OLA Quarterly

ACCELERATED CHANGE

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Accelerated Change

From the Guest Editor

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The idea for Accelerated Change as the theme of this issue of the *OLA Quarterly* came from a question I have been contemplating for much of the last year—did anything good come out of the COVID-19 pandemic? In both my roles as OLA President and a library consultant at the State Library of Oregon, I observed how the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic exposed frustrating barriers to library services. I also saw the creativity and adaptability of library workers who not only worked to alleviate those barriers, but also leveraged opportunities to innovate and think differently about policies and services. Did the pandemic, with all its disruption, actually accelerate and encourage positive changes in Oregon libraries?

The articles in this issue represent just a few of the interesting projects in Oregon libraries that got their legs through the catalyst of the pandemic.

- Jeanie Diaz makes the case for expanding library tutoring programs to reach youth in marginalized communities by telling the compelling story of Multnomah County Libraries' pandemic experience.

- Ashlei Emmons and Dylan DeLoe discover the value of the Blue Mountain Community College Library virtual reference chat service in maintaining connections among library staff and the greater college community.

- Michael Bradley illustrates how partner relationships were deepened and access needs were met by Eugene Public Library's Wi-Fi hotspot lending program for nonprofits.

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- Jennifer McKenzie talks about using virtual programming and virtual field trips to help overcome geographic and economic barriers and to build connections for students in the Siuslaw School District.

- Adrienne Doman Calkins works with her colleagues at the Sherwood Public Library to leverage the stresses caused by pandemic conditions and to reimagine behavior policies and procedures with an eye toward equitable enforcement and more positive engagement with library users.

- Sarah Ralston describes the innovative Mobile Virtual Reality Lab at Eastern Oregon University and how it helped welcome students back to the library after the isolation of the pandemic shutdown.

These authors found that the conditions of the pandemic either created opportunities to implement new ideas, illuminated the need to address known barriers to access, or provided the challenge needed to think differently about the impact of library services.

A throughline among these articles is how powerfully they illustrate the importance of relationships—those with library users, with community members who do not already use the library, with departments in our own institutions, with community partners, and with our library coworkers. Strengthening connections that withered under pandemic conditions and forging new and different relationships are essential to building sustainable library services that can withstand the next global challenge thrown our way. I hope these articles inspire you to think about what you can do in your own work to build relationships and networks to battle the barriers that remain for many in our communities.

K–12 Virtual Tutoring:
An Equitable Pandemic-era Service Worth Continuing

by Jeanie Diaz
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Jeanie Diaz (she/her) serves as Youth Librarian at the Belmont branch of Multnomah County Library. Born and raised in Portland, she earned her graduate degree from San Jose State University in 2008 and has been working in and around Portland area public libraries ever since. She especially enjoys providing storytime, working with her amazing colleagues, and encouraging kids to be creative. When she's not at the library, she can be found petting her cat, loving on her family, poking fun at life, making art, taking naps, and reading.

It's 3:45 on a Tuesday afternoon, and I'm waiting to join the Zoom meeting for K–12 Virtual Tutoring/Tutoría Virtual, a weekly service provided by Multnomah County Library (MCL). Coordinated by my colleagues, Youth Librarian Jen May and Bilingual Spanish Program Specialist Minerva Llerenas, the service is offered year-round in six- to eight-week sessions and staffed entirely by volunteer tutors. My role is to provide day-of support for the tutors and coordinators.

Shortly after I arrive, our tutors start showing up. Jen checks in with a few of them. They ask Melissa, one of our volunteer tutors, "Did you get the homework I sent you from Kaleb's mom?" Melissa confirms, then asks about a different student as more tutors arrive. Meanwhile, Minerva notices a Spanish-speaking family has entered the waiting room, so she sends them a quick message: "Hola! Bienvenidos, comenzamos en unos minutos."

At around 3:55, we start to hear a chorus of dings as more students appear in the waiting room for their 4 pm appointments. For Jen, that means it's time to move our volunteer tutors into their breakout rooms, where they'll hang out and wait for their first students. Today we have 17 breakout rooms, one for each tutor. Once the tutors are in their rooms, it's just Jen, Minerva, and me in the meeting, and it's 4 pm. Time to admit the students! "Ready?! Here they come …"

As soon as Jen hits the magic "Admit All" button, we're overcome by a sea of screens popping up all around us, some with the camera on, some off, most entering with some kind of greeting. "Hola!" "Hello!" "Welcome back," we say, and then start on the process of checking the students in. Jen greets each student by name and confirms the name of their tutor so that I send each student to the correct breakout room.

Once we've assisted the students who are here, we then ask, "Who's not here?" I take over hosting duties temporarily as Jen and Minerva get to work on contacting the

students who are not here yet, calling and texting reminders to families via county-owned smartphones. Eventually, Jen and Minerva reach the students, and they arrive at the Zoom meetings for their appointments. Phew. Another session of K–12 Virtual Tutoring/Tutoría Virtual has begun.

Background

In the midst of a bustling session, it's hard to believe that before COVID, none of this existed. Beyond offering Tutor.com and occasional 1-1 Homework Help with teen volunteers at select library locations, Multnomah County Library had never offered a formal tutoring program for youth. But then COVID happened, and shortly thereafter, MCL revised its priorities (2020) to meet the times. One significant update to the priority of supporting education and learning was the statement, "We offer students tools and resources to help virtual and in-person learning."

To focus on meeting this priority with an equity lens, management assembled a team of staff, eventually known as the Home Learning Support Team, in October 2020. When Jen, Minerva, and I joined three other colleagues on this team, our first task was to undergo a visioning process to figure out how to support students in the communities hit hardest by the pandemic. Among the programs and services we discussed was virtual tutoring. After our management sponsor approved it as one of our high-priority projects, Jen and Minerva got to work.

First, they reached out to library systems that were already offering virtual tutoring so that we could find a model that worked for MCL. While many offered services like Tutor.com or Brainfuse, there were few that coordinated dedicated one-on-one tutoring services. They consulted the Boston, San Jose, Miami-Dade, Philadelphia, and Charlotte Mecklenburg libraries. "Every system was doing it in a different way," recalls Jen. "None of them were perfect. Some paid teens. Some only used teachers. Some had staff doing the tutoring. We chose to use volunteers because we already had a robust volunteer services department with lots of volunteers willing to help." By the time Jen and Minerva were ready to launch the pilot in May of 2021, they had trained and oriented six volunteer tutors, all of whom had served as adult literacy tutors prior to the pandemic.

Centering Equity

In addition to talking with other library systems, Jen and Minerva also took steps to ensure that K–12 Virtual Tutoring/Tutoría Virtual centered equity from the start. According to MCL's revised priorities (2020), "Multnomah County Library will focus library resources on our community's recovery, starting with those most deeply impacted by the crisis." To support families whose first language is not English, Jen and Minerva planned to offer the service in both English and Spanish, with the intention of someday expanding to other target languages. Furthermore, they focused engagement and promotional efforts on youth attending priority schools, as identified by the Multnomah County Schools rubric, which ranks schools according to such data as percent of students eligible for free/reduced lunch and percent students of color.

By centering these schools and these neighborhoods, they intentionally focused our services on students of color, students who speak a language other than English at home,

and students living in poverty. Another part of the equity piece was to deliberately avoid promoting the service to the wider, more privileged public. "We didn't, and still don't, market this to the whole world," says Jen. According to most responses on the intake form (Multnomah County, n.d.), most people hear about it through friends, teachers, and other community connections.

Another important aspect of centering equity is ensuring that we are recruiting tutors who are not only prepared to help in a variety of subjects but are also flexible and aware of the myriad issues facing the families we're trying to reach. In volunteer training, Jen and Minerva emphasize patience and meeting the students where they are that day. Tutors have helped students with autism, dyslexia, socioemotional difficulties, and family trauma. One time, a tutor shared with us that her student was upset, couldn't focus on her homework, and just needed someone to talk to. So instead of a tutoring session, it became a listening session.

Given the virtual nature of this service, it's convenient for families to attend because they don't have to worry about getting somewhere at a designated time. However, it also poses an equity challenge, as many of them do not have access to the technology necessary to participate. When families register for K–12 Virtual Tutoring/Tutoría Virtual via the online form, they are asked if they have reliable access to technology. If they answer that they do not, we try our best to coordinate that access. During the 2020-21 school year, most students were given laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots from their schools to participate in online classes. However, during the following school year, many families participating in the tutoring service lacked the technology to continue. At times, they would have connection problems as they attempted to join the Zoom meeting.

To help address this, Jen and Minerva have arranged for long-term loans of laptops and hotspots, which families can pick up at their nearest MCL location. If requested, staff can meet them there, help them set everything up, and answer any questions. This arrangement takes some time and can be improved, but it goes a long way towards making participation possible.

Impact

Minerva spoke at length with a mom named Isabel about the positive impact that K–12 Virtual Tutoring/Tutoría Virtual has had on her family. "Before the pandemic, the library was my second home," Isabel explains to Minerva in Spanish. "But after the libraries opened back up, we haven't been able to go back the way we used to." When she learned about the virtual tutoring program, she was excited to enroll her two daughters. Isabel shares that her family, like many others, has endured upheaval and trauma during COVID. The quality, one-on-one attention and positive encouragement from another adult who was not a parent was especially helpful to Isabel's daughters.

"A Sofia la guió a lograr sus metas y se sentía mas preparada para la escuela," says Isabel, which translates to "Sofia was guided to achieve her goals and she felt more prepared for school." Knowing that her kids were receiving quality attention also made her feel good about herself as a mother. "It made me feel great knowing that I was helping my kids be prepared for the future, proud of them and proud of me too for finding this and coordinating it," she continues. Above all else, she feels grateful. "Solo tengo mucho agradecimiento." Even though it has been hard for Isabel to get back into the habit of visiting the library, she is appreciative that the library came to her, and brought meaningful services into her home.

