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Onboarding during a Pandemic: Creating a Welcome Guide

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Overview

The pandemic environment has required academic libraries to modify their internal onboarding and training processes. While engaging with colleagues in a virtual or hybrid environment has been challenging for all employees, recent hires in particular face barriers while getting to know a new institution and new people in the virtual landscape.

UConn Library has hired several employees since the beginning of pandemic. To address these challenges and create a more seamless onboarding process, the Research Services Unit created a comprehensive online Welcome Guide.

Guide Formation

Our aim in creating the guide was to supplement the general human resources and library onboarding process by centralizing all documents, deadlines, and links in one place, and by adding content that is specific to our unit. Much of the content serves as a stand-in for informal conversations that previously happened organically among colleagues working in the same space. A working group of four members collectively compiled this guide which is more thorough than any onboarding materials previously used by the unit.

Guide Contents

The guide is divided into 10 pages (listed to the right). Topics covered include but are not limited to: staff union information; library acronyms list; organizational charts; relocation information such as realtors, rentals, and local restaurant and activity recommendations; detailed biographies of unit members; tips for engaging in liaison work, collection development, and instruction; goal-setting, evaluation, and promotion processes; setting up technology; and lists of key contacts for various needs.

“I also provided an easy point of conversation with colleagues and felt like UConn Library cared about me personally acclimating to the area in addition to filling out all of my forms on time! As someone who interviewed remotely and joined the library when few of my colleagues were physically around to welcome me, this touch was especially welcome.”

“i wish such a guide had been available when i began work at UConn.”

Guide Usage

The guide was launched on 6/11/2021 and has been consistently accessed and updated since then. It has been promoted to 3 recent hires within the unit and 2 recent hires outside of the unit.


A survey of the entire unit (12) as well as 2 other recent hires about guide usage was conducted from 4/6/2022 – 4/13/2022.

Most useful guide pages, as indicated by survey responses:
• Liaison Basics (n=6)
• Collection Development (n=6)
• Onboarding and Important Dates (n=5)
• New to the Area (n=5)
• Unit Goals (n=5)

Selected qualitative feedback about the guide is presented on this poster in italics and quotation marks.

Conclusion

The Welcome Guide has been integral to onboarding new unit members. Several existing members have also expressed appreciation for the guide as a go-to source for links and documents that we use daily in our work. This living document has been a welcome innovation for the Research Services Unit and could serve as a template for other libraries wishing to enhance their onboarding and training processes.

Additional Resources