Trends in Online Library Instruction

Potential Next Steps for University of California System-wide Collaboration

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Submitted to Amy Kautzman, chair of the Heads of Public Services

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Executive Summary

In April 2012, the Heads of Public Services (HOPS) charged the Online Library Instruction Group (OLIG) to explore trends in online library instruction and potential next steps for system-wide collaboration. Specifically, OLIG answered the following questions with an eye toward effectively leveraging UC shared instructional content and expertise:

- Q1: How can these campus created resources be shared or made discoverable across the system? Could social media be leveraged to assist in this effort?
- Q2: How are other instruction librarians using technology to support their efforts? Is there a standard set of tools or best practices?
- Q3: What have been effective strategies for integrating library tools into curriculum/syllabus/assignments?

OLIG included instruction librarians representing each of the ten University of California campuses. Here are our summary findings and recommendations for how the UC Libraries could most effectively leverage our shared instructional content and expertise:

1. OLIG recommends the creation of a group to work with the California Digital Library (CDL) or LibGuides to determine the viability of building and maintaining an institutional repository for UC-created learning objects.
2. The survey showed overwhelming support for the creation of an online community for UC instruction librarians to foster a sense of community amongst UC Instruction Librarians and to promote system-wide collaboration. OLIG has been piloting a Facebook Group. We recommend this pilot be extended to involve a larger group of instruction librarians across all UC libraries.
3. We found no standard set of tools for online learning, but identified many common technologies across libraries. We therefore recommend that HOPS investigate the potential for sharing licensing costs and/or hosting for common learning tools at a UC-wide level.
4. The survey showed that UC Librarians and library staff are generally unaware of best practices for developing online instruction. We recommend that HOPS convene a group to define best practices for creating online instruction and learning objects at UC Libraries.
5. A subset of survey respondents listed strategies for integrating library tools into curricula, syllabi, and assignments that worked for them. We recommend HOPS convene a group to define best practice for doing this. This group should also investigate guidelines to assist librarians in articulating information literacy, library research skills and concepts as student learning outcomes for all levels of the curriculum to serve as a foundation for integrating online tools.

Overview

Beginning with the 2006 Information Literacy Common Interest group through the implementation of the Statewide Tutorial project in 2010, the UC Libraries Heads of Public Service (HOPS) has a longstanding interest in library instruction. Now with technology and electronic resources ubiquitous, student enrollment growing, the librarian workforce in UC shrinking, university libraries are turning to user self service models and/or reducing public services. Out of this reality, UC instruction librarians have developed pedagogy and tools that proactively address the growing demand for skills development, integrated instruction, and experiential learning.

Official Charge

HOPS proposes that a group of instruction librarians from each campus convene virtually to discuss trends in online library instruction and potential next steps for system-wide collaboration. The creation and use of 'learning objects', small generic modules librarians or faculty can integrate into their courses via websites, LibGuides and learning management systems, should be investigated. In particular, this group should look at:

- How can these campus created resources be shared or made discoverable across the system? Could social media be leveraged to assist in this effort?
- How are other instruction librarians using technology to support their efforts? Is there a standard set of tools or best practices?
- What have been effective strategies for integrating library tools into curriculum/syllabus/assignments?

Expected deliverable: A recommendation for how the UC Libraries could most effectively leverage our shared instructional content and expertise.

Membership

OLIG included members from each of the ten UC campuses: Ellen Meltzer (CDL), Cody Hennesy (UCB), Melissa Browne (UCD), Cathy Palmer (UCI), Simon Lee (UCLA), Susan Mikkelsen (UCM), Julie Mason (UCR), Richard Caldwell (UCSB), Kristen LaBonte - substitute for Caldwell (UCSB), Annette Marines, Chair (UCSC), Dominique Turnbow (UCSD).

Methodology

In April 2012, OLIG began its work. We subdivided into three groups to answer the questions in the charge; each group had a designated facilitator. The work of the committee was documented on a PBworks account. The entire group met three times by conference call. The subgroups met by conference call or Skype and worked by email and wiki, as needed. The chair reported a progress report to HOPS at their May 31st meeting.

