The Southeastern Librarian

Fall 2006

New Voices: Interactive CD-ROMs for Library Instruction and Discovering a Research Agenda

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New Voices:
Interactive CD-ROMs for Library Instruction and Discovering a Research Agenda

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Introduction

This paper is an answer to a call for "New Voices" in librarianship to present their ideas and perspectives on current library issues. The authors of this work are newly employed academic librarians (both hired as faculty in 2001) working at a regional, comprehensive university in the Southeast. Both authors are tenure-track assistant professors. One is working as a Distance Education/ Electronic Resources Manager and the other as an Instructional Services Coordinator. Although the titles are long and important sounding, both librarians were hired fresh out of library school and dropped directly into their first professional position within an academic library.

In addition to being "new" librarians, the authors were also "new" graduates of an American Library Association (ALA) accredited master's degree program that offered most of its courses through distance education. The majority of the course work was completed at off-campus sites or through web-based or video conferencing learning. Because of this academic upbringing, it should come as no surprise that when the authors began their professional careers, they were both very interested in serving, or coming up with ways to better serve, the distance education students at their institution. After all, just a few years ago they were "one-of them," and witnessed first hand the emergence of an increase in distance education technology, opportunities, and services. However, the authors also knew what barriers were still present, what was lacking or deficient, and as new members of the profession, what obstacles were yet to come.

How do you better serve a population that you do not see day to day, semester-to-semester, or even once a year? Is it possible to create, implement, and maintain a level of service to an invisible library patron? What about existing services – how do you ensure that the traditional library services such as reference and bibliographic or library instruction are provided to the patron who does not walk through your front door for these services, but rather enters your library through a computer?

This paper describes the development of an instruction/orientation platform that teaches students, specifically the distance education students, at our university how to access, navigate, and understand the services and resources available to them via the university library. However, there is another purpose to this paper that the authors believe to be just as valuable to other "new voices" in our profession. To that end, this paper examines how two new librarians attempted to better serve their patrons. But it also looks at how, through the instruction project's development, two new academic librarians discovered that one lone project could benefit the academic and professional development of their careers as they worked toward tenure and promotion – helping them to find and define their "voice" so to speak.

Literature Review

There is an abundance of literature related to providing instruction to distance education students. Unfortunately, most the literature provides general information about instruction options or relates to a specific library's efforts in this endeavor; whether they created a CD, used a Web-based tutorial, etc. Unfortunately, no articles were found that directly compared the

use of CD-ROM versus Web-based delivery methods.

There are a number of writings providing general information about library instruction and distance education students. Goodson (2001) discusses a variety of issues related to library services and distance education students. She briefly introduces the various instruction options available to libraries (Goodson 2001, 71-75), as well as provides a bibliography with URLs for instruction related materials (Goodson 2001, 116-117). Hricko (2001) details how Kent State University provides instruction to distance education students. Her article provides information about three common delivery methods: videoconferencing, computer-mediated, and Web-based. In addition, the problems that Kent State encountered with each delivery method and suggestions for solving these problems. She does not mention which method worked best for the library.

Of all of the articles related to library instruction for distance education students, there is limited literature related to CD-ROM tutorials. Jones (2004) details one library's development of a CD tutorial and provides information about the "nine events of instruction" (187) that should be included in tutorials. She also describes work-arounds for these elements and the applications her library used to create a tutorial.

The majority of the literature relates to Web-based tutorials. May (2002) describes how the library at the University of North Texas used the Texas Information Literacy Tutorial (TILT), the web-based instructional tool created at the University of Texas at Austin, and the course management system, WebCT, in use at the University to provide instruction for their distance education students. She also detailed how the librarians created and used subject guides and class-specific Web pages to enhance the instruction. A number of good ideas regarding creating web-based tutorials can be found in this article. Behr (2004) details the process Western Michigan University's Library staff used to create a web-based instruction resource. She describes the limitations of using their current service for distance education students, which is similar to the service provided by HCL.

The service currently in place at the HCL is face-to-face instruction sessions. At Western Michigan University, the librarians travel to the distance education sites and provide face-to-face sessions (Behr 2004). This is a major limitation in terms of those online students who do not meet at a specific location or a specific time. The author provides possible solutions for these limitations and examples of what other types of instruction services were reviewed in Western Michigan's search for an equitable solution. Yi (2005) details the trend of moving library instruction online and some reasons to follow that trend. In addition to describing the trends, the author explains the experiences California State University San Marcos encountered during its move to an online environment (Yi 2005).

