

Ask Me Anything!: Reaching Out to Online Students in Higher Education Through Librarian-Led Virtual Office Hours

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Athabasca University

18th Distance Library Services Conference

April 13, 2018

Agenda

- Introduction
- Athabasca University and Our Students
- AU Library
- Why Virtual Office Hours?
- What's Out There?
- Implementing Virtual Office Hours
- How'd It Go?
- Better Next Time...
- Questions?

Introduction

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Athabasca University and Our Students



Athabasca University. Image copyright: Maclean's Magazine, <http://www.macleans.ca/schools/athabasca-university/>

Athabasca, Alberta



Town of Athabasca. Photo byanacreon100. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/Attraction_Review-g181807-d10698633-Reviews-Town_of_Athabasca-Athabasca_Athabasca_County_Alberta.html#photos;aggregationId=101&albumid=101&filter=7&ff=210241497

Athabasca University

- Located in Athabasca, Alberta, Canada
- Distance education institution
- Graduate and undergraduate programs
- 40,000+ full- and part-time students
- Diverse, international student body

AU Library
offers...

- Reference services
- Research support
- Instruction in library use
- Materials access and lending
- Interlibrary loans

How do our
students reach
us?

- Email
- Telephone
- Online form
- Adobe Connect
- Chat (New!)

This is ok,
but...

- Service is typically asynchronous
- Few point-of-need reference opportunities
- Many students don't know we exist 😞

Why Virtual Office Hours?

- Synchronous Library support
- Personal connection between students and AU Library
- Raise awareness of the Library

What's out there?

- Not a lot!
- VOH usually mentioned cursorily
- Typically discussed as part of embedded librarian effort in course or program

Handler,
Lackey, and
Vaughan
(2009)

- Librarian-led in-person and virtual office hours program at the University of Chapel Hill's Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy, and Public Health were moderately successful.
- Online office hours received fewer visitors than did onsite office hours.
- The public health librarian stopped offering online office hours after "several sessions of no shows" (p. 339).

Hajibayova
(2017)

- A sense of community “is among the most important... factors that may positively affect online teaching and learning environments” (p. 13).
- It is important to learning outcomes and overall educational satisfaction that students have a sense of “social presence” (p. 13) in their online courses.

Oguz, Chu, &
Chow (2015)

- Students often feel isolated from their peers in online environments (p. 216).

Gibbons-
Kunka (2017)

- The “power of communication via virtual office hours immediately generates a sense of community” (p. 102).

So maybe...

- Offering a synchronous online presence to students through librarian-led VOH could help them establish a sense of community among their peers, and an emotional connection to AU and to the Library!

Implementing VOH: Planning

- Get the go-ahead
- Get feedback from colleagues
- Pick a date / time
- Find a backup Librarian

Implementing VOH: Materials

- Procedures
- Tracking documents
- Promotional images



Office 365



Jennifer Rempel



Search everything

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Jennifer Rempel

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Files > Virtual Office Hours

Name ↑	Modified	Modified By	File Size	Sharing
Chat transcripts	February 16, 2017	Jennifer Rempel		Shared
PowerPoint Slides	February 14, 2017	Jennifer Rempel		Shared
Virtual Office Hours Procedures.docx	December 7, 2017	Jennifer Rempel	14.5 KB	Shared
Virtual Office Hours Stats.xlsx	December 7, 2017	Jennifer Rempel	15.8 KB	Shared

Drag files here to upload



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
	Date	Host	Total # of attendees	# who asked specific questions	Questions asked or comments (verbatim)	Solution description	HEAT case #	General notes / comments on session	Type of question			
1												
2	2/16/2017	Jen	4	1	I was wanting to know the step to access journals- specifically for Nurse related topics	Showed patron where to find Nursing-related journals, in both the library's resources list, and in the Journal Title search. Also showed patron how to find an article from a citation.	2835730	All questions answered within first hour. Only one patron had questions, but two others responded with occasional comments. One patron logged in, then immediately logged out near beginning of session.	Materials access			
3					Do you have any suggestions for asticles that are not available in the library collection	Showed patron how to carry out an ILL request.	2835735		Materials access			
4					is there anything for APA help. I have the manual, but they have nothing in there on table of contents for example. Or if the table of contents is to be included	Showed patron where to find APA style resources from AU Library and the Write Site. Looked up patron's table of contents question on APA style blog. Directed patron to check about table of contents with tutor / instructor as APA manual offers no formatting rules for ToC.	3835737		Citation			
5					what is the discover icon used for?	Explained difference between catalogue and databases; did demo searches in catalogue and Discover.	2835739		Website-related			
					I would love an interactive APA	Told patron we have no	2835750		Citation			

Implementing VOH: Office Space

- Adobe Connect meeting
 - Supported by ITS
 - All staff have accounts
 - Guests don't need an account
 - Desktop sharing

Implementing VOH: Promotion

- AU's Brand and Marketing Unit
- Email
- Library homepage
- Social media



Athabasca University shared Athabasca University Library's photo.



15 February 2017 · 🌐

VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

Need help getting started on a project or assignment?
Want to know more about how AU Library can help you succeed in your studies?

Chat in real time with Jennifer Rempel, AU Library's Information Literacy and Resource Access Librarian.

