

Inclusivity by Design

Creating the Best Practices Checklist for One-Shot Library Instruction

Academic libraries increasingly serve diverse student populations with varying needs, backgrounds, and learning preferences. The William H. Hannon Library (WHHL) at Loyola Marymount University has committed itself to creating “a library where inclusivity is automatic,”¹ embedding diversity, equity, inclusivity, and anti-racism (DEIA) principles in collections, spaces, operations, and throughout all library work. In response to this institutional commitment and growing instructional challenges, the library prioritized, in its 2021–26 Strategic Plan, “Action 1.1.1: Directly integrate DEIA practices into information literacy instruction to enhance students’ critical information literacy skills.”

In 2022, the Reference & Instruction Department of the library began developing a practical checklist for incorporating DEIA concepts into library instruction. Rather than organizing by information literacy outcomes, which created artificial boundaries that fragmented interconnected concepts, we developed a tiered system. We require “Essential Practices” for every session, while we recommend “Enhanced Practices” that are more context specific. After three years of iterative development through our department meetings, we produced the *Best Practices Checklist for One-Shot Library Instruction*, providing librarians concrete, implementable strategies for inclusive instruction.

Development Process

Research Foundation and Timeline

In September 2022, we began tracking accommodation requests while conducting a systematic literature review of library science and education sources (2009–23).² This dual approach—theoretical research combined with practical experience—informed our framework over multiple academic years. The literature review incorporated peer-reviewed articles; books on information literacy through diversity, equity, and universal design for learning lenses; and conference presentations. Karin Heffernan’s “Loaded Questions: The Framework for Information Literacy through a DEI Lens,”³ proved particularly influential, reframing threshold concepts as open-ended questions that invite diverse voices. This prompted us to structure our checklist around reflective, equity-focused prompts rather than prescriptive criteria. Our experience tracking individual accommodations—such as

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providing preview materials and asynchronous recordings—revealed the need to systematize these practices, shifting from reactive accommodations to proactive Universal Design for Learning benefiting all students.

Collaborative Development and Refinement

Our development process included consultation with campus Disability Support Services and structured departmental review. Department members used color coding in shared Google Docs to identify essential practices, missing elements, and implementation concerns through small group breakouts. Key decisions emerged: Embed inclusive practices into existing instruction frameworks rather than create separate documentation and focus on “best practices rather than an exhaustive exercise” to ensure usability within one-shot time constraints. The checklist structure was organized chronologically to match natural preparation flow.

Implementation and Early Results

We presented the *Best Practices Checklist* at an all-staff library meeting, emphasizing its adaptability across departments. For example, public services staff can use the checklist for accessible communication and collection development librarians can incorporate diverse authors and content in their purchasing decisions. Our Archives & Special Collections colleagues began developing their own checklist using ours as a foundation, validating both the transferability of our approach and the broader applicability of embedding DEIA principles into existing workflows.

For our department’s implementation, we revised our library instruction request form to allow faculty to indicate additional demographic information and accessibility needs. However, implementation has revealed significant challenges. We need to be realistic about what we can do in one-shot instructions and how much authority and control we have in implementing these best practices.

Another challenge involves balancing the essential versus enhanced practices given time, workload, and session constraints. For example, converting existing PowerPoint materials to accessible versions requires significant time given workload demands and short turnaround times for instruction requests. We agreed to do our best in converting our existing presentation materials to accessible versions during the school year.

Best Practices Checklist for One-Shot Library Instruction

How to Use this Checklist

- ☐ ☒ *Essential Practices: Must-do items for every instruction session*
- ☒ *Enhanced Practices: Strongly recommended when time/context allows*

Pre-Session Information Gathering

Essential Practices

- ☐ Obtain student accommodation needs from the professor. Common needs may include:
 - extended time for tests/assignments
 - alternative testing environment
 - assistive technology
 - note-taking support
 - alternative formats for materials

- accessible seating
- captioning
- service animals
- breaks during class
- Obtain copy of research assignment and understand assignment context and requirements
- Know if session is in-person, online, or hybrid
- Take note of the professor's response on the library instruction form to whether there is additional information related to student demographics that will help you prepare (e.g., majors, transfer status, nontraditional, first-gen, needing additional language support)

