

Top 5 Articles on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Library Instruction

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Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is not new to the educational landscape, but there is a general lack of information on incorporating UDL principles into library instruction. The following articles work to close that gap as they describe the history of UDL and offer constructive ways in which librarians can design and teach using UDL principles to create inclusive learning environments for all students.

Black, S., Krahmer, D., & Allen, J. D. (2018). Insights from educational psychology part 6: Diversity and inclusion. *The Reference Librarian*, 59(2), 92-106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02763877.2018.1451425>

Black, Krahmer, and Allen employ educational psychology research to advocate for the intentional design of inclusive learning environments. Whether students feel a personal sense of belonging has a direct impact on their motivation to learn. The authors provide research to foreground their call for differentiated instruction and the application of UDL principles in the planning and delivery of information literacy sessions. Examples are provided for librarians to consider as they design courses or sessions that promote the principles of Multiple Means of Representation, Multiple Means of Action and Expression, and Multiple Means of Engagement. The authors include their own takeaways and an annotated reading list to help librarians advance their personal intercultural knowledge and understanding of equity and diversity issues in order to develop others' experiences and sense of belonging.

Takeaways

- Librarians need to carefully consider how their instructional materials and sessions will meet diverse students' needs.
- Recognize and respect challenges students face related to culture and disability and how they impact student success.
- Planning is paramount. Incorporate UDL principles into instruction sessions to preemptively reduce barriers thereby eliminating the need for resource intensive individual accommodations. Examples include presenting learning materials visually and aurally, allowing for students to adjust their pacing, and being flexible with how students can demonstrate their learning.

Hays, L. & Handler, K. (2020). Good design is universal: Using Universal Design principles to promote self-regulated learning in learning management systems when teaching information literacy. *Journal of Library & Information Services in Distance Learning*, 14(2), 127-140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1533290X.2020.1828219>

As the pandemic continues, more librarians are teaching remotely or struggling to find teaching opportunities as courses have been forced online. However, some students do not have the self-regulation skills needed in an online environment and in this period of uncertainty. This article discusses universal design in the creation of online library tutorials and offers practices for librarians to implement information literacy instruction into the learning management system

(LMS) for supporting self-regulation. Two librarians share their experiences with marketing tutorials, providing explicit expectations for time management, building in reflections, giving peer feedback, adding role-playing elements, and captioning. Using UDL principles to promote and guide self-regulation and related behaviors, creates an environment where every student can be successful and persist.

Takeaways

- When planning and designing tutorials, workshops, and instruction sessions, librarians need to start by asking how these activities will meet the needs of all students including the unspoken needs.
- Provide opportunities for students to practice self-regulation. Tangible strategies offered in the article include research goal settings, reflection journaling, gaming, brainstorming, and more.

Peter, S. H. & Clement, K. A. (2020). One step at a time: A case study of incorporating Universal Design for Learning in library instruction. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Innovative Pedagogy*, 2(3), 381-398.

https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/sotl_ip/vol2/iss1/3

The authors' review of the literature on incorporating UDL into library instruction revealed a significant lack of information with only three of all potential articles meeting the established criteria. Peter and Clement discussed the three articles and then shared the processes and results of their own case study to incorporate some principles of UDL into library instruction. They identified opportunities for inclusivity in their traditional one-shot instruction sessions, and during the first semester of implementation, provided students with session materials in various formats on Google Drive. In support of active learning, they substituted polling software for physical movement, allowed students to select group members, and provided multiple ways to submit assignments.

Takeaways

- Start small and be intentional when considering and then implementing a principle or two of UDL into your instruction sessions each semester.
- Allow the implementation of the UDL principles to become a natural part of your planning and delivery before including more improvements to your instruction sessions.
- Plan to assess your practices to ensure relevance and effectiveness as technology, pedagogy, and students advance and grow.
- Find or develop a community of practice for support as you explore ways in which to incorporate principles of UDL into your instruction sessions.

Tobin, T. J. (2019). Reaching all learners through their phones and Universal Design for Learning. *Journal of Adult Learning, Knowledge and Innovation JALKI*, 1-11.

<https://doi.org/10.1556/2059.03.2019.01>

This review article presents a historical overview of universal design from its inception with building and product design in the 1990s, through the development of a UDL framework by CAST that was rooted in K-12 education and grew into the higher education realm in the early 2000s. Tobin posits that in addition to providing accessible materials for the benefit of all learners, UDL can benefit the increasing number of students using smart phones for completing

their coursework. Because UDL is for everyone, it is important that everyone who interacts with learners, designs with principles of UDL at the forefront of their planning.

Takeaways:

- More students are using mobile devices for their coursework. When you design materials for mobile learners, you are reaching a larger audience. This requires a mind shift from looking at UDL as being just for learners who have disabilities to looking at UDL as being for everyone.
- Micro-moments show us that learners are used to “snackable” content, where the information is made available quickly and is useful. How is your instruction meeting their expectations?
- When you reduce barriers for all learners, you help all learners, especially the ones who would never speak up. However, it can be overwhelming to remove all barriers at once. Adopt the “plus one” mentality, where you remove one barrier in your materials before tackling the next barrier.
- Meeting with faculty to identify where students traditionally have questions or miss points on an assignment can help librarians to focus on those areas for high impact or what Tobin calls “UDL hotspots.”

Whitver, S. M. (2020). Accessible library instruction in practice. *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 20(2), 381-398. <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2020.0019>

Whitver calls for librarians to reshape their pedagogy and apply UDL as a frame of mind to serve all students. She reminds readers that librarians have no legal way to know if a student has a disability and that many students chose not to disclose. Applying UDL will reduce the chances these students are excluded from the learning process. This is hand-in-hand with librarians’ commitment to both student growth and social justice. Whitver provides tangible ways librarians can provide students with opportunities for the UDL principles. Multiple Means of Representation, enabling students to learn at their own pace, can be achieved by sharing brief presentation notes and materials before class. Multiple Means of Expression, enabling the demonstration of learning and engagement in a variety of ways, can be accomplished by having students create a concept map on paper or on a web-based tool. These options empower students and they have no need to ask for accommodations.

Takeaways

- Be flexible. Allow variety in both delivery of and engagement with class materials (i.e., provide verbal and written directions, give oral and image-based descriptions of concepts and allow for nonlinear application of ideas).
- Provide choices for expressing learning. Students can create a concept map electronically or on paper. If a student is not as visually-oriented, a list can also work to express search terms.
- Plan for spontaneous instruction needs. Use LibGuides and video tutorials.