Faculty Can’t Spare The Class Time For Library Instruction?
Create A Multi-media Self-paced Tutorial!
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The Program Director for the part-time Master of Science in Environmental Sciences and Policy degree came to us with a challenge: “We would love our students to learn to do better research but we can’t spare the class time.”

Could we develop a self-paced online tutorial since face-to-face time was not an option?

Why the need?
- Faculty were finding that student research skills were not consistently at an acceptable level for graduate studies
- Students “believe” everything can be found on Google
- Class time is limited and students need to be prepared to do scholarly research from day one
- Would busy non-traditional graduate students make time to learn about library research skills?

A team was assembled and met regularly for three months to decide upon content, platform, design and to implement and assess the tutorial.

Significant decisions:
- The multidisciplinary team consisted of:
  - Two librarian liaisons serving the part-time graduate programs with emphasis on distance education
  - Program Director for Graduate Programs in Environmental Studies
  - Librarian subject specialist in Environmental Sciences
  - Instructional Designer
  - Humanities librarian to bring a different perspective
- Communication via in-person and teleconference meetings, and a wiki space to discuss, communicate and collaborate to create and edit content
- Software decision based on the university-wide license for Blackboard as the Course Management platform
- Software decision chosen to use with Blackboard to make lessons interactive and allow for greater customization

Seven lessons incorporating multi-media, embedded videos, numerous screen shots and an interactive self-check task.

A final assessment quiz was included to check overall knowledge of the concepts presented in the tutorial.

The specific lessons:
- Distinguishing scholarly from popular resources
- Finding articles and the use of Boolean operators
- Conducting a cited Reference Search
- Finding the full-text of a known article using SFX & Google Scholar
- Discovering Books, Encyclopedias, and University Press Publications
- Evaluating sources found on the Internet
- Citing sources and formatting papers in APA style

An example of an interactive component from the tutorial on distinguishing scholarly from popular resources:

Prior to the start of the semester, 43 students received notice of the availability of the tutorial. Of those notified, 25 students opted to participate. After the semester had ended and within the guidelines of the institutional review board (IRB), 8 students were interviewed.

Using a survey embedded in the tutorial and follow-up individual telephone interviews to understand the user experience, students told us:

- Conduct detailed analysis of feedback and the development of “user stories”
- Improve the user experience
  - Make navigation and structure more flexible and intuitive
  - Investigate the use of a pre-assessment or “Test-out” option which will directly students to the needed lessons
  - Provide a better description of what is covered in each lesson
  - Provide an estimated time commitment for each lesson
- Collaborate with faculty to develop methods to determine if student research is improving after taking the tutorial
- Evaluate new changes with the next cohort of students
- Integrate sections of the tutorial into other instructional activities

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What Students Told Us

I thought that was a great idea! It made it a lot easier.

I enjoyed the use of both text and videos. I am very visual! The videos helped a lot!

I was not very familiar with the tutorials. I think they were clear and easy to follow.

I suggest that the lessons in the tutorial continue to remain available as an ongoing reference to students after they have completed the test.

What’s In This Thing?

Building It

A special thank you to our library colleagues, the staff of the ELP-Entrepreneurial Library Program, librarians who tested the site and to Student Technology Services for their assistance in the design of this poster. Special thanks to Jamie Hittman.

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