



## ARTICLE

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# Intentionally Equitable: Translating the Universal Design for Learning Principles to Academic Library Outreach

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## ABSTRACT

Equity in student learning experiences is a key concern in academic libraries, yet there is a striking lack of literature and frameworks addressing equitable academic library outreach. This gap exists despite the important intersection of library outreach with student learning, success, and wellness across multiple university units. This paper addresses this challenge by examining Universal Design for Learning (UDL)—a standard increasingly accepted in academic libraries for promoting equity in information literacy instruction and pedagogy—for its potential applicability in the domain of library outreach.

Although originally intended for instructional contexts, the UDL principles are shown in this paper to be relevant to and practicable in library outreach initiatives. The paper reviews a selection of the literature on academic library outreach, accessibility, and equity, highlighting the need for more structured consideration of these critical areas. It also presents a detailed examination of UDL guidelines and checkpoints, providing outreach-related examples and short case studies from the author's own programming and outreach experiences that exemplify the effective application of UDL principles in library outreach.

This exploration not only extends the potential use of UDL beyond traditional instructional settings but also serves as a foundation for academic librarians and researchers to develop further and refine practices promoting equity, accessibility, and inclusivity in library outreach efforts.

## KEYWORDS

universal design for learning, academic library outreach, equity, accessibility, academic libraries

The American Library Association (ALA) clearly states on its "Jobs in Libraries" webpage that "outreach librarians strive to provide equitable delivery of library services to all people through the development of programs, policies, practices, and behaviors which make the library available to all people" (2016, para. 1). Equity is a word that ALA frequently uses to describe its mission, vision, and core functions of librarians, but equitable and accessible

outreach services, programs, and practices are seldom described in library and information science literature related to academic libraries. Discussions of equity and accessibility in academic libraries often mention Universal Design (UD) for spaces and general services and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for library instruction. UDL is becoming a widely accepted standard for information literacy instruction and pedagogy, as it helps to create equity in student learning experiences. However, student learning experiences are not limited to the library classroom; academic library outreach regularly intersects with student learning, success, and wellness on many levels and across multiple university units that are centered on student success and retention. Though there is the intent to be equitable in our services, it can be a challenge for academic librarians who are responsible for outreach to effectively and intentionally build equitable practices into their efforts because there is very little literature, few examples, and even fewer frameworks for equitable and accessible academic library outreach.

This paper will review a selection of the literature related to defining academic library outreach, accessible outreach, and equity in librarianship in an effort to demonstrate that there is a need to start considering how to make outreach more equitable and accessible intentionally. Though the UDL principles are typically meant for instructional contexts, more and more librarians are taking the core concepts of equitable design and applying them to other aspects of librarianship, such as outreach and marketing for open educational resources or leadership and management practices (Davis 2022; Harlow and Dale 2023). There is no reason that the UDL principles cannot be applied and translated to all forms of library outreach; after reviewing the literature, this paper will examine all the UDL guidelines and checkpoints and provide library outreach-related examples as well as a detailed example from the author's own programming and outreach experience that exemplify the application of UDL in outreach.

## **Literature Review**

### **Defining Academic Library Outreach**

The concept of academic library outreach is characterized by a lack of a clear, consensus definition, as evidenced by the diverse perspectives in the literature. Some consider outreach in a broad sense, encompassing various services, spaces, and resources of academic libraries (Bastone 2020; Carter and Seaman 2011; Farrell and Mastel 2016; Neely et al. 2000; Salamon 2016). Others, however, view outreach through a narrower lens, focusing on specific librarian roles such as reference services, research consultations, and instructional activities (Fontenot 2017; Meyers-Martin and Lampert 2013; Neely et al. 2000). A third viewpoint identifies outreach primarily as the library's engagement with the community, targeting underserved groups and non-users (Boff, Singer, and Stearns 2006; Cruickshank and Nowak 2001; Flash et al. 2017; German and LeMire 2018; Graves, LeMire, and Mastel 2018).

This diversity in understanding has led some to prioritize the definition of competencies over a unified definition of outreach. In this vein, Metzger and Jackson's 2022 work is notable for its development of eighteen competencies that encapsulate the skills, knowledge, and behaviors essential for successful outreach librarianship. These competencies, ranging from advocacy to technology, underscore the multifaceted and evolving nature of outreach roles in academic libraries. Diaz's (2019) comprehensive study attempts to consolidate various perspectives into a more unified understanding of outreach. Their concept analysis, while not providing a succinct definition, offers an in-depth description of outreach activities. They emphasize the adaptability and

responsiveness of outreach initiatives to the changing needs and dynamics of academic communities.

