What is an online library?

[MUSIC PLAYING]

KAREN: Lovely. Well, I hope you enjoyed that. Don't forget, I'd love to see your videos too. And you can email those to us or check out the video tab for a variety of ways to get those to us.

Right. So next session, introduction to the library for you starters. I'm joined by Catherine and Wendy. Welcome. So what's in the library?

WENDY: Well, when Catherine and I were thinking about this session and how we might introduce it, I was reminded of my own library induction as an undergraduate. Or, actually, I was reminded that I missed it, which is a terrible confession to make for a librarian, because I had raging tonsillitis. So I spent the next six months sort of trailing around, trying to work out how to use the library.

So I asked Catherine if she remembered much about her library induction as an undergraduate.

CATHERINE: And I didn't because I didn't go because I was being a classic undergraduate and had a raging hangover so unfortunately missed mine.

KAREN: Great.

WENDY: Do you remember yours, Karen?

KAREN: No. I didn't go to mine either. I'm not a very good example.

WENDY: The other thing was I also recall when I went to do my postgrad qualification, I was incensed that they actually didn't even offer an induction there. And I felt actually that could have come over much more friendly and much more welcoming. And actually what we're trying to produce today is something that gives that friendly welcome to new starters to the online library.

KAREN: So despite the fact that none of us went to ours, we'd still like-- OK, we'd like you to do one.

WENDY: Because we realise the benefits. We realise the benefits, even though we missed out.

CATHERINE: Realized the benefits. And be thankful that this is being recorded and you can watch it at your own time, maybe with sunglasses and the sound turned down if you're being the classic undergraduate like I was.

HOSTESS: All right, that's bright. I know, but-- lovely. So what have we got? We've got a Wordle, haven't we? For our student to fill out.

CATHERINE: We have. Because we wanted the session to be about you guys and libraries. So if you could give us the top three words you think of when you think of libraries, on the Wordle that's on the Events page. And we'll make a picture out to them towards the end of session. So that would be great.

OK, so what we want to deal with in this session is what an online library is, how you would use it and why. So that, first all, important thing, what an online library is, it's kind of a slightly nebulous concept. So I thought we'd get students helping us out explaining this one by taking photos of their own bookshelves, their own libraries, which we're dubbing shelfies. So social media desk, could you show us some shelfies? Yay!

HELEN: This is Tom's shelfie. This is, apparently, is his current reading list, which actually looks quite horrifying from my point of view. I'm sorry about that, Tom.

We also have this from Neil. And these are some old course materials that he's hung onto. Because he actually quite likes the look of them. And he can't bring himself to get rid of them.

And finally, you might recognise this cheeky chap here.

HOSTESS: Oh, no.

HELEN: This is was sent into us by somebody called HJ. I don't know. I don't know who that could be, but yeah. So those are some of the shelfies that you sent in. So thank you very much for that. And keep sending them in.

CATHERINE: Keep them coming. We love them. So yeah, that big pile of books with little stickies sticking out, that was so evocative of studying. Yeah, I don't know, nice.

WENDY: Yeah, we liked that one.

CATHERINE: We did, yes. OK, so what an online library is. Another way of explaining this, I thought, would be was to compare a physical library with an online library. So a physical library you'd expect to use a catalogue and then go and find where your book is on the shelf.

Your online library, our online library, you would use Library Search, which is the lovely search box on the library homepage. And well worth a go for anyone who hasn't used it. And that will sort you out with A, what we have, and B, the access to it.

And the access being instant is really rather lovely. And I think, a much better experience than you get in a print-based library in that I remember being an undergraduate going to where the book should be and it not being there. Or worse, it's got a page missing.

HOSTESS: And wandering around and going through all those decimal points and things.

CATHERINE: Yes, yeah.

HOSTESS: None on that now.

CATHERINE: Still don't like Dewey Decimals.

HOSTESS: And students can access this from the student homepage to the library.

HELEN: Yeah. And again, in a traditional print-based library, you would expect to walk around the shelves and browse. We have things that do a similar type of job in that we have the selected resources for your study pages. And we also have the Explore Library videos. And those are both found on the Library Resources section of the library.

And the other thing you'd expect to find in a standard library is a librarian. But that's OK. You still have those as distance learning students, in that we have a help desk, which the contact details are all across the library website. And we also have lots of help on the library website itself.

WENDY: Yeah. The other thing I thought is worth pointing out between the difference between online and the physical is that it's instant access. I mean, one of my big bug bears as an undergraduate was always somebody who was more organised than I was and who'd been to the library induction, had got to the kit before me. Whereas, of course, with electronic resources, lots of people can access it all at the same time.

So it's instant access. Which, I think, is very, very useful. And particularly when you're studying in numbers, as we do here.

