

# *Stranger in a Strange Land at a Strange Time*

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**T**he title of this chapter takes its inspiration from Exodus 2:22 when Moses gives his son the name Gershom, which translates as “Stranger in a Strange Land” in the King James Version. Moses described himself as a stranger in a strange land because he went from being an adopted prince in Egypt to a shepherd in Midian. My addition of “at a strange time” refers to the time period beginning when the COVID-19 pandemic started to ravage the world.

This chapter will focus on my personal experiences starting a position at a new institution that was seeking to expand its electronic holdings and serve students in challenging times. The chapter begins with my journey of how I, the stranger, came to a strange land, Mississippi College near Jackson, MS, during a strange time, the COVID-19 pandemic. This account, spanning from March 2020 to May 2022, focuses on my personal journey of losing my job at one institution because of the pandemic and moving to a job created

because of the pandemic at a different institution. I will also detail how the new institution was determined to embrace the challenges and transitions of working under COVID-19 restrictions. Included are my recollections of what serving and engaging with patrons during the height of COVID-19 looked like. I present the difficulties of how to serve and engage patrons when there is physical distance and a lack of gatherings. This account covers both my feelings and memories from these unprecedented times.

## *Exile*

In March of 2020, I received an email from the provost of the Texan seminary where I worked. He asked for a meeting with me and our library dean on how we would serve students during the pandemic. However, when I arrived, I found that the meeting had nothing to do with serving students during COVID-19. He started off by saying how the future was uncertain because of COVID-19. He went on to say that since students had just been sent home for the semester, they were not going to be coming into the Library. We had several hundred students who were still living on campus, but they would not be gathering anywhere on campus due to the lockdown. Since students were not going to come into the Library, the rest of the Library staff and I were not needed for the time being. He continued to mention how challenging things were in the world. The provost spoke at length about how the pandemic had personally affected him because he would not be able to buy a boat or go see a baseball game. He said that at the end of March, I would be placed on furlough. He gave no end date for the furlough.

This meeting occurred without a representative from Human Resources (HR), and, about a week later, I called the HR department to clarify some things regarding the furlough. They told me that I was not being put on furlough and had been terminated. Not only had the provost fired me and the other Library staff, but he could not even bring himself to say that he fired us. Not only were the Library staff treated like this, but dozens of other workers on campus were also fired because of the pandemic. I was fired within a week of Texas being placed on lockdown.

I was devastated. I served as the Digital Resources Librarian at this institution for nearly six years. The school brought me there

to help them add and manage online resources. I was instrumental in modernizing the Library and enhancing electronic resources. During my tenure at this institution, I implemented a discovery system, acquired hundreds of thousands of e-books, spearheaded the embedded and personal librarianship initiative, and increased services to distance and online students. It was primarily because of my work that students were able to easily access online materials as higher education shifted to remote platforms. It hurt deeply to know that my years of service meant absolutely nothing. It was terrifying to think that a Christian institution to which I had given so much of my time and skills left me without a salary and health care while this virus was ravaging the world. I felt used and easily disposed of by this school. According to the provost, who had never once been to the Library, the best thing that I could do for the school that I loved and served diligently was to no longer work there. There was very little consideration as to how students were going to get the help that they needed without a Digital Resources Librarian.

On social media and in the news, I kept seeing stories about how various libraries were serving students during the pandemic. However, our institution decided that libraries and librarians were not essential during the pandemic. The Seminary had only kept the library dean. It was up to him and the couple of student workers that he was allowed to keep to pull books for students that were still on campus as well as attending to the many copy and scan requests that Seminary students desperately needed. Instead of continuing to serve the students that I had dedicated my career to, I was cut off from that community entirely.

