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## CHAPTER 12

# Building Partnerships for Better Library Orientations

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**Chapter Themes:** Partnerships; Targeting specific audiences; Technology; Tours

## BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2013, the Council of Provosts, whose membership is made up of the Provosts from each of the six colleges at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), was asked to create a First-Year Experience (FYE) Program pilot to support students' transition to UCSD (“About FYE,” n.d.). For the first year of the 2-year pilot program, which launched in Fall 2014, the FYE was offered as a for-credit elective course open to as many as 120 freshmen from each college. In the second year, additional classes were opened for up to 65 first-year transfer students per college, which were designated as Transfer Year Experience (TYE) courses. The freshmen-level FYE courses became permanent offerings in the university catalog in Fall 2016, and the transfer TYE courses became permanent as of Fall 2017. In total, about 1700 freshmen and transfer students have participated in the program in the past 3 years. Of those, 1200 completed the library orientation module—some students choose not to complete the module, despite it being assigned to them by their instructor, and some FYE and TYE instructors opt out of assigning at least one part of the library orientation module (i.e., they choose not to have the library lecture, but assign the scavenger hunt or vice versa).

## INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

The organizational system at the UCSD is fairly unique for an American institution because our undergraduate students enroll in one of six colleges located in its own “neighborhood” on campus, each with its own core curriculum, writing program, residential facilities, traditions, and FYE program. This is designed to combine the environment of a small liberal arts college with the many resources of a large research institution (Undergraduate Colleges, 2017). Thus, students do not select a college based on their major, and aside from the writing programs and FYE/TYE courses, they take classes with students from the other colleges. Moreover, the colleges (e.g., Thurgood Marshall College, Earl Warren College, etc.) are administratively separate from academic departments, which are organized under disciplinary divisions or schools (e.g., the Division of Social Sciences, the Rady School of Management, etc.).

## EVOLVING PARTNERSHIP

During Spring 2014, our library was asked to contribute to the information literacy portion of the FYE Program, which spurred the development of our FYE/Library partnership. We met multiple times over the spring and summer quarters with the FYE Program coordinator, the Provosts, and other campus leaders to discuss the needs of the emerging program and how the Library might help meet some of those needs. The full process of creating and evolving the library orientation module over the past 3 years is discussed in the next section, but once the initial module was approved by all stakeholders, sustaining it became the duty of the FYE Program coordinator and librarians in the Learning Services department.

The FYE and TYE courses take place every fall quarter, so we meet with both the FYE Program coordinator and FYE faculty coordinator during the winter quarter to maintain our partnership and continue to sync the library orientation with the growing FYE Program. We discuss how the fall courses went and whether any changes should be made to the library module. We are also asked to help update the information literacy section of the FYE/TYE syllabus template every spring, ensuring that relevant changes in the library field are reflected in the material provided to students (e.g., the ACRL Framework being officially adopted in January 2016 meant we modified the definition and description of information literacy in the syllabus).

After the first year of FYE courses, we were invited to provide a guest lecture for the preparatory course taken during spring quarter by FYE graduate teaching assistants (TAs) and undergraduate discussion leaders (DLs) to get them ready for fall classes. This prep course is cotaught by the FYE Program coordinator and an FYE faculty member. Our lecture to this class serves two functions: (1) as a train-the-trainer session, so that TAs and DLs are able to guide FYE/TYE students through any issues they might have with our library mobile scavenger hunt and (2) as an in-depth introduction to concepts such as information literacy, library anxiety, and the scaffolded instruction the Library provides undergraduates throughout various stages of their academic career, thus discussing where the FYE Program fits into the larger picture of information literacy on campus.

## **EVOLVING LIBRARY ORIENTATION**

When we were asked to contribute to the information literacy portion of the FYE courses, we began with a series of conversations with the Provosts and other campus leaders. In these meetings, we successfully made the argument that the “information literacy” segment of the FYE should focus on library services and resources because there was no research-based assignment included in the course content.

We used library literature to make the case that information literacy in a vacuum, with nothing to tie it to results or real-time needs, has little impact on students and low retention (Glenn, 2001; Seamans, 2002). Therefore, we pushed for the orientation module to have a more general learning goal: to introduce students to library spaces and resources. We pointed out that students who receive an orientation to library resources and services are more likely to seek research assistance with course papers, projects, and presentations (Boff & Johnson, 2002; Brown, Weingart, Johnson, & Dance, 2004; Du Mont & Schloman, 1995; Pellegrino, 2012; Ury & King, 1995; Vance, Kirk, & Gardner, 2012). We also emphasized the importance of introducing students to library spaces early in their college career (Donald, Harmon, & Schweikhard, 2012). Furthermore, a library orientation exercise where students feel they can succeed often helps combat feelings of library anxiety, as students can feel daunted by the size of the library, be overwhelmed because they do not know where items and services are located in the building, are intimidated by the research process, and feel uncomfortable asking library staff questions (Cahoy & Bichel, 2008; Gross & Latham, 2007; Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 1999; Mellon, 1986; Van Scoyoc, 2003).

