

LibraryDen:

A Tool for Learning about
Research & Information
Literacy Pedagogy

START HERE →

Melanie Lewis Croft

msmelalew@gmail.com

Anne C. Barnhart

barnhart@westga.edu

Melanie: In the fall 2020 semester, I taught a new, fully online course at the University of West Georgia (UWG): Multiple Literacies for School Library Media. This course is required for students to obtain school library media (SLM) specialist certification in Georgia and is one of the first courses students take within their graduate-level school library media program. The course focuses on enabling students to develop expertise in multiple literacies, which are identified by the American Association of School Librarians as literacy, information literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, and technical literacy (2018). A significant portion of this course focuses on guiding students in how to develop instruction in information literacy for K–12 students. As I finished designing this course during the summer of 2020, I was delighted to learn that UWG’s librarians had just developed a fully online tutorial called LibraryDen to guide our university students through learning how to access, evaluate, and use the information resources available through UWG’s Ingram Library.

Anne: In March 2020 when UWG shifted to online learning, the library staff was compelled to reexamine our online asynchronous information literacy instruction offerings. The library had a fairly robust information literacy instruction program, including both face-to-face and synchronous online workshops, but had not yet dedicated as many resources to developing standalone online modules. The online resources the library previously developed had been created for specific courses and programs, but no general introductory tutorials or digital learning objects had been developed. With the switch to online learning, it became clear to us in the Ingram Library that we needed to add to our suite of offerings to better support students

who were already comfortable with online learning as well as all of the students and faculty who now needed to experiment with this new modality.

The main asynchronous online learning object the library already had was a series of approximately seventy text-based tutorials with an FAQ-style structure. Ours was a local adaptation of Portland State University Library’s creation, *Library DIY*, which they licensed through Creative Commons and shared with the academic library profession (2021). In our library we decided to create a course shell in the university’s learning management system using the UWG implementation of *Library DIY* as a course outline (2021). We chose approximately forty-five of our seventy tutorials and grouped them into eight thematic modules covering the following topics: starting research, finding specific kinds of resources, evaluating resources, citing sources, and institutional-specific library policies for interlibrary loan and off-campus access.

We selected the subset of pages for our version of *Library DIY* based on our learning outcomes, which we had designed using language from the Association of College Research Libraries 2016 document “Framework for Information Literacy

for Higher Education” and the American Association of Colleges and Universities 2021 document “Inquiry and Analysis VALUE Rubric.” The learning outcomes for LibraryDen are:

- Students will discriminate between different library resources.
- Students will identify resources appropriate for different information needs.
- Students will explain how to get research help from a librarian.
- Students will evaluate search strategies.
- Students will recognize elements in citations.
- Students will describe criteria to evaluate the reliability of information.

We also created a question bank with hundreds of quiz questions using pop-culture references to make the questions fun and interesting for the students. Each module links to several *DIY* pages with brief optional self-assessments for the students to check their own understanding of the material. Also available is a summative quiz for each module with a subset of the assessment questions so if the students have done the self-assessments, they will

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have already seen the questions on the quizzes. Before reading any of the library's mini-course content, students do a pre-test and then there is a final post-test at the conclusion. The pre- and post-tests cover the same topics as the self-assessments but use different questions to measure student learning as opposed to students' ability to recognize and memorize questions.

Throughout creation of the mini-course, we were also beta-testing different pieces of it. The initial rounds of testing were done by student employees of the library who worked remotely to test the modules and offer feedback on the flow and question structure. With this student help we identified several questions that had to be rewritten for clarity as well as issues with continuity. We then did subsequent rounds of testing using student workers from other areas on campus. Fortunately for us, several supervisors of campus student workers were looking for remote work tasks to keep their students employed over the summer. This circumstance allowed us to get feedback from students who were not as familiar with the library as our own student assistants were. As part of the testing, we also asked the students to time themselves for each module. We wanted to make sure that we had a good distribution of work across the modules, and we wanted to know approximately how long the entire mini-course would take. We needed this information so we could advise faculty on how to assign it and how much weight to give it as part of an overall grade. Both the mean and median times the students reported for the entire course were between five and six hours for completion.