Enhanced Practices

- Meet with professor prior to the session and/or after the session (zoom, phone, in person, or email)
- Obtain copy of syllabus
- Request sample topics from professor if applicable or review past student work samples
- Formative assessment such as prior knowledge survey or icebreaker activity to solicit from students their needs/interests before the session begins
- Librarian research on assignment topics
- Highlight related campus events/services (e.g., LMU Food Pantry if related to topics in the library session)
- Highlight related current events
- Highlight free resources beyond the limitations of paywalls for lifelong learning, when applicable

Materials & Access

Essential Practices

- Ensure all videos have captions, transcripts, and audio descriptions (e.g., describe the key visual elements of a video)
- Have clear plan for technology needs (laptops, software and tools access, internet access, device compatibility and availability, download storage needs); consult with ITS to verify accessibility compliance for any new or unfamiliar tools and software
- Create clear pathways in physical space
- Test all tools and links before session (e.g., for accessibility, compatibility, etc.)
- Use institutional slide template
- Ensure accessible design:
 - Sans serif fonts (no less than 16 pt for core content in presentations; prepare for even bigger font upon request)
 - Clear structure and adequate “white space” (negative space, no text or images).
 - High contrast color combinations with text and backgrounds
 - For regular text: minimum 4.5:1 contrast ratio
 - For large text (18pt+ or 14pt+ bold): minimum 3:1 contrast ratio
 - Alt text for all images
 - No flickering/flashing content (could trigger seizures or cause discomfort)
- Provide step-by-step instructions and images for procedural tasks (activities with many steps).
- Share materials/LibGuide/resource ahead via learning management system/faculty

- ☐ Enable auto-captions for virtual sessions (to provide real-time closed captions)
- ☐ Check volume/audio settings for in-person and virtual
- ☐ Confirm visible sightlines to presentation (no physical barriers)

Enhanced Practices

- Offer content in multiple formats (video, audio, plain text)
- Review website accessibility (WAVE tools)
- Arrange for microphone use when needed
- Ensure adequate lighting (sufficient brightness, glare reduction, dimming for presentations)
- Develop alternative activities for different learning preferences
- Visit classroom space beforehand if possible
- Prepare backup plans for technology issues
- Provide handouts in digital and print formats
- Create Course LibGuide if unique resources are highlighted that are not covered on the general subject LibGuide

Content & Search Instruction

Essential Practices

- ☐ Include diverse authors, perspectives, sources, and topics in order to connect to students' varied backgrounds
- ☐ Illustrate how paywalls and subscription models affect access

Enhanced Practices

- Demonstrate language support features in research tools to support multilingual students when relevant
- Include connectors/extensions/full text pathways and citation chasing tools like Lib Key Nomad and Google Scholar in instructional sessions
- Discuss bias in subject headings and controlled vocabulary when relevant to research topic (Example: “Illegal aliens” vs. “Undocumented immigrants”)
- If appropriate, advise that AI tools may contain biases and limitations, including potential misinformation or varying levels of source transparency
- Demonstrate different types of authority or alternative perspectives and voices beyond traditional academic sources when relevant:
 - Community-based information:
 - Local news media
 - Community/historical archives
 - Local government -domains like .CA
 - Local organizations
 - Local histories
 - Traditional & indigenous knowledge:
 - Oral histories
 - Indigenous knowledge systems (e.g., knowledge, practices, and beliefs that Indigenous peoples have developed over time)
 - Mention of local and national indigenous repositories (e.g., tribal archives)

- Professional & technical sources:
 - Professional/practitioner expertise
 - Highlight trade publications
 - Technical reports & working papers
 - Government documents
 - Other grey literature
- Discuss systemic barriers if relevant to research topic:
 - Language and geographic limitations
 - English dominance
 - Translation barriers
- Show how information access varies globally:
 - Examine inequalities between wealthy regions and regions with limited financial resources
 - Demonstrate impact of paywalls on global research access
 - Show how database coverage varies by region
- Research representation issues
 - Citation patterns favoring Western scholars
 - Clinical trials with limited demographic diversity
 - Gaps in whose experiences get studied
- Be transparent about search results when applicable:
 - Show how sponsored content appears first in search results
 - Demonstrate how database filters/limiters affect results
 - If using Google/social media: Note that everyone might see different results based on personalization (e.g., search history, location)

