

Oxford and Emory Land and Labor Acknowledgement

Emory University acknowledges the Muscogee (Creek) people who lived, worked, produced knowledge on, and nurtured the land where Emory's Oxford and Atlanta campuses are now located. In 1821, fifteen years before Emory's founding, the Muscogee were forced to relinquish this land. We recognize the sustained oppression, land dispossession, and involuntary removals of the Muscogee and Cherokee peoples from Georgia and the Southeast.

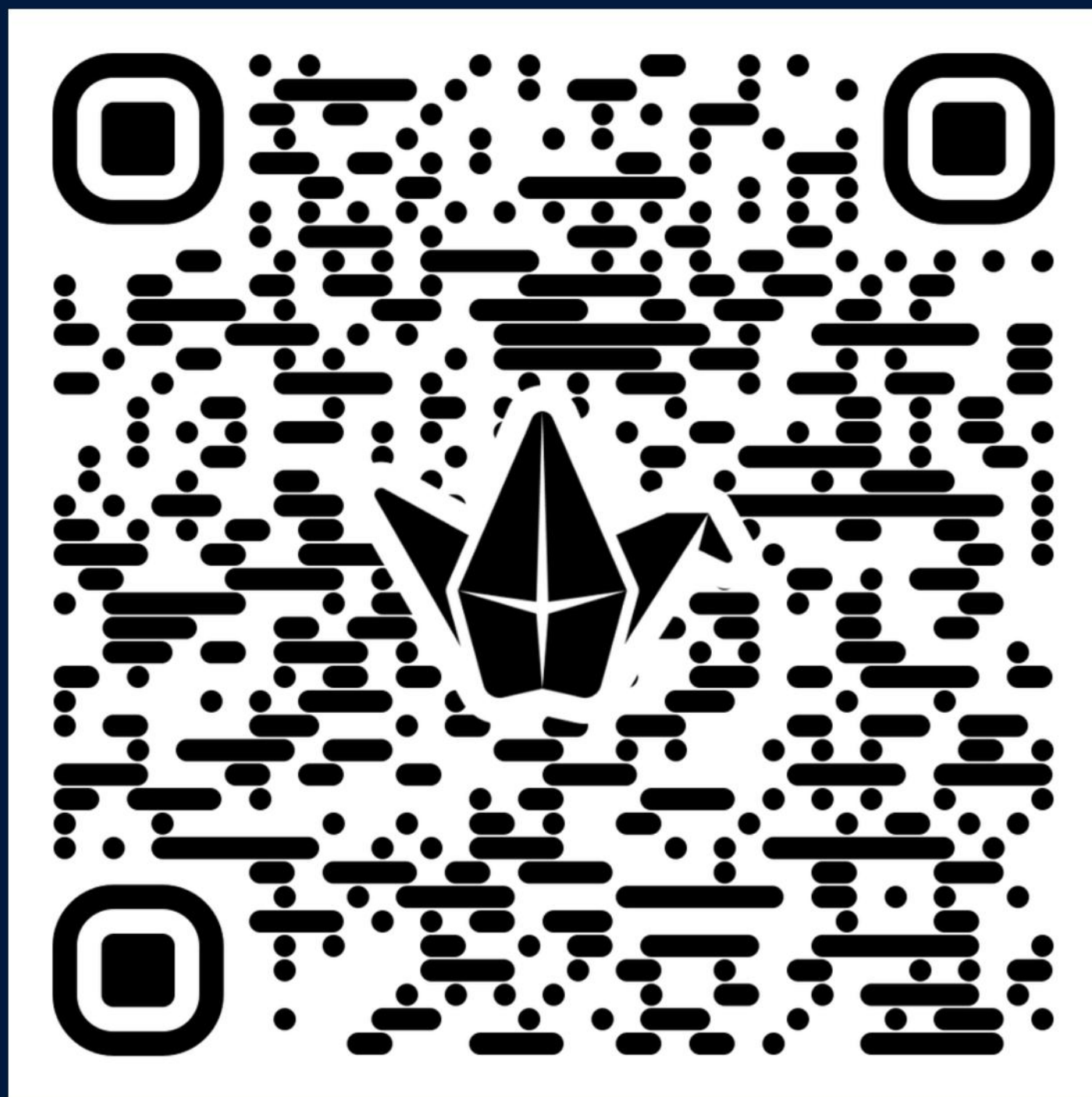
We acknowledge with respect the diverse histories and cultures of the people of this region and acknowledge that we are colonizers in this territory. We also acknowledge that Emory University's Oxford Campus, where we are employed, was in part constructed by enslaved people and that the wealth and success of this university was built on their labor.



Attendance is Optional:

