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Title: Online screencasting tutorials: A way forward for legal resources training?

Date: 2011

Originally published in: Legal Information Management

Example citation: Peters, L. (2011). Online screencasting tutorials: A way forward for legal resources training? *Legal Information Management*, 11(3), 212-213

Version of item: Author’s post-print

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10034/190530>

Online screencasting tutorials: a way forward for legal resources training?

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At the University of Chester, we have been using screencasting tutorials for two years as another way of training students in how to use our online databases and other resources.

What is screencasting?

Screencasting captures a recording of a computer screen with associated movements such as mouse movements and clicks. It can be accompanied by an audio voiceover or callouts (such as speech bubbles and arrows) which direct attention to a particular part of the database. The advantages of screencasting include:

- Students can access tutorials when and as many times as necessary so as to enforce learning and accommodate slower learners
- Available online 24/7 so students can access and learn when it suits them
- Simple, low-cost technology
- The tutorial visually guides the students through using resources step-by-step
- Each tutorial can focus on a particular aspect of a resource (for example, logging on, how to find an Act of Parliament) so students can select the tutorial that they require

Screencasting at the University of Chester

The University of Chester uses a screencasting software called Camtasia. More information about Camtasia is available from its official website -

<http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.asp>

Perhaps the most important aspect of using screencasting is the pre-production phase. Authors need to consider who their audience is and write the script aimed at this user group. It is also helpful to have a slide showing contact details at the end of the tutorial so students know where to go for further help. Once the initial screencast has been produced, audio dialogue and additions such as arrows and speech bubbles can be added.



Figure 1 – The final slide in the tutorial gives contact details should further help be required.

The Camtasia tutorials at the University of Chester cover accessing and using Westlaw and Lexis Library and using the print version of *Halsbury's Laws of England*. The database tutorials are a few minutes in length and focus on a particular aspect of using the database and can range from the basic (such as logging in) to the advanced (such as setting up alerts). Tutorials are designed to last a few minutes so students know that they can get a quick guide to help them and shorter clips are easier to update when necessary.

Camtasia has also been used to develop a tutorial for a printed resource - *Halsbury's Laws of England*. A powerpoint presentation with pictures was created, taking a step by step approach to using *Halsbury's Laws*. The powerpoint was then converted to Camtasia and an accompanying voiceover was added.

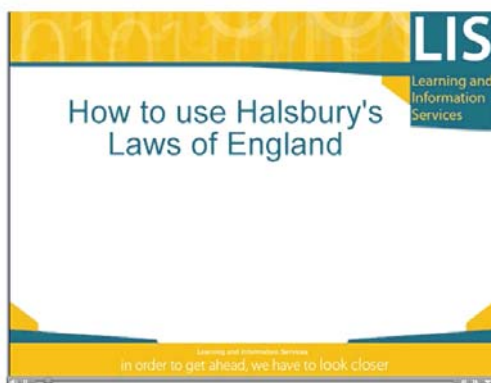


Figure 2 – The tutorial on using Halsbury's Laws of England

Recent Developments by Lexis

Lexis have recently developed a set of screencasting tutorials for use with Lexis Library and the print version of *Halsbury's Laws of England*. This gives universities the option to link to the Lexis tutorials and limit their own in-house tutorials to such aspects as logging on to Lexis using Athens or logging on off campus.

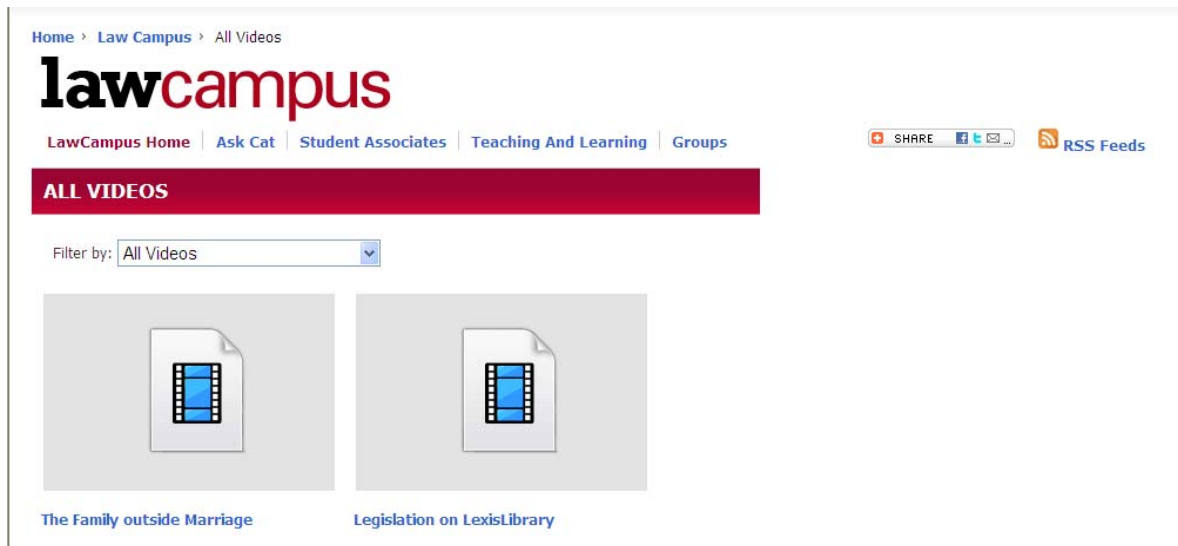


Figure 3 – Some of the screencasting tutorials available on the Lexis Law Campus website. Reproduced with kind permission of Lexis

Conclusion

Not all students learn the same way and therefore the more ways we use (by written guides, screencasting tutorials, interactive tutorials) to train them to get the best use of our resources, the more successful they will be.

References

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