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Internet Training for Faculty at a Small University

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TURNING INFORMATION INTO KNOWLEDGE

The library staff at a small university library must provide services to the academic community that otherwise would be provided by other departments on a larger university campus. One of those emerging functions is training in the use of the Internet. In a small university library, we must be concerned with training faculty and students to access the most extensive information resources available. Therefore, on many small campuses, librarians need to address the issues

involved in training and coordinating access to the Internet.

Internet Training for Faculty at a Small University

by Susan Kendall

Control Versus Chaos

With the advent of the Internet, our traditionally controlled library environment is being dramatically altered. At this point, there is

no one group that controls the Internet. No organization sets standards for displaying various databases. Thus, this wonderful anarchy of information seems to be spilling over so quickly that the ordinary user is confused and obviously frustrated. As a group, librarians are faced with a difficult problem. Where once libraries had established standards, now there is chaos. Can teaching access to this chaos be easier than what we did before?

Before the explosion of resources on the Internet, library collections were ordered by generally accepted professional standards, such as AACR2, Dewey, and LCSH. The result created a controlled environment for access to these collections. From the public services viewpoint, helping the patron locate material and training the users in finding information were done in this controlled environment. The card catalog, and subsequently the online catalog, followed specific rules. Standard subject headings and call numbers have traditionally been used to provide consistent access points. In a forum held at Rutgers University in November 1990, the topic of authority control in the online environment was the key theme. Mary Page summarized very succinctly the goals of librarians in providing a consistent organization to library material. The importance of authority control and the links that

it provides are crucial in providing ease of access to library material.¹

Indexes to periodicals, for the most part, have also followed a standard entry form and used subject thesauri. However, because journal indexes are owned by either the sponsoring organization or a commercial vendor, each type of index has its own idiosyncrasies. But each index also has its controlled entry, description, and subject headings. So in each case, an effort is made to achieve a consistent approach to the information contained in the index.

Teaching patrons to use these catalogs and indexes has been the topic of many articles, books, and conferences. Training concepts have relied on the consistencies in the catalog and in the indexes. One challenge in the past has been to teach the patron how to use different indexing sources. Through classes, one-shot lectures, handouts, personal reference interviews, and the like, librarians helped teach the user how to identify relevant sources and then how to use those sources. The nature of the resources accessible on the Internet, however, makes training a special challenge.

University of Dallas

At the University of Dallas (U.D.), as at so many other small academic institutions, the Internet is a "hot topic." Some faculty members are quite computer literate and are eager to explore the Internet. And then there are those faculty who are not quite at ease with the computer but still are intrigued about the Internet.

The University of Dallas began in 1956 with just ninety-six students. It currently has about 3,000 enrolled in the Constantin College, which emphasizes a liberal arts program, the Braniff Graduate School which offers master's and doctorate degrees in the liberal arts disciplines, and the Graduate School of Management. Our second campus, in Rome, Italy, provides a sophomore semester of studying throughout Europe. Our campus has outstanding premedical and science undergraduate programs. There are currently 124 full-time faculty members. The U.D. library has approximately 150,000 volumes and subscribes to about 800 current periodical titles. The library recently implemented an online catalog and offers access to FirstSearch and DIALOG search services. In addition, we have eleven CD-ROM products. Our campus has no central academic computing center. Therefore, the library has been viewed as a focal point for learning about computerized indexes.

Internet Training

In an editorial in *Technicalities*, Brian Alley pointed out that this time presents a golden opportunity for librarians. He asked the question: "Will librarians recognize Internet as another route to information and take on the role of trainer and Interpreter?"²

When one of our faculty members asked the librarians to help sponsor a workshop on the Internet, we readily agreed. Because our Internet connections are very limited (three modems and a few dedicated lines), we decided to offer the workshop only to our faculty and staff. Regrettably, our students at this point are not provided with access to the Internet.

While preparing for the workshop, we discovered that the Internet is a hot topic in all disciplines, especially in library science. Many journals devoted to library science now have at least one article per issue or regular columns concerning the Internet. These articles usually tend to deal with the situations found at major universities. Shouldn't small university libraries be involved in Internet training? Small university libraries, with access to resources on the Internet, can offer their faculty and students resources that they could never obtain before. Even if a small university library were given a large collection, where then would it be housed or how would it be searched? With access to the resources of the Internet, small university

libraries can now take advantage of the vast array of information becoming available.

The chaotic nature of the Internet makes structuring a faculty workshop a difficult task. The environment in a small university can make the job of organizing a workshop even more challenging. Our library at U.D. has only seven full-time librarians and ten support staff. Because we do not have an academic computing center, our university has assigned the Internet system administrator role to one of our full-time chemistry professors. However, because of his primary responsibilities of teaching and research, he is not always available to respond to Internet problems. At a small university, each member often "wears many hats," and we realize that the responsibility of conducting a workshop on the Internet should be with the library.

Conducting the Workshop

For a small library to sponsor a workshop, several problems need to be addressed.

1. *What is the expertise level on the Internet of the library staff and the faculty that might be available for assisting with a workshop?* Because of the nature of the Internet, the question begs the answer that one will never totally master the Internet. So many different types of databases and files are being added to the Internet that no one has sufficient time to master all these sources. So the initial question is: What level do you and your peers understand and use? In my case, I frequently use e-mail, telnet, and gopher. Some of our faculty use ftp frequently and are very comfortable with downloading/uploading. We found that a panel of faculty Internet users is a good way to attract a diverse group of campus users.