In addition to having an impact on families, K–12 Virtual Tutoring/Tutoría Virtual has also been a meaningful experience for the volunteer tutors. At first, most of our tutors were local and had volunteered for the library before. Then one of our Spanish-speaking tutors moved across the country and wondered if she could continue volunteering from her time zone. This led to us accepting volunteer tutors from around the country. Many of our volunteers are retired, while others are college students whose schedules change every semester. We've even had a few high school students and a retired MCL librarian.

Before tutors take on their first student, they're required to attend an orientation with Jen and Minerva, where they can ask questions and get oriented with Zoom. They're required to be available between 4 to 6 pm on Tuesdays but have some flexibility with their tutoring time. As they work with each student, tutors are encouraged to share their progress via a student summary form. They're asked what they worked on today, what they want to work on next time, and anything else they'd like to share.

One thing becomes obvious while reading the student summaries: The tutors are building relationships with the students and starting to care about how they're doing. Many of them find meaning in this work. "The past year has been difficult for many people," shares one tutor. "I can only imagine what it's like for families with younger kids who are experiencing financial struggles. Since virtual tutoring is completely free, I think a lot of families who know about this program have a strong incentive to use it with their kids."

Says another tutor, "Virtual tutoring gives these students a platform to express themselves and an opportunity to hone their existing knowledge, whether it's math, science, or some neat piece of trivia about the longest bridge in the world. Where else would these kids go without this program?"

Moving Forward

MCL management has approved continuing K–12 Virtual Tutoring/Tutoría Virtual for the foreseeable future, though it hasn't always been easy. In the summer of 2021, the Home Learning Support Team was discontinued. Jen, Minerva, and I were reassigned to different positions with different supervisors. In the midst of staffing shortages, reopening plans, and management restructuring, we weren't sure if we were going to be able to continue staffing the service. Fortunately, Jen and Minerva presented qualitative and quantitative data to convince various levels of management of its impact on the community, and thankfully we were able to keep going. We were also able to keep growing. During the spring 2021 pilot session, we provided 20 students with six volunteer tutors. During the spring 2022 session just a year later, we coordinated weekly one-on-one tutoring for 62 students with 22 volunteer tutors.

Also, K–12 Virtual Tutoring/Tutoría Virtual didn't just grow; it expanded into a meaningful partnership between Portland State University (PSU) and Glenfair Elementary School, one of our priority schools. In the summer of 2021, a second-grade teacher at Glenfair contacted Jen about providing virtual tutoring for her whole class. Unfortunately, MCL didn't have enough staff and volunteers to accommodate her request. However, around the same time, Jen met with the head of PSU's Serve Your City program, which helps college students find volunteer opportunities to support the larger community. Eventually, Jen was able to start a pilot program to connect PSU students with the Glenfair students and

provide library-supported virtual (and eventually in-person) tutoring in reading. This next school year, PSU will take over coordination of the program, with MCL staff continuing to provide training and support.

Appreciation

Back in April of 2021, an overwhelmed and frustrated single father enrolled his first-grade daughter in K–12 Virtual Tutoring/Tutoría Virtual. She was falling behind because her reading skills had slipped since the start of the pandemic. After meeting weekly with her tutor from April to November 2021, she made significant progress. "Wanted to share the good news!" the father wrote in an email. "Just found out [student] made honor roll! After a stressful year plus of virtual learning [student] has come a LONG way and I am seeing a great deal of improvements. Thank you to the entire team that puts this together every week. This exhausted dad is very appreciative of the help and all can see the results."

At the end of every six- or eight- week session of K–12 Virtual Tutoring/Tutoría Virtual, we hold volunteer appreciation parties, where we share statistics, feedback, challenges, and success stories. The volunteers especially appreciate the feedback, like the following, which reminds all of us why it is so important to continue this service:

- "Thank you for helping people who can't afford it."
- "Me encanta trabajar con ustedes ya que mi hija se siente con mucha confianza." (Translated: "I love working with you as my daughter feels very confident.")
- "Thank you so much. l really appreciate all you have done for my family." 🙏

Conclusion

Back in the winter of 2020, in a meeting with the Home Learning Support Team, I remember asking ourselves, "Why us? Why should public libraries provide this kind of service? Can't this work be done by nonprofits, community organizations, or even the schools themselves?" The answer came immediately. "Why not?" Access to tutoring is just like access to technology and all the other advantages the most privileged among us enjoy. Furthermore, it's completely logical for families to come to us at the library as trusted advisors and experts on reading and writing. "It makes sense," agrees Jen. "The library is about learning. Reading and writing are under our umbrella."

Perhaps the most convincing argument for this service and others like it is that they've proven to create conditions for positive, meaningful relationship-building, which is beneficial for the students, families, tutors, and library staff. I'm hopeful and encouraged to read about the creation of tutoring corps in states like Oklahoma and Arkansas and other news about improving free, reliable access to academic support for those who need it.

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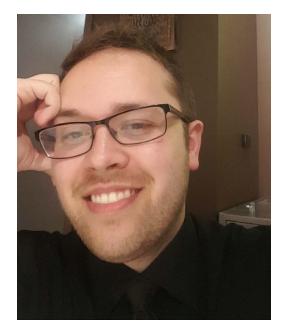## Chat Widgets Offer Safe and In-Depth Reference

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DYLAN DELOE (he/him) works at Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC) as a Library and Learning Support Assistant. He just graduated with an Associate's degree of Applied Sciences in Agriculture Production from Blue Mountain. Initially, he pursued this as a foundation for his dream of operating tea fields and/or a tea house, but he has been won over lately by other passions in libraries and political activism. He's now looking for ways to advance in those fields in a more moderate climate outside of eastern Oregon's deserts. He is the primary author drafting the in-progress textbook affordability plan for the institution and has lobbied on behalf of student interests with the state legislature. He plays video games, enjoys takeout, and hikes in green spaces with beautiful views.

ASHLEI EMMONS (she/her) studied at Willamette University and has an Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer degree from Blue Mountain Community College, as well as a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Portland State University. She has worked mainly in libraries—including the Blue Mountain Community College Library—since her time as a student worker, but currently she is the Learning Management System Technologist (also known as the Canvas administrator) at BMCC. She considers herself a lifelong gamer and a technology enthusiast. Writing has always been one of her passions. She lives in her childhood home with her two cats, Cheddar and Bugs, who are the purrfect companions for this journey we call life.

Those of us working in libraries, including university and college libraries, know the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic brought to light. However, we also know that many (if not all) of these challenges existed pre-pandemic and will continue to exist when we have reached a post-pandemic future. Issues of connectedness and access to services—and to

people—will continue to be a concern for any institution aiming for improved equity and outcomes for those they serve. Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC) in Pendleton, Oregon, implemented LibChat, an online live chat service made for libraries and hosted by Springshare. Since its implementation in April 2020, LibChat has already assisted the BMCC Library and its wider community with these issues, as it applies to everything from internal communication, flexible work schedules and environments and, of course, response to student, faculty, staff, and community needs. Additionally, LibChat can continue to assist with these issues as we move forward and evolve with our community and its needs.

Coworker Communication

While BMCC adopted LibChat mainly for the purpose of reaching students and community members who could not interact with us in person—a goal we wished to achieve even pre-pandemic—we found an even more impactful use for the software: keeping in touch with each other as a cohesive library team. When present in the physical library space, it was always easy to simply walk the few feet to someone's office to ask a question or have a conversation. However, once we were working from different locations, that ease of connection was not as naturally present. One could always use email, but being asynchronous, that form of communication always felt a bit disjointed.

This was where LibChat really shone for us. Rather than sending a chain of disjointed emails, in which multiple people may be responding at once and responses may be missed, instead we could send quick, brief chat messages. LibChat allowed us to send images and links, and we could easily plan meetings or get needed information on the spot. For those of us working on projects together, collaboration became much more manageable and much less confusing. When tasked with a large project to update the knowledge base for a school-wide chat bot—a process we had to do multiple times within a few weeks, due to website and link changes—we were able to swiftly coordinate our efforts and avoid duplicating our work, rather than hoping everyone caught emails in time. And this was all with a library team of less than 10 people, including student workers. The benefits, if applied well, could be even greater for larger library teams.

While allowing the BMCC Library team to stay connected with one another, LibChat has also provided a way to keep BMCC as a whole more connected. When one of the BMCC Library team members moved to the Distance Education department, that team member remained on LibChat to stay connected with the library team and improve department-to-department collaboration and workflows, whether working from home or from the main BMCC campus.

In addition, BMCC's Tech Hub—a faculty-led group aiming to improve technological solutions and connection at BMCC—has access to LibChat and has considered expanding its use to yet more departments, which could improve our campuswide operations in the future.

On top of the benefits of having this easy form of collaboration, we also had an easy way to stay in touch as people. During a time when everyone felt isolated and many faced mental health issues, this was invaluable. It was simple to check in on everyone, share a joke or interesting video, or discuss the hard things we were all dealing with and seeing in the news. We could also easily communicate the need for breaks or even to take time off when issues arose. To top it all off, we were able to easily plan parties via LibChat, including a Zoom Halloween party and a Zoom baby shower. While chatting over the internet

has never been the same as chatting in person, it felt like we really were still a team, despite being spread across our little town.

Work-From-Home Option for Students

One of the issues BMCC had never foreseen, and therefore never prepared for, was the need to keep students employed during a time when they couldn't physically come to the school. For many departments, the nature of the work meant many student workers were laid off or temporarily unable to work during the pandemic. However, for the library, LibChat provided a way for student workers to "watch the front desk" while working on projects they could do from home. We used LibChat to assign tasks for updating documents or working with library staff on virtual book club activities. Student workers could easily ask questions, share their ongoing work, or request their next tasks or projects.