I spent the first few months of COVID-19 trying to navigate unemployment benefits and working part-time at Walmart. I remember contacting a staff member at Atla in tears about what happened and how much hurt I felt. I remember meeting on Zoom for a Board of Directors meeting for another organization and feeling embarrassed that I was let go. I felt betrayed by both my school and my profession. I questioned the path, degrees, and years of professional development that had left me with nothing. Upon learning that it was a true termination, I started looking for more opportunities. Finding another position proved difficult as many library jobs that were posted right before the pandemic had closed or were removed because of the challenges caused by the pandemic. I eventually found a job that was posted after the pandemic started that was a great fit for me.

## *A New Change*

I received an opportunity to become the Electronic Resources and Serials Librarian at Mississippi College (MC) at the Leland Speed Library. This was a new position that was created because of the pandemic. They were seeking an experienced librarian to manage and expand their electronic holdings. They realized they needed this librarian because they wanted to meet the needs of students who would be remote and online, and to serve the online needs of their on-campus students. The skills that I acquired in my previous job prepared me for this new opportunity at MC. MC decided to emphasize electronic resources because they knew that COVID-19 had deeply impacted education. They understood that distance and online education would likely increase over the years. These goals were in direct opposition to the route the Seminary that I had been working for had chosen to take. Everything I did and advocated for at my previous school were skills and values that MC most hoped for in their candidate.

Much like Moses, I also felt like a stranger, though my transition was not quite as dramatic as Moses's. MC is a prestigious institution and the largest private school in the state. The previous college where I worked was mostly a graduate school with a small college that issued a few undergraduate degrees. MC is primarily a residential, four-year university with several undergraduate degrees, a graduate school, a physician assistant school, and a law school. The total student body of MC numbers around four thousand students. Although MC is a Baptist school, the same denomination as schools where I worked in the past, I was in very unfamiliar territory. I had not been in a working environment that was mostly residential undergrad since I was in library school. While I still felt a lot of pain from my previous institution, I was excited to start my new career. However, not only was I in a strange land, I was there during a strange time; no librarian currently living in America had ever dealt with serving patrons during a pandemic.

By the time I arrived at MC in August 2020, the Library staff was preparing to reopen the building to the students. They had been mostly closed to students since the pandemic began – closed entirely for the last couple of months of the spring 2020 semester, and open only a few days a week during the summer. In order to open fully and be compliant with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC) recommendations, we had to make the Library safe for our students.

The theme of the 2020-2021 academic year from MC administration was “Strong and Courageous,” which derived from Joshua 1:9. This theme of being strong and courageous was often repeated throughout the semester in order to encourage the community to keep pressing on during difficult and uncertain times. The words “Strong and Courageous” were painted into a mural in the student center, and were branded on hand sanitizing stations that were set up throughout the campus. “Strong and Courageous” were also words constantly used in emails and video communication from the president.

I was thankful to be in a solid Christian environment during this time. MC had a mix of trust in the Lord and respect for science. During these difficult times, administrators showed how much the MC environment was impacted by their dedication to the Lord, and they sought to be safe in how they handled campus operations. Since MC is a school that is strong in medical science, our administration took multiple precautions to ensure the safety of the community. We would get weekly emails from our COVID-19 coordinator who would inform us of our case count on campus and give encouragement during troubling times. These emails from the coordinator were heartfelt and devotional. They included tips on being physically and mentally healthy during the pandemic. She also sometimes included humorous YouTube videos to cheer up the faculty and staff. In addition, MC’s president occasionally sent emails filled with encouragement. At the same time, administrators made an effort to inform themselves about the seriousness and the risks of COVID-19. We had multiple task forces comprised of medical faculty who advised the administration for a year and a half. Grounded in their strong understanding of science, they took steps to make sure everyone was safe. The school encouraged everyone to get vaccinated. MC even offered the vaccine and boosters on campus. It was comforting to be at an institution that simultaneously cared for my well-being both spiritually, by expressing deeply committed Christian care for the community, and physically, by staying abreast of the science surrounding COVID-19.

