How Cephalonia Can Conquer the World (Or At the Very Least, Your Students!): A Library Orientation Case Study From Cardiff University

Nigel Morgan and Linda Davies

Authors' abstract: The Cephalonian Method is an innovative means of presenting a library orientation session. It is a simple, effective, flexible, colorful, and fun approach to structuring a lesson. The main features include audience participation, question and answer, humour, PowerPoint, and music; and its objective is to maximise learner engagement. It can be adapted for different levels of learners, any group size, and is suitable for use across all disciplines. We developed the Cephalonian Method at Cardiff University, Wales and it has subsequently been used and adapted by academic libraries throughout the U.K. and in institutions in Australia and Europe. This chapter discusses the origins of the Cephalonian Method, its pedagogical effectiveness, how it works in practice, responses and feedback from learners, and how it is being used and adapted at institutions in a variety of sectors.

Editors' notes: No, it's not some sort of yoga exercise... the Cephalonian Method was designed by Nigel and Linda when they found that their students were bored with traditional library tours. It all started in a taverna on the small Greek island of Cephalonia. Linda claims she was drinking orange juice at the time...

Scenario: It's a wet and windy Monday morning, and a large group of soggy Entering Freshmen descend on the library for their orientation session. The uninspiring trudge through the building begins in the foyer; however, by the time the group arrives at the book shelves, students at the rear have abandoned attempts to hear what the librarian is explaining amidst the din of the library environment. A few students wander away, whilst those with the grim determination to stay until the end yawn and count down the minutes until they can escape to the more congenial surroundings of the coffee bar. The librarian himself looks stressed and uninspired as he navigates his diminishing group along the well-trodden route. The prospect of leading six more tours that morning weighs heavily upon him. Oh, how he wishes that he was still on vacation!

Does this scenario sound familiar? Can there be a worse start to a student's relationship with the library? Having delivered library orientation sessions for a combined total of forty years between us, we identified fully with the above. We felt jaded by and bored with the traditional methods, namely the interminable library
tour and the lifeless lecture theatre “this is the library” presentation, and couldn’t bear to go through with these one more time. We also thought that the students were unimpressed, judging by all those glazed expressions and stifled yawns. Perhaps more significantly, we found that library tours were becoming unmanageable and impractical as we were required to handle larger cohorts of students, necessitating more and more tour slots. It was time to go back to the drawing board and take a fresh look at the situation. What we came up with was a novel and quirky format which was so simple that we couldn’t understand why we hadn’t thought of it before. Thank goodness for the Cephalonian Method!

The Cephalonian Method has been described as a glorious fusion of music, color and audience participation; it was originally designed for large scale library orientation with groups of medical and biomedical sciences students. This session was often the third of four back-to-back introductory lectures to student life and we wanted to give the students at Cardiff University a light-hearted break from wall-to-wall lectures whilst at the same time imparting some basic library guidance to help them through their first few weeks at university.

Instructional Goals
Our primary goal was to give students the most favorable initial impression of the library and its services as possible. Moreover, we wanted the experience to be memorable, fun and interactive. We also wanted to convey the illusion that the session was student-driven. Our secondary goal was to promote good attendance at later, more serious, information literacy sessions. We figured that if the initial session were well-received and the students had enjoyed their time with us, then our chances of getting full attendance at the information research-based sessions later in the semester would be maximized. Our tertiary goal was to motivate ourselves, to create a session which we enjoyed delivering, one for which we felt genuine enthusiasm. Our philosophy is that it is impossible to enthuse students if we are not enthused ourselves. Finally, we wanted to leave our students with a positive impression, to shatter some of those stereotypical images of librarians, by coming across as lively, humourous and above all, approachable individuals.

