the Roman Empire and trade:

1. Rome -- Commerce.
2. Rome -- Economic conditions.
3. Rome -- Foreign economic relations.
4. Trade routes -- Rome.
5. Rome -- Commercial policy.
6. Roman Empire -- Economic history.
7. Roman Empire -- Commerce.
8. Roman Empire -- Foreign economic relations.
9. Roman Empire -- Commercial policy.
10. Commerce -- History -- Rome.
11. Trade routes -- History -- Rome.
12. Rome -- Economic integration.

Please note that the actual subject headings used by the Library of Congress may vary, and it's always recommended to consult the official LCSH or library catalog for the most accurate and up-to-date subject headings for a particular book.

In this case, the Roman Empire is not a valid LCSH. Rome is the correct geographical authority. The first three subject headings that ChatGPT provided are correct. The use of the subdivision “Commercial policy” in this situation (instead of work of political science) is unusual, but the subdivision is not technically incorrect. With the accuracy of these results, the author would be comfortable recommending a new employee try ChatGPT for possible LCSHs; however, she would want novices to double check ChatGPT’s responses to validate that they are a standard LCSH.

The June version added value to the April version by including an accurate disclaimer. These disclaimers have become more common in the last two months, and they make ChatGPT more transparent. It encourages users to check sources and evaluate ChatGPT’s answers.

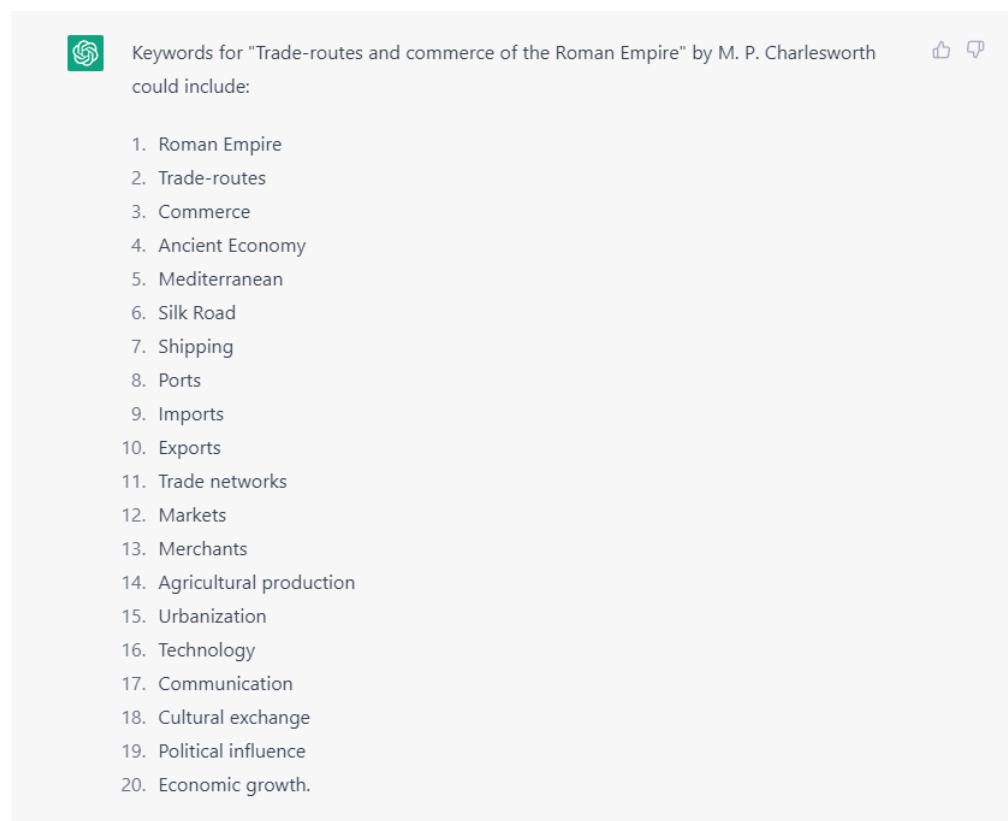
## Keywords

A keyword search is significantly different from a Library of Congress Subject Heading search. With LCSHs, professionals create a controlled term and then they assign them methodically to a metadata record such as a MARC record. In contrast, a keyword search is usually a full text search of the Internet, a database, or a website. The most successful keyword searches are those in which a user chooses keywords that match the same vocabulary that an information provider supplies. Sometimes, a user must try several synonyms to find the results that they want in a search. It is in the best interest of both users and providers to know the most common keywords for a topic. Since ChatGPT's strength is in the amount of data it has processed and its pattern recognition, ChatGPT should be an excellent source for determining useful keywords (*Keyword - Definition and Meaning*, n.d.).

The author prompted ChatGPT to provide a list of keywords in both April 2023 and June 2023 and gained the following feedback.

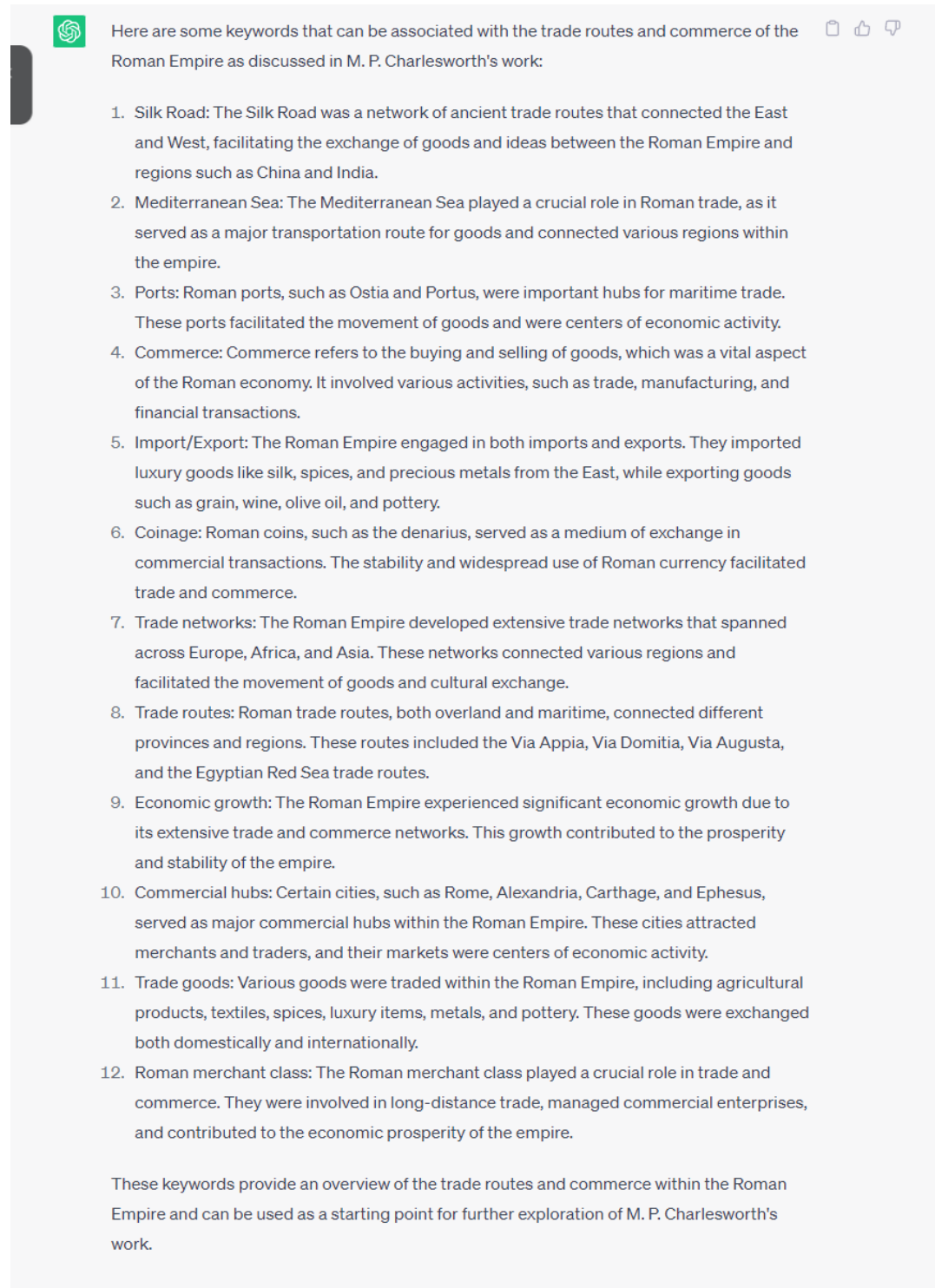
### Figure 5

*ChatGPT Response to the Prompt "Assign Keywords to Trade-routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire by M. P. Charlesworth." (April 7, 2023)*



## Figure 6

*ChatGPT Response to the Prompt “Assign Keyword to Trade-routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire by M. P. Charlesworth.” (June 1, 2023)*



Here are some keywords that can be associated with the trade routes and commerce of the Roman Empire as discussed in M. P. Charlesworth's work:

1. **Silk Road:** The Silk Road was a network of ancient trade routes that connected the East and West, facilitating the exchange of goods and ideas between the Roman Empire and regions such as China and India.
2. **Mediterranean Sea:** The Mediterranean Sea played a crucial role in Roman trade, as it served as a major transportation route for goods and connected various regions within the empire.
3. **Ports:** Roman ports, such as Ostia and Portus, were important hubs for maritime trade. These ports facilitated the movement of goods and were centers of economic activity.
4. **Commerce:** Commerce refers to the buying and selling of goods, which was a vital aspect of the Roman economy. It involved various activities, such as trade, manufacturing, and financial transactions.
5. **Import/Export:** The Roman Empire engaged in both imports and exports. They imported luxury goods like silk, spices, and precious metals from the East, while exporting goods such as grain, wine, olive oil, and pottery.
6. **Coinage:** Roman coins, such as the denarius, served as a medium of exchange in commercial transactions. The stability and widespread use of Roman currency facilitated trade and commerce.
7. **Trade networks:** The Roman Empire developed extensive trade networks that spanned across Europe, Africa, and Asia. These networks connected various regions and facilitated the movement of goods and cultural exchange.
8. **Trade routes:** Roman trade routes, both overland and maritime, connected different provinces and regions. These routes included the Via Appia, Via Domitia, Via Augusta, and the Egyptian Red Sea trade routes.
9. **Economic growth:** The Roman Empire experienced significant economic growth due to its extensive trade and commerce networks. This growth contributed to the prosperity and stability of the empire.
10. **Commercial hubs:** Certain cities, such as Rome, Alexandria, Carthage, and Ephesus, served as major commercial hubs within the Roman Empire. These cities attracted merchants and traders, and their markets were centers of economic activity.
11. **Trade goods:** Various goods were traded within the Roman Empire, including agricultural products, textiles, spices, luxury items, metals, and pottery. These goods were exchanged both domestically and internationally.
12. **Roman merchant class:** The Roman merchant class played a crucial role in trade and commerce. They were involved in long-distance trade, managed commercial enterprises, and contributed to the economic prosperity of the empire.

These keywords provide an overview of the trade routes and commerce within the Roman Empire and can be used as a starting point for further exploration of M. P. Charlesworth's work.

Both of ChatGPT's responses would be especially useful for a student or other novice beginning to research a topic. In these cases, there are no wrong or right answers. ChatGPT finds common keywords for a topic according to the specifications of the prompt, and an information provider and/or an information seeker can use the keywords for their project. In fact, if any of these keywords did not work well, a person could ask ChatGPT to find more keywords or synonyms to the original words that it chose.

However, June's response is much more detailed than April's, and it includes some context and a useful disclaimer in its response. The author would encourage the use of ChatGPT for choosing keywords. It is an excellent use of ChatGPT's strengths with little sign of weakness.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, in these examples ChatGPT's performance has become more transparent and more complete in just four short months. ChatGPT showed considerable development, and this study only used the version of ChatGPT available with free access. ChatGPT Plus was released in March, and its subscription begins at \$20 a month. ChatGPT Plus is vastly more sophisticated because it uses GPT-4 instead of GPT-3 (Rogers, n.d.). The creators of GPT-4 are touting it to be a true *artificial general intelligence*. In other words, its creators are hypothesizing that GPT-4 is acting more like humans and animals and that it has some form of intelligent agency (Kestenbaum, 2023; Bubeck et al., 2023). Nevertheless, ChatGPT will continue to improve and become more accurate, both the free version and the subscription version.

ChatGPT is a new resource. ChatGPT is an imperfect resource. But ChatGPT is a *learning* resource and is learning from its own mistakes. It has motivated creators who are striving to make it better. ChatGPT is taking feedback from its users and improving its responses. Finally, ChatGPT/ChatGPT Plus will harness bigger sets of data with each updated version, and it will be able to analyze and produce even better results.

At the current time, catalogers and metadata librarians need to be cautious using ChatGPT in their tasks, especially in tasks that require subscription access such as the Dewey Decimal Classification System. As librarians, it is important to evaluate our sources. However, the usefulness of ChatGPT is improving quickly, and it is already able to assist in choosing LCSH. It was also very helpful in selecting possible keywords for an Internet search. Going forward, classification, subject headings, and keywords are just the beginning. Future areas of exploration could include creating abstracts and summaries. Catalogers and metadata librarians are necessary for the production of reliable and usable metadata, but they now can work with ChatGPT to create timely, authoritative, reliable records with excellent discoverability.

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# **A Balancing Act in the Archives: Increasing Access to the Great Plains Black History Museum Collections**

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## **Abstract**

The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) Libraries' Archives and Special Collections is temporarily housing a portion of the Great Plains Black History Museum's (GPBHM) archival collection as a result of an ongoing community partnership. The GPBHM's stated mission is "...to preserve, educate, and exhibit the contributions and achievements of African Americans with an emphasis on the Great Plains region, as well as provide a space to learn, explore, reflect and remember our history" (<https://gpblackhistorymuseum.org/>). It was founded in 1975 and has since served as a rich resource for Black history in the Omaha community. UNO has a history of collaborating with the museum for co-sponsored panel discussions, history summer camps, and guidance on collection care. Building upon these joint efforts naturally led to piloting a partnership that involved the temporary transfer of archival collections to UNO for arrangement, description, and select digitization. At the time of transfer, the collection allowed no public access due to space limitations. As community members, UNO archivists wanted to help make these resources available to the wider community. UNO staff could reasonably offer their professional resources to contribute towards increased access to the GPBHM archival collection. The potential multiple pitfalls of community partnerships do require in-depth consideration though, some the authors were prepared for and others less so.

The ethical considerations of UNO staff forming a partnership that transferred records temporarily out of the community in which they were created were significant. While UNO archivists bring professional skills to the project, it was critical that they not approach it from a position of all-knowing power, but with a service mindset while incorporating significant input from the museum leadership. Communication between UNO and the GPBHM was an important piece in establishing the partnership. The MOU between both parties indicates exactly how UNO will assist the GPBHM in their efforts to increase access, while ultimately ensuring that the resources be as open as possible to the community. The authors learned that communication can be difficult when there is a single point of contact, made more difficult by a volunteer board populated by people who work full-time elsewhere. While the authors were prepared for these potential pitfalls, they were less so ready for the juggling act of balancing resources. Quite unexpectedly, the platform where digital collections were to be made accessible became a non-viable option only two years into the partnership. This coincided with uncertainties surrounding a permanent GPBHM location to house and provide access to the collection, which may not be settled for years. In addition, concerns over the annual library budget have contributed to discussions surrounding priorities in processing and digitization.

Despite these uncertainties, one of UNO's strategic priorities is community engagement. The authors are fortunate to have the support of both their unit Director and library Dean to pursue the work. The authors will continue to support increased access to the GPBHM archival collection by pursuing grants that will assist with conservation, further processing, and ongoing digitization. The ongoing work will build off the selection of materials originally chosen for its subject matter and relevance to UNO's Department of Black Studies. This paper will discuss building relationships with community partners, the ethics of partnerships that include relocating and hosting collections, complications with balancing resources, and handling the unknown. The authors will describe and reflect on UNO's partnership with the GBPHM with the goal of serving as one example of how positive community partnerships can benefit all parties involved.

# **A Balancing Act in the Archives: Increasing Access to the Great Plains Black History Museum Collections**

## **Introduction**

The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) Libraries' Archives and Special Collections (ASC) has an ongoing community partnership with the Great Plains Black History Museum (GPBHM), which is a rich exhibit-based resource for Black history in the Omaha community. The latest collaboration has involved the temporary transfer of a portion of their archival collections to UNO for arrangement, description, and select digitization. Though this kind of partnership has potential pitfalls related to ethics, access, communication, and resource prioritization, UNO archivists are hopeful about seeing this project completed. One of UNO's strategic priorities is community engagement, and the authors are fortunate to have the support of their library leadership. They continue to support increased access to the GPBHM archival collection by pursuing grants that will assist with conservation, further processing, and ongoing digitization. This paper will discuss building relationships with community partners, the ethics of partnerships that include relocating and hosting (but not owning) collections, complications with balancing resources, and handling the unknown. The authors will describe and reflect on UNO's partnership with the GBPHM with the goal of serving as one example of how positive community partnerships can benefit all parties involved.

