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Easing the Learning Curve: The Creation of Digital Learning Objects for Use in Special Collections Student Training

Judith A. Wiener

Introduction

Low-staffed and often under-funded, academic libraries have traditionally relied upon student labor to maintain library services and to complete a seemingly unending workload. The use of students within the archival or special collections setting is no different. Special Collections departments often use students to complete tasks that could be reserved to the realm of professional staff. These include processing collections, preservation and conservation work, digitizing, and providing reference assistance.¹

Academic library professional staff members often rely on students to provide high levels of service and skills. Yet, students pose unique challenges professional or paraprofessional staff may not. Perhaps the most obvious

¹ Anke Voss and Rachel Vagts, "Managing Student Assistants in the Archives," presentation at Midwest Archives Conference, Bloomington, IN, October 1, 2005.

difference is that the primary focus of a student's life on campus is being a student. This means that his or her archival job is often secondary to a student's studies and other campus activities, and this is often reflected in the amount of time that a student remains in a job position, time that can be dedicated to the job, or consistency in work schedules during various academic terms. Another obvious challenge with student workers is that they do eventually graduate. This means that student workers are guaranteed to be part of the archival staff with a high turnover rate.

In the case of undergraduate students, it is very unlikely that entering students will also come with any sort of knowledge of what an archival institution is, what it does, or what types of work take place within its confines. This presents a particularly unique challenge when one is trying to train a student about a task which is unfamiliar in purpose, significance, or meaning.

These challenges speak for the need for student worker educational training materials to be consistent, basic, and easy to repeat. Given the limited professional staffing in many departments, it is also important that the training not take too much of the professional staff's time. Although the need for hands-on training will always be necessary to a certain extent, an organized and comprehensive training manual can ensure that the proper introduction to archival and preservation methods were provided to all archival student workers with a minimal expenditure of the permanent staff's time.

The special collections and archives departments at The Ohio State University have similar challenges to those discussed thus far. These departments use student labor to maintain everyday services and activities. Until the creation of the special collections digital student manual, however, each of the departments had vastly different ways of training students. In 2004, the head curators of the

departments decided to create a unified process to train students more efficiently and consistently. Based on these shared needs, the decision was made to create digital learning objects to meet these challenges.

Digital learning objects are small, self-contained, and reusable blocks of digital instructional material that can be easily and quickly adapted to a multitude of instructional situations and needs.² The small units of material can also be mixed and/or stung together to provide customized classes based upon the differing institutional and instructional situations. According to Laurel A. Clyde,

The concept of learning objects is based in both instructional technology and computer science. Instructional technology has been a factor in the current shift of instruction towards more student-centered, problem-based strategies. Computer science has contributed the ideas associated with object-oriented programming and computing. This object-oriented approach is based on the creation of digital components (called “objects”) that can be used and re-used in different contexts and even for different purposes.³

The multi-purpose nature of a digital product was particularly appropriate for the needs of the various special collections departments at The Ohio State University

² Robert J. Beck, “What are Learning Objects,” Center for International Education, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (last updated November 23, 2010), http://www4.uwm.edu/cie/learning_objects.cfm?gid=56 (accessed December 29, 2010).

³ Laurel A. Clyde, “Digital Learning Objects,” *Teacher Librarian: The Journal for School Library Professionals* V. 31, no.4 (2004), http://www.teacherlibrarian.com/tltoolkit/info_tech/info_tech_31_4.html (accessed September 30, 2009).

because the curators foresaw having similar training objects ready for other training opportunities. These other opportunities included intern, researcher, volunteer, and scholar training situations.

The following article reviews the professional literature on the topic of student training in library and special collection settings with an emphasis on technology-delivered training methods. It discusses specific examples of the decisions that need to be made when creating a digital student training manual and examines techniques for implementing digital learning objects as an educational delivery method. Finally, the author analyzes the experience of the creation of The Ohio State University Libraries Special Collections training manual.

