

Looking for new ways to engage virtually with Zoomed out students? Two librarians and a graduate assistant at a large university library created virtual research clinics using the virtual reality tool Gather.town to support students with research assignments.

Virtual research clinics are opportunities for students to receive additional support from library staff after completing an online, asynchronous tutorial. Gather.town is a free proximity-based virtual reality tool that library staff can use to build virtual spaces designed for natural social interactions. The presenters found it much easier for students to interact with each other, library staff, and online library resources using a proximity-based platform rather than via video teleconferencing platforms like Zoom. Additionally, virtual clinics increase opportunities for meaningful student interactions with library staff, which is especially important for students experiencing library anxiety or who are unable to physically come to a library.

The proposed poster will provide an overview of Gather.town and virtual research clinics. The first section will provide an introduction to Gather.town and virtual research clinics. The second section will explain how virtual clinics were created to support undergraduate students in a large communications class who received library instruction via asynchronous tutorials. The final section will include strategies used to encourage students to attend virtual research clinics and ways to prepare students for the experience using Gather.town.

In addition to the poster, the presenters will include multiple options for participants to experience virtual research clinics. Options will include providing a QR code for participants to join a research clinic via a mobile device and a laptop that participants can use to explore Gather.town.