## **Literature Review**

Informal discussion about shared stewardship, reciprocity, empathy, and ethics related to the role of institutions in community collecting has been occurring for years amongst the authors and their colleagues. Existing published literature clarifies and focuses the authors' ongoing discussion and provides alignment of thought with the professional discourse. Additionally, published literature has opened new lines of inquiry to consider.

One major theme frequently considered throughout the existing literature is the impact of community archives on people and their communities. Community archive users are documented as perceiving their records as haunted in the way that writing narratives about people and events that have been excluded from mainstream archival institutions is like writing ghost stories. Thus, community archives provide a space in which to summon ghosts, learn about past community members, and document invisible histories (Tai, Zavala, Gabiola, Brilmyer, Caswell, M., 2019).

One track related to this theme of the impact of community archives are records contributing to representational belonging of a community as a counterweight to symbolic annihilation of that community's history and culture. In part, community archives fill gaps in the historical record due to past bias and neglect and can help users recognize their own belonging in a community and draw meaning from that community's history and culture (Caswell, Cifor, Ramirez, 2016). Yet another related track considers reciprocal archival imaginaries, a new term proposed by the article. Imaginaries consider how a community is defined by people in and out of the community. So then, reciprocal archival imaginaries refer to the circular, entangled relationships and influences between community-based archives, their users, and their imaginaries. These in turn

influence decisions, policies, and procedures in the community archives (Brilmyer, Gabiola, Zavala, Caswell, 2019).

A much-discussed aspect of community and mainstream/institutional archives are the benefits and challenges facing such joint efforts. Both parties benefit in these types of partnerships, with community archives often gaining training, increasing their public visibility, and making strides toward sustainability. Institutional archives often receive the benefits of appealing to new user groups while increasing the diversity of the collections they interact with and stretching the roles of professionals participating in the partnership while growing their skills beyond those required for certifications and degrees. The major challenge facing these collaborations is the balance between trust and autonomy, which often involves communication and cooperation obstacles (Pool, 2020).

### **The Project**

The processing and digitization project was guided by a memorandum of understanding (an MOU) signed between UNO ASC and the GPBHM board in 2021. To start, the GPBHM executive director sent archivists the inventory and collection plan completed a couple years prior by a grant-funded temporary archivist at the GPBHM. This was essential because the authors needed to find material related to UNO's Department of Black Studies out of the over 200 document boxes that made up the GPBHM Archives. The authors and the ASC director identified boxes on the inventory that indicated the presence of papers related to UNO's Department of Black Studies. This was the starting point because the processing and digitization work soon to be completed by a student under the authors' supervision would be funded by a grant tied to the history of UNO's Department of Black Studies.

To retrieve these boxes, the authors visited the then-downtown branch of the Omaha Public Library where the GPBHM archival collection was temporarily housed. The authors knew that the boxes they pulled would likely hold additional topics beyond those related to the Department of Black Studies, but there was no time to separate the materials. As it was, the retrieval was made even more swiftly than planned because a strong windstorm was bearing down on Omaha, and the public library and university were set to close early for safety. The authors returned to ASC with eight document boxes for processing and digitization.

The student employee hired for this project used the inventory and collection plan, along with a processing plan developed with Schwartz, to arrange and describe all the Department of Black Studies material, as well as papers related to K-12 and higher education in Omaha that shared those six boxes. The student worked so efficiently that Schwartz and another archivist in the department arranged with the GPBHM executive director for a second pickup of boxes from the Omaha Public Library. They returned with sixteen more document boxes with material related to sports, the military, and more education. The student employee arranged and described those using the same processing plan previously developed.

When this work was completed, the student employee moved to digitization of the Black Studies records supervised by Guerra. As with the processing, the student worked efficiently and finished these records before moving on to digitize additional GPBHM material and Black Studies-related records in the University Archives. For now, the GPBHM's digital collection is hosted in UNO's

online repository, the finding aid is available in UNO's public ArchivesSpace interface, and eighteen boxes are stored in UNO's secure storage. (Note that though archivists took in twenty-four boxes from GPBHM, the eighteen completed boxes reflect natural shrinkage resulting from processing.)

Additionally, Schwartz and two other archivists from the department visited the Omaha Public Library for a third time to help the GPBHM executive director rehouse and label the collection in anticipation of moving out of the downtown branch, which was set to be demolished by the city. The collection was destined for a storage unit and would be inaccessible until a new source of funding became available to finish largescale processing and additional digitization or a permanent space was built, whichever came first. Meanwhile, the 18 boxes housed in UNO's secure storage would remain at UNO until that time.

The obstacles in any community-institutional partnership are many, but persevering through them can lead to a richer historical record. This kind of work adds breadth and depth to historical narratives of communities and events that mainstream archives, media, etcetera have largely ignored.

### **Establishing Trust - History of Partnership**

Establishing a partnership between a formal institution and a community entity requires consistent engagement and trust building. In the 1980's and early 1990's a few UNO administrators and faculty from the Department of Black Studies worked collaboratively with people from the GPBHM. At that time, the library and archives were not involved. Years later in 2014, UNO Libraries' ASC director was hired and came to UNO with the goal of establishing connections with other local history and cultural heritage groups. There was no relationship between ASC and the GPBHM, and while she desired to connect with them, she was discouraged from doing so at that time. The museum board was dealing with their own internal complications, so a slow and mild approach to relationship building was deemed the best way to connect as circumstances allowed. The environment at the time did not call for the assertive friendliness the director typically used to form new connections; consideration had to be given to how best to cautiously connect and establish trust.

Gradually over a few years, opportunities for connection and trust building presented themselves. ASC's director along with Schwartz did neighborly things like attending museum programming and exhibit openings, introducing themselves to museum staff and leadership, and hosting small tours of the library and department for a few museum people. ASC staff's actions laid the groundwork for Guerra connecting with the museum director in 2021. At that point there was a pre-existing relationship that had established ASC as an institution that cared and wanted to be involved with the community. Guerra felt that the existing relationship would be open to the project despite the large amount of trust the community archive would need to place in UNO as an institution. Many emails were shared back and forth, along with a few Zoom calls as funding sources were identified and considered and ultimately secured along with a project defined by a clear MOU.

## **Communication**

Communication is critical to relationship building, establishing trust, and carrying out an ongoing project with a community partner. The information shared between UNO and the GPBHM presented the opportunity to demonstrate both parties' willingness to share and receive knowledge while working towards a joint goal. While UNO archivists bring professional archival knowledge to the equation, the GPBHM knows best how to connect and interact with the specific community they seek to serve; sharing each type of expertise requires intentional communication. While critical to a successful partnership, the communication between ASC and the GPBHM was not always straight forward. It was challenging to connect and solicit interaction from the museum as it has one paid employee who spends the majority of their time creating exhibits and speaking with community groups. Owing to this reality, archivists did not expect efficiency and timeliness in all communications, but looming grant deadlines and tight timetables heightened the frustration.

While most of the initial conversation revolved around funding sources to support a joint project and discussion of what grant funded work had previously been performed, Guerra initially routinely updated the GPBHM director on the status of the project. After receiving minimal and eventually no replies, even to inquiries into the museum's preference for handing off and storing copies of the digitized objects and metadata, her intentional communication tapered off. Guerra had a goal of sharing knowledge about digital preservation and access but felt that there was not much appetite for receiving such information. While one benefit of a community partnership could theoretically be a professional sharing their knowledge with a community member, that only works if the receiving party is interested.

## **Funding**

Sustainability is often one benefit for community archives, and part of that sustainability is due to funding sources that institutional archives may have available to them. While ASC does have some state-aided money for employing students to complete department work, those funds have continuously declined over the years. As a result, funding is both an obstacle and a benefit in the UNO/GPBHM partnership. ASC seeks grants and private funding to move processing, digitization, and outreach projects forward. Some collections have specific funds attached to them, money that has been intentionally raised for that collecting area only, while other funds can be utilized with greater flexibility depending on department priorities. As indicated above, the GPBHM archival collection project was connected to UNO's Department of Black Studies anniversary. The decision to focus and begin processing and digitization of the collection materials documenting the early formative days of the department was directly related to Humanities Nebraska and Eugene S. and Sunny M. Thomas Endowed Fund for Innovation monies secured by the Outreach Archivist, ASC director, and Department of Black Studies faculty. As such, funds to support this partnership project come from external sources, not state-aided accounts, with the exception of ASC archivists' salaries.

UNO faculty gladly gave of their time, and the student employee hired to process and digitize the materials was fortunately more efficient than the authors expected. A significant amount of work

was able to be completed before the student employee had to leave the position. Unfortunately, ASC is now in the position of having a small amount of specific funds remaining, but not quite enough to hire a student employee for any length of desirable time. Additional grant funds will need to be identified, applied for, and secured before any further processing, preservation, or digitization work continues. Moreover, the cost of providing online access has surfaced as an unexpected obstacle due to the loss of the opensource software utilized to present collections to the public. While the path forward remains unknown, ASC will do all in their ability to continue hosting the digital collection.

### **Staffing and Student Labor**

The authors benefited in 2022 from the grant-funded student who processed the boxes in the department's care and selectively digitized some of that material. UNO archivists felt strongly that when a project was being funded by grants or private monies the hourly wage should be above minimum wage for students at the university. Thus, the hourly wage for this position was 50% over the wage a student would make on state-aided monies.

Related to this is that while there is a flexibility benefit to using short-term student employees, the authors' experiences with student employees the last several years has been incredibly hit and miss as students seem to be struggling more and more with physical and mental health issues and increased financial pressures. Of course, the authors understand these stressors and have compassion for student employees. Additionally, UNO archivists support student employees as students first, employees second. Even the student on this project, who performed at a high level, could not continue their employment after several months. As it was, it would have been a challenge to get additional boxes out of storage. As indicated above, the project is now paused as the project partners consider other funding opportunities.

### **Hosting and Access**

Processing and digitization of GPBHM materials increased representation in ASC's digital collections and contributed to an overall increase in access to resources for research, exhibits, community events, engagement, etc. UNO archivists have already been able to locate material in the processed portion of the collection for the museum to use at a significant community event and were contacted by the media for a related question soon after. These reference interactions were encouraging to archivists for whom providing access to materials is a vital activity.

A major obstacle to providing access is the digital infrastructure that also supports preservation. UNO archivists are currently providing online access to the collection via a LYRISIS-hosted instance of Islandora 7, which has a sunset date of April 2024. Guerra is in the process of securing a new access and preservation platform but cost and budget are severely limiting available options and there is much she still does not know about this platform. UNO agreed to host the digitized collection and is committed to fulfilling that. However, given costs, Guerra may be required to distribute collections across various platforms, incorporating no cost options (Internet Archive and Flickr) as needed along with a hosted content management system for select collections. An additional, unexpected layer of complexity is choosing a platform that serves the needs of UNO and the GPBHM.



There are hosting and access uncertainties when it comes to the physical collection, as well. As noted, archivists are housing the boxes that the student employee arranged and described because there is not an accessible place to return them. The rest of the archival collection is currently in inaccessible storage until a new museum space opens, and the timing and features of this space are yet unknown.

This also creates access uncertainties for the bulk of the archival collection that is inaccessible currently, but also for the portion of the collection temporarily housed at UNO. Since ASC does not have the deed to the collection (which it does not seek), UNO archivists are limited to what they can do with the material for research and exhibits, according to terms in the MOU or considerations left out of the MOU. ASC is storing the boxes but does not have full access and rights to them. For example, archivists may respond to a museum request for items in the GPBHM boxes to be displayed at a community event, but may not receive those materials back, which creates access and description issues. Or archivists may not offer GPBHM materials to researchers or use materials for in-house exhibits without clearance from museum staff.

Traditionally, archival repositories have expected ownership of collections to come with the transfer of material into the archives. The reasoning is that if archives go to the cost and effort of processing, digitizing, and storing archival material, they should also have the ability to make the materials as accessible as possible via research, exhibits, digitization, and outreach. For this community partnership, UNO archivists have decided that the benefits to the community-based archives and its users are more than worth their investment. The professional literature offers several reasons why this may be the priority for archivists in community partnerships, and particularly for archivists at UNO who prioritize community engagement and preserving and making accessible collections from underrepresented communities over the ownership of those collections.

### **The Future / Conclusion**

For future work related to community-based archives, the authors see a need for empirical research surrounding how institutions manage partnerships with community entities, particularly the decision-making that results from these partnerships, and the prevalence of hosting but not owning community-based archives. There are many case-study based journal articles about community archives and community partnerships, and while very useful, there is not as much supporting empirical research. UNO archivists plan to continue working on this community partnership, pursuing grants to continue this project, and providing access as they can. Driven by strategic priorities and pursuit of resources, they plan to develop more community partnerships and continue to increase access to historical records.

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# **Developing Info Literacy Skills to Meet Students Where They Are: Personalizing Instruction to Increase Engagement.**

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## **Abstract**

The complex digital information landscape librarians navigate creates several evolving challenges to the delivery of consistent information and digital literacy lessons to all incoming students. At Pittsburg State University, the Learning Outreach Librarian has focused First-Year (FY) instruction sessions, semester workshops, and upper-class lectures on different facets of mis/disinformation, media literacy, and emerging AI trends.

What began as a discussion around separating mis/disinformation from fake news quickly evolved into an extensive project to help students visualize these concepts without undermining their existing knowledge. Using data from mid semester first-year classes and surveying students in upper classes, the instruction goals evolved. For the last nine years, one driving factor has been breaking through student disengagement and increases the saliency of the digital literacy skills. A second factor has been to focus student learning around developing a toolkit of information literacy tools that help restore confidence in the world around them. The paper below examines some of the information and digital literacy shifts over the last few years and explores a user-focused game and strategies that help students with critical literacy skills.

# **Developing Info Literacy Skills to Meet Students Where They Are: Personalizing Instruction to Increase Engagement**

## **Introduction**

In today's digital age, where access to information is almost instantaneous and applications are frequently changing and evolving, the need for robust information and digital literacy skills (IDL) has become paramount. While it continues to be important to teach students to access information, navigate, and discern good from bad sources, this is no longer keeping pace with evolving technology and emerging trends. An additional challenge is to teach students how to separate fact from fiction in a critical manner where they understand their impact and power in the information landscape. Over the past nine years, the Learning Outreach Librarian at Pittsburg State University has focused on combining IDL skills, in various courses and workshops, in a way that meets the students at their level, builds on their existing knowledge, and tries to empower students to be critical consumers. This paper shares some of the trials and lessons learned over the years teaching information and digital literacy in hopes to offer insight on how to empower students to navigate the complex digital information landscape.

## **Review of the Literature**

The review of the literature covers sections or topics related to information behaviors, game design, and user disengagement. These are too vast for a comprehensive review. Highlighted areas show the myriad of issues complicating the information landscape for students and increasing disengagement.

One main issue creating difficulty for information professionals is the speed at which the information landscape has evolved over the last several decades. Authors Twenge et al. (2019) have a comprehensive discussion of the displacement model where newer media technologies displace or replace older legacy media. In a similar study, De Waal and Schoenbach (2010) track media use displacement and conclude that the largest demographic leading the change are younger users. In both, the research emphasizes the impact that limited time has on the users choosing one format to displace the other.

To see this research with a focus on US users, authors Shearer (2018) and Walker (2021), as part of their reporting for Pew Research Center, report statistics and trends on news consumption across social media platforms. Even by 2018, author Shearer was reporting the dominance of only a few sites to be the main start for news exposure, "Reddit, Twitter and Facebook stand out as the sites where the highest portion of users are exposed to news – 67% of Facebook's users get news there." Walker (2021) highlights an important change, by 2021 there are newer sources like WhatsApp and TikTok that are starting to have an increased presence for user news consumption. It is important to note that the Pew Research Center made changes to their methodology making it difficult to compare to prior years.

Another issue to contend with is the impact of misinformation and disinformation on users and their ability to navigate the online spaces. In their works Cooke (2018) and Alcott et al., (2019) discuss the impacts of false or fake news. Authors Alcott et al., (2019) focus on the increase of

false content diffusion through Facebook and Twitter after the 2016 US elections, with particular attention to the changes to both platforms; with traffic on twitter showing a continued increase (p. 6). Authors Alonso Lopez et al., focus their research on TikTok as a vehicle for misinformation across three countries. In contrast to the other countries reviewed, the content regarding the US reinforces that majority of the misinformation content is politically driven, by individuals, and that it heavily relies on out-of-context media reinforced with biased text (p. 80).

Regarding game models and concepts there is a lot of research done over the years, both for academic and non-academic spheres. The book by Kapp (2012) does a thorough job at setting out definitions of gamification and creating frameworks for broad use of game design. The focus is not just for education and educators. In their respective works, authors Bell (2018) and Walsh (2014) focus more on specific examples with the outcome of increasing student engagement. In the article by Bell (2018) there are case study examples that highlight specific game principles such as the use of rewards and incentives in the form of gold coins or currency for activities and content in class (pp 116-117).

### **Shifts in Library Instruction at Pittsburg State University**

A major challenge for many Instruction Librarians at academic institutions is finding the balance between the one-shot classes and having the opportunity to be embedded in a First-Year course or having a for-credit Information Literacy course. Often times there is not much of a choice if the institution undergoes changes, if there are system-wide alterations to the general education curriculum, or if there is simply not enough buy-in from faculty to add more content. These are just a few of the external factors that will impact each librarian in a different way.