Without this way to both collaborate with students and maintain a connection with the community during work hours, the library would have had difficulty maintaining student positions, much like other departments in the school. For some of our student workers, maintaining their positions with the library was the only way to ensure they could continue their education, and it provided a much-needed connection during an isolated time. Student worker, Dylan DeLoe—co-author of this article—echoed many of the benefits of utilizing LibChat for work-from-home options. "I didn't have to feel alone. And minimizing the risks of the pandemic by working from home felt good as a baseline, just in terms of taking care of myself and my family. The flexibility it offered was a bonus."

We were able to meet the needs of our diverse group of student workers and ensure that they were able to continue earning work experience and financing their educational goals. LibChat can have an additional positive impact on equity by bringing access to those who cannot drive, have mobility issues, have busy lives, or live on the outskirts of our wide service area—whether they are our library student workers or the fellow students and community members they serve.

Research Questions are the Norm in Chat

Not everyone has time to sit in the library to do their research, and with the steady proliferation of personal computers and laptops in many homes—and especially in those homes in a socioeconomic situation that enables the pursuit of higher education—many opt for more flexible options. This most impacts those reference questions that often take the longest, whether they are asked in person or not. Looking more closely at the kinds of questions the library received over the course of the pandemic and comparing them to questions received after returning, in-depth research reference questions occurred at the same frequency during both periods and were almost exclusive to the chat service.

We cannot compare our usage of LibChat itself pre-pandemic and during lockdown and onward, as we did not implement LibChat until one month into the pandemic. However, we can see that students are electing to use the chat service rather than come into the library space for the same assistance. In fact, we have witnessed students already in the library space using LibChat to get their answers rather than approaching the desk. We have not collected student feedback to assess why this pattern is occurring or whether it is the best option for our students, but that is one area for further exploration as we move forward with the service.

Research help has included answering questions about osteopenia (bone density), the history of hacky sack, and the effects of a broken heart and how to fix it (which was during the pandemic, of course—an apt summary of the time). Because LibChat offers the ability to switch between internal (staff-to-staff) chat and patron chat, that means any staff member can quickly crowdsource an accurate response from the whole team (whether you need an expert at hacky sack or breaking hearts).

These examples aren't just pulled from thin air, either; LibChat integrates directly with the other Springshare products to track the kinds of questions the library receives, when they receive them, and who answers each one. This further informs effective scheduling and training of our team.

Further research shows correlation between positive patron responses and the chat option generally as well (Dempsey, 2019). Each example question presented here is a real question asked by a real student or faculty member, because LibChat allows us to pull metadata in beautiful Microsoft Excel spreadsheets for any kind of analysis we aim for. And it isn't limited to in-depth questions, either.

Quick Faculty Questions and Basic Reference

Since returning to campus and the fluid classroom dynamic associated with in-person learning, and having attained an affinity for LibChat over the course of online classes, students and faculty feel especially adept at rapid online interactions. They quickly reach out for a library card number, for example, or for a password to access library databases. Where an email just wouldn't guarantee the same reply speed, hosting live chat monitoring on a circulation desk computer or in library staff offices can guarantee incredible results. Leave it open for the day and respond whenever you are "dinged." These faster questions also included:

- "How do I contact financial aid?"
- "Are there laptops available for checkout still?"
- "Do you have tutors available for [course]?"
- "Is there coffee on campus?"

No question is too big or small to bring to our online chat, and with LibChat's help, the BMCC Library can help people find the answers they are looking for.

While we have limited feedback from faculty on the impact LibChat has had for them, we know that some faculty have been impressed by the service. BMCC's Tech Hub—the faculty-led technology solutions group—became familiar with the service's basic functions during conversations with library staff. They decided quickly to implement LibChat as one way to get connected with BMCC staff and placed the link where students could easily find it. So far, only library and Distance Education staff are active responders via LibChat at BMCC, but they are able to act as human door greeters to reassure students and send them on to the resources they need. Ideally, more departments will be incorporated into the service in the future.

Good for Our Large Service Area

While LibChat serves as an access point for BMCC Library service, our chat widgets are also the only live chat widgets available for help on the college's website. They are in visible locations: next to the student email login widget and the registration and financial aid

self-service portal (named WolfWeb, in honor of the Timberwolves mascot), as well as on the main library page and in nearly all of our LibGuides (see Figure 1).
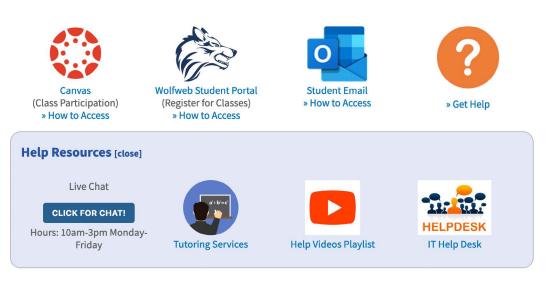

Figure 1. The LibChat widget appears in the lower-left corner of the first screen on the college's Current Students web page.

This strategy of wide implementation means we answer any and all directional questions—not just for library services, but to lead students to on-campus resources like financial aid, tutoring, the food pantry, the health and wellness center, and the other campuses that cover nearly 18,000 square miles between them. The large service area is not matched by having separate libraries and staff in each satellite campus, leaving students wanting for options that can connect them with services that libraries often provide.

Live chat is a previously unavailable service for students in those hard-to-reach rural areas, as well as those whose lifestyle, socioeconomic situation, or ability simply doesn't allow for travel to our central campus. Having live chat at all is an improvement because more options mean more access points for the information students are seeking. In continuing our use of LibChat, we hope to gather more information about how this new option has served our students. This will improve our understanding of the real equity results LibChat has had, as well as the ways in which we can improve its equity impact for our institution in the future.

The Future of LibChat at BMCC

As we move forward into a post-pandemic future, it is easy to see the ways in which the BMCC Library and the wider BMCC community can continue to use LibChat to positive effect. All these uses—improved coworker communication; upgraded access for students, staff, faculty, and the community; enhanced responses to in-depth research questions and quick reference information; and more equitable access for our large service area—continue to be relevant.

We're also considering how best to add response fields that allow us to collect demographic information about those we serve through LibChat in order to ensure equitable access for all in the community and to address areas where we fall flat.

In addition, the BMCC Library—which is evolving into the Library and Learning Hub—is developing a Student Tech Help Desk. This desk will provide basic technological help for students, faculty, and staff, and will also assist with the checkout and management of laptops and other applicable equipment. We hope this will be an opportunity for students to gain important experience and maintain employment while in school, and the service will be accessible both on the Pendleton campus and via LibChat.

We are confident that more departments will agree to integrate LibChat into their service cycle to further enhance student access. In combination with the Student Tech Help Desk, this could create a strong network through which our students can receive the help they need.

Continued advancements in equipment and student connectivity will be the primary path forward to expanding access to services like the library—via LibChat—and Blue Mountain Community College as a whole. Whatever the next moves are for this service, the library will be leading the way.

For more information about BMCC's implementation of LibChat, feel free to reach out to the co-authors.

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Creating and Sustaining Collaborative Partnerships:
The Eugene Public Library's Nonprofit Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Collection

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MICHAEL BRADLEY (he/him) is a recent MLIS graduate, with a degree specializing in public library management from Valdosta State University. He has worked for libraries in Kansas, Colorado, Idaho, and Oregon. Michael was the original project manager for the Eugene Public Library hotspot lending collection and oversaw the creation of the nonprofit lending model discussed in this article. In addition to library work, he is a musician, visual artist, and lover of remote hot springs and quiet places throughout the Pacific Northwest. Michael currently works for the City of Eugene's Community Development department as a Management Analyst.

In response to the pandemic-related closure of library locations in March 2020, the Eugene Public Library Foundation created a microgrant program to jump-start creative service ideas from library staff. These "Innovation Grants" were offered in amounts of $1,200 or less with the stipulation that funds should be used for programs and services for underserved patrons.

The Pilot Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Program

The first of these grants was awarded to staff at the Bethel Branch Library in West Eugene for the creation of a pilot Wi-Fi hotspot lending program. Using information gleaned from the Public Library Association (PLA) Hotspot Playbook (American Library Association, 2019), this collection of 12 hotspot devices was designated for use by local nonprofit partner agencies.

The initial decision to lend to nonprofits, as opposed to a pilot program for public use, was driven by a need to accelerate the process of evaluating a completely new service, while creating opportunities for measurable outcomes. By reaching out to a select number of partners, Eugene Public Library (EPL) was able to:

- test the signal strength and usability of the chosen service provider and hotspot devices;
- receive targeted feedback on the user experience from partner organizations and their clients; and
- temporarily avoid the process of exploring lending policies, packaging, and cataloging for these new lending items.

In the midst of pandemic uncertainty, the EPL nonprofit pilot program was successful in offering a valuable resource to partner agencies, while serving as a beta test for a larger public lending program.

Potential partner organizations were identified and sent communications outlining the details of the pilot program. Of 10 potential partners, three responded with interest in joining the program. Eugene nonprofit organizations St. Vincent de Paul's First Place Family Center, White Bird Medical Clinic, and 15th Night borrowed Wi-Fi hotspot devices from the pilot collection to share with their clients and for internal operational use. These partners serve hundreds of unhoused families and young adults with meals, shelter, pre-kindergarten education, and harm reduction supplies. By offering a valuable resource at no cost to the agencies, we hoped to not only help bridge the digital divide for underserved patrons but also create collaborative long-term partnerships with these community organizations.

