Perspectives on Presentation and Perception of Libraries on Admissions Campus Tours

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Abstract: This article examines the presentation of libraries during admissions campus tours at a large public university. Perspectives from tour guides, librarians, and admissions staff are considered through an analysis of tour observations and interviews. Tour guides' statements about the libraries varied, but mostly indicated that they viewed the libraries as positive and valuable places. This article reveals opportunities for collaboration between academic libraries and admissions departments to ensure that tours present information that aids prospective students in understanding the library's role on a university campus, feeling welcome and comfortable in the library space, and envisioning themselves using the library.

Keywords: Library marketing, library outreach, academic libraries, library tours, campus tours

Introduction

Campus tours provide a crucial opportunity for colleges and universities to attract prospective students. In a short time, tour guides are tasked with conveying a wide spectrum of the undergraduate experience, from academics to residential and social life. The stakes are high as tours are the first impression of the campus environment, facilities, and culture. Rated as one of the most important factors in the college selection process, a tour can solidify the student's decision to apply or accept an offer of admission (Secore, 2018; Stolzenberg, et al, 2019).

As the heart of academic and research life on campus, libraries are a common tour stop. Depending on a tour guide's experience and training, the

caliber and content of library information on campus tours can vary widely. As part of the library's broader marketing and outreach efforts, the quality of general campus tours led by these student guides may benefit from library intervention. Admissions campus tours that highlight the library are a marketing opportunity that librarians can evaluate and influence.

Visiting a college campus is an opportunity to understand what the student experience is like. In our case study of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), a large public research university with an enrollment of over 18,000 undergraduate students, admission is competitive, and the university regularly offers admissions tours. Prospective students and guests can schedule a visit that includes an information session with an admissions staff member followed by a 75 to 90-minute walking tour of campus led by a student guide. This case study investigates the following questions: how do student tour guides communicate about the library to prospective students and families; what aspects of the libraries do they discuss; how are they trained to present the libraries; and is this consistent with how librarians want the libraries to be portrayed on the tours?

Literature Review

Academic librarians understand the vital importance of communicating value to users and potential users (Silipigni et al., 2017), yet prospective students and families tend to be an overlooked audience for academic libraries, which understandably concentrate marketing efforts on enrolled students. For instance, it is common for academic libraries to develop tours for incoming students to orient them to the library's offerings. The role of the library in recruitment and admissions tours has received less attention in the literature.

In a survey of academic library participation in recruitment and retention initiatives, Hubbard and Loos (2013) found that 73% of academic library directors surveyed "indicated that librarians, or library staff, participate in recruitment efforts" of which library-hosted tours were the most common recruitment strategy. Little and Price (2013) implemented a strategy of librarian involvement in campus admissions tours by encouraging staff engagement with the tours. Their efforts include communication with parents as a priority, based on the idea that parents can communicate library benefits to their child(ren) and encourage them to seek help. However, librarian intervention may not be

feasible for busy librarians on campuses, especially where tours are held frequently, as Kopp (2013) acknowledges in her case study on academic libraries and new student recruitment. Kopp emphasizes the benefits of partnering with campus admissions offices to engage incoming students and build their awareness, comfort, and familiarity with the library.

Miller also discusses campus tours as an important marketing tool. Miller (2012) educated admissions staff and student tour guides about the libraries and their value to the campus community at Miami University. Beyond the basic information on hours, services, and facilities, she suggests librarians supply admissions ambassadors with student anecdotes. While a handful of studies have explored library partnerships with admissions, the literature in this area is missing a methodological approach that examines how tour guides present the libraries in their own words.

Higher education marketing literature points to campus visits and tour guides as highly influential sources of information in the college selection process (Secore, 2018; Brown, 2010). A study by Okerson (2016) sought to fill a gap in knowledge about what components of the campus tour are most important, finding that "the factors that make a difference for students evaluating the campus environment are the perceived aesthetic of campus, personal interactions, and community/vibe" (171). This study and other sources offering advice on improving the campus visit experience sometimes mention the library as a tour stop, but do not provide recommendations for how the library should be portrayed. For example, Mass (2016) posits that parents are more interested in academic venues than amenities such as expensive recreational facilities, but does not specifically appreciate the library's role in tours.