During the mid-2010s the Leonard H. Axe Library at Pittsburg State University underwent a shift to develop a Learning Commons. Accompanying this transformation was a massive multi-year renovation and a commitment to academic and student success partners in the library. During this time, a major change for the Instruction Librarians was the shift from one-shot reference classes to embed in the First-Year student program, currently known as the Gorilla Gateway course, part of the Pitt State Pathways. This allowed Library Services have some input on the program that every incoming student is required to take on during their first year. The librarians became responsible for multiple one-shot classes that scaffolded to teach the five elements that were part of the Information and Digital Literacy pillar.

The Learning and Outreach (L.O.) Librarian decided to focus on developing two class sessions covering topics on misinformation, evaluating online sources, what creates authority, and, finally, the individual's role in the information landscape. As part of the cooperation with the first-year program, the librarians had access to add Information and Digital Literacy questions to the pre-course test and midterm, in addition to smaller assessments after each lesson. This data helped shape how these classes evolved and later provided support for developing workshops focused on the practical application of the IDL skills. The COVID-19 pandemic was a major disruptor that forced re-evaluating the formats and engagement activities. But before all of these changes, one major hurdle to overcome at the beginning of the course development was to find a way to present the topics to all incoming first-year students. The following section discusses the

creation of an in-class card game for small groups and presents some of the challenges encountered as possible lessons.

## **Developing Gaming Experiences to Engage**

Previous experiences illustrated that some first-year students confused their tech savviness or social media savviness for tech literacy and failed to fully connect with the material. In addition, the barrage of information that students find themselves in today creates an environment where some students disengage completely or feel disempowered to affect the world around them. To overcome these challenges the Learning Outreach Librarian set out to find a tool or game that would break the ice around Misinformation topics and allow genuine discussion, without exasperating existing biases. The goal was not to argue if one news source was good or bad, but to help students develop the language to critically evaluate and voice why they trust or rely on specific sources of information.

The solution was to find a game that small groups could play and then provide discussion and reflection time, as a class, to maximize engagement. This game would ideally use an existing application to engage multiple learning styles and facilitate the move from small groups to a large class discussion. This proved to be a significant and frustrating challenge as most freely accessible or low-cost games either emphasized quick gut responses (awarding points to the speediest correct guess) or placed all the examples on a true or false binary scale, eliminating the nuanced discussions and opportunities for critical thinking.

The Learning Outreach Librarian started work on a card game where players in a small group competed against each other for points by utilizing clues to determine if the “news sources” were factual, a type of misinformation, or designed to be for fun/satirical. The *Factual, Fictitious, or For Fun* (Fa.Fi.Fu.) game emerged and went through several refinements that addressed game quirks and added to the focus of engagement. Features were built into the game to avoid the pitfalls perceived with other Misinformation games. The first game design element was to create a point system that encouraged critical evaluation of the cards and clues. Get a certain number of points and the player wins but guess wrong and the remaining points are awarded to an opponent. By sacrificing some points from the card value and reading a clue, a player increases their chance of getting the answer right. The second game element was to tie the clues to Information and Digital Literacy tools and best practices. The tips and strategies from the American Library Association and the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) were turned into the core strategies on each card, assigned points based on the amount of effort to execute that strategy. For example, receiving a clue entitled ‘consider the source’ would require giving up a smaller number of points than a clue about ‘check supporting sources’ or ‘consult with experts.’ Initially, there were about fifty cards, each pulled from a different news source, and ranging in topics.

The *Fa.Fi.Fu.* game was met with enthusiasm from students and positive feedback from professors, who reflected that the activity gave students a chance for group engagement and to speak out loud in class. Setting time aside for a game where students could have unpredictable responses was risky and rarely stayed within the designated time. The activity did create rich opportunities for students to discuss in small groups how mis/disinformation might impact their

day-to-day lives. The *Fa.Fi.Fu.* game has gone through several iterations as students helped highlight barriers to the gameplay and as deployment technologies were tested to adjust to COVID-19 restricted. The next section discusses lessons learned in the hope they serve as tips for anyone interested in developing their own mis/disinformation tool or just incorporating ideas into their instruction models. There are several examples of adjusting the instruction tool to meet students at their level. This is not to about lowering academic rigor but about ensuring the content is relatable to students and the benefits of this approach.

## Lessons

One lesson for this type of game and content development is to take into consideration the user's reading levels and learning styles. The original game was developed under an incorrect expectation of student reading abilities that did not match the reality of some new students. Game cards came from a diverse number of news sources, domestic and international, in an effort to expose students to a range of sources. An unexpected issue was that some of the sources required higher reading and comprehension levels. Simultaneously, students were informally sharing the frequency with which their current-event news consumption came through a social media platform. The rates at which students discussed were at times a little higher than the national averages reported by Shearer (2018) in the Pew Research Center report. The combination of both situations meant students were not prepared for long format reading, some struggled to get through enough cards, some stumbled on words, and this overall broke the pacing of the game and purpose. To address the issues the game was overhauled, and a new section was added that focused on Social Media stories. Many news outlets reported the same story through Facebook or Twitter, making it easier to keep some of the stories, just swap where they originated from. The clues and tips now focused on digital strategies for assessing online content, assessing website ownership, and initiating reverse-image searches. Beyond cards designed to focus on higher visual content, cards were also added that specifically addressed media influence and marketing. Examples of this included cards showing fabricated products to gauge user responses or shared memes that due to their sensational nature ended up in the print news cycle. This approach provided chances for brief discussions on the traditional flow of information and how users can impact the stories that make it the news cycle. In hindsight, the format now, with social media stories and articles, is better able to accommodate more individuals and different learning styles.

A second lesson is to remain updated regarding students' information behaviors, at a local level, and adjust to those as needed. An example from game development can explain this better. An initial goal of the *Fa.Fi.Fu* game was to update cards periodically, to avoid stale content, but as expansions or sets. But early testing reflected just how quickly current news stories faded from students' awareness. Stories with longer sticking power only had key bits of information retained 6 months to 12 months later. This retention phenomenon is by no means exclusive to students, but it seems to be augmented by general disengagement with current events and politics. When queried for information, students shared anecdotes of not paying attention to current event stories unless they rose above a certain emotional threshold or were spotlighted by a content creator on a social media platform reacting to the week's news. Instead of trying to compete for currency the Learning Outreach Librarian chose to take on the challenge by adapting the game and highlighting the ephemeral nature of some stories. A broad third category was added that focused

on recurring or Déjà vu stories. Leaning into the theme some cards showcased stories with cyclical nature, such as fabricated stories about the most powerful storm designed to sell supplies. Other stories might show a situation where satire riffed on a real story and the parody had an amplification effect due to the original story's hype. This has had mixed success, but overall, it has allowed for honest conversations about how a parody or satire piece can be taken out of context due to memory gaps, passage of time, or clever mimicry.

A cumulative third lesson comes from continuously surveying and creating space for students to share why they disengaged from content and feel current events and news burnout. The lesson can be distilled as learning that students' disengagement is multifaceted, personal, and that avoiding tough discussions can be very harmful. Authors Cao et al. (2019) also bring up research on prior trauma or behavior issues that would contribute to disengagement or anxiety. At a local level, when students share their reasons for disengagement from current events, they seem to share similar sentiments. Some students express not seeing the implications between misinformation and real-life, some express frustration, some express a sense of powerlessness in their online environments to affect change, and some just feel too overwhelmed to connect. With such a broad range of emotions and concerns it is certain that no one-size-fits-all approach will work.

Over the years some strategies have worked better than others at tackling student disengagement and disempowerment. Creating a safe space and a mechanism for students to voice concerns is a good start, but it allows some students to fall through cracks (students avoiding discussions). The one strategy that has effectively worked for several years has been to focus the remainder of the class period, after the game, on building up students' sense of online empowerment. It may seem odd to frame Information and Digital Literacy lessons as empowerment and trust building, but this is what has yielded the best discussions. Furthermore, quiz and post class assessments show students score the same or higher than their pre-class assessments.

An example of reframing the class content comes from discussions around the impact of advertisements. In previous classes the discussion may have focused on spotting native advertisements or the pros and cons of articles coming from sponsored research. The current students are well aware that everything online has a revenue model relying on advertisements or subscriptions. Thus, the conversations can instead focus on how deceptive a website might be about hiding the advertisements or how transparent a news website might be about its income streams. In this fashion the class discussion asks students to consider if these factors, types of advertisement strategies or transparency, become reasons they can articulate trusting or distrusting a website or content creator. This lesson becomes real to students if someone in the discussion brings up how these topics relate to social media content creators. If guided correctly, students can then see that the discussions topics relate from the class to their everyday activities and content consumption.

A second example comes from discussing the informational literacy framework "authority is constructed and contextual". Some earlier versions of the discussions with students followed the model of defining authority and determining sources of credibility. Students, in current FY classes, are faced with the extra challenge inherent to their social media consumption. The short video format platforms and the content creators they come to rely on, many that claim to



aggregate news or digest current events, do not provide a metric to evaluate their authority and do not have an incentive to share ethics or standards. Thus, a class structured around definitions and sources will have limited engagement. Flipping the script and starting with the social nature of the information puts the students in a more active and engaged space. From here one can ask students to operate as empowered electronic consumers and identify what markers they need to determine if a social media account, sharing current news, is credible or reliable. As students share markers or factors that create authority, this is the appropriate place to showcase positive examples, such as news organizations that publicly post ethics handbooks or have public pages organizing story corrections and clarifications. A discussion about the impact of errors in publications can become the foundation for a discussion around the value an organization conveys to its consumers by sharing the information. Constructed this way, students can view these as tools to evaluate pages, as resource consumers, and reflect on whether these same values should be inherent in social media of short format video platforms.

### **Beyond First Year Classes**

This student focused approach can apply to sessions beyond the first-year classes as well. It is not uncommon to hear from educators, at all levels, that their students are struggling with engagement and connecting to the material. When possible, openings to host workshops or upper-class discussions are the ideal way to scaffold IDL lessons. As part of a guest lecture series around educational technology, the Learning Outreach Librarian has been able to hold ongoing discussions with upper-level students in the Teaching and Leadership department. These students are close to graduation and start giving more complex answers to how technology will impact their K-12 classrooms. These guided lectures are less about a specific right or wrong answer, and more about how they might tackle the evolving technologies. Significant time is spent discussing the impact of social media usage, conspiratorial content, the effectiveness of reverse-image search strategies, and strategies to employ in their fields. As technology changes, the conversations have seen a shift toward discussing deep fakes and the emerging AI trends.

When discussing AI products and tools with students it has been met with a mixed response. When hosting a section to show and discuss AI image content generators, some students expressed awe at the capabilities and some expressed concern about the possible abuse and exploitation of the technology. The instructors present avoided drawing any conclusions for the students and preferred to have them share why they were uncertain or to provide support for their viewpoint. During these discussions when the students are being asked, once more, to consider themselves in different roles such as students, electronic consumers, or educators, they are open about insights regarding the future. The area of AI products is evolving so rapidly the Learning Outreach Librarian still needs to construct content that will address the topics in an approachable manner.

A final example about empowering the students and helping them find their own authoritative voice comes from an exercise about context. In small class groups, students are shown images of social media posts where an account is strongly pushing a narrative and they have to analyze the available information and form an opinion about the content. In one example, students are shown an account's post that appears hostile towards foreign commercial goods and as evidence the account provides an out-of-context image about a grocery store with foreign brands left

unconsumed during the COVID-19 product shortages. The students are asked to evaluate the situation. After some discussion, some students feel confident in responding that they support the premise that the account is pushing misinformation and using an emotional piece to stir users. Other students might disagree and support the claim that the piece is satire and should not be taken as serious content. In both cases, students need to provide support for their claims. By the end of the exercise many are finding their voice and providing several pieces of supporting statements for their claims. As with many social media pieces, it is near impossible to prove intent. The goal was for students to critically examine and voice their opinion.

### **Conclusion**

By employing a different approach to addressing student disengagement educators can gain more than responsive students. They can gain students that are active in the learning process, consider real world implications, and help students slowly regain a sense of agency over the content they encounter and consume on the web. This can help foster more informed students capable of thinking about the complex ways the information landscape continues to change and capable of making informed decisions.

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# **Empowering Undergraduates: Building Confidence in Primary Source Literacy**

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## **Abstract**

At the University of Northern Iowa, a midsize regional comprehensive university which originated as a normal school, archives and museum colleagues have partnered to build a primary source literacy instruction program with a particular focus on pre-service teachers. This instruction has developed as an iterative process that has changed and adapted through ongoing assessment to enhance student's primary source literacy knowledge and engagement. Through a combination of asynchronous, online tutorials and active learning instruction sessions, students gain knowledge and skills to make use of primary sources in their future K-12 classrooms, as expected in the Iowa Core Curriculum.

The authors discuss the impetus and development of this program, including the integration of the 2018 Society of American Archivists' *Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy* into instruction strategy and lesson planning. The authors also share various tools and online resources that they use for instruction and evaluation, such as a primary source sets LibGuide and LibWizard tutorials, as well as specific classroom activities such as zoom in/zoom out. Finally, the authors share suggestions and takeaways from their experience for other librarians, archivists, and museum professionals about making primary sources more approachable and easily used and understood by a variety of learners in K-12 and higher education settings.

# Empowering Undergraduates: Building Confidence in Primary Source Literacy

## Introduction

As primary source literacy (PSL) efforts and archival instruction become increasingly important in the profession, an archivist and a museum professional at Rod Library at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) share their experiences building a PSL program with a particular focus on pre-service teachers at a midsize midwestern public university. In these proceedings, the authors detail the project background and purpose, trace how their efforts evolved to meet the needs of students and utilized emerging library technology, and offers takeaways and examples of activities and resources to use in library instruction.

## Literature Review

Since the seminal 2003 Yakel and Torres article, “AI: Archival Intelligence and User Expertise,” archivists have increasingly recognized and prioritized what is now called primary source literacy and instruction as core professional duties. Works such as Duff and Cherry’s 2008 *American Archivist* article, Krause’s 2010 study, and Rockenbach’s “Archives, Undergraduates, and Inquiry-Based Case Studies from Yale University Library” (2011) demonstrate the impact of engaging undergraduate students with primary sources.

As the emphasis on archival instruction has grown, archivists and educators also began focusing on objectives, outcomes, and ways to define archival intelligence, PSL, or archival literacies or competencies, partly to aid in meaningful assessment of this evolving work. One early example is Yakel and Tibbo’s “Standardized Survey Tools for Assessment in Archives and Special Collections” (2010), which introduced archival metrics and tools such as the student researcher and teaching support questionnaires. Others have offered insight and suggestions for defining and measuring PSL, such as Bahde and Smedberg in “Measuring the Magic: Assessment in the Special Collections and Archives Classroom” (2012); Weiner, Morris, and Mykytiuk’s 2015 article “Archival Literacy Competencies for Undergraduate History Majors;” and Carini’s 2016 *portal* article.

Such concepts and objectives were solidified in 2018 when the SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on the Development of Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy published the *Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy (Guidelines)*. Almost immediately, archivists and educators utilized the *Guidelines* in their own instruction and practice, offering insight about implementation. For example, Hauck and Robinson’s “Of Primary Importance: Applying the new Literacy Guidelines” (2018) is one of the earliest accounts of this implementation, and Hervieux’s chapter in *Approaches to Liaison Librarianship: Innovations in Organization & Engagement* (2021) details a workshop designed with the *Guidelines* for broad student participation about using primary sources in research. Additionally, the Society of American Archivists Reference, Access, and Outreach Section (2023) has published 24 case studies, as of this writing, demonstrating how archivists at a variety of institution types have put the *Guidelines* into practice. With a more assessment-specific focus, the Teaching with Primary Sources Collective’s *Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy Rubric* (2019) provides specific criteria and outcomes for evaluating the *Guidelines*’ objectives, and Hoyer et al. (2022) detail an assessment program’s redesign and

implementation for teaching local history with primary sources, offering an assessment tool for others to use at their own institutions.

While not explicitly using the *Guidelines*, others have further shared their experiences designing and teaching PSL sessions in a variety of ways as the education landscape evolves, such as the study conducted by Duncan et al. featured in the 2023 ACRL conference proceedings about text-message based instruction, and Craig and Sullivan's article (2022) about PSL instruction in the COVID-19 era and beyond.

Alongside the developing work around establishing guidelines, objectives, and assessment, many archivists have asserted the power of active learning techniques when teaching with primary sources (TPS) to undergraduates. Krause (2010) writes that participants were “overwhelmingly convinced of the benefits of active learning in teaching undergraduates how to use primary sources” (p. 406), noting the importance of students being able to see and touch primary sources and to use, analyze, and evaluate them in groups with peers (pp. 406-07). In a case study at Yale, Rockenbach (2011) advocates for inquiry-based learning with collection items to “increase student engagement and teach higher-level critical thinking skills” (p. 298) and offers examples of activities, such as think-pair-share, to provide students with meaningful interactions and put themselves into the role of historian (pp. 307-08). While focused on digital archives, Wagner Webster (2020) argues that “active learning techniques can help students role-play archival decision making” to develop critical thinking skills (p. 490), which may be broadly applicable in a variety of TPS scenarios. Carini and Swan (2019) detail their approach to active learning at Dartmouth College through three core principles: meet, engage, and reflect (p. 267). Along with their colleagues at Dartmouth, since 2011 they have provided immersive pedagogical training to librarians and archivists, extending the meet, engage, reflect approach beyond their campus to many others nationwide (pp. 274-75).

