

Technology Instruction

- Challenges and Lessons from a Web Services/Technology Librarian's Experience

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Background

"No one accepted definition of technology exists among educators, researchers, and evaluators. Most often they use the term as an inclusive phrase to mean any type of equipment or application, inside or outside of the classroom, both computer-based and not, that is used to aid the learning process." (Achacoso, 2003)

Issues

- Does the technology increase access to learning?
- Does it promote improved learning?
- What should guide the adoption and evaluation of technology in the learning process?

Challenges

Not all web services/ technology librarians are familiar /comfortable with teaching /instruction.

- Tend to get fascinated by new tools and to focus on functionalities (**What can it do?**)
- Daily work doesn't involve frequent contacts with faculty and students.
- Less experience in teaching and creating lesson plans with objectives and goals
- Less familiar with the use of technology tools in the context of research
- Less familiar with what users currently use for research
- Likely to conduct instruction highlighting features and functionalities with less emphasis on their application to research process

The audience, however, is likely to find instruction that introduces technology in the context of their daily research activities more helpful. (**What can it do for me?**)

Lessons

- Users are interested in immediate and tangible benefits.
- Users may infrequently use certain technology tools.
- Users are unlikely to learn advanced features, no matter how powerful, if complicated.
- Users will challenge you:
Why this tool would be better than old one they are already familiar with;
Whether the benefits of new technology would exceed the pain of learning/adopting it.

- Things that you deem to be obvious can be new to your audience.
- Things that seem natural to you may not be intuitive at all to your audience.
- There will be always unexpected questions.

Practical tips

- Plan and conduct technology instruction in the context of research
 - Teach “How to find a full-text article”, not “How to use link resolver”
 - Teach “How to create a bibliography automatically”, not “Zotero” or “Refworks.”
- Collaborate with reference/instruction librarians about instruction objectives, lesson plans, evaluations, etc.
- Focus on simple, quick, and easy-to-use features, not advanced functionalities.
- Provide practical examples of applying technology in the context of daily research activities.
- Consider the background and the interests of your audience.
- Take examples from attendees.
- Let users try themselves – Find out what is deemed to be a difficulty by users.
- Compare the pros and cons of new technology in comparison with familiar old tools.
- Don’t assume anything is obvious; Explain all jargons; Ask for questions, all the time.
- Repeat major points and speak slowly.
- Adjust your instruction based upon audience needs and feedback.
- Provide handouts or something that the audience can take away with them.
- Repurpose and improve instructional materials in different formats.
- Get feedback and evaluation from the attendees.
- Sit in other classes and ask colleagues to sit in yours for feedback.

Selective Readings

Achacoso, M. (2003). Evaluating technology and instruction: literature review and recommendations. The University of Texas, Austin. Division of Instructional Innovation and Assessment. Retrieved January 10, 2010, from <http://www.utexas.edu/academic/mec/LiteratureReview.pdf>.

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http://skokielibrary.info/s_programs/pr_computer/past_classes.asp.

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, Critical Issue: Using Technology to Enhance Literacy Instruction. <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/content/cntareas/reading/li300.htm>.