In July 2012, an anonymous online survey was distributed via the HOPS OLIG representatives to all UC librarians and staff that deliver online instruction. Participants were asked questions touching on the themes in the charge. There were 115 responses with representatives from all ten campuses as illustrated in Figure 1 below. Pertinent results of the survey will be discussed in the report; however, the full survey and responses are available in Appendix F.

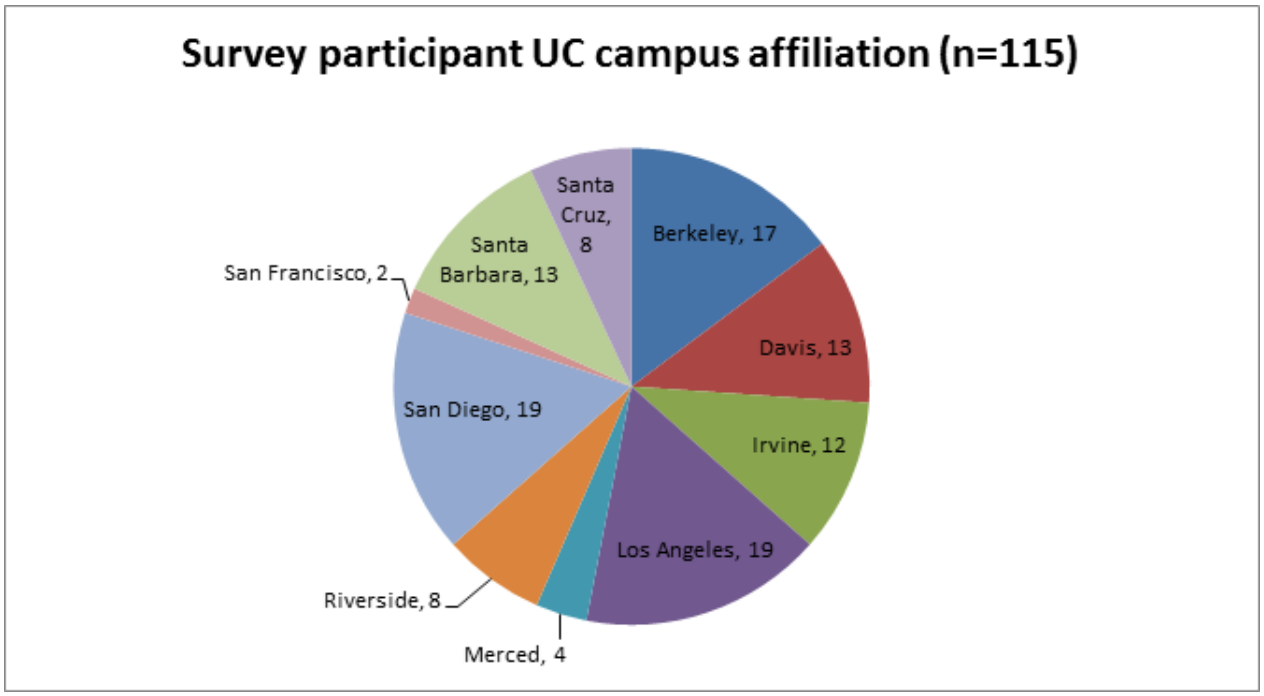

Figure 1. Survey responses by campus affiliation.

Analysis and Recommendations

Q1. How can these campus created resources be shared or made discoverable across the system? Could social media be leveraged to assist in this effort?

Survey results were analyzed to explore barriers that librarians and library staff felt restrained them from reusing existing online instructional materials, and also to examine issues related to discoverability of these resources (see Appendix B). Additionally, two platforms were evaluated for their potential as repositories for UC-created online instruction materials to enable sharing and discoverability across the system. Finally, a preliminary pilot was established to test the use of social media in building an online instruction community across the system.

