

Adding a Little Mystery to a University FYE Program:

How Librarians Developed a Mystery Game to Teach Fundamental Search Skills to First Years

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Content Preview

- About Illinois Tech and the FYE program
- Developing the mystery game
- Running the games
- Tips and best practices



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from Noun Project

About the Illinois Institute of Technology

- Bronzeville neighborhood of Chicago
- Private, non-profit
- Bachelor's-PhD programs
- Many Mies van der Rohe designed buildings



About our Students



- 6,504 students
 - 2,998 undergraduate
 - 2,334 graduate
 - 870 law
 - 274 business
- 106 different countries represented
- 37% are international

Illinois Tech's First-Year Experience Program (FYE)

Participants: All incoming students, including transfer and international students, around 500 students in Fall 2021

Non-credit course

Weekly meetings: large group seminars, small cohort discussions, and one-on-one check-ins with FYE mentors

Seminar topics include:

- **campus resources, support, and services**
- college transition
- understanding their personal learning styles and academic strengths
- creating career plan
- communication skills

Developing the Library Mystery Game

Partnership

Galvin Library
Undergraduate Admission
Office of Campus Life

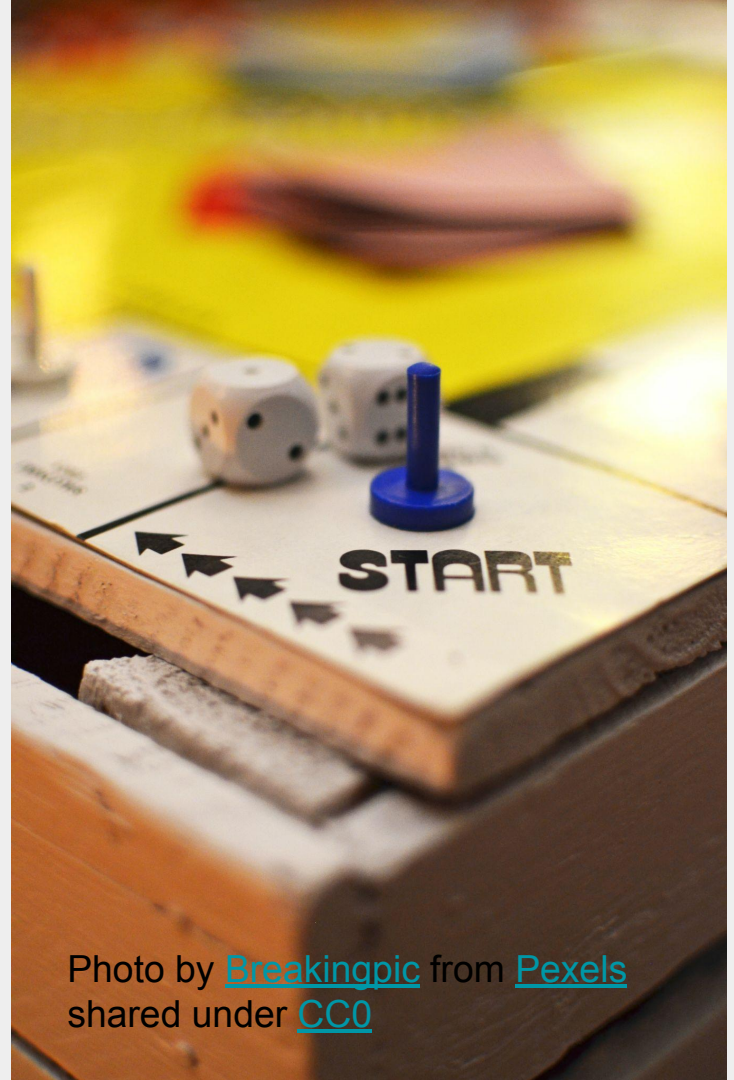


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Library FYE Instruction Session

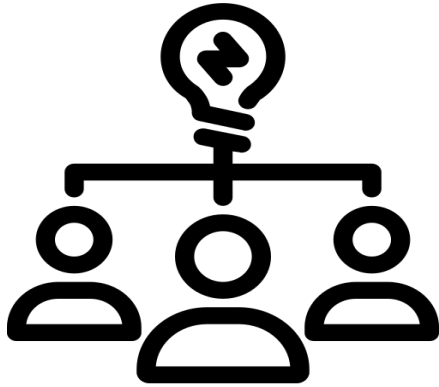
- One-shot session for each cohort group (25-30) students, one hour
- FYE mentors would be responsible for bringing their cohort groups to the library for library sessions
- Instruction request: introduce students to library spaces, resources and services
- Not overlapping the library orientation session content

Teamwork

- Three librarian team
 - Head of Research and International Library Services
 - Information Literacy Librarian
 - Online Learning and Instruction Librarian
- Started meeting 3 months out from launch date
 - Initially met bi-weekly and then weekly
 - Early on the focus was on escape rooms and mystery games

Developing the learning goals for the library mystery game

The team brainstormed learning goals.

