

## **Getting Oriented: A Business Librarian Joins the Business School's Orientation Committee**

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### **A New Beginning**

On February 19, 2024, I became a librarian. Specifically, a business librarian at Vanderbilt University's Walker Management Library. The Management Library is one of nine campus libraries and is physically located in the Owen Graduate School of Business, which offers an array of master's programs and has about 650 full time students. In the months after my hire, as I began getting oriented to my job, I took advantage of several opportunities to get acquainted with Owen. One such opportunity was serving on Owen's 2024 orientation committee.

Walker Management Library staff have the benefit of being intimately part of two major campus communities: the larger Jean and Alexander Heard libraries and Owen. While structurally reporting to the libraries, Walker is involved in the day-to-day life of the business school, and there are many opportunities to interact with Owen staff. As part of our unique position, we are included as staff for Owen's meetings, communications, and events.

In March 2024, Owen's Office of Academic & Student Affairs put out a call for volunteers to join the Owen Orientation Working Group. The group plans and implements each year's orientation for the business graduate programs. This involves scheduling sessions, coordinating various events (including the Dean's reception), and procuring and handling swag. When I saw the call, I thought this might be an interesting opportunity to get to know some Owen staff and to get in tune with the rhythm of academic life. However, this experience has provided much more. Here are three key takeaways from my time on the committee.

#### **1. Embracing A New Culture**

Prior to becoming a librarian, I worked for 16 years for a union-sponsored multi-employer pension fund, which included a related 401(k) fund and health fund. The fund office is a small operation with fewer than 50 employees and very low turnover. Many of the people I worked with on day one were still there on my last day. Though I was ready for change, transitions of this kind can be unsettling and perhaps a little disorienting. Doing the committee work provided a pathway to embrace the culture at Vanderbilt, particularly in the business school.

Not only was I able to become familiar with a few established workflows (such as ordering swag with official library branding), I was able to form new working relationships with Owen staff. For example, Owen's amazing event coordinator and I served on the logistics sub-committee. We worked together on catering menu plans and scouting a venue for the Dean's reception.

While joining an academic committee outside of the library can sound intimidating, a librarian's skills are valuable amongst any team: scheduling, communicating, developing outreach materials, planning instructional sessions, etc. I would encourage other new librarians to embrace new cultures while acknowledging their unique backgrounds and experiences to add value to teams.

## **2. Having the Insider View**

Being embedded in Owen, the Management Library is in tune with the cycles of Owen's academic calendar. Having started in the middle of an academic year, I was eager to experience an academic year from beginning to end and to get to know a new cohort of students. Orientation marks a new beginning for the incoming class, and planning a solid orientation experience is important. We offer library orientation sessions for each program; as I became aware of the tentative schedule for library sessions, I was able to share with my library colleagues so that we could hold time on our calendars and begin to plan.

Two years ago, orientation shifted from two weeks of programming to three days. Many sessions, and stakeholders, were unfortunately removed from programming. The library session remained, which we are told is due to our stellar student feedback, but it certainly helps to have a librarian on the planning committee to ensure we are allotted time with new students each year.

Additionally, as a librarian on the committee, I helped with marketing the library's services. Since the orientation committee handles the swag (which includes Vanderbilt Business branded backpacks), I coordinated library swag being added to the backpacks. Along with the library swag, we printed postcards calling students to complete three library items within their first 30 days. The three items include attending the library open house, signing up for a workshop, and signing up for the business news subscriptions offered through the library. Finally, I helped order Management Library branded stress relievers for our interactive orientation sessions.

Besides the marketing efforts, I was able to be a voice for the Management Library. For example, the committee had a debriefing meeting in which we discussed successes and opportunities for improvement after the orientation. I shared some helpful feedback I had gathered from my Management Library colleagues about the student experience that could influence next year's orientation.

## **3. Serving in the Academy**

Service to the libraries and the university is part of the expectations for rank and promotion within Vanderbilt libraries. There are a multitude of service opportunities, but being able to do university service within Owen, so early in my career, at Vanderbilt has been helpful. Since the orientation committee was task-based with a short time horizon, this was a perfect way to get my feet wet without feeling overwhelmed. Additionally, having expanded my network at Owen, I have worked with or called on fellow committee members throughout the year. For example, when I needed to reschedule a room booking for a library workshop because of an unexpected conflict, I was able to reach out to the event coordinator for an assist.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

Being on the committee provided some insights that are useful for my role as the business collections librarian. The committee maintains a list of admitted students by program, thereby providing the size of the incoming class for each program as well as the number of international students. This information has led me to think about the growth of each program as well as the diversity of our student population. In turn, I have been considering how to keep a pulse on each program to best inform the library's collection strategy. Also, I have been thinking about how to diversify the collection to reflect the student population and needs.

## Academic BRASS

I am glad to have served on Owen's orientation committee and would highly recommend getting involved in the same or similar types of opportunities. The experience has provided me with some institutional knowledge and has expanded my network in the business school, which I feel confident will lead to serendipitous ideas and opportunities. More importantly, the experience has helped me feel more connected with some of my Owen colleagues.