How can these campus created resources be shared or made discoverable across the system?

The current model for sharing instructional materials in UC is the CDL-hosted shared space, http://www.cdlib.org/services/info_services/instruct/, the (DLINSTRUCT-L) email list, and outreach via the annual Survey for Resource Liaisons as well as the UC Irvine-created tutorial. While these resources have been useful for collecting and communicating information, the survey responses indicate that these resources are not being leveraged to their full potential.

While responses reveal the practice of reusing guides is low, lack of time to create or search for materials cropped up throughout the survey. With a declining workforce in UC, we can speculate that the future need to reuse online instruction materials will grow. When it comes to locating materials, participants listed barriers that indicate they experience frustration when attempting to find the right materials: *can't find the exact thing I need* (43%), *it takes too long to search for something I need/want* (26.7%), *there's too much out there to look at* (16.3%). These findings suggest a need to simplify the process of finding materials.

Two options, Springshare's LibGuides and the CDL's eScholarship repository, were evaluated as tools to enhance the sharing of materials and their discoverability across UC. For a comparison of the two platforms see Appendix C.

Recommendation

To address some of the barriers to sharing and discovering materials identified by participants, OLIG recommends that HOPS pursue the idea of a repository to host and make accessible UC-created instruction materials. This may necessitate assigning a group to work with CDL or LibGuides to determine the viability of an institutional repository for UC-created learning objects, establishing a policy for encouraging deposits and oversight, promoting the repository, investigating features such as crowd-sourcing, and identifying a contact for each campus.

Could social media be leveraged to assist in this effort?

The committee considered the potential of social media as an instructional medium and as a tool for community building. The committee evaluated the social media sites Facebook and LinkedIn. The survey was used to test assumptions and gather information about preferences. Based on the survey results the committee created a preliminary pilot to test Facebook Groups as a forum for UC Instruction Librarians.

Very few survey respondents reported using social media in instruction (4.5%). Based on this low response, we did not pursue the idea of social media as a platform for instruction further. On the other hand, a majority of librarians were either *very likely* (41.4%) or *somewhat likely* (41.4%) to join an online group dedicated to library instruction. Respondents preferred Facebook as a platform (54.2%) over LinkedIn (33.3%).

Facebook Group Preliminary Pilot

To explore the validity of a UC system-wide library instruction group, the committee piloted a Facebook Group called "University of California Instruction Librarians." Facebook was selected because it was more ubiquitous and provided more features than LinkedIn; it was also the leading choice in the survey. The group was set to "Secret," by invitation only. All OLIG members were invited and received "Administrative" status. The goal of the pre-pilot was to provide a forum for networking, publicity and announcements, creating a common area for posting questions and sharing tools, and linking to basic information about UC instruction resources. Early findings, based on members' activities (see Appendix D), suggest the pre-pilot would achieve the intended goals.

Recommendation

Based on the barriers to sharing materials—prevalence of creating one's own materials, difficulty discovering materials and determining their fair use—OLIG recommends that the pre-pilot be extended to a system-wide Facebook Groups Pilot for the period of one year. The pre-pilot was set up to explore the viability of such a group for networking, publicity and announcements, creating a common area for posting questions and sharing tools, and linking to system-wide instruction resources, such as best practices. Exploring these issues would necessitate a group to monitor activity, adjust settings, report on the results and potentially assess[1] the pilot.

Q2. How are other instruction librarians using technology to support their efforts? Is there a standard set of tools or best practices?

[1] The assessment should consider: What are the usage statistics? What do the discussions/posts cover? Are features such as "Like", "Add Photo/Video", "Ask Question" (polling feature), "Uploading File[s]" being used. If so, how?

To answer these questions, the most recent thirty tutorials selected for inclusion in ACRL's Peer-Reviewed Instructional Materials Online database (PRIMO) were analyzed in terms of the technologies used for their creation and presentation (see Figure 2) , their general content, and their target audiences. A survey of the library literature was also undertaken with an eye towards standard tools and best practices in online library instruction (see Appendix E).