A Review of Literature

A review of archival and library literature on the topic of student worker training revealed that student workers in archives and libraries provide both benefits and challenges to employers. Budget constraints and inadequate staffing mean that students are relied upon in these settings to complete a wide variety of tasks. These tasks can range from clerical to quasi-professional in nature. Student workers fill a critical staffing need and may also take up a considerable portion of the budgets of most libraries. Without this help, most archives and institutions would be hard-pressed to fulfill their mission let alone their hours of operation.

Archival literature has explored the topic of student workers in a limited fashion. In their 1992 article, "Learning by Doing: Undergraduates as Employees in Archives," Barbara Floyd and Richard Oram remark that undergraduate employment is especially attractive to archival managers at universities due to inadequate professional staffing, low student staffing costs, and the ready availability of students needing jobs. However, the

authors recognize that student labor also brings with it a series of challenges such as recruitment, selection, and training. The authors note that these special issues are not usually identified or discussed in the professional archival literature.⁴

Floyd and Oram conducted a survey as part of their study and discovered that students employed within university archives are completing a wide variety of tasks from clerical to semi-professional in nature. The survey also revealed that more than half of the archival institutions utilizing student labor did not have training manuals. The authors argue that the development of specialized archival skills through tools such as a manual is paramount to successful archival staffing. The authors explain that,

undergraduates. . . need to be exposed to the fundamental principles of archival theory and practice early in their training. . . although developing a student manual as part of a training program is very time-consuming the investment pays off in the long run. The supervisor will discover that less time will be devoted to individualized training and supervision.⁵

The authors did not provide details about the specific materials that should be included in manuals.

Archival training has a strong tradition of hands-on instruction, perhaps because of the non-routine nature of many of the tasks completed by staff. This can lead to the reluctance of some managers to create a student manual.⁶

⁴ Barbara L. Floyd and Richard W. Oram, "Learning by Doing: Undergraduates as Employees in Archives," *American Archivist* 55 (Summer 1992): 441.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 445.

⁶ Margalotti, Jaime L, "Utilizing Student Library Assistants in University Archives and Special Collections" (MLIS thesis, University

However, the creation of such a manual can actually benefit the institution by documenting the procedures for these non-routine tasks, serving to offer guidance and reinforcement when one is faced with non-routine circumstances, and serving to lessen the overwhelming nature of training overload on students or the need to spend staff time retraining student workers.⁷

The Society of American Archivists (SAA) has recognized the need to provide effective training to student assistants in order to create higher standards of work performance, morale, and accomplishment for both workers and managers. The SAA handbook for managers of student workers suggests that the departmental orientation include general worker expectations and an introduction to the institution and archival theory. General expectations could include items such as human resources policies, customer service standards, and evaluation schedules. The institutional overview could include references to the repository's history, mission, goals, and function. An overview of archival theory could include a general primer to the basic of archival work and definitions. The overview should be left to a minimum, as "explaining all the theoretical/historical foundations of archival work is not only time-consuming, but often counter-productive. Tailor the depth and scope of explanations to the kind of work the students do."⁸

Although the archival literature provides a cursory review of the challenges and benefits of student workers,

of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004), <http://etd.ils.unc.edu/dspace/bitstream/1901/90/1/jaimemargalotti.pdf>, (accessed December 29 2010).

⁷ Michael D. Kathman and Jane McGurn Kathman "Training Student Employees for Quality Service," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 26 (May 2000): 179-180.

⁸ College and University Archives Section of the Society of American Archivists. *Student Assistants in Archival Repositories: A Handbook for Managers* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1992): 21-23.

general academic library literature has explored the topic in a more in-depth manner and has included an investigation into the delivery of digital training methods. Such a detailed exploration of this topic is not surprising, given that students comprise a large part of the academic library workforce. A 1996 American Research Library (ARL) survey revealed that 24 percent of the staff of ARL libraries was comprised of students and that these students performed a wide array of tasks, from circulation duties to ready-reference responsibilities.⁹ Because of this high level of responsibility, training is placed as a high priority in many library articles concerning student employees.

