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Lights, Camera, Information Literacy: Collaborating to Create Multimedia Materials for Library Instruction

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Abstract

Academic librarians devote their lives to research. Whether it's providing scholars access to authoritative works or guiding new students through the uncharted territory of online databases and primary sources, librarians are an integral part of the research process. However, lack of time and resources can often restrict librarians' abilities to apply in-depth research methodologies to evaluate their own institutions.

The irony of this circumstance was not lost on the librarians at the American University of Paris, where innovation and collaboration are strong tenets of the institution's culture. AUP librarians chose to build on their partnerships both internally and externally with faculty and vendors to transform their challenges into a growing study about undergraduate student research behaviors. By administering online surveys to students and following-up with in-person interviews, librarians were able to collect qualitative data about students, their research behaviors, and their opinions about the library's resources.

The paper will provide an overview of results about students and their use of Literati, as well as highlighting what worked well during the collaborative research process between AUP librarians and Credo Reference. AUP librarians and Credo Reference as partners demonstrate the experience of becoming strategic partners, tools for successful collaboration, and lessons learned.

About Literati

Literati by Credo is an information literacy platform that integrates faculty and student outreach, multimedia instruction, and assessment tools and resource discovery led by reference content.

About the American University of Paris

The American University of Paris—a 50-year-old liberal arts institution committed to creating responsible global citizens with well-structured faculty-librarian collaborations and a curriculum designed to foster strong critical thinking skills and promote information literacy.

Many academic librarians find themselves charged with the creation of engaging and interactive multimedia learning materials that promote information literacy in the classroom and beyond. A recent survey shows that the most common types of learning materials created by academic

librarians are videos, tutorials, and quizzes (Mestre, 2011). While there is a need for such materials at AUP—an institution that prides itself on providing unique learning experiences—several factors make development of multimedia a challenge:

- Sophisticated users: Students expect educational multimedia materials to mirror the technology found on the open web.

- Cost: Video production and editing software is costly and requires training to overcome what many perceive as a steep learning curve.

- Time: Even with resources and expertise, creating these materials takes time, and the ever-changing nature of technology requires time to stay abreast of the latest features and trends.

The partnership with the Literati Customer Solutions Team enabled AUP's librarians to

develop multimedia materials to help inform student perspectives in key first-year and senior seminar courses. Videos and interactive quizzes about the deep web, keyword searching, research guides, and primary resources were designed by the Literati team to illustrate complex concepts in a matter of minutes. The success of these materials relied on the valuable insights of AUP librarians to address themes both relevant to AUP and specific to the courses receiving information literacy instruction.

Given the importance of assessment to AUP, the Literati Customer Solutions Team collaborated with the institution to design online surveys and interviews. The goal of the assessments was to study the effects of the multimedia materials, as well as the research behaviors of AUP students.

Assessment by Surveys and Interviews

Online surveys were presented to students in two different types of courses in order to include a diversity of student perspectives. This was done by selecting students in their first year at AUP (6 students) as well as students who were in their senior year of school (11 students). The number of students involved with the survey was small and therefore in no way a representative sample of the entire AUP student body, which is approximately 1,000 students. However, the data collected from the surveys serves as a foundation for a student feedback loop to improve materials in the short-term and longer-term collaboration and research.

The first course was the Senior Psychology Seminar; students in this group were conducting advanced research in a specific field, and many were preparing to write their senior theses. These students had received classroom library instruction, which included materials developed by the Literati Customer Solutions Team. Despite their already strong information literacy skills, all of the seniors who responded to the survey found the library instruction in their course to be either helpful or extremely helpful. When asked about future use of Literati as a research tool, 75% of respondents said that they would be likely to use the resource again.

Learners from the second course, a required undergraduate course for first year students called First Bridge, also participated in the survey. Having received more in-depth library instruction, the responses from this group were of great interest to both AUP and the Literati Customer Solutions Team. Their responses echoed the findings of the first survey with the senior students. In this group, 85.7% confirmed that Literati is helpful or very helpful for research, and 85.7% said that they would use Literati for future research (see Figures 1 and 2 below).

To gain greater insights and feedback on Literati, the first year survey respondents were invited to participate in interviews. Data from these interviews revealed that almost all of the students had been using search engines to conduct academic research. One student stated, "[Before library instruction], I wouldn't even know how to use the Academic Search Complete." This database, along with Literati, are two of the core resources presented in library instruction sessions. The comfort level of students after library instruction is demonstrated by additional data collected from the interviews. For example, another First Bridge student stated, "Literati is one of my favorite databases, so I frequently go there."

