

## Moving the Library: Bringing Resources to Students (Using a Learning Management System)

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## **Moving the Library: Bringing Resources to Students (Using a Learning Management System)**

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### **Abstract**

Students are increasingly finding library resources online due to the explosion in online courses and the use of course management software for all courses, whether fully online, hybrid, or traditional face-to-face courses. Librarians from Union County College (a two-year community college) and Montclair State University (a large research library) discussed the various approaches used to promote and market library services and resources using their institutions' library management system (LMS). A representative from Gale Cengage presented how Gale is connecting library content to the classroom while helping libraries raise their profile on campus.

### **Promoting Library Resources in Canvas (Union County College)**

The Union County College experience was presented by Karen Venturella Malnati. The presentation focused on the library's use of Canvas to promote library resources to teaching faculty. The philosophy is in telling the teaching faculty about library services and resources that can be shared in Canvas the teaching faculty will in turn encourage students to use the library resources. Libraries need to spread the word on what exists as well as simple directions on how to provide links in the LMS to the resources. Ways the Union County College is using the LMS to bring resources to students include an embedded librarian program, demonstrations to faculty on how to provide links in their online course shells to e-book chapters, scholarly articles, LibGuides, and streaming videos. A one credit course titled "Methods in Library Research" is offered to students to emphasize the importance of developing information literacy skills.

Various methods have been used to reach faculty such as speaking at faculty professional development workshops on topics such as "library tools for student success" and "the embedded librarian program." Giving a presentation at adjunct orientations has been a way to reach a large group of new faculty members to let them know about library services and resources. Canvas conferencing has been a tool to reach faculty who predominantly

teach online to demonstrate how to link to library resources in Canvas.

### **Creating a Library Community in Blackboard (Montclair State University)**

The second presenter, Steven Shapiro, electronic resources librarian at Montclair State University, discussed another way of embedding the library in an LMS by creating a community (group forum) in Blackboard, which supports such functionality. Communities in Blackboard are similar to courses, allowing you to post announcements, documents, and multimedia as well as send e-mails, conduct asynchronous discussions, and perform a host of other activities. At the same time, both require members to be enrolled by a system administrator or leader/teacher. While the community can be an effective tool for marketing the library to faculty, students, and staff, it is particularly well suited for connecting with students. Academic libraries, such as Montclair State University, usually have many methods for communicating with faculty, including listservs, liaison programs, campus-wide committees, and working relationships. On the other hand, there are fewer methods for communicating with students.

At Sprague Library at Montclair State University, the original strategy for reaching out to students consisted largely of using the library website, social media, and library instruction. Unfortunately, these methods of communication tend to be passive depending on the

students to come to the library's website or Facebook page. The staff wanted to try something less traditional but also more embedded in the virtual environment frequented by students. Montclair's LMS at the time, Blackboard, seemed to be the appropriate place to establish a library presence. The goal was to create a platform for more aggressively disseminating information about the library.

In the spring of 2011, the Blackboard system administrator created the library community entity and designated a leader (Steven Shapiro) to create content areas, which include text and links, or tools (e.g., announcements). Everyone with a Blackboard account (all students, faculty, and staff) was batch enrolled into the community. After that, batch enrollment would take place once a year (initially it was twice a year) to add any new Blackboard accounts. This meant that over 18,000 individuals were registered for the community.

The primary purpose of the library community was to publicize resources, services, and programs while also providing a fun and entertaining side to attract and keep our target audience, students. When students logged into Blackboard, library community announcements appeared by default on the main page in a box labeled "My Announcements." If they selected the community tab from the interface and then entered the library community, they could also view "Library Announcements" as the initial screen or menu item. Announcements usually consisted of news items focusing on new resources, events, workshops, faculty or staff achievements, changes in library hours, and/or new services.

Other sections or menu items created included "Library Info," which listed quick facts (e.g., updated hours and information on popular services such as laptop loan) that addressed student needs; the "Featured E-Resource," which profiled underutilized or new e-resources; "Librarian Spotlight," which provided a personalized and up-close bio of a librarian or staff member; the "Newsroom" section that was devoted to freely available Internet resources and digital collections; and the "Library Trivia" section that contained items to test students' knowledge of Sprague Library's collection and the library world. In addition, a "Discussion" section was established for any future asynchronous Q&A sessions.

The marketing impact of the community was enhanced by the ability to text and e-mail

announcements to mobile devices. This was accomplished by using the University's RAVE cell phone alerting service to relay messages from Blackboard via a "building block," enabling the LMS to communicate with RAVE. All students needed to do was to register on the MSU phone apps site to receive library community announcements as either text messages or e-mails on their mobile device.

Usage statistics generated upon completion of the community's first semester in existence (spring 2011) were encouraging. There were over 3,200 page views during this time. The menu items most visited were Announcements (1,895 hits), Library Info (333 hits), the Newsroom (275 hits), Library Trivia (201 hits), Featured E-Resource (173 hits), and Librarian Spotlight (137 hits) (Shapiro, 2011).