A critical observation the author noted in reviewing the literature is the relative absence of a clear focus on equity and accessibility in the discourse around academic library outreach. This gap suggests that while such values might be implicitly present in certain outreach competencies, there is a significant need for more deliberate and explicit exploration of how equity and accessibility can be integrated into outreach strategies. The competencies identified by Metzger and Jackson, particularly those related to advocacy, diversity, and user engagement, provide starting points for this exploration. Future research in this area could provide valuable insights into the nuanced ways equity and accessibility manifest within academic library outreach, contributing to a more inclusive and effective approach to serving diverse academic communities.

### **Equity and Accessibility in Outreach**

There is a fair amount of literature related to accessibility in academic libraries (Longmeier and Foster 2022; Pionke 2016, 2017; Remy, Seaman, and Polacek 2014; Samson 2011, to name a few) and there is a growing body of literature about equity in libraries (Bastone and Clement 2022; Battista et al. 2015; Folk 2019; Hodge 2019; Patin et al. 2020, 2021; Saunders 2017). However, there is almost nothing related to the equity and accessibility of outreach in academic libraries. The author was able to identify only one article that addressed the notion of accessible outreach.<sup>1</sup> Kevin M. O’Sullivan and Gia Alexander explore the concept of accessible and inclusive outreach for special collections libraries in their article, “Toward Inclusive Outreach: What Special Collections Can Learn from Disability Studies” (2020). O’Sullivan and Alexander call attention to the need for special collections librarians to amplify the conversation about equality and diversity specifically in special collections libraries, noting that “while the updated Code of Ethics marks significant progress, it is clear that there remains a critical lack of awareness regarding the needs of persons with disabilities among special collections practitioners, particular in the area of outreach and instruction” (2020, 16). While O’Sullivan and Alexander’s article is a step in the right direction towards the creation and promotion of inclusive and accessible outreach—which brings us closer to equitable outreach—it is clear that much of the outreach they describe equates to instruction-related activities. For the purposes of this paper, the author is excluding instruction as an outreach activity because there is a growing body of literature about equitable and accessible instruction, whereas there are very few works about equitable and accessible non-instruction outreach in academic libraries.

### **Universal Design for Learning**

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has become a common framework for librarians to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of their information literacy instruction and pedagogy. Developed by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), UDL is “. . . a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn” (CAST 2023a). The UDL principles help instructors design learning environments that account for individual variability so that all learners have the option and flexibility to take control over how they learn in order to optimize their experience. Based on a

<sup>1</sup> Databases searched included Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA); Library Science Database (ProQuest); Information Science & Technology Abstracts; Information Science and Library Issues Collection (Gale); Academic Search Ultimate. Keywords: “academic libraries” AND “outreach” AND “accessibility.”

foundational set of more than eight hundred peer-reviewed research articles, the UDL principles provide a series of benchmarks and checkpoints for educators to help them center the learner and implement UDL in their curriculums (CAST 2023a). At its core, UDL works to minimize some of the barriers that are inherent to education while increasing opportunities to learn. Many academic librarians, including this author, have incorporated the UDL principles and adapted them as necessary into their information literacy pedagogy and practice of librarianship (Chodock and Dolinger 2009; Coyne et al. 2012; Daniel 2015; Hays and Handler 2020; Hoover, Nall, and Willis 2013; Peter and Clement 2020; Webb and Hoover 2015; Whitver 2020; Zhong 2012). Some point out that incorporating UDL into information literacy instruction can be overwhelming and the best course of action is to take small steps and make slow changes. Peter and Clement share their experiences with incorporating UDL into their information literacy instruction sessions and explore the challenge of wanting to do too much too fast: “Overcoming those challenges meant taking every change one step at a time, mastering a technique before moving on, and developing a community at our university to encourage growth” (2020, 37). They took inventory of their information literacy instruction sessions and identified a few places where their practice could be more equitable to start with. This is exactly what librarians should do to start incorporating inclusive and equitable practices into academic library outreach. UDL has proved effective and useful for bringing more equity into information literacy instruction, so why not also for non-instruction-related outreach activities?