The pandemic definitely had shaken up my world. It temporarily caused me to lose faith in my chosen profession. It caused me to be disconnected from a Seminary in which I was deeply invested and entrenched. I both lived and worked at the Seminary. So much of my social life revolved around the people I knew at the school. Being let

go deeply wounded me. However, MC provided a place where I could heal from those hurts. MC was concerned about the pandemic but was a place where fear had not taken over. I came to work feeling “strong and courageous.” MC is a place that has filled me with peace and confidence. This is an institution that carefully watched over its people during a difficult time.

## *Impact of COVID-19 on Library Services*

COVID-19 presented many challenges for the Library staff at Mississippi College. Although it was great being a part of this new community, I found it difficult to connect with that community because of all the pandemic restrictions in place. These mandates also made it difficult for Library staff to serve patrons during this time. Although the new dynamics at MC proved to be problematic, we were able to meet those challenges to ensure that students were safe from the virus as well as receiving library services and resources.

At the Speed Library, we sought to make our students strong and courageous by giving them the confidence that we were doing everything necessary to protect them against the virus. There were many safety measures that we put into place. We had a mask mandate throughout campus. In fact, MC went beyond the CDC recommendations; our school required masks when you walked outdoors. The only places where faculty, staff, and students could have their masks off were in offices, dorm rooms, and designated eating places. Our president could routinely be seen driving around campus on his golf cart wearing his own mask to remind students to keep their masks on. He even had a mask made to put on the front of his presidential cart to further emphasize the need for wearing masks. While I helped enforce and model good masking habits, one of the most difficult hurdles I faced was learning how to make purposeful connections with my new students and patrons despite the alienating look of masks.

Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, the Library had one entrance and one exit whereas before the pandemic, there were two main doors where patrons could either enter or exit. Before entering the Library, patrons would have to scan their cards. Previously, entry by card access only occurred during the evening. Card access restrictions also meant that we were closed to all non-MC people from the community. Once patrons were greeted by a Library worker who was

stationed at a desk in the foyer, they showed the worker an app that verified they were free of COVID symptoms. If they had trouble with the app, the worker would have the patron fill out a symptom form and take their temperature. This process was maintained for a year. In addition, a clear physical barrier was installed at the circulation desk for further protection against the virus. This barrier is similar to the ones found in a grocery store or a bank.

We implemented several other measures to protect students and staff in the Library. Several hand sanitizing stations were placed in the building. Plastic signs were placed on all tables indicating the table had recently been cleaned or was in need of being sanitized. The signs instructed students to flip the sign over after they were done using it. Library staff would walk the building hourly to wipe down the tables that had been used. Once the tables were wiped down, the staff would turn the sign over to indicate that the table had been cleaned.

One requirement that made Library staff unpopular was monitoring students during the pandemic. Making sure students were wearing masks in the library became a very laborious task. Throughout each day, twice an hour, two members of our Library staff would walk through the Library to enforce mask compliance and social distancing guidelines. When the pandemic started, we were asked to report the names of students who did not comply with the mask mandate to the Dean of Students and ask them to leave the building. This naturally upset students, and quite honestly it upset the Library staff because it put us in awkward and often adversarial situations. This also deeply impacted my ability to make positive connections with students because we were seen more as “mask police” than Librarians offering services to patrons. In addition to us acting as “mask police,” the Library actually contained real, off-duty police officers who would assist the night supervisors with mask compliance in the evening.

Before the fall 2020 semester started, we began to rearrange the study spaces in the Library. We had to remove a lot of chairs, changing the number of seats available to patrons at each table. We placed one chair at our shorter tables, which usually sat two to four people, and we placed only two chairs at our longer tables, which normally sat four to six people. We also limited the number of people who were allowed in study rooms. Most of our study rooms fit six to eight people. However, we limited the rooms to an occupancy of two to four people depending on the size of the room. Due to the changes

and restrictions present in the Library, our building lost its status of being a place of community. Instead, it became another place where students were in isolation. Our building was quiet and no longer a place where groups of friends would meet up. In addition, our coffee shop had remained closed from the time students were sent home in March 2020 and during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Although the theme on campus for 2020-2021 was from the book of Joshua, at times it felt like we were in the book of Judges. The mask requirements at other places on the MC campus were not as closely monitored as our building was, so it felt like many were doing “what was right in their own eye.” MC even made a video to address how some students had become lax in wearing their masks. It seemed that many students were not willing to wear a mask or were tired of wearing them. It was discouraging to know that other places on campus were not adhering to guidelines at MC, and, in the perception of many students, the Library and its Librarians were seen negatively. I remember reviewing comments made on pictures as well as in our personal messages on Instagram about how harsh the Library was during this time.