The literature establishes the significance of PSL and active learning in TPS across a variety of classroom settings and audiences. While instruction is still a relatively new professional priority for archivists and special collections librarians, an array of teaching activities, assessment tools and outcomes, and case studies are emerging in the literature, providing archivists with resources to implement PSL instruction at their own institutions. The authors aim for these proceedings to add to this growing body of work with an emphasis on pre-service teachers, asynchronous learning tools, and adopting an iterative instruction process.

## **Background**

In the early 2000s the UNI Museum (UNIM) maintained a robust set of traveling trunks for checkout by educators to bring museum objects into K-12 classrooms, complete with learning activities and lesson plans. Over time, the use of these trunks declined. A survey of local elementary teachers conducted in 2017 revealed that new curriculums and uncertainty in how to use these materials precluded newer teachers from making use of such resources. Teachers indicated a desire to use material culture, active learning techniques, and TPS in their classrooms, but did not feel they had the resources, knowledge, or time to do so effectively.

At the same time this survey was conducted, several key events took place. The Iowa Department of Education was in the midst of rolling out new social studies standards for K-12 schools (often referred to as the “Iowa Core”) that integrated inquiry-based learning, specifically mentioning primary sources in multiple standards. Additionally, Rod Library hired a new archivist in Special Collections & University Archives (SC&UA) who was eager to bring students into the archives for research and instruction. Finally, the SAA-ACRL/RBMS released the *Guidelines* in 2018. The coincidence of these three events provided the opportunity for the authors to partner and introduce new PSL instruction at UNI. Equipped with clear learning objectives and standards from the *Guidelines* and the Iowa Core, the authors had the tools to demonstrate the relevance and practicality of PSL knowledge and skills and were ready to implement them.

The authors identified pre-service teachers as an ideal audience to introduce this new instruction, as they have a clear need for PSL with the new Iowa Core. Building this connection with the College of Education (COE) also aligned with UNI’s history as a teaching college. The authors found professors in the COE eager to collaborate and experiment with new ways of introducing PSL into their own classrooms. Completing instruction and PSL-oriented assignments with the authors gave students space in their coursework to learn and integrate new skills without the daily pressure of lesson planning, creating an easy way to practice these methods and tools as they progressed through student teaching and eventual placements. The students could also share their PSL knowledge, skills, and related teaching techniques with new colleagues throughout school districts.

After liaising with COE professors to generate interest, the authors scheduled initial instruction in fall 2018 focused on bringing students into SC&UA and UNIM to interact directly with primary sources. While students displayed excitement at handling historic materials, it quickly became evident that they lacked the skills or knowledge to interpret, analyze, or evaluate the sources, let alone integrate this material into lessons on their own. When engaged in whole class discussions, students struggled to articulate the significance of the materials, determine where the materials came from or who made them, and were unable to suggest further areas to examine or where to search for additional related materials. As education majors they generally had not been exposed to primary source research before, so they needed to personally develop skills and knowledge while also learning how to impart this information onto their own future students.

Over the next several semesters, the authors explored TPS emergent trends and updated their approach in several ways. This included integrating more active learning techniques; pivoting from bringing a wide range of sources to demonstrate the breadth of the collections to curating sources around a particular event or theme; and emphasizing key *Guidelines* objectives of understanding and articulating the difference between primary and secondary sources and the importance of each, rather than diving immediately into interpretation and analysis. As the authors continued reflecting on how to create more meaningful learning experiences for students, the emergence of COVID-19 forced them to again shift their approach to TPS.

The switch to fully remote learning meant students no longer had direct access to materials within SC&UA and UNIM, and the lack of digitized collections meant that simply introducing students to library websites (including finding aids and catalogs) would not yield meaningful



engagement. With staffing and resource constraints, the authors prioritized digitizing a curated set of sources to support instruction in the 2020-2021 academic year so students could still access some primary sources. More information about these efforts is detailed in the Tools and Resources section below. Working with a small set of digitized sources, the authors could then focus less on the materials and more on the skills and knowledge students needed to develop in order to confidently find and use primary sources in the future.

As instruction continued, the authors added formative assessment elements, which are described in Tools and Resources below. While initially designed to aid in the quick transition to remote learning, this assessment encouraged the authors to continue adapting their instruction to respond to students' knowledge, skills, and assignment needs.

## **Tools and Resources**

To support instruction and assessment needs, the authors utilized various online tools and resources, including free, paid, and asynchronous options. Because Rod Library already uses SpringShare products, the authors chose to create a LibGuide as well as tutorials and quizzes through LibWizard, though other products and platforms could be used depending on the needs and resources of a given institution.

### **LibGuide**

To share digitized items from SC&UA and UNIM, the authors created a LibGuide featuring primary source sets. While the authors discussed developing these sets prior to the pandemic, the necessity of remote learning fast-tracked this project so PSL efforts could continue in the era of COVID-19. Drawing on the State Historical Society of Iowa's primary source sets (2017) as inspiration, the authors selected items from their collections to support different topics, which aligned with the Iowa Core and/or met student and professor needs based on feedback from previous instruction. The sets include the topics of immigration/migration, Black experiences in Iowa, American Indians in the Midwest, elections and campaigns, and women's history. Sets within the LibGuide include the digitized items along with brief captions and identifiers, links to relevant finding aids and catalog entries, and additional resources like activity ideas. Beyond the sets themselves, the LibGuide includes relevant contact information for the authors and their library units and collections, as well as information about digitized primary sources at other institutions and PSL resources.

## Figure 1

### Page from the UNI primary source sets LibGuide

#### Primary Source Sets

This guide contains primary sources from UNI Museum and Special Collections & University Archives at Rod Library. This guide is intended to provide information about using primary sources in the PK-12 classroom for teachers and students alike.

Search this Guide Search

- Home
- Immigration / Migration
- Black Experiences in Iowa
- American Indians in the Midwest
- Elections and Campaigns**
- Women's History
- Find Sources Beyond UNI
- Learn about Primary Sources

#### Elections and Campaigns

As a democracy, elections are the foundation of the government of the United States. This set focuses on election materials collected from campaigns at various levels of government.

Many items below come from various collections within Special Collections & University Archives. Finding aids to specific collections are linked below.





A curated sample of the UNI Museum materials related to elections can be found at the tag set linked below. More materials may be found by searching the online database available on our website.

- Mary T. O'Halloran Papers, MsC-85
- Leon Mosley Papers, MsC-54
- Lynn Cutler Papers, MsC-48
- Charles E. Grassley Papers, MsC-30
- Black Hawk-Bremer League of Women Voters Records, MsC-11
- UNI Museum Election tag set
- UNI Museum Political History database

#### Additional Resources

- Activity ideas  
Activity ideas for grades K-8 aligned with the Iowa Social Studies Standards.
- FAQs  
A general overview of elections in the United States.
- Palczewski Suffrage Postcard Archive  
Collection of historic postcards related to Women's Suffrage.

#### Primary Sources

			
<p>Ribbon Ribbon worn by a delegate at the 1892 Democratic State Convention. These conventions are used to select a presidential nominee. UNIM 00.34.2.5.2.</p>	<p>Political Button Official campaign button for the Nixon-Agnew 1968 presidential campaign. UNIM 1968.19.</p>	<p>Political Button Campaign button for Hubert Humphrey's 1968 presidential campaign. UNIM 1968.27.</p>	<p>Political Button Pin in support of the Republican Party, which is also known as the GOP. GOP stands for "Grand Old Party." UNIM 1970.63.</p>

## LibWizard

LibWizard is an interactive tutorial, quiz, and form tool. Using LibWizard, the authors created multiple tutorials and quizzes for students to complete prior to an instruction session. These function as both formative assessment tools and a way to prepare students and establish PSL knowledge. As information literacy and PSL specifically are integrated into pre-service teachers' educational paths, it is important to continue to monitor their knowledge levels and adapt to their needs. The tutorials and quizzes embed core concepts and learning objectives from the *Guidelines* and use local primary sources and resources as examples.

One of the quizzes is a pre-test to both assess students' PSL skills and knowledge, and to introduce core concepts. For example, the pre-test includes questions asking students to determine if a given item is a primary or secondary source, and it also includes explanatory text about the difference between primary and secondary sources and places to find each, both in person and online in digital form.

## Figure 2

*Page from the PSL pre-test*

**Primary Source Literacy pre-test**

Where might you find a primary source, part 2

Primary sources can be found in a variety of locations, including in-person and physical places as well as digital locations. They can be described and accessible in many different resources, such as library catalogs, finding aids, and data repositories, depending on the discipline and topic of your research.

Many primary sources are collected and stored in places that have geographic and/or institutional significance to the source's creation. For example, materials that document the work and lives of early Cedar Falls citizens would most likely be found in Black Hawk County rather than a county in Montana. As another example, records from UNI are most likely to be stored at UNI rather than Iowa State or the University of Iowa.

Remember that primary sources are typically created at the time of an event, while secondary sources are typically created after the fact and can provide interpretation and analysis.

Imagine you are researching radio pioneer and former University of Northern Iowa professor Herbert Hake. Where are the most likely places you may find a primary source to support your research on Hake's career? Select all that may apply. (required)

- Reference Collection at Rod Library
- University Archives at Rod Library
- UNI Museum - UNI History Collection
- EBSCO database
- Journal of Radio Studies
- State Historical Society of Iowa Photograph Collection

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In addition to the pre-test, the authors created several tutorials with built-in quizzes showing how to navigate the SC&UA and UNIM websites and the primary source sets LibGuide. This eliminates the need for lengthy website demos during class, introduces students to finding aids and museum catalogs, offers tips for searching and browsing, and provides key information about using a primary source, like how to cite sources properly. Throughout the tutorials, students practice these skills by finding specific resources and information on the various sites to answer quiz questions.

## PollEverywhere

PollEverywhere is a subscription-based online program in which students respond anonymously to prompts on a screen. In addition to displaying their responses, PollEverywhere allows users to interact with each other's answers. The authors use this during instruction sessions to encourage engagement in class discussion, particularly for students who are uncomfortable with public speaking or who are reluctant to speak up due to their unfamiliarity or lack of confidence with PSL. PollEverywhere also provides the authors a quick method for gauging the students' comprehension of the materials, giving a snapshot of the overall level of understanding and any areas of confusion, allowing the authors to emphasize certain points as needed.

## Classroom Activities

As the authors addressed multiple needs and the development of complex skills, they determined it best to split the instruction into multiple sessions. To maximize synchronous instruction time, students complete tutorials and quizzes (see Tools and Resources) before class to establish basic PSL concepts and gain familiarity with relevant library websites. Using tutorials and quizzes for the pre-session instruction addresses the concepts that students need to grasp and provides the authors with a safe assumption about the knowledge level with which students enter the classroom. Completing this groundwork prior to class allows more time to be spent practicing these skills and exploring the concepts further with support and guidance from the authors.

The first synchronous session focuses on the “Conceptualize” and “Find and Access” learning objectives from the *Guidelines* (2018, pp 4-5). First, the authors lead a discussion concerning what constitutes a primary and secondary source and the value of each in the classroom. Then students complete a think-pair-share activity guided by a worksheet. The activity provides students an opportunity to practice finding primary sources on their own. Students initially work individually, brainstorming what types of sources they seek for a topic of their choosing as well as keywords and places to search. Next, the students search, sharing with each other their successes and challenges, adjusting their searches based on peer and instructor feedback. The session ends in discussion about their searching process and what they learned about locating primary sources. Students should leave having identified a specific source they could use in a lesson.

### Figure 3

*Worksheet used during the first instruction session*

Primary Source Literacy Instruction Worksheet - Session 1  
 Spring 2023  
 With Jaycie Vos (University Archives) and Jess Cruz (UNI Museum)

Learning Objectives:

1. Conceptualize
  - A. Distinguish primary from secondary sources for a given research question. Demonstrate an understanding of the interrelatedness of primary and secondary sources for research.
2. Find and Access
  - A. Identify the possible locations of primary sources.
  - B. Use appropriate, efficient, and effective search strategies in order to locate primary sources. Be familiar with the most common ways primary sources are described, such as catalog records and archival finding aids

Part 1		
What topic are you researching?	What kind of sources are you hoping to find (e.g. books, letters, photos, etc.)	What keywords are you using to start?

Part 2	
Where did you search, what did you find, what questions do you still have?	How could you refine or expand your search?

Part 3	
Perform your search again. What new things did you find?	Pick 1 primary and 1 secondary source. Why do you want to use them, and how can they be used together?

For next class, come prepared with a primary source that you want to focus your lesson on.

The second session focuses on the “Read, Understand, and Summarize” and “Interpret, Analyze, and Evaluate” learning objectives from the *Guidelines* (2018, p. 5), with the specific goal of demonstrating teaching activities students can apply in the future classrooms. The authors model activities so the students may see these activities in action while developing their own skills to understand and evaluate primary sources.

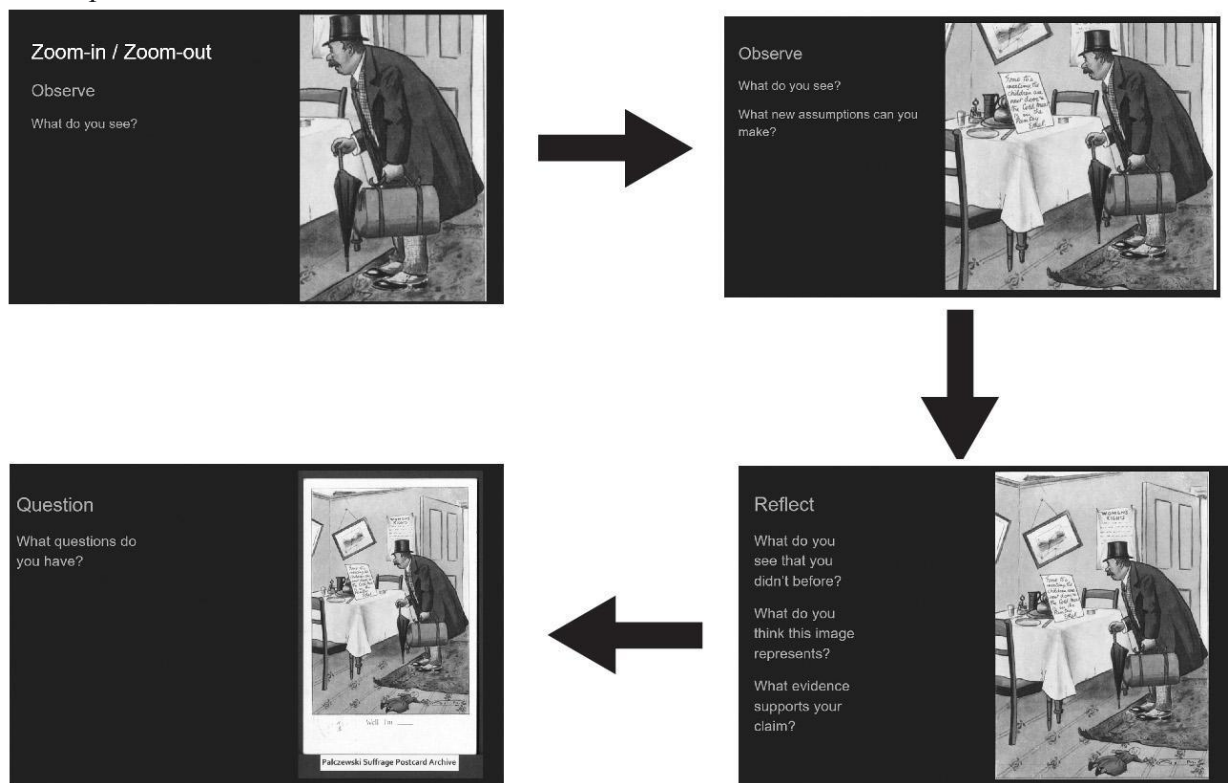
The session begins with a discussion about how to evaluate a primary source, such as asking questions about the source’s creator and credibility. The authors model this using both reliable and unreliable sources to illustrate their point. Then they explore how to determine if a source is appropriate for a given teaching scenario, such as whether it is age appropriate or is relevant in supporting the learning objectives.

The majority of class is spent completing instructional activities and tools that could be used with a wide variety of sources and topics. The first activity introduced is called zoom in/zoom out (inquirED, 2020). It is best suited for image-based materials, such as photographs or illustrations, and works by showing only a portion of an image and then incrementally zooming out, revealing more of the image as students share observations and ask questions along the way. By focusing on a select section of the image initially, students slow their viewing, pull from existing knowledge, and gain confidence in questioning and articulating their observations. The

authors refrain from providing answers, instead leading students through their own questioning. For example, when initially asked “What do you see?” students typically reply with a straightforward description of the action in the image (e.g, a man coming home). Instead of moving on to more observations, the authors engage in questioning to encourage the students to consider their assumptions (e.g. “Why do you think it’s his home?”). This activity suits a wide range of materials and grade levels, can function as an introductory activity to gauge current knowledge levels or as a summative assessment to test what students have learned in a unit, and it relies primarily on student engagement, so they are actively participating and contributing to the class activity.