## **UDL<sup>2</sup> Translated for Outreach**

As mentioned previously, there are a handful of librarians who have taken the UDL guidelines and transformed them into non-instruction sectors of academic librarianship. This paper aims to take the UDL guidelines and imagine examples of what their application might look like for academic library outreach that is not instruction-based. The following tables take each of the principles, their guidelines, and individual checkpoints, and provide a library outreach-related example. Some of the examples are quite specific while others are less so; this is intentional to help librarians imagine beyond the examples. UDL can be applied to academic library outreach in countless ways, and it is not the intention of this author to provide definitive ways of how UDL should be incorporated into outreach. The original tables were created by Peter and Clement (2021) and designed to provide library instruction-related examples for each UDL principle, guideline, and checkpoint. They were licensed under a Creative Commons 2.0 CC-BY license, and these new tables are licensed under the same attribution. It should be noted that no one is expected to implement each and every one of the three principles, their guidelines, and checkpoints. The UDL framework is meant to be a pick-and-choose model in which practitioners can decide for themselves which elements make the most sense to implement. Some guidelines may be especially relevant for certain outreach activities, and not for others. Choose wisely and start making your outreach more accessible to all by taking small steps that have the potential for a large impact.

### **Multiple Means of Engagement**

Student engagement does not happen solely in the academic classroom; engagement takes many co-curricular forms across the university, including interaction with and use of the academic library. Multiple Means of Engagement

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<sup>2</sup> The application of UDL guidelines described in this paper is based on the UDL Guidelines 2.0. CAST released the UDL Guidelines 3.0 on July 30, 2024.

focuses on the different ways in which people are motivated to learn, which in turn influences why they engage with content, experiences, people, and resources. This principle, together with its guidelines and checkpoints, encourages librarians to consider multiple ways to engage users in outreach activities, events, and programs by providing multiple options, as there is no one means of engagement that will motivate everyone. Table 1 provides an overview of all the guidelines and checkpoints for Multiple Means of Engagement with definitions and library outreach-related examples.

Guideline	Checkpoint	Definition	Library outreach related example
Options for recruiting interest	Optimize individual choice and autonomy.	Provide options for various things, such as level of perceived challenge, tools used for information gathering, and learning objects.	Give users options for <b>how they will interact with your outreach initiative</b> . For example, if you are hosting an information table, you can provide <b>paper handouts</b> or use a <b>QR code</b> to get digital copies of the materials.  You can even have a space where users can collect the information <b>without having to speak with anyone</b> .
	Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity.	Find ways to make the content relevant and valuable to the students while still being authentic.	If your outreach is specific to a group of users (i.e., first-generation, first-year, graduate students, international students, faculty, etc.), <b>take the time to investigate what they might need to know about your library that others might not</b> . Connect with student groups, student success units, and other campus groups to do an environmental scan and/or needs assessment.  <b>This is especially important if you do not identify as part of the group for whom you are doing the programming.</b>
	Minimize threats and distractions.	Create a safe space for the students that helps them avoid having a negative and/or distracting experience.	There are many ways that we can do this in regard to outreach programs. One simple way could be <b>introducing yourself with your preferred pronouns</b> to indicate that this is an inclusive space when the program starts.  You can also pay attention to the amount of sensory stimulation that might be involved with your program or event, and either <b>work to provide options for engagement that minimize overstimulation or provide content warnings that describe the sensory level</b> .

Guideline	Checkpoint	Definition	Library outreach related example
Options for sustaining effort and persistence	Heighten salience of goals and objectives.	Build in periodic reminders of the goals and objectives to sustain concentration and focus.	<p>Use your <b>marketing materials and public relations</b> to highlight the <b>goals and objectives of your outreach programming and events</b> and be concise.</p> <p>During the event, if it is relevant, you can provide a <b>brief overview in a variety of ways (written, spoken, digital), to reiterate the goals of the event</b> to users who attend your programming and events.</p>
	Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge.	Students need to be challenged, but not always in the same way because they vary in their skills and abilities.	<p>Since many outreach activities and programs are not about producing student work, this one can be difficult to translate, but not impossible</p> <p>Provide users with <b>opportunities to engage with the event or program on multiple levels that vary the degree of complexity.</b> For example, if you are hosting an international coffee house in partnership with the International Student Programs, provide options for users that range from simply attending for the free coffee and snacks to <b>more complex options</b> such as learning about the featured culture through book displays, informational materials, and individuals with whom users can engage in conversation.</p> <p><b>This is particularly useful for recurring events, where users may scale up their desire to engage further should they become repeat attendees.</b></p>
	Foster collaboration and community.	Provide flexible options for students to work in groups to help them learn how to work effectively with others.	<p>Provide some options for outreach that are <b>specifically targeted towards building community, and make it clear through marketing and public relations that community and collaboration are key outcomes for the event.</b> For events that encourage collaboration and community, build in time for participants to engage with one another in meaningful ways. For example, if you run a book club, <b>break the larger group into smaller sub-discussion groups to encourage cooperative learning.</b></p>