OK. So one of the points that we did want to cover was why would you would use the library? And one of the most important reasons is that at different points in your course, you will be expected to use it. As you would know, Karen.

HOSTESS: Mm.

WENDY: So students will be given particular study activities that will acquaint then with how to use the library and also, will point out very, very important resources in their subjects. So that within different study points in the study calendar you would go off and work with particular materials. Another reason is to enrich your learning.

The phrase that you often see in teaching and learning materials, at the end of units and chapters, is further reading. And it is, literally, reading around your subject. And we often find that even if students don't do that further reading at the end of each unit, they find it very, very useful when they're preparing for their TMAs. They can read around the different topics that they've chosen for their TMAs at that point.

HOSTESS: We've got some comments about flirting in the library. Is that right? Or have I misheard something? What's going on on the social media desk? Helen?

HELEN: Simon has confessed that he spent the day in Liverpool Joan Moores Library, trying to do a study. But it seemed to be where students go to eat, chat, and flirt.

HOSTESS: Fabulous.

HELEN: Well, there we go. Much less distraction in an online library.

WENDY: There you are.

HELEN: Yeah.

WENDY: But if you want to be distracted, then I suppose that Liverpool John Moores is where to go.

HOSTESS: It's where it's all at.

WENDY: Yeah.

[LAUGHTER]

HOSTESS: And we also have silent raves too. So yes, indeed. Indeed.

WENDY: But I mean, going back to if you didn't want to flirt and actually wanted to study, as you would progress through your studies, you would find, actually, that module materials and your programmes of study will require you to be increasingly independent in your use of the library. So you actually need to get to know it to feel familiar and comfortable with using those resources as you progress through to levels two and three.

But the other thing that Catherine and I both really hope and are confident, that as students get to know the content, they will actually realise just how fabulous it is and get to value it more and more. And again, while we were thinking about this session, we were talking about our own personal guilty pleasures, the sorts of things that we'd kind of lose half an hour in if we're not careful. Because we dip into it.

And then we sort of get a bit distracted just because we like it so much. I mean, one of my favourites is something called the Broadsides Ballads Collection, which is, I suppose, 16th to 18th century version of a scurrilous broad sheet. It's got all these ancient songs and pamphlets that would be read out in taverns and sung about current ridiculous issues of the day, like the midwife who faked her own pregnancy. And the woman who gave birth to rabbits, or pretended to.

So really, really daft stuff like that. And my other favourite is the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, which I often find myself going around in what's called a Wikipedia loop. But I love it. Because it's gossipy.

And it has pictures. And it has links through to some of the people that you're reading about. It just feels really gossipy and sort of magazine-like, almost. What are some of your favourites?

CATHERINE: I love that now I've worked for the library and so therefore, remember, I don't have to pay for the New Scientist anymore. It's great. And also, we've now recently bought the National Geographic archive, which is just beautiful. It's a lovely way to spend an evening.

And if you're like me and are interested in lots and lots of different things, we have the very short introduction series of books which we've recently bought. And they're brilliant to just dip into and being given sort of an instant guide. But you know, at a fairly decent level.

WENDY: But like, an academic blaggers guide to--

CATHERINE: Yes, yes, an academic blagger.

WENDY: But I'm sure you've got those.

HOSTESS: Oh, yeah, no. Well, yeah, I do, actually. Sometimes I'll end up searching.

And then you know, those search terms that come up. And I'll have to be looking for something perfectly sensible. And then all of a sudden I'll see those.

And then I'll start thinking, oh no, that looks interesting. And then, all of a sudden, I've somehow got from here right down to somewhere else. A lot of love for the online libraries.

And then also a lot for physical ones. Eleanor's saying that the library is her home from home. So obviously more to do than just looking at things, I suppose, is getting all that knowledge. And I guess that's how we can get distracted, either in an online library or a physical one.

CATHERINE: Yes, yeah.

WENDY: So if you were thinking about getting started using the online library, we've got different sorts of ways that people can get to know the material. Because we realise that people have lots of different ways of working and lots of different preferences, lots of different study styles. One of the favourites that we have is the Getting Started videos, with Dear old Bob and his cat and his little goldfish.

Because they talk through some of the essentials. And they're linked from the library homepage. We also have two different ways of getting straight to content. The Explore Library Resources, as Catherine mentioned. They're kind of browsable.

And they give you nice videos, giving you overview of a subject content. And we also have the selected resources for your study. And again, they're broken down to particular subject areas. So if people don't really know where to start, but they really are interested, and they want to get going in their particular subject, then those are great pages for that.

And if they don't really know where to go on the library pages, again, library search, because it's just that search box, right on the front page, you can just enter some search terms. See what comes up. And then click through and follow the links.

So again, that's a very, very nice, easy way to start exploring. But we also have our OU Live training sessions. We've got one this evening. That's at 7:00 PM.