Creating a Sustainable Workshop Program

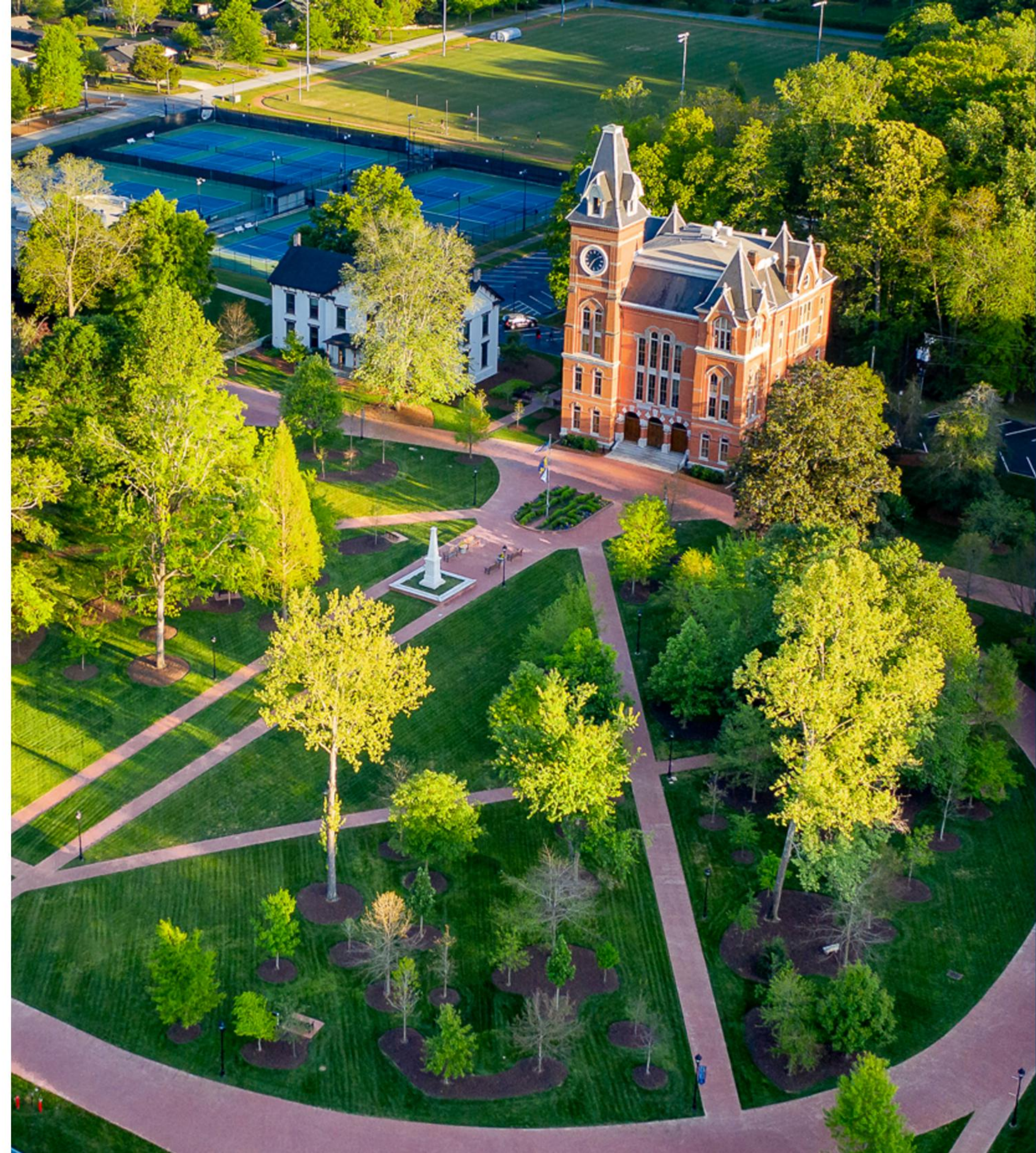
Alexandrea Kord, Kerry Bowden, Paige Crawl, Qing Xu
Oxford College Library, Emory University



Padlet QR
Code

Oxford College of Emory University

- Two-year undergraduate college of Emory University focused on liberal arts education
- Located on its original campus in Oxford, Georgia, a community about 38 miles east of Atlanta
- Around 1,000 students

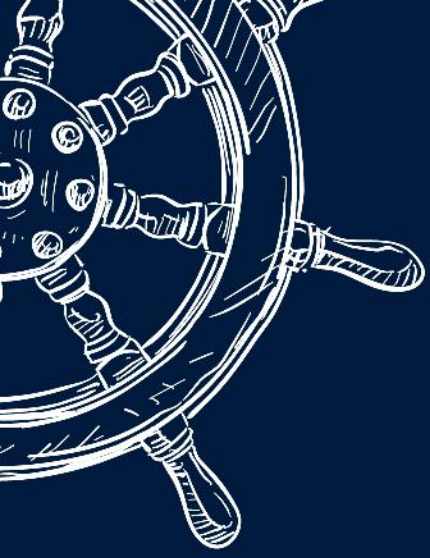




Oxford College Library



- 14 person staff
- 8 librarians, 5 staff members, and a college archivist
- No departments, all staff have multiple responsibilities
- 6 teaching librarians
 - Serve as liaisons for departmental faculty members
 - Course-specific library instruction
 - Teach the majority of workshops