In their book, *Effective Management of Student Employment: Organizing for Student Employment in Academic Libraries*, Baldwin, Wilkinson, and Barkley note,

supervisors have an obligation both to train student employees to do their job and to develop them. A development program is needed to provide students with a broadening experience designed to build on their strengths and give them positive work experiences.¹⁰

In this way, students are not only prepared for the job at hand, but are also developed to provide an increasingly higher level of service and skills that they can take with them upon graduation.

Properly trained students are also more likely to have a higher level of job satisfaction and success. In her manual for student employee supervisors, Kimberly Burke

⁹ David A. Baldwin, Frances C. Wilkinson, and Daniel Barkley, *Effective Management of Student Employment: Organizing for Student Employment in Academic Libraries* (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 2000): 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 175.

Sweetman asserts that most supervisors fail to properly train students because they see it as a wasteful use of time, given the often-temporary nature of their employment. However, well-trained students often stay longer and decrease the likelihood of high-turnover rates that often plague student worker positions. She suggests that the creation of toolkits, such as digital learning objects, can be one way to ensure proper and consistent training, increase student job satisfaction, and cut supervisor training time.¹¹

The literature also points out the importance of mass student preservation training for students working in all academic library departments. As Anthony J. Amodeo points out in his book chapter entitled, “Preservation Awareness for Student Workers: Adding a Quiz to the Agenda,” budget cuts mean that library books must last longer before being replaced and a stretched-thin library staff can mean that little attention is given to student preservation training. In reaction to the realization that improper preservation training of staff members who frequently handle materials could mean disaster for collections, many universities attempted mass training methods such as video presentations. However, these mass training methods were sometimes inconsistently applied and Amodeo argues that consistent hands-on training and follow-up training quizzes are necessary to fully train students in preservation techniques for general library collections.¹²

Other authors also conclude that consistent student training is necessary for an effective student work force.

¹¹ Kimberly Burke Sweetman, *Managing Student Assistants: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians* (New York: Neal Schuman Publishers, Inc., 2007): 87-89.

¹² Anthony J. Amodeo, “Preservation Awareness for Student Workers: Adding a Quiz to the Agenda,” in *Promoting Preservation Awareness in Libraries: a Sourcebook for Academic, Public, School, and Special Collections*, ed. Jeanne M. Drewes and Julie A. Page (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 66-74.

This is especially true in large university multi-library systems. In their 2001 article, Terri L. Holtze and Rebecca E. Maddox discuss the challenge of implementing student training programs across multi-library systems, such as the authors' institution, the University of Louisville. The authors identify the need to train students consistently in an ever-fluctuating student workforce environment. The authors also note that the cost of student labor is higher when student training is not centralized in a multi-library system. Therefore, when students doing similar tasks are trained via a centralized training program better quality of student training is coupled with a savings in funding invested in training.¹³

Holtze and Maddox also suggest that web training could be used to facilitate a centralized training program. They point out that "by using the web for ... skills training, we reduce the problems of physical distance, scheduling conflicts, and lack of communication." In addition to web training, the authors are also proponents of hands-on training offered in the form of a large seminar attended by all student workers.¹⁴

Using computer-assisted training to overcome the challenges of student worker training is a concept that was recognized as microcomputer technology began to emerge. In his 1984 article, Marvin C. Guilfoyle remarked that a standardized computer-assisted training manual had been recognized as a solution to the difficulties of training part-time student workers with inconsistent schedules. His institution, the Clifford Memorial Library at the University of Evansville, developed its first computer-assisted training manuals in 1978. Guilfoyle stressed the importance of having staff members who were proficient in developing

¹³ Terri L. Holtze and Rebecca E. Maddox, "Student Assistant Training in a Multi-Library System," *Technical Services Quarterly* 19 (February 2002): 27-28.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 28.