Guideline	Checkpoint	Definition	Library outreach related example
	Increase mastery-oriented feedback.	Use assessment strategically to give students the feedback they need to help them stay motivated to learn.	There are many ways that we assess the effectiveness of our outreach but <b>consider developing small assessment checkpoints throughout the outreach event or program.</b> This is highly dependent on the type of outreach program, but it can be as simple as mingling with attendees and asking them how they are enjoying the event. For example, if you bring in therapy pets to the library for a wellness event, you could chat with users and ask how they feel after spending time with the therapy pet.
Options for self-regulation	Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation.	Let students set personal goals that are attainable in the time allowed.	<p>This one is also difficult to translate into library outreach, but not impossible. <b>We can actually use outreach activities to learn more about what our users find motivating and help them self-reflect on the event or program they attended.</b></p> <p>Try putting out a whiteboard at your outreach event or program that asks participants to answer a brief question about the event. A good option is "What was the best thing you learned today?" or "What do you still want to know after today?"</p>
	Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies.	Consider students' need to cope with anxiety-inducing social situations.	<p>Library anxiety is a real and present issue for many users, and we can use library outreach to help alleviate library anxiety. <b>Meet-and-greet events with research librarians can lessen the anxiety some users may have over asking for research help.</b></p> <p>Events that allow users to engage with the library for reasons outside of coursework can help them cope with any anxiety they may feel in asking for help.</p>

Guideline	Checkpoint	Definition	Library outreach related example
	Develop self-assessment and reflection.	Find creative ways for students to recognize their own progress.	When appropriate, provide items or handouts that users can take away from the outreach event or program, such as a one-pager on whom to contact about what in the library, or a swag giveaway that is useful in everyday life and branded with the library logo and/or website. <b>Continual reminders that the library exists and is here for users can be useful in helping users progress successfully through their academic studies.</b>

Table 1: Guidelines, checkpoints, definitions, and library outreach-related examples of the Universal Design for Learning Principle, Multiple Means of Engagement. Adapted from: (CAST 2023b; Peter and Clement 2021). Attribution 2.0 CC-BY.

**UDL For Outreach in Practice: Bash in the Stacks**

Outreach events at Kennesaw State University (KSU) are often framed as fun or recreational events rather than academic ones to entice students to participate. Students are encouraged to have fun, but there are also options for learning embedded into all outreach events which the students can elect (or decline) to take advantage of. A prime example of incorporating UDL into an outreach event took place in fall 2022: Each year, KSU hosts the “Weeks of Welcome” over the course of three weeks surrounding the first week of classes. During this event, the KSU Libraries throws a “Bash in the Stacks to welcome students to the library. The event is meant to be fun—there are oversized games, a photo booth, a large table with an assortment of snacks, a magician, and sometimes even a therapy dog. Students are drawn in by the entertainment, but there are learning opportunities embedded throughout the event. The magician is one of our instruction librarians, and he connects the close-up magic that he performs to the skill and knowledge of librarians who can help students navigate library resources. Librarians and library staff oversee the games, the snack table, and the photo booth, helping students not only with the activities but also providing library information as they chat with participants about their Weeks of Welcome experience. As they enter the event, students are encouraged to collect tickets at each activity to get a prize before they leave. Each of the tickets features a library service and has a scannable QR code linking the student directly to the service. The tickets also double as bookmarks, so students are encouraged to keep them and use them. We ask the students to take a survey as they leave, and in fall 2022 we added a whiteboard and encouraged students to write the best thing they learned about the library during the event. Students typically provide a variety of answers ranging from observations about the fun they had to more meaningful reflections about the information they learned about the library. This was an unintentional application of UDL in an outreach event. Whiteboards are used for many outreach events at the KSU Libraries, and it was only in retrospect that we realized providing students an opportunity to self-regulate throughout the event and to self-reflect on the event by answering a whiteboard prompt is an effective way to incorporate UDL into an outreach activity that allows for Multiple Means of Engagement.

**Multiple Means of Representation**

Users—regardless of whether they need accommodations in their academic endeavors—approach, perceive, and comprehend information in different



ways that help them better understand what they are learning. This principle encourages librarians to consider multiple ways of presenting outreach content; its guidelines and checkpoints describe options for the representation of information. Table 2 provides an overview of all the guidelines and checkpoints for Multiple Means of Representation with definitions and library outreach-related examples.