And we also have one next week, which is all about an introduction to the library. And they offer a more structured approach. And they also give students an opportunity to ask the librarian who's delivering the session all sorts of questions that they might not otherwise have known how to work stuff out.

So they're a really nice friendly way of getting to know the library in a structured way. But there's also human at the end of it, which is really quite nice. Oh, and the other new thing that we're launching this week is something called Open Tree. And it's a gaming environment.

And it's a way in which students, if they wish to, can build their library skills in a kind of supportive gaming community. And they can share what they've picked up and earn badges for the sorts of things that they've done. So there's all sorts of ways of getting started. I've gone through an awful lot. But we've got them all on the Library Resources page for this session.

HOSTESS: That's right that's a massive link of ways to search the library. If you go to the Resources page of the website. I'd like to go to the social media desk to find out OK, we're talking about the online library. But you guys are talking a lot about physical libraries. What's this about an awesome smell?

HELEN: I must have missed that one.

[LAUGHTER]

HELEN: Yeah, well, I agree with whoever said that. I love the smell of old books and libraries. Unfortunately, at the moment, for those of you who don't know, I work in the library with Catherine and Wendy. And the smell that we get is the smell of computer monitors, really.

[LAUGHTER]

And the occasional nice cake from the staff room. But yeah. But there's been some great, great discussion in the chat. It's been wonderful.

And Georgina and Liza were asking about Open Tree. So that's great that you mentioned it. I've been asking people what their guilty pleasures are. And Sam says she loves the Bridgeman Education Art Library. And also, she could get really lost in nature, spend hours just reading articles in nature. But a question that I think a lot of our students might be asking is why can't we just Google it?

CATHERINE: It's a reasonable question. And the answer is that they'll miss out on the lovely content that we pay for, which is sad. Because it's very nice. So if they're just going in via Google, the people that provide what they're wanting to read will say, pay us, essentially. Whether is if they come through us they won't have any of that nastiness.

WENDY: And there's also that issue of trusted content, isn't it?

HOSTESS: Yes.

WENDY: So if you access resources through the library, it's been selected particularly because of knowing it's that sort of academic value. So there's been that quality assurance process already. So that students know that what they're accessing is of the right level. And it's written particularly for them.

And you can't be sure you get that with Google. It's knowing the quality of what you're getting.

HOSTESS: Yeah. Lovely. Our Wordle's looking very nice. Shall we have a look?

CATHERINE: Yay. Yes, please.

HOSTESS: Ooh. I'm wondering if the smell posted is related to the--

[LAUGHTER]

CATHERINE: You can get an old books fragrant candle. Which, again, working in an online library, I'm thinking about, for myself to get that. But sorry, more sensibly, informative. That's good to know. Useful, that's all nice.

WENDY: Essential. We like essential. We think what the library provides is essential. We think we've pretty important too. I mean, as far as helping you get to the good content.

HOSTESS: And fun.

WENDY: There's fun in the corner there. We like fun. We do like fun. And lots of people have said quiet. And I suppose when you're working in an online environment, actually, it's as quiet or as noisy as you want it to be.

CATHERINE: Yes.

WENDY: So for instance, I recall a chemistry student who used to always log into Naxos music library. Because it helped him actually work better. So I suppose that was his guilty pleasure. But yes, working at your own place from wherever you want, you can make life as quiet or as noisy as you need it to be.

HOSTESS: But absolutely no raving in the library.

HJ: No, absolutely not. I was just having a look on the chat. Stephanie's chinless into a drinking game every time someone mentions cake. And Brett says, cake, cake, cake, cake.

[LAUGHTER]

WENDY: Excellent.

HOSTESS: Lovely. Well, I'd like to know, we've got five minutes left of our session. And I bet there are loads of questions. So can we throw this open to you at home and see what sorts of things you'd like to know most about the online library? You've given us a really good overview of a lot of the things they're mentioning, the OU Live Training. And could you actually just a little bit more about that? Because that's tonight at half past 7:00, isn't it?

WENDY: Yes.

HOSTESS: And for those people who are brand new, what is OU Live? And why do they need to know about it?

WENDY: OK. So OU Live is the OU's live tutorial software. And it enables a tutor, wherever they're based, to link up with their students in a tutorial group. Or sometimes librarians, like us, linking up with groups of people who want to attend training.

And the Tutorial Room with OU Live is an online space where people can join the online meeting. And it enables the tutor to talk to Skype, effectively, with a video link, with their students. And you can also share a desktop or share PowerPoint slides.

So it is as good as near as dammit, as being in the room-- a physical room-- with both your tutor and also your fellow students. So it's a great way not just to access your tutor and ask them all sorts of interesting questions and have a tutorial. But it's also a really neat way of catching up with your fellow students and realising that that question you were a bit worried about, and you were thinking, oh, is this too daft to ask? Thank goodness someone else has already asked that. And it's a really great way of actually getting more of that campus-based experience but in a distance way.