**Figure 4**

*The steps to zoom in/zoom out*



*Note.* From C. W. Faulkner and Company (n.d.) ([https://scholarworks.uni.edu/suffrage\\_images/247/](https://scholarworks.uni.edu/suffrage_images/247/)).

In this session, the authors also introduce the Question Formulation Technique (QFT) (Right Question Institute, n.d.) and Source, Observe, Contextualize, and Corroborate (SOCC) (Denial, 2017). While QFT is suited to a variety of source types and grade levels, SOCC works best for middle school students and older. QFT consists of having students generate questions about a source without stopping to edit or evaluate the questions. After the initial round of generating questions, then students improve and prioritize the questions through group discussion. They then use this information to explore research avenues. SOCC offers a frame for analyzing primary sources and is typically completed with a worksheet to scaffold the activity. It dissects

the research process into four distinct activities, encouraging students to focus on one area at a time rather than becoming overwhelmed at the complexity of the research process. An added benefit of introducing pre-service teachers to SOCC is that it provides them with another tool to evaluate whether a source is appropriate for a particular lesson.

This approach to instruction provides students with foundational PSL skills while also making the best use of the authors' time in the classroom with students. While this series of sessions can be adjusted to meet specific curriculum and scheduling needs, the scaffolding of knowledge and integration of guided practice and active learning leads students to have a deeper understanding in PSL and more confidence in TPS.

### **Suggestions and Takeaways**

The authors have found success in routinely adapting their instruction to meet student needs and the continuing evolution of TPS, and they offer takeaways that can be implemented in any classroom looking to integrate PSL. The following insights outline key components to consider.

First, recognizing the need for flexibility and change is essential. The authors found that an iterative approach to PSL was necessary and beneficial for both the pre-service teachers and their own instruction process. Their teaching evolved partly due to the emerging nature of TPS in the broader field, their initial unfamiliarity with students' PSL knowledge and skills, and their use of formative assessment. The instruction methods, learning objectives, and classroom activities have changed drastically since their conception, and based on author observations and feedback from professors, this has resulted in deeper student engagement and understanding, and students now have the skills to directly apply what they learned in their own lesson planning and assignments.

Building collaborative relationships with professors is integral to creating and adapting instruction that serves the students and meets learning objectives. Because the authors established open lines of communication and demonstrated an ability to adapt to meet various requests, professors were willing to dedicate more class time to PSL. The authors then had space to intentionally scaffold PSL instruction and build in active learning techniques to give students more meaningful, engaging learning experiences. Approaching instruction from a collaborative lens also gave the authors greater insight into class assignments, which allowed them to customize instruction to make PSL skills immediately applicable. Students recognized the relevance of PSL and became more invested and retained more information from these sessions.

Creating asynchronous, online tools is initially labor-intensive, but this investment provides a host of long term benefits. While initially created specifically for pre-service teachers, such tools could be used and adapted in many classes, both in person and remote, and by library patrons at large. Similarly, the instruction developed for these students has informed the authors' teaching, and they have recycled and updated lesson plans and worksheets for many scenarios beyond the initial purpose. Investing in developing and fine tuning these resources and approaches has made later work much more manageable and easier to deploy and adjust based on students' skills, discipline areas, or assignment needs.

To maximize synchronous instruction time, it is helpful to integrate asynchronous quizzes and tutorials before class. Upon completing these resources, students have some awareness of core PSL concepts, knowledge, and skills and some familiarity in finding and using relevant local resources, such as the LibGuide and SC&UA finding aids. Rather than spend time clicking through library websites, the authors, equipped with quiz responses, are able to customize instruction to emphasize processes or concepts based on the needs and abilities demonstrated by the students. Everyone comes to class better prepared, and together, they are ready to have more meaningful and engaging instruction time, where they can more quickly begin activities where students interact with primary sources and apply what they have learned.

Embracing active learning fosters a more meaningful classroom experience and gives students hands-on practice using, analyzing, and evaluating primary sources. Rather than lecture or do collections show-and-tell, the authors found that using Carini and Swan's meet, engage, reflect approach (2019) with active learning techniques engaged students as they learned how to conceptualize, find, and begin using primary sources. It was especially useful for students to practice searching for and interpreting primary sources independently, in small groups, and with the entire class and the authors so that they could practice the skills, gain confidence, and receive valuable feedback and guidance in the process. Whether through a worksheet-guided think-pair-share or zoom in/zoom out activities, this gave the pre-service teachers concrete ideas to implement in their future classrooms.

Through active learning, formative assessment, and a commitment to an iterative process, the authors developed PSL instruction for students that intentionally met their needs as future teachers and established foundational skills with applications beyond one specific classroom. Librarians, archivists, and museum professionals working across a variety of settings and with a range of learners could implement and adapt these resources, tools, and activities to make primary sources more approachable, easily understood, and accessible for all.



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## Quest for the Best: An Info Lit Strategy for First Year Seminars

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### Abstract:

Each year, first year seminar courses in colleges across the country typically include a session which introduces students to the library and information literacy skills. The approach to engage students and cover materials has evolved at Southeast Missouri State University. Originally, students registered for an introduction to the university course which included a research assignment. Each class had a theme ranging from college majors to UFOs. Due to the range in content covered and the need to hire additional full-time faculty, the class was reduced to one-credit hour with no research component. As a result, library instruction shifted into a contextual void with minimal application or critical thinking.

Through a series of faculty meetings, lesson drafts, and a piloted instruction session, a new information literacy lesson methodology was developed with adaptability to any subject area. Driven by a challenge question, librarians designed a quest inspired by pedagogical philosophies of flipped classrooms and POGIL (Process Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning). This approach reduced the lecture time and increased student engagement through a hands-on group research project that included evaluation, presentation, and assessment components.

Participants in this session will:

- Learn how Southeast's information literacy lessons have evolved over time to address the struggles in teaching information literacy to first-year students.
- Share challenges encountered at your library to create engaging information literacy instruction.
- Discover how a research quest for specific information resulted in higher level learning.
- Explore solutions presented by speakers and attendees to generate practical ideas adapted to your own information literacy instruction.

## **Are We Putting our Values into Practice? Chat Reference Assessment**

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### **Abstract**

In 2017, the UMKC Libraries general reference team developed a series of customer service values to guide interactions with patrons. While the values were referred to regularly in the intervening years and used as part of training for new employees, no concerted effort was made to assess how well the staff adhered to them. Library patrons' growing preference for chat reference has provided opportunities to gain an accurate view of reference service delivery via transcript analysis. The Head of Teaching and Learning developed a transcript assessment rubric in 2022 and applied it to two hundred chat transcripts randomly selected from the previous year. After establishing the current state of customer service delivery, she provided additional training and service expectations for her team. The assessment was then repeated one semester later to judge improvement. The adoption of a rubric for customer service assessment held advantages and disadvantages. UMKC Libraries has made modifications to their approach to assessment for more flexibility.

# **Pilot Workshop on AI Art and Libraries at the University of Mississippi**

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## **Abstract**

Since the widespread availability of "AI Art" tools such as Dall-E in summer 2022, such tools have been a frequent topic of discussion in this emerging field alongside other emergent tools such as ChatGPT. As such, the University of Mississippi piloted a small-scale workshop with the University of Mississippi art department in November 2022, with the intent to collaborate with actual art students and faculty in creating, critiquing, and classifying "AI Art" made with the Dall-E platform. The resulting data, both in terms of images and the art department's response to them, may provide some insight into future conversations about the technology in the library sphere, and was included in the University of Mississippi's eGrove institutional repository.

# Pilot Workshop on AI Art and Libraries at the University of Mississippi

## Introduction

Information professionals, especially those involved with academic libraries, have often been called upon to deal with disruptive technologies. Whether the epoch-defining impact of digital storage and the internet on libraries and information, or technologies like Second Life that ultimately failed to attain mainstream adoption, academic libraries and their staff are often at the forefront of real or imagined disruption.

AI technologies are no exception to this, and the early 2020s have seen an explosion in spheres in which this rapidly advancing technology has had an impact. While text generators like ChatGPT have attracted academic notice due to their perceived potential for misuse for academic dishonesty, another highly visible facet of AI development has been the emergence of art generators such as Dall-E 2, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion.

This pilot study, through collaboration with an art department and practicing artists, seeks to begin a conversation in the academic library and among information professionals about patrons' perceptions of AI artwork and libraries' roles in facilitating and hosting said artwork.

## Background and Literature Review

Given the relative newness of AI-generated artwork, scholarship is very much in flux. However, a basic definition that is useful to non-experts is given by Marcus, Davis, and Aaronson of New York University: "a system [that] generates original synthetic images corresponding to an input text as caption" (Marcus et al., 2022, p. 1). Dall-E 2, Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, and other AI artwork generators—the latest generation of such software as of late 2022/early 2023—in particular use a process called diffusion, to develop and display those synthetic images (Borji, 2023, p. 1). Alex Wilkins, writing for *New Scientist*, described the diffusion model as "[working] backwards from random noise to produce images similar to those that they have seen before" (Wilkins, 2023, p. 10).

While a strict understanding of the exact process is not necessary to use them, diffusion-based AI artwork generators like Dall-E2 essentially ingest images and use them to train the software to output an image matching the text; a full and technical accounting of this process is available from the Dall-E 2 developers themselves (Ramesh et al., 2022). It is also worth noting that, despite the use of "AI," the process is not, nor is it intended to be, a true artificial intelligence. "AI" is, in this context, more metaphor or branding than fact. Fernandez (2022) offers a slightly more accessible and information professional-focused summary of several major AI art players and their working models (2022, pp. 1–2).

The source of images ingested by AI artwork generators is not always clear. It is thought (Carlini et al., 2023; Schuhmann et al., 2021) that large numbers of text/image pairs are used in the process, and some such as Carlini et al. were able to extract and source some original images used to train Dall-E 2 (2023, p. 1). They describe it as "data scraped from the internet" which can pose "privacy and copyright risks" (Carlini et al., 2023, pp. 1–2), while Wilkins puts the act of

"scraping" in a less technical context as "taken from the internet without necessarily seeking the owners' permission" (Wilkins, 2023, p. 10).

This has the effect of creating a volatile information landscape with regards to AI art generators. The diffusion process has the potential to create images very quickly and efficiently, but the data used to train that process may have been unethically acquired or used. This uncertainty has been intensified by high-profile use of AI-generated in controversial circumstances; the winner of the 2022 Colorado State Fair art contest proved to be an AI generation from Midjourney, for instance (Roose, 2022), while the cover for a new science fiction novel from author Christopher Paolini was revealed to have been at least partially AI-generated (Codega, 2022). Incidents like these seem to have, at the very least, brought fear of automation into art discourse.

Libraries and archives enter this conversation, therefore, in an interesting place. Some in the information science discourse have emphasized text-based AI tools or the ability of AI imaging tools to ingest and interpret library materials for metadata purposes (Haffenden et al., 2023, pp. 32–24). Others have emphasized the effect that AI tools can have on library services and conceptual frameworks, similar to the treatment of other disruptive technologies in the past (Okunlaya et al., 2022, p. 1869).

The ethical dimensions of the use of AI have also been part of the information science discourse. A 2022 analysis by Cox identified issues of bias, transparency/accountability, privacy, safety/security, and human agency in the use of AI by or for information professionals (Cox, 2022, pp. 205–206). The "corporate logics" inherent in many of the current models, developed by corporations for profit, was one area of concern (Cox, 2022, pp. 206–207). In a later article on a similar topic, Cox noted that data collected from information professionals "could reflect professional resistance to a technology that might replace professional roles in the name of efficiency," reflecting a fear of automation that echoes that of the art community above. There have also been pervasive fears of using the technology to "generate realistic photographic images that are misleading," which present self-evident information literacy challenges (Fernandez, 2022, p. 3).

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLAI) attempted in 2020 to present a list of recommendations on the subject as well, urging that among other things "libraries should, where possible and appropriate...[h]elp their patrons develop digital literacies that include an understanding of how AI and algorithms work, and corresponding privacy and ethics questions" and "[e]nsure that any use of AI technologies in libraries should be subject to clear ethical standards and safeguard the rights of their users" (IFLA, 2020, p. 3).

Absent in much of the discourse among information professionals is any mention of AI art generators such as the aforementioned Dall-E 2, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion. This is hardly surprising; Dall-E 2 has only been available outside of a closed beta since August 2022, for instance, and the technology has been evolving rapidly. Fernandez, writing for *Library Hi Tech News* in early 2023, offered several possibilities relating to information professionals, libraries, and AI art generators, from marketing to stewardship to "housing the massive output" of such generators (2022, p. 2).



This pilot study was conceived to examine aspects of the IFLAI recommendations, as well as speculation by Fernandez and others, about libraries educating on the subject of AI art, doing so ethically, and perhaps housing some of that "massive output" in a digital repository. In particular, it was designed to explore bridging the two viewpoints above: the artist, concerned about the ethics of image harvesting, ingestion of copyrighted content, and automation, and the information professional, concerned about information literacy, user needs, and automation as well.

## Methods

At the beginning of the Fall 2022 semester, the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Mississippi was solicited for participants in a pilot workshop on AI Art, specifically the Dall-E 2 platform run by OpenAI. Respondents were led through a 60-minute workshop, with each respondent taking approximately 15 minutes. The workshop was structured as a series of back-and-forth interviews, with each interviewee submitting queries to Dall-E 2 with the investigator as a mediator and responding to what they saw in dialogue both with the generated images and the investigator.

Dall-E 2 was chosen as the platform due to its relative ease of use (as of November 4, 2022) compared to those of other major platforms, such as Stable Diffusion or Midjourney. Dall-E 2 also had a robust internal archiving system, keeping each result from a query unless specifically deleted; this made it easy to return to previous images and to compare them. Finally, the Dall-E 2 terms of use (as of November 4, 2022) were very clear and permissible: "OpenAI hereby assigns to you all its right, title and interest in and to Output" (OpenAI, 2023).

At each step of the workshop, the interviewees were prompted to select, and comment upon, the "best" or "favorite" response from the four generations made by Dall-E 2. They were then prompted to revise the words used in their generation in order to better fit what they hoped to see. Finally, each participant was given a questionnaire with regards to the workshop. This questionnaire asked for them to list their phrasing, and to select what metadata they thought was important about the subsequent Dall-E 2 generations; they were also allowed to suggest metadata that was not present on the list.

Following the conclusion of the workshop, the images generated from the interviewees' Dall-E 2 prompts were organized and uploaded to an internal file-sharing service at the University of Mississippi. All images were uploaded, organized by prompt and by interviewee, with their "best" or "favorite" images noted as such. The completed worksheets were also scanned and uploaded. This information was then furnished to partners in the University of Mississippi Libraries for inclusion into eGrove, its institutional repository.

It was hoped that the information gleaned from the interviews, on the completed, worksheets, and the process of uploading the results to the eGrove institutional repository, could be used for future library work with AI art.

## Results

### Interviewee 1

Interviewee 1 (I1) was a Studio Art Printmaking MFA student in their final year of study with a specialization in screen printing. At the beginning of the interview, I1 expressed the difficulty in acquiring the proper machinery and materials for large-scale screen printing since it had gone out of fashion some years ago, especially in light of the recent resurgence in interest in handmade, tactile, and retro art forms, as they put it. When asked about AI-generated art, I1 immediately made a face and suggested that it was extremely problematic for a number of reasons, not least of which in its possibility for unethical use and creating unauthorized art "in the style of" an artist without their permission. They had not previously experimented with the Dall-E 2 service or any other AI-generation platform before.

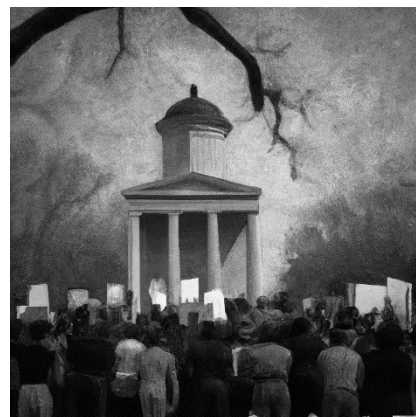
When asked about their choice of subject matter, I1 said that they explored political themes of social unrest and protest, having participated in several such protests in the period 2020-2021. They were then invited to submit a query to Dall-E 2. Their choice was "oil painting of abortion protest in Mississippi," which was rejected by the Dall-E 2 system as being against its terms of use. I1 speculated that the word "abortion" was the cause of this, and reflected that having it as a forbidden word made Dall-E 2's rejection of it as a search term a (perhaps unintentional) political statement.

They then revised their query to "oil painting of a protest in Mississippi," which successfully completed and delivered four images. I1 expressed pleasant surprise in the quality of the images, noting that several seemed like they could have been depicting locations at the University of Mississippi. Their choice among this image group was image #1, as it most clearly communicated both "protest" with its visible placards and "Mississippi" with its columned and domed central building, the central structure of which they noted was "Lyceum-like," referring to the central administrative building of the University of Mississippi campus known as the Lyceum. They also expressed that image #3 would have been a stronger candidate if not for a strange "glitch" in its midst.