Feedback on Literati in General

The data collected from surveys and interviews painted an insightful picture of students' experiences with Literati. Figure 1 displays information from the Senior Psychology Seminar. These students participated in the study by taking an in-class survey. Figure 2 illustrates the information gathered from students in the First Bridge Seminar. This second group of students participated in both an online survey, as well as one-on-one interviews with librarians. Despite the difference in the learning levels and data collection methods, the data revealed commonalities between both groups of students and their use of Literati. One hundred percent of the seniors in the Psychology Seminar found Literati helpful, and a still impressive 85.7% of First Bridge students indicated Literati as a helpful resource. It is also interesting to note that 100% of the First Bridge students found the one-on-one

instruction of librarians helpful while the number declined somewhat to 75% for the more advanced group of seniors in the Psychology Seminar.

Impact on Research Behavior

The respondents not only valued the library instruction, but they also found the Literati-produced multimedia materials to be helpful in changing their research behaviors. After watching the instructional video on the deep web, one student stated, "It got me to think about writing

would. However, as one of the students said, it depends on the time of the semester. Research papers are due at the end of the semester, and then research becomes a topic among students: "Everything is due now, but if you would have asked me [if I would recommend the video to a friend] in the beginning of the semester, no; but by the end of the semester, yeah. Everybody's talking about research papers about this time." This quotation underlines Carol Kuhlthau's (2004) argument about the importance of the "teachable moments." Many times, it is the time factor (or
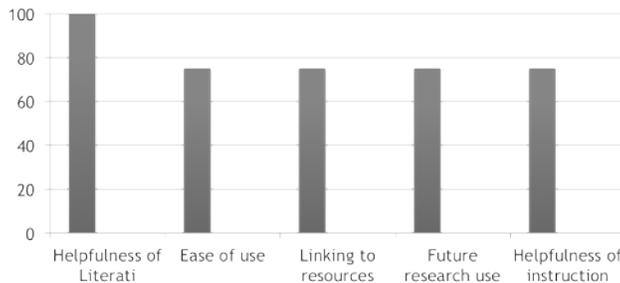

Figure 1. Data from Surveys of Senior Psychology Seminar Students
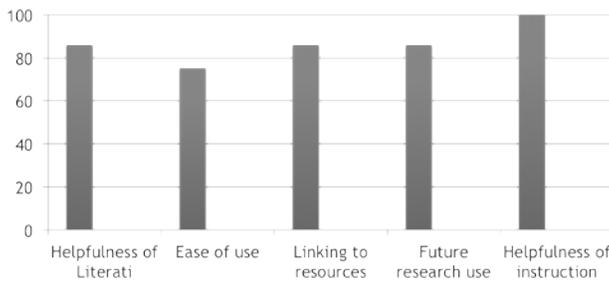

Figure 2. Data from Surveys of Frist Bridge Students

my next research paper with the library databases more....Honestly in my next research paper, I will use the library databases!" One of the other students put forward, especially those that had more experience in research, that this specific video on the "deep web" had less impact on them, as they would simply use the library resources already.

When asking students if they would recommend the video to a friend, many of them stated they

the space factor, as will be pointed out in the next paragraph) that determines the usage.

Where to Place the Videos and Tutorials

Another point of unanimous agreement was the placement of the multimedia materials. While videos and tutorials are currently placed throughout the Literati platform to catch students at their point of need, all of the First Bridge students suggested placing the multimedia

materials on the library homepage, with some students recommending a rotation of materials throughout the semester. "It should be, like, on the front. […] Yeah, there's no way. There's too much work for me to find and to watch a 'minute video.'" It is interesting to hear the students' complaints about the difficulties in finding the videos. It seems that the watching of the video depends on the expected gain that students take out of the viewing. If the gain isn't high enough, they will not make the effort to find extra information. Furthermore, many times they do not know about those videos or tutorials making it harder to increase their usage.

User-Driven Development to be Continued

This feedback was used to develop a plan to promote a range of multimedia materials on the library homepage. The Literati Customer Solutions Team is designing a rotation of changing graphic icons to draw students to these materials. The clickable icons then lead students to an AUP webpage with information literacy videos, tutorials, and activities.

In less than a year, the collaboration between Literati and AUP has paved the way for a long-term solution to the demands of instructional development. The librarians' knowledge of their students' unique needs coupled with Literati's multimedia expertise has created a sustainable partnership that includes quarterly assessment, long-term data analysis, and an appreciation for the iterative process.

References

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