Universal Design

ARTICLE BY

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The Instructional Design Librarian:

- supports consistent application of best practices in library instruction
- develops online instructional content geared towards assisting students at their point-of-need
- provides leadership for the assessment of librarians' instruction practices

Through the intentional adoption of the best practices of Universal Design for Learning, Grand Valley State University Libraries demonstrates its ongoing commitment to inclusion and equity.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provides guidelines for developing curricula, selecting materials, and creating learning environments that consider the wide variability of learners in higher education. UDL is inspired by Universal Design principles that show up in our day-to-day life. For example, Universal Design can be experienced in smooth, level entrances without stairs, signs with strong visual contrast, and closed captioning and sound options for television shows.

Just as those design choices make interacting with the world more inclusive, UDL provides that same result for learning experiences. Essentially, UDL involves anticipating diverse learning needs from the outset and designing instruction to meet those diverse needs. Variability in UDL instructional design is the rule, not the exception.

The UDL principles are based on a three-network model of learning developed by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST):

- Multiple means of engagement: the methods that stimulate interest and motivation for learning
- Multiple means of representation: the different ways information and content are presented
- Multiple means of action and expression: provide multiple avenues for students to express or demonstrate what they know

When librarians create instruction sessions and learning objects using this model they give learners variety in engagement, representation, and action and expression

in everything created. This variety makes it more likely that librarians will be able to connect the ideas they teach with the widest possible audience. It also acts as a check on implicit assumptions and biases of what learning looks like that may be otherwise invisible.

Librarians use multiple means of engagement by utilizing both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation techniques. An example of motivating extrinsically would be teaching students that finding good citations makes for stronger papers and better grades – learning these skills will earn external validation. An intrinsic approach would be to teach that the student, as a scholar, wants the best information available to generate the best thoughts – here the validation comes from oneself.

Librarians use multiple means of representation by providing students with a variety of ways of learning the content, such as lecture, video, online tutorials, and active learning exercises – librarians mix and match these representations in a single session to engage the widest audience.

Librarians use multiple means of action and expression by allowing students to show their knowledge in different ways, such as verbally or in writing.

As Grand Valley changes and innovates, the way faculty teach in University Libraries also needs to continuously evolve. The three principles of UDL – engagement, representation, and action and expression – are important in all learning environments, but become increasingly significant in online and hybrid spaces where library instructors may not be able to respond to cues of engagement available in person-to-person instruction. Grand Valley State University's Strategic Plan specifically aims to have at least 30% of classes offered in innovative
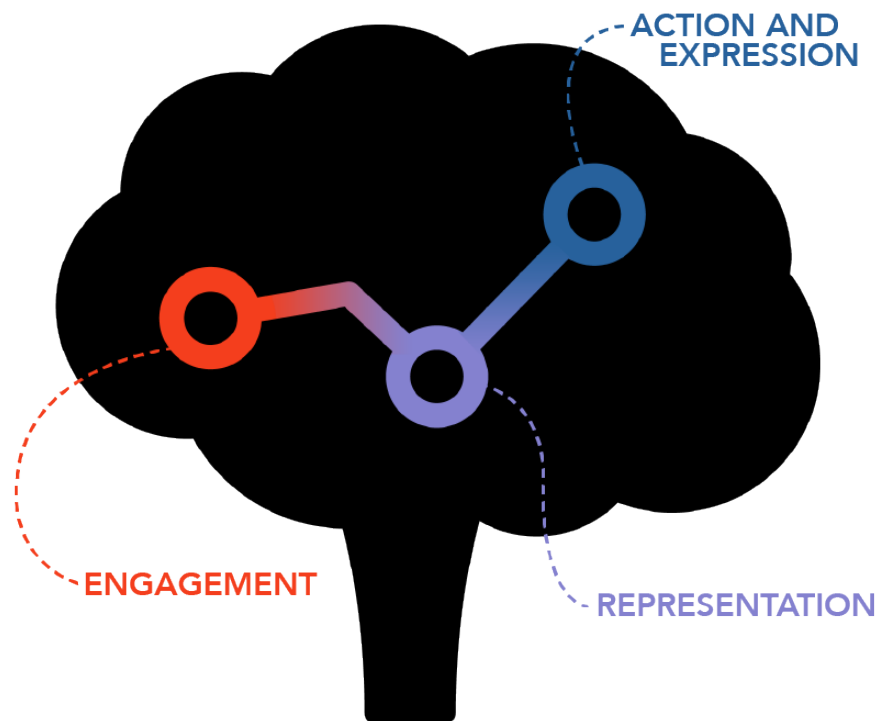
approaches and formats by 2021. As Grand Valley provides students with more online and hybrid course offerings, University Libraries is preparing to offer equitable support for all students regardless of what type of classes they are enrolled in. Implementing UDL principles in library instruction proactively prepares librarians to shift to online and hybrid environments.

University Libraries has set out in its strategic plan to "develop library instruction, resources, and support for hybrid and online courses." An Instructional Design Librarian was added to University Libraries in 2018. The position was created to support the effectiveness and inclusivity of our teaching as the University Libraries includes more online options to complement the tradition of in-person library instruction for which our librarians are well-known.

Some ways that University Libraries will use UDL as it continues to move into the

online space is by developing accessible online library resources, offering multiple means of instruction and consultations, and by providing a variety of resources that meet different learning styles and needs. Some features of accessible online library resources include using videos with closed captions, integrating multiple forms of media such as images, audio, and text, and inserting alternative text for images.

Using UDL principles in all forms of library instruction allows University Libraries to better serve the Grand Valley community. This instructional practice will provide all GVSU students with equitable and inclusive access to library services and resources, ensuring that all students will have quality support. Instructors interested in exploring how they might adapt library instruction into new online/hybrid environments are encouraged to reach out to their liaison librarian•

ACTION AND EXPRESSION

ENGAGEMENT

REPRESENTATION

Brain by Matt Wasser from the Noun Project