When invited to iterate on their query, I1 revised it to "oil painting of a 2020-2021 protest in Mississippi." They hesitated in choosing a specific year before requesting both, and explained that as they had been to actual Mississippi protests during that time span, it would provide a useful standard of comparison. This request was accepted, and once again I1 professed to be pleasantly surprised by the results. They specifically noted image #2 as containing a real

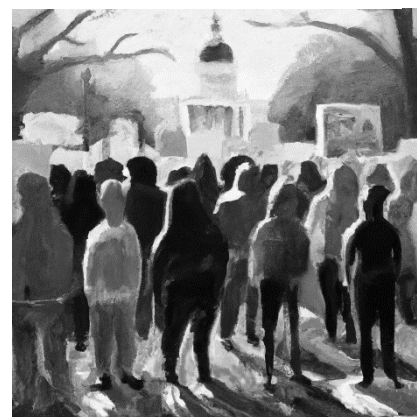
**Figure 1**

*Oil painting of a protest in mississippi*



**Figure 2**

*Oil painting of a 2020-2021 protest*



Mississippi landmark, the state capitol building in Jackson, and image #3 as depicting a roadside protest of the sort common in rural Mississippi, especially in places where there is not an urban area to use. #4 was dismissed as appearing more like a crowd and containing too many photorealistic elements, while #1 was acknowledged as depicting a protest but with little to distinguish it as Mississippi (in particular, they noted that a feature in the middle may have been the Washington Monument).

Invited to submit a final iteration, I1 decided to "lean into" the appearance of the Mississippi State Capitol building and specify not only a time but a place, with the query "oil painting of a 2020-2021 protest in Jackson Mississippi." This query was accepted as well, and I1 noted that the results were much less abstract and more like photos than the other iterations. They pointed out several Jackson landmarks such as the state capitol and the Regents building in the resulting images (#1, #2, and #4 specifically) and noted with pleasant surprise that all the images appeared to depict protests, with one reminding them of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests and another with two red-hooded figures in the foreground that evoked protestors dressed as characters from *The Handmaid's Tale* at a later protest. They chose image #4 from the group as a result of this, despite it featuring a "glitch."

## Interviewee 2

Interviewee 2 (I2) was also a Studio Art Printmaking MFA student but was in their first year rather than their last; they were also an international student and a non-native English speaker. Their area of emphasis was on cyanotype printing, with espoused interest in natural scenes and environmental issues. They said that they had experience working with digital art, but much preferred making physical prints for the tactile and handmade qualities involved. When asked about AI-generated art, I2 noted that they had heard of it but were not especially familiar with it, and had not previously experimented with the Dall-E 2 service or any other AI-generation platform before.

When asked about their choice of subject matter for a Dall-E 2 query, they chose to focus on words that reflected their medium and their interests with the query "printmaking of lake pollution contamination." Initially unable to decide between the words "pollution" and "contamination," they ultimately asked to include them both. The query was accepted, and like I1 I2 was immediately impressed with the results. Interestingly, despite no mention of cyanotype printing in the query, I2 noted that image #3 closely resembled an unfinished cyanotype, especially with its stark teal color and monochromatic exposure. They chose #3 as the best image from that group as a result.

**Figure 3**

*Oil painting of a 2020-2021 protest in jackson mississippi*



**Figure 4**

*Printmaking of lake pollution, contamination*



When invited to iterate on their query, I2 once again followed I1 in "leaning into" an emergent quality they noticed in the images and requested the query "cyanotype printmaking of lake pollution contamination." Even more so than the first search, I2 was visibly impressed by the results and said as much, noting that the resulting images did indeed display all the characteristics one might expect of a cyanotype. They were especially impressed by image #2, which was also their choice as the best image resulting from this query, as they noted its compositional strength in juxtaposing visibly polluted water with seemingly clear and calm water with a city skyline in the distance.

As a final iteration, I2 added "scientific features" to the previous query to form "scientific features cyanotype printmaking of lake pollution contamination." This resulted in another set of images that bore the proper hallmarks of cyanotypes, according to I2, but also two of the results bore features of collages, which they found surprising as collage was not an especially scientific feature. They chose image #2 from this set as the best, citing again its compositional strength and contrast in water texture. After the conclusion of the interview I2 specifically asked about the photograph-like qualities of the Dall-E 2 images, wondering if they depicted real places that had merely had a cyanotype filter added by AI. When told that this was probably not the case, they were visibly intrigued, and a short discussion about AI-generated landscapes and AI-generated human faces a la "This Person Does Not Exist" (*Random AI Generated Photos of Fake Persons*, 2023).

### Interviewee 3

Interviewee 3 (I3) was an instructor in the Art History department with a specialization in the history of photography and a doctorate from a major international art school. Of the interviewees, they were the only one to have actively experimented with Dall-E 2 on their own, joining shortly after the waitlist beta ended in September 2022. They said that they had enjoyed using the platform, and were excited about its possibilities as both an artists' tool and a gadfly to facilitate discussion of topics in art and photography.

I3 was also the only interviewee who came pre-prepared with several possible topics. They eventually settled on a modification of a quote from *Les Chants de Maldoror* by the

**Figure 5**

*Cyanotype printmaking of lake pollution, contamination*



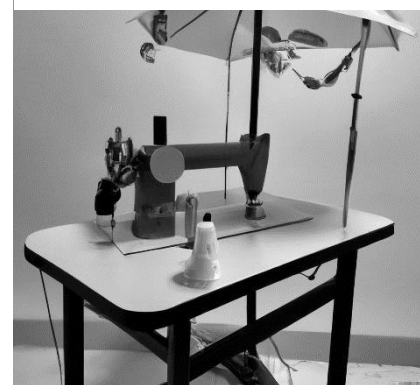
**Figure 6**

*Scientific features cyanotype printmaking of lake pollution, contamination*



**Figure 7**

*The chance meeting on a lab table of an umbrella and a sewing machine*



Comte de Lautréamont; the writer had described a young man as "beautiful as the chance meeting upon a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella" and that had been embraced by early Dadaists and Surrealists as an admirable definition of surrealism. Rendered as "the chance meeting upon a dissecting table of an umbrella and a sewing machine," it was rejected by Dall-E 2 as being a violation of its terms of service. I3 noted that perhaps it was interpreting "dissecting table" as a request for gory and disturbing imagery, and agreed to bowdlerize the request and try again.

Their second attempt, "the chance meeting upon a lab table of an umbrella and a sewing machine," was accepted by Dall-E 2 and generated results. I3 expressed some disappointment in the prosaic images that followed, which struck them as insufficiently surreal for a response to one definition of surrealism and too much like still lifes. Their preferred image, #4, did at least include both an umbrella and a sewing machine. I3 also noted that Dall-E 2 seemed to be interpreting the umbrella as a beach umbrella, pointing out some accoutrements that seemed to suggest that in image #4.

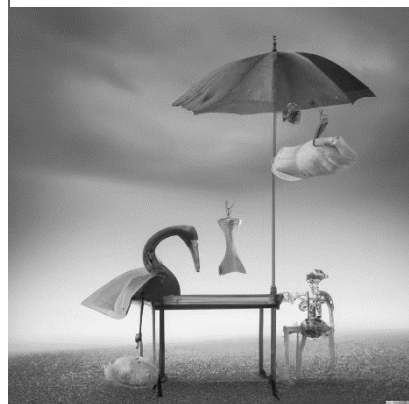
When offered the chance to refine their request, I3 decided to add the word "surrealism" to their query to try and force the image into that genre. When asked if they wanted the word at the beginning or the end, they decided to try both in sequence, starting with "surrealism the chance meeting upon a lab table of an umbrella and a sewing machine." I3 stated that the result was much closer to their conception of surrealism, and specifically mentioned a Salvador Dali influence in the "melty, biomorphic" features of the images. They chose image #1 as the best, with its interpretation of an "anthropomorphic sewing machine" drawing praise.

Rather than refine their request further, I3 moved the word "surrealism" to the end of their query to produce "the chance meeting upon a lab table of an umbrella and a sewing machine surrealism." They noted that these results were "a little less surrealist" but was able to identify more aspects that they thought may have been taken from actual practicing surrealist artists. In particular, their preferred image, #3, featured a ladies' shoe they said reminded them of Rene Magritte, and a strange bird-figure they found evocative of Max Ernst or Joan Miro. In addition to image #3, two others contained a dressmaker's torso manikin, which I3 found reminded them once again of Salvador Dali.

At this point, I3 asked to try Dall-E 2's new "outpainting" feature with their favorite image from the previous step. This allows an image to be "expanded" beyond its original borders, and was at

**Figure 8**

*Surrealist the chance meeting on a lab table of an umbrella and a sewing machine*



**Figure 9**

*The chance meeting on a lab table of an umbrella and a sewing machine surrealist*



the time the only way to create a Dall-E 2 image larger than 1024×1024 pixels. The result was a 1728x1536 image which added a second mannikin and ominous "umbrella clouds," a result I3 found very much in keeping with both the original query and the desired surrealism theme.

Finally, I3 wanted to submit the same query to the standard Dall-E 2 to see if there was any difference. As a result, "the chance meeting upon a lab table of an umbrella and a sewing machine surrealism" was input again. I3 found image #2 to be their favorite and agreed that the results were similar, with dressmaker's dolls and birds as prominent themes. Strangely, the bird in that image was identifiable as a specific species—the brown-headed nuthatch, a Mississippi native—that had been used as an earlier prompt on that Dall-E 2 account. This suggested that, to an extent, the images were being influenced by past queries, something that I3 said would be ripe for a future study.

**Figure 10**

*Outpainting of "the chance meeting on a lab table of an umbrella and a sewing machine surrealism"*



## Questionnaire

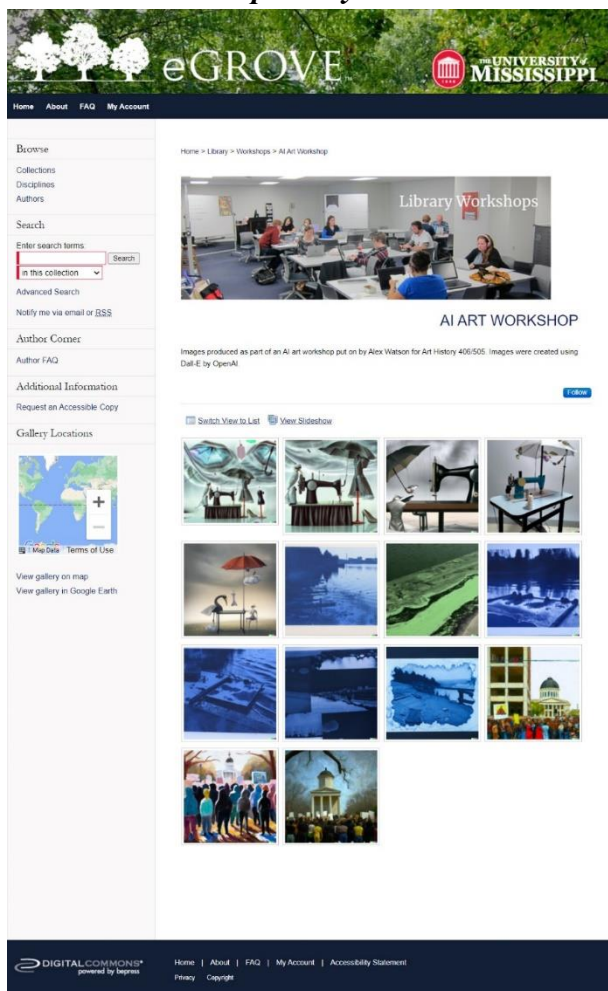
Each of the interviewees also filled out the questionnaire as requested. Interviewee 3 was the only one to add any additional comments or to use the "Other" field. Specifically, they noted that the name of the art generator should include its version, and that the name of an uploaded or edited original should be included only if known. Their responses in the "Other" field were: "the number of images generated for each search term" and "the more info, the better!"

**Table 1**

	<b>Interviewee 1</b>	<b>Interviewee 2</b>	<b>Interviewee 3</b>
<b>The name of the person who submitted the art generation request</b>	X		X
<b>Any affiliation(s) and organization(s) the submitter belongs to</b>			X
<b>The name of the art generator used</b>	X	X	X
<b>The date and/or time that the art was generated</b>	X	X	X
<b>The exact phrase or words entered into the art generator</b>	X		X

<b>A prose description of what the request was intended to generate (whether or not it succeeded)</b>			X
<b>The name of any recognizable art schools or styles present in the image, if any</b>			X
<b>The name of any artists whose recognizable trademarks are present, if any</b>		X	X
<b>The name of any original work(s) uploaded or edited</b>	X	X	X
<b>Any failed or alternate iterations of the generated art</b>	X		X
<b>The original dimensions of the image</b>		X	
<b>The computer, operating system, and/or browser used to access the generator</b>		X	X
<b>Subject keywords or terms</b>		X	X
<b>Other (please specify below)</b>			X

## Institutional Repository



After the workshop was completed, each of the images was uploaded into a shared folder and each of the survey sheets was also scanned and uploaded. Working with the curators of the eGrove institutional repository at the University of Mississippi, images and metadata for the workshop were uploaded in the "Library Workshops" category.

Due to technical limitations, only some of the metadata could be included with each image in the form of a comment. This metadata was included in the item's description as well as in the comments field. The system did allow for the specific interviewees to each be "credited" with their generation and linked to their identity within the system.

The same technical limitations prevented the failed or alternate iterations of each image generation from being included for the interviewees who believed that this information was important. As a result, only the interviewees' pick as the "best" image from each query, as well as the single use of the "Outpainting" feature, were included in the institutional repository.

## Analysis

The workshop succeeded in its goal of encouraging conversation and gathering information. All interviewees were interested and engaged in the topic despite disparate fields of interest, all engaged with their prompts and Dall-E 2's output thoughtfully and within familiar art frameworks, and all seemed to come away with a positive feeling about the overall process.

All three interviewees expressed surprise at the Dall-E 2 generations, whether it was with the platform's ability to work with a relatively obscure cyanotype visual style (Interviewee 2), the inclusion of real buildings or popular culture references (Interviewee 1), or the lack of surrealism in images when presented with a surreal query (Interviewee 3). Furthermore, the interviewees as a whole were able to bring to bear a suite of analytical skills and field-specific understandings to interrogate the Dall-E 2 images in a way that was specific to their chosen art fields—and one that would not have been obvious to a non-artist, even an investigator who was the long-serving art librarian. This underscores the importance of close collaboration with artists and art/art history departments in any library work involving AI art generation, preservation, or storage, regardless of platform.



Putting the interviewees' generations into the eGrove institutional repository proved challenging due to technical limitations; while it is possible to include the various types of metadata provided by Dall-E 2 and suggested by the participants in the system, it may require a good deal of back-end groundwork and bespoke alterations. Those are definitely issues to consider for the future when—or if—large numbers of AI-generated images find themselves in institutional repositories. The metadata about each item proved especially difficult to wrangle—while Dall-E 2 provided a record of the prompt and date/time the images were generated, much of the rest had to be reconstructed through thorough and painstaking note-taking.

All three interviewees were also familiar with the concept of AI art generators like Dall-E 2 and Stable Diffusion, if not by name, and one of them had even experimented with Dall-E 2 before. But the breakneck pace at which the technology had been rolled out meant that their impressions were out of date as of the workshop. For instance, Dall-E had been in a closed beta over the summer of 2022 and running close to capacity, generating error messages due to server issues; it had also been strictly limited to images of 1024 x 1024 pixels in size.

### Conclusion

These latter issues show the difficulty of working with AI-generated images—as well as text and other formats, presumably—in the context of standard academic life. With the rapid advancement of this technology, and the evolution of its perception, in just a few months, keeping pace with it as librarians and scholars is very much a case of running the Red Queen's Race from Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* and running as fast as possible just to stay in one place.

However, as a pilot study and proof of concept for the use of interviews with practicing artists to glean information useful to libraries and librarians vis-à-vis AI art, and as a demonstration of some of the hidden blind spots and difficulties in working with this sort of content, the project can be labeled a qualified success.

But between the time when the workshop was scheduled in August 2022 and the time when it was run in November, all this had changed. Dall-E 2 left its closed beta in late September 2022, added its “Outpainting” feature to expand images beyond 1024 x 1024 pixels in size in late August, mere days after the workshop was scheduled, and all server capacity issues seemed to have been resolved by November—there were no server capacity issues evident in the workshop.

Furthermore, in the short period of time since the workshop, this gap has increased. As above, several major uses of AI-generated artwork in the publishing and art world have led to an uproar among practicing artists (Codega, 2022; Roose, 2022) resulting in a widespread backlash among practicing artists (Babbs, 2023; Shaffi, 2023). If the concept was in its infancy in November 2022, by early 2023 it was well-known to many artists and perhaps on the verge of becoming a full-blown panic (Cheung, 2023; Deck, 2023), perhaps not unreasonably as many artists fear losing work to automation that may have been trained on their content without consent (Deck, 2023; Kim, 2022).

