Report on Libraries Outreach Activity: Welcome to the UW Libraries Online Events

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Welcome to UW Libraries! | Sept 25-29 | Virtual via Zoom

Description: Attend the virtual library orientations for first year students (including first generation and transfer students) to find out how the UW Libraries can help you succeed at UW. Although the library buildings won't be open, we still have lots of great resources that you can access remotely. We'll show you how to connect online, find course materials, start your own research, and more! In addition, you'll have a chance to meet other students and ask any questions you might have. Student attendees will be entered into a drawing for e-gift cards.

Goals and Outcomes

1. Students will learn about key library services and resources, especially those that support online learning.
2. Students will know how to ask for research, writing and technology help and that it is normal to ask for help.
3. Students meet and interact with UW Libraries staff and fellow students in a friendly and welcoming online environment.

Partners

Office of First Year Programs

Resources

Funding

UW Parents Collections and Programs Endowment provided funding which was used to buy 25 $20 Tango e-gift cards. Student attendees who provided their contact information were entered into a drawing for a gift card after all events were concluded.

Planning team

Undergraduate Student Success Team (Amanda Hornby, Emilie Vrbancic, Linda Whang) and Odegaard GAs Michelle Li and Chelsea Riddle

Event staff

Dillon Baker, Bethany Barelman, Taylor Healey-Brooks, Amanda Hornby, Michelle Li, Chelsea Riddle, Emilie Vrbancic, and Linda Whang

Planning Overview

With the library buildings closed due to Covid-19, staff working from home, and students learning from across the globe, planning for Dawg Daze 2020 necessitated a complete reimagining of how to reach out, connect, and engage with students, and what types of information they would need to succeed while studying remotely.

Keeping the Libraires' "online first, equity first" directive in mind, the USS Team and Odegaard Graduate Assistants Michelle Li and Chelsea Riddle began planning all-online events for first year students, even as we waited to hear whether Dawg Daze would be in-person, hybrid, or fully online. Using data from past Dawg Daze events, the Libraries' First Generation Participatory Design project, and student surveys from Spring 2020, the planning group updated our goals to focus on online learning and social needs of students, and developed a presentation to introduce students to resources and services essential for student success: online library resources, textbooks, getting help, technology, and building community & events.

Activity Overview

Four separate *Welcome to UW Libraries!* events were held during Dawg Daze:
- All students: Sept. 25, 11:00AM-12:00PM, 134 attendees
- Transfer students: Sept. 28, 1:00-2:00PM, 29 attendees
- First generation students: Sept. 28, 4:00-5:00PM, 30 attendees
- All students: Sept. 29, 3:00-4:00PM, 31 attendees

224 students attended our *Welcome to UW Libraries!* sessions. Out of the 224 total attendees, 152 filled out the gift card drawing form at the end of the session, and of those 152 students, 125 students indicated that they wanted to receive more information from the Libraries.

Each event was staffed by two facilitators, a chat moderator, and an assessment volunteer. The sessions began with facilitators welcoming students into the Zoom room and asking students to share their location in the chat box. Students indicated that they were attending from all over Washington state, as well as China, India, Korea, Thailand, California, Hawaii, and New York. The sessions also began with a short engagement activity in which students answered fun questions (e.g. cats or dogs?) on a Zoom poll. These activities helped ease students into the session and allowed them to see what they had in common with other students.