Guideline	Checkpoint	Definition	Library outreach related example
<b>Options for perception</b>	Offer ways of customizing the display of information.	Digital materials provide more flexibility in displaying information that is otherwise static in traditional print.	Provide users with a <b>variety of ways to access the content provided in your outreach initiatives, wherever possible.</b> If you have handouts for an information session, also provide an <b>editable, digital copy so that participants are given the option to adjust things like font size, image size, and colors.</b> Digital copies are most easily distributed with a QR code or shortened link.
	Offer alternatives for auditory information.	Consider options for presenting information, including that presented aurally.	If you are showing video clips as a part of outreach programming, or you are recording something so others can view it later, <b>make sure that the videos have clear captions, or provide a transcript if possible.</b> Additionally, if available, <b>always use a microphone to amplify your voice.</b>
	Offer alternatives for visual information.	Visual representations are not always equally accessible; provide a non-visual option.	The simplest way to offer alternatives to visual information is to use <b>alt-text on any visual and digital materials</b> (PowerPoint slides, handouts, etc.). Using alt-text will also <b>make accessibility software, such as screen readers, work better for those who may need them.</b>

Guideline	Checkpoint	Definition	Library outreach related example
Options for language and symbols	Clarify vocabulary and symbols.	Use a combination of words, symbols, numbers, and icons to represent content in different ways.	<p>If you like to use icons/symbols instead of words or numbers in your outreach or marketing materials, <b>consider adding alternative text descriptions for symbols or provide alternative materials that explain the same things, but in different ways.</b></p> <p>This may not be possible in all cases and may detract from the point of concise materials and marketing, but try to be as considerate as possible. <b>Symbols that are familiar to academia and librarians might not be as readily familiar to students and other users, especially first-generation students.</b></p>
	Clarify syntax and structure.	Provide alternative representations of the content that can help clarify or make more explicit syntax and structure.	<p>There is a lot of jargon in the worlds of higher education and academic libraries. <b>Any time you plan an event, design a marketing campaign, or create targeted outreach to a particular group, consider ways to reduce or explain jargon.</b></p> <p>For example, if you are launching a “Did You Know...” social media campaign about library services, spaces, or resources, <b>make sure you explain concepts that might seem simple to you, a librarian, but might be mystifying to a low- or non-user</b> (e.g., for a post about how to find a book in the stacks, either explain what “stacks” are, or use a synonym or a visual representation).</p>
	Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols.	Make sure text and symbols don’t get in the way of the learning goals.	<p>This checkpoint may be most useful to outreach librarians who are putting together programs or events for particular disciplines. Students in disciplines such as math, science, and engineering, may discover that scholarly articles contain formulas, equations, and symbols specific to those fields. <b>Be prepared to provide assistive technology</b> (if your library has it) that could help them with text-to-speech to decode these things.</p>

Guideline	Checkpoint	Definition	Library outreach related example
	Promote understanding across languages.	Be prepared to use translations or descriptions of materials for other languages.	<p>If possible, <b>take all the key information from your outreach and make it available in other languages that are most common at your institution.</b> Or encourage your program attendees to let you know if they need a translation and assure them you will do your best to get them one.</p> <p>Providing outreach in multiple languages (or the option for multiple languages) can create a more inclusive and comfortable environment for users who do not speak English as their first language.</p>
	Illustrate through multiple media.	Use simulations, graphics, activities, videos, etc.	<b>Use a combination of text, diagrams, illustrations, videos, images, charts, etc.,</b> in your outreach materials to make the information you are presenting more comprehensible to users who may not learn as well from text alone.
<b>Options for comprehension</b>	Activate or supply background knowledge.	Build connections to prior understandings and experiences.	<p>It can be useful to consider the students' experiences at certain times of the academic year in their classes (e.g., midterms, finals), in their social calendars (e.g., major university sporting events, university social events, student club events), and community events.</p> <p><b>Knowing what is going on in the lives of your users can help inform your outreach and connect it to happenings that might be important or tangential.</b> It can also help you plan events better by not conflicting with major university dates.</p>

**Intentionally  
Equitable: Translating  
the Universal  
Design for Learning  
Principles to  
Academic Library  
Outreach, *continued***