To convince the Provosts that an online scavenger hunt was a good option for introducing students to the library's spaces, we discussed studies about successful library orientations that focus on active learning exercises such as scavenger hunts, treasure hunts, Amazing Library Races, mysteries in the library, and self-guided library tours on mobile devices, such as iPads. These activities provide low-pressure games that introduce library locations and research concepts, without the high stakes of a graded research assignment (Boss, Angell, & Tewell, 2015; Broussard, 2010; Burke & Lai, 2012; Cahoy & Bichel, 2008; Foley & Bertel, 2015; Giles, 2015; Kasbohm, Schoen, & Dubaj, 2006; Marcus & Beck, 2003; McCain, 2007).

Thus, our contribution to the first year of the FYE Program consisted of three distinct but connected elements. The first was a 15–20 minute presentation about library resources given during the FYE class lecture. Next, students participated in an online interactive library scavenger hunt as an in-class activity during their discussion section, which took around 30 minutes to finish. Lastly, they completed a homework assignment where they had to create a public service announcement (PSA) featuring their favorite library resource, space, or service.

In the second year of the program, the PSA assignment was dropped from the module as the FYE Program staff and faculty found the logistics of collecting and grading the assignment unwieldy because of the number

of students involved and the creative format in which students were creating their PSAs. Given that the Council of Provosts hopes all first-year UCSD students will someday be required to enroll in an FYE or TYE section, it made sense to streamline the orientation module so that it could more easily scale up to encompass over 8500 students per fall quarter (Student Research, 2016). Therefore, from Fall 2015 to the present, the library orientation module has consisted of the library lecture and the mobile scavenger hunt.

## **DEVELOPING THE LIBRARY SCAVENGER HUNT**

Given the many services, spaces, and resources offered by the Library, we had to narrow down to those which would be most useful to first-year students to decide which to highlight in both the lecture and the scavenger hunt. We met with a number of librarians who work directly with first-year students to discuss which resources and services were most popular for new students and determine the best set of “stops” to have students visit within the library building. The final list included the following:

- Spaces: front lobby and information desk, reference desk, course reserves, active and quiet study spaces, special collections, computer labs with printers and scanners;
- Services/Resources: library cards, catalog, databases, course and subject guides, reference services, library hours, Wi-Fi.

Several of the spaces, resources, and services mentioned in the scavenger hunt are first introduced to students during the short library lecture, so that the two components of the orientation module reinforced each other. An important decision we made to reduce impact on library service points was to post validation codes in areas that students were visiting which students would then record for the scavenger hunt indicating that an area was visited, rather than having hundreds of students asking library staff the same question. (For a fuller discussion of the development of this module, as well as a complete list of questions used in the scavenger hunt, see our article: Goldman, Turnbow, Roth, Friedman, and Heskett (2016).)

## **TECHNOLOGY**

When selecting a technology solution for the mobile scavenger hunt, we had several requirements we needed the technology to meet. It needed to be Web-based and not require an app to be downloaded because that can be a barrier for some of our students. It needed to be scalable up from our initial group of 472 students in Fall 2014 to the 5000–10,000 students our Provosts envision taking an FYE/TYE course in future. Finally, it needed to have a relatively short learning curve for those without a background in software programming—like most of the librarians at UCSD—because we would be the ones creating and maintaining the scavenger hunt. Initially, we selected the educational gaming software Edventure Builder as our technology solution, but in Summer 2017, we moved over to Qualtrics. Like Edventure Builder, Qualtrics allowed students to complete the scavenger hunt using a Web link that was responsive and accessible on multiple devices. This change was cost-saving for us, as we can use Qualtrics for many other activities and assessments within the library, and we do not have a pay-per-game model with Qualtrics the way we did with Edventure Builder. (For a fuller discussion of the technical design and testing process used in the development of this module, see our article: Roth, Turnbow, Goldman, and Friedman (2016).)