The facilitators shared a Google slideshow on their screen and talked through the main content areas. A link to the slideshow was shared so students could follow along on their own screens and the chat moderator shared relevant links in the chat box during the session. Students were encouraged to type questions in the chat box or to unmute and ask questions. Students had many questions about textbooks and when the libraries would reopen and the facilitators and chat moderators were able to answer them in real time. Attendees were encouraged to stay until the end of the session when they would be able to enter a drawing for a gift card.
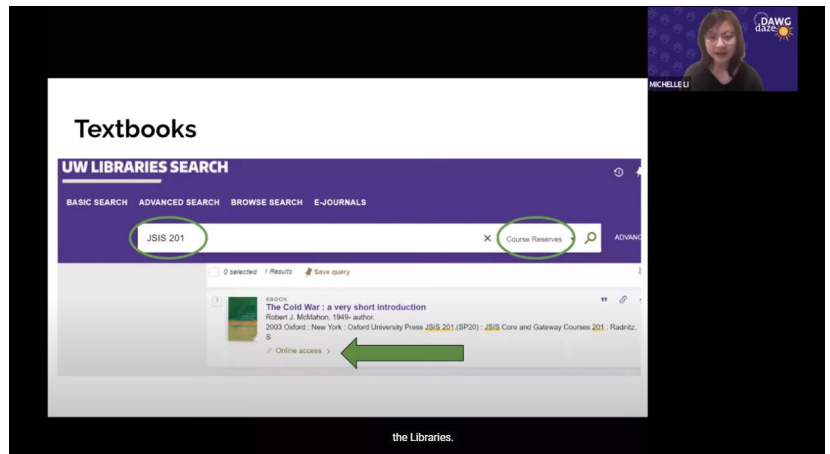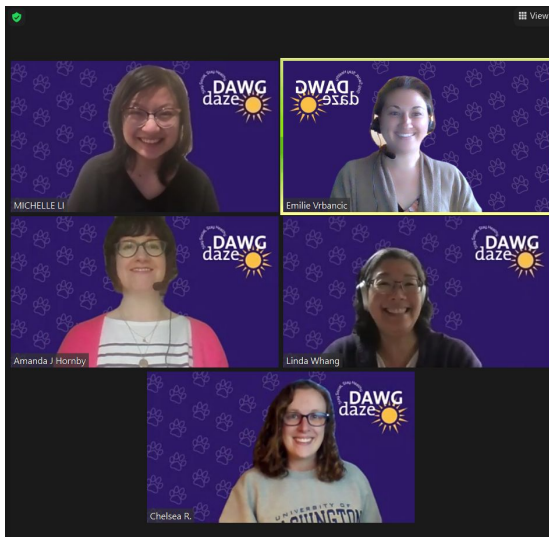
Screenshots of presenters and presentation during the session

The transfer student event also included subject librarians (Jessica Albano, Kari Anderson, Julie Cook, Amanda Pirog, Elliott Stevens, and Madison Sullivan) and breakout rooms for transfer students and subject librarians to get to know each other. Most attendees left the meeting rather than go to the breakout room, which may signal that students are more interested in participating in chat than in small breakout groups. At the end of the session, students were asked to share in the chat box one thing they learned about the libraries and how they planned to use the libraries in the fall.

Students responded that they learned about:
- 24/7 online chat
- Textbooks
- Course reserves
- Subject librarians
- "Research guides! Amazing resource!"

Students noted they planned to use these resources and services in the fall:
- finding textbooks and for research
- help with research
- using ebooks
- Using the writing and research center
- use the subject databases to research.

There were many benefits to offering these events online via Zoom. First of all, many more students could attend than we would have been able to accommodate at an in-person event (134 in the first session!), and students were able to attend no matter where they were physically located. Because we focused on online resources and showed screenshots of library webpages (and shared links to those pages in the chat box), students could see what resources we had and how to get to them. The chat box allowed students to ask questions and get answers in real time, and all students could see the questions and answers. Students could also return to the slideshow and a recording of the presentation later. Limitations include timing of the events so that students in other time zones could attend at a reasonable hour.

Conclusions

Given the very high student attendance and student engagement, and the evidence from the event assessments, the Welcome to the UW Libraries online events were successful in meeting our goals of having students learn about Libraries online services and resources, feel empowered to ask for help, and engage with Libraries staff and students in a welcoming online environment. Partnership with First Year Programs was essential for promoting the online events to students, and for providing the Undergraduate Student Success team with input on how best to support students in the new online-only format.

In reflecting on all of the Welcome to the UW Libraries events, planning staff noted that students connected remarkably well with the Libraries' content and staff, and each other. Each event's Zoom chat feature gave students the opportunity to participate in a way that felt comfortable for them and allowed all participants to see questions and answers. Several students stayed after the session to ask questions, and many expressed their thanks in the chat at the end of the session. One student wrote in the chat: "This has been helpful and inspiring."