During the summer of 2021, we did get a reprieve from the mask mandate. We were finally able to go outside our offices without wearing them. The Library celebrated over social media through posted videos of us ripping down Library mask signage and pictures of Library staff stomping on masks. We started adding more seating to the Library and dropped the entrance requirement, allowing students to use both entrances into the building once again. Our Archivist sent out an email to the whole campus to ask for masks, signs, and other artifacts that people wanted to donate to the Archives to document and preserve the COVID-19 impact on MC. Campus dining even decided to re-open the coffee shop in the Library, which excited many students. Life on campus seemed to have returned to normal. Future events were planned throughout the school and, after a year break, athletics were fully back. Going into the fall 2021 semester, the school had changed its theme. The “Strong and Courageous” mural was replaced with “Rise Up,” which was taken from Nehemiah 2. However, this respite from masks was short-lived.

Students, staff, and faculty were asked once again to wear masks outside their offices to help ensure the health and safety on campus at the beginning of fall 2021 because of rising cases throughout our area. Although we were no longer monitoring the Library like before, and we did not require limited seating, it was still difficult



to go back to the way things were before the summer. We thought that since many people had been vaccinated and restrictions had been lifted, we could finally serve our students without any caution about the pandemic. It seemed like our hopes of having the Library become an engaging space again were over. However, a few days before Homecoming 2021, MC lifted the mask mandate for the final time. Since that time, the school slowly started to return to the way things were before the pandemic. MC would later experience its first “normal year” unhindered by COVID-19 in the 2022-2023 school year. The administration continued to incorporate the theme “Rise Up” by adopting the phrase “Here you Rise” in their promotional materials, and they have continued to use the terms “rise,” “rising,” and “arise” in various media campaigns and educational initiatives.

The pandemic gave us new opportunities to expand our Library services in different ways. Since we had a desire to expand our online holdings, I decided to add public domain e-book sites to our database list. In addition, I further utilized our LibAnswers tools. I created a library chat box from Springshare that appeared on our website and within our EBSCO databases. The chat box enabled synchronous chatting whenever a librarian would log in to the system at their desk. If they were not logged in, the LibAnswers box would show up for students to submit questions to be answered later. Although the synchronous chat service does not get used as often as I hoped, we have had several students submit questions through Ask-A-Librarian on LibAnswers. In addition, I made sure to add our text-a-librarian number to our webpage. In the 2020-2021 academic year, we received 30 synchronous chat questions and in the 2021-2022 academic year, we experienced a slight drop to 23 synchronous chat questions. Over the years, with the Ask-A-Librarian tool, we asynchronously answered:

- 180 questions in 2018-2019
- 157 questions in 2019-2020
- 127 questions in 2020-2021
- 72 questions in 2021-2022

Through our text a librarian service, we answered:

- 100 text questions in 2018-2019
- 353 questions in 2019-2020
- 284 questions in 2020-2021
- 225 questions in 2021-2022

We seem to have the most overall success with students using our texting service more than the synchronous chat and asynchronous Ask-A-Librarian services.

As the Electronic and Serials Librarian, I recognized an opportunity to maximize our print and journal collection. I added many public domain journals to our collection along with adding free and helpful online resources to our Library's website. MC was already transitioning away from bound print journals; they stopped binding print journals and were disposing of them instead of keeping them. Upon my arrival, there was already a plan in place to remove the bound journals that had been in the building for many years. Once those were removed, we only shelved and made accessible current journals. Library staff were able to determine that current print journals were not being used because no one requested them, and they were not leaving the Library shelves. We later decided to remove all print journals because the culture of our students had shifted to online journal use only.

