

# Captivating the Students: Online Library Instruction for a Psychology Class and Lessons Learned

## 吸引學生：心理學課線上圖書館利用指導之實施經驗分享

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### 【Abstract】

This paper presents the first attempt of teaching library instruction via a Web-based tutorial for a Psychology and Law online course taught during the summer of 2009 at Rider University. Students received information literacy instruction through the

creation of an online tutorial to help them with their class project. The article includes a discussion of the close collaboration between the authors, a psychology faculty member and two librarians, the nature of the online course, the production of the tutorial, technology used, and future considerations.

## 【摘要】

本文介紹 2009 年夏季在美國瑞德大學「心理與法律」線上課程所實施的線上圖書館利用教育個別指導。學生透過線上個別指導者提供資訊素養的個別教學，協助學生完成課堂作業。本文說明研究團隊，包括一位心理學教授和兩位圖書館員之間密切合作的討論過程、線上課程的本質、個別指導的產出成果、使用的科技，以及未來實施個別化資訊素養課程的規畫依據。

## Introduction

Distance online learning in colleges and universities has grown at a rate of 20% or more annually for the last five years (Allen & Seaman, 2008). In addition, the wired-Generation students now on campus are driving this phenomenon with their demands of classes anywhere, anytime (Dawson & Campbell, 2009). Rider University, a private institution with approximately 4500 undergraduate and 800 graduate students, is meeting this challenge to develop online courses and tools through its Distance Learning Advisory Committee. Responding to trends in increased online courses in American colleges and universities, this committee invited applications for grants to develop online learning materials in October 2008. Three librarians in Rider University's Moore Library applied and then received a grant of \$2000 in December of 2008. With this grant, equipment and software were purchased and several information literacy tutorials were created.

A psychology professor at Rider University (W. Heath) was also awarded one of these grants. She collaborated with two of the librarians (P. Dawson and S. Yang) to develop a way to deliver library instruction for a distance learning class. This paper addresses the collaborative efforts between the authors, the design of an online tutorial to help students with their research assignment, the technical nature of the software and equipment, institutional policies, successes and challenges of the effort, and, lastly, discussions of the future of this endeavor.

## Literature Review

Distance education has been in existence for a long time, but with the advent of the Internet and computers, the tools to deliver this type of learning has changed drastically from radio, telephone, and correspondence via mail. When online classes became more prevalent, there were many concerns that this mode of teaching/learning was inferior to the traditional classroom method; however, it is becoming more accepted and established with approximately 20% of college students enrolled in online courses (Bernard et al., 2009; Shea & Bidjerano, 2009; Silver & Nickel, 2007). The emphasis has changed from comparing online learning to classroom lectures to evaluating the different types of online courses for quality and measurement of student learning (Bernard et al., 2009; Larraemendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Leng, Dolmans, Jobsis, Arno, & Vleuten, 2009; Shea & Bidjerano, 2009; Soong, Chan, Chua, & Loh, 2001). Online learning, defined as the interaction between teachers and learners using computers and the Internet, allows students greater access to higher education (e.g., Larraemendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). Non-traditional students, usually older and involved in careers, find the online learning environment meets their needs (Tallent-Runnels, Thomas, & Lan, 2006). In addition, with regard to library instruction, traditional college students prefer online tutorials instead of librarian directed sessions in some settings (Larraemendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Silver & Nickel, 2007). The literature confirms that close collaboration between faculty and librarians can result in successful creation of online tutorials to help students with assignments as well as enhance student engagement.

## Disciplinary Perspective

As noted above, teaching online is increasing in prevalence generally (Kinney, 2001), and for many, the Internet provides a viable alternative to learning in the

traditional classroom. Interestingly, this prevalence is not uniform across disciplines. For example, Piotrowski and Vodanovich (2004) found that the number of psychology faculty members participating in online instruction was negligible primarily because psychology instructors do not undergo formal computer technology training. While this was true for the psychology faculty member teaching Psychology and Law at Rider, the idea of teaching this “applied” course online was very appealing for reasons noted below, and thus, the online Psychology and Law course at Rider University was developed.