Methodology

Qualitative research methods including observation, interviews, and content analysis were used to collect data for this study. Given the lack of research concerning campus tours, a qualitative approach is useful in bringing attention to aspects and issues for further study. Participant observation was used to collect data reflecting student tour guide behavior. In participant observation, the researcher is immersed in the study setting as both an observer

and a participant, allowing the researcher to gain insights firsthand (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Six full admissions tours, each led by a different tour guide, were observed and recorded in spring 2017.

In a study of this nature, it is essential to capture the tour guides' candid remarks about the libraries. When it comes to observational studies, "the biggest danger is that observed people change their behavior because of the presence of the observer," a phenomenon known as the Hawthorne effect (Wildemuth, 2009). In order to achieve the study's goals, it was necessary to record the tour guides' speech about the libraries without notifying them about the observation. This research was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for research on human subjects at UNC, as well as UNC admissions, with the understanding that tours are conducted in public areas with no expectation of privacy.

Six (6) tours were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Tour guides were selected to include the perspectives of two genders (4 male, 2 female) and class years (1 freshman, 2 sophomores, 2 juniors, and 1 senior). This sampling method was used to attain a range of tour experiences and achieve data saturation, meaning that no new data and coded themes were uncovered. The data saturation was sufficient for producing a comprehensive set of themes for analysis. The primary data from the tour transcripts were analyzed and assigned to thematic categories using an inductive coding method in which themes and categories were developed by reading and synthesizing the data (Bernard et al, 2017). A codebook was created to ensure systematic coding of the data based on documented code definitions with representative examples (see Appendix A for a summary of coded findings).

In addition to the tour observations, two admissions staff members were interviewed about how the campus tour content is developed, and how guides are trained to speak about the libraries. Semi-structured interviews of three librarians and one library administrator were conducted to provide information about what UNC Libraries would like to communicate during tours; all interviewees provided written consent.

Findings

The librarian perspective

Three central themes emerged from interviewing library staff about what they would like the tour guides to communicate about the libraries.

1. The libraries are spaces that are open for students to explore, use, and study within.

The librarians considered what information would be most relevant for a prospective student to know. Research questions may not be on their mind, but they know that they will use the libraries as study spaces, and entering students can visualize themselves doing this. To that end, guides can explain the different atmospheres of the three main libraries, "characterizing for each of them the personality of each library so that they can begin to picture themselves connecting to one of those libraries. I think that is a really good way to start that relationship-building process between the student and the library." Prospective students should know that they are welcome to take advantage of all the libraries offer. Guides can explain that there is a network of libraries that serve different purposes depending on what students are working on. A student's major or status as an undergraduate does not limit access—all libraries are open to students.

2. The libraries are here to support student learning, research, and creative endeavors.

How does the library support the ecosystem of learning on campus? One librarian suggested that guides frame the library by placing it within the broader student support network. Guides could explain the library's role in the campus learning community along with the Writing Center, Learning Center, or peer tutoring services, which work together to contribute to student success.

Considering that "first-year students come here having never experienced any kind of academic library," there is also a need to clarify how the libraries are distinct from each other in terms of both study spaces and the

resources they offer. Most new students will not have encountered a special collections library, so it would be helpful for guides to explain the advantages of special collections. This would help to contextualize this library and explain why, with its absence of visible bookshelves, it does not look like any other library they have been to.

3. The libraries are a place to get help.

"Every single person who works in the library is here to support your academic experience": that is the message one of the librarians would most like prospective students to know. Tour guides can highlight librarians as a resource to help ease prospective student's anxieties about navigating the library and the campus at large. As another librarian said, prospective students should be assured that they need "never feel bad about asking us for help—if it's not something we do, we'll find you the people on campus who work on that." This comment establishes the libraries' function as a point of connection to information and resources across campus, while countering students' fears about asking for help. The tour guide could take this a step further by sharing "a personal experience of a time that a librarian helped them, or someone they know, that would encourage them to see the librarians as just as much of a useful resource—if not more of a useful resource—than the books on the shelves and electronic databases." Telling a personal story about the helpfulness and accessibility of librarians sends a message to prospective students that asking for help in college is an important skill for academic success.

The tour guide perspective

Seven themes emerged from the tour data related to student experiences with the libraries. A list of the coded themes is provided in Appendix A. Direct quotes and excerpts from the data are used throughout the findings to illustrate themes and analysis.