Finally, a new evolution in library instruction is using course management systems for delivery. Several articles detail how libraries can use a course management system to provide library instruction. Ladner, Beagle, Steele, and Steele (2004) provide information about their experience with creating Web pages designed specifically for two courses and then linking the pages through WebCT for access. Lenholt, Costello, and Stryker (2003) detail their enhancement of face-to-face, hands-on instruction by adding the handouts from these sessions into Blackboard. These same authors later describe using the same approach to providing instruction as detailed in their 2003 article, but augmenting it for generations X and Y students (Lenholt, Costello, and Stryker, 2004). Silver and Nickel (2003) provide information about using Blackboard as a delivery method for instruction. Although the sessions were delivered through Blackboard, it was not necessarily geared towards distance education students. In addition to providing this service for the distance education students, the authors also use their Blackboard session as an optional format for those students who could not attend a face-to-face session (Silver & Nickel, 2003).

It All Starts with an Idea

Our employer was preparing for a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) re-accreditation visit when we were hired. It was due to this review and a section of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) "Guidelines for Distance Learning Library Services" that the Distance Education/Electronic Resources Manager position was created. The guideline states that institutions should have a "librarian-coordinator managing the services" (http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/guidelinesdistancelearning.htm).

One of the first objectives for the Distance Education/Electronic Resources Manager was to create a profile of the distance education community. This profile would provide detailed information that the Distance Education/Electronic Resources Manager could use to meet the goal of providing library instruction to the distance education students. Since this endeavor involved instruction, assistance from the Instructional Services Coordinator was needed.

The task of providing instruction to a distance education student population is quite daunting. However, as stated earlier, most of the authors' library course work was through some type of distance education (off-campus/remote site instruction, web-based courses, video conferencing, etc.), there was a definite advantage. The experiences of the authors in this arena provided insight into the needs of this particular community, which provided a welcome benefit in our undertaking.

A major concern was how to "reach and teach" the distance education students about the Library. This is very important due to the rising interest in the distance education programs. This concern is also in agreement with the University's mission "to provide educational, cultural, and social experiences for a diverse undergraduate and graduate student population" and "to produce broadly educated graduates with skills for employment, citizenship, and life-long learning," and the Library's mission to "serve students, faculty, administration, and staff of the

University." In addition to fulfilling the missions of both the University and Library, providing instruction to distance education students would satisfy one of the SACS "Principles and Philosophy of Accreditation" requirements under section 3.8 Library and Other Learning Resources: "3.8.2 The institution ensures that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources" (http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/PrinciplesOfAccreditation.PDF). In addition to this requirement, the University's Self-Study Report (http://www.jsu.edu/sacs/Report/V.pdf) included a section regarding instruction. Section V. Educational Support Services, 5.1 Library and Other Learning Resources, 5.1.2 Services, included this statement "Basic library services must include an orientation program designed to teach new users how to access bibliographic information and other learning resources. Emphasis should be placed on the variety of contemporary technologies used for accessing learning resources" (http://www.jsu.edu/sacs/Report/V.pdf).

From fall 2001 until spring 2005, the number of distance education courses and supplements has risen from 34 to 384. The number of students enrolled in distance education courses has also risen, from 957 in fall 2001 to 8,772 in spring 2005. These numbers were based on the most current data available to the authors. The growing distance education community has obviously impacted the Library. As more students are enrolling in distance education courses, our services and resources need to be as flexible as possible to ensure the students get the whole University experience. In this same line, more and more of the Library's resources are moving to the online environment. This has been a welcome event for faculty, staff, and students, but it has also led to growing problems of how to disseminate information about access and instruct individuals on using these resources.

Furthermore, the Library tries to orient and instruct students in order to produce graduates with life-long learning skills. A major factor of life-long learning includes information literacy.

Access is an important component of information literacy, but it is simply a starting point. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) provides answers to the following questions about information literacy:

•"What is "information literacy" anyway?" Information literacy means knowing how to find, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use information from a variety of sources. It means knowing when a book may be more helpful than a Web site. It means knowing what questions to ask. Is the information complete? Accurate? Is someone trying to sell something? Good decisions depend on good information. Academic librarians teach 21st century research skills that students will use throughout their professional and personal lives.

