



WCES 2014

Evaluation Of An Online Internship Journal System For Interns

Lih-Juan ChanLin^a, Wei-Hsiang Hung^{b*}

^a Department of Library & Information Science, Fu Jen Catholic University, Xinzhuang Dist., NewTaipei City 24205, Taiwan (R.O.C.)

^b Department of Library & Information Science, Fu Jen Catholic University, Xinzhuang Dist., NewTaipei City 24205, Taiwan (R.O.C.)

Abstract

Providing students with opportunities for both experiential and theoretical learning is very important for professional development in higher education. Internship opportunities encourage an authentic learning experience by offering opportunities to integrate course knowledge with practical experience in specific context. With the advent of modern technology, the use of content management systems provides the opportunity to help students document their own learning process from internship experiences. In fostering students' reflection on what is experienced at their work sites during the internship period, an online journal system was developed. The platform is aimed to facilitate review and retrospection relevant to competence development among interns. In this study, students' responses toward the use of online journal system were assessed by a set of questionnaire items containing 23 items (regarding learning, system function, and management issues). Data from 70 interns were gathered. The results of the study indicate that most interns are reacted positively to the learning and reflective processes embedded in journal writing.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of WCES 2014

Keywords: online reflective journal, internship, experiential learning, reflective learning, library and information intern

1. Introduction

Encouraging students involved in practical work settings can support students' learning from internship experiences. Education in the disciplines of library and information science requires providing students with opportunities for experiential as well as theoretical learning (Franks & Oliver, 2012). Students' internship opportunities provide valuable authentic learning experience to engage students in solving their work problems.

*Wei-Hsiang Hung. Tel.: +886-910-969-859; fax: +886-2-2901-7405.

E-mail address: loghung@gmail.com

Work tasks from an internship also challenge students to acquire needed knowledge of the specific context (Anderson et al, 2012). Throughout the internship period, students work collaboratively with members of the work site and develop hands-on skills to accomplish particular tasks (Anderson et al, 2012). For students' professional preparation, both experiential learning and theoretical learning are essential part of the curriculum. An internship opportunity encourages an authentic learning experience by offering opportunities to integrate course knowledge with practical experience in a specific practical context. In conjunction with internship work, writing a journal can benefit students through retrospection and review of their own learning process. Research across a wide range of disciplines in higher education has found the process of journal writing to be a mechanism for thinking and reflecting critically about previous learning. A journal also provides a venue for students' professional development (Dyment & O'Connell, 2010). Students can use journals to enhance their learning by making connections between theory and practice, by asking questions, and by engaging with higher order thinking (Dyment & O'Connell, 2010; Connor-Greene, 2000). With the advent of modern technology, the use of content management systems provides the opportunity to help students document their own learning process from internship experiences. In fostering students' reflection on what is experienced from work sites during the internship period, an online journal system was developed at the Department of Library and Information Science at Fu Jen Catholic University. The platform is aimed to facilitate the review and retrospection process relevant to competence development among interns. In this study, students' responses regarding the use of this online journal system were assessed by a set of questionnaire items containing 23 items in learning, system function, and management issues. Data was gathered from 70 interns. Results of the study indicate that most interns responded positively to the learning and reflective processes embedded in journal writing.

2. Findings

According to various internship opportunities, students were distributed among 22 work sites, including: public libraries, academic libraries and information companies. Students' reactions toward the use of the LIS online internship journal system are summarized in following aspects: learning, system function and system management. Table 1-3 summarizes the research findings.