Atmosphere

The UNC–Chapel Hill library system is composed of several libraries, each with a distinct atmosphere. The three main libraries are the Walter Royal Davis Library (Davis), which houses the general research collection, the R.B. House Undergraduate Library (UL), and the Wilson Special Collections Library

(Wilson). A library's atmosphere is distinguished by its architecture and spaces, how people behave in the space, whether it is best suited to individual or collaborative work, and the noise level. These factors influence a student's emotions, attitudes, and perceptions of the library.

Several guides described Wilson as a counterpart to the famous Hogwarts library in the *Harry Potter* movies: "Wilson Library is that library at UNC, I feel like all colleges have one that looks like Hogwarts on the inside." With its grand reading room and stately façade featuring regal columns, imposing steps, and a domed roof, Wilson Library is an impressive building and a focal point of the central campus. Guides express pride in the building and its beauty ("it's really great for Instagram pictures") but their comments reveal that they see the space as more of a showpiece than somewhere they would actually go to study. Indeed, guides struggled to articulate Wilson Library's purpose and why students might use it. Mostly they focused on how quiet this library is as a study environment in which any accidental noise exposes them to judgment by fellow students. Comments such as "it's a little bit intimidating," "you literally can hear a pin drop," and "I always get self-conscious if I sneeze" demonstrate how the social dynamics of the library, and the way that people enforce the noise level, play into students' perceptions of whether they feel comfortable in the space.

Guides do point out that specific spaces are conducive to certain activities, that many study environments exist in different libraries and even different floors of the same library. Studying for class might be done in Davis Library, but studying for an important exam may require a silent study space for maximum focus. For example, "I don't go in there [Wilson Library] a lot, but when I was studying for the MCATs and I was doing my practice tests, I would go in there since it's super quiet so you minimize distractions."

In contrast to Wilson, one guide described the UL as having a "cozy setting," though he preferred working in Davis, which is ideal for "buckling down and getting after it." The UL has a reputation as being a louder library with a social atmosphere—a place where you can study in groups and run into friends. However, students who need to focus and be productive may prefer to go to Davis, where there is a greater chance of anonymity and more spaces for private study.

Overall, these comments repeatedly present the libraries primarily as study spaces, and less about research, and the library's resources. On one level, studying in the library is probably what prospective students can most readily envision themselves doing and is useful for tour audiences to see. However, more attention could be given to how the library supports research beyond physical spaces to work.

Personal attachment

Most of the guides talked about which library they preferred to use or claimed a certain study space as their favorite. Among the guides observed, Davis emerged as a favorite. One guide jokingly called this library his "favorite eight floor monstrosity" because he spends "a little too much time there." Nevertheless, he still says "I love it anyways," in keeping with his upbeat, positive presentation style. This quotation reveals the tension between students' attachment to a library and their negative feelings about spending a lot of time studying. Another student mentioned that specific furniture in the UL fit his method of studying: "[The UL] is where I personally like to study. It's got a lot of really big tables that you can lay out all your work on and it's open 24/7, which is really convenient." To describe the difference between Davis and the UL, one guide said, "if you like the cozy setting, if that's your thing, then the UL is definitely the place for you," conveying that there is a library that fits different personal preferences, and that students tend to take ownership of a particular library when they discover their favorite. His use of the phrase "the place for you" is an important marketing technique that invites prospective students to picture themselves in the space and claim a library as their own.

One guide emphasized that branch libraries are open to all students, irrespective of your major/minor: "It's the Kenan Science Library but it's really open to everybody. I have friends who are arts majors who come with me to that library." This personal example highlights that all students are welcome to use the library, as well as the social aspect of going to the library with friends. This sentiment was echoed by another guide at the conclusion of her tour. This is when the guide tells their "Why State" story, explaining why they chose to come to UNC and what they love about it. The guide talked about how UNC students are the kind of people who help each other rather than compete. She "found friends here who will stay up with me until 3am in the library." This comment highlighted the community and camaraderie among UNC students who are

dedicated to their academic work, while still supporting and spending time together. It is a positive thing for the library to be seen as a space for groups of students to study together in solidarity. Even though the thought of late nights in the library is not particularly enticing for a prospective student, it is a reality of college life and helps to reassure prospective students that UNC's libraries have spaces and people to support them.

