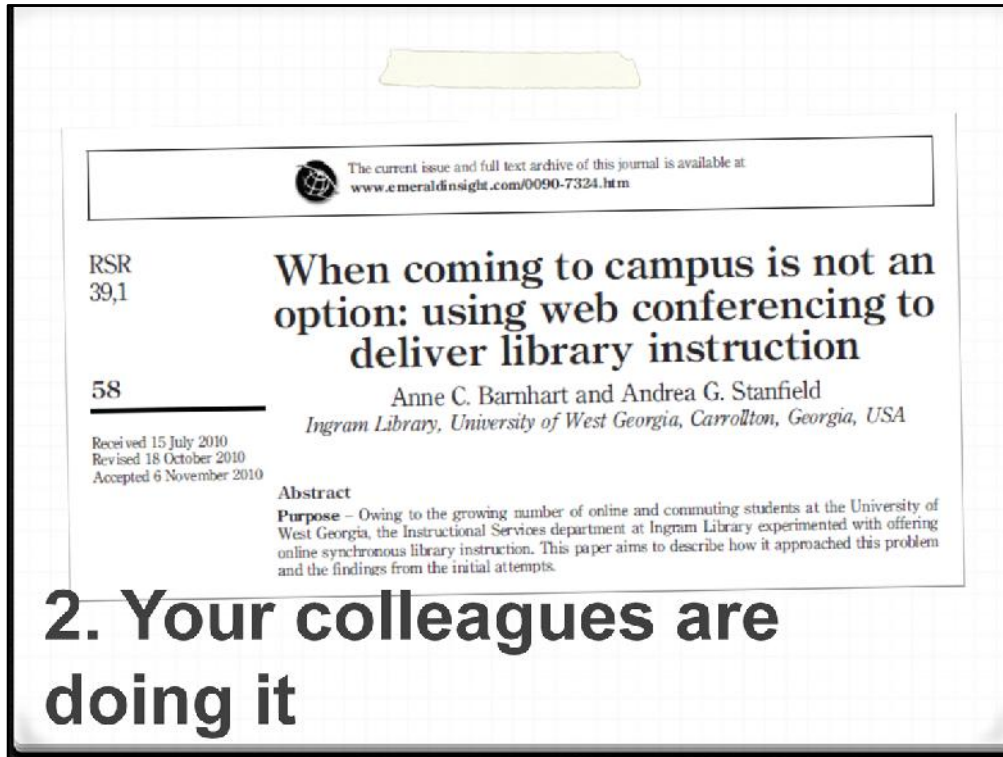


- I'm a research and instructional services librarian at The University of Alabama's Amelia Gayle Gorgas Library. Gorgas is the University's humanities and social sciences library and serves the majority of its undergraduate population.
- I serve as a liaison to UA's Early College program, in which high school students earn college credit by taking online classes.
- Early College utilizes Blackboard IM to conduct its online, synchronous "Gateway Sessions." Bb IM is an "instant collaboration system" designed for academic use and offers such features as audio/video conferencing, instant messaging, application and whiteboard sharing, and queued chat.
- In June 2011, as the Libraries' Early College liaison, I began offering library instruction during the sessions via the product's application sharing features and real-time research assistance via its IM component.
- In spring 2012, I worked with the College of Continuing Studies to pilot the use of the product's queued chat feature to hold "office hours" for distance learning students enrolled in English 102 courses.



- Last week, I attended the Distance Library Services Conference in Memphis, where librarians from several institutions shared how they're using web conferencing tools for reference and instruction.
 - Regis University librarians shared their experience of using Adobe Connect to offer synchronous webcasts to students taking classes at six extended campuses. Whereas they had previously offered library instruction via asynchronous discussion threads, with Connect, they were able to offer live, interactive sessions that could be archived for later viewing.
 - In a panel discussion entitled Table for One: How Librarians Provide Individualized Services to Distance Students via Web Conferencing, librarians from six different universities shared different approaches to using the software for virtual library instruction and reference assistance.
 - One holds office hours 1 night/week; students access the Adobe Connect room via a URL in a LibGuide for distance education students
 - One used Adobe Connect to arrange for 10 librarians to provide research assistance to 20 doctoral students in Taiwan
 - One uses the Tungle.Me free online scheduling software to schedule research consultations in Elluminate (soon to be Bb)
 - Another uses Doodle to schedule group sessions conducted via Wimba. Students access the Wimba room via the learning management system.
 - Last but not least, Yingqi Tang and Jodi Poe from Jacksonville State University presented a poster describing their development of a Blackboard IM library information desk for virtual reference service.

- That's not all- there have been quite a few recent articles on the topic, some of which I've pulled together at the URL I shared with you- but even three presentations from one conference give an idea of the variety of tools and approaches available to us.

