

Abi Morgan
Social Sciences
Librarian
Miami University

morgan55@miamioh.edu



Hybrid by Design: New Student Orientations and the Value of Asynchronicity

Stefanie Hilles
Arts and Humanities Librarian
Miami University
hillessa@miamioh.edu

Miami University Land Acknowledgement

Miami University is located within the traditional homelands of the Myaamia and Shawnee people, who along with other indigenous groups ceded these lands to the United States in the first Treaty of Greenville in 1795. The Miami people, whose name our university carries, were forcibly removed from these homelands in 1846.

In 1972, a relationship between Miami University and the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma began and evolved into a reciprocal partnership, including the creation of the Myaamia Center at Miami University in 2001. The work of the Myaamia Center serves the Miami Tribe community and is dedicated to the revitalization of Miami language and culture and to restoring that knowledge to the Myaamia people.

Miami University and the Miami Tribe are proud of this work and of the more than 140 Myaamia students who have attended Miami since 1991 through the Myaamia Heritage Award Program.

From more information on the Myaamia Center and Miami Tribe Relations, please see:
<https://www.miamioh.edu/miami-tribe-relations/index.html>

Myaamia Forced Removal in 1846



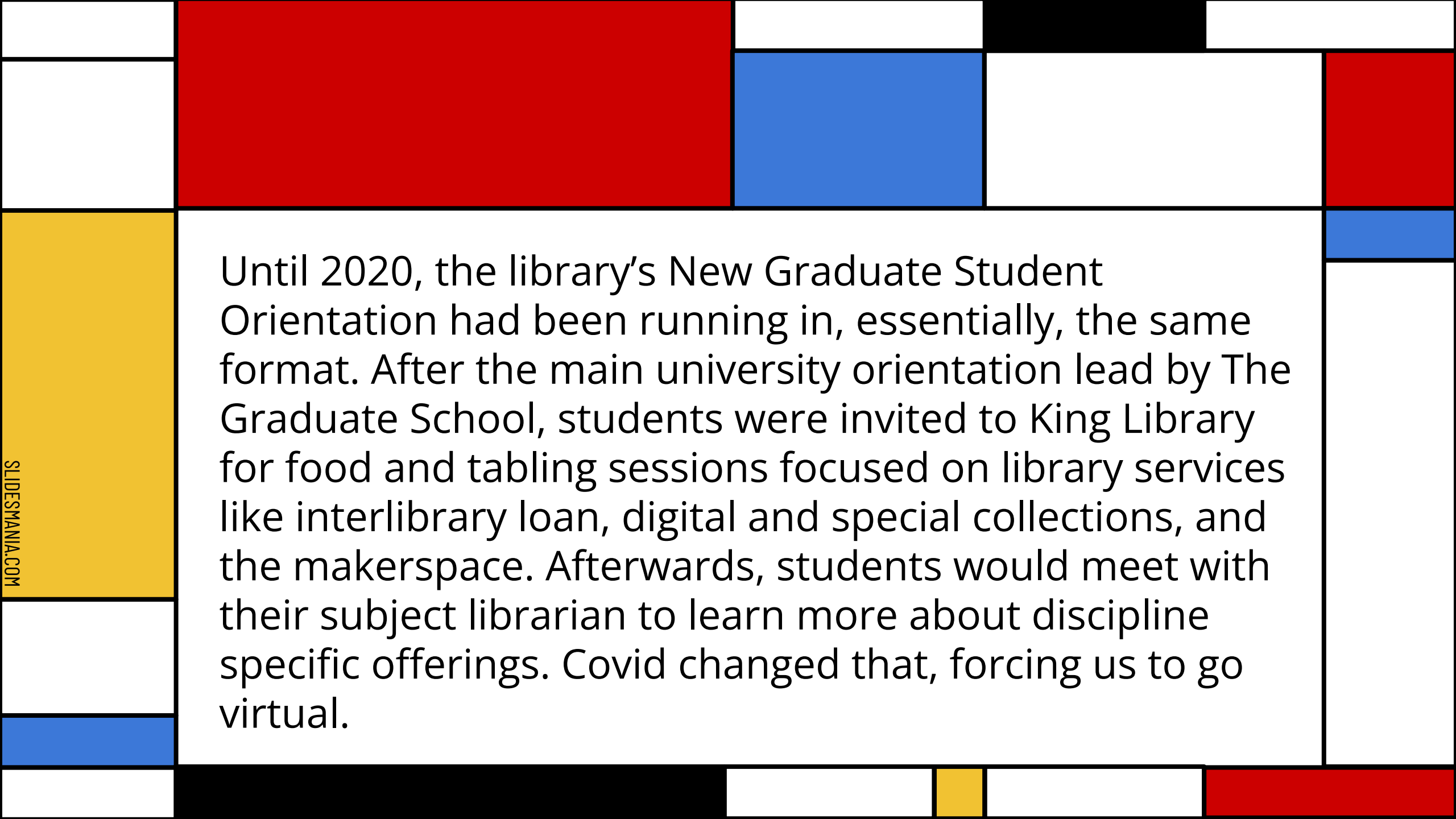
This material is based upon work assisted by a grant from the Department of Interior, National Park Service.