Materials and collections

During one tour, an audience member expressed concern about whether the library would have all of the textbooks needed for classes. The guide recommended purchasing textbooks from the bookstore and using library books "if you've got a paper to write and you need to do research on it" or "if you want to learn more about a specific topic." This distinction is appropriate, though the guide could have mentioned library textbooks are available for some courses. Instead, the reason given was "most of the textbooks that your professors are going to want you to have are new and most of the books in our libraries are pretty old." It is unfortunate that the guide's comment portrays library collections as outdated, implying a lack of relevance. This scenario would have been a good opportunity to talk about the library's course reserve system, which makes textbooks and other course materials available for a limited checkout time. Since textbooks are often expensive, their availability via the library is a legitimate concern, especially for students worried about the affordability of college.

Understandably, the tour guides did not detail Wilson Library's extensive special collections, although one guide mentioned an interesting object on display. Another guide mentioned that Wilson Library has "a bunch of different collections that students can use." Not only did he acknowledge that there are many collections within Wilson, but more importantly that the collections are available for student use. By contrast, another guide introduced Wilson as "technically our graduate library, but it's open to all students." Librarians have also heard students perpetuate a misconception that only graduate students, faculty, or other "serious" researchers can use the materials in Wilson, so it was useful for this guide to clarify that all students have access to them, although it should not have been referred to as the graduate library. It would be helpful to train guides on what special collections and archives are, why students might

use them, and share specific examples of interesting items, since they are very different from other types of libraries.

Accessibility and safety

On a typical college campus, the phrase 'Walk of Shame' conjures up images of an early morning walk home after a night of revelry. At UNC, this phrase has a unique connotation:

> "There is something called a 'walk of shame' that is associated with Davis Library...the Walk of Shame is students walking from Davis which closes at 2am to the UL which is open 24 hours...At 2am they walk across in this big mass. No one's happy. Everybody's solemn, probably the saddest moment of their week, perhaps their month. Don't procrastinate is the moral of the story."

The tour audience laughed at this story, which was delivered in a self-deprecating and humorous manner with a clear intention to entertain and play to the audience's sympathy. Yet underlying this funny story is a message to prospective students about the need to develop good time-management skills or face the consequences of late nights of studying in the library.

This guide had previously introduced Davis Library by associating it with the virtues of productivity and studiousness: "You'll see a ton of students in there all day studying. I saw some on the first day of classes studying and I just couldn't help but think to myself 'Why can't I be like them?'" On one hand, it is positive that students heavily use the library, but the implication for prospective students can result in the impression that UNC students are stressed out and overworked. On a positive note, these anecdotes underscore that the library is responsive to students' needs, setting policies for hours that accommodate students' need to study any time of the day or night.

Safety and transportation in connection to the late hours were also highlighted by tour guides, using it as an opportunity to talk about the bus transit system and late-night shuttle. As one guide said, "if you're up late

studying for your exam at Davis Library, you can always make sure that you can get back safely no matter what." Another guide took the opportunity to praise the campus SafeWalk service which provides students with a way to get home safely after a late-night library study session. Safety while at college can be a concern, so talking about late-night transportation and SafeWalk services are a way for guides to reassure prospective students—and perhaps more importantly, their parents—that systems are in place to keep students safe. The library is seen as a trustworthy place that supports student safety by stationing SafeWalkers in the building and is also portrayed as being an integral part of student life and a student's daily routine.

Technology

The UNC-Chapel Hill library system provides technology and support including access to computers, printing, a media and design lab, makerspaces and 3D printers, and audio and video equipment and editing software - disappointingly, the guides did not cover much of this information. One guide pointed out an office suite on the basement level of Wilson Library and said that they received help with downloading software there. However, that office suite is for the library's internal software development department and is not a public service point. The guide may have confused it with the basement level of the UL, which houses UNC's Information Technology Services (ITS), as another guide pointed out in a story about getting a laptop fixed. This situation highlights how tour guides gather information based on cues from the surrounding environment. The sign on the door to the library's software development office in Wilson is intended for an internal audience and thus is not clear signage for a tour guide who may easily assume it is a branch of ITS.

Most guides mentioned makerspaces when they showed off the Be a Maker (BeaM) space located near the science building. It is actually a network of makerspaces across UNC's campus, of which the libraries are a part, although the guides did not explicitly explain this. One tour guide pointed out the Library's makerspace resources, particularly referencing 3D printing:

> "The Library has a software acquisition department which does things like 3D print Old Wells. So really anybody has access to it... I'm [also] building a 3D printed hand this semester for one of my classes... You really

can use 3D printing for everything, and I think it's super awesome we have this free resource here for all students."