The pilot project was instructive in identifying potential challenges and opportunities associated with expanding the nonprofit hotspot collection to serve a larger number of partner organizations. From the start of the pilot program in November 2020, it became clear that through the process of managing partner relationships and providing IT support for hotspot devices, the library's connection with these agencies was becoming stronger and more collaborative.

For instance, EPL staff were in regular contact with St. Vincent de Paul's First Place Family Center staff throughout the pilot project to support their efforts to provide broadband access to unhoused children and families. When a device failed to connect or experienced service interruptions, EPL staff offered technical assistance to get First Place Family Center clients reconnected in a timely manner. In addition to collaboration related to hotspot use, our partner agencies began referring clients to the library for other information resources and reaching out to branch staff for help with library-related questions. This two-way collaboration drove the creation of new library users and deepened EPL's relationship with St. Vincent de Paul.

In exchange for participation in the pilot program, partner organizations agreed to track usage data and provide feedback on usability. This data provided insight into user satisfaction, information needs, and potential improvements to the program. From the start, the pilot program generated specific examples of how clients use mobile Wi-Fi hotspots to access employment resources, educational opportunities, and virtual healthcare appointments (see Figure 1). The EPL marketing team and EPL Foundation collected these stories and shared them in video advertisements for a public fundraising effort in April 2021 (Eugene Public Library Foundation, 2021).

The Connecting Community Campaign—a month-long fundraising effort led by the Eugene Public Library Foundation and the Friends

Figure 1. St. Vincent de Paul client demonstrates how to use the Wi-Fi hotspot device at the First Place Family Center.

of the Eugene Library—was overwhelmingly successful and resulted in the purchase of 500 Wi-Fi hotspot devices with one-year service plans. Three hundred hotspot devices were allocated for public borrowing, while 200 were designated for use by nonprofit partners. Using lessons learned from the pilot project, in October 2021 EPL opened the hotspot lending collection for use by area nonprofits.

Partnership Maintenance

Library partnerships with outside organizations can be tricky. Competing priorities, staff turnover, lack of consistent and clear boundaries, and a myriad of other obstacles can impede long-term collaboration and healthy partner relations. With the creation of Eugene Public Library's 200-device hotspot lending collection for nonprofits, such obstacles were carefully considered in the early phases of program design. With experience from the pilot program, we set out to design a large-scale partnership model that fits the needs of busy nonprofits while adding value to their organizations. By offering valuable resources to strategically chosen partners, EPL has created meaningful and collaborative relationships with over 20 local nonprofit stakeholders.

A nonbinding memorandum of understanding (MOU) (see the sidebar on the next two pages) was drafted, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of both the library and partner agency. In addition to this document, agencies also complete an application for an institutional library card, which is used to check out Wi-Fi hotspots. The MOU document serves several purposes:

- defining the library's offer of free high-speed internet devices at no charge to the organization,
- setting communication standards for the partner agency in the case of loss or theft,
- outlining the loan period and expectation for allowed uses,
- clarifying who is responsible for the hotspot devices both for the library and the partner organization, and
- encouraging partner agencies to share impactful stories of how hotspot devices help Eugene citizens.

After an institutional library card is issued and the MOU document is signed by both parties, the partner organization may borrow hotspot devices for use with clients and staff. EPL's inventory of 200 devices allows for generous distribution of devices. Most organizations use between one and five devices, while others employ as many as 20. The City of Eugene's Safe Sleep Sites—city-funded vehicle and tent camping sites—use 17 hotspot devices to provide high-speed broadband service to over 150 residents.

Partner organizations are also allowed to use hotspot devices to support internal operations. Community Supported Shelters (CSS)—a Eugene-based nonprofit offering no-cost temporary housing—employs hotspot devices for shelter residents as well as for staff working in the field or those who simply need a fast Wi-Fi connection to work from home. Partners—especially start-up organizations with budget constraints—appreciate this flexibility and in-kind support to boost their bottom line.

EPL's hotspot project manager maintains these partner relationships, troubleshooting issues and fielding requests for new partnerships. In all, the EPL hotspot project manager spends around 5–10 hours per week working on this initiative. The project manager is

Eugene Public Library

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is entered into by and between:

Eugene Public Library		Friends of the Eugene Public Library
100 W 10th Ave.	AND	100 W 10th Ave.
Eugene, OR 97401		Eugene, OR 97401

A. Purpose

The purpose of this agreement is to outline the roles and responsibilities of the Eugene Public Library (EPL) and **FRIENDS OF THE EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY** for the purposes of maintaining a Mobile Wifi Hotspot lending agreement. This agreement also establishes the allowable uses of the Mobile Wifi Hotspot devices and defines the liabilities of both parties.

By entering into this agreement, the Eugene Public Library seeks to provide free broadband access to **FRIENDS OF THE EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY** and their program participants. The Mobile Wifi Hotspot lending program is an attempt to enhance the capacity of partner agencies in the area of digital connectivity. By agreeing to support the ongoing costs related to internet service, the Eugene Public Library seeks to narrow the digital divide in the Eugene community, which overwhelmingly affects underserved and at-risk populations.

B. **Roles and Responsibilities**

EPL will provide 5 Mobile Wifi Hotspot devices with unlimited high-speed data plans to **FRIENDS OF THE EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY**. The cost of Mobile Wifi Hotspot devices and internet service will be covered in full by EPL.

During this period, **FRIENDS OF THE EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY** will lend Mobile Wifi Hotspot devices to their program participants and staff. When lending to staff, **FRIENDS OF THE EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY** will ensure that Mobile Wifi Hotspot devices are used primarily for business purposes.

FRIENDS OF THE EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY will be responsible for ensuring the care and return of Mobile Wifi Hotspot devices. In the event of a lost or damaged Mobile Wifi Hotspot device, **FRIENDS OF THE EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY** will contact EPL at their earliest convenience to report the loss or damage. EPL will turn off data service to the lost or damaged Mobile Wifi Hotspot device. EPL may not be able to replace the Mobile Wifi Hotspot device immediately or at all.

Lost or damaged items will not be charged to **FRIENDS OF THE EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY**.

C. **Reporting**

EPL encourages **FRIENDS OF THE EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY** to share anecdotes or stories demonstrating the impact of the hotspot lending program. For instance, a program participant who uses the Mobile Wifi Hotspot device to connect to job seeking resources could be asked for feedback on how the Mobile Wifi Hotspot device has helped with their job seeking. Sharing

such stories is not required but helps EPL demonstrate the success of the hotspot program to donors and stakeholders. Such stories and anecdotes can be collected anonymously.

In addition, **FRIENDS OF THE EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY** also agrees to report all lost or damaged Mobile Wifi Hotspot devices or accessories at their earliest convenience.

D. **Timeframe**

The lending period for hotspot Mobile Wifi Hotspot devices will last three months. When the three-month lending period expires, EPL will contact **FRIENDS OF THE EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY** to discuss whether the Mobile Wifi Hotspot devices will be renewed – for another three-month period – or returned to EPL.

This MOU is the complete agreement between the Eugene Public Library and **FRIENDS OF THE EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY** and may be amended only by written agreement signed by each of the parties involved.

EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Authorized Official: _____   _____
                               Signature   Printed Name and Title

Address: _____

Telephone(s): _____

Email address: _____

FRIENDS OF THE EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Authorized Official: _____   _____
                               Signature   Printed Name and Title

Address: _____

Telephone(s): _____

Email address: _____

Mobile Wifi Hotspot contact: _____

Email address: _____   Phone: _____

an essential component of this model as they serve as the single liaison between partner organizations and the library. When library-related questions and information needs arise for clients of partner organizations, the project manager is often the first point of contact for service providers.

Creating a Bridge with Area Service Providers

Long-term collaborative partnerships with community organizations are an excellent way to connect with non-library users (Molyneux, 2004; Willett & Broadley, 2011). Such partnerships offer library professionals access to valuable insight into the information needs of non-users from the perspective of case workers and social service providers. An in-depth needs analysis of underserved populations can be an expensive and time-consuming endeavor. Meaningful partnerships with local agencies connected to underserved populations can provide a shortcut to much-needed information regarding the needs of the whole community (Provence, 2018).

Offering a resource of value for loan, in our case Wi-Fi hotspots, to partner agencies which serve hard-to-reach populations (i.e., unhoused populations, previously incarcerated individuals, victims of domestic abuse) offers the opportunity to foster powerful relationships with service providers. Educating service providers on the process of obtaining a library card as well as the multitude of resources available creates a bridge between the library and non-user populations (Willett & Broadley, 2011).

For instance, Community Outreach through Radical Empowerment (CORE)—an EPL hotspot lending partner—serves unhoused teens and young adults in the Eugene area. As a result of the hotspot partner relationship, CORE staff regularly contact the hotspot project manager with questions related to library use and card eligibility policies. Information needs are identified by CORE staff and then communicated directly to library partners as a result of our collaborative relationship.

Collaborative Partnerships and Your Library

At Eugene Public Library, the success of our community campaign to fund the purchase of Wi-Fi hotspots put us in a position to share the devices with the broader service provider community. But your library does not need 300 Wi-Fi hotspot devices to create meaningful long-term partnerships. Creating and managing nonprofit relationships require intention, strategic planning, and staff time, but can also be tailored to fit your library's current staff and funding levels.

Start by asking what types of resources would be valuable to your local nonprofit community. Onsite programming, such as regular outreach storytimes or job-seeking assistance, can also foster collaborative relationships. Co-authoring a grant proposal—even for a very small dollar amount—is another excellent way to bring partners to the table for collaboration and sharing ideas. When exploring the acquisition of new lending collections, consider reserving 10–20 percent of the collection for a nonprofit lending collection. For instance, the purchase of 10 laptop computers for public use could be reimagined as eight devices for public use and two set aside for lending exclusively to local nonprofits.

