

## **The Evolution and Reaffirmation of a Library Orientation Program in an Academic Research Library**

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In 1981, James Rice proposed that there are three levels of library instruction: library orientation, library instruction, and bibliographic instruction.<sup>1</sup> Library orientation provides an introduction for users to the physical library layout and selected resources and services. The more subtle objectives are to reduce user anxiety, motivate subsequent use, and promote the availability of helpful service. In Rice's model, the second level provides a more extensive explanation of specific library materials and the third is the offering of formal courses in bibliography.

One can argue that this model is dated and no longer reflects the instructional programs carried out by academic libraries. Today's emphasis is increasingly placed on the process of information seeking and management, in addition to the organization of knowledge and libraries. This article focuses on Rice's first level—library orientation—and the continuing viability of its role as the foundation piece of a library's instructional program, especially in an electronic environment.

### **Background**

Commitment and definition of the instructional mission of libraries began in the 1960s. The American Library Association formed the Committee on Instruction in the Use of Libraries in 1967. In 1971, the Association of College and Research Libraries created the Bibliographic Instruction Task Force. Project LOEX (Library Orientation Exchange) was begun in 1972 to collect and share library instruction materials with academic librarians. Through that decade, librarians sought less staff-intensive approaches for library orientation in order to devote more energy to instruction *per se*. This included self-guided tours (audiotape or printed), slide/tape presentations, workbooks, and computer-assisted instruction (CAI).

Lynch in 1974 saw evidence that the traditional conducted tour was “on its way out” and was being replaced by these self-guided or media tours.<sup>2</sup> The conducted tour was further characterized in 1980 as “an embarrassment, if not an anachronism.”<sup>3</sup> However, by the latter part of the 1980s, the conducted tour was still a well-entrenched format.

Mensching looked at trends in bibliographic instruction by comparing results from a 1979 LOEX survey with those from a similar 1987 survey.<sup>4</sup> Required bibliographic instruction (lecture or

tour) had increased significantly: up to 65 percent of reporting libraries in 1987, compared with 24 percent in 1979. Conducted tours were used by 86 percent of the respondents in 1987, compared with 81 percent in 1979. The use of taped tours (videotape or audiotape) was up only 8 percent. Slide/tape presentations had 1 percent greater use. Workbooks and CAI increased 13 and 15 percent respectively. No change was reported for printed self-guided tours.

In the last ten years, relatively little has appeared in the literature with regard to library orientation. Simons offered a model for evaluating library tours.<sup>5</sup> Three articles deal with developing an audiotaped tour.<sup>6</sup> Each of the university libraries represented had experienced a relentless increase in requests for bibliographic instruction and chose an audiotape format to get staff relief for tours. Lawson compared conventional tours and CAI programs.<sup>7</sup> Dunbar reported a lecture/tour format for freshmen.<sup>8</sup>

During this period, instruction librarians began to consider implications from educational psychology research for their instructional programs. This included paying attention to both the cognitive and affective domains to develop new skills. Cognitive functions include knowledge of specific facts and the ability to combine them into new structures, and affective functions include motivation to learn and the internalization of values. Diane Nahl-Jakobovits and Leon A. Jakobovits, for example, suggested principles for managing the affective environment in the design of library instruction.<sup>9</sup> Others discussed the learning style preferences of users and the implications for library instruction.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, librarians began coping with providing instruction for dealing with information in an environment that is more and more electronic.

This article relates the evolution of a library orientation program in an academic research library from a lecture/tour format to an audiotape tour and highlights the steps in between. Kent State University's main campus has approximately 23,000 students. The Libraries are a member of the Association of Research Libraries and have approximately 1.7 million volumes, which are shelved in the twelve-story Main Library and in four branch libraries on campus. Library instruction is conducted by a reference department staff of 12 librarians.

### **Lecture Plus Conducted Tour**

The Freshman Library Instruction Program, or FLIP, was begun in 1970 as the Libraries' first formal library orientation program. It was offered through the freshman basic composition classes and by 1990 reached about 4,500 students per year. Each class was scheduled by the reference department to spend one class period in the library. A librarian would lecture on the use of the catalog, *Library of Congress Subject Headings*, a basic periodical index, and a newspaper index. At the end of the lecture, the class would receive a brief tour of the first floor of the library and its major service points and location of starting tools for an information search. Each student also received a packet containing guides to the Libraries' basic services and

collections and an assignment to be completed outside of class time. Completed assignments were returned directly to the English instructor.