I also sought to increase our student's use of interlibrary loan (ILL) during this time. I set out to have students gain easier access to both print and electronic resources. When I was hired, students could make ILL requests for books and articles through a form on the website. If they found an article in an EBSCO database that did not include the full text, they could fill out an ILL article request form on the Library website. However, students would have to go between the record and the online form. As students were researching, they would assume that they could not get the full text or they would go through the process of going to our main Library webpage and filling out a form. I wanted to ensure that our records without full text in EBSCO would include a link to an EBSCO-generated form that would send the request for full text to the MC ILL department. This form included the bibliographic information about the article. The patrons would only need to put in their contact information. This was done to give patrons easy access to request the full text within EBSCO instead of navigating back to our Library webpage. Simply putting this link in our EBSCO records dramatically increased use of the ILL service. This direct link to the form likely informed students that, when there was not a full-text article available, they could more directly request the article by filling out the form. The original ILL article request form on the Library's website was likely only known to students who had seen it demonstrated in an instruction session. We went from 90 article requests in the 2019-2020 academic year to 745 requests in the

2020-2021 academic year. This amount increased slightly in the 2021-2022 academic year to 776 requests. By changing the point of access for article requests, more students were able to access the resources that they needed.

COVID-19 did not seem to broadly impact our need to provide print resources to our students. In the 2019-2020 academic year, our students circulated 1,558 books. Although COVID-19 did impact this number, it only impacted about seven weeks of circulation due to the spring 2020 lockdown. In the 2020-2021 academic year, the number of check-outs increased to 2,712, and in 2021-2022 it increased to 3,747. Our overall circulation statistics have been up since before the pandemic started. Even though e-books are convenient, many students are choosing and needing the print books in our collection.

### *Impact of COVID-19 on Outreach*

In my first year at MC, there were no events or gatherings. All sporting, Homecoming, and regular on-campus events were canceled. The institution attempted to have a campus Christmas party in December of 2020; however, that was canceled due to the number of COVID cases that were rising in the Jackson, MS area. MC also chose to not have graduation ceremonies for the fall 2020 semester because they did not want to risk mass gatherings where there could be a potential outbreak of COVID-19.

When the pandemic started, we were unable to do any Library outreach events or host events in the Library. This greatly impacted our ability to center the Library as a hub on campus and form connections with students. However, we slowly found ways to engage with the students, which eventually led the way for us to host events at the institution. My colleagues and I wanted to do something fun to engage with students during this time, and we were able to conduct limited outreach activities such as contests and small events that did not require a large gathering.

### *Ghosts in the Library*

Our Administrative Coordinator is a talented decorator. One holiday that she gets excited about is Halloween. During the month of

October, it is not uncommon to find a witch smashed underneath a stack of books or spiderwebs in a library corner. In addition to decorating the Library, she came up with a way to engage the community.

In the fall of 2020, she stationed ghosts in the building sitting in various places. These ghosts were made from plastic skeletons and clothing. She came up with the idea of creating a contest on social media to decide what the names of the ghosts should be. One ghost was created for the students to name and another was created for the faculty and staff. Submissions were made by commenting on the picture on social media. Once all the submissions were received, Library staff voted on which ones were our favorites. The participants who submitted winning names received a gift card to campus dining. Overall, this was a well-received outreach effort. Each year, our MC community looks forward to seeing new ghosts in the building and submitting more names for this now-annual contest.

### *Library Madness*

Since we were unable to do any on-campus events during the pandemic, I developed a remote event. I borrowed an idea that I had seen from a SpringShare SpringyCamp presentation given by librarians from the University of Dayton (Lewis and Wardell 2020). In order to engage with their students during the height of COVID, they created a March Madness-style bracket (although they did their tournament in June 2020), but, instead of basketball teams, they used books. I modified their idea for our Library and hosted this event in March 2021.