Of course, replicating the Wi-Fi hotspot lending model used by EPL is also a possibility. Hotspot service providers like Mobile Beacon, Mobile Citizen, and T-Mobile's government accounts department offer deeply discounted Wi-Fi hotspots and service plans to libraries.

As mentioned above, the Hotspot Playbook (American Library Association, 2019) is an excellent resource for planning a hotspot lending program. In addition, Vercelletto (2019) offers practical steps for establishing a new hot spot collection. If your library already lends hotspot devices to the public, consider adding a small number of devices that are exclusively for nonprofit lending.

Choosing the right staff to create and foster these relationships is also an important consideration. Many nonprofit organizations operate on small budgets with little extra staff time for collaboration and meaningful partnership. Library staff who communicate with outside organizations should expect to be patient, understanding, and flexible with the needs of nonprofit partners. While setting clear boundaries and expectations with a written agreement is an excellent start, fostering relationships with partners will also require a staff member with excellent communication skills and the ability to accommodate the changing needs of partner organizations.

Conclusion

The pandemic landscape of 2020 changed library services in countless ways. With physical locations closed to the public and low-income patrons experiencing significant challenges related to digital equity, Eugene Public Library seized the opportunity to narrow our local digital divide. In response to community need driven by pandemic-induced hardships, EPL is leveraging an abundance of digital resources to support the operations and boost the capacity of a diverse group of partner organizations. These partnerships have been essential in reaching non-library users and creating a window into the information needs of underserved populations.

Meeting potential library users at their point of need—be it a food bank, homeless shelter, place of worship, or Head Start preschool—creates a bridge between the library and other trusted social service agencies. When trust and confidence is created between library staff and the staff of agencies working with underserved populations, the likelihood of client referrals between both entities is greatly increased. Intentionally offering a resource of value to local agencies is an excellent way to begin building dialogue and collaboration.

Public libraries seeking to replicate this partnership model should consider these options:
- Co-author a grant proposal with a local nonprofit agency.
- Offer regularly scheduled on-site programming at a partner agency location.
- Create a collection of resources reserved for nonprofit use only.

Designate a staff member or team to focus on creating nonprofit relationships. Organizational budgets and staff capacity will limit the size and scope of any partner lending program. Smaller libraries can scale their efforts by adjusting collection size, number of partners, and overall program goals to fit the capacity of the organization. Starting small with an option to increase program capacity is an excellent way to get started without overcommitting staff or financial resources.

As partnerships with local agencies deepen and mature, the benefits for libraries can be enormous. Nonprofit organizations have access to valuable insight into the information-seeking habits of hard-to-reach patrons. Strengthening your local nonprofit ecosystem helps local agencies thrive and helps underserved patrons access information resources. It also spreads the work of the library beyond the library space and into the community at large.

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Start With Cats!
Innovative Virtual Opportunities
that Bring the Community into the Classroom

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JENNIFER MCKENZIE (she/her) is a 20-year veteran English Language Arts teacher and teacher librarian, a former US Army Medical Service Corps Officer, a Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms scholar, a Future Ready Librarian presenter and podcaster, a five-time Teacher of the Year recipient, the 2019 Oregon Teacher Librarian of the Year, and the Region 3 Executive Board member of the Oregon Association of School Libraries. She is currently the K–12 District Teacher Librarian for Siuslaw School District in Florence, Oregon. "Innovation" is her favorite word! She regularly provides service learning opportunities that amplify library literacy standards via live or prerecorded virtual field trips that bring both local and global expertise to her Siuslaw learning community.

Oregon school systems canceled face-to-face classes as our state went into shelter-in-place on Friday, March 13, 2020. In the blink of an eye, educators had to negotiate reaching our learning communities digitally whilst navigating a global pandemic and collective trauma. We had to strategically figure out how to "ride the wave" during a period of accelerated change throughout our global educational landscape.

School library staff—the creative, innovative, and magical unicorns that we are—began offering live online classes and programming to include read-alouds, virtual poetry and music offerings, virtual gaming meetups, and virtual safe spaces. Among the many innovative community builders and silver linings that emerged from this pandemic were live and recorded virtual field trips and programming as well as the ability to harness the power of global professional connections.

Global Educational Networks and Fulbright Scholarship:
Connect and Collaborate!

If you weren't a global library collaborator before the pandemic, particularly through social media, I'm guessing you've become one by now. Another silver lining of the pandemic has been reaching out and working with diverse school library staff—any time, any place. I first met Amy Page (District Librarian, Eugene, OR) at the Oregon Association of School Libraries (OASL) 2019 Fall Conference where we were both panelists discussing library operations amid COVID-19. We loved each other's energy and started pulling together a professional learning community (PLC) within our region.

A month later, I met Michelle Carton (Elementary Librarian, Anchorage, AK) at one of the Future Ready Librarian Summits hosted by Shannon McClintock Miller (District

Teacher Librarian and Director of Innovation, Van Meter, IA). We were presenting research and teaching strategies concerning virtual programming and virtual field trips. Our districts partnered later during the spring of 2021 to explore the gray whale migration along the west coast. Michelle encouraged me to apply for a Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms (TGC) Fellowship, which I received!

The Fulbright Program is an international educational research network sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State (see Figure 1). The United Nations (2021) strategically created 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are an urgent call for action by all countries, developed and developing, in global partnership. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education (SDG Goal 4) is crucial in spurring global social justice and economic growth for all. Our 2021 international Fulbright TGC cohort consists of 401 educator researchers who, in one year's time, will impact over 75,681 students.

Figure 1: This map shows the one-year impact of the 2021 cohort of the Fulbright Teacher Program for Global Classrooms.

Much of our global collaboration is possible by leveraging technology tools to conduct virtual field trips and programming opportunities (see Figure 2). Our work is grounded in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on "glocal" (local/global) teaching strategies. As my international educational network expanded, I met Tracey Rowley (Tech Integration Specialist, Tucson, AZ) and Michelle Singh (LCT-E Learning Solutions CEO, Miami, FL) via online conferences concerning virtual teaching strategies. The three of us recently copresented a virtual field trip session at International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Live 22.

Figure 2: Global virtual field trips allow collaboration with partnering learning communities.

Siuslaw School District Community Connections

When I first arrived as the new K–12 District Teacher Librarian in the fall of 2020 (in a district that had lacked that position for well over 20 years), I could see what operational and curricular gaps existed. I could see what people needed, but I began to ask what they wanted. The number one response was connections: connections with Florence, with the district as a whole, with each other, and with the outside world.

In response, using a cell phone and a selfie stick, we initiated local virtual field trips. Since then, we've conducted hundreds of weekly trips. We've been building curricular connections and driving business to local shops and organizations. Our trips and service learning projects have assisted in animals being adopted from the Oregon Coast Humane Society, and we've collaborated globally with other schools outside of our learning community.

K–12 and Professional Development Library Programming

The local virtual field trips we're conducting are fabulous library programming opportunities for our learning communities, and so much more. We're covering all our library priority standards, and we're also teaching our learning community what 21st-century library curriculum is all about. We're co-creating our tours and interviews as primary texts, archiving them in our Destiny digital catalog and creating new research collections (Destiny Collections), and highlighting articles from the Gale Databases each week. Students and staff are demonstrating how to be good digital citizens, and our community partners and local city government folks now are using and reinforcing the language of digital leadership.

Digital Leadership plus Service Learning

Our Siuslaw virtual field trips have become meaningful service learning opportunities. The service learning projects I've worked on have always been the most meaningful, impactful, and magical moments in my career. Authentic service learning projects connect students who have curricular skills to learn with a partnering organization that has a need. As a former English

Language Arts teacher, this was always reading, writing, and speaking skills. It's a win-win situation in which students are learning or writing "for real" whilst serving a community gap.

For example, I lived in a community that experienced a massive 100-year flood that shut down the town; staff and students were out on the sandbag line for weeks. When it was safe to return to school, my middle school students partnered with the city government to research and write flood preparedness pamphlets that were distributed to the community.

I've also worked extensively with veteran and new American oral histories in which we conducted interviews and archived them through the Library of Congress. Students also created and presented documentaries of their journey to community crowds of 500+ to further promote the benefits of service learning.

Logistics for Live Local Virtual Field Trips

So, we can see the power of local and global virtual field trips and community partnerships. Now what? How do you get started? There is a plethora of resources available to conduct global field trips, like Flipgrid Virtual Field Trip events and scheduled trips offered through the California Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students (PORTS) system. My favorite trips have emphasized local, live, "cell phone and a selfie-stick" trips for my learning community.

- **Start With Cats:** If it's your first time conducting a live virtual field trip, the easiest organization to get acquainted with is your local Humane Society. Students, particularly our younger friends, are incredibly engaged with anything animal or nature-centric. You can simply begin weekly read-alouds from your local shelter or "catio," and you'll provide rich content for your learning community. Along the way, you'll help promote a local organization's mission and get some kitties and puppies adopted! I have a standing agreement with our local Oregon Coast Humane Society, and I pop in frequently for read-alouds, to conduct tours, and to coordinate service learning opportunities for Siuslaw and the shelter (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: We conduct virtual field trips and community service learning projects with the Oregon Coast Humane Society.

- **Live Trips:** We are onsite with our students and community partners live each week using Google Meet. We are particularly Wi-Fi-challenged on the coast, so occasionally I must prerecord site footage. For example, we did a trip to the water treatment plant. All the reservoirs and equipment are out in a field with no Wi-Fi, so I recorded a 15-minute tour of the plant in advance. Even with prerecorded footage, we still go live onsite and introduce our community partners. One of our library assistants controls our Google Meet on the back end and plays the footage for me. Afterward, we cut back to live coverage to continue Q&A and interaction with the organization.