Every Thursday, 2 to 4 pm MT, beginning February 16

Virtual Office URL:

<https://athabascau.adobeconnect.com/virtualoffice>

Athabasca University Library

Published by Jennifer Rempel [?] · 15 February 2017 · 🌐

Tomorrow, AU Library will be launching a brand-new service: Jen's Virtual Office Hours! These Adobe Connect office hours will provide AU students, faculty, and ...
[See more](#)



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Margaret Anderson and Brittany Harrison



Write a comment...





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University

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Virtual Office Hours

Virtual Office Hours are now being offered every Thursday, from 2 to 4 pm Mountain Time.

These Adobe Connect office hours will provide AU students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to drop in to a free-form web session to ask AU Librarian Jennifer Rempel their questions about Library services, resources, and getting research help.

The Adobe Connect URL is <https://athabascau.adobeconnect.com/virtualoffice>.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact Jennifer at jrempel@athabascau.ca, or 1-800-788-9041, ext. 6257.



Athabasca
University

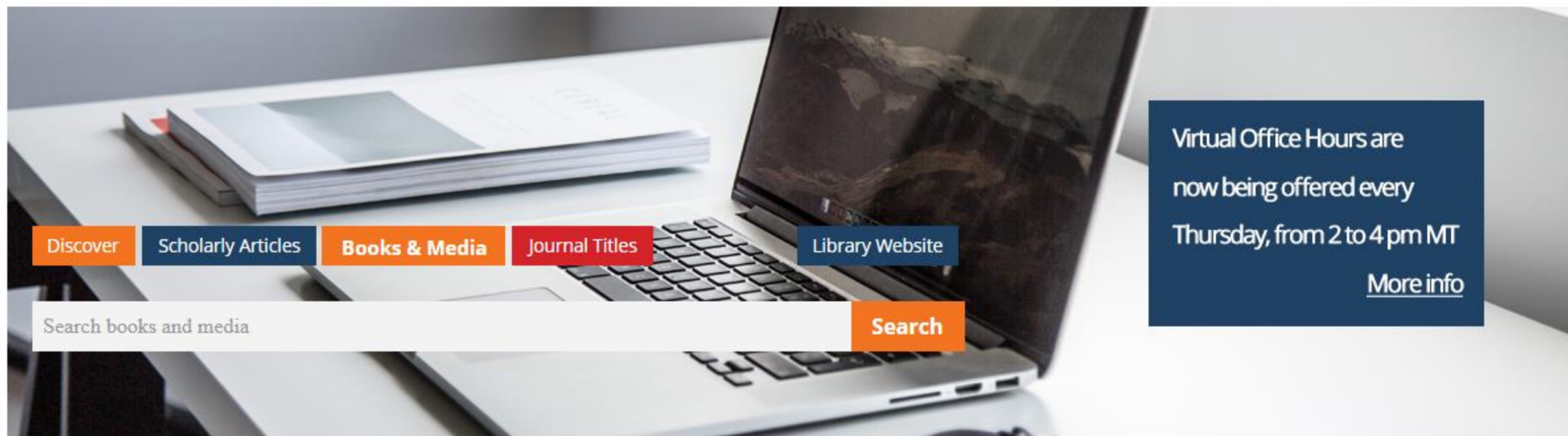
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Virtual Office Hours are
now being offered every
Thursday, from 2 to 4 pm MT

[More info](#)

LIB RARY Athabasca University Library Published by Jennifer Rempel [?] · 3 May 2017 · 🌐

Virtual Office Hours tomorrow, 2 - 4 pm MT! Need help getting started on a project or assignment? Want to know more about how AU Library can help you succeed in your studies? Chat in real time with guest host Peggy Lynn MacIsaac, Reference Services Librarian. Virtual Office Hours take place every Thursday, 2 - 4 pm MT. Virtual Office URL: <https://athabascau.adobeconnect.com/virtualoffice>



👤 223 people reached

Boost Post

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👤 Mable Aung

LIB RARY Write a comment... 😊 📷 GIF 🗨️

LIB RARY Athabasca University Library Published by Jennifer Rempel [?] · 16 August 2017 · 🌐

Virtual Office Hours this Thursday, August 17, 2-4 pm MT! Need help getting started on a project or assignment? Want to know more about how AU Library can help you succeed in your studies? Chat in real time with Jennifer Rempel, AU Library's Information Literacy and Resource Access Librarian during her Virtual Office Hours. Every Thursday, 2 to 4 pm MT. Virtual Office URL: <https://athabascau.adobeconnect.com/virtualoffice>



👤 74 people reached

Boost Post

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How'd it go?

- 32 sessions over 34 weeks
- 14 patrons attended 10 sessions
- 11 patrons asked a question

Overall, a total of 13 questions were asked

- Category and number of questions:
 - Citing sources = 2
 - Library events and services = 3
 - Library website = 1
 - Materials access = 2
 - Reference = 2
 - Writing help = 1
 - Not Library-related = 2

Feedback

- 14 chat transcripts analyzed
- Feedback was generally positive
- No attendees reported negative experiences

Better next
time?

- Initial uptake of VOH was encouraging
- Attendance numbers dropped early on
- VOH could have been implemented more successfully

What
happened?

- Not enough time
- Not enough staff

What
happened?

- Issues with Adobe Connect
 - Two-way communication a challenge
 - Difficult for guests to set up microphones

What
happened?

- It's better to offer VOH within a specific course or program

Conclusion

- VOH at AU Library was not a success
- But it is important to try new things!
- I know what to do differently in future

Thank you for your
attention!

Questions?

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