In 1985 the reference department conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of FLIP; 137 students were given a pre-test of five questions to complete during the first few minutes of their session. These questions measured library skills such as using the card catalog, the library's building guide and periodical directory, and a general periodical index. One month after the FLIP lectures, the same students completed an identical post-test. The answers were compared with those from the pre-test. The overall scores indicated that about 34 percent of the students achieved scores of at least four correct answers on the pre-test, compared with 54 percent answering at least four correct on the post-test.

While the post-test results indicated that progress was being made in improving the students' library skills, library staff continued to have reservations about the overall effectiveness of the program. Staff evaluation laid out the following advantages and disadvantages of this lecture/tour format.

The advantages of this program were that it

1. reached all incoming freshman;
2. had the support of the English department. Instructors were encouraged to attend the library sessions with their classes;
3. met in the library;
4. introduced key finding tools;
5. provided an orientation to the physical layout of the library and main service points;
6. projected a friendly, helpful atmosphere and gave an opportunity for students to ask questions; and
7. used an assignment to reinforce points covered in lecture.

Disadvantages included the following:

1. It was a passive experience for students.
2. There were up to two English classes or 60 students/library session, making it difficult to "reach" all students through the lecture and to provide a manageable and audible tour.
3. It exhausted reference staff and decreased their time available to honor the growing number of requests for higher level, subject-oriented bibliographic instruction. Each librarian taught 5 to 15 FLIP lectures.
4. Extensive time was required of the bibliographic instruction coordinator and office staff for the scheduling of lectures, communicating with English instructors, assigning librarians, and preparing packet materials. FLIP also created serious scheduling conflicts for the library lecture room.
5. Feedback from some English instructors suggested that the lost class period further aggravated an already stretched schedule.
6. Reference staff did not see the completed assignments to determine effectiveness of program. Given the volume of students involved, the review of completed assignments on

a regular basis by reference librarians did not seem practical. Periodically, arrangements were made with a sampling of instructors to see the assignments.

7. There was no reinforcement of this library introduction by the class assignments that center on reading and composition and do not require library research.

### **Lecture Plus Slide/Tape Tour**

The problems of staffing and scheduling became acute by the late 1980s and several modifications were introduced. The first was the creation of a 10-minute slide/tape tour to replace the conducted tour at the end of the lecture. The big advantage was that it dealt with the problem of trying to negotiate a large group through the first floor on a tour. With a slide/tape tour, everyone could see and hear.

A significant disadvantage, however, was that this was still a passive experience. In fact, librarians found that, by the time the slide/tape was shown at the end of the session, the students were restless. Some librarians elected to show the slide/tape tour at the beginning of the class to better hold the students' attention.

Nonetheless, librarians at the reference desk perceived, by the questions they received after the slide/tape tour, that the students had failed to get a physical orientation to basic tools and service points needed to complete their assignment. This is similar to findings by Ridgeway, who found that students developed a better cognitive map of the library through a walking tour than through an "armchair tour."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Gale et al. found that navigation performance was inferior for those who had viewed a video tape, as opposed to an actual field experience.<sup>12</sup> Although this was an indoor setting, it seems to support Ridgeway's findings.

Because the slide/tape presentation did not replace the lecture, it did little to reduce the commitment of the librarians' time. Additionally, although it was only 10 minutes long, it was fairly time consuming to produce. Those in charge of this effort were frustrated that they needed to incorporate changes yearly, if not more frequently.

### **Lecture Plus Electronic Demonstrations (No Tour)**

For some time, the FLIP lecture included an interactive demonstration of the online catalog using the video projector in the classroom. Nonetheless, it was clear that, although this demonstration provided an introduction on how to search and interpret screens, students were ill-prepared to transfer this experience to using the online catalog themselves for the first time. Nor did the existing lecture format provide for introducing students to other electronic resources, such as periodical indexes on CD-ROM.