- **Staffing—Play the Long Game:** Whatever you plan, make it sustainable considering your regular staffing and timing. You'll need a Google Meet (or Zoom) buddy. Someone has to open and control your digital platform while you're onsite live out in the community. Also, think of your timing. I can easily pop across town, do a live trip, and be back all within the average 60-minute class period.

- **Technology:** My advice is to keep your technology super simple. Really, all you need is your cell phone and a selfie stick. I've tried several other options, including a Chromebook plus mobile hotspot and I learned the cell phone/selfie stick combo is just easier. I have better Wi-Fi reception and it produces better video and streaming quality. As outdoor adventures are some of our biggest draws, and because we do all our trips rain or shine, rain gear is an absolute must out on the coast. See the sidebar for the Padlet of resources, including Amazon links to the specific technology we've used.

- **Advertising and Social Media:** Garner your audience! Our trips are designed for a K–12 audience plus staff and community members. We advertise trips in our monthly *Smore* newsletter, in our weekly K–12 curricular slides, on our school district website, and via all social media platforms (currently Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok). When I post to social media, I tag our partnering organization, which provides rich content and promotion for all involved. Teachers also post information to their Google Classroom sites. Siuslaw is not currently using Canvas, but you could push out content with ease via that learning management system. Eugene and Siuslaw school districts collaborated for our ocean adventures trip with Marine Biologist (and whale whisperer) Carrie Newell in Depoe Bay, OR. We used Zoom and kicked out a YouTube live stream. We had hundreds of participants watching from across the country. Just imagine the possibilities, friends!

- **Curate Research Collections:** We began curating Destiny Collections for each trip that include the live Google Meet, recorded virtual field trip, and/or prerecorded tours. With this, we're co-creating and archiving primary texts. Students can search for our virtual trip content and use it for their research writing. We're also adding the recorded weekly read-aloud, related fiction and nonfiction titles from our school district libraries, and any other applicable websites or resources.

Conclusion

With today's generation of students, finding new ways to connect learning in the classroom with the outside community, making it relevant, providing diverse experiences, and furnishing new ways to provide social-emotional learning can be a challenge. Harnessing the power of technology and virtual field trips is one innovative solution to create authentic, meaningful connections both locally and globally. The best way to start is with cats! Reading a book with a student's grandma and her cat, visiting the local shelter to visit the adoptable cats and learn about pet care, or talking with another class across the world using Flipgrid about pets, are all easy options that can be easily implemented with very little work but have positive outcomes.

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The following are resources for local and global virtual field trips. Reach out if you'd like to collaborate and connect.

"Virtual Field Trips: A Service Learning Opportunity"
Padlet: https://padlet.com/jmckenzie39/p6ook4uejgf54649

Follow these innovative educators and organizations via Twitter:
- Jen McKenzie: @jenmarymckenzie
- Amy Page: @AmyPageTL
- Shannon McClintock Miller: @shannonmmiller
- Michelle Carton: @AKGlobalTeacher
- Tracey Rowley: @TraceyRowley2
- Michelle Singh: @SinghNBCT
- Fulbright Teacher Exchanges: @FulbrightTeach
- ISTE: @ISTE

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Approaching the Library Behavior Policy with Justice and Access at the Forefront

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ADRIENNE DOMAN CALKINS (she/her) has worked as Library Manager at Sherwood Public Library since 2014 and has over 30 years of library experience from public and academic libraries in Oregon and Washington state. She holds an MLIS from San José State University and is the incoming OLA Secretary. Passion projects at work include equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism (EDIA) efforts, library assessment, and strategic planning.

During the COVID pandemic and the overlapping racial reckoning, the inequalities of resources and the disparities of the impact on our country and our communities have been exposed more than ever. Like most libraries, at Sherwood Public Library, we had tangible restrictions to our operations, were temporarily limited to curbside and virtual services, and reopened our doors to a community navigating multiple traumas and injustices. As we prepared to welcome our patrons back inside, our existing Behavior Policy (Sherwood Public Library, 2022) was inadequate, lacking the conviction of antiracism and trauma-informed customer service that we knew we needed.

This article explains why and how we worked through procedural and policy changes designed to preserve access to library services to the maximum extent possible, with tiered restrictions that now encompass continued access to curbside and virtual services. The process was made simpler by working in stages, alignment through training, and a cycle of evaluation and improvement. Our new behavior policy and procedures support consistent and appropriate enforcement, reduce biases, and foster more engagement with our patrons and community partners.

Background

Sherwood Public Library (SPL) is a member library of Washington County Cooperative Library Services and a department of the City of Sherwood. Our local policies are developed internally by SPL leadership, reviewed by our city's legal counsel, and evaluated and approved by the City of Sherwood Library Advisory Board. SPL staff develop and approve procedures, with legal review as needed. As policies and procedures are reviewed, we incorporate best practices from the OLA *Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, & Antiracism Toolkit* (2020) and other similar calls to action to make systemic change.

The SPL Behavior Policy (2022) is a tool for staff to "provide a welcoming environment where all are equally and safely entitled to use of the facility and to give staff support for consistently enforcing proper behavior," to quote from the policy's purpose statement. We are lucky in Sherwood to have had few issues at the library with drugs, violence, or other illegal activity. That said, we also evaluate public behavior against this policy on a daily basis and our comparatively quiet surburban status does not make us exempt from needing a fair and just policy.

Pre-pandemic, we mostly used the Behavior Policy with young teens for rowdiness, messes, theft, vandalism, bullying, and disregard of staff direction. The process of enforcement for violations such as rowdiness that was unlikely to cause or threaten harm followed this common pattern:

1. Check in with the offending patron(s), let them know the expectations, and ask for cooperation.
2. If the behavior continues, give the patron(s) violating the rules a warning that continuing the behavior will lead to being asked to leave for the day.
3. If the behavior continues, they are asked to leave for the day and may try again tomorrow.
4. If this is a repeating issue and we've already asked the patron(s) to leave previously, then we may exclude the patron(s) for a week or longer.

Violations that caused or threatened harm to others, or for other illegal behavior, called for immediate exclusion for at least one week, up to permanent trespass, and local police were likely involved.

Behavior issues were escalating in those pre-pandemic "before-times" and it was challenging to be consistent about the duration of our exclusions. We struggled to keep up with documenting and sharing the incidents right away so everyone on staff knew the stage of enforcement to use (whether the next time should be a warning, or a week out, etc.). This challenge led to inconsistent enforcement and a situation that was vulnerable to biased decisions.

Incremental Improvements

In 2019 and early 2020, I began personalizing the exclusion letters I wrote to excluded patrons (and minors' parents) with positive statements to better illustrate specific pathways to returning to the library. I made more phone calls and sent emails to try to reach parents and approach situations collaboratively. This wasn't fully restorative justice, but that's the concept that was prompting questions such as "What role does a public library have in encouraging socially and mentally healthy communities? What impact will our behavior policy enforcement have, if any, years down the road for some of these teens who were still learning who they are and how their choices begin to define them? Can we have a positive impact in how we enforce behavior?"

Together with lead staff, I began codifying revamped procedures to include a progression of enforcement based on the level of behavior infraction and the number of infractions. This concept is not new, though for us it was critical to empower lead staff to make quick assessments of what the next step should be and why. I was also working on a policy draft with new language about relationship-building just as the pandemic hit. While the work paused, the ideas kept simmering.

Silver Linings of Accelerated Change

Since COVID and the killing of George Floyd, our community, like so many, became polarized. Customer service was complicated by masks, safety, and the shifting moods of the community and our nation. Life and work were strained. As we reopened our building in the spring of 2021 during the statewide mask mandate, mask compliance at the library was our top concern to protect staff and the public, and allowed us to keep our doors open with a small staff. For those patrons who did not want to wear a mask, we continued to offer the new pandemic-era alternatives of curbside service, expanded virtual services, Chromebooks, and hotspots. A small percentage of interactions about the mask requirement led to arguments and sometimes threats from patrons. We asked some to leave for the day, and, for repeating issues, even longer.

We started using our newly updated procedure and exclusion progression, resulting in more objective consistency (see sidebar). The process had previously been punitive and subtractive (taking away library rights, i.e. access to the library). A new option before us was to continue to offer choices even in the face of excluding patrons from the facility. They could choose to stay and comply, or leave for the day and still have access to curbside service, check out a hotspot and Chromebook, or otherwise participate virtually—silver linings the pandemic brought us.

Revised Progression for Behavior Infractions

The following is an excerpt from our revised behavior procedures, which are included in the new policy document (Sherwood Public Library, 2022).

An example exclusion progression for behavior that is disruptive, disorderly, or unsafe is below. This example is for relatively minor infractions. More serious or repeat infractions will have a compressed progression.

- *1st infraction—Request from staff to discontinue behavior; staff will make efforts to offer an alternative way to use library services, as available (e.g. curbside only or virtual services).*
- *2nd infraction—Request to discontinue and warning that behavior can lead to an exclusion; alternative way to use library services, if available, may be required for the day.*
- *3rd infraction—Asked to leave for the day; staff will offer alternative methods of library use, if available.*
- *4th infraction—Exclusion for one week. Alternative methods of library use that do not require the facility or physical property will be allowed as relevant for the infraction (e.g. if behavior only presents inside the building, then using curbside and/or virtual services will still be allowed).*
- *5th infraction—Exclusion for one month. Alternative methods of service may be allowed. See above.*
- *6th infraction—Exclusion for three months. Alternative methods of service may be allowed. See above.*

- *7th infraction—Exclusion for six months. Alternative methods of service may be allowed. See above.*

Example of exclusion progression for behavior that is threatening, harassing, harmful, or violating the rights of library users and/or staff:

- *1st infraction—Exclusion for one week minimum, up to a permanent trespass, depending on severity of the situation.*
- *2nd infraction—Exclusion for longer period, up to a permanent trespass, depending on the severity of the situation.*

Offering alternative use of library services during the exclusion may not be applicable, depending on the severity of the violation. Staff and public safety and rights will be considered.