Guideline	Checkpoint	Definition	Library outreach related example
	Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships.	Emphasize the important information and connect it to the learning goals.	<p>Academic outreach librarians may or may not write specific learning goals for outreach events and programming (though it is highly recommended). If you do, you can be <b>overt in ensuring your participants realize there are learning goals and objectives for your outreach.</b></p> <p>For example, if you regularly host a pop-up library in different locations around campus, <b>one of your learning goals may be that users who engage with you will understand how to book a research consultation when they leave.</b> It would be perfectly acceptable to display an easy-to-read sign that illustrates how to book a research consultation in three easy steps.</p> <p>You could also duplicate the sign as a handout that users can take with them. This may be more passive, but not all learning is active, nor is all outreach active.</p>
	Guide information processing and visualization.	Use well-designed materials to help students process the content.	<p>If presenting a workshop or event that requires instruction, <b>give explicit instructions (verbally and written) and/or diagram the steps visually.</b></p> <p>For example, if you are hosting a Coffee with a Librarian event and you want users to rotate through the different librarians' stations, make that clear in multiple ways: written and visible, verbal instructions repeated often, and a diagram of the flow of the room.</p>

Guideline	Checkpoint	Definition	Library outreach related example
	Maximize transfer and generalization.	Help students apply what they learned to the bigger picture.	<p>This one feels harder to imagine for outreach because <b>not all outreach events allow time for participants to demonstrate what they have learned, such as they often do in the classroom.</b></p> <p>One simple way to help participants connect what they are learning at your outreach event is to talk to them, should the event allow it. <b>A short, informal conversation with a student who attends an information fair can tell you a lot about how they intend to use the information you've given them, as well as give you ideas about how to improve in the future.</b> Asking questions is also a great way to help users connect what is happening at your event to other aspects of their lives.</p>

Table 2: Guidelines, checkpoints, definitions, and library outreach-related examples of the Universal Design for Learning Principle, Multiple Means of Representation. Adapted from: (CAST 2023b; Peter and Clement 2021). Attribution 2.0 CC-BY.

### UDL For Outreach in Practice: The Nite Owl Writing Sprint

In the fall of 2022, the KSU Libraries co-hosted an event with the KSU Writing Center called the “Nite Owl Writing Sprint.” It was an event held in the library where students could get help with their papers from two student success services: research help from librarians and writing help from writing center consultants. Typically, students have to book two separate appointments at two separate locations to get research help and writing help; this event sought to bring the two services together for an evening, just before final papers were due. All services were drop-in and librarians and writing center consultants staffed the event from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. Students were encouraged to stay in the space to write and ask for help when they needed it. To organize the event, a workflow was designed. First, students would fill out an intake form to give details about the assignment with which they needed assistance. Then, based on the intake form, the students would be recommended to see either a librarian or a writing center consultant. The librarian or writing center consultant would fill out a designated portion of the intake form to record their interactions with the students. Finally, students were instructed to turn in their intake forms at the check-in table when they left the event. Because this event workflow was rather complex, a slide deck was designed to run on a loop in the event room to remind students and staff members of the workflow they should follow. In addition to having the slide deck repeating throughout the event, the library staff member at the check-in desk was trained to verbally explain the flow of the event to incoming students, and the intake form was designed to help guide students, librarians, and writing center consultants through the intended flow of the event. With the intentional use of UDL concepts, the event gave all participants options for comprehension to help guide information processing and visualization by providing everyone involved with multiple ways to

understand the intent and flow. This was an effective way to incorporate UDL into an outreach activity that allows for Multiple Means of Representation.

### **Multiple Means of Action and Expression**

How users navigate learning environments will vary from person to person. It is important to take into consideration the physicality of outreach activities, events, and programs because individuals with movement impairments (whether visible or not) may need to or prefer to approach your programming in different ways. This principle, along with its guidelines and checkpoints, encourages librarians to consider all types of abilities (not just movement, but also verbal and abilities that deal with executive functions) when designing outreach because there is no one means of action and expression that will work for all learners. Table 3 provides an overview of all the guidelines and checkpoints for Multiple Means of Action and Expression with definitions and library outreach-related examples.

<b>Guideline</b>	<b>Checkpoint</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Library outreach related example</b>
<b>Options for physical action</b>	Vary the methods for response and navigation.	Consider using a variety of tools and methods that make the content physically accessible for all students.	Provide a variety of ways that users can participate in outreach activities or events. <b>If you are hosting a Get to Know the Library event wherein users are expected to walk around the library, you might consider having an option for a non-physical way to participate, such as a virtual option (LibGuide, video, or tutorial, for example).</b>
	Optimize access to tools and to assistive technologies.	Facilitate access to assistive technologies for those students who need them.	Familiarize yourself with the <b>assistive technology your library has available to users.</b> If you don't have any available, try providing multiple ways for users to engage with the outreach using what you do have or what is freely available online. You may have to do some research and get creative.
<b>Options for expression and communication</b>	Use multiple media for communication.	Express learning in flexible ways.	Keep public copies of all your outreach materials (marketing materials, information documents, photos, presentations, etc.) in one central, digitally accessible place such as your institutional repository (if you have one), or the cloud storage option provided by your institution. <b>Whenever you host outreach events or activities, provide a link to the digital copies to participants so they can view the items on their own time and at their own pace.</b>  You can also link to this resource on your library website so that any and all users will have the opportunity to engage with your efforts in flexible ways, at times that work for them.