We came up with four categories: mystery, classic, fantasy/science fiction, and non-fiction. Library staff submitted nominations for favorite books from each category. Thirty-two books were selected. Once the staff went through the list of books, a March Madness-style bracket was filled out with the books to compete against each other for round one. The bracket was printed out at the desk, posted on a LibGuide, and sent out in a mass email to students, faculty, and staff. In addition to the bracket, a weekly poll was created in LibWizard. Links to the March Madness LibGuide were also posted in campus-wide emails as well as on social media. Each week, the MC community would select their favorite book and weekly polls would determine which book was most popular with MC students, faculty, and staff, all of whom could vote for their favorite. For example, during week one *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* competed against

*Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief*. Whichever book got the most votes for their round would go into the next week and go against another book. Our final four ended up being *Harry Potter*, *Mere Christianity*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. The championship was between *Harry Potter* and *Mere Christianity*, with *Harry Potter* taking the ultimate win.

We had a total of 35 faculty, students, and staff fill out brackets. In week one we had 81 votes, week two we had 34 votes, week three had 33 votes, week four had 23 votes, and, in the final week, we received 24 votes. Those who participated in either the online polls or completed the bracket were entered into a weekly drawing for campus dining. Overall, this was a very fun way to engage with our community. It allowed us to interact with our students virtually and became a fun way for us to host an event without physically gathering.

### *Pop-Up Popcorn Events*

Under the COVID-19 restrictions, no one was able to bring or consume food in the Library. We had a popcorn maker that was regularly used before COVID-19, and, during fall 2021, we started pop-up popcorn events where we served popcorn to attendees. Our director would send an email to the campus letting them know that the pop-up popcorn event was happening. This outreach event allowed us to host a positive, in-person interaction with our patrons again.

Pop-up popcorn events in fall 2021 became the first time in nearly two years that we had an event in the Library, and everyone was excited that this event had food! They were designed as quick moments of connection that were hosted a couple of times during the semester. Over time, these events have become quite popular and have even been highlighted in campus tours. These outreach events worked because they were quick and easy to set up. In addition, they also did not require a large gathering of people; at the time, many were still hesitant to gather. Students would simply line up for a few minutes while easily maintaining social distancing.

### *Edible Book Festival*

Since the masking and social distancing mandates had been lifted, we determined it was time to have an official, larger event in the

Library in the spring of 2022. After reflecting, we decided that it was time to bring back the Edible Book Festival (EBF).

Our EBF is based on the festivals that many libraries started doing on April 1st back in 2005. This is an event where we encourage the MC community to bring edible, book-themed dishes to the Library. These dishes are not designed to be eaten; the entries are for display only. In order to get participation from students before they get overwhelmed with school and other activities, we host this event in February. The Speed Library held this event in 2018 and 2019, and then it was suspended for two years due to COVID-19 restrictions. Although this event was not designed specifically with the pandemic in mind, it worked well to hold it during COVID-19 restrictions because it did not require a lot of people to be gathered at the same time and none of the food created for the event was consumed by attendees. The event is very passive in nature since it goes on all day, allowing people to casually walk by entries on display. There was not a particular moment when several people were gathered in one place to view the entries. We received about a dozen entries in our EBF 2022. We had entries such as models of Hobbit houses, Alice (from Wonderland) sitting next to a tree, and an icy landscape with Mr. Popper's penguins. There were even funny puns such as donut holes representing *Holes* and Dove chocolate candies in the shape of a heart to represent *Heart of Darkness*. Students voted for their favorite dishes on Instagram as well as through in-person ballots. Overall, this was a very successful event that received positive feedback from our community.

The Edible Book Festival was the first planned event that the Library hosted since 2019. Although we had the pop-up popcorn events in the fall of 2021, the previous semester, those events were more spontaneous. This was the first official event that was on the calendar and promoted on social media and in emails. It ushered in a return to the Library being seen as more than just a quiet study area. In many ways, the Edible Book Festival seemed to give us the agency over the building that had been lost to us during COVID-19. We were returning to being a community space on campus. Although the feeling on campus was still hesitant and cautious, we could feel that things were becoming normal again. Later in the semester, other departments on campus began to have events in the Library such as faculty lectures and student presentations. In the semesters that followed, more events occurred physically in the building along

with campus student groups choosing to hold their meetings in the Library.