## **FRESHMEN VERSUS TRANSFER STUDENTS**

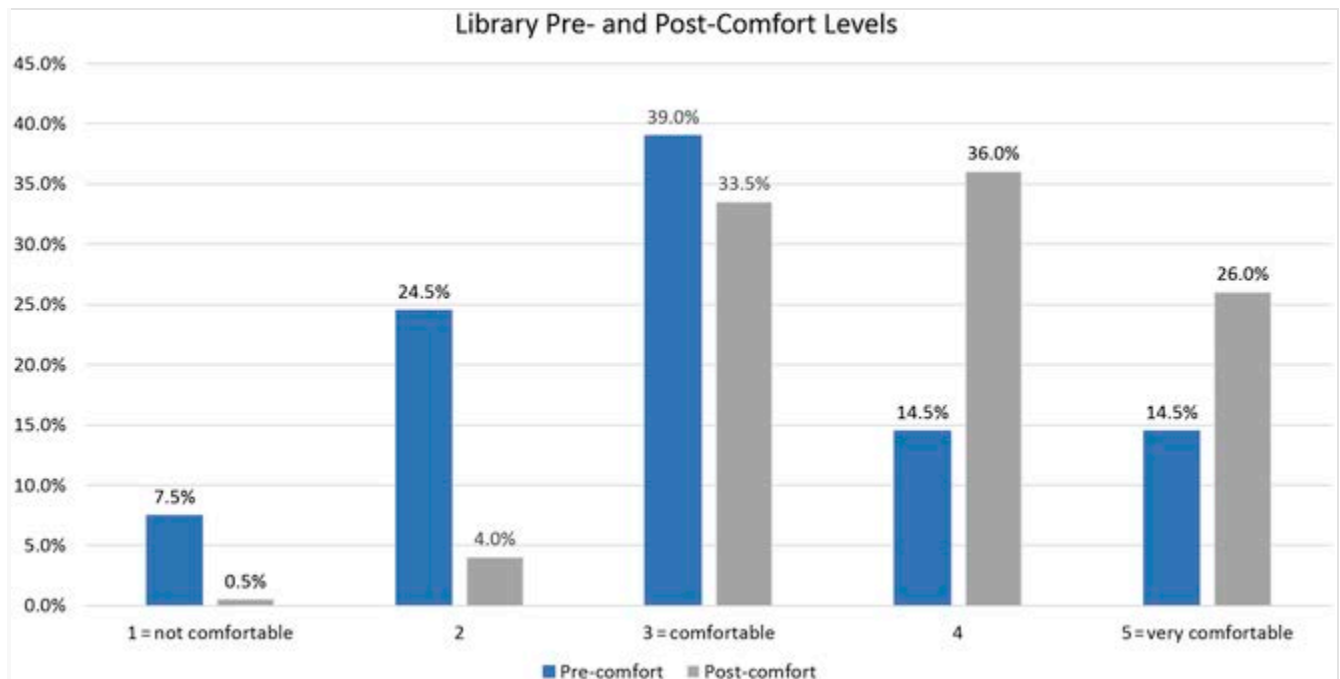
When sections for transfer students were added to the FYE Program during the second year, it was decided that they should go through the same lecture and mobile scavenger hunt as the freshmen. However, informal feedback received by the FYE Program coordinator indicated that transfers felt the module was a bit too basic

for them because they had used a university library before and had completed college-level research papers at their previous institutions.

Therefore, in our 2016 winter quarter meeting with the FYE Program coordinator and faculty coordinator, we came up with the idea to flip the order of the module for transfer sections. Instead of the lecture coming first, followed by the online scavenger hunt, transfer students would complete the scavenger hunt first. At the end of the scavenger hunt, we added the question: What is one question you still have about the library? Using the answers to those questions, we then turned the subsequent lecture into an FAQ session, rather than a basic introduction to the library. In this way, we emphasized UCSD-specific spaces and services, which transfers have not used before, while respecting the prior knowledge and experience these students bring with them. The new flipped model was received much more positively by the transfer students.

## FORMAL FEEDBACK

Students are asked at both the beginning and end of the scavenger hunt to rank their comfort level with using the library on a scale of 1–5, where 1 = not comfortable, 3 = comfortable, and 5 = very comfortable. Across the 3 years of the FYE Program, there was a 21% overall increase in comfort after the library scavenger hunt (see Fig. 12.1). During the postevaluation, 42% of FYE/TYE students reported an increase of 1 on the comfort level scale (e.g., the student went from a 3 to a 4), 16.2% had an increase of 2, 2.6% had an increase of 3, and 1% had an increase of 4. About 34.5% of students experienced no increase in their comfort with the library, 2.6% had a decrease of 1, 1% had a decrease of 2, and 0.1% had a decrease of 3. It is important to note that some of these changes may not directly relate to the scavenger hunt itself but instead relate to changes in either library anxiety or overconfidence (Gross & Latham, 2007; Gustavson & Nall, 2011; Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 1999; Mellon, 1986; Molteni & Chan, 2015).