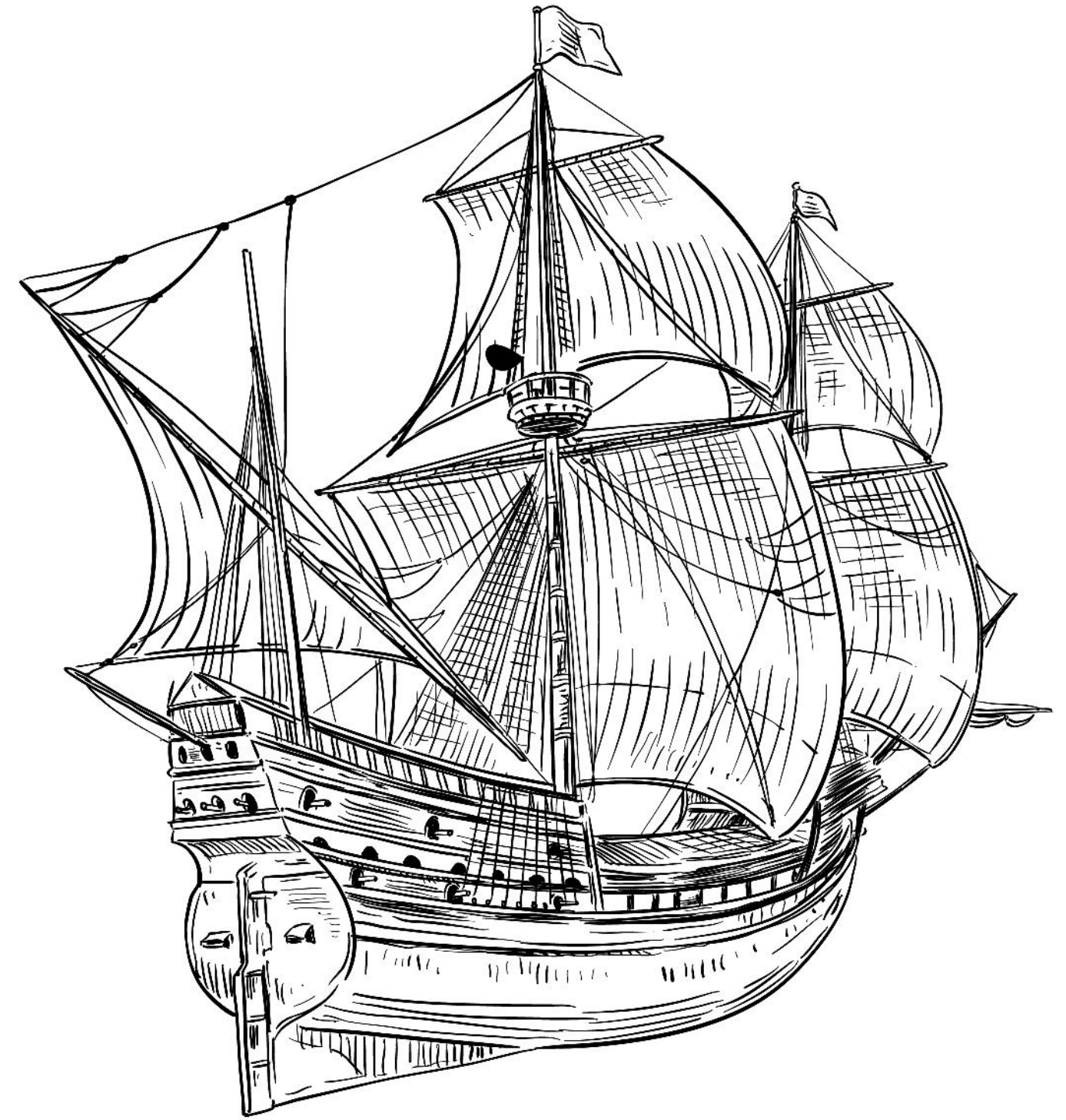
History of our Workshop Program

- Workshops offered sporadically
- Workshops had low turnout
- Scheduling, marketing, and registration were not well organized

The workshop program had been tabled well before the pandemic move to remote learning.

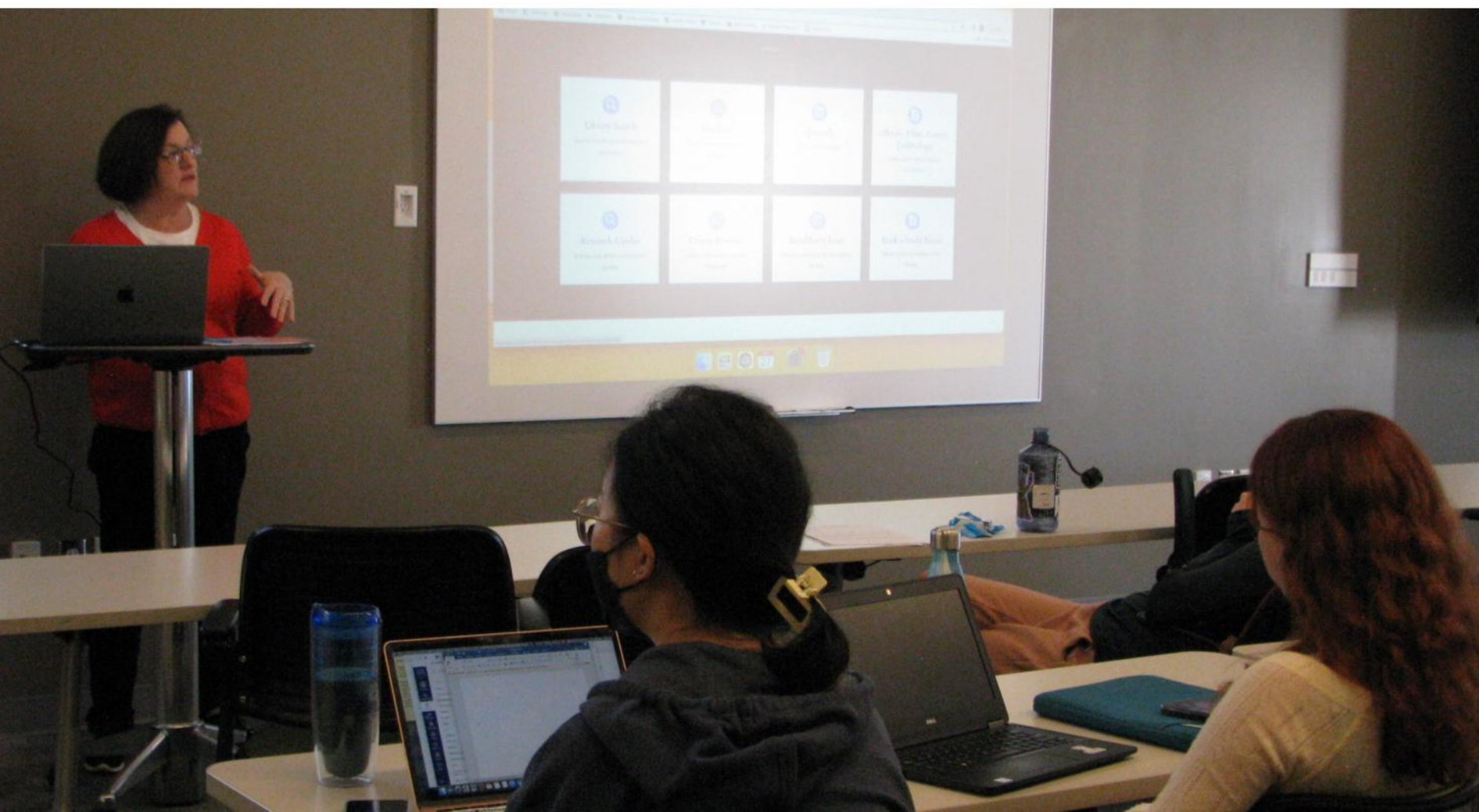


Attendance.
Let's talk
about it.



Attendance

- Total attendance over past 4 years:
 - 262 learners
- Most workshops had 3 attendees

