

ELEVATE CAREER READINESS IN THE HUMANITIES

5 TAKEAWAYS from the “Humanities Education and Student Career Readiness” Webinar

WEBINAR PANELISTS:

Adrian Graham

eResources Librarian
Austin Community College

Michael Meth

Dean, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library
San José State University

Kaitlyn Tanis

History and Social Sciences Librarian
University of Delaware

It's no secret the humanities are facing challenges. However, humanities graduates are crucial to the modern workforce. As technology and ways of work rapidly evolve, employers increasingly value skills like communication, data literacy, critical thinking, and information literacy—all of which are core to humanities curricula.

By fostering these in-demand skills, librarians and faculty can work together to not only keep the humanities relevant on campus but also ensure humanities graduates are ready for the workforce.

In our recent Choice webinar, three academic librarians share their insights for transforming humanities education to enhance student career readiness. Implement their actionable strategies on your campus to equip your students with the skills they'll need to excel in their futures.

“Libraries are phenomenal contributors to student success, and there are plenty of studies that show engagement with the library and time spent in the library supports student success and their attainment during their scholastic career and also postgraduation.”

— Michael Meth

“When we talk about the credibility of sources, here’s where we can bring in those critical-thinking tools by helping students just delve deeper into that thing in front of them—by looking at these metrics.”

— Adrian Graham

1 FOSTER TRANSFERABLE SKILLS IN HUMANITIES STUDENTS

In a recent survey of librarians and faculty, 54% of respondents said imparting transferable skills should be the main focus of improving career readiness in the humanities. According to survey results, **critical thinking, data literacy, and information literacy** were the top skills identified for success, aligning with feedback from employers in the workforce.

From making skill development core to classroom assignments to creating workshops that focus on practical skill applications, there are countless ways your institution can foster skill development in the humanities.

For one example, Michael Meth shared that San José State University opened a Digital Humanities Center, which offers students a broad range of workshops and skill series. These targeted lessons are designed to bridge the gap between tech and the humanities, with topics covering everything from using Adobe tools and Google Docs to understanding AI bias. As students attend workshops and get hands-on experience, they’re building digital and data literacy skills as well as critical thinking.



Actionable Tip:

Find creative ways to strategically integrate skill development into student learning experiences, both inside and outside of the classroom.

2 PRIORITIZE FACULTY-LIBRARIAN COLLABORATION

Interdepartmental collaboration between librarians and faculty is essential to transforming humanities education. Librarians and faculty must be aligned on both the importance of workforce readiness for humanities students and strategies to accomplish this goal, especially when it comes to library instruction in the classroom.

Adrian Graham explained that librarians partner with faculty members at Austin Community College to provide the tools and resources needed to further student skills through instruction. They’ve seen the most success in courses that pair integrated reading and writing strategies to teach students about effective communication and finding credible sources. These courses help students build essential communication, data literacy, and critical-thinking skills.



Actionable Tips:

When collaborating with faculty, demonstrate how the library can help students build research and information literacy skills to improve student projects and engagement.



Create structured programs that encourage regular collaboration between librarians and faculty, such as joint workshops and training sessions that enhance teaching methodologies and resource utilization.

“Talent is universal, but opportunity is not. Libraries can harness and enhance and support with all the work that we do.”

— Michael Meth

“I really want to foster a type of environment where students are curious about the information they’re consuming, but also critical information consumers.”

— Kaitlyn Tanis

3 IMPLEMENT EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Hands-on learning opportunities give students practical experiences developing and implementing transferable skills. On- and off-campus jobs, internships, job shadowing, study abroad programs, undergraduate research, and volunteering are just a few examples of experiential learning opportunities that can help students excel.

At San José State University, student work experience is an essential component of the library’s career readiness strategy. The institution offers library assistant positions, fellowships in the Digital Humanities Center, a library research scholars program, and more. Michael Meth says they’ve seen student workers develop transferable skills firsthand within these hands-on environments and move on to succeed in a variety of careers after graduation, from teaching to UX design to forensic pathology.



Actionable Tip:

Partner with career centers and local businesses to increase available experiential learning opportunities on your campus, from internships to workshops to practical projects that integrate digital tools and real-world applications.

4 INTEGRATE SKILL-BUILDING DIGITAL TOOLS INTO COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

With the right tools, your library can support humanities coursework that imparts critical-thinking, data literacy, and information skills into everyday instruction and research.

As an instructor librarian at the University of Delaware, Kaitlyn Tanis uses digital resources to get students excited about consuming information, asking creative questions, and critically evaluating sources. Tanis encourages students to read laterally and find answers in primary sources, which helps them establish information literacy skills to drive success not only in their own career paths but also as active citizens.

In addition to in-classroom instruction, the Research Data Steering Group at the University of Delaware provides additional services that teach humanities students data literacy. The group established a Data for the Humanities Workshop, which helps students feel comfortable interacting with and using data. Participants have a chance to look at complex datasets that are humanities-focused and manipulate that data, asking questions that might relate to their own research.



Actionable Tip:

Invest in effective teaching, learning, and research platforms and ensure librarians and faculty are equipped to leverage them with extensive training.

5 TAKE A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO AI

According to our recent survey data, academic librarians and faculty emphasize that it's essential that students are supported in understanding the limitations, pitfalls, and ethics of AI. In addition to developing data literacy and information literacy, humanities graduates must learn to mindfully consume AI-generated content. By taking a proactive, strategic approach, your library can ensure students have access to AI tools that develop digital and data literacy skills.

San José State University recently hired its first AI librarian, demonstrating their commitment to keeping up with evolving technology. This new position enables the library to strategically address digital literacy with AI solutions, from generative AI tools to a self-service library assistant. On the university's website, students and faculty can access a wealth of information to enhance their research and teaching with AI.



Actionable Tips:

Incorporate AI literacy into the curriculum by offering workshops and resources that explain the ethical use and limitations of AI.



Develop collaborative projects that allow students to engage with AI tools in a controlled educational environment.



Get Your Guide for Career Readiness in the Humanities

Ready to transform humanities education to support students in the modern workforce? Get more strategies to help students develop transferable skills, strengthen librarian-faculty relationships, and find effective tools for teaching and learning in our actionable guide for faculty and librarians.



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