The Old Well is an iconic structure associated with the University, which makes it a relevant example of the creative possibilities for 3D printed objects. At the same time, the guide showed that 3D printing supports academic work by giving the example of how they created a prosthetic hand to solve a real-life problem. This is an excellent example of how the library's services support classroom teaching and learning, as well as personal learning and creative experimentation.

Research

Typically, tour guides discuss opportunities for undergraduate research at a separate tour stop from the libraries. However, several of the guides' comments place the libraries within the network of support for undergraduate research. One guide emphasized that, "We have a lot of really great options for resources both for classes and to do undergraduate research," while another talked about using library materials to explore topics and gather sources for research assignments.

A specific example of library research was shared by a guide who referenced an article in the student newspaper featuring a student who discovered poems and conducted original research in Wilson Library.

> "I just read an article in the *Daily Tar Heel* about a student who was doing a project for her English class here at State and was looking through the archives for stuff, and she ended up discovering two poems. Which is really cool that she got kind of famous for, and got written about for, just doing stuff for a class at UNC and using the resources available within the libraries, which is really awesome."

This is an excellent story for the guide to share about the excitement of discovering materials in the library's collection and the opportunity for undergraduate students to conduct original research. It also reveals that reading the student newspaper is one way that at least some guides build their knowledge base, and that it is important for the library to be regularly included in university news and media outlets.

Interlibrary loan (ILL)

Many of the tour guides made a point of highlighting their pride in the ILL system, perhaps explained by the fact that ILL is included in the tour guide training document. Guides emphasized the convenience of students being able to obtain any material they might need for their research. One guide gave a personal example: "I've had friends who have gotten things emailed to them from Duke or NC State for projects, which is really awesome and really convenient." Another description of the interlibrary loan system follows:

> "We are the third-largest library system in the nation, and that's because we have the pleasure of sharing a library system with a couple other schools in North Carolina. We share with Duke, State, and NC Central, which means there's an interloaning system. So if you ever need a book and you can't find it in one of our many, many libraries here, you can loan it from there and they'll bring it to a library here and then you can use it."

The assertion that UNC has the third-largest library system, while clearly a point of pride for the guides, is unfortunately incorrect. That comment is listed as a fact in the training guide but its source is unclear. Data points such as this, ranking UNC highly among other schools, appear frequently during tours as guides regularly use superlatives to present UNC as exceptional, but it would be more accurate to say that UNC has *one* of the largest library systems in the Southeast. This quotation also conflates interlibrary borrowing with the Triangle Research Libraries Network, which is a collaborative organization comprising local institutions. Patrons can request document delivery of materials from other TRLN libraries. While the guides emphasized the TRLN member institutions, they are not the only places from which UNC borrows materials. ILL requests may be filled by libraries anywhere both in and out of the country. While the guides did not explain this confusing system exactly right, they did positively convey the benefits of resource sharing and how it improves the accessibility of materials for UNC students.

The admissions staff perspective

According to admissions staff members, the purpose of the tours is to market the university, make students feel at home on campus, and help the tour

audience experience firsthand the "hustle and bustle" of campus. While this research was being conducted, Admissions was revising the tour format based on feedback from visit surveys. The goal is to find ways to "include more of a typical day for a student" by "using the libraries and different buildings on campus to provide more resources to help fill out that full experience." Visit survey feedback included requests to go into a library or to see where students study. Since most students will spend time in the libraries during their time at UNC, entering the buildings can help round out the picture of student life from an academic perspective, and guides are now required to stop in a library during their tour.

In assessing the tour guides' presentation of the libraries, it is important to understand the goals for the tour and the guide training process. Becoming a tour guide involves a selective application process, followed by a formal training program. Training involves several sessions covering background information, followed by a mock tour. Trainees then undergo a shadowing process where they gradually take over parts of the tour until they lead a full tour, at which point they are evaluated.

At the beginning of training, to build their knowledge base, guides are provided with a fact sheet outlining everything that they need to learn, formatted as key quick facts by location. The facts are guidelines that provide a shared knowledge base and structure, rather than serving as a script, and guides are encouraged to personalize the tour by sharing their own stories and experiences. Guides will inevitably prioritize their involvement in the tours at different levels, and even if a guide reviews all of their training materials, they are encouraged to expand on these facts with personal stories, so standardization is not possible or even desirable. Providing the guides with key talking points is not an effort to script them, but rather to gently steer them in the right direction, understanding that the tour guide's personality should still shine through.