The Psychology and Law course is designed to provide students with information regarding the role and influence of psychology within the legal system. Within this course many of the topics that are covered are frequently in the news media such as wrongful convictions, jury decisions, eyewitness testimony, and confessions. This course has been taught in a traditional format at Rider University for approximately 15 years. There were two major reasons that the idea of teaching this course online was appealing. First, the idea of an online Psychology and Law course was especially attractive when you consider that this course at Rider has, at times, drawn students employed within law enforcement or corrections fields; the online version of this course makes this course even more accessible to such audiences. Second, the Internet does afford a unique perspective on issues relevant to psychology and law. For example, real court documents and relevant videos demonstrating real world legal situations are available on the Internet. Thus, creating an online course, under these conditions, was expected to be an exciting, worthwhile endeavor.

## Construction of the Tutorial

After the grants were awarded, the psychology professor contacted one of the librarians (P. Dawson) to develop an online tutorial for her e-learners who

were required to write a paper for her Psychology and Law class. The two collaborated on developing the tutorial based on the requirements for the assigned paper. The learning objectives of the tutorial involved locating Rider University Libraries’ homepage and accessing appropriate electronic databases from off-campus. Students were expected to construct search terms with the use of Boolean operators to locate a newspaper article. Lastly students were expected to provide a reference section in their papers with information regarding the sources they used. The completed online tutorial product consisted of six modules.

A good Flash tutorial has condensed content and should not run more than ten minutes. Otherwise students can get tired and lose focus. Therefore it is vital to break down the contents of the library instruction into logical steps or modules. To create the tutorials, first the librarians collaboratively produced an outline of the modules. The next step involved writing scripts and using screen shots of the resources to be used to create a “storyboard” for each module. The text and screenshots served to describe step-by-step actions and texts for recording the audio portions of these modules.

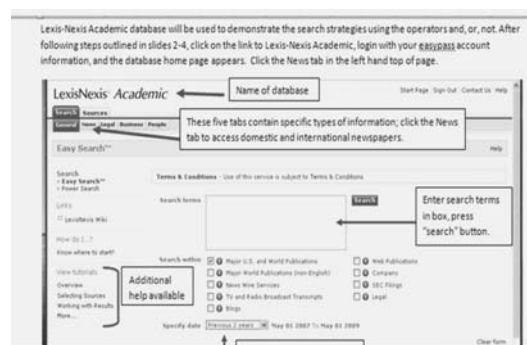


Figure 1 Illustrates the storyboard technique used

The storyboards were saved as Word documents. One of the librarians (S. Yang) trained library student workers to generate the tutorials using Captivate and the storyboards were translated into interactive

tutorials with sound and text. These modules were saved and stored on the library Web server and the website address was sent to the faculty member for review and further revisions. When the tutorial was finished, the professor created a link in Blackboard so that the students could access it. As an alternative, Blackboard has the capability to recognize a Flash tutorial, making it possible to upload all of the modules directly into Blackboard for the duration of the course.

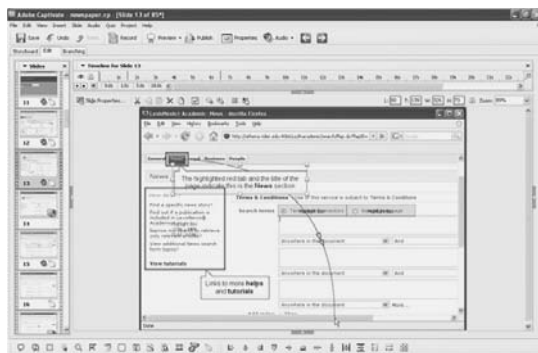


Figure 2 Provides a view of the Captivate screen in the process of creating the tutorial

Changes were made based on the psychology professor's recommendations, and the tutorial website was made available to her students at the start of the semester.

After the course ended, the professor provided more feedback on the tutorial. Based on this experience and her suggestions, the tutorial will be modified by dividing the modules into shorter units and integrating feedback forms into the modules for assessment purposes. Following these modifications, the resulting online library instruction will be used in future Psychology and Law courses (taught using both traditional and online formats).