lessons in the computer medium selected and noted that a successful computerized training program depends on the audience's ability to use the training program handed to them.¹⁵

Yesterday's computer-assisted microcomputer training program has become today's macromedia Web experience. Despite the advances in technology, the fact remains that digital training programs rely on both users and developers who are experienced and comfortable with the training program selected. A modern-day example of the University of Evansville microcomputer training program can be found in the Bloomsburg University interactive instructional program. To solve its problem of student training inconsistencies, the University contracted with the Institute of Interactive Technologies and used its graduate students to develop an on-line training tool utilizing content developed by the librarians and library supervisors. In this way, the library was able to use the volunteer labor of graduate students in a technology program to develop a program that did not require the use of its staff as technology developers. However, in this situation, library experts could design the content without needing to be computer experts. The end result was that student workers were presented with a computerized program that was professionally-developed and contained quality training instructions.¹⁶

Despite the many benefits of digitally-delivered training programs, it is important that hands-on training is also provided and planned for in a training program. Often,

¹⁵ Marvin C. Guilfoyle, "Computer Assisted Training for Student Library Assistants," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* V. 10 no. 6 (1984): 333-336.

¹⁶ Erik Poole, Frank Grieco, Heather Derck and Tom Socash., "Training Library Student Assistants: Bloomsburg University's Interactive Instructional Program," *College and Research Libraries* V. 62 no. 5 (2001): 537-538.

the demonstration of techniques can be more valuable than a description of the task. As Katherine Elizabeth explains in her article about training students for the specialized needs of an academic law library, “Computerized training allows student assistants to learn at their own pace and to review as needed. It also frees up some of the student’s time. But computerized training should be accompanied by personal interaction. It will be necessary to keep in touch with students, check on their progress, and use on-the-job training when necessary.”¹⁷

Many academic libraries have examined and have found a great deal of success with computer-assisted and Web-based training programs. Together with hands-on instruction, technology-assisted training programs, such as those that use digital learning objects, require the existence of technology-savvy program developers and users but can be extremely beneficial in easing the learning curve of student workers and meeting the challenge of providing constant and consistent quality student training programs.

Developing the Objects

The development of digital learning objects for student training in the Special Collections departments at The Ohio State University was a solution to a shared student training inconsistency problem. Although the departments have varying administrative reporting lines, they are all led individually by head curators and often solve shared problems through a special collections roundtable group that meets monthly to discuss activities and issues. The head curators within these departments also meet annually at a retreat to set agenda items for the upcoming year’s roundtable sessions.

¹⁷ Katherine Elizabeth Malmquist, “Managing Student Assistants in the Law Library.” *Law Library Journal* 83 (Spring 1991): 308, 309.

The nine special collections departments that participated in the digital student manual project had vastly different ways of training students. During the 2004 and 2005 The Ohio State University summer curators' retreats, the curators identified the creation of a unified and digitally-available student manual as one of the roundtable group's main goals for the upcoming year. Work on the manual began immediately after the retreat by a library science practicum student, who was charged with developing and creating the components that would make up the manual. The manual was completed and distributed to the curators for implementation at the start of the 2005-2006 academic year.

The urgency for a unified student manual at that time was also compounded by the fact that The Ohio State University library system began a major renovation and reassessment of space. During the renovation, departments were forced to share space and students. After the renovation, some of the collections that were previously housed in separate locations were combined into one location within the renovated main library building and were expected by library administration to share, to some extent, resources such as student workers.

Until the completion of the unified digital student manual, the amount and standardization of training seemed to depend largely upon the size of the student staff within each department. Smaller locations hired a limited number of graduate student assistants per year and had low student staff turnover. These locations relied solely upon hands-on training for student staff. Larger departments hired a moderate number of undergraduate and graduate students per year, used a series of loose-leaf instructional handouts and manuals to train students, and relied heavily on hands-on training. The printed material distributed for training purposes focused primarily upon the collection contents and location, general and emergency policies and

procedures, departmental contacts, and quick reference tips. Few departments included information about preservation and archival processing.