Instructional Strategy
The inspiration for our change to library orientation sessions was a vacation company introduction to the Greek island of Cephalonia experienced by Linda:

Dreading the obligatory one-hour poolside lecture in the scorching heat, she was relieved to find herself sitting in a well-shaded taverna, with a long cool glass of orange juice, but was very surprised when, along with several others, she was handed a question card. The young and enthusiastic company reps turned the traditional session on its head by asking everyone holding a card to stand up and read the question aloud. The questions were designed as prompts to enable them to pass on all the necessary information in an informal and memorable way. Linda’s question was “Am I stuck on this island for the whole week?” This was a cue for information about trips to nearby islands and the Greek mainland.” What
should I do if I’m bitten by a mosquito?” prefaced an explanation of the location and opening hours of the local drug stores. “I’m really scared of driving on these twisting roads; is there any other means of getting around the island?” prompted information about local cab firms and coach services.

This format was used to convey all the essential information to enable everyone to enjoy their holiday and it struck Linda at the time that it would be possible to adapt this for library orientation. The recent increase in student numbers had already caused us to abandon library tours for all but one or two degree courses with smaller numbers. Instead, for several years, library orientation had been conducted in a trial-by-lecture environment to groups of one hundred plus. What she’d experienced in Cephalonia seemed to be an ideal starting point for a complete overhaul of large and small scale orientation sessions. Questions we considered on her return included:

- Could we develop a format along these lines to provide an entertaining and informative introduction to the library?
  - Would it work with larger groups?
  - Would it still work with small groups?
  - How could such a session be organized to give a degree of coherence and structure, which hadn’t been necessary in Cephalonia?

**Match of Goals and Strategy**

Our principal goal was to emulate the strategy used in Cephalonia; we recognized that this approach would allow students to participate in the session whilst at the same time providing an unusual and stimulating learning experience. However, to achieve our goals we needed to devise a logical structure whilst not losing either the apparent spontaneity of the original session, or the impression that the students were running the orientation.

Our solution was to use a thematic approach with color-coded question cards grouped into categories. The Cephalonian Method required time up front for careful planning and structuring but the time invested was well worth it as we were rewarded with a seamless, stimulating, and stress-free lesson model. We began by identifying the learning outcomes; we considered carefully what we wanted students to learn by the end of our session, and then devised appropriate content to enable these outcomes to be achieved. Indeed, we put much thought into the selection of a valuable core of information to present and carefully considered how best to organise this into logical groupings.

We used a color-coded structure to group content areas together and to ensure a logical sequence within the lesson. Each content group contained a set of questions to be asked by students during the sessions and these were printed on colored cards:

- Blue—Basic introductory information
- Yellow—Finding recommended reading
- Red—Services and facilities
- Green—Miscellaneous information
The Cephalonian Method is nevertheless suitable for students with color-perception impairments as the color is clearly identified in text on each card. These cards became the catalysts that would drive the session along. Instructions were provided on the back of each card.

We tried to phrase the questions from a student's point of view, to lighten the atmosphere, and maintain interest, e.g. a question that prompts information about computing facilities might be "My mum has e-mailed me a picture of Miguel, my pet iguana—am I able to print it in the library?". A question on study facilities may be phrased as "My tutorial group has to prepare a presentation on the winter vomiting virus, is there anywhere we can work together?". Each question had an equivalent PowerPoint slide of the appropriate color, which we used as a presentation aid. In addition, we used images and music as sensory stimuli; the slides originally featured copyright free clipart but we subsequently opted for a comic strip approach using photographs with speech bubbles, which gave the presentation a loose narrative thread. The photographs featured an imaginary student named Tyrone pictured in various situations including borrowing books, receiving help from a friendly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE 1. Instructions on the Back of the Cards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you hear the colour of your card called</td>
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<tr>
<td>by the presenter, please ask the question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>which you have been assigned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please speak loudly and clearly so that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>everyone will hear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please deliver your question with conviction!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you - your assistance is much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appreciated!</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>FIGURE 2. My Mum has E-mailed Me a Photo of Miguel, my Pet Iguana. Where Can I Print Him Out?</th>
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My Mum has emailed me a photo of Miguel, my pet iguana. Where can I print him out?

