Creating an Embedded Library Instruction e-Classroom: A Campus Partnership

**The Need**

The mostly-freshmen branch Mount Vernon Campus (MVC) of GW completed a new dorm that, beginning in fall 2010, doubled the campus resident population.

For nearly a decade, the library instruction program in the GW University libraries has taught a variety of sessions covering research methods, tools, and information literacy. The majority of these sessions support the freshman University Writing classes (2-3 sessions for each class) and junior/senior Writing in the Disciplines courses.

With more freshman residents on campus, the need to increase course offerings on MVC to alleviate excessive inter-campus shuttling and a need to better utilize available spaces led to an increase of freshman Writing Program classes, all of which required library sessions.

**The Lesson**

Libraries can make things happen in challenging financial times. But it may take a combination of collaborative efforts and having hopeful planning in place at all times...you never know when opportunities may arise!

Partnerships are important relationships to establish and foster, and be sure you understand your strengths and those of your partners. Sometimes it is great to learn new tricks, but sometimes it is useful (and more cost-efficient) to let other experts do the work for you.

If your library is able to transform spaces, make sure you consult with both users and the service providers in the pre-planning and planning stages. Survey present and anticipated needs, wants and desires.

Try to balance instructional technology with solid old school methodologies and pedagogy – always make sure that the lessons are not impeded by bells and whistles.

**The Opportunity**

The main research library on GW’s downtown campus has 3 electronic classrooms dedicated to library instruction, including two with mobile technologies and reconfigurable furniture to increase collaboration, but the MVC library sessions generally occurred in computer labs with fixed basic workstations. Library administrators of both campuses planned renovations of library spaces to create an e-classroom and formulated a fundraising plan.

Simultaneous to the e-classroom planning, a major renovation was approved that would create a large new academic building from an exciting campus life building on the ground. This renovation was to include many new technology-rich classrooms and offices for two departments, one of which was the University Writing program.

The MVC provost offered an unnamed entry-floor space as a possible e-classroom and adjoining office space for the library, with the offer that the renovation budget would pay for the necessary infrastructure upgrades. Once additional capital project funding and matching funds were secured, the planning began in the space that represents both MVC’s first library e-classroom and the first space that would enter a major library service into an external spaces.

**The Project**

In the final planning of the spaces, the librarians of the Instruction and Education group met several times and brainstormed the use of space in sessions including the technologies and layouts. These discussions informed the team assembling the spaces.

The GW Libraries consulted with, and ultimately decided to form a formal, ongoing collaboration with, the Academic Technologies department of GW. Various furniture and hardware options were explored, with a final decision to use a Mac instructor station with a wireless mouse and keyboard, a Smartboard, Steelcase Meeting and Conference furniture and iPads.

For purposes of ultimate flexibility, it was decided that the library would have control and direct responsibility for the scheduling of the space. The responsibility of day-to-day support of learning technologies would be shared between Eckles Library staff and Academic Technologies, while Academic Technologies is responsible for regular system upgrades, installation of software, etc.

**The Assessment**

Technology is never a one-time investment. You should always budget for support, regular maintenance, upgrades, and life-cycling of equipment.

The e-classroom opened with the rest of the renovated building, in the Spring 2012 term.

The advance training of librarians on use of the space occurred via video and in-person sessions. Support staff assist librarians before the beginning of each session and remain on-call during all scheduled classes to ensure successful usage of space, and Eckles Library staff secure spaces and technologies after use.

In the first semester, a self-selected group of roughly half of the instruction librarians taught some sessions in the space, and others were trained in summer 2012. In total, 10 librarians have taught over 125 sessions in the space, for classes including University Writing, University Honors, Women’s Leadership Program, and Forensic Sciences. Additionally, librarians have used the adjacent office space to meet with students to discuss research individually and in groups.

Ongoing assessment is capturing some nuances of the usage of the space. Usage of collaboration in the space was mapped, and the technologies used and preferred have also been quantified and mapped. More assessment is planned for upcoming semesters.

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