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Spring Semester Reflection

Claire Staub
Patron Services

This spring brought us another semester of remote online learning in a de-densified campus. In addition to our online learning services, the library remained open and available for student study. The Creative Production Lab and the Archives and Special Collections unit were available by appointment, and the service desk team increased our hours of operation in March. In this extended edition of BiblioTech, join us in celebrating the ever-changing environment and extra efforts that have been made by the library team. We aim to ensure that our UNO community experiences excellent service from YOUR library!

Library Management System Conversion

Kris Tuel
Patron Services
One of the major changes that happened was switching to a new Library Management System (LMS). In the summer of 2017, UNO, UNK, UNL, and UNMC began the investigative process for the possibility of all campuses moving to the same LMS in the interest of financial and collaborative efficiency and providing a better experience for our users. After nearly 18 months of research, proposals, demonstrations, and meetings, the decision was made to go forward with Ex Libris’ Alma and Primo for managing library services for all University of Nebraska campuses.

A committee was formed with lead representation from each campus to help make decisions and shepherd the process forward. Working groups were formed to take on specialized sections to ensure nothing was lost during the migration. The initial migration work began in February 2020, with the hand-off from Ex Libris expected on December 21, 2020. While we knew that the involvement of multiple campuses meant the need for virtual meetings, we did not yet know that this would be our only way to meet for the entirety of the project.

Campuses began a shutdown period in mid-March 2020, and the groups working on the project dove into the world of virtual collaboration. It became evident that the Pandemic was not slowing down, it was necessary to embrace the fact that this project would need to be completed in a virtual environment, with no on-campus or in-person meetings available. There were technological, personal, and remote-work challenges that were new to many. Hours of Zoom meetings per week were proving that “Zoom fatigue” is real.
However, these challenges proved to be no match for the dedicated librarians and support staff, and their willingness to put in an enormous amount of effort to complete this project on time. We now have a better working relationship between all campuses and are determined to foster a more collaborative environment to produce better library services for the University of Nebraska system.

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Remote Teaching Take Two

*Katie Bishop, Monica Maher, Tammi Owens*

*Research and Instruction*

The new LMS system was not the only challenge; transitioning to a successful remote teaching model was another challenge. Members of the Research and Instruction team had to adjust from the norm when it came to all instruction sessions.

This spring was our second full semester delivering Composition II library instruction fully online. With the transition to remote learning, we offered three choices for Comp II instructors. Our Canvas quiz and self-directed learning page on the Comp II library guide include short videos on the concepts and databases we usually teach in person. We also offered instructors synchronous instruction in their Zoom classrooms. We taught 22 sections this way using Google docs for an interactive keywords lesson and a class-sourced bibliography in which students copied citations found in the library databases.
With a year of remote learning behind us, we have discovered that lessons taught via synchronous Zoom sessions generally take longer than the same types of activities taught in person. Partnering with teaching faculty to determine student learning outcomes for the online session is especially imperative during this time. Many of us completely reworked our classroom activities to best meet student needs. We have created fully online, asynchronous modules, recorded video lectures and updated our synchronous instruction for Zoom format. In addition, many librarians offer optional drop-in Zoom sessions for specific courses to help students with in-depth research questions. The Zoom environment is challenging for all of us, but we have been encouraged by the overall positive energy in the classes we support. Helping students collaborate in breakout rooms and then come back to the full class eager to share their learning is extremely rewarding.

Remote Teaching in Archives & Special Collections

Claire DuLaney
Archive and Special Collections
The Archives and Special Collections team also had to adjust from what would normally be in-person to an online platform. As Outreach Archivist, part of my job is conducting instruction sessions, sharing collection materials and primary source resources with students. As classes remained remote during Spring 2021, I had prepared to teach from my office on campus, provided instructors with lists of materials accessible online through our finding aids and digital collections, or utilizing the Reading Room to mimic in-person class sessions. (Image 1). This latter format was not ideal as I found out in Fall 2020. It is difficult to engage with students and give them space to examine the materials while walking around with a Zoom session in one hand and turning pages of materials in another.

I knew that I had to adjust, but nothing made me adjust quite like that incredible cold weather snap we had that last week of January. Pivoting took on a whole new meaning as I carried materials out of the archives (safely returned later) and into my home to teach two ART classes remotely. (Image 2). As my kitchen table became part of a bookbinding display, I don’t know that I found it much easier to juggle the tripod, even with my laptop nearby to show items. The materiality and the qualities I love about teaching with artists' books are challenging to translate over Zoom. I haven’t quite figured out the best way to work with artists' books and the tripod, but that level of working from home was highly amusing and forced a type of teaching flexibility I was not expecting.

Classes that allow for materials to be scanned, such as those used in SOC 3700, provided an incredible example of how virtual engagement can be powerful. Scans and audio clips were shared with students so that they would have access during the instruction session. I also shared a slide deck with key information and QR codes that linked to a Padlet site (Image 3). Students answered questions throughout the class, providing me with immediate feedback. This helped drive
conversation immensely because I could refer to their comments as opposed to trying to remember which student had nodded or given a verbal response.

Whatever future in-person sessions look like, I will be incorporating lessons learned from remote teaching. Flexibility is key, don’t try to cram too much into a 50-minute session, and I will 100% be using instant feedback forms in my classes.

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