Is there a standard set of tools?

PDF	3%
ASP	3%
Blog	3%
Quicktime	3%
Vimeo	3%
Camtasia	7%
LibGuides	7%
PHP	7%
Captivate	10%
Articulate	13%
Flash	17%
JavaScript	17%
YouTube	17%
HTML/text	23%
Video	33%

Figure 2. Percentage of thirty PRIMO tutorials that featured specific technologies.

The most common use for the nationally-recognized library learning objects in PRIMO is to cover broad topics such as information literacy (80%) and research strategies (60%), while fewer are directed at specific skills such as found in tutorials on database and catalog use (33% and 17%, respectively). A greater portion of those same tutorials were directed at less experienced users than directed at those with a stronger foundation in research: 70% were for undergraduate students, 57% for first-year students, while 30% were targeted at graduate students.

The overall landscape of learning object and tutorial use nationally and in UC libraries is fractured, but the results of the survey illustrate a few differences in how UC librarians and academic librarians nationally are creating and using online learning objects.

Only seven percent of PRIMO tutorials included LibGuides, though the same tool is the most common mode for delivering online instruction by the UC librarians surveyed (68%), followed closely by custom/local guides (49%). A review of the library literature revealed that library guides such as LibGuides are most often used as web pages to supplement in-person and distance education, listing collections and providing access to chat and reference widgets as well as links to (and embedded) social networking applications. These guides are more rarely used as tutorials or learning objects in the sense of serving as a stand-in for instruction, which might explain why very few library guide tools are selected for inclusion in PRIMO. Notably, custom HTML guides are more commonly found in PRIMO tutorials (23%) than LibGuides (7%), and are also quite common among UC librarians (42% of whom have used custom HTML to deliver online instruction). It's also worth noting that library guide usage varies widely from campus to campus, where UC Los Angeles, UC San Diego and UC Santa Barbara rely more heavily on LibGuides, and UC Berkeley, UC Davis and UC Riverside are far more likely to use custom/local guides.

Video tutorials, constituting 33% of all PRIMO objects analyzed, were notable in the library literature as ideal tools for presenting "how-to" library skills, and also for being flexible in terms of broadcast across various channels such as YouTube, Vimeo, on library web pages, in guides and course management systems. Our survey revealed that many UC librarians had used a variety of video tools, but also that nearly one third (34%) of UC librarians either didn't know or had never used video to deliver online instruction. Those creating videos at UC most commonly use Camtasia and/or Jing (both 34%).

Over 95% of survey respondents expressed that social media was not a significant delivery channel for their online library instruction, and accordingly none of the PRIMO tutorials analyzed relied on social media for content delivery.

Recommendation

We did not identify a set of standard tools for online instruction nationally or at the University of California. We were, however, able to highlight certain tools that are most commonly used in the UC Libraries: 68% of survey respondents used LibGuides for library instruction, Camtasia and Jing were the most common video tools (34% of survey respondents had used each), and custom HTML was the most common framework for delivery of online instruction. We therefore recommend that HOPS investigate the potential for sharing licensing costs and/or hosting for specific common learning tools at a UC-wide level.

Is there a standard set of best practices?

The vast majority of UC librarians surveyed report that they did not have best practices for developing online instruction (36%) or that they didn't know if there were best practices in place on their campus (58%), while only seven percent expressed the view that there were best practices on campus. Our survey question did not ask librarians

who had best practices whether those guidelines were based on institutional policies or personal knowledge and experience.

The literature (see Appendix E) did provide some guiding principles for creating/using electronic course guides and video tutorials. Electronic course guides should be standardized for a consistent look and feel, provide for easy editing, allow data gathering for outcomes assessment and usage statistics, employ consistent naming conventions and be embeddable in the campus CMS.

Video tutorials should be scenario-based, less than five minutes in length, viewable on cell phones, accessible to students with disabilities (avoid red and green for color blind patrons; include Closed Captioning for hearing-impaired patrons), be easily navigable in chapters and organized in small chunks, be interactive, allow for assessment, and be developed with reusability in mind.