A common student instructional training video had been attempted once before by the various departments. The video, called *Archive Man: Raiders of the Lost Archive*, was created by the curators of the special collections roundtable group in 1996, The Ohio State University Library's preservation department, and The Ohio State University theater department. The goal of the video was to introduce students to general archival and preservation tools, techniques, procedures, and policies. The video followed the adventures of the fictional superhero Archive Man as he participated in an Indiana Jones-type adventure to protect library collections from dangers and villains. Although the film introduced important and useful ideas and concepts, the video was not as educational and detailed in nature as many of the curators had hoped. As a result, the video was not used in several departments, used only a few times in some, and used as student entertainment in others. At the start of the digital manual project, none of the departments were using *Archive Man: Raiders of the Lost Archive* as part of their student training routine.

In contrast to the video training effort, the curators wanted to present detailed information through the digital student manual. As in *Archive Man: Raiders of the Lost Archive*, the new manual needed to introduce key archival and preservation tools, techniques, procedures, and policies that are universal across the various departments. Although students in each of the departments had varying levels of responsibilities, common key concepts were identified as important for students to know in every department. These concepts included proper handling of materials and collections, basic processing skills, assisting patrons in the

usage of materials, and proper scanning and photocopying techniques.

The curators also identified the need to cover general human resource and student worker policies in the digital student manual. These policies included timesheets, attendance, breaks, and paycheck information. In addition, the curators indicated that human resource information for student worker supervisors would be a desirable unit of the manual. A section was also included to direct students to further information from both on and off campus sources. These informational resources included archival, library, employment, training, and emergency information. In this unit of the manual, students were given links and phone numbers of resources such as human resources, the Library of Congress, and the campus police.

Another area that the curators felt was lacking in their current student training manuals was the subject of customer service. Many users of special collections only interact with the staff present in the public areas of the departments. In many departments, this meant that student workers may be the only staff working with researchers at certain times. In closed stacked areas, such as the special collections departments, researchers must rely upon the workers in the reading room to bring them material. These customers expect a level of service that many curators felt was deficient in many student workers' skill sets. The curators also expressed concern that poor customer service experiences may mean that researchers may not return or, worse, may create bad publicity for the department and, thus, decrease the likelihood of future use or donations. Customer service skills and techniques were considered an essential addition to the digital student manual.

In addition to the needs of students working within the departments, several of the curators expressed the need to train communities other than student workers in several capacities. This need centered primarily on the training of

proper handling and usage techniques for special collections materials for students, general users of the materials, and volunteers. Several curators also taught classes that required use of their collections as part of the classroom assignments. Providing one-on-one instruction to these students during the school term continuously proved to be a large time commitment on staff. To solve this annual problem, portions of the manual could be assigned to students taking courses requiring the usage of special collections materials. Thus, the curators needed the manual to be generic enough to be useful in a multitude of circumstances.

After the general needs of the various departments were established, an analysis of the preferred digital delivery method was made. All existing manuals had site-specific information that the curators felt was essential to the proper training of their student workers and the new manual had to be easy to change by each of the departments to best fit their purposes. Although various digital delivery and software packages were considered, it was obvious that the technology, budget, and software gaps that existed among the various departments meant that a more user-friendly and commonly available interface was desired. The Microsoft presentation software *PowerPoint* met these requirements. It had the further advantage that the curators already used the program in their classes and everyday lives and felt that the content could be easily modified by current staff members. Finally, the fact that *PowerPoint* could be delivered via the web made the program the best choice for the manual.