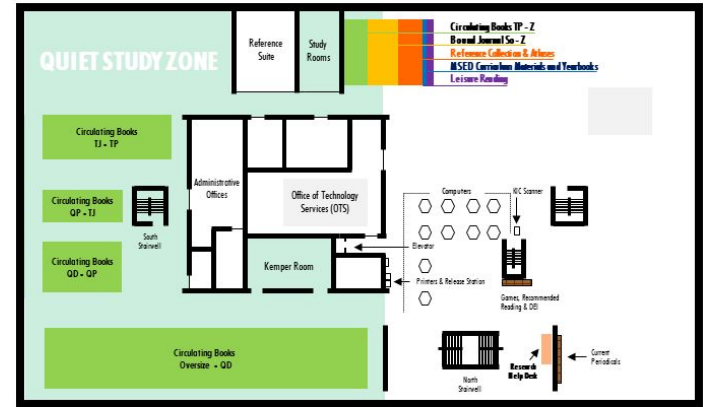


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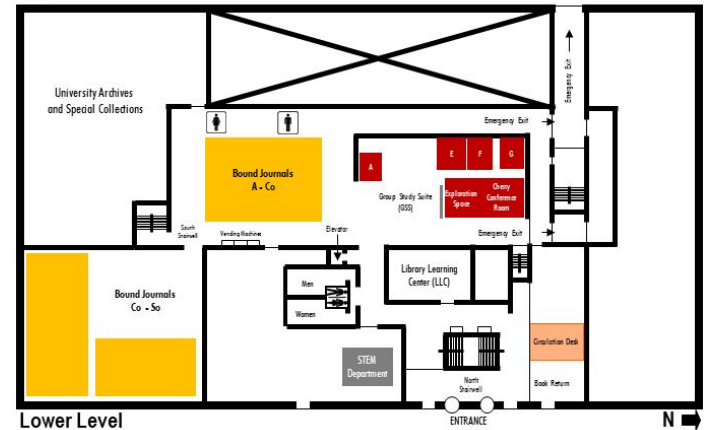
1. Students will be able to look up a book in the catalog and find it on the shelf.
2. Students will be able to check out a book on reserve.
3. Students will become more comfortable asking librarians for help after interacting with friendly librarians during the game.
4. Students will be able to use the library website to find important information.
5. Students will gain familiarity with the library's physical layout.

Creating the Mystery Game

- The story
- In person program
- Created 6 clues
- Each clue took teams to a different space in Galvin Library
- Librarians staffed each space to hand students their next clue and give hints as necessary



Upper Level



Lower Level

Creating Clues

1. Bibliography with a hidden message
2. Book cover puzzle
 - a. look up the book in the catalog and find it on the shelf
3. Cipher
 - a. Textbook on reserve
4. Invisible ink clue
 - a. Clue directed them to Research Help Office where they had to complete a worksheet before receiving next clue
5. Word scramble
6. Sheet of paper with a photograph of a painting and the first letter of each word in the description spells out the name of Galvin's art gallery.

Team and Location Rubric

Red	Green	Blue	Orange	Purple	Black (accessible)
GSS	UASC	RHO	Reserves	Stacks	Stacks
Stacks	RHO	Reserves	UASC	GSS	RHO
Reserves	Stacks	GSS	RHO	UASC	Reserves
RHO	GSS	UASC	Stacks	Reserves	GSS
UASC	Reserves	Stacks	GSS	RHO	UASC
Kemper	Kemper	Kemper	Kemper	Kemper	Kemper

Test runs: student workers & librarians

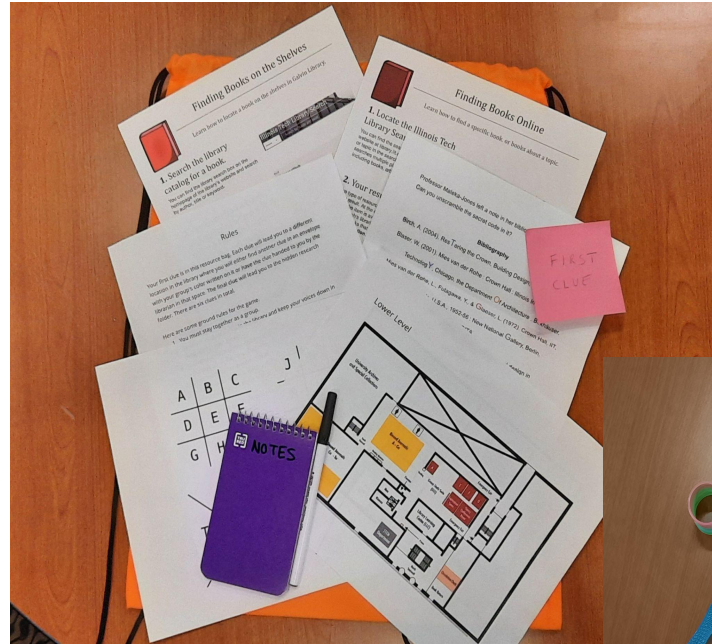
Revised clues based on
feedback.