As such, it seems that librarians and archivists need to plan for when, not if, images that are created in whole or in part by generative AI are entered in institutional data structures—including codifying metadata standards, fields, and coding. Seeking input from actual practicing artists, as above, may be a good first step. This also raises some further ethical questions: for instance, if generative AI datasets include images that were taken without permission, does that mean there is no ethical use of generative AI artwork? If no ethical use case exists, what does that mean for libraries, archives, or institutions ingesting said AI-generated materials? Is more metadata the answer, perhaps in a form similar to that suggested above? All of these issues will hopefully be addressed in scholarly literature in the near term.

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# **New Expansions of Open Access to Benefit Research and Researchers**

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## **Abstract**

This presentation emphasizes the importance of open access journals, discusses new federal policy that mandates that federally funded research be made freely available upon publication, and explores some possible predictions for the future of open access. Open access has evolved over the years with several types of open access and licensing. Open access benefits researchers, medical professionals, and scientists the world over who want to get their work viewed by other researchers. In addition, some higher education institutions have invested in transformative agreements with publishers in order to move from subscriptions towards paying to publish with the goal of expanding open access. With the number of open access journals continually increasing, academic librarians are challenged to evaluate and create access to them. Academic librarians are charged with educating researchers about open access benefits, including using data about their research to support tenure and promotion. Pitfalls, including predatory open access journals and lack of peer review for some open access journals, are also areas of concern. The presenter's findings explore recent expansions of open access through new federal policy and transformative agreements, and predictions for the future of open access journals.

# **Zettelkasten Note-Taking in Zotero for Grounded Writing**

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University of Missouri

## **Abstract**

In an age of paper mills and paper-writing AI's, instructors are realizing that, if they are to teach students to learn through a process of research and writing, they need to teach and evaluate the research, reading, and note-taking phase of writing, not just a final product or even a draft. Both students and working scholars can struggle with "leakage" between the information taken in through sources or arising from fleeting thoughts, and production of organized, scholarly writing. The Zettelkasten method of note-taking can resolve both these issues by forcing the practitioner to tighten the relationship between reading, organization, analysis, synthesis, and writing. The free, open source Zotero tool provides affordances for ingesting and citing sources, storing notes, and connecting notes with sources and each other, to bring the method to life. This paper introduces the Zettelkasten method as actualized in Zotero and offers suggestions on how to use this method to create assignments that move the focus away from smooth writing and onto the student's thoughtful use and integration of research sources.

# **Building Community: Library Leadership of a Common Book Program**

Jill Becker

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## **Abstract**

Common book programs (also known as common read programs, one book programs, common reading experiences, etc.) are present at many higher education institutions. Typically, these programs are administered by a student success office or the provost's office in connection with student success initiatives, particularly those focused on engagement and retention of first-year students. Libraries and librarians are not unfamiliar with large-scale reading programs. However, much of the literature about these programs pertains to public libraries and community reading initiatives. While there is evidence of academic libraries connecting with common read programs, it is often in the form of programming and events. It is less common for academic libraries to be the administrative home for these programs.

The KU Common Book program was established in 2012 and in its tenth year, KU Libraries took over administration of the program. This session will discuss the circumstances that led KU Libraries to take on the program, the opportunities and challenges that come with inheriting a campus-wide initiative, and set forth a direction for assessing campus-wide engagement with a common book. In addition to a shift in the program's administrative home, the program's audience has shifted from a first-year experience initiative to an effort to engage all levels of students at the university. This is accomplished by collaborating with faculty and instructors to integrate the book into courses and curriculum, and campus partners to develop co-curricular programming and events to support the program. This type of engagement is not dissimilar to collaborations that librarians already do with faculty and campus partners, but focusing these conversations on the common book program is a new challenge. Additionally, there is a responsibility to assess the program to demonstrate that the investment of human and monetary resources benefits both the library and the university.

Attendees at this session will discuss ways in which academic libraries support common book programs, consider how reading and discussion of common books can advance institutional goals surrounding equity, diversity, and inclusion, and explore new directions for evaluating and assessing common book programs that are led by academic libraries.

# **Digital Media and Innovation Lab: A Must Have for Academic Libraries**

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University of Missouri

Joseph Sabo  
Senior Library Information Specialist  
University of Missouri

## **Abstract**

The presenters posit that Digital Media and Innovation Labs (DMiL) are an essential part of modern academic libraries. DMiLs play a role in student engagement, help support changing models of learning and scholarship, and support knowledge creation. Not only do DMiLs bring students into libraries, but they also help students achieve their goals by providing resources, guides, training, and opportunities to explore new technologies. DMiLs can be used by faculty for both in-class and out-of-class learning. By providing spaces, resources, and support, DMiLs allow libraries to support what Vygotsky calls the ‘zone of proximal development’ in student learning. In addition, by exploring and providing showcase projects using lab resources and innovative technologies, lab staff and student workers can help generate ideas for class projects and assignments, as well as complete a variety of projects for libraries.

For example, the DMiL at University of Missouri libraries supported an instructor who transformed their final class assignment into a public service announcement on environmental issues in the local community by providing training and support to use green-screen and filming equipment. The resources and technical knowledge and expertise in the DMiL also helped the libraries and librarians plan digital media projects like informational videos, podcasts, and other digital content.

The presenters invite participants to share their ideas as the presenters discuss other projects and initiatives that make Digital Media and Innovation Labs an integral part of any modern academic library.



## **Digital Libraries as Digital Third Place: Virtual Programming in the Age of Loneliness**

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University of Nebraska at Omaha

Jenny Haddon  
Processing and Outreach Archivist  
University of Nebraska at Kearney

### **Abstract**

Physical library spaces have long been used for community groups and programming that serves to bring people together over common interests, an essential function amid the loneliness epidemic that affects so many populations, especially the elderly, some minority groups, low-income or homeless individuals, and those feeling unsafe or marginalized elsewhere, such as BIPOC or LGBTQ+ individuals. This public health role needs consideration alongside informational and circulation services. Some libraries have already begun the transition of their programming to the digital realm, particularly due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic when many libraries were forced to rapidly transition online. Vital community services have had to be reimagined in delivery as interactive social spaces became even more necessary, and demand for libraries to find ways to bridge the digital divide and expand technological services to their communities escalated.

The main issue to consider is that digital libraries cannot be viewed simply as passive electronic bookshelves. They need to provide active programming and interactions on-par with physical spaces, creatively initiating and encouraging social interaction and education – even if that means teaching patrons how to use the technology required in order to participate. Critically, then, the library's role also needs to expand, as the increase in digital presence creates an added responsibility for intelligent information sourcing and education in fact checking, eliminating fake news sources, and attempting to reducing online extremism. The communal isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the forefront the public health conversation about the increase in self-reported loneliness, the dangers of this trend, both in terms of physical and social health, and how to address it. To do so digitally is a natural extension of the role libraries already serve in their brick-and-mortar role.

# **Digital Libraries as Digital Third Place: Virtual Programming in the Age of Loneliness**

## **Introduction**

Brick-and-mortar libraries are commonly cited as examples of “third places:” community building spaces outside of home and work which embody qualities of equity and access without placing demands upon those who use them. However, as libraries increasingly invest in digital services, can they continue to serve in that role through virtual programming? Amid what public health officials are currently referring to as a “loneliness epidemic,” with the highest self-reported rates of loneliness and social isolation measured since sociologists began tracking it in the 1970s, the community-building role of libraries is perhaps more essential than ever. While much has been written on libraries as third place, digital libraries and, to a lesser extent, digital third places, literature examining the possibility of digital libraries as digital third places is scant. By examining existing library efforts to address loneliness among their patrons, virtual library public health initiatives, and existing research on loneliness in the age of social media, this paper argues that digital third places can indeed serve the same community-building function as physical third places, given certain circumstances and intention of design. This paper also offers an identified list of features common to successful digital third places, as well as likely pitfalls which occur due to deficiencies in design and moderation and concludes with a list of suggestions for virtual library programming with third place in mind.

## **Libraries as Third Places**

The story that libraries tell about themselves is that they are places for everyone. Whether public or academic, the guiding values of libraries revolve around equity, access and, aside from a few standard rules for behavior, being institutions that place no demands upon the people who use them. No purchases are required and, once there, a patron is free to use the space for more-or-less any purpose which best suits their needs. Whether that purpose is conducting research, finding summer reads, accessing the internet, or simply enjoying some pressure-free moments, libraries pride themselves on being there to serve. For many, libraries are a cornerstone of democratic societies.

All of the qualities listed above are what enable libraries to function as third places. In *The Great Good Place*, sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1999) discussed the value of third places to communities. These are spaces, neither work nor home, which serve an essential community-building role by facilitating socialization. Essential to the function of third places is that they offer equity of access and demand little to no obligation from those who enter them – they are places to simply “be.” Jeffries et. al, (2009), describe the value of a third place as offering “stress relief from the everyday demands of both home and work. It provides the feeling of inclusiveness and belonging associated with participating in a group’s social activities, without the rigidity of policy or exclusiveness of club or organization membership”. Commonly cited examples other than libraries include churches, community art spaces, coffee shops, public parks, and playgrounds (Harris, 2007; Montgomery & Miller, 2011; Slatter & Howard, 2013) as well as a local bar or neighborhood barbershop where regulars might gather to converse with one

another far more often than they do to get a haircut. These are places to socialize, forge social bonds, and exist without pressures or expectations (Rosenbaum, 2006; Rosenbaum et. al., 2007).

Research reveals other commonalities in that third places tend to be a neutral ground, with no political and few, if any, financial obligations for those who visit. They are also a leveled place, where community is emphasized over social status; conversation and community are central activities, though not necessarily the only activities and; finally, third places are easily accessible - requiring little in the way of travel and scheduling to utilize them (Sleeman, 2012). For libraries, in particular, these qualities make those spaces valuable resources for marginalized groups including, but not limited to, homeless individuals, the LGBTQ community, and immigrant communities (Kelleher, 2013; Philbin et. al., 2019; Scott, 2011).

The capacity of libraries as third places is strengthened by the fact that they are able, through offering a variety of programming, become an “intermediate and open space for adventures and surprises” (Elmborg, 2011, p. 346). This also depends on whether space and programming are designed with such intentions (Elmborg, 2011, p. 346). As provisioners of information and providers of space, libraries accommodate and serve multiple communities of interest by providing space and programming specifically designed for them. Libraries, both public and academic, as third place, are so ubiquitous in their myriad of services and roles that we’ve perhaps come to take them for granted. The growth of digital libraries, however, presents new challenges for libraries in their community-building and programming capacities.

### **The Rapid Growth of Digital Libraries**

The move into digital library services was significantly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the first year of which saw 430 million eBooks circulated through the digital reading platform Overdrive alone --- a 33% increase over 2019 (Albanese, 2023). That trend continued into 2021, albeit at a reduced pace, with eBook loans topping half a billion, a further 16% increase. Even after the era of lockdowns ended, Overdrive reported 555 million items e-circulated in 2022 (Albanese, 2023). Academic libraries, even as universities have returned to in-person classes, also continue to see an increased demand for virtual services from students. An industry study by Research and Markets predicts the online education market to more than double 2021 numbers by 2027 (Renub Research, 2022). COVID-19 certainly required a sudden, massive move to temporarily exclusively online services, however that increased engagement merely accelerated existing trends.

The response of libraries throughout has been one that is primarily concerned with increasing access to and delivery of services and materials. Ashiq, Jabeen and Mahmood (2022) surveyed 23 practice articles of both academic and public library pandemic responses and found that digital library initiatives could be divided into distinct areas of infrastructure development, leadership and policy, training, and information literacy. Missing from the articles that these researchers surveyed is evidence of strong consideration of interactive programming and the community-building function of libraries. It is likely this was simply a matter of urgency - the sudden dramatic change in need for library services required by the pandemic meant that digital circulation, training and policy were priorities, and the dangers of health-related misinformation motivated libraries to offer online fact-checking and information literacy programming

(Martzoukou, 2020). For academic libraries there was also the added responsibility of continuing to support the curriculum, which itself was undergoing a sudden, rapid transition into online learning (Meththa & Wang, 2020). However, once libraries have sorted out infrastructure, policy, workflows and training, they then have the opportunity to move on to other programming, including those that would allow them to function as digital third places. As Liu, Akram, and Abrar (2020) note, mobile digital library penetration is already above 90% for all libraries. Given the ease of mobile use, and considering recent eBook circulation trends, libraries should account for the fact that some of their patron base will, from now on, primarily or even exclusively utilize digital library services and adjust their deliverables accordingly.

Research on the subject of digital libraries as digital third places is currently limited. Lawson (2004) was an early call for intention of digital library third place design, writing that “virtual libraries should try not to lose the virtues they have established as traditional third places and should strive to be the model of a virtual third place” (p. 14). Houghton (2013) recognizes that a library is not simply the sum-total of the collections housed and services offered and that digital libraries can function as a community-building presence because of the established ability of librarians to design programming which facilitates interaction between people in community networks. Neither of these sources, however, go into much detail about what such intentional design would look like in a virtual space. Arguably, until recently perhaps there was not seen to be much need for it, but the past several years have proven the powerful need for open spaces in the digital realm where knowledge-seeking, social services and community-building can safely intersect, and libraries and digital libraries are uniquely positioned to answer that need.

### **The Loneliness Epidemic**

While social media and the internet have made each person more connected to more people than at any time in human history, the country is also in the midst of what public health officials are calling a “loneliness epidemic,” with the highest self-reported rates of loneliness since sociologists began tracking that data (Jeste, Lee & Cacioppo, 2020). It seems counterintuitive – people can, at a moment’s notice, reach out to the majority of individuals who have ever been considered friends, whether through Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or simply via text message. Individuals are more apprised of the day-to-day lives of their friends than any generation prior. Once, catching up on the lives of high school and college friends ten or twenty years later would be something for a reunion, a wedding, a funeral, even a chance meeting at an airport. Now, many people are kept apprised of the careers and families of people they have not seen in years by seeing their status updates. And yet, surveys such as one conducted in early 2022 by the New York City Department of Health found that 57% of respondents felt lonely at least some of the time, and 67% had felt socially isolated earlier weeks (Chokshi, 2022).

The reason why growing loneliness is such a concern for public health officials is not limited to personal happiness. Loneliness has real, observed, physical health ramifications. Holt-Lunstad et al (2019) found that the influence of social isolation on mortality was comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. The reasons are myriad – people with friends are more likely to be active; lonely people are more likely to consume alcohol and lead sedentary lives. People who are lonely have a higher risk of depression, hypertension, dementia or Alzheimer’s disease. (LeRoy et. al, 2017). These effects are amplified for individuals over the age of 65 and a 2020 report from the National Academy of Sciences found that social isolation was associated with a 50% increased

risk of dementia, along with increased risks of stroke, heart disease, depression, anxiety, and suicide (NAS, 2020). Loneliness is literally killing people, and the problem only seems to be getting worse.

There is a role for libraries to play here, though, and one which lends the idea of developing digital third spaces more urgency. A systematic review of literature looking at the causes of this dramatic increase in loneliness identified “weakening of local institutions that strengthened social capital, and the ways the internet is used by young adults” as two of the major culprits (Crowe et. al, 2022). In other words, a loss of third places, coupled with a lack of engagement with digital third places. Even though libraries persist in the same community-building role as they always have, the move into online social lives means that many people are less likely to socialize in physical spaces. If libraries are interested in functioning as digital libraries, now is the time to do so. To do that, libraries need a coherent set of guiding principles.

### **Library Responses to Loneliness: Physical and Virtual**

Some public health officials and researchers are noting how libraries can function as a facilitator of social interaction and engagement and therefore as a partial antidote to loneliness. In large part, this is due to already being a space that is commonly used by the public in a way that does not demand financial compensation. Thus, existing outside the realms of commerce, work and home life, they’re primed as a site of third place value. Khan positions this capacity in the context of a UK government plan announced in 2018 to address the loneliness epidemic: approximately half the adult population in the United Kingdom (and 43% of those over 55) use public libraries to some degree, which makes a solution obvious. (Khan, 2018).

The capacity of libraries to function as a facilitator of public health outcomes is sufficient that, according to a team lead by social and behavioral scientist Morgan Philbin, public libraries should be considered a component of the health system itself (Philbin, 2019). While examining the role of libraries in a number of areas including, but not limited to, providing access to healthcare, addiction services, and employment services, they specifically note that libraries can help alleviate feelings of social exclusion among marginalized groups, including LGBTQIA+ youth who do not feel safe at home (Philbin, 2019). Other researchers have also noted that libraries can often serve as a refuge for LGBTQ individuals, a demographic found to be disproportionately at risk of social isolation (Hawkins, 2022; GLSEN, 2023; Barriage et. al, 2021; Gorcynski & Fasoli, 2021, Moagi et. al, 2021).