The next pressing issue for us was easy and timely communication among staff about behavior enforcement. We were also working on restoring all open hours and still had staff working from home part of the time. We had little available bandwidth and whatever came next had to be easy and reliable. We were looking for a pilot that was "good enough" and embraced our new appreciation (requirement?) for slow librarianship—which was another silver lining concept brought to our attention by Meredith Farkas (2021) and helped move us from theory to operationalization without getting bogged down by perfection.

A New Tool

New questions were emerging: "How can we use trauma-informed customer service principles at this policy level? How can we assume the best and preserve dignity? How can we preserve a person's constitutional right to use a public library to the maximum extent possible, while still having a safe and welcoming library? How can we make tools that are effective and simple? How can we do better to combat bullying, microagressions, and harassment? Are our values of equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism (EDIA) evident?"

A pivotal change to our enforcement was to create and implement a new behavior tracking and staff communication tool using the cloud-based Microsoft Office 365, which our city's technology department implemented at the beginning of the pandemic to facilitate working from home. This online Behavior Log now guides staff through enforcement procedures and documenting details. It includes multiple-choice prompts such as "What level of behavior enforcement occurred" and "What alternative methods of service did staff offer?" (see Figure 1). The form populates a cloud-based Excel spreadsheet that is viewable and searchable by all library staff.

In addition, we use a dedicated Microsoft Teams chat to capture smaller issues and generally share updates about behavior and safety-related concerns. Training on unbiased descriptions and confidentiality was part of onboarding the new Behavior Log. This new tool helps to document behavior issues, ensure consistency, and to work quickly as a team—even when our team members are in multiple locations.

What alternative methods of service did staff offer?

☐ None

☐ Curbside

☐ Electronic resources (e.g. e-books or e-resources)

☐ Call or email for library services

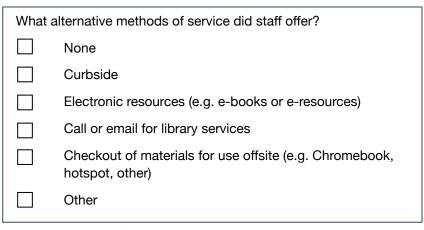☐ Checkout of materials for use offsite (e.g. Chromebook, hotspot, other)

☐ Other

Figure 1: A new question from the Behavior Logs is embedded into the enforcement process.

After an infraction, supervisors and lead staff often anticipate next actions and share pre-scripted wording for staff to use should another transgression happen or to start a conversation to team-solve a situation. We script out choices for the patron and a clear path to returning to full use of the library.

Alignment through Training

Until Oregon's mask mandate was lifted in March 2022, we were weary from enforcement and the escalated tensions. We knew our patrons were, too. The Ryan Dowd COVID training (2020) got us started, and we also needed longer term solutions. The need for a revised Behavior Policy was becoming more urgent, and so was the need to learn new skills.

On Working with Local Police

Calling police for enforcement can be a trigger for those who have experienced trauma; for Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC); for LGBTQIA+; and for other marginalized individuals. Real biases can have dire consequences. While our own experiences with local law enforcement were helpful, we were aware of problematic repercussions. Indeed, the concept of reducing police presence in libraries has gained much traction as part of equity work (Mueller et al., 2022).

In addition, we needed a refresher on when to call for police backup and emergency response. We partnered with Sherwood Police for a staff training, with additional customized trainings to come. A local officer who is a member of a mental health response team shared tips from mental health trainings for police officers and deescalation techniques applicable in the library setting.

We also learned we are empowered to ask the police to leave if they are making a library situation worse or if they are deviating from our policy and mission—a subtle and new option in our enforcement toolkit.

On Mental Health Support

Our role in creating safe spaces and building relationships was galvanized by the pandemic. I wanted to look at behavior issues and our social service referral skills holistically as patrons were reentering public gathering spaces. Mental health continued to be a top priority to support our community and our team as the pandemic moved past the two-year mark.

We used GetTrainedToHelp.com (https://gettrainedtohelp.com), the training portal for Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties. Several librarian staff members attended the full-day Mental Health First Aid trainings, choosing adult or youth versions to match their areas of focus. All staff were invited to a QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) training on suicide prevention scheduled for our team, in addition to a customized training from our Employee Assistance Program, Canopy (https://canopywell.com/Employee-Assistance), on navigating change during uncertain times. Both have helped normalize conversations and activities about mental health, self-care, and collective care.

On Bystander Training

Following a path laid out in our strategic focus areas, we contracted Tai Harden-Moore (http://www.moore-consultants.com/) to present *From Ally to Accomplice* training for SPL staff, which inspired us take a stronger stance with our EDIA approach to foster a safe library. We are in early stages of developing library-specific scripts for interrupting racism and microaggressions.

For example, if we overhear a racist remark directed at a patron, we can insert ourselves into the conversation and say, "I overheard [XYZ] and I'm checking in on you. Do you need any support?" We can say to the speaker, "This library is a safe space for everyone and those words are hurtful. I need you to help us make the library welcoming and safe for everyone." This is a new level of proactive enforcement for all of us, and while it might be uncomfortable, it is our duty to uphold the values of the library and our stronger policy backs us up.

Enforcing with Empathy

I've been approaching this work with the following questions, guideposts, and assumptions rooted in empathy and research:

- How can we create physical, psychological, social, and moral safety for all of us (Tolley, 2022)?
- We are doing this work with reduced capacity. Do we have enough staff in today? Are we stretched too thin to do the new work before us? Do we have the mental and emotional stamina to handle another behavior policy infraction or other urgent matter, let alone do the work we were hired to do?
- We are working with patrons and staff who are struggling (Urban Libraries Unite, 2022, and Infopeople, 2022).
- Our colleagues and our communities are exposed to new traumas (e.g. emergencies, loss of a loved one, or anything that threatens one's security and rights) and are expected to cope with the compounded effects of the new trauma (Barski-Carrow, 2018) on top of the effects of the pandemic.
- Assume we all need things to be easier, more just, more holistic, and to extend grace more often.
- Assume the loss of library access has negative impacts beyond that day or that week. There can be shame and loss of trust. There can be financial, educational, and social

ramifications to losing access to our resources.
- A policy needs to be fair, enforceable, and supported with the training and tools to use it with empathy and consistency.
- Punitive behavior doesn't solve problems without deeper work and engagement.

Next Steps and Conclusion

This set of changes is part of our culture of continuous improvement as a learning organization. I anticipate there will be future revisions to this policy, because the work is never done. As of this writing, our new Behavior Policy is in the final stages of review and approval. It begins with this statement: "Our intention with our enforcement is to be fair and to build relationships that lead to improved behavior and continued access to our services and facility." Among many changes, it has new language about hate speech and racism. I expect to look at the policy with fresh eyes and see a dozen ways it could be better. And there are always more policies to review, revise, and sometimes to add. All SPL policies are located at https://www.sherwoodoregon.gov/library/policies (2022). I welcome suggestions and questions.

A library's behavior policy is a tool for a safe and welcoming library, and is also a litmus test for some of our most difficult circumstances where we are called upon to build relationships even as we may be removing access. The behavior policy strenthens our role as protector to counter hate speech, bullying, harassment, and microaggressions. Part of creating a library that is welcoming for everyone is looking for ways to build bridges, repair past distrust, and prioritize making just and equitable systemic change. The vestiges of the early stages of the pandemic—curbside and virtual services—are part of the accelerated change that made us stronger and more just.

To all those who are involved in policy work, I'm sure you can relate that policy work is satisfying when it's done and positive change is made. Policy work can also be daunting. It's laborious. Perfection feels out of reach, which can cause inaction. There are so many layers: working with all levels of staff, the board, legal counsel, and others in a cycle of revisions. There are also real and perceived obstacles to doing the work:
- Time to dive deep into the research.
- Patience and courage to sit with uncomfortable thoughts.
- Isolation in the actual writing and rewriting and finding direction when there's no manual applicable to this era we're in.
- Commitment to go through all the steps.
- Effort and skill-building to develop and test new methods.
- Time and resources to implement and train

In spite of these obstacles, I come back to this: Our library policies are the core structure of what we do. They hold us accountable and they shield us. They set us in motion to demonstrate our values and convictions. We must also be ever watchful for any unfortunate mismatch between the values in a policy and the EDIA goals we are trying to accomplish.

My call to action, then, is to take the time to reevaluate policies with an equity lens. Choose one and make it better. Then repeat the cycle. We must examine and adjust our policies frequently as a process, not merely to create static products. Systemic change happens one small step at a time and together we are moving libraries in a positive direction.

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Inside Look: EOU's Mobile Virtual Reality Lab

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In January 2022, the Eastern Oregon University (EOU) Library officially launched its new Mobile Virtual Reality Lab and Virtual Reality Studio. Virtual reality at EOU was made possible in part by an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services through the Library Services and Technology Act, administered by the State Library of Oregon in summer 2021.

Virtual reality, or VR, simulates experiences with the aid of technology, most commonly specialized headsets that allow the user to see and feel like they are immersed in a virtual space. It can be used for gaming, entertainment, fitness, social interaction, and education. The call for grant applications came at a serendipitous time, just after I had read the article "Beyond the Lab: Virtual Reality for Undergraduate Anatomy and Physiology Students" (Phillips, Lynn, Yenser, & Wissinger, 2021). As the library liaison for the Sciences, I regularly work with many Anatomy and Physiology students and their professor. I suggested a collaboration and the project concept took off from there.