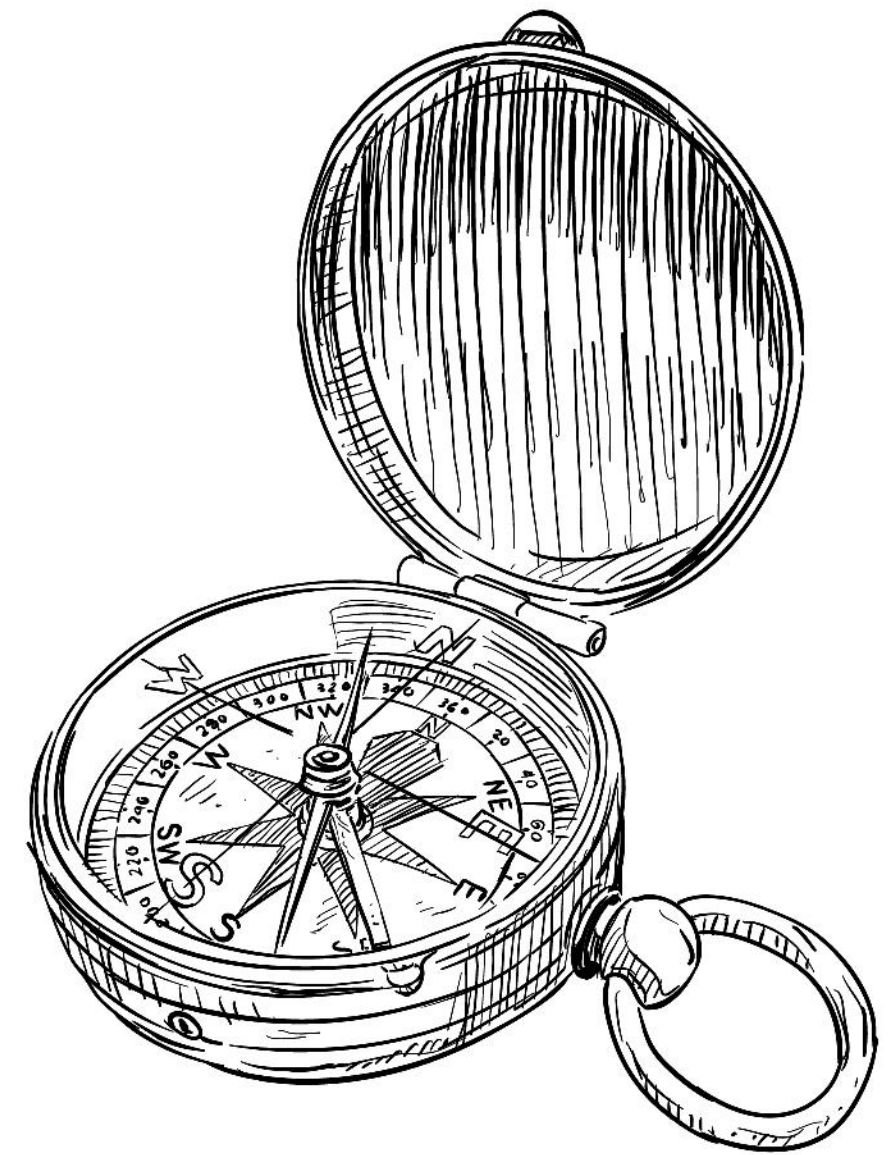


Strategies Tried

- Offered food
- Adjusted times: common hour, later evening, and afternoon
- Tried in-person vs. Zoom
- Offered multiple sessions
- Adjusted marketing



How many patrons attend your workshops?



Libraries have offered...

- Flexible scheduling
- Specialized topics
- Creative branding and marketing
- Food
- Extra credit
- Badges and certificates
- Money vouchers
- Prizes

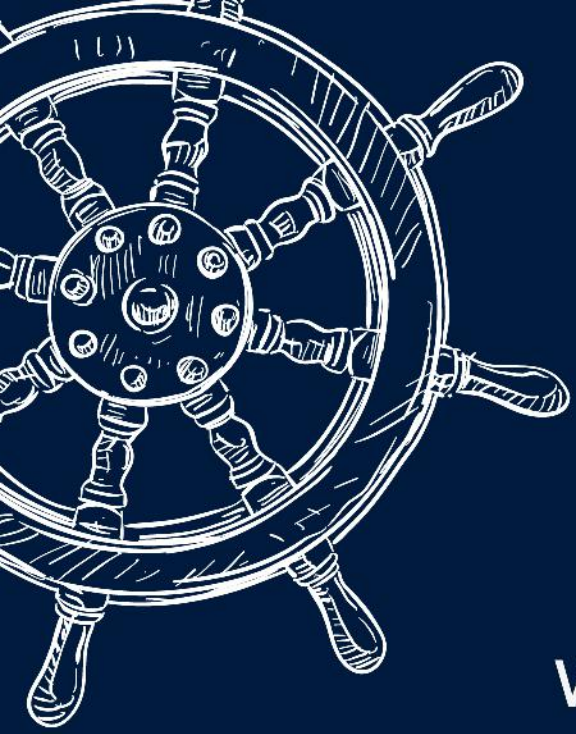
Yet almost half of library workshops have fewer than 5 attendees. Many have none at all.
(Witherspoon & Taber, 2021)

Why do we feel so much pressure to increase attendance at workshops?



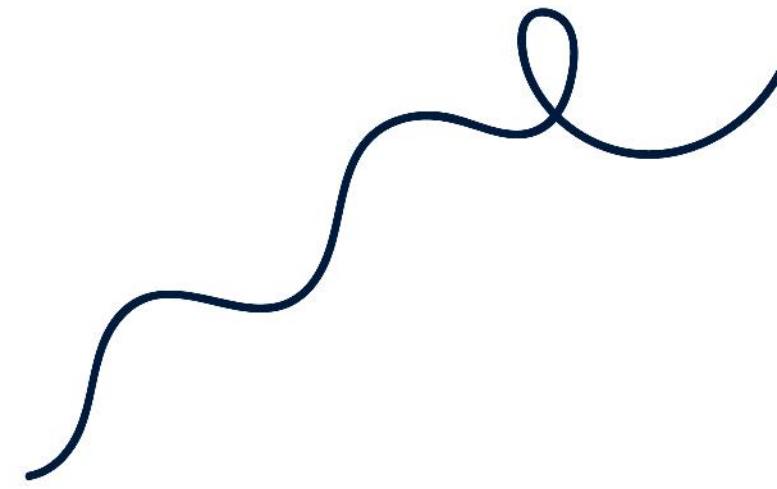
“... Customized registration forms that gather registrant demographics and opinions, Regular analysis of registration and attendance after each semester, Responsive marketing and scheduling based on semester-by-semester data analysis” (Stumpff & Craven, 2023)

“In a world where data skills are highly valued, libraries are doing their part to continue to support students through data literacy workshops; but to make this work more impactful, libraries need to increase student motivation to engage with these workshops” (Schultz, 2025)

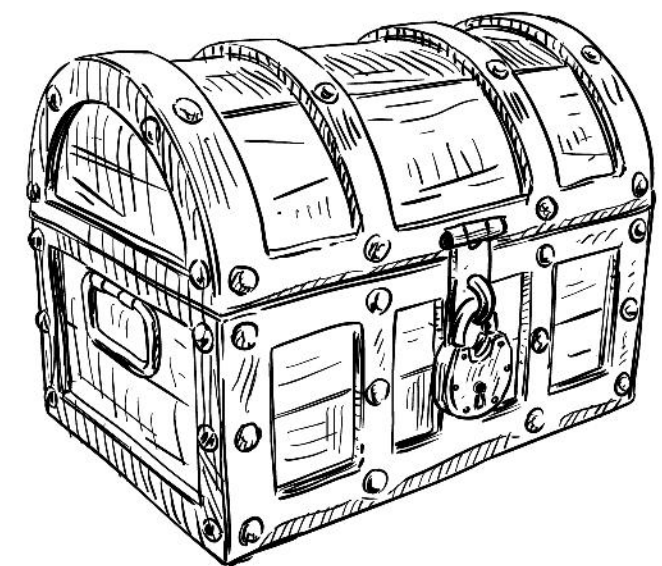


“I know like GIS is very widely used and as a skill that's valued [in the workforce], so it would be something that I think is very worth learning... I would just not go to it if I didn't think it was valuable to me” (Schultz, 2025)

“To determine whether it was worthwhile to have staff take these courses. In other words, whether these tools would be valuable to our work” (LaPolla, Contaxis, and Surkis 2021)



What makes patrons value workshops?