The department decided to experiment with the orientation format in a spring semester when the number of freshman composition classes is lower. The tour portion was discontinued to make time for other types of experiences. In half of the classes, the librarian demonstrated a CD-ROM index as an example of an alternative form of a periodical index. The other classes were taken at the end of the standard lecture to a cluster of terminals in the reference center and given hands-on practice with the online catalog, with approximately three students per terminal.

A survey was given to all students at the beginning of their library visit to gain information on how they felt on their first visit to the library and on their prior experience with an online catalog or with CD-ROMs. Of the 96 students surveyed, 43 percent reported feeling uncomfortable using the library on their first visit. Less than half had previous experience with an online catalog and only 28 percent had previously used a CD-ROM. After the library orientation, students were asked questions about how prepared they felt they were to use the online catalog: 58 percent felt confident and 70 percent felt they could correctly interpret a catalog record.

The experience of the hands-on classes seemed to be more satisfactory for the students involved and generated more questions and enthusiasm than in the CD-ROM demonstration group. Likewise, the librarians found this to be a more satisfactory experience. The CD-ROM demonstration did not seem to generate any more interest or questions for that group than any other part of the lecture. The shortcoming of both of these formats was the lack of a tour component. The original problem of an excessive commitment of staff time also remained.

### **Putting It All Together**

There was a mandate within the department to maintain a library orientation program for freshmen and to change it to incorporate the best of the various formats that had been tried. In keeping with the goals of Rice's first level of library instruction, the new program would give new users an introduction to the library's physical layout and introduce them to selected basic library resources and services. The primary goal of the program would be to reduce users' anxiety by providing a "trial run" of the library and giving them a chance to perform practice searches using selected basic resources. The program would, rather than attempt to completely teach the use of any one library resource, prepare the way for future bibliographic instruction offered through specific courses and for individualized instruction at the reference desk or through an appointment with a reference librarian.

It was determined that the program needed to

1. remain within the freshman English curriculum and be required. The relationship with the English department and its support of library orientation was highly valued. Trying to move the program to a required freshman course that required library research was judged to be too problematic and uncertain;
2. include a physical orientation of the library through a walking tour;
3. introduce the use of the online catalog and of a periodical index. This should include doing a basic search, interpreting the record, and determining where an item could be found in the Libraries' collection. There should be a hands-on experience with the online catalog;
4. have a required assignment that would be reviewed by library staff to insure use of basic tools; and
5. provide economies in the use of staff time.

### **The Audiotaped Tour Decision**

It was determined that an audiotaped tour would achieve the orientation, instructional, and efficiency objectives set out in the library orientation review. Planning and implementation would draw from the experiences reported by Forrest (1986) and Benefiel (1989). It would continue to be required and administered through the freshman English course, but students would come to the library individually and complete the tour and assignment on their own time.

Students would check out a portable cassette player and headphones from the circulation desk and receive a packet of materials. The packet would include a tour map, a copy of the library guide for students, and an assignment sheet. The tour would cover the first two floors of the library where the key service points are located (reference, circulation, reserves, periodical information).

The students would listen to an audiotaped narration as they were directed to eleven marked tour stations. At given tour stops, they would complete parts of the assignment. This would include a hands-on exercise with the online catalog. They would be encouraged to ask questions at the reference desk at any point during the tour. At its completion, each student would return the equipment to the circulation desk, turn in the assignment, and obtain a signed and dated receipt to be given to his or her instructor that verified the student's participation. The entire process was judged to require about 30-45 minutes of the student's time, with taped narration running for 12 minutes. The assignments would be graded by reference librarians and returned to the English instructors for their information, and then returned to the students. This was seen as an important change from the former program that would provide feedback to the reference department as well as signal to the students that the assignment did matter.

## **Implementation**

The majority of the planning, including the production of the tour script, was done by the librarian coordinating the project. The assignment was similar in form and content to the previous FLIP assignment, although slightly shorter. Examples were included with each question to serve as a guide. In order to add interest, a buried treasure hunt theme was selected. The program itself was named "Navigating the Library."

This became a cooperative venture with the participation of other departments. The audiotape was produced by audiovisual services using both a male and a female voice. Appropriate music was dubbed in to provide additional interest. The graphics department created a pirate's treasure map that served as a tour map showing the library's first two floors and the tour stations. Audiovisual services also undertook responsibility for duplicating the master tape and ordering and maintaining the necessary equipment.

