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Library Tools for Connecting With the Curriculum: How To Create a Professional Development Workshop for Teaching Faculty

by Sonya S. Shepherd, Debra Skinner and Robert W. Fernekes

Working as an information services librarian with reference desk, bibliographic instruction, and information specialist and co-liaison responsibilities for the College of Business

Administration continues to provide unique opportunities for interacting with students, classroom faculty and colleagues. Using the ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education definition of outcomes¹ set the stage for a collaborative project that has evolved from an initial presentation at ASCUE² to online tutorials for classroom faculty and librarians to reshape the student's learning environment by linking academic requirements directly to library resources.

Background: The Information Situation

The information situation today can

be overwhelming for students in general, but especially for new college students who may be doing true library research for the first time. Often presented with conflicting

information, students may be unable or not take the time to discern how to proceed in doing library research or know that assistance is available at the library. Getting the correct information from multiple sources online, as well as from print media, poses a challenging task for students who may not know what a database

is or what licensed sources they can access for a given research requirement. Although immersed in a technology-driven environment that provides on-demand and continuous communication of personal information, students face unnecessary obstacles for the simplest of tasks: (1) locate a book at the library using a recommended

reading list and (2) locate a journal article on your topic in one of the following communications journals. Most librarians will recognize these basic research tasks as information literacy competencies that students should know how to do in order to be effective learners. On the other hand, traditional research assignments provided to students as handouts are plagued with shortcomings for students who are not proficient with searching a library catalog or knowing which database actually indexes the journals that the student must access to satisfy the research requirement. A review of the recommended reading list revealed incorrect entries for some book titles and that the library owned only 20 percent of the book titles. It was also disturbing to discover that some of the journal titles had ceased publication and others had changed their names since the list had been created.

Introduction: How We Got Started With Linking Tools

Alarmed with what we learned from these two typical research requirements and recognizing that there are students that we do not see, three librarians at Zach S. Henderson Library – Sonya Shepherd, Debra Skinner and Bob Fernekes –

Outcomes are the ways in which library users are changed as a result of their contact with the library's resources and programs. This definition was initially developed for the ACRL Task Force on Academic Library Outcomes Assessment Report in 1998 and is used to define outcomes in the current standards.³

formed a team to determine a practical solution which would facilitate “pushing” students into library resources that classroom faculty were directing them to use. In addition to creating library subject-based research and resources guides, we felt that the time had come to collaborate with classroom faculty to streamline the “locate resource step” in the overall research process. In the two typical research examples cited, we strongly felt that the student’s need to easily access the resource in order to demonstrate course-evaluated critical skills⁴ far outweighed the student’s need to learn basic information literacy skills.

Equipped with recent advances in linking technologies, such as the saved catalog search and journal finder applications, we had the necessary capabilities to simplify the search process at our fingertips. “Library Tools for Connecting With the Curriculum” presented at the 2004 ASCUE Conference provided confirmation that we were on track. Upon return from this conference, we did an information presentation to Henderson Library faculty where it was suggested that we create a

faculty development workshop. After several workshops offered through the Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET), we decided to develop individual tutorials for each of the linking tools. Our last presentation at COMO 2005 introduced five new tutorials that could be used by colleagues and classroom faculty in Georgia.

It’s All About Outcomes: Why Are We Doing This

Based on the complex and complicated nature of the student’s information environment, it became more important for us to go where the students are and provide typical research assignments online with embedded “easy links.” The challenge of providing students with easy direct access to specific resources can best be accomplished through collaboration with classroom faculty. Thus, our objectives were twofold: (1) to market linking tools to classroom faculty through the library liaison program, and (2) to provide classroom instructors with capabilities to link directly to library resources from course syllabus, faculty web pages, course

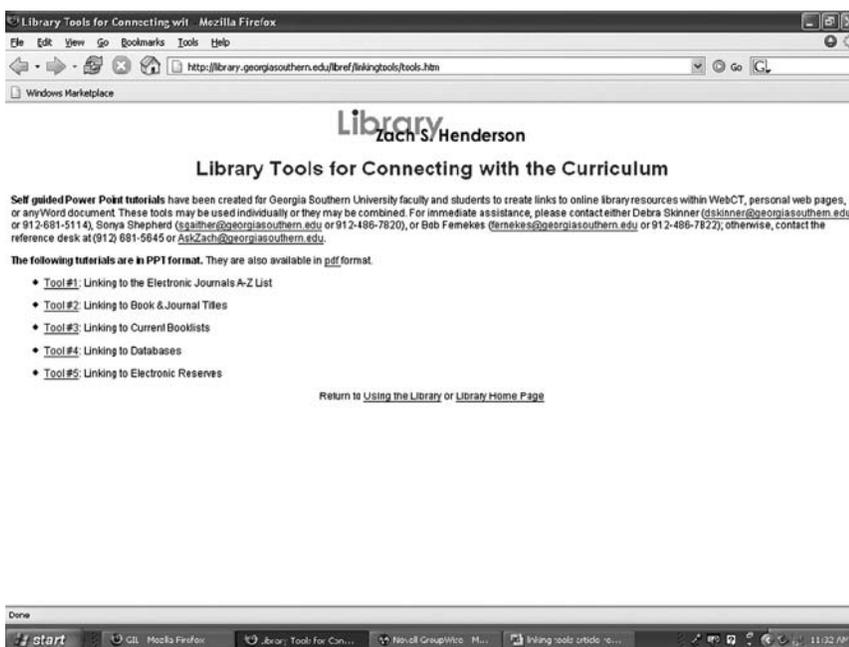
management applications and research assignments.