Once the delivery method was selected, the content of the manual could then be created. Using the needs and suggestions of the curators, the manual's seven units included general information for students; introduction to special collections, customer service, general preservation techniques and policies, general archival processing

techniques and policies, resources for the students, and a supplemental unit to guide student supervisors on The Ohio State University's student worker policies. The division of the manual into units meant that the curators could select which sections they would assign to various communities. For example, student workers might be assigned all units except for the supervisor supplement, while a student assigned to use the collections for a class may only be assigned the introduction to archives and general preservation techniques and policies units.

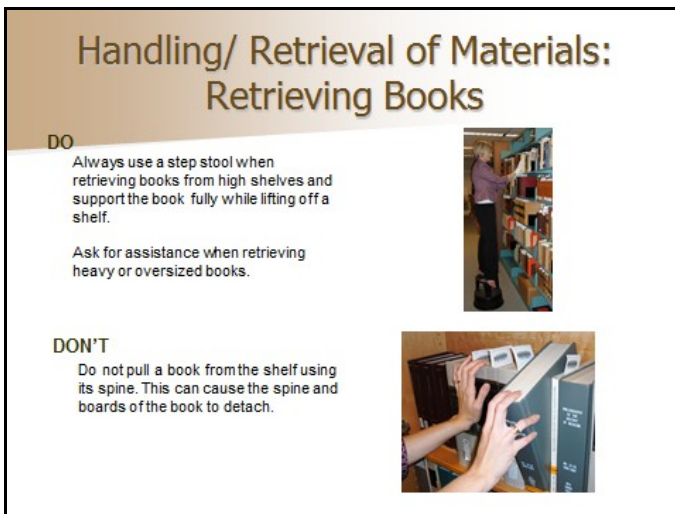


Figure A: Common student tasks, such as the handling and retrieval of books were photographed to illustrate the correct way to handle special collection materials.

The manual creator was influenced by materials already being delivered by the Web, such as Donia Conn's *PowerPoint* presentation for the staff of the Syracuse University Library about the care and handling of books and manuscripts.¹⁸ Conn's presentation successfully used

¹⁸ Donia Conn, "The Care and Handling of Books and Manuscripts: a Workshop for SUL SCRC Staff and Students," (Special Collections

PowerPoint, photographs, video clips, and text to demonstrate proper archival procedures successfully. Common archival procedures and situations were staged and basic preservation tools were photographed to illustrate concepts and processes featured in the digital manual. (See Figures A and B)



Figure B: A photographic glossary of preservation tools was included in the digital learning object on general preservation to familiarize students with their correct use and purpose.

Once the content had been developed through the exploration of the curators' needs and an observation of web-delivered tools already in place, it was time to create a design for the slide presentation. The goals set forth by the curators were that the design should be easy to replicate, read, and share. Based on these goals, the decision was made to use the design templates already available in the