In this presentation we will discuss...

1. Challenges to moving New Graduate Student Orientation online in 2020
2. How (and why) we created a hybrid orientation in 2021
3. Should we continue asynchronous opportunities at new student orientations in a true post-pandemic environment?

New Graduate Student Orientation: The Pre-Covid Years...





Until 2020, the library's New Graduate Student Orientation had been running in, essentially, the same format. After the main university orientation lead by The Graduate School, students were invited to King Library for food and tabling sessions focused on library services like interlibrary loan, digital and special collections, and the makerspace. Afterwards, students would meet with their subject librarian to learn more about discipline specific offerings. Covid changed that, forcing us to go virtual.

2019 vs. 2020

What we kept

The essential format. The libraries' orientation followed The Graduate School's, began with tabling sessions, and ended with meeting subject librarians.

What we changed

The event was held virtually.

Students had the option to attend either synchronously or asynchronously online.

No food was offered.



2020

Began with virtual tabling sessions discussing library services in individual Webex rooms. Students were free to circulate amongst the rooms that interested them at their leisure. Afterwards, students met virtually with their subject librarian to learn about services specific to their discipline. Room meeting links were organized for students via a landing page created with LibGuides.

01

Challenges in 2020

Some challenges we faced including teaching staff how to use new video conferencing software to record accessible videos, collaborating with campus partners, and how to best present the event with existing learning management platforms and the library website.

Teaching Staff

Using new video conferencing software.

At the time, we were using Webex as an institution, which we found to be less user-friendly than Zoom.

Videos were recorded in Webex in August - meaning staff had only a few months to familiarize themselves with this complicated software.

Important to discuss precautions and responsive actions to take in case of bad actors.

Detailed instructions sent to presenters

NGSO Presenter Instructions

Hi NAME,

Thanks for presenting at New Grad Orientation this year. Just as a refresher, we are holding a virtual session Aug. 10 from 6-8pm, somewhat following the same format as previous years. We are planning this to be a synchronous session in order to preserve some of the welcoming atmosphere of our usual orientation sessions.

From 6:00-6:45pm we will have virtual tables that students can visit. Then from 7:00-7:45pm students can meet with their subject specialist.

Here is the slide template with wording from last year (when available) that can be updated as needed. Please feel free to add to it as you like.

Since we are thinking of these presentations as sort of a virtual poster session, you only need to prepare a short 5 minute talk.

Please make sure you make a recording of your presentation at some point so that we can share it for students who are not able to attend the synchronous session.

If you aren't a liaison librarian - You would be free to log off after the table session is over.

We will need the link to your WebEx room. [\[Insert instructions on how to find WebEx room\]](#)

We are having two test run sessions - Tuesday 8/4 from 11-noon or Thursday 8/6 from 2-3pm. Please plan to attend at least one session.

Thanks again for your help!

Collaborating with campus partners

The difficulties of planning an event in the summer of 2020

In summer 2020, uncertainty reigned. Campus was still closed, and fall plans were still forthcoming.

The Graduate School was also trying to navigate the transition as best they could and plans kept changing.

We had to move the event up by one week midway through planning when the university decided to start classes a week earlier.

