Affective Labor under COVID-19

Dealing with the emotional work of the emergency distance delivery transition
Who We Are:

Lee Skallerup Bessette, PhD, Learning Design Specialist, CNDLS, Georgetown University

Martha Diede, PhD, Director, Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, Syracuse University

Lindsay Bernhagen, PhD, Director, Center for Inclusive Teaching and Learning, University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point

Melissa Dalgleish, PhD, Career Development Specialist, SickKids Research Institute
Emotional Labor

“...induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others."

_The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling_, Arlie Russell Hochschild
The Work We Do

“...my consulting relationships are almost entirely voluntary, and could theoretically dissolve easily at any time. While I can make strong recommendations, the scholars I work with are the ultimate decision makers; and this is why my work is emotional labor, as opposed to pure technical advice. The way that I provide guidance and information will have an emotional impact, and people will make better decisions if they are feeling steady, resilient, and energized, rather than depleted, by their work.”

“Not Your DH Teddy Bear,” Paige Morgan
Substitute “Librarian” For Your Job Title

“Many, if not all, of these attributes are seen as desirable in librarians: Adaptability, cooperation, and helpfulness are almost universally seen as core values of the profession. Placing a premium on amiability comes, at times, at the expense of valuing other important contributions that librarians make. While individual librarians in a variety of settings may find their intellectual capacity and teaching ability acknowledged and appreciated, that recognition is often hard won. Since our perceived value lies in these “private-stage,” invisible talents, it can be a challenge to make our intellectual labor visible in the context of the hierarchy of academic labor...we find ourselves deeply engaged in collaborative projects, often winning effusive verbal praise for our contributions, only to be erased from the public version of this work.”

“Claiming expertise from betwixt and between: Digital humanities librarians, emotional labor, and genre theory,” Logsdon, Mars, and Thompkins
When COVID-19 Came...
So What Can We Do?

Personally

Institutionally