As this was our first time converting our in-person orientations to all-online orientations, the staff time and effort needed to plan and execute the event was extensive, but it is outweighed by the high impact and value to first year undergraduate students. Students learned about specific library resources and services like research guides and course reserves that support online learning, why and how to ask for research, writing, and technology help, and they enjoyed meeting and interacting with UW Libraries staff and other students. Staff reflected that they felt students learned more about how to use the UW Libraries online resources and more practical research information than in-person Libraries orientations or library tours. Ultimately, we succeeded in creating connections with a variety of first year students in the online environment.

Recommendations & Resources Requested

Recommendations:
- Continue "Welcome to UW Libraries" online orientation model, and follow online learning best practices for student engagement.
- Continue to create customized online programs for first year student populations with specialized needs, especially first generation students and transfer students.
- Continue to partner with First Year Programs for promoting the events and for support in developing responsive, student-centered online events.
- Record a short version of the online orientation so it is accessible to students who could not attend live or would like to review the content. As of late 2020, the Welcome to UW Libraries YouTube video had 106 views.
- Add some live demos to the presentation- this may be more effective than screenshots.

Resources:
- Continue to request funding for e-gift cards to promote student engagement and thank students for their time.

Best practices for student engagement

Connected to the UW Libraries "Online First, Equity First principles", we drew upon the UW Libraries Best Practices for Online Events & Programming in designing and delivering these sessions. Considerations, reflections and additional recommendations of the best practices include:
1. Equity & Accessibility
   a. Provide multiple access points to information
      i. We considered delivery formats and decided on synchronous Zoom events, so students could meet library staff and each other, and an asynchronous recording for students who couldn't make it to the events or wanted to refer back to it later. The recording is posted on the UW Libraries YouTube channel and has over 100 views in December 2020, increasing from 81 views in October 2020.
      ii. We also shared our slides at the beginning of the event so students could follow along without the Zoom screen share, especially if they were constrained by joining in on a small screen or via phone.
   b. Consider Accessibility

        i.   We utilized Zoom's internal closed caption feature to ensure we met this accessibility criteria when posting the recording to YouTube.

        ii.   We recommend the UW Libraries Public Web Operations Group create an internal process so staff are clear on the guidelines and procedures for posting videos to the YouTube Channel. Given how busy fall quarter is, we want to ensure that we follow recommended procedures and not burden one person with being responsible for guiding us through the process.

2. Consistency & Sustainability

    a.   We recommend adding considerations for sustainability of staff time. Consider using assessment and planning documents to ensure that each time you offer a similar event, you are utilizing already created materials and incorporating reflections from previous events. The USS team is currently planning similar Winter 2021 Dawg Daze events and reworking already created materials and incorporating assessment reflection is making planning easier the second time around.

3. User Engagement

    a.   Communicate expectations for participation

        i.   We ensured that students had multiple modes of engagement during and after the event. For example, our script included this statement "Feel free to use Zoom in a way that's comfortable to you. Camera on or off. Use your mic or chat. If you need to step away, that's ok!" We also reminded students to reach out with additional questions using Ask Us Chat or Email.

        ii.   For the transfer student *Welcome to the UW Libraries* session, we had students join small group break out rooms led by subject librarians. We made sure to mention this to students at the beginning of the event. Students could then decide if they wanted to stay for that additional engagement opportunity, or not.

    b.   Lead sessions with humanity

        i.   Each of our sessions began with a "connection" question. Observation and reflection showed that these low stakes engagement techniques help ease students into the session and offer ways to connect with other students using Zoom features like reactions and the chat.

        ii.   Another way to create connection is to be sure to say participant names when answering questions. When most participants are muted and their videos are off in Zoom, it adds a human touch where participants can feel "seen".

    c.   Online engagement looks different

        i.   We recommend being very clear about assigned roles for online events. Plan for more knowing that support staff can leave if they are not needed. This is also helpful in case someone has connection or tech issues the day of an event. For example, we had two facilitators, a chat moderator, and an assessment volunteer for each session. Having one person responsible for sharing their screen is also helpful since configuring all the Zoom controls, presenting, and monitoring chat can be overwhelming on a small laptop.