Table 1. Reaction toward learning from documenting online journal

Questions	Strongly Disagree		→	Strongly Agree		Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Number of respondents							
Through writing the online journal, I am encouraged to reflect on what I learned from the internship.	0	2	7	38	23	4.17	0.722
Through writing the online journal, I can observe more detail about how my profession is practiced.	0	3	7	40	20	4.10	0.745
Through writing the online journal, I integrate knowledge in the classroom with practical application.	1	1	10	39	19	4.06	0.778
Through writing the online journal, I reflect on difficulties encountered in my internship.	0	2	8	38	22	4.14	0.728
Through writing the online journal, I am able to recall what I have learned during the internship.	0	1	5	38	26	4.27	0.658
Through writing the online journal, I can summarize my learning content each day.	1	1	7	39	22	4.14	0.767
I review what I have experienced from working through the journal system.	1	0	4	38	27	4.29	0.705
I can express my feelings and review my interpersonal relationship through writing the online	0	1	10	38	21	4.13	0.700

journal.							
I can track my internship and my personal growth through the journal system.	1	1	7	40	21	4.13	0.760
N = 70							

Table 2. Reactions toward the functions provided by the LIS Online Internship Journal System

Questions	Strongly Disagree		→	Strongly Agree		Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
	Number of respondents						
Applying for an account from the journal system is easy.	0	2	8	43	17	4.07	0.688
Logging onto the journal system is easy.	0	2	7	39	22	4.16	0.715
The journal system provides enough needed functions.	0	2	10	40	18	4.06	0.720
The display of the journal system is well-arranged and well-organized.	0	1	13	41	15	4.00	0.681
Writing journals in the system is easy.	0	1	6	43	20	4.17	0.636
It is easy for me to review my previous journal entries in the system.	0	1	7	42	20	4.16	0.651
It is easy for me to search for specific information from the journal system.	0	1	7	42	20	4.16	0.651
It is convenient for me to output my journals.	0	0	11	42	17	4.09	0.631
The interface of the journal system in accordance with my use habits.	0	1	12	37	20	4.09	0.717
The settings of the journal system meet my personal needs.	0	1	17	38	14	3.93	0.709
N = 70							

Table 3. Reactions toward the management provided by the LIS Online Internship Journal System

Questions	Strongly Disagree		→	Strongly Agree		Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
	Number of respondents						
The journal system replies to users' questions in a timely fashion.	1	3	17	33	16	3.86	0.873
The journal system replies to users' questions effectively.	1	3	19	31	16	3.83	0.884
The journal system provides operating instructions which are easy to follow.	0	3	9	41	17	4.03	0.742
The journal system can provide personalized assistance whenever needed.	0	4	15	35	16	3.90	0.819
N = 70							

3. Conclusion

In this study, an online internship journal system was developed. Students' perception and reflection of this journal system was assessed. From learning aspect, most students were positive about the use of the online journals system for providing opportunity to review what they experienced from work. It was also helpful to recall what was learned from the internship experiences. The opportunity of reflection also helped students to manage their internship and learning more effectively. From system function aspect, students considered the journal system is well developed and easy to use. The search function provided by the online journal system facilitated interns to quickly access specific information, and to connect relevant learning events with practical knowledge. From a self-management aspect, the journal system provided an easy-operation platform allowing interns to document the process of learning. Along with the process of system implementation and evaluation, suggestions were provided by interns. Overall, the use of the LIS online internship journal system has achieved its intended purpose to provide a platform to share internship experiences. The system also served as a means to bridge among LIS students, faculty and work sites. University faculty and supervisors from worksites could easily identify possible obstacles encountered by interns and provided needed help immediately. The study is preliminary. In the future, ongoing evaluation and revision is needed to make the system much more adaptable to individual needs.

References

- Anderson, W., Cohen, M., Hogan, S., & Holzman, S. Karr, E. (2012). Science librarian internship as a way to get started in eScience. *Journal of eScience Librarianship*, 1(1), 36-40.
- Connor-Greene, P. A. (2000). Making connections: Evaluating the effectiveness of journal writing in enhancing student learning. *Teaching of Psychology*, 27(1), 44-46.
- Dyment, J. E. & O'Connell, T. S. (2010). The quality of reflection of students' journals: a review of limiting and enabling factors. *Innovative Higher Education*, 35, 233-244.
- Franks, P. C. & Oliver, G. C. (2012). Experiential learning and international collaboration opportunities: Virtual internships. *Library Review*, 61(4), 1-30. Retrieved August 5, 2012 from: <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=17044158>