Presenting the event

Overcoming the limitations of our platforms

We made significant updates to the Graduate School's Canvas page, which had a lot of outdated information.

We created an event-specific landing page separate from our normal Graduate Student services page. Special recognition needs to go to Meng Qu, our Web Services Librarian, who pulled the page together and made constant updates.

Miami Libraries ^{At}



The Library's presence on the Graduate School's Canvas course

The [Miami University Libraries](#) are here to support you through a wide variety of services. Whether you are on the Oxford, Hamilton, or Middletown campuses, the Miami University libraries are the place to go for research help, study space, and access to specialized software and technology.

The Libraries are [hosting an orientation for graduate students on Aug. 16 from 6-7pm](#). You can meet your subject librarian and learn about our services at a virtual table talk session. Find more information at [the event page](#).

Basic research help information is below. You can always refer to the library [Graduate Student Resources page for more](#).

Research Help

- Live Online Assistance (9:00am - 9:00pm Mon-Thu; 9-5pm Fri; 1-8pm Sun)
 - Go to the [Ask Us page](#) and type your question in the window.
- Text Message
 - Text your question to: 513-318-1318.
- In Person/Virtual Meeting
 - Schedule a meeting with [your subject specialist](#).



2020 landing page

August 10th from 6-8 p.m.

From 6-6:45pm we have virtual tables you can visit, please see the list of topics below.

From 7-7:45pm you can meet your subject librarian who will give you an overview on the many ways the Libraries can enhance your grad school success.

02

Our hybrid event in 2021.

We incorporated the lessons from 2020 into a hybrid orientation in 2021 and continued to use asynchronous recordings on an event landing page.

Why a Hybrid Event?

- We had a lot of the content made already.
- We wanted to be prepared for the unexpected with Covid.
- The university has increased its online graduate programs in recent years.
- We wanted to offer students who might not be comfortable attending in person, or who might not be able to attend for other reasons, an option.
- We understood that some of our international students might not be in the country due to Covid restrictions.

2020 vs. 2021

What we kept

Our work updating all the online information paid off since we didn't have to change much for 2021.

Landing page.

What we changed

The landing page only linked to pre-recorded videos or existing websites.

We didn't do any synchronous online sessions.

Added in-person library tour.

What did our hybrid event look like?

In-Person Orientation

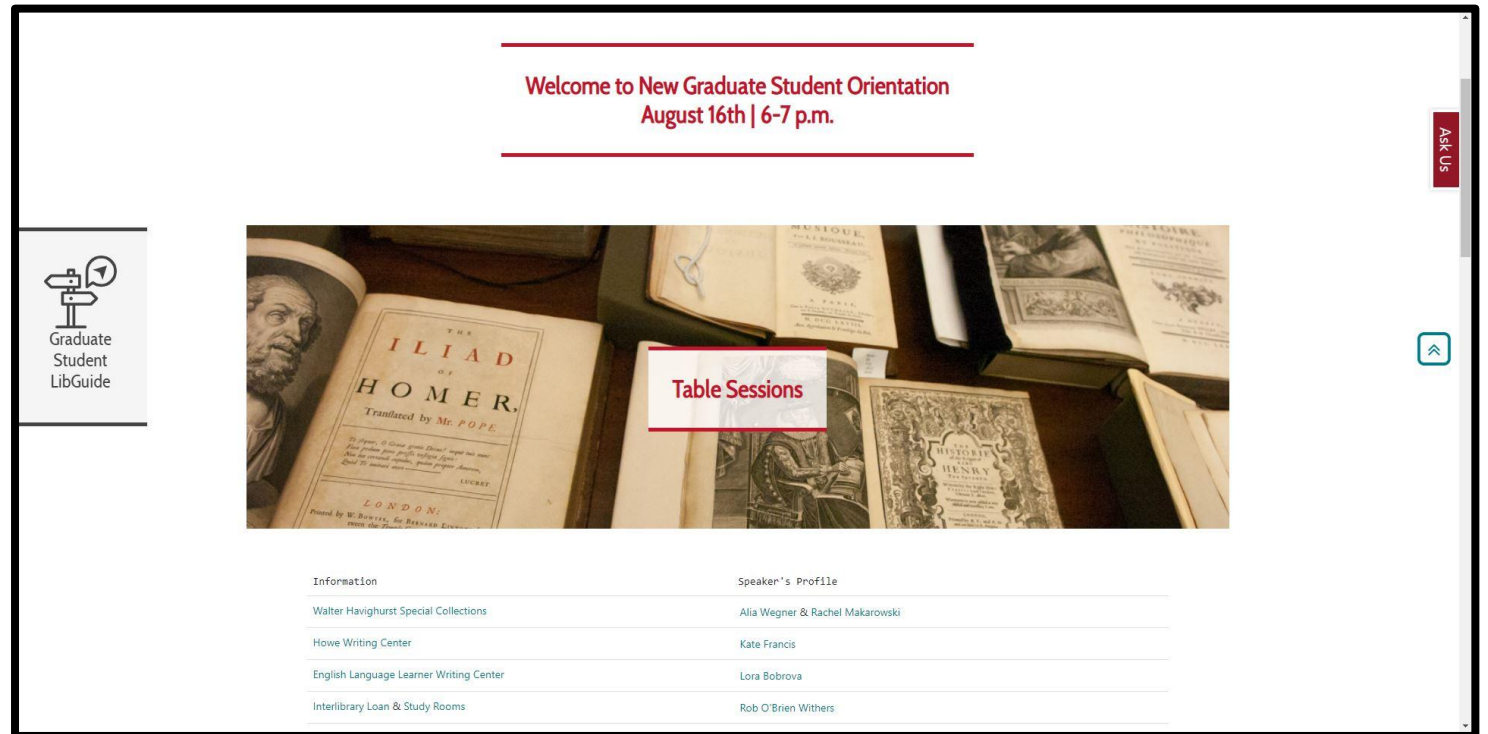
Traditional in-person event in our main lobby area. Food was provided as a to-go box rather than eaten at the event.