The emphasis on library use by the elderly is important. Franssen et. al (2020) found that self-reported loneliness was highest among those over the age of 50, and there is no disagreement that the same group is also at particularly high risk of negative health effects from loneliness (Luanaigh & Lawlor, 2008; Luo, 2012; Gerst Emerson, 2015). In addressing this, Khan continues that programming targeted at specific age groups offer socialization opportunities (Khan, 2018). Similarly, libraries which offer story time sessions for young children can offer parents a place to socialize with peers, and teen programming, such as the YOUmedia center at Chicago Public Libraries, a space for collaboration and creation without the usual library noise restrictions, serve a similar peer-connection role for youth (Austin, et. al, 2011). What all these studies examining the role of libraries in combating loneliness have in common is a focus on the

social role of libraries, both public and academic, as physical third place. Facilitation of real-world social interaction and offering safe spaces are established roles for physical libraries. Addressing the loneliness epidemic in a virtual setting, however, is not.

Physical interaction in library spaces is well-documented as an effective response to combating loneliness – whether it be through makerspaces, displays, workshops, cultural or ESL programming, book groups or social gatherings (Johnson, 2016; Arts Council England, 2018; Princh, 2020). A study of Canadian libraries combating elder loneliness examined various tactics for encouraging group interactions and bridging age gaps with knitting sessions, digital literacy clubs, movie or quiz nights, and fitness classes, with one respondent stating that refreshments are often served in order to surreptitiously offer food to anyone who may be low-income with limited access to regular meals or snacks (Baluk, Griffin & Gillett, 2021). However, an easy connection to the topic of digital libraries as digital third places here is Parkinson, Schuster & Mulcahy (2022), which specifically noted the essential component of communities of common interest to functioning digital third places. As libraries already have extensive experience in facilitating such groups, extension into a digital realm would be a next logical step.

### **Recommendations: Designing Digital Library Programming with Third Place Intention**

Can virtual spaces function in the same community-building capacity as brick-and-mortar third places? If so, what sort of design do digital libraries need to incorporate into virtual services to ensure they function as third places? How can digital libraries continue to function as this essential community cornerstone? While the simple extension of circulation and reference into the digital realm may satisfy basic functionality for remote users, they do not offer the same capacity for community building as do physical spaces. If libraries are to continue to function at the same level as a third place amid the continued growth of digital services and use, then at least some of those services need to function as an analog for the possibilities of physical space. Otherwise, as a library's digital services continue to grow, that library's function as third place will necessarily diminish. Every hour of labor spent by libraries developing online services is an hour not spent developing in-person programming.

In terms of libraries, the takeaways detailed in this paper can be used to inform how digital library programming is designed to address the loneliness epidemic in our patrons. Such a goal is a natural extension of the role libraries already serve in society: that of third place and of being essential sites for community building. However, while the role of libraries as places that facilitate socialization is established, such is not the case for digital library offerings. And while often merely providing the physical space for socialization, such as a book club popular with senior citizens, allows for social interaction to occur on its own, online interaction is a much trickier animal. The simplest form of digital library services – allowing access to materials – is not one where a digital third place can occur. For it to occur, design with intention is essential. And while such an approach can have different outcomes depending on type of interactive platform, age of user, and method of use, in the context of libraries, certain universal guiding principles can apply:

- Design digital library services that move beyond simply providing access to electronic materials and allowing for virtual reference.

- Re-conceptualize the role of virtual libraries to include facilitation of meaningful social interaction, which is essential to community building and addressing issues of loneliness and social isolation.
- Create virtual spaces where communities of interest can gather online and engage in organic social interaction.
- Rather than being a way for libraries to broadcast informational programming, these spaces should function as third places, embodying the same features of equity, access, and obligation free social interaction between participants.
- Design library programming where contributions from patrons are not only encouraged but are integral to the design.
- Design library programming in which patrons engage in active creation and share those creations with their peers.
- Design library programming suitable for different levels of interaction - some patrons function well in large groups while others require more intimate, low-energy environments.

It is also essential that moderation policies be enacted to combat toxic behavior and ensure a positive experience for attendees. Stevens et. al (2017) and Parkinson, Schuster & Mulcahy (2022) stress that competent mediation and facilitation is essential to discourage toxic behaviors and promote organic socialization. Here, it is important to remember to focus on facilitation, and avoid moderation tactics that become dictatorial. Quoting the latter, “there is a balance between facilitating opportunities for interaction while allowing consumers the freedom to engage in naturalistic conversations, with service providers needing to find the optimal point for their service community” (p. 121). The goal is to ensure a positive space where organic, as opposed to forced, socialization can occur.

### **Conclusion**

Taking these suggestions into account will allow digital libraries to continue to function as third places in a manner analogous to their brick-and-mortar counterparts. In devoting labor and investment to the workflow responsibilities of digital libraries, to the infrastructure required, to funding and administration, libraries have established the necessary systems to allow for this type of programming. The initial focus on simple extension of circulation into the digital sphere was one required by the pressures of the pandemic, and the myriad library public health education initiatives that libraries undertook during the pandemic, have given libraries experience in moving programming into the digital realm, meaning existing workflows are in place to utilize in thinking about provisioning digital third places.

As Ashiq, Jabeen and Mahmood (2022) found in their literature survey, libraries that have moved into digital services have already devoted labor and time into developing infrastructure (digital circulation), leadership and policy, and training, along with initial forays into digital programming in the form of information literacy and public health education. Digital circulation and information literacy and public education programming are easily quantifiable. Circulation in simple terms of reference interviews and lent items, and outreach programming in terms of content created and attendance of virtual events. Virtual community building is perhaps less easily described in terms of simple statistics. What number can describe the cessation of

loneliness through the formation of an online friendship? Given the loss of many traditional third places, and the migration of so much of people's social lives into social media, the job of communicating the value of remaining third places has gained an added importance. Doing so will make future advocacy much easier and help ensure that these less-easily quantifiable benefits of libraries can be enjoyed by patrons in virtual spaces.



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# **Community Engagement: Academic and School Library Partnerships**

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## **Abstract**

Academic library and school library partnerships can benefit librarians and library media specialists as well as their communities. These partnerships can support student learning and enhance professional development skills. This case study at the University of Mississippi Libraries examines the process of identifying outreach projects that extend support to school library professionals and Mississippi high school students. This paper will discuss the timeline of challenges, opportunities, and events that led to new community engagements for academic librarians and local area school librarians. With legislative sessions attempting to pass bills that would hinder librarians' abilities to support student learning, academic librarians have stepped up to pursue more opportunities for professional development in the K-12 community. Future planning with university strategic initiatives and financial considerations are also discussed.

# **Community Engagement: Academic and School Library Partnerships**

## **Introduction**

Collaborative enhancements to student learning through partnerships between academic and school librarians is not new. Trude (2013) reflects on the challenges and opportunities for school librarians to seek local, state, and national connections to gain continued professional development. In 2022, the University of Mississippi Libraries (UML) actively sought to expand community engagement outreach. Academic librarians and deans from Mississippi universities met to discuss ways that UML and others could create more outreach opportunities, specifically for school librarians. For the past few years, UML has wanted to create goals that align with the university's mission in outreach and community engagement, yet barriers such as a shortage of staff and resources kept this from becoming a reality. In May 2023, the Head of Research and Instruction Services at UML was accepted into the University's inaugural Community Engagement Fellowship cohort, establishing UML as an official community engagement partner. UML's newly hired Outreach and Strategic Initiatives Librarian became a partner in planning the library's new outreach initiatives. From discussing needs with local information professionals, two opportunities that would benefit the K-12 community were identified: 1) creating a professional development day for school library specialists and 2) creating a library inquiry day for high school students. This case study examines how UML librarians developed programming to support outreach needs for their local school librarians and high school students.

## **Literature Review**

Civic engagement between faculty at universities and community partners has long been a theme in the academy. Boyer (1996) reiterates the importance of the work in universities to connect with problems addressed in the community through the scholarship of discovery, scholarship of integration, scholarship of sharing knowledge, and the application of knowledge (21-23). Likewise, professional development for librarians, regardless of academic, special, or school affiliations, is important in librarianship, and generally a requirement for advancement within the career both nationally and internationally (Bowen-Chang & Hosein, 2019; Gunasekera, 2021). Typically for academic librarians, "faculty development" is required for tenure and promotion, yet barriers to opportunities can inhibit participation (Fribley, et al., 2021). Finding existing community partnerships and expanding them is a positive theme in the literature for both academic libraries and school libraries. Reynolds (2021) expanded the longtime partnership between Tomball academic librarians and school librarians to include the local public librarians with a community art showcase designed to support community goals. In Alberta, CA, a community partnership between the college, school, and public libraries identified the benefits and challenges of established partnerships to enhance and expand library services with limited budget options (Sarjeant-Jenkins & Walker, 2014). Jackson & Hansen (2006), Groves (2019), and Hallem, et al. (2023) all evaluate case studies that emphasize the importance of school and academic librarians to collaborate to provide seamless information literacy instruction to high school students transitioning to college while forming mutually beneficial partnerships. Finally, professional training opportunities between academics and schools help provide a space for

discussions and collaborations to improve expertise in teaching by understanding the challenges and resources available to both groups.

## Methods

UML's Head of Research and Instruction Librarian partnered with the Outreach and Strategic Initiatives Librarian to identify campus and community partners to help design and develop agendas that could help UML explore two initiatives to enhance K-12 education. Working together, they created partnerships with the UML Friends of the Library, University of MS School of Education, Mississippi State University (MSU) librarians, and school library media specialists from Oxford and Lafayette County. Through these partnerships, two annual programs were developed: 1) School Library Symposium at the University of Mississippi Libraries and 2) Library Experience Day at the University of Mississippi Libraries.

Each year, the Mississippi Library Association hosts an annual conference to build partnerships while learning from others at academic, special, public, and school libraries. For the past several years, a downward trend in participation and programming for school libraries has affected attendance. In order to help school librarians succeed with professional development CEU credits, MSU established a one-day "MegaResources" workshop in 1999 designed to mimic a mini-conference. This workshop allows up to 100 school library media specialists from across the state to register to attend each February. Covering topics related to technology, instruction, and online databases, these workshops continue to serve as a major outreach effort to the K-12 community. Two recurring challenges MSU noted were: 1) an overwhelming number of librarians want to participate, and 2) participants sometimes struggle to cover the cost of attendance due to the location of the workshop and the time of year it is offered. At the 2022 meeting of librarians and deans, all agreed that if it is possible to extend similar services and new outreach programs throughout the state in locations such as Oxford and Hattiesburg, school librarians would have more opportunities for professional development that helps them prepare Mississippi students to succeed in college and careers.

Working with MSU librarians, UML librarians were able to attend the workshop in February 2023 and learn first-hand how to lead a similar workshop, including the opportunities and challenges discovered through surveying attendees. The workshop leader, Melody Dale, and an established conference planning committee met with UML librarians to discuss the workshop's timeline, logistics, programming, and future considerations. This partnership will help grow the UML symposium and better connect UM and MSU as partners for school librarian success in Mississippi.

Another outreach initiative that MSU had recently established, but no longer continues, is a one-day "Library Experience" for school librarians to bring selected students to visit the university library. "MSU, The Library Experience," was a day-long event designed for up to 10 high school librarians and 1-3 students from each school to learn about what university libraries provide, entice students to attend MSU, introduce students to the library profession, and connect and collaborate with supporters of libraries and information science. According to "MSU: The Library Experience" (n.d.) this successful outreach project for MSU Libraries began in 2018 and ended in 2022. During National Library Week in 2023, UML piloted a similar event with a group of 15 high school juniors from Oxford High School to see if this type of outreach initiative could be successful.

UML librarians established an outline for the day-long Library Experience Day event that benefits academic librarians as educators, school librarians as partners, and students as potential recruits to the university. It was an important goal for UML to remove barriers to success for local students, especially those who may be marginalized, to be able to visit the local university campus, library, and see the work of information professionals in an engaged unique tour.

The assessment tool for each outreach program will be a participant survey that librarians can use to analyze feedback about each event's success in programming, timing, location, and other factors that would enable or prohibit future participation. A long-term measure of success will be comparing the number of opportunities for school library professional development in the state as well as the satisfaction with the quality of programming at these workshops.

### **Discussion**

This year, the Mississippi Legislature considered multiple bills that would negatively impact the important work school librarians are doing to prepare students for college and careers. With book challenges exploding recently across southern states, it is a critical time to strengthen university connections to the K-12 community. This support system can connect scholars and researchers directly with school librarians in synergistic professional engagements. An important goal for UML is to support the teaching and learning needs of the campus and community researchers, faculty, staff, and students, and both initiatives help UML meet this goal.

UML has been able to create two distinct outreach programs to extend the Ole Miss Experience to school librarians and students by successfully working with campus and community partners and state library leaders to develop pathways in information science that identify a target group and established need. These workshops provide a clear path for UML to extend recruitment and to create a more inclusive environment for learning and inspiration for Mississippi students.

The UML goal of the symposium is to provide accessible professional development to 30-40 regional school librarians, with the first year's costs for registration, CEU's, parking, and meals all covered by university partners. UML librarians hope to develop connections between campus scholars and the K-12 community by having leaders in emerging fields engaging directly with school librarians during the symposium on topics like censorship, diversity, equity, inclusion, and emerging technology trends like artificial intelligence. For campus partners, extending awareness to university resources and researchers fulfills their desire for outreach. For community partners in the schools, this collaboration provides an affordable outlet to gain CEU credits and learn from peers and new partners ways to enhance K-12 education.

Feedback from the pilot Library Experience Day in April 2023 has been overwhelmingly positive. UML librarians will work with existing partners to develop the 2024 Library Experience Day agenda, keeping in mind the scheduling logistics from the school librarian perspectives as well as campus parking, activity leaders, programming agenda, and managing the timing of all events, including lunch, will be the primary responsibility of the UML coordinator librarians. Summer planning meetings will be sponsored by UML and invitations to all local



librarians will be sent. Meetings will be held at local breakfast and lunch venues in Oxford and Lafayette County to encourage discussion and ideas for developing the symposium agenda.

By enhancing accessible professional development and sharing academic research directly with school library specialists, UML can provide a path for enhanced learning to fellow library educators that is currently being unmet. This fundamentally supports the University's mission by extending our instruction and research to teachers and students. Future discussion to enhance this experience include working with campus partners to establish a funding pool for librarians who may not be able to afford to visit campus without additional support and include university student library ambassadors during the day of hands-on learning in the library to connect potential UM students with our services and resources that can better prepare them for college and careers.

### **Conclusion**

UML librarians in Mississippi are collaborating to improve outreach to high school students and expand professional development opportunities for school library professionals within our state. Academic librarians around the state noted a gap in school library professional development opportunities as well as the need to enhance critical thinking skills in high school students transitioning to college. Building sustainable programs with community partners is fundamental to our universities' missions and provides faculty development for academic librarians as well as support the civic mission to engage with the local community in order to solve problems. The community partnerships established in this case study follow the principles and values of service learning to provide clear paths for school librarians to gain CEU credits and better prepare students for college and careers. Collaborating directly with high school students also expands the library profession to potential future information specialists as well as the understanding of what resources and services university libraries can provide their local communities.

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## **Launching a Ticketing System with Asana**

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### **Abstract**

Due to a lack of a proper pathway for library patrons to report electronic resource issues and be notified of solutions in real-time, the ERM team discovered a strong need for implementing a ticketing system at the Cook Library of Towson University. As an ERM team member, the presenter will share the journey with Asana, a project management software subscribed by the library. Starting in the summer of 2022, the ERM team implemented Asana to facilitate their workflow. Impressed with the customizations and flexibility of Asana, the ERM team embarked on developing a local ticketing system to manage and monitor discovery and access issues.

The presentation will cover two implementation processes: creating a customized form and integrating the form into the library's primary discovery interfaces – EBSCO EDS and the A-Z Database List on the LibGuide platform. The presenter will share the practice of embedding the customized form into the EDS discovery service with a custom widget and connecting it to the A-Z Database List as well. The presenter will conclude that the successful integration of the Asana form into multiple library discovery layers has provided an easy way for library patrons to reach out to the ERM team with their questions about e-resources and simplified the process of receiving and fixing e-resources problems via the ticketing system. In addition, Asana allows the ERM team to categorize and analyze all kinds of e-resources issues, which is helpful for the team to develop a proactive troubleshooting strategy as they will identify patterns of reported issues down the road. Overall, launching the ticketing system by leveraging Asana was a milestone for the ERM team. It also encouraged the team to continue the exploration of this powerful project management tool and provide better support for library end users.

## **Meeting the Needs of Student Parents**

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### **Abstract**

The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that one in five college students is a parent. Student parents face many challenges including the need to work, find childcare, and manage a household. Libraries can help by building collections that include resources designed for quality family time such as puzzles, games, kits, movies, and picture books.

The Puksta Library at River Valley Community College (RVCC) created a family-focused collection in the spring of 2021. The average age of an RVCC student is twenty-nine and many students attend school while also juggling the demands of a full-time job and family. By providing convenient access to free family resources the library helps students spend more time with their loved ones. Board games, puzzles, and yard games are extremely popular, especially items that can be enjoyed by people of all ages. The library also lends state park passes, kits, family-friendly movies, picture books, and musical instruments. Each month a different display is created that includes an idea for an activity – such as bird watching or cooking with kids -- and a story time in the library is scheduled for the beginning of each fall semester.

Adding family resources to the connection has built strong student relationships and increased circulation. Students feel that their needs are important to the library and are more likely to utilize the space and ask for help when needed.