

## DOLS Top 5 Jan - March 2021

Theme: Inclusivity

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As distance/online learning has become more prevalent, librarians have sought guidance about how best to meet the needs of all students in an equitable manner, regardless of race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, etc. Librarians who provide online instruction or who design content for library websites must consider how to make their presentations and web pages as inclusive and accessible as possible so as to support student success. The following articles provide tips that librarians can follow to help ensure the inclusivity of their presentations, LibGuides, tutorials, and other library-related content.

**Hodge, M. (2019). Online learning through LibGuides for English language learners: A case study and best practices. In Y. Tran & S. Higgins (Eds.), *Supporting today's students in the library: Strategies for retaining and graduating international, transfer, first-generation, and re-entry students* (pp. 79–89). Association of College and Research Libraries.**

[https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1063&context=libraries\\_pubs](https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1063&context=libraries_pubs)

In this book chapter, Hodge offers best practices for designing research guides and other online resources for English Language Learners and international students. Many library guides still contain long blocks of dense text filled with jargon, which international students may find challenging and off-putting. Additional best practices from the literature provided the basis for a case study in which Hodge developed a series of three online lessons in LibGuides for international students at her institution. One lesson was about borrowing books from the library, one was about source evaluation, and one was about avoiding plagiarism and citing sources. The asynchronous lessons received hundreds of views and provided helpful opportunities for Hodge to scaffold future instruction sessions.

Takeaways:

- International students may be unaware of the academic traditions and norms at American institutions, and they may have difficulty with long blocks of text and library jargon. Develop resources and instruction specifically for this audience that addresses these challenges.
- Online learning objects that target the needs of specific campus audiences allow librarians to support these communities without becoming overwhelmed with additional workload.

- Universal Design Principles can help librarians design online learning for international students, in addition to other populations with unique needs.

**McCann, S., & Peacock, R. (2019). Be an ally for accessibility: Tips for all librarians. *College & Research Libraries News*, 80(5), 266-268. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.80.5.266>**

McCann and Peacock present five tips that librarians can follow to make their online content more accessible to all students. The authors provide specific guidance and tool recommendations based on their own experience with creating online content for their libraries. The authors note that their tips are not meant to be comprehensive, and they provide suggestions of additional resources to consult (e.g., Web Accessibility in Mind) for more information.

Takeaways:

- Browser extensions such as WebAIM's WAVE (for accessibility checking), Check My Links (for identifying broken links), and Funkify (for disability simulation) can be used to ensure that web page content is accessible.
- Hyperlinks should make their destination clear (e.g., they shouldn't just say "Click here"), and each link should have unique text (e.g., there shouldn't be multiple links on a page that are all called "Journals" if each link goes to a different destination)
- Web pages and documents should have headings so they can be easily navigated. Many programs contain built-in styles that can be used to create headings for navigation trees.
- Images should include alt-text descriptions.
- Captions (which describe all sounds in an audio file, not just spoken words) should be in a sans serif font and should appear two lines at a time, for three-to-seven seconds per set.
- Descriptions of visual details should be added to audio content if a video contains important visual elements that can't be understood from the regular audio.

**Pionke, J. J., & Manson, J. (2018). Creating disability LibGuides with accessibility in mind. *Journal of Web Librarianship*, 12(1), 63-79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19322909.2017.1396277>**

Pionke and Manson describe a project they completed with funds from the American Library Association Carnegie-Whitney Grant to create 22 research guides about disabilities, disability theory, and assistive technologies. The guides themselves were designed with accessibility in mind, as well as general online writing best practices and universal design principles. Overall, the guides were well-received by users and viewed over 2900 times in the first 3 months after their creation. The authors also describe popular disability theories and the academic library's responsibility to consider disabilities in the design and delivery of materials for distance students and others.

Takeaways:

- When designing research guides, consider accessibility, both in the design process, and when choosing what content topics to explore in the guide itself.
- It can be challenging to find reliable health and disability information online without the help of a librarian. Research guides about these topics help patrons and the public find trustworthy information about the complicated topic of disability.
- For libraries that use Springshare's LibGuide platform, consult Springshare's accessibility resources before creating a guide or while updating one. Using tools like the Web Accessibility Evaluation (WAVE) tool by WebAIM can also help.
- Allow viewers of research guides to provide feedback, as it provides the library an opportunity to correct misconceptions about specific disabilities or other topics pertaining to marginalized groups.

**Saunders, L., & Wong, M. A. (2020). Critical pedagogy: Challenging bias and creating inclusive classrooms. In *Instruction in libraries and information centers*. Windsor & Downs Press. <https://doi.org/10.21900/wd.12>  
<https://iopn.library.illinois.edu/pressbooks/instructioninlibraries/chapter/critical-pedagogy-challenging-bias-and-creating-inclusive-classrooms/>**

This chapter by Saunders and Wong specifically addresses the role of critical pedagogy in library instruction and how it can lead to more inclusive teaching. Because implicit biases are outside of our awareness, designing instruction to minimize bias on the part of both instructors and students is very important. Critical pedagogy acknowledges the influence of dominant cultures on the educational system, and it also encourages teachers to see education as a tool for dismantling oppressive societal structures. The chapter also defines microaggressions and provides strategies for discouraging them in the classroom. The authors end the chapter by offering some methods for developing a positive, inclusive teaching climate that empowers all students. While the chapter doesn't focus specifically on distance learning, many of the theories, examples, and strategies are applicable to online learning spaces that librarians create and join.

Takeaways:

- Focus on learner-centered activities and learner choice in the classroom. This allows students to shape their own learning and actively share their voices and perspectives.
- When possible, work to explicitly center marginalized voices throughout your online teaching. This can be accomplished when modeling library searching, making pop culture references, and describing bias in academic systems.
- Address microaggressions or other forms of bias if they come up in the course of learning. It can help to set ground rules for discussion ahead of time.
- Acknowledge that everyone has implicit biases, and be open to learning and growing if you make mistakes. Also, when possible, work to correct biases in the library systems that are used for searching.

**Thompson, K. M., & Copeland, C. (2020). Inclusive considerations for optimal online learning in times of disasters and crises. *Information and Learning Sciences*, 121(7/8), 481-486. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ILS-04-2020-0083>**

In their article, Thompson and Copeland recommend that the creation of online course material, even if done during an emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic, should always be done with accessibility in mind from the very start, as this will provide the best learning environment for all students. The authors list some of the most common disabilities that students may have and suggest ways that each of the disabilities may be accommodated. They note that being explicit about what's been done to ensure that all students have an equitable instructional experience can help to foster "a culture of awareness of differences in learning needs" (p. 485) and may encourage students to feel more comfortable about communicating what they need in order to feel included and to be successful.

Takeaways:

- To accommodate students with visual limitations, content should use high-contrast settings (e.g., a black background with white font, or vice versa). Bold font rather than coloration should be used to indicate emphasis, as students with color blindness might not be able to tell that certain words are in a different colored font.
- To accommodate students with hearing limitations, captions or transcripts should be provided with videos.
- To accommodate neurodiverse students, classes should be consistent, offering repetition and reinforcement, and should make expectations clear. Questions should be encouraged, and holding regularly scheduled online meetings will further help to ensure that students understand what is expected of them.
- To accommodate students with mobility issues, students may need to be allowed to take extra time to complete class activities, or they may need to be provided access to assistive technologies such as text-to-speech software.