## Technology Used

There are many formats that we could use to create online tutorials. A survey of such tools in 2009 shows that academic libraries created online tutorials using a

variety of technologies, including PDF, Word, HTML, CGI scripts, video, mp3, and Flash (Yang, 2009). Furthermore, evidence shows that "students [respond] positively to the interactivity and game-like nature of the tutorial" (Armstrong & Georgas, 2006). After weighing pros and cons of each technology, we decided to use Flash as the format for the Psychology and Law online course tutorial. Based on the above mentioned considerations, Flash appeared to be a more ideal technology to fulfill our mission.

Flash is a technology invented in 1996 by Micromedia to bring animation, sound, and limited interactivity into a Web page. This technology needs little bandwidth so it downloads fast onto the Web. In addition, a Flash tutorial can be viewed as a video with text and audio capabilities. It produces a more game-like quality than any other formats. By far Flash is the most advanced tutorial format on the market. The more popular Flash creation software includes Camtasia and Captivate. At the time of the software selection, Camtasia was better for demonstration purposes, while Captivate provided interactivity. We wanted to allow for the possibility of adding interactivity to our tutorial, thus Captivate became our final choice. The grant from the Rider University Distance Learning Advisory Committee enabled the purchase of Captivate, microphones, and Adobe Photoshop for tutorial creation.

In addition to technological considerations, institutional policies come into play in tutorial creation. The university's Office of Information Technologies (OIT) has to support the Captivate software and Flash format on both server and client sides. After the completion of the tutorials, server space is needed to mount them on the university's website so that students can access them from the course management system. Loading a Flash tutorial directly into a course management system is another possibility. The Flash tutorials may up take a lot of space if their length is long and audio files are attached. Sometimes the institution may have a policy limiting the amount of

space in a course management system. Faculty may need special permission to run Flash tutorials off the course management system. On the client side, a computer has to have Adobe Flash Player installed in the browser software in order to view a Flash tutorial. Adobe Flash Player is a small computer program or a plug-in written for browsers that one can download freely from the Internet. Most of the browsers such as Firefox and Internet Explorer come with this add-on installed already so that a user does not need to worry about it. But the OIT support is needed to cover potential problems. Therefore, before one embarks on the task of creating online tutorials, all those factors have to be taken into consideration.

## **Overview of the Class Assignment and Evaluation of the Tutorial**

The particular details of the assignment in question will be given here. One of the major topics covered in the Psychology and Law course is the factors that can influence the reliability of an eyewitness (e.g., distance from crime, weapon focus effect). For the assigned paper, students look through newspaper sources for a real-life case which involved at least one eyewitness and discuss at least 4 factors that could have influenced the eyewitness(es) in that particular case.

When this course is taught using the traditional format, students often have trouble locating a newspaper article for this assignment. Prior to the creation of the Captivate tutorial, students who sought out extra help would just be provided with a couple of key search terms that they could use and told to continue trying. This, upon reflection, was not a very efficient way for students to search for their article. Students often became quite frustrated as they searched for an article that fit the rules (e.g., an article written within the last year).

The tutorial appeared to solve these problems in that students were able to view a demonstration of how to

search specific sites. The modular nature of the tutorial allowed students to zero in on the particular information literacy skills required to locate the needed materials. The professor reported that the number of students who asked for help or who seemed frustrated by their search decreased. In addition, 27% of the students in the Psychology and Law course ( $N = 3$ ) completed an online assessment of the usefulness of the tutorial. All indicated that the tutorial was helpful to them and that they would recommend the resource to other students. Thus, these preliminary data suggest that this online library instruction was a good addition to Rider University's Psychology and Law course. We will continue to assess the usefulness of this instruction in the future.

## **Conclusion**

Library instruction has traditionally been conducted in a classroom setting. With the increase in college courses taught online, librarians need to meet this challenge and provide instruction in this environment. Collaborating closely with faculty is essential and the creation of online information literacy tutorials is one way to incorporate these skills into an online course.

Good planning is an important factor in developing successful online tutorials. Many lessons were learned, including the necessity of close collaboration between the faculty and librarians, the importance of faculty support, consideration of organizational politics and information technology infrastructure, the need for learning outcome assessment, and sharing the experience with colleagues for future improvement. The knowledge gained from this first experience will aid in the preparation of future information literacy experiences.

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