•Why are librarians concerned about information literacy? In a world that's information rich, librarians are information smart. They know that having more information isn't necessarily better and that the best source of information isn't always Google. Good decisions depend on good information. Librarians know that information literacy is a survival skill in the 21st century. They also know that for knowledge to advance, it must be based on the best, most current information." (http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/informationliteracycompetency.htm)

Currently, the Library provides instruction sessions for anyone who requests one. Most of the time, these requests are from faculty members teaching on-campus courses. But what about the distance education students? How is instruction provided to this student population that does not meet on campus? These were the questions that needed to be addressed. In reviewing the various options (online tutorials, virtual reference/chats, CD-ROMs, etc.), it was decided to create a CD-ROM tutorial. This decision was based on the variety of online tutorial packages that would require the students to learn that application as well as the library information. Also, the cost of virtual reference/chat services was out of our budget. Furthermore, if the students were given something free, even something as simple as a CD, they just might "try it out." It was because of this idea that the authors finally decided on a CD-ROM instead of a Web-based tutorial.

The use of CD-ROMs allowed us to customize everything about the tutorial and provides easy access to the students. Students could use the CD with any computer without being online. In addition, the CD will assist us in meeting the SACS requirement for providing equivalent services to our distance education students and an ACRL Guideline for services: "a program of library user instruction designed to instill independent and effective information literacy skills while specifically meeting the learner-support needs of the distance learning community" (http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/guidelinesdistancelearning.htm). Once fully implemented, the CD-ROM tutorial/orientation extends our ability to address our students' information requirements and serves our mission by enhancing the students' awareness of library services and resources, facilitating the development of information literacy, perpetuating lifelong learning skills, and improving the learning environment for distance education students.

So, how do we fund this idea? In order to create this CD, we applied for and received a technology grant provided through the University. The grant allowed us to develop an instruction/orientation platform that will teach the students, specifically the distance education students, at our university how to access, navigate, and understand the services and resources available to them via the library.

Project Development

Currently, the University Library provides an online tutorial that is accessible from the Web site. This tutorial uses programming languages for Web pages, such as HTML and JavaScript, to instruct users on searching the catalog. We used this tutorial as the basis for the CD-ROM by incorporating the HTML and JavaScript into the new tutorial and expanding it to include instructions on journal searching.

Problems accessing the tutorial arose. Some of these problems were: how to get the tutorial open, some of the elements did not work correctly in older browsers, and, most importantly, the CD did not automatically start when it was loaded. We tried a number of things to work through these problems, but they were even more cumbersome. To eliminate this problem, the University's Webmaster was consulted. He suggested using Auto Run, which is a program that sets up a CD-ROM to automatically start when loaded. Thanks to the University's Webmaster, we were able to get the tutorial to operate seamlessly.

Research/Test Groups

The CD was tested by providing a copy to the student assistants in the Library. The student assistants were asked to complete the tutorial and report any problems. After correcting the problems and/or clarifying some items, a test population consisting of distance education students needed to be created. Using a listserv created specifically for distance education professors, a message was distributed and a great number of positive responses were received. Since we wanted to keep the testing population to around 30, the first two "volunteers" were selected: a Department of Political Science and Public Administration professor, and a professor in the Emergency Management program (Institute for Emergency Preparedness under College of Arts and Sciences). We sent the CD's along with some instructions and information to the students of their courses: Public Personnel Administration and Disaster Response and Recovery. We asked these professors to request that their students view and evaluate the tutorial. They contacted their students and offered extra credit for those who responded.

Survey Results and Responses

We created a survey using EventHandler to gauge the success of the CD-ROM. Students were asked to comment on the design, application, and use of the received format as effective pedagogical tools. The survey and complete responses can be found in the appendix of this paper. Twenty-nine surveys were distributed and 14 were returned,

giving a 48% return rate.

The first question asked if the student had received formal library instruction before completing this tutorial. This was a simple yes or no question. Over half (64%) indicated they had not. This high percentage illustrated the need for such an instruction tool. The next three questions were asked to ascertain information on the method we selected for delivering instruction. First, students were asked how helpful the tutorial was based on a 5-point scale. Second, the students were asked how confident they were regarding using the Library's resources after completing the tutorial. This was a simple yes or no question. Finally, students were asked how easy the tutorial was based on a 5-point scale. Fortunately, a large majority of the students rated the tutorial helpful or very helpful (76%) and easy or very easy (79%). In addition, over 90% said that they felt more "confident" using the library's resources after completing the tutorial.