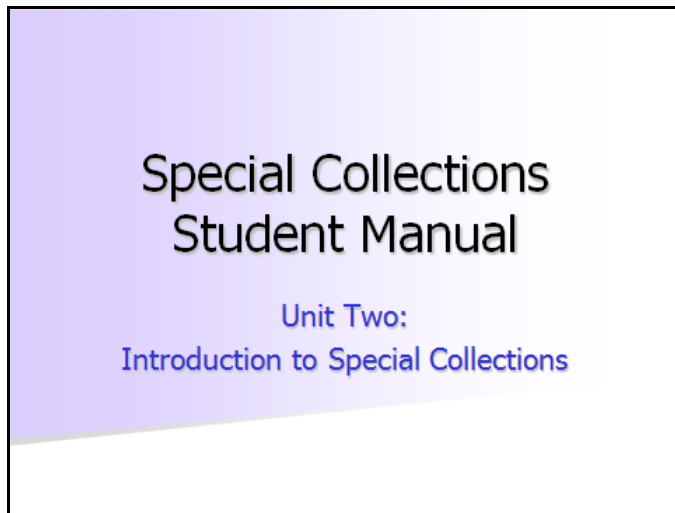
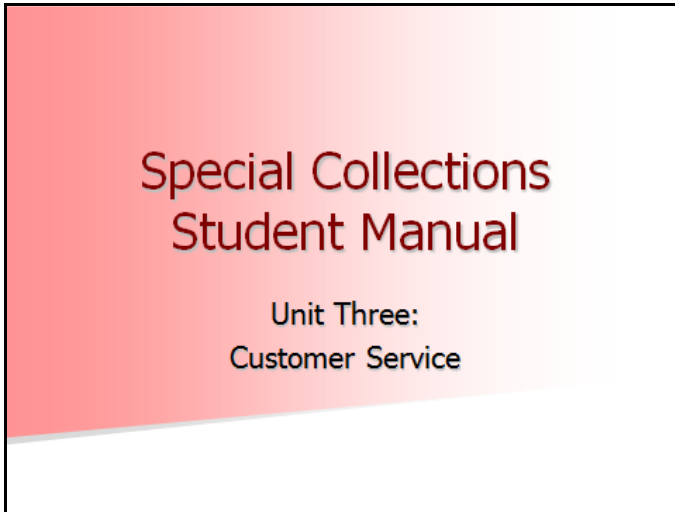
PowerPoint software. An easy to read and display slide design template was selected. However, the slide had some questionable colored screens that made the slides difficult to read. To solve this problem, a custom color scheme was developed and applied to the slides. This solution met all of the goals set by the curators. (See Figures C and D)

Implementation Options

Upon the completion of the digital learning objects the curators approved the basic content that would be used for all departments. Next, the curators made alterations based upon their specific needs and then were ready to use the tool for student training purposes. Once the digital manual was distributed to the curators, the emphasis of the project turned to implementation.

The manual creator provided guidance to the curators about implementing the manual and how the objects could be easily modified to best fit their needs. Based on the research completed in the area of student training, the manual creator recommended that students should view the manual during their first few days on the job and prior to performing any hands-on training. This would give students a baseline level of familiarity with concepts and activities before hands-on training or work activities began. The manual creator also showed the curators how the *PowerPoint* manual could be modified to fit individual needs and delivered locally on the department's computers, on the World Wide Web, or via classroom delivery programs such as *Blackboard* or *WebCT*. This last option could be particularly attractive to those curators who teach classes and must educate entire classrooms on proper handling procedures.

The manual creator recommended that the implementation process include frequent reassessments of



Figures C and D: To ensure the slides used in the digital manual would be easy to replicate, read, and share, a standard design template already available in the PowerPoint software was selected. A custom color pallet was created to make the slides easy to read and to easily differentiate the learning objects within the manual. The Customer Service slide (Figure C), for example, used a rose shades while the object on special collections concepts (Figure D), utilized a lavender-color palette.

the manual's contents. The techniques represented in the manual reflected the archival best practices known at the time of manual creation. Also, the student manual contained specific student worker policies established by The Ohio State University Human Resources Department that were subject to frequent revision. As best practices and human resources policies change throughout time, it was important that the manual change as well to remain current.

It is important to note that the digital student manual was not intended as the sole medium for student training needs. All special collections departments included in the manual project intended to utilize hands-on training methods, especially to demonstrate delicate or complicated processes. Although these techniques and concepts are introduced in the digital learning objects, the manual creator suggested that the departments continue to use hands-on training and close supervision to ensure students are completing their tasks in a proper manner. Although not a desired component of the digital manual at the time of development, it was also suggested that the various departments might want to create quizzes to assess that students had gained the appropriate amount of knowledge through student training.

Assessment of the Project and Lessons Learned

The unified digital student training manual was implemented in a majority of the special collections departments in the 2005 – 2006 academic term. Although considered a useful tool by the head curators, many were not using the manual or using it in a limited capacity three years later, at the start of the 2008-2009 academic term. The disuse of the project in such a short time frame occurred due to a wide variety of reasons.

Many departments cited a change in staff responsibilities, including the training of students and volunteers, that had occurred since the manual's creation.