After the university migrated to the Canvas LMS, one of Montclair's librarians created a community called "Academic Research Explained," which gave faculty the ability to incorporate library research instructional content, including tutorials, into their Canvas courses by simply copying and pasting. Moreover, faculty didn't need to use entire content modules within the community but could select those portions pertinent to their course. Over 40 faculty from the first-year writing program belong to the community, and the library intends to expand access to a larger number of academic departments.

Sprague Library is also experimenting with a library portal that was created on the campus engagement network provided by OrgSync. The MSU network is referred to as HawkSync and is utilized by members of student organizations including the student government association (SGA), fraternities, sororities, clubs, and other groups. Like the original library community, the portal includes announcements, news items, video clips, and information about library programs and services. Content added to the site can also be emailed to portal members.

### **Gale Cengage as a Library Partner and Advocate (Sara Tarpley)**

Sara Tarpley, the third presenter, discussed Gale Cengage's role as a library partner and advocate who continually analyzes the trends and behaviors of not only libraries but faculty practices and student preferences. Monitoring these trends and practices helps Gale define a product development strategy to

ensure it is building tools and resources that are commensurate with ways that libraries can continue to enhance the value they bring to their institution. Gale has done a great deal recently in developing tools and resources that can empower learning outcomes through the library.

“In 2015, Gale conducted a survey with Library Journal to better understand the relationship between academic faculty and librarians. The survey of roughly 500 academic librarians and 500 faculty revealed just how big the gap is. The numbers themselves are eye-opening, with a little under half of faculty (49%) indicating that they embed library resources or links into their LMS or syllabus. In addition, 27% of faculty think that there is no need for campus librarians and faculty to consult with one another” (Mason, 2016).

“Up against perception challenges like this, it’s clear that libraries need to continually show faculty and administrators how they support better learning outcomes, and one specific way to do this is to show how the content the library has can directly support in class instruction and discussion” (Mason, 2016).

The tools and products Gale develops are increasingly designed to mimic the patterns and needs of faculty and students and include capabilities to increase collaboration between librarians and faculty across campus. Examples of such tools include Gale Researcher, a curriculum tool that fosters the development of information literacy and critical thinking skills by providing students with a clear path to research materials aligned to the scope and sequence of general education courses, as well as our partnerships with Google and Microsoft, and finally joint initiatives in higher education with our parent company Cengage Learning, who is a leading textbook provider.

Gale Researcher not only provides a clear research path for students who are sometimes overwhelmed with starting their research, but it also provides the ability to support faculty who are looking to embed digital resources into the classroom via their learning management system. Blocks of content from Gale Researcher are easily able to be embedded as web links via durable, bookmark URLs. Further, designed within the resource is an opportunity for librarians to work with faculty to customize Gale Researcher to incorporate documents, links, open access materials, and videos that instructors might utilize regularly as

part of their teaching practice. This customization is available to help further cement collaborative relationships between faculty and the library and thereby promotes the value of the library in support of curriculum design. Because Gale Researcher is so closely aligned to the learning objectives of the most highly enrolled courses on campuses across the United States, it is likely that the materials held within could support open educational resources initiatives on campuses whose definition of such programs include limited-restricted content such as library subscription databases, thus making learning opportunities more affordable and increasing students’ academic success.

Ultimately, though, Gale is keenly aware that it is not enough to simply design content aligned to curriculum. Gale has also incorporated workflow tools that mimic the student and faculty members’ natural workflow. An example of this is our partnerships with Google and Microsoft, in which we have designed sign-ins within our library resources to encourage classroom utilization. Instructors can leverage Google Classroom, an open-source learning management system, to assign documents from our research solutions. Students and faculty have found tremendous value in leveraging their campus-based Google or Microsoft accounts to inspire collaborative research projects. Students may continue to use these research tools as they matriculate into the workforce after college.

A Cengage Learning Fall 2015 Engagement Insights Study also indicates that students want library resources more closely embedded in their courseware. Gale has established a way to bring library content to the student by allowing library resources to be accessed through Cengage Learning’s MindTap. MindTap is a personalized learning program of digital products and services that engages students with interactivity while offering students and instructors choice in content, platform, devices, and learning tools.

As a strong advocate for the value that libraries bring to the learning process, Gale will continue to enhance solutions to empower learning. Gale seeks to make library solutions that can be easily integrated into the classroom. With this alignment of research and content to curriculum, libraries may benefit with increased usage of collections, stronger relationships with faculty and administration, and an improved perception of value of their services on

campus. Faculty will have an opportunity to bring more scholarly material into their courses and student workflow. The goal is for students to interact with quality research materials earlier and more often, promoting critical thinking and discovery.

## Conclusion

These different approaches share the goal of aiding students' research efforts. As students are increasingly using an online LMS to access courses, it is critical that libraries reach out to students and

faculty in their LMS and for library vendors to provide research material that can be accessed and integrated into the LMS. According to the ACRL Standards for Distance Education (2016), "Academic libraries must . . . meet the information and research needs of all constituents, wherever they may be." Now that students are increasingly online, it has become crucial for libraries to reach students using their institution's learning management system. This panel focused on various ways to bring resources to students in their LMS as well as to promote and market library resources.

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