So we have...

- High pressure to invest significant time to increase attendance
- Use of data analytics for customized marketing and incentives
- Determination of value by application in the workplace

**Let's talk about
neoliberalism.**



Neoliberalism and Higher Education

“Intentionally implementing policies and using marketing strategies to reduce the ability of the populace to dissent against a system that relentlessly commodifies every aspect of culture, including education... [leading] to an immense apparatus of marketers, administrators, and financial professionals who tie education almost exclusively to job opportunities or to improvements in our military capacity".
(Coleman & Pankl, 2020)



In the neoliberal library...

- We find an “increasingly urgent call for management strategies that improve performance, value, and return on investment”.
- We must “constantly justify the existence and purpose of the library and its services and holdings... through metrics and money”.
- Library instruction “should serve the need of industry and government for skilled and competitive individuals”.
- Librarians must “make the acquisition of skills measurable and assessable ... to demonstrate their fitness within the university to teach these skills, so that [they] will be viewed as indispensable to the mission of (re) producing student success”. (Beilin 2016)



How do we prove our value?

- To students tempted by AI tools claiming to do everything and more?
- To institutions facing funding cuts?
- To ourselves, as higher education faces increased scrutiny?



How do we define our value?



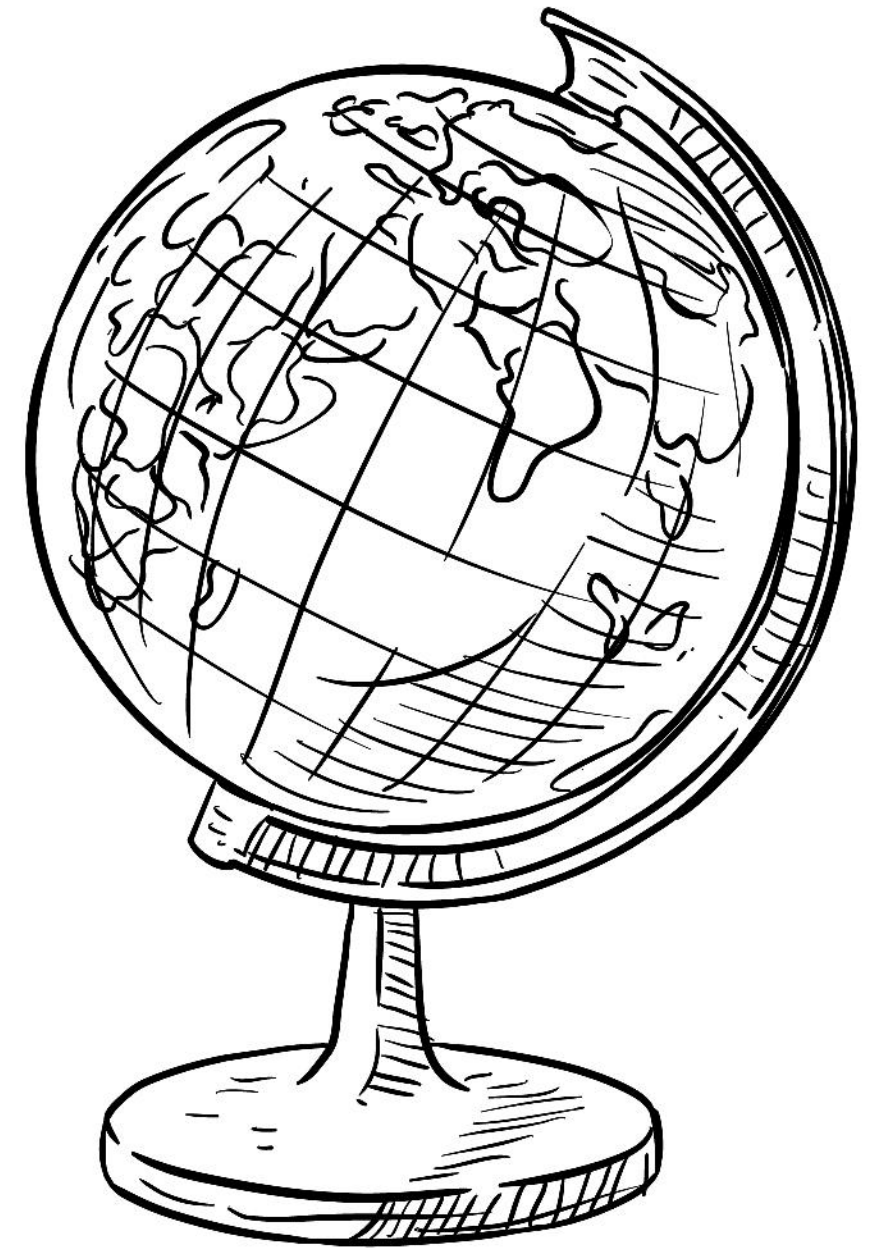
“[I]f we wish to question the purely utilitarian or instrumentalist version of student success, we have to align our own success accordingly. We should question our own definitions” (Beilin 2016)