**Figure 12.1** Comparison of students' reported comfort level using the library before and after completing the library scavenger hunt.

## BEST PRACTICES

Throughout the 3-year evolution of the FYE/Library partnership, we have developed a set of best practices that could be of use to other librarians who wish to create a similar orientation module for a partner on their campus. (To review our initial best practices list, developed in the first year of this partnership, see our article: Goldman et al. (2016).)

- *Choose strategic partners.* We were fortunate to be brought in during the development stage of the FYE Program, but this type of orientation module could be used with a variety of campus partners, such as a first-year writing program, a lower-level general education course, freshman orientation, or Welcome Week. This orientation module is best used for students new to campus, and every institution will have several key courses or programs, which work with incoming students. Reaching out to receptive partners might be the first step to realizing this type of module.
- *Form a team with a varied skill set.* From the beginning, we were fortunate to have a team in place that included members with an understanding of our institutional history, instructional design, instructional technology, and project management. Each person made valuable contributions that led to the successful launch and ongoing maintenance of this module.
- *Foster internal and external communication.* Throughout our partnership, we have communicated with the FYE Program coordinator to ensure students had a positive experience during the orientation, especially because we only interact with students face-to-face during the short lecture. Additionally, we needed to make sure other librarians were kept informed about the scavenger hunt and would be willing to let us post signs with validation codes at their service points.
- *Manage internal and external expectations.* Within the library, we had to manage the expectations of other librarians about the amount of information we could cover in the scavenger hunt. After it was developed, we received several requests from other library departments to include additional “stops” at their respective service points. Some of these we could accommodate and others we could not, but this required a number of conversations about our goals and the amount of time we could expect students to devote to the activity. Externally, we had several discussions with the Provosts in the initial stages of developing the module about why it was best to concentrate on an orientation to library services and spaces rather than customary research skills and information literacy concepts. As mentioned above, we used scholarly literature to manage the Provosts' expectations about the type of instruction we could reasonably offer considering the lack of a research assignment and the limited face-to-face interaction we had with students.
- *Select a maintainable technology solution.* One of the most important factors that led to the scavenger hunt's initial success was that we selected a technology solution which was easy to use and scalable. By doing this, we have been prepared to meet the needs of the FYE Program as it has grown each year. Using external vendors (Edventure Builder and Qualtrics) for the scavenger hunt means the technology is maintained by the vendor, and the only maintenance we need to complete routinely is to check questions once a year to make sure our information and links are up-to-date. To limit the need to make such updates, we did our best to use information and links that were not likely to change.
- *Consider accessibility.* Accessibility can mean many things to different people. Though we have not yet been able to focus on accessibility in terms of universal design, it is something we want to concentrate on in the future. Instead, we have prioritized making the scavenger hunt accessible for students without a mobile device. To achieve this, we offer students a paper form that they can complete and then ask them to provide their answers electronically by using a library computer.
- *Be flexible.* In any partnership, needs will change. When we decided to shift to a new technology solution, the FYE Program coordinator only asked that the functionality of the new software be as close as possible to the previous one, which students had responded to positively. As the FYE Program grows, its course content continues to shift. We do our best to be cognizant of and supportive of these changes, aligning our orientation module with their content. For example, the library lecture was first paired with a lecture on academic integrity but is now paired with the instructor's discussion on Internet safety and privacy, so we have adjusted our introduction to segue from their lecture into a discussion on information literacy in the digital age before delving into library-specific spaces and resources.

## CONCLUSION

Our partnership with the FYE Program has been beneficial for both them and us. We were able to familiarize more first-year students with library resources and concepts, building a new layer in the scaffold of information literacy instruction we offer to our campus. Likewise, the FYE Program has found that their students enjoy and benefit from an introduction to the Library.

If other librarians wish to form a similar partnership, we highly recommend following the best practices listed above, and we cannot overemphasize the importance of communication with all stakeholders. We check in with the FYE Program several times each year to make sure the content we offer is useful to students, TAs, and DLs. We also keep other library departments updated if we need to make any changes that could impact service points. This maintains goodwill and buy-in from our stakeholders, and that alone does a great deal to keep the library orientation module successful for the Library and FYE Program.

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