Background

In spring 2021 the campus community was anticipating a shift back to primarily on-campus classes after a year of mixed offerings. While we were only fully remote for one term—Spring 2020—students were taking classes in a variety of formats during the 2020–21 academic year, and only about half were in-person on campus.

In an undergraduate ethnographic research study of the EOU student experience during the pandemic, students reported feelings of extreme loneliness, social isolation, and other mental health challenges during this time (Thompson, 2022). These and other outcomes of social disruption were observed by teaching and library faculty in our classes and interactions with students. There was increased anxiety around being on campus and entering buildings, confusion about acceptable face coverings, stress about what to do with poor mask com-

pliance, and, for many students who were not interacting regularly with others in person, anxiety about talking to people they didn't know.

The university was planning on a mostly on-campus Fall term, though we continued to offer asynchronous online classes as we have for many years. At the library we were interested in re-engaging students with library programming and services, and trying to increase traffic in the building. Creating a welcoming, stress-free environment was our primary student outreach goal for the year.

Anatomy and Physiology students and their professor had found the remote learning experience challenging. Students had to purchase software licenses to access an online lab platform in addition to their already expensive textbook. The online lab simulations were not popular, and there was a lot of cheating. Students who had Chromebooks or who didn't have their own computers had to borrow one from a friend, or skip the labs altogether as the software doesn't run on all types of computers. Some students dropped out, failed out, or even changed majors because the remote format did not serve them well.

In consideration of all of this, the class was planned to run in-person for the 2021–22 academic year, though the modality for the labs was undetermined as safety measures were more difficult to implement in the lab setting. The professor and I thought that VR activities could potentially be one way for students to have an in-person, hands-on lab experience regardless of the modality in which the labs were offered.

Technology, Facilities, and Logistics

With the grant funds and the help of EOU's IT department, we purchased four HP G2 Reverb Windows Mixed Reality headsets and four Alienware laptops with the power to run VR applications. We also purchased an Oculus Rift-S headset, two Meta Quest 2 all-in-one headsets (formerly called Oculus Quest 2), and additional equipment and accessories.

We repurposed an office in a public area of the library as the VR Studio and equipped it with a large-screen TV, desk, and lounge chair for VR meditation. The room is about 10 feet by 10 feet and furniture is minimal, which allows for the necessary six-foot radius of space to move about while wearing a VR headset (see Figure 1). A VR headset and laptop are installed in this room for VR appointments. We made slight adjustments to the furniture and equipment in two of our study rooms so they could be used for VR appointments when needed as well, and we store the other

Figure 1: A professor and a student experience a Civil War battlefield VR simulation in the EOU Library VR Studio.

headsets and equipment near our circulation desk. We improvised a classroom and empty office as needed. At our busiest, we had five VR appointments in different rooms in the library at the same time.

To make VR as easily accessible as possible, we created a simple appointment request system using a Google Form. Our daytime and nighttime circulation supervisors, along with another librarian, were trained on how to use the VR equipment. Students can make appointments any time the library is open. When an appointment request comes in, we reserve a room (the VR Studio or one of the VR-capable study rooms), the appropriate headset for the application the student wishes to use, and an Alienware laptop, if required. Laptops are not required to use the Meta Quest 2 all-in-one headsets. So far, a Google Calendar has satisfied our needs, but we might need a more sophisticated reservation system in the future. The headsets and laptops are cataloged so they can be checked out to students for use in the library, similar to physical course reserves. We ask students to fill out VR Use Agreement forms upon their first time checking out VR equipment and we keep these on file in case of damage or other problems.

The Anatomy and Physiology class is the largest class on campus, with up to 100 students enrolled in the Fall term. These students sign up for VR appointments in groups of two to four. One student can wear the headset while the others watch on the TV monitor, but often they take turns. The VR application the class uses is SharecareYOU VR, a human body simulation that allows students to examine internal organs and systems of the body in 3D. A user can explore inside certain organs, including the stomach, the heart, the eye, and the neuron environment of the brain. They can control certain functions like blood flow, eating, or breathing to see the effects these have on the organ.

The experience is completely immersive and objects appear three-dimensional. It allows students to take their time, try different things, and compare healthy states and pathologies of various organs or systems in a setting where they are in control. Students have described the experience as much more realistic than watching lecture slides or video simulations, and much more engaging.

The labs for the course did return to an in-person format, but human cadavers are not (and have never been) used in the labs. SharecareYOU VR allows students to investigate the inner workings of the human body in as realistic a way as possible in the absence of the real thing.

Students and Classes Experiencing VR

The first iteration of VR lab for Anatomy and Physiology was an extra credit assignment in which students were required to give feedback about using VR and what they learned. Many students admitted to me that their motivation was primarily the extra credit, but by the time they had finished, they were excited and ready to come back. Several booked additional appointments on their own to use the application to study for exams. The first attempt having been a success, in Spring term the professor built a VR assignment exploring the heart and the circulatory system into the class requirements. Again, some students came back on their own time to spend additional time in VR and to study for exams. We found that word of mouth was a key promotional tool. Students might seem fairly disinterested when they arrived for their first appointment, but almost always left excited and told their friends, resulting in more appointments apart from the class assignment.

Though the project began with the Anatomy and Physiology class, we have collaborated with faculty in History, Communications Studies, Psychology, and Health and Human Performance, as well as with campus departments, including the Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion, and Residence Life. Students have visited our VR Studio to meditate in VR, play games like Beat Saber for fun and stress relief, and to show their friends their hometowns in Google Earth VR.

We've taken the mobile lab to the residence halls and to classrooms, and we've collaborated with the Multicultural Center to offer a monthlong installation of the VR application "I Am A Man" during Black History Month (see Figure 2). "I Am A Man" uses archival audio recordings, TV footage, and print media to illustrate some of the events of the Memphis sanitation workers' strike in 1968. Students in a lab session of a History course chose between "I Am A Man" and the VR documentary "Traveling While Black," which describes the history of restricted and dangerous travel conditions for African Americans during the Jim Crow era in the South.

Figure 2: A student uses a VR application at the EOU Multicultural Center.

In another History course, students watched "The Civil War 1864: A Virtual Reality Experience" on YouTube 360 from the American Battlefields Trust. Students reported that these experiences were moving and powerful. Unlike watching a film, VR puts the observer in the scene, marching along with protestors, sitting in a restaurant booth across from someone telling a personal story, or looking around a Civil War battlefield hospital as if they were there.

Future Applications of VR at EOU

Additional collaborations in the works include a fitness application called VZFit on the Meta Quest 2 headset that connects to a Bluetooth-enabled bike trainer in the Exercise Science lab. Undergraduate and faculty researchers will be looking at how VR affects motivation to exercise. Another Health and Human Performance professor will be using SharecareYOU VR in her lab to help students learn muscle function. A Psychology professor who teaches neuroscience will use the application in a classroom demonstration to show parts of the brain that are otherwise difficult to illustrate with two-dimensional images. With the purchase of a 360-degree camera, we will also be exploring how we can create our own content such as lab safety training VR videos.

Challenges and Successes in the VR Lab

Alongside these successes there have also been plenty of challenges. Long waits for laptops delayed the start of the project to Winter term. University restrictions on software purchases and licensing caused frustration. Some VR applications only run on certain headsets, which forced us to acquire additional headsets that we had not planned on. Running VR uses battery power at a much faster rate than typical daily applications, and only alcohol-free sanitizing wipes can be used on headsets. Those interested in getting into the weeds of setting up a VR lab may learn more from Gillian Ellern and Laura Cruz' articles "Black, White, and Grey: The Wicked Problem of Virtual Reality in Libraries" (2021) and "Hardware is the Easy Part: The Gray Areas of Integrating VR in Libraries" (2021).

EOU is a small, regional, public university, and our library budget is modest. Because much of the budget is encumbered by subscriptions (databases, journal packages), we rarely have funding for technology or special projects without the aid of grant funding. ARPA funds through the State Library of Oregon were granted to projects addressing one or more focal areas, including connectivity, digital equity and inclusion, and needs arising from the pandemic, among others. This funding allowed us to purchase all the technology equipment and accessories, as well as a couple of VR games. In this way, we were able to provide innovative digital content to our rural college students without any charge to them. It also helped to build learning experiences that were superior to what had been offered during the prior, more restrictive year of the pandemic.

Now the only ongoing cost for the VR lab is the SharecareYOU subscription, which will be paid by the College of Science, Technology, Math, and Health Sciences.

Conclusion

For the library, this wasn't so much a pandemic-induced pivot as it was an opportunity to offer engaging, cutting-edge, free, and accessible learning experiences to our students. This was consistent with our goals of offering programming that brought students into the library and made them feel welcome. All of our outreach and programming activities share the goal of breaking down barriers between students and library use. With this project, we invite students to use the library in a new way. While some students may be nervous at the beginning of their VR session, their positive experiences with friendly staff and interesting technology help to show them that the library is not just a study hall, and that the staff are eager to help and interact with them.

Libraries are often testing grounds for emerging technologies, and housing this equipment in the library while making it mobile has made the technology accessible to all our campus-based students in a way that wouldn't be possible had it belonged to a particular department or college. I overheard student ambassadors talk about virtual reality at the library while giving campus tours, and overheard another student in the student union telling a friend how easy it is to make an appointment to try VR in the library. After a restrictive year in which we were challenged to figure out how to serve students and how to get them to return to the library, hearing students tell their friends about something exciting at the library feels like a big win.

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