The circulation department agreed to house the equipment and materials for the program and to check them out to students and issue a receipt when the cassette player and assignment were returned. At the suggestion of the circulation department, a short list of written instructions was given to students as they checked out the equipment to provide a summary of the tour's objectives and what they needed to do.

The initial cost of for the audiotaped tour was \$2,352.50. The largest expenditure was for the portable cassette players. Detailed costs are given in table 1. Considerable savings were recognized from the in-house production of the script, tape, and packet materials.

## **Evaluation**

During the first semester of "Navigating the Library," students were asked to complete a short survey that was included with the final page of the assignment. Responses were given by 2,210 students, or 82 percent. The results are given in table 2.

Over 60 percent of the students found the audio tour interesting or were at least neutral about it. While staff would like to see a higher percentage reporting a positive impression, they were encouraged that the students' perception of the difficulty of the assignment and usefulness of the directions compared favorably with their performance with the assignment. Staff were pleased to see that the fundamental questions about using key finding tools and locating materials were grasped and answered successfully. The few recurrent problems seen in answers prompted a slight revision in the assignment directions in a later semester.

In the space allotted for comments, one major theme emerged. While a large percentage of students did not seem to show much interest in the tour itself, the majority of comments (over 600 individual remarks) indicated that the tour had given them useful information to locate books and other materials in the library. In other words, although many students do not appear enthused about the prospect of library orientation, most agree that it serves a useful purpose for them.

The other comments were so diverse as to illustrate the difficulty of planning a library orientation program for 3,000 students who represent myriad backgrounds and experiences. Over 130 students thought that the information presented was too limited. A small number thought too much information had been given. Some preferred the self-guided activity. Others said they would have felt more comfortable taking the tour with their classes.

Longer surveys were sent to the English instructors after the tour program had been completed for the semester. Their comments verified the student responses. According to some instructors, students seemed more enthusiastic about the tour program than previous classes had been about the lecture/tour. Students also reported being more comfortable in the library after the tour. The instructors found there were about equal numbers of students who liked and didn't like the program.

The instructors themselves were also somewhat divided. Those who liked the audio tour format found the hands-on aspect especially valuable and less passive than the lecture/tour had been. They also commented favorably on the savings in class time. Instructors who preferred the lecture format found it to be more personal and easier for students to ask questions. They felt students took the lecture program more seriously because it was done in class, and they appreciated having more control over the whole activity.

Reference staff were pleased that the implementation of the audiotaped tour resulted in a savings of approximately 100 hours previously spent teaching orientation lectures. This has enabled

librarians to spend more time teaching higher level information skills through subject lectures and to offer a new program of seminars designed to introduce faculty to new electronic resources.

Evaluation of the program is intended to be ongoing. Because the orientation program is mainly concerned with breaking down the initial barriers to library use for new students, students will continue to be surveyed periodically to determine their overall confidence levels in using the library successfully. Librarians' review of completed assignments reveals to staff whether students are grasping the basic concepts presented, and the English instructors are regularly queried for comments and suggestions.

### **Reaffirmation and Conclusion**

As the available technology in academic libraries increases, library users find themselves faced with an ever more bewildering array of resources. The level of stress experienced by an incoming student on first entering the library is almost incomprehensible to the average library staff member. Therefore, the need for some type of library orientation program is as necessary as ever before, and is far from being anachronistic.

The audiotaped tour program seems to be the best available method at this time of achieving the goals set forward for the program: to introduce the student to the physical layout of the library building and to the basic finding tools available by the use of an active, hands-on learning experience, to let the student work at his or her own pace with the opportunity to ask for help from library staff, to provide the student with feedback on the library assignment, and to accomplish these goals in the most efficient way possible to benefit both students and staff. In keeping with Rice's goals of library orientation, the program attempts to reduce user anxiety, motivate subsequent use of the library, and promote the availability of helpful service.

In addition to ongoing evaluation and modification of the existing audiotaped tour program, staff recognize the need to consider other types of self-guided tours that might effectively replace or complement the current program. Possibilities include information kiosks placed in central locations in the library and multimedia tours via computer-assisted instruction. The use of the developing campus network for some type of library orientation is also seen as a possibility, as increased numbers of library users gain offsite access.