Reframing Expectations

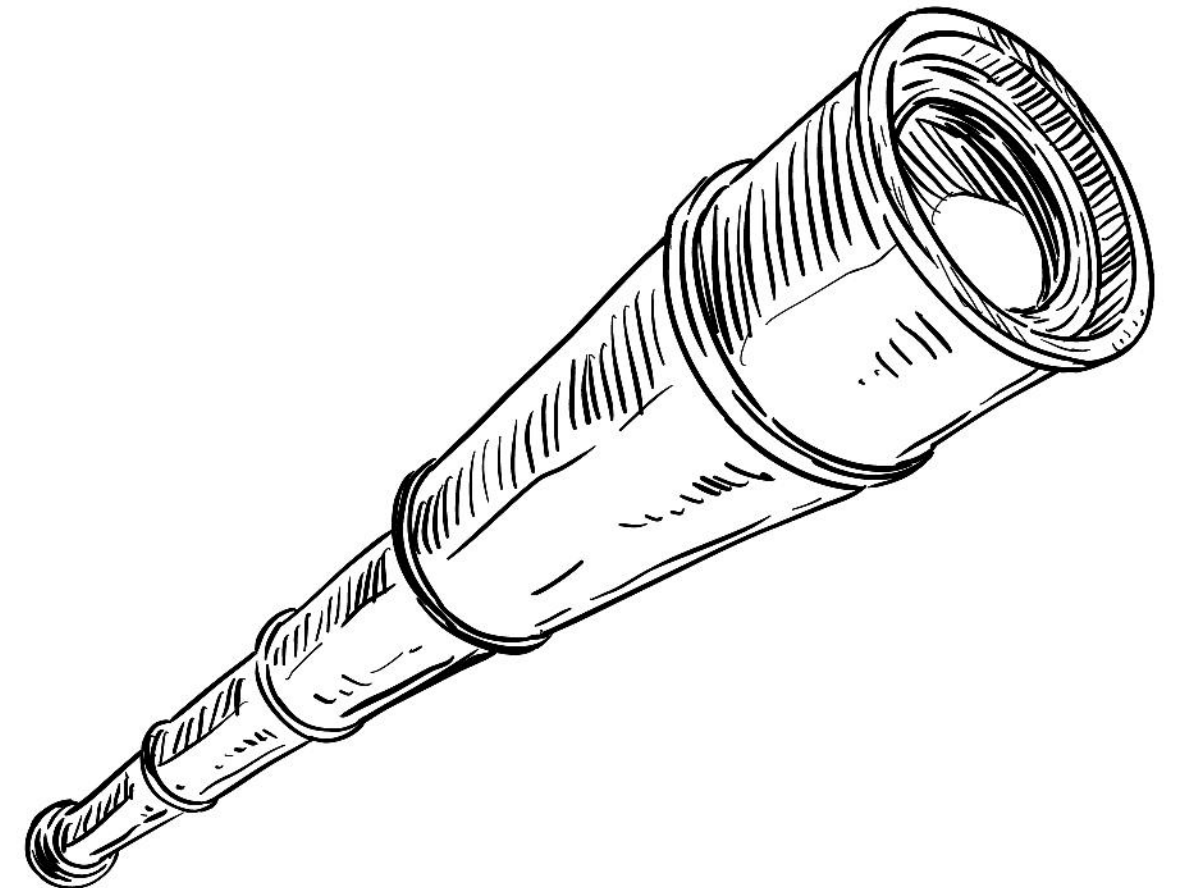
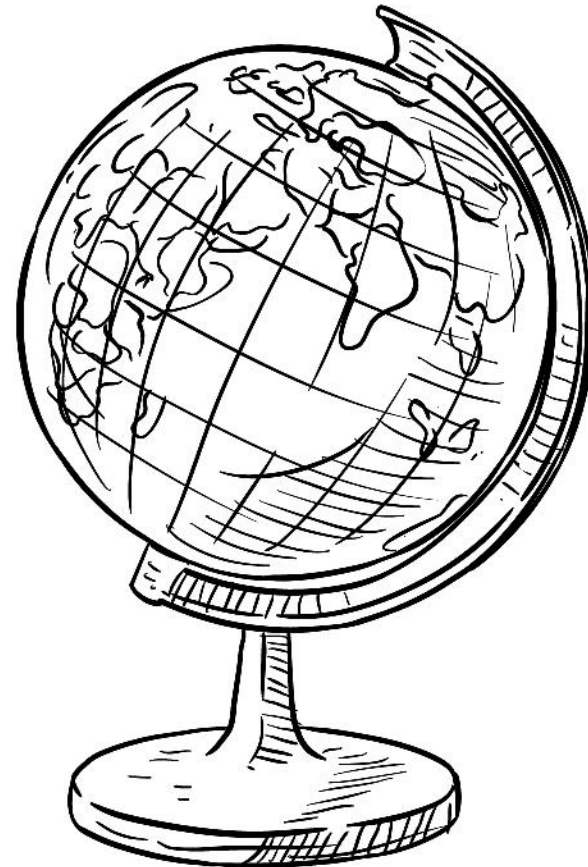
- Institutional or managerial pressure to meet arbitrary attendance quotas leads to burnout
- Providing authentic learner experiences
- Supporting staff autonomy builds more genuine connections with learners



What does
success mean
for your
workshop
program?



Our Workshop Program



Why are workshops valuable to us?

- Provide spaces where academic librarians can independently design and deliver instruction with measurable impact
- Create learning opportunities for staff and faculty
- Allow library staff with the ability to offer support and instruction to students outside of class time
- Teach topics or skills not traditionally covered in disciplinary classrooms



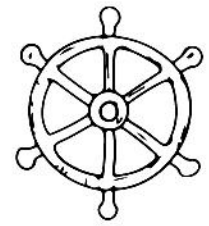
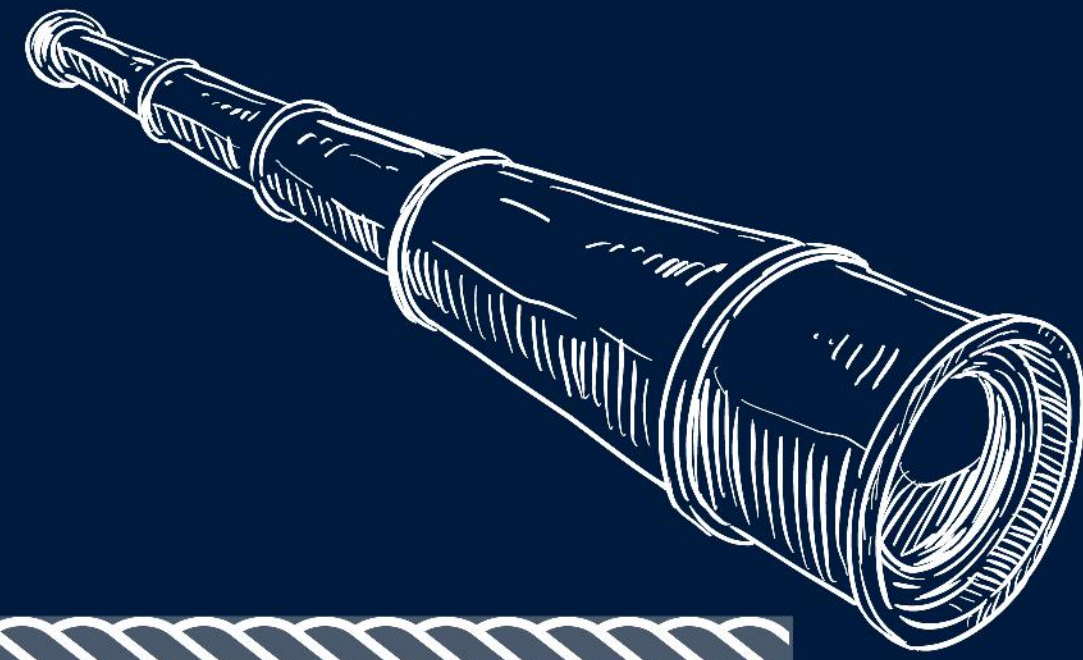
The Workshop Program