Staff members with new responsibilities were not told of the existence of the manual and it, therefore, was not incorporated into regular training courses by the new student supervisors. Some departments had cut or limited student staffing due to budget concerns and felt that a structured training program was not needed for the smaller staff with little turn-over. Still other departments had recruited more advanced graduate students who did not have the need for such basic skills training.

Two departments continue to utilize the program fully as part of their entry-level training needs. These departments use the manual as a starting point to introducing students to archival and student worker concepts and also provide additional hands-on training. Several students in these departments have remarked that the program is a useful introduction to the basics of student work in a special collections setting. In these areas, the digital manual is working as designed and is used in conjunction with hands-on training. However, no complete updating or assessment of the tool other than anecdotal evidence has been made since its implementation due largely to the lack of staff time to devote to updating the digital learning objects.

The need for a unified training program was and, arguably, is still needed for the student training needs of The Ohio State University Special Collections departments. Despite being appropriate for the needs of the special collections units at the time, the digital manual is no longer included in the training programs of the majority of the departments due to unforeseen circumstances. These include changes in student backgrounds, budget constraints, and staffing changes combined with challenges in succession planning for student training responsibilities.

Although the tool is, by design, easy to modify and customize by department, no central support for the training program existed after the departure of the

practicum student who created the manual. With no centralized support system, the success of the unified training program fell to the responsibilities and challenges faced by each individual department. Therefore, instead of the unified training program intended, the digital manual became more of an optional, albeit anecdotally useful, item in the toolbox of student training of each individual department.

From this experience, one could argue that a truly successful student centralized training system needs not only the support and participation of various departments at the beginning of the project, but also the firm dedication to student training on an ongoing basis. This might include the work of a staff member or members at an organizational level, instead of each departmental level, who is responsible for the frequent revision, assessment, and promotion of the tool to all departments. This could be a position that resides in library administration, a rotating responsibility among each of the departments, or work completed by a student training committee. Once established, this role should not take an inordinate amount of time but may be essential to such a program's continued success.

Conclusion

The creation and implementation of consistent, comprehensive, and easy-to-use-and-modify digital learning objects is a solution that can be used in any special collections department, large or small, to ease the student worker learning curve and solve the unique challenges of student training. Student labor, by its nature, is categorized by high turn-over rates, which means that training is frequent and can, therefore, be inconsistent. Although consistency is also possible with a printed manual, the digital manual ensures that any changes or modifications needed are accomplished in an easy and inexpensive

manner. This is because there are no printing fees and extensive reformatting of a printed manual is unnecessary in digital form.

Potential inadequacies of digital learning objects are also identifiable. Hands-on student training is still necessary for complicated or complex techniques and procedures. An over-reliance on digital training methods could be deemed unnecessary and students could potentially cause harm to materials within the collection using misunderstood and incorrect techniques. Follow-up assessment is likewise recommended to ascertain the effectiveness of student training. It is also important to note that another downside to digital learning objects is that they require a certain technology competency level to develop, modify, or use. Closely linked to this problem is the fact that digital learning object modifications could be time-consuming and may rely on a limited number of technology-savvy staff members to make time in their schedule for such modifications. To combat these deficiencies, it is recommended that provisions for ongoing revisions, assessments, and promotion be identified at a centralized institutional and not individual departmental level.

The digital delivery of student training manuals in a special collections setting such as that present at The Ohio State University is a noteworthy example of a solution to problems inherent in training large groups of students on a regular and routine basis. Beyond the creation of the training objects, ongoing support at the central level is recommended to ensure continued success of the student training program. Despite the large scope, such a project can reap many rewards and benefits from this investment in time and resources.

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Outreach at the Prior Health Sciences Library and Center for Knowledge Management at The Ohio State University. She helped to create The Ohio State University Libraries Special Collections Digital Student Training Manual as part of her practicum experience at Kent State University and the research conducted for this project served as the basis for this article.