### *LibWizard Tutorials*

One aspect of library service that COVID-19 changed was in-person instruction classes. In times past, the MC reference librarians would invest a lot of their time in planning and creating instructional content. Typically, our reference department would conduct about 50 instruction sessions a semester and answer many reference questions. Fortunately, our Coordinator of Reference Services had already completed all instruction requests before the pandemic closed the Speed Library.

Not long before COVID, MC began subscribing to LibWizard, a platform that allows the creation of tutorials and online videos. The restrictions of COVID presented an opportunity to create online tutorials through this new tool, and our Coordinator of Reference Services began investing heavily into LibWizard. MC had created only one LibWizard tutorial before the pandemic. COVID-19 restrictions provided an opportunity to enhance this service and produce clean and efficient online tutorials. These online tutorials both informed students on how to use the Library and served as online guides acting as reference points that students could return to in order to remind themselves how to conduct research (Ben VanHorn, pers. comm., March 27, 2023).

There were no in-person instruction sessions for the fall 2020-spring 2021 academic year. Instead of classes coming to the Library or our reference librarian going out to classes, he changed his workflow to meet the needs of the school through an electronic format. LibWizard allowed us to be flexible with the format of instruction. Throughout that school year, the reference librarian created subject and class-specific tutorials. These sessions were developed for both online and typically in-person classes. Our reference librarian recorded videos that he uploaded to YouTube and embedded them into LibWizard. Students who went through these tutorials received both instruction as well as practice in finding information.

According to our reference librarian, the spring 2023 semester garnered the most excitement over online instruction since COVID-19 started. At this point, the online tutorials are serving as the preference for faculty over in-person teaching. What was once a tool of

necessity has become a preferred method for many professors. If trends in higher education continue, then there will be an increase in online education. Universities and seminaries will likely continue to see growth in remote-only student populations. For these and other reasons, online tutorials are more than just a fad for MC. They will likely be an integral part of the future of the Library.

## *Conclusion*

COVID-19 gave Mississippi College challenges; it responded with opportunities for growth. Through the ingenuity and care of the employees at the school, MC has been successful despite new and continuing global economic hardships. Online services and resources will need to continue to expand as distance and remote education continues to grow. Even as the importance of electronic resources steadily increases, libraries will also need to ensure that their physical spaces are seen as community spaces. Libraries are inherently places of community – they are places where ideas can be shared, and they are places for people to gather.

Although the title of this chapter is inspired by the sentiment of Moses in the book of Exodus, I feel that ultimately my experience is like that of Joseph in the book of Genesis. I believe that what was meant for evil, God turned into something great. Joseph was sold by his brothers into slavery and served in prison. However, God took him from these terrible circumstances to make him a prominent person in Pharaoh's court and he was used to do great things. God took me from a place that did not appreciate my work and transported me to an institution that values it. All of the skills I learned in my previous position helped me to secure the job at my current institution. Once I had been at MC for a year and a half, I was promoted to Assistant Library Director. This stands as an interesting contrast compared to my previous school where the administrators resigned from their positions shortly after they made massive layoffs. That school now has completely new leadership in all key positions and some of the librarians who were laid off have been hired back. That Seminary is a more stable and thriving environment under their new administration, which now places an emphasis on student success.

Even though much of the harsh terror from COVID-19 has passed us, it has deeply affected many throughout the world. Along with the



physical pain, it also caused deep emotional and mental scars that many people may never fully heal from. Not only did it change individual people, it also changed so many things about society. Over the course of the next several years, we will continue to see how this pandemic has affected both school and work environments. Libraries will remain important as technology continues to change and as people continue to long for community.

## *References*

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