Guideline	Checkpoint	Definition	Library outreach related example
	Use multiple tools for construction and composition.	Provide alternative media options to reduce barriers to those with different learning styles.	<p>While this checkpoint mostly applies to written work that students do in the classroom, it still holds relevance for library outreach activities and events that involve asking participants to participate through writing.</p> <p><b>If your event involves any kind of written activity or written feedback, provide different options for producing the requested content, such as paper copies, digital copies, and/or digital forms.</b></p>
	Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance.	Use scaffolding to help students practice what they learned and develop deeper skills.	<p>There are many ways to build scaffolding into outreach activities and events, though it might feel more natural for events that are iterative or work to build skill sets over a series of workshops or programs.</p> <p><b>For example, if you are running an Adulting 101 series with various campus partners, work with them to structure the sessions so that they build on one another. Use that structure as a selling point to make it more interesting and purpose-driven to your target audience.</b></p>
<b>Options for executive functions</b>	Guide appropriate goal setting.	Let students practice setting challenging and authentic goals	<p>This checkpoint might be more useful if you frame it as goal setting for your outreach activities or events instead of goal setting for the users who attend. This is especially useful for passive or asynchronous outreach.</p> <p><b>Try setting a few goals for your outreach activities and events that scale up in terms of what you want users to walk away with after they attend.</b> Some users will engage lightly and meet only one or two of your goals, while others may engage more deeply and walk away with a richer experience and better retention of the information.</p>

Guideline	Checkpoint	Definition	Library outreach related example
	Support planning and strategy development.	Have the students try to formulate reasonable plans for reaching their goals.	<p>When appropriate, build in small checkpoints during your outreach activities and events where you can <b>have the users stop and think about what they have learned and connect it to the overarching goals of their courses and/or their whole college career.</b></p> <p>For example, if you are hosting an information session about the library, <b>you could ask a student who stops by your table how they think they will use the library to help them succeed in their courses.</b> This will allow them to consider the information you have given them and connect it to the bigger picture.</p>
	Facilitate managing information and resources.	Support organization and memory using flexible tools and processes.	<p>Students have a lot going on in their lives, and remembering how to use the library or what services the library offers is probably not high on their priority list. To help them mentally connect the library to their academic efforts, provide <b>a variety of takeaways for students at your outreach activities or events. This can range from informational handouts to fun giveaways that prominently feature the library logo or website.</b> If you are doing fun giveaways, make sure to consider the utility of the items. The more useful it would be to the students' everyday life, the more likely they are to use it on a regular basis and see that library logo and website.</p>
	Enhance capacity for monitoring progress.	Analyze growth over time and how to build from it.	<p>This checkpoint may be better translated for the librarian's growth than for the user's, but will still benefit outreach attendees. <b>Assessment of our outreach activities and events is important to the growth of our outreach programs. Establish a standard of assessment for your programs and use that data to grow and shape future iterations of outreach.</b></p>

Table 3: Guidelines, checkpoints, definitions, and library outreach-related examples of the Universal Design for Learning Principle, Multiple Means of Engagement. Adapted from: (CAST 2023b; Peter and Clement 2021). Attribution 2.0 CC-BY.



## UDL For Outreach in Practice: Pi(e) a Librarian Day

In the spring of 2023, the KSU Libraries hosted an event to celebrate Pi-Day—March 14. The event was titled “Pi(e) a Librarian,” and students had the opportunity to pie a librarian in the face with a whipped cream pie after taking a short survey about their library experiences. The event’s goals were intentionally scaffolded with the UDL guideline of Multiple Means of Action and Express to allow participants to self-select how they would participate in the event and what they would get out of it. There were three goals that the outreach team set for the event: (1) participants would enjoy the event and have fun watching librarians get pied in the face; (2) participants would take a short survey and get to participate by choosing either a small, personal pie to eat or to pie a librarian in the face; (3) participants, while having fun, filling out the survey, and choosing their prize, would also engage in meaningful conversations with librarians about their experiences with the library. These goals were not shared with participants but only with the outreach team and other library volunteers. Not sharing the goals of the event with the participants allowed them to choose how they wanted to participate. Some participants just watched the fun. Most chose to fill out the survey and choose one of the prizes. Approximately one-third of the sixty students who took the survey engaged in conversation with the outreach team and library volunteers about library services and spaces. Some students even conversed with each other about library services and spaces. One group of students asked to film themselves taking the survey, pie-ing a librarian, and then interviewing the outreach team so they could use the footage for a class project. *By providing options for executive functions and guiding appropriate goal setting for the event*, students were allowed to self-select how they would interact with the event and how they would express themselves based on their experiences at the event. This was an effective way to intentionally incorporate UDL into an outreach activity that allows for Multiple Means of Action and Expression.