IT room in Biomedical Library
IT rooms in Science Library
- Microsoft applications
- Internet, Blackboard, & email

Networked printing payment:
- Laser printing (b&w)
  - 6p per A4 sheet
- Colour printing
  - 20p per sheet

L. Davies & N. Morgan. Information Services, Cardiff University.
librarian, searching our online catalogue, renewing his books from home during the Christmas holiday season, and proudly displaying his print of Miguel the iguana. Tyrone has certainly proved popular and we have frequently been asked to disclose his phone number!

**FIGURE 3. OK. How do I Actually Find the Books on my Reading List?**

**Voyager**

http://library.cf.ac.uk/

**E.g.**
Drake, R.L. et al.  
Gray's anatomy for students.  
Philadelphia:  

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**FIGURE 4. What Really Irritates the Library Staff?**

*What really irritates the library staff?*

- Eating & drinking  
- Litter - use recycle bins  
- Soggy books!  
- Loud talkers  
- Theft  
- Mobile phones!  

**Mobile phones!!**  

**Mobile phones!!!**

L. Davies & N. Morgan. Information Services, Cardiff University.
Music is also an important feature of the Cephalonian Method; it is a useful tool for creating atmosphere when students arrive, striking a positive and uplifting note at the end of a session, and can be used effectively during activities within extended orientation sessions. The life-enhancing effects of music have been documented in recent years by advocates such as Don Campbell whose celebrated book *The Mozart Effect* provided us with inspiration.

We believe this method has benefits for our students as it enables them to actively participate in the session, and engage with content. It also has benefits for us because no two sessions will ever be identical; within each color grouping we don’t know the order in which the questions will be asked, it is a case of randomness within a carefully engineered structure. As a result, there will always be variety, spontaneity, and surprise.

**Description of the Instruction Session: What Actually Happened?**

We aimed to start most sessions with music, often played as loud as the sound system would allow. If we were in the lecture theatre before the students, we’d set up a CD with several tracks to play as they arrived. However, if we were timetabled in between other lectures and the students were already present, we started the music as soon as possible and left it to play over our preparations. One of us handed out the cards, usually selecting the more talkative and potentially more confident members of the group, whilst the other one started up our PowerPoint presentation and passed around guides to the library and the online catalog. Either way, we used the end of the music to signal that preparations were over and that we were ready to start the session.

We explained that we’d be asking all students with a card to stand up and read the question aloud for the whole group to hear, but added that anyone who didn’t want to do this could pass the question on to another member of their group. Generally we found students happy and willing to take part and there was always a rush to stand up when we started by asking for a question on a blue card. Ideally, we wanted the student with the question “So who are you two then?” to stand up first as this raised laughter and provided us with the opportunity to put on a friendly face and introduce ourselves—a great icebreaker. However, the beauty of this method is that within the color groupings we were able to take the questions in any order and to adjust the answers depending on the preceding questions.

In response to each question, we selected the equivalent PowerPoint slide and delivered the relevant information content. The questions themselves formed the title of each slide, to ensure that all students followed the presentation, regardless of the volume at which they were delivered. If we thought the student had been too quietly spoken, we repeated the question whilst bringing the slide up. Allowing the students to determine the order of the questions meant that we couldn’t simply work through the presentation in a linear fashion, and we have frequently been asked how we were able to display the correct slide seamlessly as the question finished. Our official answer was that we have psychic powers and are able to accurately predict the sequence in advance. The truthful answer is more straightforward, if
more mundane. Before the session, we printed out a color handout of the entire presentation which acted as our key. We numbered each slide clearly so that when a question was asked, a quick glance at this told us the position of the relevant slide within the presentation; we then keyed-in the number, hit Return and hey presto! It appeared slick and instantaneous, though of course we had to be extremely careful that we got the number correct!

We each presented two color sections, alternating after each section, to give the students a change of voice and accent (Nigel is a native Welshman, whilst Linda is an exiled Londoner). One of us kicked off with blue and handed over to the other for yellow. The yellow section was in fact only one question, but was the cue for a demonstration of our online catalog. Again, we tried to make this as relevant as possible by demonstrating a search for a book that we knew was on the reading lists that the students had already received, and by searching for a subject that we knew they would be studying. We then tackled the red, and finally the green sets of questions, alternating presenters again.