Recommendations

While very few survey respondents (7%) could identify best practices for developing online instruction on their campuses, online education initiatives such as UC Online (uconline.edu) are growing at a rapid pace. We therefore recommend that HOPS convene a group to define best practices for creating learning objects at UC Libraries. Special attention should be paid to establishing practices that would enable platform-independent use (and reuse) of learning objects across campuses. By analyzing barriers to sharing (see Appendix B), OLIG was able to identify a number of best practices:

- Create materials that are as “brand neutral” or “brand free” as possible. For example, when creating video files, restrict branding to areas outside of the video itself, to increase reusability.
- Require or encourage the use of Creative Commons among creators to indicate the terms of use of the material.

Q3. What have been effective strategies for integrating library tools into curricula / syllabi / assignments?

To answer the question, the definitions of library tools was utilized (Appendix A), and local strategies of selected OLIG representatives were discussed. Questions to learn what strategies UC librarians considered successful in integrating library tools into curricula, syllabi, and assignments were included in the survey.

When presented with a list of strategies that have been effective in integrating learning objects into curriculum, syllabi or assignments, the majority of respondents reported *meeting with the course instructor in person* (77.1%) and *e-mail correspondence with the course instructor* (77.1%), followed by *rapport between the department and the librarian (opening pathways between librarians and course instructors)* (45.8%)

When asked what strategies have been effective in encouraging students to use library learning objects, participants overwhelmingly selected *librarian uses it during instruction session* (81.3%), followed by *course instructor requires it* (75%) and *student receives credit for completing it* (62.5%).

The strategy of having *student learning outcomes at the University relate to information literacy (thus encouraging the course instructor to utilize library tools)* was not judged to be particularly effective (it had a 22% response rate), but it is unclear whether this reflects respondents' views on current learning outcomes on their campus or the strategy's potential effectiveness. OLIG members were of the opinion that having learning outcomes related to information literacy is important for motivating instructors to include library instruction into their courses, but the survey results were unclear in this respect.

Recommendations

While the survey identified some successful strategies currently in use, the responses were made up of a subset of the sample (48 of 115 participants). OLIG recommends that HOPS convene a group to define best practices for integrating online tools in curriculum, syllabi, or assignments. The following list should be investigated and expanded upon:

- Actively communicating with one's liaison departments in ways that are conducive to success in incorporating library learning objects into assignments and course curricula.
- Promoting the use of library learning objects by using them during instruction sessions and by linking to them.
- Encouraging course instructors to give students course credit for using library learning objects.

This group should also investigate guidelines to assist librarians in articulating information literacy, library research skills and concepts as student learning outcomes for assignments, courses, programs, and academic majors at all levels of the curriculum to serve as a foundation for integrating online tools.

Conclusion

OLIG has made a series of recommendations intended to serve as a foundational step towards addressing the growth of online education on UC campuses. The OLIG survey clearly revealed that most UC librarians are creating online learning objects, that they often use colleagues' online content as models for their own, and that they would like to have improved access to generic learning modules that could be easily adapted for their own use. Our analysis highlighted significant differences in the library learning tools used nationally (as represented by PRIMO tutorials) and the tools used in UC Libraries. There is room for a closer analysis of this gap, though it is beyond the scope of OLIG's charge.

Survey results strongly suggest that there is a need for a UC-wide set of best practices addressing the creation of learning objects for potential reuse. Along the same lines, UC libraries would benefit greatly from a set of best practices or guidelines addressing effective strategies for integrating library learning into courses and campus learning outcomes.

OLIG has identified a number of opportunities to improve institutional sharing with learning object repositories and social media. Further, OLIG survey respondents articulated a clear demand for more remote professional development opportunities concerning new developments in online education. Online presentations using tools such as ReadyTalk are ideal for communicating best practices, such as those identified above, to librarians across the UC campuses as they are developed.