## Unintentional Equity Through Outreach Assessment

There is a good chance that there are already elements of UDL in many standard outreach activities, events, and programs. Using QR codes on marketing materials—both digital and print—has become relatively standard in my library and is a good example of the principle of Multiple Means of Engagement, specifically for the guideline of “provide options for perception.” The use of QR codes also reflects the principle of Multiple Means of Representation, specifically for the guideline “provide options for recruiting interest.” Though using QR codes was not originally an intentional application of UDL for outreach, it became one moving forward. Once it was recognized as an equitable act, it became significantly easier to incorporate as a regular outreach practice.

When I recognized that using QR codes on marketing materials was an application of the UDL principles for academic library outreach, I began looking for other ways to be intentionally equitable. Moreover, as is recommended when implementing UDL for library instructional purposes, I sought to identify one action to attempt and master before moving on to other UDL principles, guidelines, and checkpoints. Using QR codes was already something that students at my institution were used to and expected, so it made sense to attempt to use them in other ways to provide flexible avenues for students to interact with outreach activities, events, and programs. I decided to use QR codes as an option for assessing outreach. Working with the program assistant for my unit, I designed four options for outreach participants to evaluate the activities, events, and programs they attended. Participants were given the

choice of (1) filling out a paper survey on the spot, (2) scanning a QR code to fill out the same survey online, (3) using an iPad to take the online survey, or (4) taking a handout that contained both the URL and the QR code for the online survey so they could provide their feedback at their own pace and at a time that was convenient for them.

This method proved particularly useful for one of my institution's most popular outreach events: therapy dogs in the library. Most students opted to take the paper survey on the spot, but just under half of the total surveys collected were from the scannable QR code or the iPad with the electronic survey that was provided to participants at the event. There were even a handful of surveys that were returned up to a week after the event as a result of the handout that provided both a URL and a QR code for participants. Anecdotally, participants expressed appreciation at being given several options for how to take the survey, with a few even expressing that they appreciated an online survey as opposed to a paper survey because they would rather type on their mobile device, the provided iPad, or a computer than handwrite answers. Changes to the outreach assessment such as these were simple yet highly effective and continue to be standard practice for all my outreach activities, events, and programs.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has highlighted a significant gap in the academic literature regarding equitable and accessible outreach in academic libraries, despite the ALA's commitment to ensuring equity in library services. The scarce guidance, examples, and frameworks currently available underscore a pressing need for academic librarians to actively ensure their outreach efforts align with principles of equity, inclusivity, and accessibility. The primary contribution of this paper is the application and adaptation of UDL principles—originally designed for instructional contexts—to academic library outreach. It has demonstrated that, by translating UDL guidelines and making them relevant for academic library outreach, librarians can develop more inclusive, accessible, and equitable outreach initiatives. The expanded application of UDL beyond traditional instructional settings signifies its versatility and further underlines its relevance as a tool for promoting equity. This paper provides a starting point for creating a comprehensive framework for equitable and accessible academic library outreach, using both existing examples and the author's own experiences. The practical applications of UDL principles outlined here serve to guide and inspire academic librarians in charge of outreach, helping them integrate equitable practices into their initiatives.

However, there is much work yet to be done. The challenge of creating equitable and accessible outreach services and programs in academic libraries is considerable, but the potential rewards are immense. By harnessing the power of the UDL principles, librarians can foster a more inclusive, engaging, and effective library environment for all users, ultimately contributing to student learning, success, and wellness throughout the academic lifecycle. Thus, this paper calls upon academic librarians and researchers alike to engage deeply and thoughtfully with the principles and potential of Universal Design for Learning for creative application in all aspects of librarianship. Future research and practice should aim to build on this preliminary framework, testing and refining these approaches in real-world contexts and sharing best practices that emerge. It is through such collaborative and concerted efforts that we can make academic library outreach truly equitable for all individuals.

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## Author Note

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