The experience of this reference staff over the past decade has reaffirmed the key role that library orientation plays in the overall library instruction program and the need to deliver it in an effective and efficient manner. In an increasingly complex world of information, library orientation programs provide students with the necessary grounding for learning more advanced skills of information management. Library orientation, as outlined in the first level of Rice's model, continues to serve as the foundation of the library's instructional program.



Figures

<b>Table 1: Initial Audio Tour Costs</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Cassette tape players: 60@\$21.00	\$1,260.00
Headphones: 100 @ \$5.00	500.00
Batteries: 240 @ \$ .60	144.00
Media hang-up bags: 10 packages @ \$4.35	43.50
Target tape: 1 case @ \$150.00	150.00
Script narration	50.00
Production costs: master tape, audiocassette tapes and labor	165.00
Treasure map	40.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,352.50</b>

<b>Table 2: Audio Tour Survey Results</b>	
1. Rate your opinion of the audio tour:	
Interesting	27%
Neutral	34%
Boring	39%
2. Did this tour give you enough information to use the library for your coursework?	
Agree	58%
Neutral	31%
Disagree	11%
3. How would you rate your confidence in using the library?	
Confident	47%
Neutral	35%
Insecure	18%
4. Have you used a computerized library catalog before?	
Yes	62%
No	38%
If so, where?	
Public library	43%
High school	10%
This university	10%
Other college	7%
5. How would you rate the assignment? (Choices ranged from “very easy” to “very difficult”)	
Easy	65%
Neutral	31%
Difficult	4%
6. How were the instructions for the assignment? (Choices ranged from “very adequate” to “very inadequate”).	
Adequate	75%
Neutral	20%
Inadequate	5%

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- <sup>1</sup> James Rice, Jr., *Teaching Library Use: A Guide for Library Instruction* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 5-8.
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- <sup>3</sup> A. Carolyn Miller, "The Round Robin Library Tour," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 6 (September 1980): 215.
- <sup>4</sup> Teresa Mensching, "Trends in Bibliographic Instruction in the 1980s: A Comparison of Data from Two Surveys," *Research Strategies* 7 (Winter 1989): 4-13.
- <sup>5</sup> Michael Simons, *Evaluation of Library Tours* (Reno, NV: Nevada University Library, 1990). ERIC ED 331513.
- <sup>6</sup> Candace R. Benefiel and Joe Jaros, "Planning and Testing a Self-Guided Taped Tour in an Academic Library," *RQ* 29 (Winter 1989): 199-208; Charles Forrest and Mary Gassmann, "Development of a Self-Guided, Audiocassette Tour at a Large Academic Library: Preliminary Report," *Research Strategies* 4 (Summer 1986): 116-124; and Marilyn S. Hautala and Mary T. Mick, "University of Nebraska at Omaha Library Audio Tour," *Nebraska Library Association Quarterly* 22 (Fall 1991): 42-45.
- <sup>7</sup> V. Lonnie Lawson, "Using a Computer-Assisted Instruction Program to Replace the Traditional Library Tour: An Experimental Study," *RQ* 29 (Fall 1989): 71-79; and V. Lonnie Lawson, "A Cost Comparison Between General Library Tours and Computer-Assisted Instruction Programs," *Research Strategies* 8 (Spring 1990): 66-73.
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- <sup>9</sup> Diane Nahl-Jakobovits and Leon A. Jakobovits, "Managing the Affective Micro-Information Environment," *Research Strategies* 3 (Winter 1985): 17-28.
- <sup>10</sup> Harold W. Tuckett and Carla J. Stoffle, "Learning Theory and the Self-Reliant Library User," *RQ* 24 (Fall 1984): 58-66; and Constance A. Mellon and Kathryn E. Pagles, "Bibliographic Instruction and Learning Theory," in *Bibliographic Instruction: The Second Generation*, ed. by Constance A. Mellon (Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1987), 134-142.
- <sup>11</sup> Trish Ridgeway, *Library Orientation Methods, Mental Maps, and Public Services Planning* (Rock Hill, SC: Winthrop College, 1983). ERIC ED247942.
- <sup>12</sup> Nathan Gale, Reginald G. Golledge, James W. Pellegrino, and Sally Doherty, "The Acquisition and Integration of Route Knowledge in an Unfamiliar Neighborhood," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 10 (March 1990): 3-25.