**Created by Adrien Coquet
from the Noun Project**

Materials

- Resource Bags
 - Cipher key
 - Rules sheet
 - How-to handouts
 - First clue
 - Map of the library
 - Marker
 - Pen
 - Notepad
- Buttons for all participants
- Library services flyer
- Fidget toys for winning team members
- Exit surveys



Running the Games

Scheduling and Communication

- Check-in meeting with the FYE instructor in August
- Scheduled sessions via LibCal
- One session for each FYE cohort group
- FYE mentors responsible for signing up for a library sessions for their groups and accompanying them to the session
- Confirmed the library sessions with each FYE mentor after they selected a session time

Running the FYE Mystery Game Session

Session Time: 1 hour (Introduction: 5 to 10 minutes, Game/activity 30 to 40 minutes, Wrap-up and QA: 5 to 10 minutes)

1. 30 minutes prior to start time run through pre-game checklist.
2. Divide students into groups of 5 depending on class size.
3. Set the Scene: read the story, tasks and ground rules.
4. Hand out a resource bag to each group
5. After the game starts and the students leave, one librarian should stay in the room and give hints to groups as necessary.
6. The other participating librarian(s) should walk around and discreetly check on how the groups are doing.
7. Wrap up discussion and highlight key services
8. Give out prizes to the winning team: fidget toys
9. Distribute library services handout, buttons and exit surveys

Assessment

Participants reassembled in the art gallery at the end of the game and were given an exit survey consisting of three questions:

1. What are the 3 most important things you learned in this lesson?
2. Do you feel more prepared to use the library after this lesson?
3. Is there anything you still have questions about? Include your email address with this question, and we will get back to you with an answer.

Feedback from Students

“How to find books; the existence of Special Collections; the call number system”

“How to look up for a book; how the library is organized; where the help desks are”

“Where the group study rooms are, what the archive does, where to find books”

“How to use the library, how to find books, that **librarians aren't scary to talk to**”

“FYE meetings are fun, the library is bigger than I thought, there is tons of help in library”

Feedback from Students

“Teamwork; communication”

“Working together, trust, listen to others”

“Work together, take your time, ask questions, take risks”

“Working together is key, stay calm, look into the small details”

“Super FUN!”



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Challenges

- Low attendance, low cohort group participation
- Students' scheduling conflicts
- Communication challenges with FYE mentors
- Staffing challenges

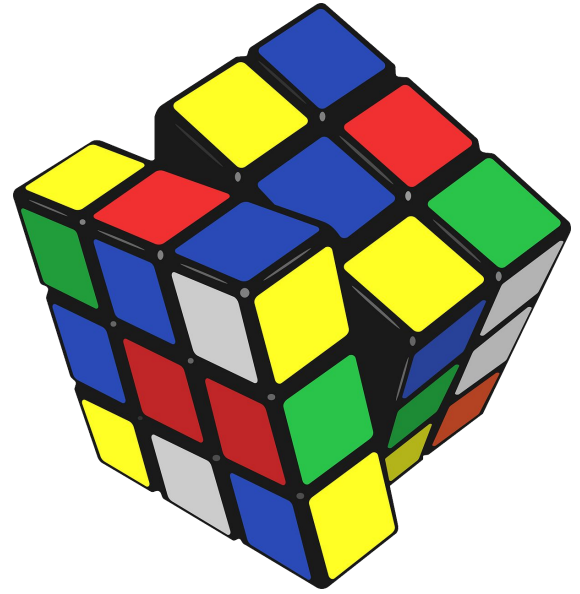


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Tips and Best Practices

Tips

- Use items you have on hand
- Start planning early
- Seek out campus collaborators
- Staff involvement
- Promotion and timing
- Include prizes for motivation and participation, eg earning badges, points, winning team prizes
- Communicate regularly with collaborators



Best Practices for Designing a Mystery Game

- Set clear learning goals
- 4-6 clues per game
- Keep team sizes at 5 members or smaller
- Add a team competition component
- Give students a clear starting point
- Include how-to handouts, eg screenshots of a catalog search
- Test runs with staff first for feedback
- Prepare 1 or 2 hints for each clue
- A few challenging clues are okay, but not too difficult
- Have fun!

Conclusion

Innovative student led curriculum

Minimal staff and instructional requirements

Small or no budget requirements

A collaboration opportunity with campus partners

Fun and engaging



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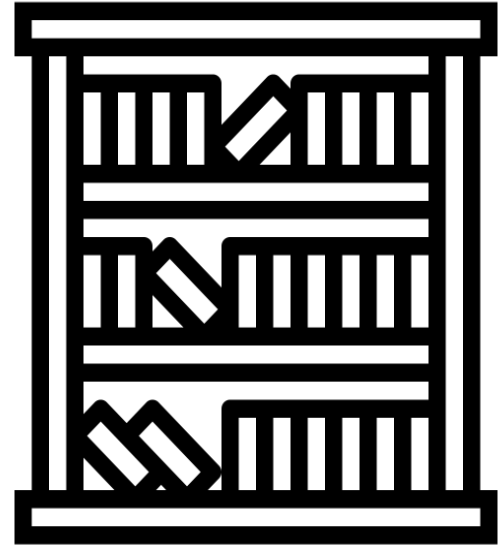
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Thank You!

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