What did our hybrid event look like?

Online, Asynchronous Orientation

This landing page was very similar to the one we used in 2020. The biggest difference was that we didn't have synchronous tables or librarian sessions.



2021 landing page

<https://libguides.lib.miamioh.edu/grad-orientation>

03

Should we continue with online components?

What were the benefits of asynchronous orientation elements? What were the attendance outcomes from 2019 (in-person), 2020 (virtual), and 2021 (hybrid)? Which format produces the most student engagement?

Online elements

Benefits

- ❏ More accessible options for students not able to attend in person.
- ❏ More personalized than the regular Graduate Student services page.
- ❏ Less costly than in-person events.
- ❏ As more online graduate programs are added, these pages will be increasingly helpful.

Online elements

Drawbacks

- ❑ Requires significant coordination before the event with library staff, as well as troubleshooting technology difficulties.
- ❑ Students seemed reluctant to speak to librarians in drop in rooms, especially during the beginning portion when browsing library services at their leisure.

Attendance Figures

2019 - 150 synchronous participants

2020 - 54 synchronous participants; 542 landing page views

2021 - 127 synchronous participants; 77 landing page views

2019

150

2020

54

542

2021

127

77

Chart is for illustration only; not to scale

Was it worth it?

Ultimately, our asynchronous attendance numbers were much higher when classes were online. In fact, the total views on the landing page in 2020 were higher than what we typically see at an in person graduate student orientation. However numbers dipped online in 2021 when students had the option of attending in person.

Will we continue asynchronous elements of New Graduate Student Orientation in the future?

Although our asynchronous attendance numbers went down in 2021, we still had 77 students visit the landing page. That means we reached about 50% more students overall compared to 2019.

At this point, because all the asynchronous materials have been created it will be easy to reuse them and simply keep them updated every year.

Since we expect online graduate programs to increase at the university in the future, having a landing page to make them feel equally included in graduate student orientation is critical.

What are some of your pandemic orientation stories?

How did your libraries handle orientations during Covid? What were your successes and challenges?

Did you change your 2021 orientations in light of your 2020 experiences? How so? Will you keep these changes for future orientations?

Thank you!

We look forward to your questions
and discussion.



MIAMI
UNIVERSITY

OXFORD, OH • EST. 1809

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hillessa@miamioh.edu

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