Planning Workshops

- The Workshops Team
- Semester Planning Meetings
- Scheduling
- Workshop Development
- Workshop Promotion
- Content/Coverage

The Workshop Team

Roles and Responsibilities



Team Lead

A staff member who:

- Creates schedule
- Adds workshops to LibCal
- Leads all marketing efforts
- Compiles end of semester data



Team Members

A group of library staff who:

- Volunteer each semester
- Bring fresh perspectives and expertise
- Develop lesson plans
- Teach workshops



Semester Planning Meetings

Workshop Planning

Timing

Meetings held during
academic breaks

Topic Brainstorm

Grounded in:

- Student needs
- Course trends
- Emerging information
literacy demands

Instructor Coordination

Based on:

- Expertise
- Interest
- Availability

Scheduling

When & How Sessions Are Scheduled

Workshop Hours:
5:30-6:00 pm

- Occasional afternoon offerings
- Distributed throughout the semester
- Scheduled to avoid major campus events

Built Around Instructor Availability



Remote vs. in-person work days



Personal scheduling preferences



Workshop Development

The Standards

Session Description

Each instructor writes a concise description that communicates the session's goals and learning outcomes.

Lesson Plans

All librarians use a standard template to create lesson plans.



Workshop Promotion

Reaching Students Across Multiple Channels

Digital

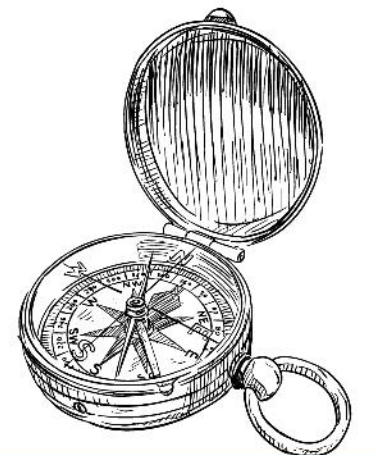
- Internal daily newsletter
- LibCal
- Canvas announcements
- Library website
- Social media

Physical

- Table toppers in library
- Bookmarks with QR codes
- In collaboration with library communications team

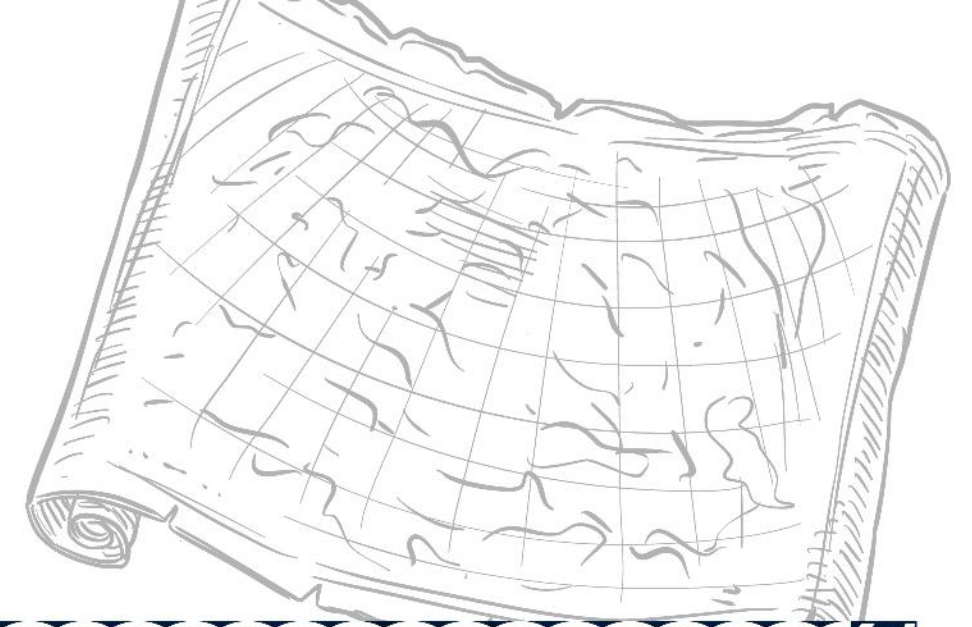
In-Person

- Library orientation
- Classroom instruction



A Balanced Program

Designed for Diverse Needs



Research Skills

- College history and archives
- Citation practices
- Information literacy
- Research techniques