We spent the spring and summer of 2020 developing and testing the mini-course. During the summer we also began marketing it to faculty because we hoped to get it included in

fall 2020 courses. Part of this process included branding the tutorial in a way that would make sense. The UWG mascot is a wolf (named "Wolfe"), and the campus locally brands services and locations with wolf-themed names. For example, the learning management system is locally branded as "CourseDen." We named our library mini-course "LibraryDen" to align with these local themes. We began marketing it in May 2020 by presenting it to faculty at a campus pedagogy conference that was online due to the pandemic. We presented the content and had student testers talk about their experiences from their perspective. In addition to this presentation, we created a video about the course and sent notes to individual faculty members teaching intro-to-the-discipline courses.

Melanie: I found LibraryDen to be the perfect example of information literacy in action. I decided to incorporate it into the Multiple Literacies for School Library Media course curriculum with two goals: a) to orient our new graduate students to the Ingram Library and the resources they would be required to use throughout their program, and b) to serve as a model of a type of online tutorial that our students might adapt for use in their K-12 school libraries. I appreciate that LibraryDen was designed to be a self-paced program that allows instructors to use it in a variety of ways within their courses. I chose to have my students complete it within a six-week period of my course. Though LibraryDen is set up to calculate a standalone grade for completion, I was able to use it as a pass/fail activity. I required my students to complete each of the modules and their respective quizzes with an overall 70 percent score and submit brief narrative responses describing what they learned from the activity—from the perspective

of a UWG graduate student and as a future school librarian.

LibraryDen is a well-designed, cohesive educational resource that effectively uses video and activities to engage students in the learning process. I appreciate the flexibility afforded by this resource and the regular support provided by the Ingram Library librarians. They regularly sent me reports of student completion progress and reset accounts if students asked to redo one or more quizzes within LibraryDen.

As of fall 2021, over 140 students have taken the Multiple Literacies for School Library Media course and completed LibraryDen. I have received only positive feedback from students, who shared that they found it to be a valuable learning experience in virtually orienting them to the Ingram Library. In particular, students said that they:

- appreciated how LibraryDen was organized with:
 - modules of content
 - tools to check their understanding through quizzes, self-assessments, and review
 - immediate feedback that required them to master the material before moving forward
- gained knowledge in:
 - how to begin exploring a research topic
 - applying search techniques
 - using Wikipedia and Google Scholar
 - identifying and locating peer-reviewed/scholarly sources
 - avoiding plagiarism
 - using citation generators
- were surprised to learn that:

- they should never pay for resources (because they're covered by tuition for library services)
- research help is provided via in-person meetings, online, and over the phone
- materials can be accessed through other University System of Georgia libraries
- materials can be shipped to their homes
- they have live 24/7 access to librarians located throughout the United States and United Kingdom
- really enjoyed the mix of academic and current pop-culture references.