The sources for the facts and frequency of outline updates are unclear, which explains some inaccurate information. The libraries are mentioned during one of the in-person guide training sessions and in four bullet points on the fact sheet. Unfortunately, all of the library information in the fact sheet is technically inaccurate as a result of the current lack of collaboration between Admissions and libraries. The good news is that the tour guide trainers are

committed to improving the information they provide. Academic libraries only stand to benefit from proactively reaching out to their institutions' admissions departments to review and revise the tour's library content. The Admissions department, for example, says they would welcome input from library staff to improve tour guide training materials. Additionally, staff from across campus are sometimes invited to tour guide meetings to give brief presentations. This is an excellent opportunity for library staff to educate guides about library resources, how to better use the library, and how to better frame the library system at UNC, while clarifying any points of confusion.

Another component of tour-guide training involves sharing personal anecdotes. This information is captured in a "homework" portion of the outline, which asks guides to respond to questions with how they would phrase something on their tour as a personal experience. Guides also share these stories with each other in meetings and are encouraged to repurpose the stories for themselves by talking about what "someone they know" has done—allowing guides to share a greater range student experiences. This is an opportunity for librarians to provide student success stories, arming guides with anecdotes that demonstrate the library's value.

The physical path the tour takes to the library is worthy of consideration. Tour-goers are guided to Wilson Library via its basement entrance, due to its convenience. Unfortunately, the basement is not an ideal stop because the space houses staff work areas and not student study spaces or resources. The basement is the most visually unattractive level of Wilson Library, so it is worth investigating an alternate route that accommodates accessibility and logistical concerns while providing a more attractive and representative experience of how students use the libraries. Considering alternatives, Admissions staff expressed concern that tour groups would be too disruptive and distracting in other library spaces. Library staff can weigh these considerations and work with Admissions to recommend an ideal tour path.

Conclusions

A comparison of librarians' suggested talking points with the tour guides' speech reveals areas of alignment as well as areas for improvement. Five of the six tour guides made an effort to present the libraries in a positive light and were

competent at conveying that the libraries are open for students to explore, to use, and to study in. Guides also emphasized the benefits of library access and extended operating hours, while showcasing a variety of spaces open to students by highlighting the three main campus libraries. Overall, the presentation of the libraries typically focused on atmosphere and/or type of study environment.

Some inconsistencies persisted though, especially pertaining to Wilson Library. For example, one guide commented that Wilson is "technically our graduate library, but it's open to all students." Wilson is *not* technically the "graduate library" but fortunately the guide did say it was open to all. It would be beneficial to dispel this notion to reinforce that the libraries are open to the entire campus and none of the libraries is dedicated for a select segment of users, nor are undergraduate students at the bottom of an imagined hierarchy. There was also some confusion about what special collections and archives are, and why students might use them. Tour guides would benefit from training in this area.

Student tour guides are students before they are tour guides, and consequently have varying impressions of the library based on personal experience. As such, their statements about the library can be inconsistent. Guides should share authentic personal stories, but preferably ones that highlight how the library helps students, rather than describing stressful all-night study sessions. Librarians want students to know that the libraries are a place to get help with research assignments, not just to study. A tour guide sharing an example of being helped by friendly library staff would reinforce this point and emphasize that the libraries directly support student learning, research, and creative endeavors.

It is a reality that student tour guides may also unintentionally relay incorrect information about the library. Such misinformation can take the form of inflation, misdirection, or factual inaccuracies, potentially creating misconceptions. With a lot of ground to cover, details on specific library policies, spaces, and services can slip through the cracks of a campus tour. While most of the information the guides shared was accurate, there were some misperceptions and instances where knowledge could be improved, specifically about course reserve materials and technology lending. Overall, the misperceptions overheard are not harmful but do indicate the need for guides to

have more robust training about what the libraries offer, as well as accurate reference materials. Librarians should proactively work with Admissions to review talking points as well as address common misconceptions to prevent misinformation.

Academic libraries and admissions departments both stand to benefit from improving how tour guides frame and talk about the library. Prospective students seek to get a grasp on what their college experience might be from the campus tour, and study findings suggest the library can be used to support two of Okerson's core elements that make up the "campus essence"—aesthetics and the community vibe of the campus (2016). Tour guides can present the library as an aesthetically-appealing space dedicated for student use and as a gathering place. In this way, the library brings to life the community atmosphere and campus social dynamics. Okerson asserts that students on tours are highly observant, "constantly evaluating the physical space, the bulletin board postings, and the social patterns on campus to determine whether they can envision themselves on campus" (p. 161). Acknowledging that prospective students have "a desire for happiness and balance" in college, tour guides should be urged to avoid negative study experience stories (p. 161). Instead, librarians should provide tour guides with positive stories about the library and how it contributes to academic success, whether that means finding community and a comfortable study spot, receiving help from a librarian, or using library-provided design software and equipment for creative projects.