Technology & Digital Literacy

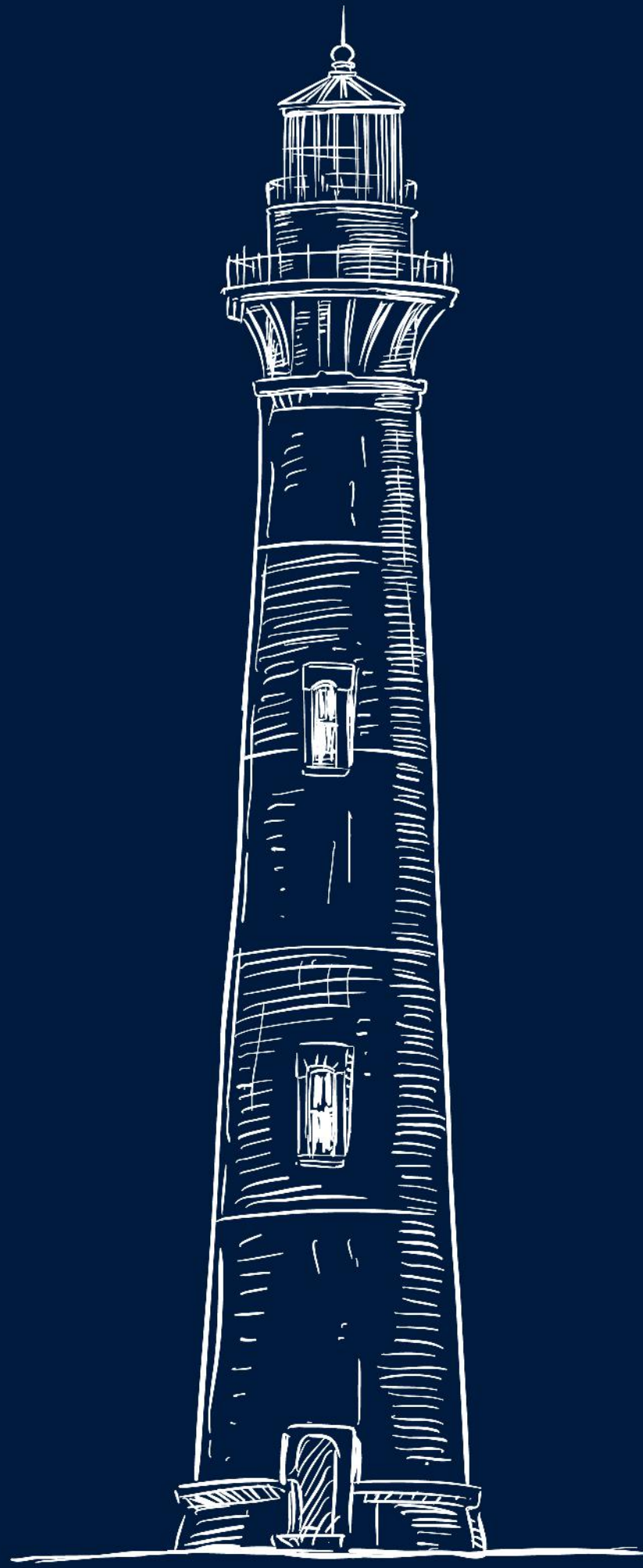
- Emerging tools
- Data management
- Software skills

Creativity & Community Building

- Visible mending
- Zine making

Workshop Assessment

- Three question paper form:
 - What is something about research or using library resources that you are still confused about?
 - What other topics would you be interested in attending a workshop about?
 - What will you take from this workshop to use in your future research?
- High response rate
 - Last fall 100% response rate
- Used in all workshops except archives and craft workshops

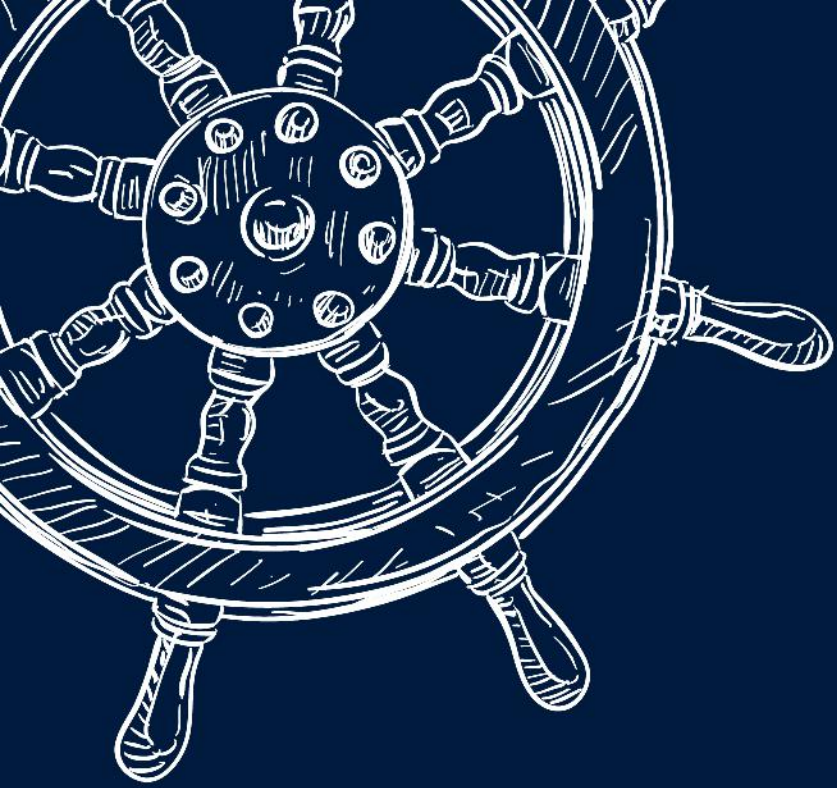


Conclusion

Are we measuring what matters?

Citations

- Beilin, I. (2016). Student success and the neoliberal academic library. *Canadian Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 1, 10–23. <https://doi.org/10.33137/cjal-rcbu.v1.24303>
- Blanchat, K. M., Colwell, T., & Snow, J. (2025). If you build it, they will get a tote bag: Reimagining a university library's workshops through a collaborative incentive program. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 25(1), 35–53. <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2025.a950007>
- Coleman, J., & Pankl, L. (2020). Rethinking the neoliberal university: Critical library pedagogy in an age of transition. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 14(1), 66–74. <https://doi.org/10.15760/comminfolit.2020.14.1.5>
- Johnson, M. W. (2025). Job control, library instruction, and burnout: A quantitative analysis of academic instruction librarians' experiences of job control while teaching. *College & Research Libraries*, 86(1), 50. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.86.1.50>
- LaPolla, F. W. Z., Contaxis, N., & Surkis, A. (2021). Piloting a long-term evaluation of library data workshops. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 109(3), 490–496. <https://doi.org/10.5195/jmla.2021.1047>
- Peacemaker, B., & Roseberry, M. (2017). Creating a sustainable graduate student workshop series. *Reference Services Review*, 45(4), 562–574. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RSR-04-2017-0010>
- Schultz, M. K. (2025). What makes students tick? Exploring factors that affect learner motivations and challenges when engaging with optional library workshops on data literacy. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 51(1), 102983. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jacalib.2024.102983>
- Sheu, F.-R. (2025). Beyond numbers: Advancing human-centered library assessment through qualitative understanding. *International Journal of Librarianship*, 10(4), 169–175. <https://doi.org/10.23974/ijol.2025.vol10.4.575>
- Stumpff, J. C., & Craven, H. J. (2023). Improving a library workshop service: Implementing change and enhancing the service based on data analysis. *Reference Services Review*, 51(3/4), 287–301. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RSR-03-2023-0014>
- Witherspoon, R. L., & Taber, P. O. L. (2021). Increasing student attendance at library workshops: What the data tells us. *College & Research Libraries*, 82(1), 113. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.82.1.113>



Questions?