HOSTESS: So I guess people who are enjoying this sort of chat might then like to go into OU Live.

WENDY: Yeah.

HOSTESS: But it sounds very easy. Why do people need to be trained in it?

WENDY: I'm not sure that people need to be trained in it, in the use of the software. But it's definitely worth getting to know it, perhaps, a little bit before your first-ever session. It is pretty easy to use.

CATHERINE: I think probably only 15 minutes before your first session.

WENDY: Yeah.

CATHERINE: We're not talking intense here. It's fairly user friendly.

HOSTESS: I teach on OU Live a lot. And one of the things I found-- because you need a browser. The first time you ever do it you have to instal this little browser. It's like an app. And then, basically, every time it runs from there.

And I think it's one of those anxieties where you don't know what's going to happen if you go in the room. You don't know if they're going to go, and now, Karen Foley has entered the room. And then you're going to have to speak or do things. And I like the idea of training.

Because I think it's one of these things where if you go in and you see what's there and then you can like, practise talking and typing, you sort of know I can do it. And then when you need to learn, then you don't have that to worry about. You have downloaded your browser. You know what you can get there. You know what to do. And it always amazes me how everyone picks up all the emoticons and all the changing colour fonts and all this, that, and the other. Everyone picks it up so easily. It is very easy.

WENDY: Well, within our library sessions, because they're delivered right away across all of the faculties, and we know that some faculties use OU Live software more than others, we have a very lowest common denominator. So we go through all of those key functions always at the beginning of our sessions. And that's what our colleague, Amanda, will be doing tonight at the beginning of the session.

She'll be pointing out how the emoticons work and all of those different things. And then she will go on to deliver what the session is about, the content of the session, which tonight's session is how to find information for your assignment. But then next week there is one that's on purely an introduction to the library. And that's at 7:00 PM next Thursday, isn't it?

CATHERINE: Yes.

WENDY: Yeah.

HOSTESS: Lovely. And we'll put those links up on the website.

WENDY: Yeah, sure.

HOSTESS: The other thing that you guys do very, very well is referencing. And Wendy's been asking about referencing and where the best sources of information are about referencing. And you also provide a bit of support for this. It's one of those things that students, especially when they're starting, are very, very anxious about.

WENDY: Yeah. Yeah.

CATHERINE: So on the library website, if you go to Help and Support, and then Referencing and Plagiarism, there is a load of information. It's better not to get too stressed about it. Read it calmly. And try not to worry about it too much. I always think that with students and worrying about referencing there's so much in your studies that actually you will need to spend time thinking about from an academic process. That actually referencing is one of the things where you're given all the answers. You're told what to do.

WENDY: That OU Harvard guide for referencing, it has so many different examples of all the different types of content that students might need. And there are even some faculty-specific ones. So if students are worrying, oh, well, they'll never have that particular type of information, actually it's extremely likely to be covered. And again, it's always the friendly staff on the Help Desk. They'll always pick up any queries.

HOSTESS: So referencing is a concept you help with. And are there any sort of specific referencing software, tools that you would recommend? Because, of course, now, in a digital age, there are lots of things. I know I use Endnote and various things to collate referencing. You can often save things that you can then use. So you don't have to sit down and write it all down manually. Are there any things that you'd personally recommend? Or shall we come and compile a link? Because I bet everyone at home's got some ideas too.

CATHERINE: I think it'd be really interesting to hear what people at home are using. We don't really push a referencing software.

WENDY: No.

CATHERINE: It's very much what would you like to use? We do have a training session on helping people out on choosing a referencing software. Because you can write it all out if you want to. That's my idea of hell. But it's not everyone's. So yeah.

WENDY: Those training sessions are good.

CATHERINE: The popular ones are listed on the Referencing Page that I was talking about before.

HOSTESS: We've had comments from our audience about Zotero and Neil's Toolbox being good ones as well, for people to use.

WENDY: That's interesting. Oh, Zotero?

HOSTESS: Yeah.

WENDY: Yeah, that's an add-on to Firefox, isn't it? Yeah, that's quite popular amongst the Open University's research community as well. That's quite common.

But that OU Live session that we run, we've designed it to try and help people make the best choices. So we get them to think about what exactly do you think you'll be using referencing for? How many references would you be working with? And guide people towards different choices that they might make.

HOSTESS: Lovely. So check out those sessions. We'll put a link to that on the Resources Page of our website for the first session tonight. But Wendy and Catherine, thank you. That's been absolutely brilliant. Really useful. And so I'm glad that the word fun came up in the Wordle. Because we're going to show you, now, a fun video of our silent rave in the library.