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Create or Curate: An Environmental Scan of Digital Learning Object Development

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Create or Curate: An Environmental Scan of Digital Learning Object Development

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[A 2012 survey focused on the sharing of information literacy teaching materials \(PDF\)](#)

found that current practice amongst many librarians creating digital resources is to find existing learning materials before developing their own.

In 2017 we conducted a survey to examine whether this continued to be true for librarians creating or reusing Digital Learning Objects (DLOs) and what best practices regarding design and development of DLOs were being used.

We adopted the New Media Consortium (NMC) definition for DLOs which describes them as “any grouping of materials that is structured in a meaningful way and is tied to an educational objective.”

Examples include: a video on YouTube, an interactive online module, or a stand-alone activity or website that includes a mix of videos, and interactive components.

Methodology »



The survey was distributed via listservs focused on information literacy and library information technology.



The survey had 21 questions starting with asking what percentage of DLOs are created or curated from elsewhere.



The survey concluded with questions about the respondent's role in the library and any guiding best practices, including accessibility compliance.



Respondents were then asked to consider a DLO used for instruction in the past 6 months, whether it was created or curated and answer questions about priorities and limitations leading to the creation or curation decision.



69 individuals completed the survey and follow-up interviews were conducted with **6** volunteer participants to learn more about specific cases and institutional contexts.

Reasons to Create »

Seventy one percent of respondents said they built the majority of DLOs. The top three reasons for building were:

1. A unique instructional need that was not being met by existing content;
2. The flexibility to add or change the DLO as needed;
3. The importance for the DLO to be institutionally branded.

A quarter of respondents replied they did not use an instructional design model when building a DLO. Bloom's Taxonomy was the most used model with 27% utilizing it in their development.

Top software used to create DLOs were Camtasia, PowerPoint and Adobe Captivate.

Top three reasons for curating an existing DLO were:

1. Ease of use of the existing material;
2. Time commitment for curating rather than creating;
3. The challenge of finding staff time to create one.

Respondents stated their libraries did not have a formal workflow or dedicated team for creating DLOs. It often fell to the liaison librarian to create DLOs using available software. A similar lack of workflow existed for determining whether an existing DLO should be curated.

Interview Insights »

The survey did not ask about DLO maintenance or storage strategies. A pair of interviewees voiced concern with how to store and organize them. This can signal a future area of research, not only of DLOs, but digital assessment management by the library in general.

An interviewee described shifting from developing DLOs using Camtasia and Captivate to using HTML, Word or PDF. These were quicker to create with and easier to maintain.

An interviewee stated that while her colleagues wanted to create more interactive DLOs, most faculty were happy with screencasts or instructional videos and it had been a struggle getting faculty to realize the benefits of incorporating interactive DLOs into their instruction.

Icon Sources »

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