

Managed Chaos:

Training Library Assistants Made Easier

Dory Shaffer

Lake Superior Library Symposium

J.R. Van Pelt & Opie Library



Michigan Tech

Michigan Technological University



- 5,642 undergrads and 1,231 grads
- 71% of undergrads are male and 87% are white (*as of 2020*)
- 60% of undergrads are in the College of Engineering
- Institution is very focused on hands-on experiences and design thinking
- Student employees, as a part of our peer-to-peer reference system are a crucial part of our team



Michigan Technological University



- Who the heck am I?
- **Dory Shaffer**~ Education & Outreach Librarian
 - 5 years, over 10 years working in public and academic libraries all in the UP
- Work on or lead several teams instead of subject librarians
 - Key here is our reference services, including 7-9 grad and undergrad student reference assistants



What about you?

*What sort of library do you work in, and
what sort of employees do you supervise?
What challenges do you face?*



Session Outcomes

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

1. Evaluate what is causing training issues for your staff, especially in high turnover areas
2. Explore a potential training model and connect which portions would work best for you
3. Begin to critically integrate new training programs in your library



Plan of Attack

- Standards Activity
- About deficit thinking
- Our process for avoiding deficit thinking & examples
- Workshop a lesson of your own & share!



Okay, Let's Talk about Problems



Okay, Let's Talk about Problems

So what were my problems that I needed to redesign a whole training program???

Overkill much?



Okay, Let's Talk about Problems

- Employees are what we call Student Research Consultants (student reference assistants)
- Mix of undergrad and graduate students
 - Peer to peer learning!
 - Amazing students!
 - What could possibly go wrong....



CHAOS!!!!!!



Okay, Let's Talk about Problems

- Employees are what we call Student Research Consultants (student reference assistants)
- Mix of undergrad and graduate students
 - High turnover, inconsistent scheduling
 - Students have vastly different backgrounds
 - Every librarian is part of the reference team, and every librarian helps with training
 - This group had been put on the back burner post-covid
 - No one had time! How did they keep track of different student's progress???
 - All housed in a confusing, dated Canvas Course shell





Home

Modules

Grades

People

Discussions

Files

Outcomes

Syllabus

Announcements

BigBlueButton

Collaborations

Assignments

Quizzes

Pages

Rubrics

Ally Accessibility Report

SRC Training Program

Assign To

Edit



Import Existing Content

Import from Commons

Choose Home Page

View Course Stream

New Announcement

Course Analytics

View Course Notifications

SRCs play an essential role in our library. They:

- Serve as an initial point of contact in the library in person, via telephone, and through electronic means and provide directional information, basic reference services, and guidance in the identification of the best resources to complete assignments;
- Facilitate contacts with sources of expertise including the TAC staff, Circulation Desk staff, and librarians;
- Encourage fellow students to discover and apply the library's resources.

This training course consists of two progressive Tiers:

- Tier 1: Essentials
- Tier 2: Beyond the Essentials

Working through the tiers will help you build skills in **Customer Service**, **Resource Comprehension**, and **Library Navigation**.

Customer Service

This skill set is the most critical to the Student Research Consultant position.



To Do

- 3 **Grade Databases: Commonly Used**
 20 points • No Due Date
- 5 **Grade Building Navigation**
 8 points • No Due Date
- 3 **Grade LibGuides**
 6 points • No Due Date
- 3 **Grade Interlibrary Loan (ILL) - placing requests**

My Solution

- Ditch the Canvas course
- Do not reinvent the wheel–I started manageable and rewrote the [SRC Handbook](#) (this will be for all reference staff soon)



Hold Up!

**What Tech Do you
Have Available?**

My Solution

- New platform for training needed to be
 - Simple
 - Easy to access
 - Easy to update for all library staff
 - Simple to organize and keep organized
 - Bonus points for being library software employees should know anyway
 - Shareable
 - **SIMPLE**



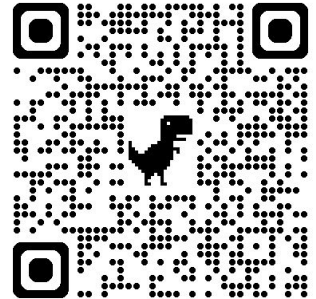
My Solution (a bit more complex)

- New Platform: LibGuide
 - Pulled some content from old training, but in the end substantially re-developed or newly developed most of it
- Utilize Google Drive, and Google Forms
- Streamlined sheets to keep track of training



My Solution Let's Take a Look!