Additional strategies to improve information sharing include: (1) paying attention to the questions that prospective students and parents ask, and address them in tour guide training and guidelines; (2) fact checking the tour guide fact sheet to assess quality, accuracy, and relevance; and (3) recognizing that tour guides take cues from their surrounding spaces, ensure that library signage assists them in understanding library hours, service points, and policies. Finally, libraries should continue promoting their services and student success stories through campus channels such as the student newspaper and social media. Increased visibility on campus increases the chances of guides learning new information about the library from a variety of sources.

Prior to this research, librarians at UNC were not in touch with Admissions, but they now have the opportunity and encouragement to collaborate. The Admissions staff are enthusiastic about working more closely

with campus units and receptive to making improvements. Library staff should seize the opportunity to build a relationship where they can consistently supply relevant talking points, updates, and advice on how tours can best navigate—and show off—the library space. By working together, libraries and admissions departments can achieve the mutually beneficial goal of relationship-building between incoming students and the library.

An avenue for further research could involve interviewing tour guides to ask follow-up questions. Additionally, surveying tour audiences about their perceptions of the libraries would provide more information about the tour's impact on prospective students. Asking incoming students about their perceptions of the libraries, and what shaped those perceptions, could further reveal the importance of admissions tours as an initial source of information about the library.

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Appendix A: Thematic Findings

Coded Theme	Code Properties	Representative Quote
Atmosphere	Social dynamics within the library space, and characteristics used to describe the atmosphere of individual libraries.	*"I'm not going to lie to you, Wilson's beautiful but I don't really like studying there. It's a little bit intimidating. It's almost silent all the time."*
Personal attachment	Personal stories about using the library.	*"I found friends here who will stay up with me until 3am in the library."*
Materials and collections	Quality, usefulness, condition, format, and availability of library resources.	*"All of your textbooks are going to come from Student Stores. All of the books in here [the library] you're going to use if you've got a paper to write and you need to do research on it."*
Accessibility and safety	Library hours of operation, convenience, transportation, and safety.	*"Since our libraries are open pretty late, we have a great program here at State called SafeWalk, where you walk down to the information desk for whatever library you're in, you ask for a SafeWalker…"*

Technology	Technology services and support available through the libraries.	*"You really can use 3D printing for everything and I think it's super awesome we have this free resource here for all students."*
Research	The library's role in facilitating undergraduate research.	*"We have a lot of really great options for resources both for classes and to do undergraduate research… you've got a lot of options to pull sources from."*
Interlibrary loan (ILL)	The lending system by which a library can borrow materials from other libraries.	*"If you need a book for a class, it's here. And if it's not, we can get it. What that means is we have interlibrary loan… I've been doing a lot of research papers as a humanities–based student so that's very helpful for me."*

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview questions for the Librarians and Library Administrator

1. Have you seen tour guides talking about the libraries during Admissions campus tours? If so, how would you assess their presentation of the library/libraries to the tour audience? Can you recall any specific statements that they have made about the libraries?

2. What are the three most important things that you think the tour guides should talk about?

3. Where in the library do you think the tour should stop?

Interview questions for the Admissions Staff

1. From your perspective, what is the purpose of the Admissions campus tours?

2. Why do you include the libraries as part of the tour?

3. How do you select the tour locations that are inside or outside the library?

4. What is your sense of how the libraries are presented on the tours? Which libraries are included? Why did you select those ones?

5. What is the process for tour guide training?

6. How are tour guides informed of what to say about the libraries?

7. What is your perception of the similarity between what you train the tour guides to say and what they actually say?

8. Tour guides are encouraged to tell stories. In your ideal world, what stories would the tour guides tell about the library?

About the Author

Alena Principato is the outreach and engagement librarian at Nevada State College, where she is responsible for leading the Marydean Martin Library's marketing and outreach efforts. Alena holds BAs in English and art from Lafayette College and an MS in library science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. At UNC–Chapel Hill, she worked in the university library system as a fellow in the prestigious Carolina Academic Library Associates program.