These percentages proved to us that we were on the right track and should continue our work on providing instruction to the distance education community. The next question asked if the student would recommend the tutorial to a friend. This was a simple yes or no question. Over 80% responded that they would, which was very encouraging. The final two questions were open-ended and allowed the students to provide information on how we could improve the tutorial and to provide additional comments. Some of the comments we received were very inspiring:

> "I have used the library remotely. Initially had problems. I believe that if this CD is handed out initially to new students and they are allowed to use it, they will grasp a quicker understanding of the tools available to them.. Good idea whoever thought of this. Wish I had it in January. Thanks."

> "Make it a requirement for all new online students."

> "This was GREAT. I only wished it had been available in January when I began online courses. Thank You!!"

Also, some of the suggestions for improvement were very interesting:

- •"It was very informative. Will be able to help out many college students in the future."

- •"Include more graphics"

- •"Include tour guide."

- •"Interlace with video or a show me slide and then take the person back to do the "hands on part.""

Future Applications

Where does library instruction go from here? The authors would like to distribute the instruction CD to all new students through the various orientation sessions offered for both undergraduate and graduate students. The authors would also like the CD included in the University's "Preview Days" packets and at the new faculty orientation session. Additionally, the Disability Support Services Department has asked the author's to distribute the CD-ROMs to their students. Since this distribution was very well received, this partnership will continue. For complete library instruction coverage, the authors are very interested in mailing a copy of the instruction CD to all students enrolled at the University. Unfortunately, budgetary concerns may limit this option. Furthermore, funding to update the contents, create new copies, and distribute the CD may not be available. The authors recognize this limitation of the CD. It is due to this dependence on funding that the authors are exploring other avenues.

Finally, enlisting the assistance of professors for the various distance education courses (Online, College By Cassette, and Videoconferencing) to create instruction sessions/tutorials for their students would provide an opportunity to "spread the word" even further. This partnership with professors to include a library assignment as part of their online course would help the students familiarize themselves with library services and resources. Finally, the authors would like to make the CD-ROM available to the local community, businesses, schools, and Alabama libraries,

thereby contributing to the educational, cultural, and economic well-being of the area.

One Project = Countless Opportunities: Discovering a Research Agenda

As new librarians, the authors were both eager and nervous, and both anxious and apprehensive about the "scholarship" component of their job description. However, there is an old saying that opportunities multiply as they are seized. Luckily, from this one project the authors were able to combine (or seize) several opportunities to gain valuable experience, fill a service gap to a growing patron population, and along the way, produce substantial scholarship (i.e. presentations, grant writing, and publishing opportunities) to include in their vitas as they work toward tenure and promotion

New academic librarians with faculty status often struggle initially with the scholarship requirements for tenure and promotion. The pressure to "publish or perish" is not lost on academic librarians who are, in addition to their forty plus-hour workweeks, required to produce scholarship in one form or the other. In the authors opinions', most library degree programs seem to only briefly address these concerns when discussing academic librarianship. As a result, many new academic librarians are overwhelmed by the requirements to publish an article in a scholarly or peer reviewed journal, present a paper at a regional or national conference, or write a grant. Not only do they not know where to begin, they often don't have the confidence in their writing skills to produce such material (consequently they also feel that research and writing on an academic level for publication or for presentations, should be included more in the academic librarianship curriculum).

This one project provided the authors with a wealth of opportunities. From the beginning they knew they would need additional funding to help pay for the project. Duplicating CD's, marketing them, and distributing them would require more funding than was available in the library's printing budget. The authors answered a university wide call for grant applications for assistance in technology projects and decided to

apply for the grant to assist with the funding. Neither author had any experience in grant writing but they felt that the project was worth "learning something new" and, subsequently, researched and wrote a successful grant application and got the project funded. A stipulation of the grant was that the findings and project be presented to the entire university at an Academe meeting, a monthly university wide symposium sponsored by the Academic Affairs Office. From their first grant, the authors were also given an opportunity for their first ever presentation to a university wide audience at Academe. Because the Academe presentation was well received, the authors decided to "share" their project with their colleagues across the state by answering a call for a best practices session at their state library's convention.