- New Platform: [LibGuide](#)
 - Pulled some content from old training, but in the end substantially re-developed or newly developed most of it
- Utilize Google Drive, and Google Forms
- [Streamlined sheets](#) to keep track of training

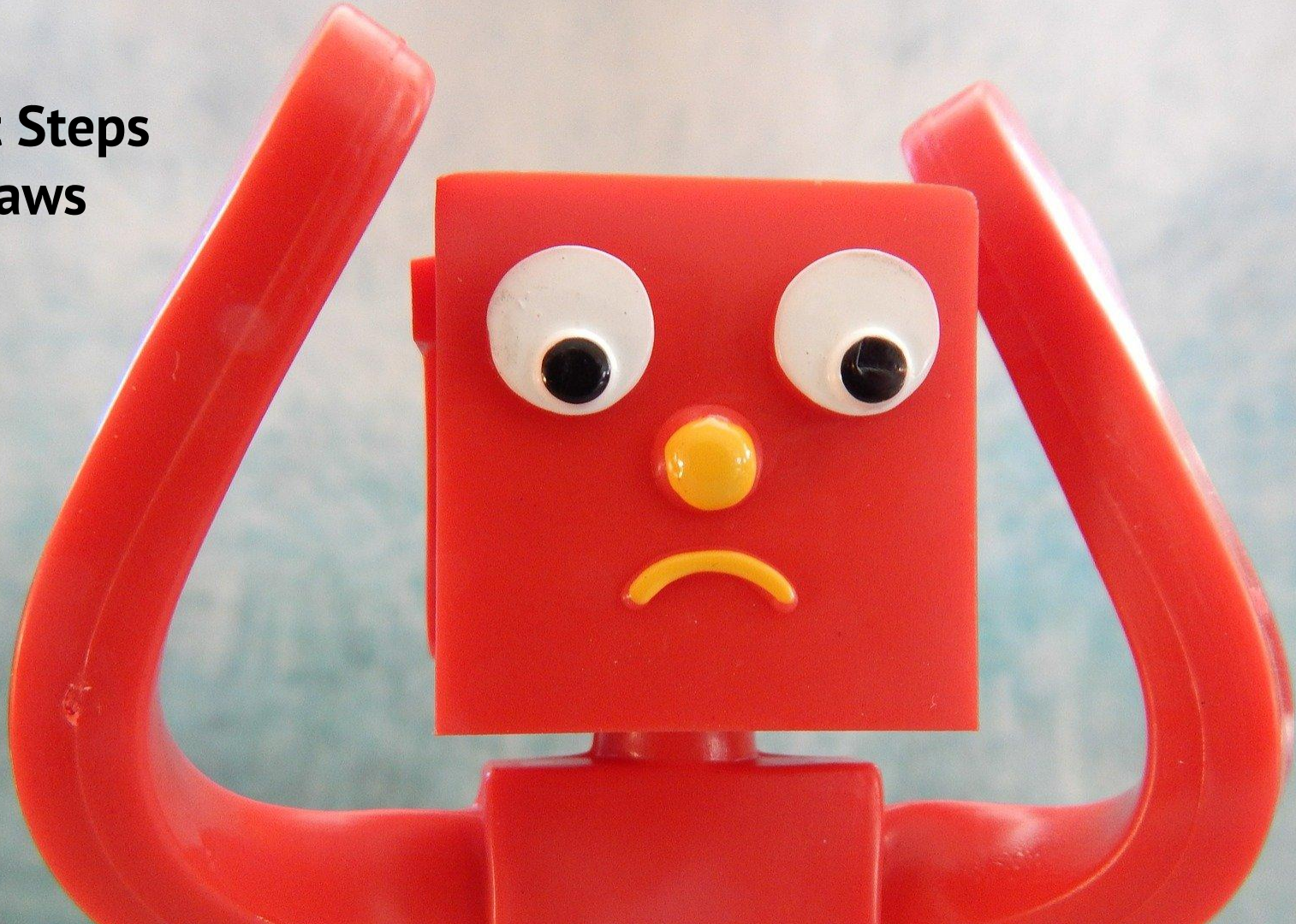


My Solution Let's Take a Look!

- New Emphasis on learning outcomes and teaching as the main tool when answering reference questions
- Expanded opportunities for senior or highly talented student employees to try different things
- Mixed asynchronous and synchronous training



Next Steps & Flaws



Next Steps

- Working with one of our scholarly communications librarians who specialize in OER to make this a training you can snag and adapt as your own!
- Always finding little mistakes–the library is constantly evolving
- Make this a seamless training tool for new reference librarians as well as SRCs



Questions? Ideas? Share Out!



Michigan Tech

Let's Talk

Dory Shaffer dmshaffe@mtu.edu