The image shows a user interface for screen sharing. At the top, there are two main options: 'share your screen' and 'join someone's screen'. The 'share' option has two sub-options: 'pro start free trial' and 'basic start download'. The 'join' option has a text input field and a green play button. Below this, there is a screenshot of a Google+ Hangouts window. The Hangouts window shows a video call in progress with two women. There are red numbered callouts: '1' on the top left, '2' on the bottom left, and '3' on the top right. The Hangouts window also shows a 'People' section with other participants' thumbnails and an 'Apps' section.

3. You can do it!

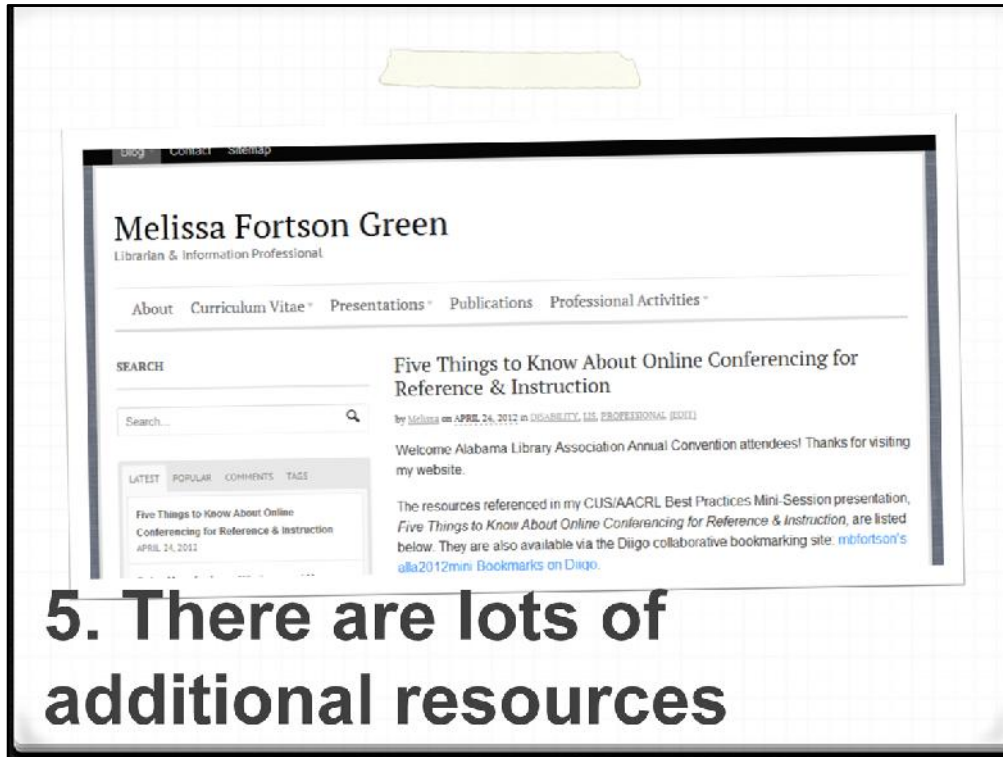
- Yes, you.
- You may have access to web conferencing software through your institution. Check with the instructional technology or distance education office.
- Even if you don't, there are lots of low- and no-cost options available.
 - join.me
 - from the makers of LogMeIn
 - free version features include:
 - internet calling
 - screen sharing
 - 250 viewers
 - share control
 - multi-monitor
 - Chat
 - send files
 - iPad/iPhone, Android viewers
 - Google Hangouts
 - Those are just a couple; there are many others. Included in resources is a great LibGuide from UIU-C that lists some tools and has links to additional resources.

4. Things to keep in mind

- o It may “fail miserably”
- o Students may have difficulty using or prefer not to use advanced features
- o Partner with an instructor or another librarian when possible
- o It’s not just for distance students
- o It may be wildly successful

- Should you decide to give it a shot, here are some things to keep in mind.
- It may “fail miserably.”
 - One panelist at the DLS conference said no one showed up. Ever.
 - I offered the CCS office hours for a total of 8 hours on 4 Sundays (2 hours each). Only 2 students participated, and 1 walked one through accessing the same database 3 times. Was it a failure?
 - Possible solutions to address low participation: offer research consultations by appointment instead of office hours. Advertise a demo of a specific tool, then open the floor for Q&A (one librarian got more questions this way).
- Students may have difficulty using or prefer not to use screen sharing, VoIP, and other advanced features
 - Internet connection, unfamiliarity, shyness. Be prepared to chat, or use the mic to talk to the user while they type back, or talk on the phone while using screen sharing
- When doing instruction, partner with an instructor or another librarian when possible
 - One can do the instruction while the other fields questions, handles technical difficulties
- It’s not just for distance students
 - Authors of one article suggested web conferencing as response to space constraints
 - Applicable in blended environments
 - Tool for embedded librarianship
- It may be wildly successful

- Staffing and scalability considerations
- Students contacting me directly via Bb IM (no complaints 😊)



- We've just scratched the surface. The resources I mentioned- along with several others- are available at bit.ly/alla2012mini.