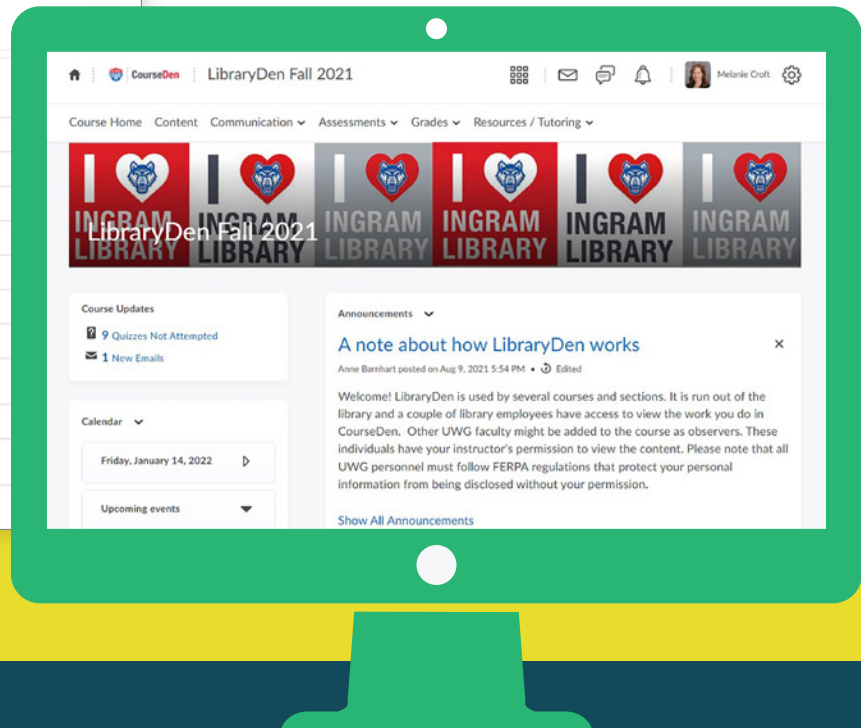
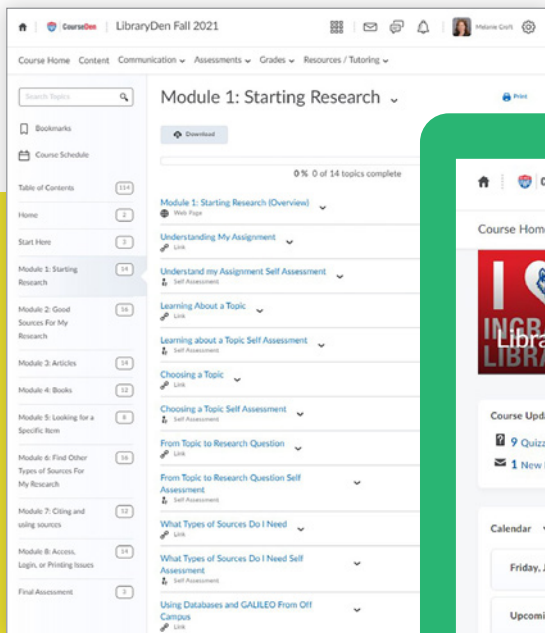
One student shared, "I liked the movie and TV references in the questions; they were funny and

allowed for the feeling of common interests and connections when online learning can often seem robotic and impersonal."

Anne: In our pilot year we had thirty class sections (a total of 685 students) enrolled in the LibraryDen mini-course. These students ranged from second-year undergraduates to incoming graduate students. Some faculty assign it as part of the course grade, while others offer it as an extra-credit option. Not surprisingly, there were greater completion levels in the courses that required LibraryDen when compared to those for which it was merely extra credit.

We were pleased with the assessment data that we gathered. At the end of the first semester (fall 2020) we saw a mean increase of 11.99 percent (median 13.59 percent) in scores when comparing the pre-test

to the post-test. Several students and faculty asked that students be allowed multiple attempts for the quizzes. Based on this feedback, for subsequent semesters students could have two attempts for each quiz, including the post-test. The following semester (spring 2021) the mean increase from the pre-test to the post-test was 26 percent (median was also 26 percent). These figures indicate to us that LibraryDen works as an instructional tool. Aside from assessing student learning, we wanted to know what students thought about the learning experience. We included an optional anonymous survey asking students to provide feedback. We learned that 80 to 85 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "LibraryDen is useful to me as a UWG student." Additionally, 70 to 77 percent of student respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I would recommend LibraryDen to friends and classmates." In short, LibraryDen works as a pedagogical tool, and students see value in it.



The library professional community also sees value in it. In 2021 Ingram Library won the American Library Association’s Library Instruction Round Table Innovation in Instruction award for the creation of LibraryDen (ALA 2021). We licensed LibraryDen through Creative Commons (CC-BY-SA). Because LibraryDen is a course that uses Ingram Library DIY tutorials as its course text, libraries interested in adopting LibraryDen would first need to adapt or create a set of tutorials customized for their libraries. The LibraryDen course structure, modules, and quizzes can be downloaded from GitHub (a website where software developers share copies) and imported into other compatible learning management systems. Information about LibraryDen and links for downloading its content are available on our information page: <http://libguides.westga.edu/LibraryDen> (Barnhart 2021). Since LibraryDen’s content is specific to the UWG’s resources and policies, it serves as a model or starting point for school librarians to adapt for use by their community. School librarians working within a school district could collaborate to import, adapt, and maintain their version of LibraryDen within their selected learning management system for use across their school sites.