Teaching Strategies

Essential Practices

- ☐ Active learning or learning by doing (actively engage students in the learning process by having them participate in meaningful activities and think critically about what they are doing, instead of passively receiving information like in a traditional lecture). Examples could include:
 - Think-pair share (two students look at a news article, they discuss, and share something to the class)
 - Case-Based Learning- analyze and solve a case
- ☐ Share information in more than one way such as verbal explanations, written explanations, visual demonstrations, or multimedia
- ☐ Build on existing knowledge (provide reminders of past knowledge, use analogies, etc.)
- ☐ Build in processing time for all students (pause when speaking, speak slower). Also, be sure to allow extra time for language processing when applicable (e.g., ESL, International, new vocabulary)
- ☐ Provide scaffolded practice opportunities (e.g., break down complex tasks into smaller steps, modeling, modifying an assignment, guided practice, etc.)
- ☐ Allow time for questions and clarification
- ☐ Offer multiple participation options based on student comfort:
 - Verbal participation
 - Written responses

- Nonverbal signals
- Collaborative documents (Padlet, Google Docs) or online polling
- Working individually or with peers
- Working anonymously for sensitive topics

Enhanced Practices

- Offer various options for previewing materials or reviewing materials - (e.g., script in notes field of slides, AI generated notes, zoom recordings)
- Incorporate *ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*
- Integrate student-generated search terms/topics into presentation materials when possible
- Incorporate reflection into activities or assessments
- Use random selection for groups during peer learning to create a mix of perspectives
- Build in time for peer learning
- Create opportunities for student choice in activities when possible
- Include diverse guest expert perspectives when possible (e.g., short video clips)
- Prepare students for cold calling if used
- Formative assessment (e.g., Interactive Polls & Quizzes) to gauge understanding

Classroom Environment

Essential Practices

- ☐ Avoid gendered language when pronouns unknown
- ☐ Acknowledge all student contributions, even if not the answer you were looking for (e.g., I appreciate you sharing your personal experience on this topic; can anyone else share a different viewpoint?; this is a complex question with multiple valid answers)
- ☐ Create welcoming atmosphere:
 - Greet students as they enter
 - Introduce yourself clearly
 - Set positive tone

Enhanced Practices

- Use pronouns in introduction
- Practice using inclusive language consistently (e.g., name specific groups rather than “minorities”) For example, see APA’s *Inclusive Language Guide*⁴
- Avoid examples limited to a specific culture, subgroup, or generation (e.g., pop culture figure or historical figure) or be sure to explain them if present
- Have plan for addressing microaggressions (e.g., acknowledge the comment, state why it’s problematic, and redirect to the research focus; ask the professor for help on how to handle if needed)
- Address controversial or politicized topics respectfully:
 - Acknowledge different viewpoints exist
 - Maintain respectful discussion environment
 - Ask the professor for help/to intervene if necessary
- Consider student wellbeing:
 - For longer sessions, consider giving students breaks
 - Validate that research can be frustrating

Conclusion

To foster inclusive and equitable learning environments, libraries should actively incorporate DEIA principles into their instruction practices. We encourage other institutions to adapt or modify our checklist, which continues to evolve.⁵ Although the checklist was ultimately renamed due to the political climate, we maintain our commitment to inclusive practices. This practical tool guides librarians from preparing instruction to delivering it, empowering them to provide effective one-shot instruction while supporting students through learner-centered approaches. By fostering critical information literacy, we support lifelong learning and informed citizenship essential to a democratic society. ♪

Notes

1. William H. Hannon Library, "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Antiracism@ the Library," <https://library.lmu.edu/deia/>.
2. William H. Hannon Library Reference & Instruction Department, "DEIA and Library Instruction (WHHL)-Collaborative Bibliography," Zotero, created November 2022, https://www.zotero.org/groups/4862183/deia_and_library_instructionoutreach_whhl.
3. Karin Heffernan, "Loaded Questions: The Framework for Information Literacy through a DEI Lens," *College & Research Libraries News* 81, no. 8 (2020): 382–86, <https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.81.8.382>.
4. American Psychological Association, *Inclusive Language Guide*, 2nd ed. (2023), <https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/language-guidelines.pdf>.
5. William H. Hannon Library Reference & Instruction Department, "Best Practices Checklist for One-Shot Library Instruction" (2025), https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/librarian_pubs/165.