At some sessions, we threw bright red toy bugs bearing the Information Services logo to the students when they asked the questions; these fluffy novelties could be thrown into the audience without injuring anyone. These were much appreciated and added an additional element of fun. Once we had completed all sections, we invited questions from the floor and were surprised by how many students were keen to stand up and ask something. These additional questions were obviously important to the student, but were often quite peripheral and we took this to mean that we had provided information on all key areas. This was easily tested by asking them a few quick questions to see how much they'd learned, e.g. "How many books can you borrow?" or "How much does it cost to photocopy your friend's lecture notes?" The whole lecture theatre shouted the answers back at us, and we were delighted as we saw this as an indication that we had succeeded in engaging attention and had sustained interest to the end. This was confirmed when we were rewarded with an effusive round of applause. Finally, we sent the students on their way with further rousing musical accompaniment; Linda's preferred choice of "Psycho Killer" being firmly overruled by Nigel, we settled on Talking Heads' "Once in a Lifetime."

Reflection on the Instruction Session: Lessons Learned

So, how successful has the Cephalonian Method been? In short, it's worked like a dream and we certainly do not intend to return to the traditional orientation methods. The friendly informality appeared to suit most people and the element of surprise has helped; at the start, students were intrigued and it was great to see all those quizzical "What's going on now?" expressions. Once the sessions got underway it became obvious that involving the students in this way contributed to breaking down barriers. We were surprised by the degree of interaction within the large groups, and with smaller groups in later years we found that students were encouraged to lose their inhibitions and enter into discussions instead of simply asking questions. In particular, students responded positively to the use of humour and our stars, Tyrone and Miguel the iguana, proved immensely popular.
Indeed, as other United Kingdom institutions adopted the Cephalonian Method, and adapted the content to suit their libraries, we have seen Miguel reincarnated as Sid the ferret, Paulo the polar bear, George the gerbil and several other wonderful zoological manifestations.

We encountered only a few problems. The two most obvious concerns were audibility and spatial orientation (or lack of?) As we had anticipated, the students were uncustomed to projecting their voices sufficiently in a large lecture theatre to enable all members of the group to hear (after all, we were dealing with medical and biosciences students not drama students!) Repeating the question ourselves and displaying the question at the top of the relevant PowerPoint slide enabled us to overcome this. Secondly, although we have incorporated images of the library into the presentation, we are aware that the sessions do not offer the same level of geographical orientation that students gain during a tour. This has been the most frequent criticism in the feedback we have received and we will address this issue in the future by incorporating 3D interactive library plans, which we hope will help give students a clearer guide to the layout of the library and will also provide visual interest. However, all first-year medical students do visit the Biomedical Sciences Library in small groups with their second-year buddy, usually before our orientation session and therefore can visualize the library to an extent during our presentation.

To monitor our success in achieving our goals and outcomes we handed our questionnaires at the end of every session, and were immensely relieved when the feedback indicated overwhelmingly that the sessions were a success. In 2006, 99 percent of first-year medical students felt that we had succeeded in giving a good introduction to the library service. In addition, 90 percent indicated that this approach was preferable to the library tour. We certainly seem to have struck the right chord with our audience, as the comments were extremely positive:

"Very well presented...loved it. Bravo!"
"It was immense"
"It was a bit strange" (We took this as a compliment!)
"It was a creative way of introducing the library. Student participation was a smart idea!"
"Really good idea, made it more fun to watch the presentation."

Whether we struck the right chord with regards to our choice of music is another matter. Choosing appropriate music is always difficult; everyone has their own tastes and preferences. Indeed, we disagree on this more than on any other aspect of the sessions! Our aim is to create an appropriate mood, taking into account factors such as the time of day; a calm, ambient track may be ideal for an early morning orientation but something a little more robust and invigorating is required for a mid-morning session or the dreaded after-lunch slot. We have experimented with classical, punk, new wave, Latin-American, sixties soul, and new age tracks. We have tried various artists, but Paul Weller singing "That's Entertainment" has proved the most popular so far. On one occasion we used J.S. Bach's Goldberg Variations; it seemed the perfect choice at the time for small group orientation. However, it was
pointed out to us afterwards that this was a favorite of Hannibal Lecter in Silence of the Lambs. We decided to drop the track as we had not intended our sessions to have menacing overtones!