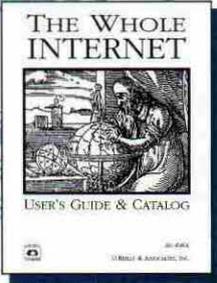
We have conducted three workshops during the past two semesters. On our panel for these workshops, we have used someone from Management Information Systems (MIS), Philosophy, Science, and the library. Each member of the panel had been a "charter member" on our campus in connecting with the Internet. Each brought enthusiasm and many great experiences to share with the audience. Having a diverse panel also gave the unspoken message that the Internet's resources were as diverse as the interests of our panel members.

2. *What is the academic emphasis at the university and how can the resources of the Internet enhance that emphasis?* At the University of Dallas we have a dynamic Graduate School of Management

(GSM) that holds classes primarily in the evenings and on the weekends. Constantin College (undergraduate) and Braniff College (graduate) emphasize liberal arts. Because the professors in GSM are on campus in the late afternoons and early evenings, a session just for GSM was held in the early evening. Another session for the liberal arts colleges was held the next day. Both sessions were in the Spring semester. A third workshop was held in the Fall term. All faculty and staff were invited to the Fall session.

3. *How should a workshop be set up?* At our institution, we have a classroom set up with a computer with overhead projection capability and a modem. (Ideally, a networked environment would give the faculty a hands-on experience while the workshop is in session.) With the help of the panelists, we were able to make arrangements for the room and to clear the session with the academic provost. Publicity included sending notices to the university's campus newsletter, which ran a notice twice before each workshop. I also sent out mailers to all full-time faculty. To make sure that the word was really spread, I phoned several key faculty members and reminded them of the workshop.
4. *What will be the impact on your department?* In our case, it meant that I was away from the Reference Desk many times in the month preceding the workshop. Fortunately, the Head of Reference strongly supported the purpose of the workshops and understood the need to adjust my Reference Desk schedule. General chores included setting up with the panel the schedule of presentations; experimenting with what we would do; making overheads; making handouts; and composing flyers, and publicity. After each of the workshops I received numerous calls from people who attended the session and wanted more information.
5. *What "works" at a workshop?* We had made the usual handouts with definitions, examples, and lists of listservs. We used a lot of transparencies to show concepts. But what made the program a success was the live, online demonstrations. During the workshop, we kept telling the audience that none of us were "experts" and that we were learning every day about the Internet. Because the panel had such a cross section of participants, our claims were more believable. Besides the overheads and the handouts, we also had arranged with O'Reilly & Associates to send us thirty copies of Ed Krol's book, *The Whole Internet*. We sold all copies of the book at the first two sessions. This book is a great "jumping off" point for exploring the Internet. Since then, we have had favorable

THE WHOLE INTERNET



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USER'S GUIDE & CATALOG
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Librarians know the Internet as a research resource of almost unimaginable wealth. The Internet—the international network that includes virtually every major computer site in the world—offers electronic mail and news services, as well as thousands of public archives, databases, and other special services; everything from space flight announcements to ski reports.

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responses from our faculty about having the book at hand when they are trying to use the Internet. Because we are a small institution and have little organized support for using the Internet, we told the groups that we need to keep passing newly discovered resources and new ideas to our colleagues. From the Spring sessions we learned to be less inclusive; we had tried to cover too much at one time. The Fall session was an improvement because we kept the overviews to a minimum and the practical demonstrations at a maximum. This method has proven to be more successful. (See the appendix for an outline of the scripts.)

To Wrap It Up

Should you consider hosting an Internet workshop, even if you work in a small library? Yes! You will have to get on the Internet and do a lot of "lurking" to get a script together. But this exercise is informative and reconfirms the vastness of the resources on the Internet. The following statement by Kalin and Tennant reiterates the need for librarian involvement: Libraries cannot afford to be myopic about the resources they make available. Those who can be reached through networks

such as the Internet are like any other research tools: if they are valuable to a library's clientele, then staff members are obligated to learn about them and either make them accessible within the library or inform their patrons on how they can gain access.³

A library *should* be the focal point for information resources. Because our library sponsored the workshop, we were able to draw a diverse group together. If one academic group had solely sponsored the event, I believe that other faculty members would have thought that the workshop only pertained to that group.

Finally, the small university does not have many of the resources that the larger schools have. The Internet gives that small university a connection to many other resources. There is no question that the small university has more to gain by connecting with the Internet than the larger campuses. With the library as the leader, the small university can "surf" without fear of a "wipeout."

Appendix

The following is an outline of the first workshops that were held at the University of Dallas.

1. *What is the Internet? (A brief introduction to the background of the Internet)*
2. *How can I use the Internet?*
 - a. Show parts of an Internet address
 - b. Discuss e-mail
 1. How to begin e-mail
 2. "Netiquette"
 3. Listservs
 - c. telnet, ftp, gopher
3. *Demonstrations of e-mail, telnet and ftp*
4. *How do I get an Internet account?*

5. *Personal experiences on the Internet*

6. *Questions and Answers*

After these first two sessions, the panel agreed that the next sessions would be less involved with the background of the Internet and the various resources. We decided to give a more "hands-on" workshop. The outline was more abbreviated:

1. E-Mail (How to use the e-mail package, ELM. We set up a fictitious address and then set up an e-mail account.)
2. Demonstrate the use of telnet by using CARL's UnCover.
3. Demonstrate gopher. (Use the University of Minnesota Gopher and the American Philosophical Association Gopher.)
4. Questions and answers.

Notes

1. Mary Page, "Authority Control in the Online Environment," *Computers in Libraries* 11 (March 1991): 8-12.
2. Brian Alley, "Internet, Learning Curves and Angst," *Technicalities* 12 (Sept. 1, 1992): 1.
3. Sally W. Kalin and Roy Tennant, "Beyond OPACS. . . The Wealth of Information Resources on the Internet," *Database* 14 (August 1991): 32.

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