As they began the project (looking to fill a service gap to a patron population they felt close to), the authors had no idea that it would progress to grant writing, a university presentation, and a state presentation. They certainly didn't think that it would lead to a regional conference - talking about a project they started for a few of their patrons about three years ago. What lessons were learned or what lessons are the authors still learning? One lesson is that you can take one project or one idea and get the most out of it if you think it is worth sharing with the rest of your university or the profession as a whole. Another lesson, and this is perhaps the most important lesson, don't disregard any projects that you have done to help your library and don't think that others in your university, your state, your nation, or even the world, won't be interested in what you have to say. Although they might not be as passionate about it as you (most people are not), they may see some value in what you have done. By all means, if you think it's important, you should share your ideas with the rest of your profession. Chances are if it has helped you or your library in any way, it can probably be useful to other libraries as well. Last but not least, although you may find yourself a "new voice" - don't hesitate to use it. Don't be silent because you are new. Find a project that will allow you to exercise your voice, be passionate about it, and share it with others. Along the way you just might discover, as the authors did, that speaking up (however so softly) can help you both find your voice and ensure that your voice is around long enough to no longer be considered "new."

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Appendix

Survey & Sample Responses

Have you received formal library instruction before completing this tutorial?

        Yes – 36% (5 of 14)

        No – 64% (9 of 14)

How helpful was this tutorial (5-point scale)?

        5: Very Helpful – 38% (5 of 13)

        4: Helpful – 38% (5 of 13)

        3: Average – 8% (1 of 13)

        2: Somewhat Helpful – 8% (1 of 13)

        1: Not Helpful – 8% (1 of 13)

After completing this tutorial, I felt more confident using the Library's resources (Library Catalog, Databases, etc.).

        Yes – 93% (13 of 14)

        No – 7% (1 of 14)

How easy was it to use the CD-ROM tutorial (5-point scale)?

        5: Very Easy – 43% (6 of 14)

        4: Easy – 36% (5 of 14)

        3: Average Difficult – 7% (1 of 14)

        2: Difficult – 7% (1 of 14)

        1: Very Difficult – 0% (0 of 14)

        *Someone did answer this question with Yes (7% – 1 of 14)

I would recommend this tutorial to a friend.

        Yes – 86% (12 of 14)

        No – 7% (1 of 14)

        *Someone did answer this question with "nothing was wrong, it just took awhile for the next screen to pop up." (7% – 1 of 14)

How could we improve the tutorial?

- It was very informative. Will be able to help out many college students in the future.
- No way to improve.
- No suggestions at this time
- Direct phone numbers
- Can't think of anything. It would be useful to a new online student and is very easy to use.
- Include tour guide.

- Interlace with video or a show me slide and then take the person back to do the "hands on part." This would work good based on the #7 answer below.
- Make it a requirement for all new online students
- Offer a web based tutorial
- I see nothing that needs improvement on at this point.
- The Tutorial wouldn't work correctly in the title search. It kept hanging up, I tried it on two different computers, Win 98 SE2 and Win 2000. the tutorial is fine for someone who isn't already familiar with the JSU Library, which is why I rated it low… I didn't learn anything new. I think some of the more advance search techniques and other cross reference tools that exist would help the more experienced user. Add a discussion on how to transfer books within the state library system to JSU or wherever we students are at.
- I think the Library tutorial went well.
- No common
- Nothing

If you have any additional comments, please include them in the box below.
- None
- No comments
- None
- This is a good introductory tutorial for new students. Once a student has been involved for a while however it really doesn't offer anything they haven't already picked up on their own.
- include more graphics
- I have used the library remotely. Initially had problems. I believe that if this CD is handed out initially to new students and they are allowed to use it, they will grasp a quicker understanding of the tools available to them.. Good idea whoever thought of this. Wish I had it in January. Thanks.
- Very helpful tutorial, thanks
- This was GREAT. I only wished it had been available in January when I began online courses. Thank You!!
- Please notify Dr. Hunter that Norm Mueller have completed the tutorial. You should also include instructions on the CD itself if it matters if you are on-line or not. This CD has a lot of potential, would be happy to be a beta tester for it...
- I'm very glad that I got to know how to search on JSU Library Website.
- No common
- Thank for the tutorial