When we have asked students what music they would like us to play, suggestions have been extremely diverse and often downright bizarre; for instance, we are not sure whether the national anthem would be a fitting choice or whether Meatloaf’s “Bat out of Hell” is a wise selection for a 9:00 a.m. slot on Monday morning and we are not quite sure what constitutes trash metal! We have decided to rely on our own judgement, accepting the fact that we cannot please everyone. Nevertheless, most students seem to agree that music is a welcome addition to the orientation session.

From our perspective, the Cephalonian Method has been a refreshing change and there are usually lots of opportunities to introduce surprises. For example, librarians in some U.K. universities throw candy to participating students as a reward, and in one particular institution, they invite the students who ask the final two questions to ‘come on down’ for a game show-style play-off with a prize for the winner. Several occasions required initiative and ingenuity when question cards disappeared, with students preferring to hide them rather than pass them on. We have also discovered that some star-struck students will improvise unexpectedly and ask a question of their own devising, instead of the one they have been allocated e.g., “Do you have any Harry Potter books in the library?” We learned to take such incidents in our stride and relished the challenges they presented. In the case of the Harry Potter question, this was a chance to ask the group how they would check for the books and give another quick demonstration. Fortunately, one of our libraries stocks several titles in the famous series, along with analytical and critical texts, as part of a course in Children’s Literature. However, the unpredictability that we enjoy is often sufficient cause for other librarians to be wary of adopting the Cephalonian Method. We acknowledge that there are risks; however, for us this is part of the excitement and allure and it gives us a real buzz. We also believe that librarians do not have to be particularly extroverted to run successful orientations in this way (although we concede that the Cephalonian Method will not suit everyone!) Nevertheless, presenters need to be confident as they are required to navigate around a PowerPoint presentation without knowing what is coming next. Some institutions have adopted a more structured approach by numbering the cards in order to provide a linear sequence, however, we think that this robs the session of some of the fun and spontaneity and destroys any illusion of being student-driven.

The Cephalonian Method still has scope for further development; the minimum requirements are colored cards and a PowerPoint presentation, but these can be enhanced by the use of multimedia and lighting effects (of the appropriate color of course!) in order to deliver a truly theatrical spectacle. Some institutions are experimenting by getting students to formulate their own questions whilst others have combined the Cephalonian Method with a traditional tour by planting questions at strategic points en route in the style of a treasure hunt. If you have
imagination and the courage to put it into practice, then the Cephalonian Method can help transform your orientation sessions into a uniquely memorable learning experience.

Application to Other Instructional Settings
The Cephalonian Method is, we believe, a versatile and pedagogically sound method of presenting an orientation session. This is not just our view; the Cephalonian Method is popular in U.K. libraries in both the higher education and further education (community college) sectors. It has also been used for purposes other than library orientation. We have been informed by colleagues at other institutions that it has been used successfully toiven up lectures and other factual presentations. The Cephalonian Method was developed for undergraduates, and we have been wary of utilizing it within postgraduate contexts. Therefore, we were surprised to learn that it had been used with and enjoyed by PhD students during information research classes. We were also delighted to discover that the Cephalonian Method has been successfully used to train medical personnel in the use of information resources within the U.K.'s National Health Service. Indeed, we see no reason why its use should stop here; we believe that the Cephalonian Method could also be effectively utilized in the training of new personnel, whether in a library context or in any other environment. Whatever the setting, the Cephalonian Method can be used to get people actively involved, helping to create a more relaxed and enjoyable environment for learning, and hence assisting in the assimilation and retention of information.

We love the Cephalonian Method. It never ceases to amaze us that such a simple idea spotted in a Greek island taverna is proving such a popular and dynamic force; now, no longer confined to its place of origin, the Cephalonian Method has the potential to conquer the globe. Why not bring some Greek sunshine to your own library? We think that you should!

Ellítheristí!

Notes