LibraryDen will require some maintenance and updating as a course. The pop-culture references that make the questions fun for students will gradually become outdated and need to be refreshed. We also will soon confront issues about the integration of LibraryDen in the curriculum. While the School Library Media (SLM) program has integrated LibraryDen in one of its required courses so that all graduate students have the information, programmatic integration is not consistent across the university. In

other departments, one professor teaching an introduction-to-the-discipline course might assign LibraryDen to their section, but other sections of the same course do not include it. This means that students do not uniformly carry the basic knowledge from LibraryDen into upper-level courses within a division. This uneven approach also results in some students being assigned LibraryDen in multiple courses across multiple semesters. By making the self-assessments optional, a student could move quickly through LibraryDen as a refresher by skipping the tutorials and taking the module-level quizzes in approximately thirty minutes. As this continues to happen, we anticipate seeing student satisfaction numbers decrease out of frustration resulting from having to repeat the same content. In the library we would prefer to achieve systematic program-level integration, but that is difficult in an academic setting in which departments in the disciplines can take independent actions.

Melanie: School librarians may have a greater ability to integrate learning experiences like LibraryDen across grade levels within their K–12 school settings. When asked how they might adapt LibraryDen for their future school libraries, SLM students provided many helpful suggestions. They considered the following regarding:

- delivery:
 - it could be used as a self-paced course, avoiding standard informational presentations that can be overwhelming, especially because school librarians aren’t always available when they’re needed by students and staff
 - it could be used in place of or in addition to a library orientation as a resource that would be helpful to both in-person and virtual learners

- in the words of one SLM student, “it’s a great way to show students (and their parents helping them at home) all the resources available to them to still complete their assignments and do research on their own interests without having to physically be in the library”

- it could be used as professional development to “help my colleagues because, as a previous classroom teacher, I didn’t know everything the library had to offer until I was in the media specialist role”

- format:
 - add a search bar so students/staff can quickly locate specific information when needed
 - turn quizzes into scavenger hunts
 - add graphics and audio to increase engagement
 - create certificates or badges (because students like to feel rewarded!)
 - give it a catchy name aligned to a current trend like “LibraryTok” or “LitTok”

- content:
 - use it to introduce research skills
 - use it to demonstrate how to use the library management system (e.g., Follett Destiny) and state databases (e.g., GALILEO)
 - include a section on digital citizenship

Finally, one student emphasized that an adaptation of LibraryDen “... would show my administrators my dedication to our students and to the job!”

Melanie & Anne: We’ve been thrilled with the results of LibraryDen thus far. We are particu-

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larly impressed by the transferability of skills between the academic and school library settings. The ability for school librarians to adapt an instructional model such as LibraryDen for the K–12 setting

provides an opportunity for them to collaborate with their local academic librarians in designing a continuum of information literacy skills that spans all grade levels.

Also, K–12 students that engage with efforts like these may be better prepared for the rigors of academic research upon entering a college or university. We look forward to continuing to refine our instruction in our respective settings to best meet the needs of learners who engage with LibraryDen.



Dr. Melanie Lewis Croft is an assistant professor in the College of Education at the University of West

Georgia. She has worked with all grade levels and subject areas across a variety of learning environments in public, private, urban, and rural school systems. She served the K–12 field of education for seventeen years as a state-certified elementary-level classroom teacher, secondary-level school librarian, and district administrator of technology, library services, and curriculum. Since 2014 she has worked at the university level serving as both a faculty member and program coordinator of graduate education programs in school library media in California and Georgia. She currently serves AASL on the School Library Research Editorial Board and as a Knowledge Quest blogger. Her recent publications include “Enabling School Librarians to Serve as Instructional Leaders of Multiple Literacies” in *School Library Research* and “A Certified School Librarian Is a Professional Learning Powerhouse” in *The Learning Professional*.



Anne C. Barnhart is a professor and Head of Outreach and Assessment at the University of West Georgia. In addition, she

is an adjunct instructor for the iSchool of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she teaches *Collection Development*, and *Library and Information Resources for Spanish-Speaking Populations*. She received ALA’s *Library Instruction Round Table Innovation in Instruction Award* for 2020–2021. She is vice president/president-elect of the *Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials*, and is a member of ALA, the *International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions*, the *Association of College and Research Libraries*, and the *Georgia Library Association*. Her recent publications include “*The Course-Integrated Unconference: A Pedagogy of Courage and Mutual Trust*,” forthcoming in the *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, and “*¿Enseñar o crear experiencias para aprender? Cambiando el enfoque del papel del bibliotecario en el desarrollo de ALFIN*” in *30 motivos para celebrar a las bibliotecas*.

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