From a scholarship of teaching perspective, the linking tools tutorials are designed to improve student and faculty use of library and online learning resources. In a similar manner, it is believed that direct links will facilitate the library’s contribution to learning, as well as document the impact its resources and programs have had on users. By extension, this impact includes reviewing course syllabus and research assignments to ensure that classroom faculty are providing students with up-to-date information on library and online learning resources.

How the Tutorials Were Developed

Five linking tools used for connecting library resources to the curriculum were created to help faculty simplify the process of locating resources needed by their students for class assignments. Linking tool 1 connects to the Electronic Journal A-Z Listing. Linking tool 2 connects to book and journal titles in the online catalog. Linking tool 3 connects to booklists in the online catalog. Linking tool 4 connects to GALILEO and Henderson Library-funded databases. And linking tool 5 connects to electronic reserves. The concept of using these linking tools was first presented at the 2004 Association of Small Computer Users in Education (ASCUE) Conference. Later that summer, we presented the linking tools concept at our library faculty meeting. We thought by presenting the linking tools concept to our colleagues we would have another way to promote library resources and services via our library liaison program.

The library faculty thought the concept of linking tools was a topic worth pursuing with teaching faculty across campus, so they suggested we



talk to the Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET) staff about offering a workshop that would demonstrate how to create and use the linking tools. We met with the CET staff to discuss the linking tools workshop and decided the format of the workshop would be an hour in length, demonstration only, and if participants had further questions or wanted personalized assistance, they could contact us for personal appointments.

After several offerings, we revamped the workshop by extending the time from one hour to two hours to allow for hands-on instruction. The workshop also included more detailed instructions using PowerPoint on how to create and use the linking tools with the assumption that participants would seek outside assistance for creating courses using WebCT and/or creating personal Web pages. The PowerPoint containing all five tools was also converted into PDF via Word so the file would be available from the library's Web page as an online tutorial. Afterward, we decided to make the tutorial smaller by creating a PowerPoint for each linking tool. That way, if a faculty member was only interested in one tool, then she/he would only access that tutorial. Of course, all the tools were made available online in one PowerPoint file and in smaller PowerPoint files as well as in PDF format. Each PowerPoint file consisted of an explanation of why faculty would use the linking tool, an explanation on how to create the tool, an example of the tool being used and library liaison contact information for questions/comments.

Even though several workshops have been offered, attendance has been low, but the few faculty who have been in attendance have expressed their appreciation for the ability to link to online library resources as well as for the opportunity to learn how to create and use the tools to

supplement their course content via WebCT or a personal Web page. As more and more faculty realize linking to online library resources is possible, they are expressing an interest in the workshop and are requesting personal appointments for assistance. We have gone to their offices and showed them how to create and use the linking tools. And this seems to be the most effective way to demonstrate how to create and use the linking tools. Additionally, we are trying to promote a Web site created for faculty that allows them to access the tutorials for learning how to create and use the linking tools at their own pace. This site can be found at <http://library.georgia-southern.edu/libref/linkingtools/tools.htm>, which compiles all the tutorials (PDF and PowerPoint) into one location.

Conclusion

In the future, we will continue to revise and expand our linking tools offerings. It will be important to remain flexible, offering assistance according to emerging demands including both individual assistance and group presentations. Workshops will be scheduled on a formal and recurring basis as well as scheduled on demand as requested by a group or department. By partnering with the Center for Excellence in Teaching, workshops receive campus wide publicity and are part of a large group of offerings presented each semester. We can follow up a group session with an office visit to faculty members who request this service. By sitting in the faculty member's office, the liaison can provide individual assistance with a real project on which the faculty member is working.

Another aspect of future training will be to train other library liaisons so that they can assist faculty as well in linking resources for student use. Individual assistance at the point of

need is often the most effective technique for assisting faculty with linking tools. By making other faculty liaisons aware of the capabilities of linking tools, they will be able to make suggestions to faculty as they recognize an opportunity for utilizing linking technology.

We will continue to develop resource guides using the linking tools that we are promoting. These guides are available on the library page and are available for use by faculty as well as students. These guides can become examples that faculty can use in creating their own resource lists or assignments with links. In addition, more tutorials will be developed over time to expand the self-help resources available to faculty in terms of linking. Materials and workshops will require regular revision based on technology that becomes available and as new databases and resources are added. An example soon to become a reality is the ability to "deep link" to journal articles through the use of link resolver technology. Constant monitoring of the technological capabilities and resources will make the linking tools workshops relevant for as long as the current revolution in linking capabilities continues. ►►

Notes:

¹"Standards for Libraries in Higher Education." Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), June 2004. (January 29, 2006).

²Fernekes, Robert, Debra Skinner, and Sonya Shepherd, "Library Tools for Connecting With the Curriculum" (paper presented at the Association of Small Computer Users in Education (ASCUE) Conference, June 2004). <http://fits.depauw.edu/ascue/Proceedings/2004/p86.pdf> (January 29, 2006).

³"ACRL Task Force on Academic Library Outcomes Assessment Report." <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/whitepapers/taskforceacademic.htm> (January 29, 2006).

⁴Ladner, Betty, Donald Beagle, James Steele, and Linda Steele. "Rethinking Online Instruction: From Content Transformation to Cognitive Immersion," *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 329-337.