Opportunities to Uncover, Locate, and Learn: The Library Orientation Scavenger Hunt

Alexandra W. Gomes, MSLS, MT, Associate Director for Technology and Curriculum, and Elaine Sullo, MLS, MAEd, AHIP, Coordinator, Information and Instructional Services,
Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library, The George Washington University Medical Center, Washington, DC

In the Past

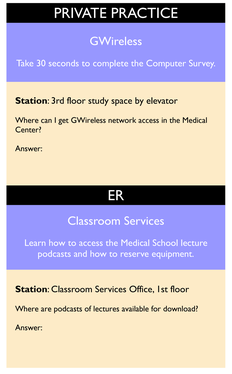
- Separate library tour and large-group library orientation
- Orientation originally lecture-based, then revised to include a series of web-based tasks
- Difficulties in keeping students on-task and engaged as class size expanded
- Student feedback that there was too much overlap with informatics activities that also occur early in the semester
- Change inspired by University of Pennsylvania medical library orientation, observed by Himmelfarb Library's Director
- New library orientation format aspired to expose students to library collections and functions in an interactive and enjoyable way

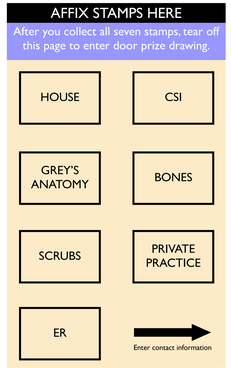
Preparations

- Library administration met with the Assistant Dean of Medical Student Affairs & Education to share ideas regarding the orientation structure and format, and to obtain week-long orientation schedule
- Identified five areas of library information that students needed to know corresponding to five stations on the scavenger hunt
- Added two additional stations for Student Technology Services (laptop and wireless support) and Classroom Services (digital audio recordings of lectures)
- Chose medical television show theme and brainstormed programs
- Assigned librarians to staff stations and develop activities/questions for booklet
- Identified local businesses to approach for possible door prize donation. Divided list among librarians to pursue. Also, library vendors contacted for prizes

Door Prizes
- iPod Shuffle (2)
- Flash memory stick
- Cecil Textbook of Medicine, 23rd edition
- Medical Student Snack Bag from Trader Joe's (2)
- Elliot in the morning/CD package from DC 101 (2)
- $5 Gift certificate to The Burro (4) or Bertucci's (5)
- GW Medicine in the New Millenium poster
- Coupon for free Starbucks Vivanno beverage (45)

- Customized library map for the occasion, clearly labeling orientation stations
- Created evaluation survey via Survey Monkey



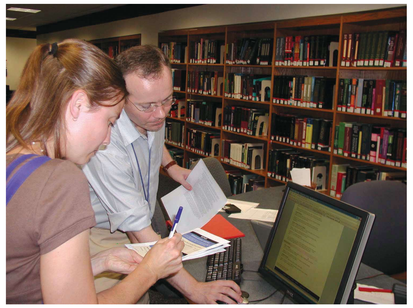


Organization

- Students arrived in groups of 12, received welcome and quick directions from library director, then had 30 minutes to visit all seven stations
- Station sites were specifically chosen to provide a self-guided tour of the library, taking students to small group study rooms, the computer lab, the reference desk, and the stacks
- Activities were planned to focus on one aspect of the library and reinforce that knowledge

Station Name	Topic	Activity
House	Where to go for help (reference desk, web-based tutorials, drop-in classes)	Overview of classes/tutorials and reference desk (originally IM answers to question to reference desk)
CSI	Off-campus access to library resources	Test VPN login
Grey's Anatomy	Print and electronic collections	Identify one of three anatomical structures in print atlas; sign up for federated search usability testing
Bones	Software and other study aids	Introduction to web-based CAI software
Scrubs	Library need-to-know (hours, pay for print, policies)	PowerPoint slide show containing information on hours, policies, etc.
Private Practice	Accessing the wireless network	Complete computer survey and get information about wireless network
ER	Accessing lecture podcasts and reserving equipment	Get information about podcasts and sign up to be note taker if interested
Materials needed: booklets, signage, door prizes, door prize drop-off box, laptops with wireless access, stamps and ink pads, computer survey, maps with station locations clearly marked, sign listing door prizes		

- Booklet served two purposes: a method of tracking progress through the stations via the stamps, and a summary of the various library topic areas for students to take with them
- Door prizes were an incentive for students to complete all seven stations, making them eligible to enter the door prize drawings



Concluding Activities

- Took photos of event in progress
- Sent out orientation evaluation survey via student listserv
- Conducted door prize drawing and notified winners (posted in library blog and sent email to student listserv)
- Sent thank-you notes to door prize donors
- Solicited feedback from all participating library staff

Lessons Learned

- In future years, have two librarians at a station (so folks could take a bathroom break, or report a laptop outage), or switch stations every hour or two. Alternatively, have a floater walking around to provide librarians with a break
- Add additional detail to booklet summaries and emphasize that the booklet is the orientation handout. Several students commented that they found it difficult to absorb the information, and it was difficult to take notes
- Adjust the timing and size of groups, if possible. Sometimes the groups were very large, at other times, very small, and librarians had to repeat the same thing many, many times
- Make sure to have bagels or cookies for group tour guides (second year medical students) bringing the new first-year students to the library
- Clearly mark restrooms, stairwells, elevator on the map
- Build in additional lead time for setting up laptops with wireless access
- Have students complete an evaluation before they leave the library, as the number of students completing the online evaluation via Survey Monkey was small, compared to the total number of students who attended (only 52 students completed the online survey)

Student Feedback

"This was the best library orientation I've ever been to! Everything was GREAT and really helpful!"

"It was a helpful way to get a first quick understanding of the library services."

"The library staff was very friendly and encouraging in the mini scavenger hunt (very creative). The possibility of winning great prizes was a nice plus too!!!"

"Interactive game format was interesting. I liked learning about resources because before it felt intimidating and overwhelming to try to figure out how to use the resources. I feel a little more comfortable now."