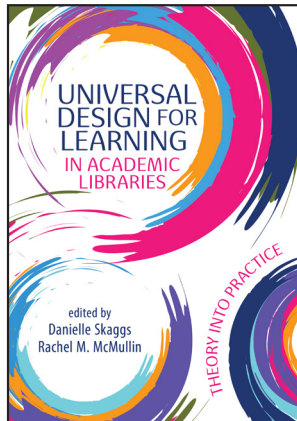


Universal Design for Learning in Academic Libraries: Theory into Practice, Danielle Skaggs & Rachel M. McMullin (eds.), ACRL, 2024. 294p. Softcover, \$78.00. 9798892555494



Today's college students enter the academic library and the classroom with an increasingly diverse array of backgrounds, needs, and existing skill sets. Designing learning experiences and library services that equitably address this range can be challenging. In *Universal Design for Learning in Academic Libraries: Theory into Practice*, editors Danielle Skaggs and Rachel McMullin draw on their expertise in instruction, online learning, and accessibility to present a collection of chapters introducing and applying Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Skaggs and McMullin's book positions UDL as a guiding framework academic librarians can lean on as they examine their teaching and services to adopt practices that better serve all learners.

UDL is derived from Universal Design (UD), an architecture and model principle suggesting that spaces should be planned from the ground up to reduce barriers for all people rather than requiring after-the-fact accessibility solutions. UDL takes this inclusivity into the classroom, advocating for learning experiences that meet all learners where they are, providing openness and flexibility to encourage participation and to reduce alienation. The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), the originator of the UDL framework, structures the approach around three main principles: engagement, representation, and action and expression, each with accompanying checkpoints teachers should consider when designing instruction (CAST, 2024).

Universal Design for Learning in Academic Libraries examines UDL's application within the academic library, arguing that a gap exists in the literature on using the Association of College and Research Libraries' *Framework for Information Library for Higher Education* in this setting. The book is divided into sections exploring various areas that could benefit from UDL. Part I lays the groundwork for understanding UDL's current use in the context of libraries where Skaggs and McMullin, in their introductory chapter, delineate UDL's emergence from UD and offer working definitions employed throughout the volume. The next chapters map UDL's intersection with current federal law and accessibility standards, reviewing its application within the reference interview while following the Reference and User Services Association's guidelines.

Part II focuses on applying UDL within library instruction. Chapters cover creating accessible research consultations, implementing the Framework and backward design, and restructuring online learning to be more flexible and equitable. Other sections compare UDL and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and explore case studies about creating digital learning objects utilizing Springshare's LibWizard and LibGuides applications. Part III is a behind-the-scenes look at the technical side of creating and providing access to materials and systems aimed at reducing barriers to the library. It includes several chapters on Open Educational Resources (OER): applying open pedagogy and critical open pedagogy during OER development; establishing a systematic workflow in creating OER; and marketing OER to campus stakeholders. Content addresses accessible cataloging and UDL-inspired leadership theory. The organizing principle for this section feels a little awkward—OER might have made more sense as a separate section—but including

chapters on UDL outside the classroom is still a solid addition to the book.

Finally, Part IV's two chapters cover the academic library's role in bringing UDL principles to the entire campus. One chapter offers pointers on initiating conversations with campus faculty about transforming research assignment design. Another showcases one library's partnership with a teaching and learning center to create a faculty learning community and book club, which ultimately inspired broader institutional curriculum and standards revisions.

The book is a helpful, beginner-friendly introduction to UDL in academic libraries. It expands the application of UDL beyond the classroom, showing how to create instruction materials, engage stakeholders in the learning process, and maximize the potential impact of library resources and services. Library workers will appreciate the practical relevance and applicability of the book, most of which are case studies showcasing how UDL can enhance existing workflows and generate new initiatives to reduce barriers for users. Especially beneficial are chapters that suggest starting with small projects. Implementation of new frameworks can be daunting and including targeted ideas for realistic first steps enhance the book's value. Providing tips or checklists as a standard element in each chapter would have made it more practical for readers to adopt UDL in their own practices.

Another feature that would have improved the book is the inclusion of a chart listing the full UDL guidelines and tenets. Though Skaggs and McMullin introduce the three main criteria of engagement, representation, and action and expression, most chapters delve into the granular elements requiring readers to search and refer to an external resource for the complete guidelines. Readers should also be aware that, since the publication of Skaggs and McMullin's book in 2024, CAST has released an updated version of the UDL Guidelines, version 3.0 (CAST, 2024). The new iteration addresses the concerns mentioned in several chapters and integrates learner-centered language and addresses issues of bias, identity, and inclusion.

Overall, however, the book is a useful and highly informative resource for practitioners within academic libraries across a wide range of roles. As the chapters do not focus exclusively on the classroom environment, there is content of interest not only to instruction librarians and instructional designers but also to staff in cataloging, electronic resources, outreach, and administration. Librarians who conduct research consultations, manage student workers, work with internal staff, and collaborate with departmental faculty and campus administrators will find valuable content to enrich their work and teaching. Examples in the chapters include institutions from community colleges to large research universities; academic libraries of all sizes and capacities will find informative aspects.

Universal Design for Learning in Academic Libraries is a valuable resource and addresses the coverage gap surrounding UDL in libraries. Skaggs and McMullin focus on the use of UDL as a guiding framework and the included chapters offer sound, actionable examples as well as advice for those looking to increase the accessibility and universality of their own interactions with users and stakeholders. — Abigail Higgins, Auburn University Libraries

Reference

CAST. (2024). *Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 3.0*. <https://udlguidelines.cast.org>