TEACHING AND LEARNING

Going Virtual in a Time of COVID

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Business Reference Services (<https://www.loc.gov/rr/business/>), a part of the Science, Technology & Business Division of the Library of Congress, recently transformed its existing face-to-face Business Reference Orientation (BRO) into a virtual format when the Science and Business Reading Room (<https://www.loc.gov/rr/scitech/beforeyouvisit/beforeyouvisit.html>) closed to the public in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We began the transformation of BRO with a small team that met periodically using videoconferencing software in order to critically review the existing orientation presentation, which had been developed over the years by Business Reference Services staff. We considered it from a new perspective and reorganized it to work well in a virtual environment that emphasized our digital resources and excluded some on-site services. We regularly shared our work with fellow staff members in Business Reference Services and found their feedback invaluable as we went through this process. In response to staff suggestions, we spent a lot of time writing a natural-sounding script for the presentation and developed a chat box script to deliver important URLs and information to participants.

In our revised orientation, our team linked to existing digital content, such as our Using the Science and Business Reading Room video, Adams Building Storymap, and selected instructional videos (see Appendix A). Upon observing presentations from other Library of Congress divisions, we decided to adopt some of their methods of actively engaging participants, such as the use of an ice breaker, a poll to identify participants' research interests, and trivia to explain catalog searching concepts and promote digitized content (see Appendix B). We also exchanged information with other divisions engaged with virtual instruction about their processes in developing and presenting orientations and webinars. We learned from their experiences which were the best hours to offer virtual presentations in order to reach different audiences in various geographic locations. As a result, we decided to offer our sessions once every other month from 1:00 pm-2:00 pm EST.

We made the BRO slides, script, and chat script available to all reference librarians in our division in the hopes that elements of the presentation could be used as a template in developing future divisional presentations. In addition, we developed an internal workflow document to assist others in the process of developing new virtual classes; it covers items like using videoconferencing software, event management, and outreach activity details. The finished orientation can be viewed by registering for a free upcoming session of the Virtual Business Reference Orientation (<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-business-research-orientation-registration-127708649007>).

Appendix A

Existing Digital Content

Using the Science and Business Reading Room video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Jv8dm89P8M>

Adams Building Storymap

"A Handsome Box:" The Adams Building

<https://www.loc.gov/ghe/cascade/index.html?appid=269e0f33240d4ea7a06afd5484884356&bookmark=Introduction>

Library of Congress - Getting Started - Video Tutorials for Researchers

<https://www.loc.gov/rr/video-tutorials.html>

Appendix B

Engaging Participants

- The initial ice-breaker slide included a trivia question to engage users before the presentation began and get them to use chat.
- A poll was used to identify researchers' interests.
- There were two trivia questions featuring books to explain how to use the Library of Congress Online Catalog (<https://catalog.loc.gov/vwebv/searchAdvanced>).
- Finally, a trivia question was posed to highlight the Historic American Buildings Survey as a digital resource available freely through the Library of Congress (<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/>).