

All aboard! Virtual onboarding for new librarians during a pandemic

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UNCG Libraries' virtual onboarding overview

- We had two new librarians onboarding virtually in Spring 2021
 - Juanita Thacker, Information Literacy Lecturer
 - Recent MLIS grad
 - Former Access Services Department staff member
 - Lots of institutional knowledge already, but new to instruction librarianship
 - Katherine Heilman, Electronic Resources Librarian
 - New to UNCG and to academic libraries
 - Assigned an onboarding buddy within the department
- The overall goals of virtual onboarding were similar to any onboarding for a new employee: learning relevant policies & procedures; understanding workplace culture and norms at UNCG Libraries; learning about communication expectations; and getting access to necessary systems.
 - Juanita's onboarding focused on transitioning to a new role rather than transitioning to a new institution (see <https://go.uncg.edu/allaboard1>)
 - Katherine's onboarding included onboarding to a new job and the logistics of working at a new institution (adapted for UNCG Libraries and the Technical Services department from Adam H. Lisbon and Megan E. Welsh's [Onboarding New Academic Librarians Template](#))

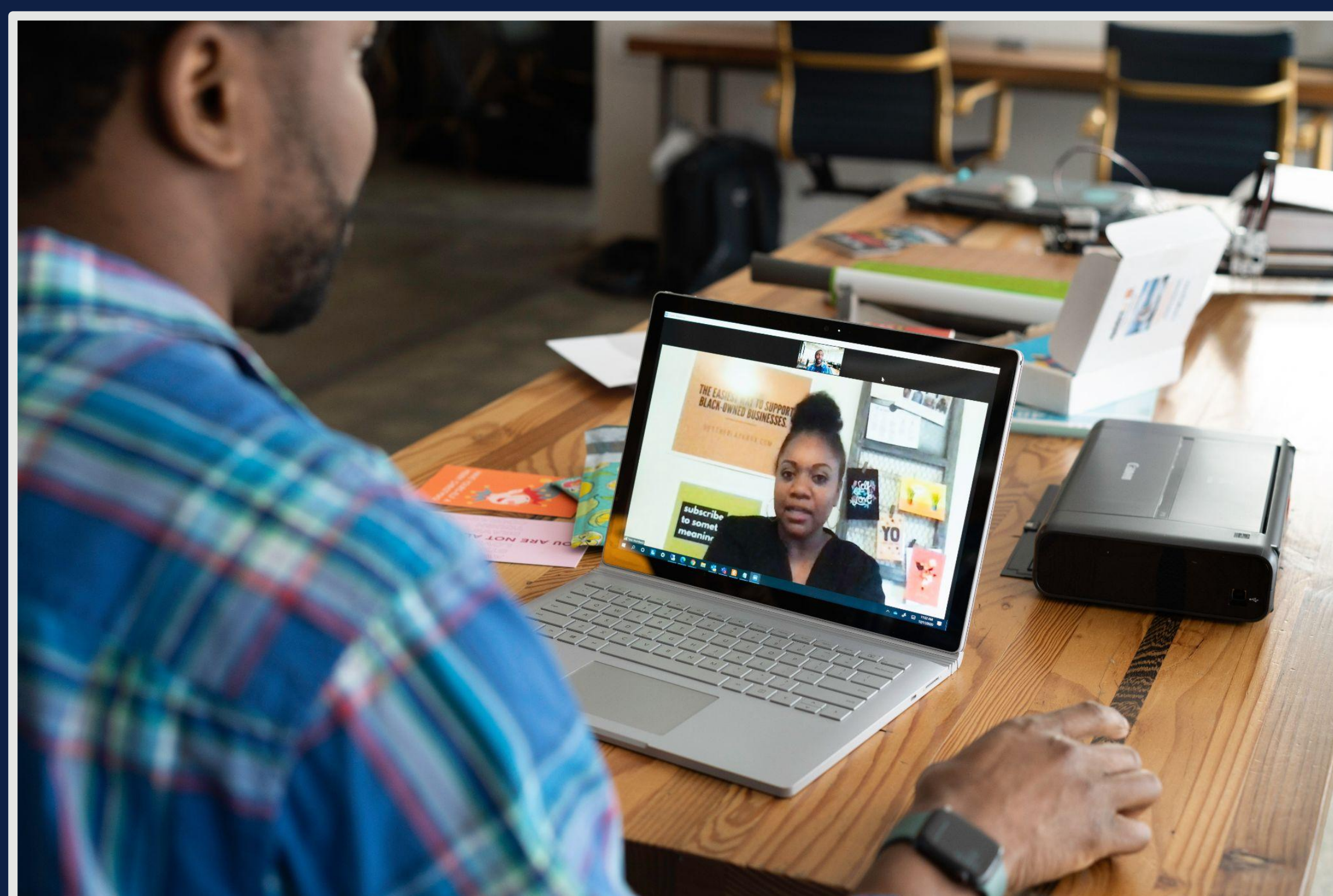


Image credit: [Person on virtual call] via Unsplash
<https://unsplash.com/photos/1LyBcHrH4J8>

Successes

- More independence
- Flexibility in terms of time, pace, and ideation
- Grace and kindness from new colleagues

Challenges

- Supervisor perspective:
 - Virtual onboarding required more intentional planning
 - It's challenging to know if and how often to communicate before the job starts
- New employee perspective:
 - Reduced social opportunities
 - Difficult to understand interpersonal dynamics online
 - Lost opportunities for informal or serendipitous learning can lead to information gaps

Lessons learned

- Cultivating trust between the new employee and their supervisor and colleagues is even more critical in a virtual environment
- Supervisor as mediator can be awkward in an online environment
- Onboarding is an essential part of the process of welcoming any new library employee

Please feel free to contact us!

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