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AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH FOR CREATING A SELF-GUIDED VIDEO TOUR IN AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY

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Introduction

Millions of students visit academic libraries each year, hoping to achieve success in the classroom and make progress with their research. Many of these students need help in navigating the complex services, collections, and facilities of a large academic library.

Librarians often respond to this need by offering in-person orientation tours. However, with this approach, library personnel are unable to reach all who need assistance. Furthermore, the schedules of busy students and busy librarians do not always coincide, and students may prefer to learn about the library in a more flexible, self-paced fashion. It's known that in-person tours are a time-consuming and costly way to teach students about the library.

If an in-person tour is not feasible, a self-guided tour is often an acceptable alternative for familiarizing students with the library. Many well-established museums have implemented self-guided tours with much success. The time and other resources used to create a self-guided tour yield huge benefits. A self-guided tour can be used many times, with only a one-time developmental cost. Furthermore, a self-guided tour can reach a wide audience at the convenience of all.

This paper describes the development and implementation of a self-guided video tour in an academic library. The tour uses a digital, multimedia player and streaming video for content delivery and targets more than 4,000 undergraduate and graduate students in science, engineering, and nursing at the University of Alabama.

Literature Review

Hickok (2002) observed that with the advent of the worldwide Web and modern multimedia tools, more opportunities exist for creating library tours. But virtual and self-guided tours using multimedia are not conceived as a replacement for live tours but rather as a way to supplement them. Hickok makes a point to say that with a huge student population of over 30,000 at his institution, live tours were not reaching enough students, and a need existed to reach students with more effective and innovative strategies.

Ashmore and Grogg (2004) reported how cooperative work among colleagues helped to create a library virtual tour in a university library. They also found that virtual tours via the Web had become a common tool for instruction and outreach. Still, they noted that traditional guided and self-guided tours are still the most popular. Library tours, whether virtual, guided, or self-guided, generally have a common purpose, to introduce students to study areas, meeting rooms, general resources, library hours, computers, snack bars, and other pertinent resources. By introducing the library as a campus resource and not just a place to find books, students are encouraged to use the library at a high level, according to Ashmore and Grogg.

Kenneway (2007) indicated that technology is a key tool for marketing libraries. By coupling technology with marketing important outcomes can be achieved. Further, delivering the right message to the right person at the right place and time is the way to market new services to diverse groups.

Oblinger (2003) raised some very interesting issues relating to preferences of Boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millennials. A major concern is how well college and university faculty and staff take differing learning styles into consideration when designing programs. “Not surprisingly, technology is assumed to be a natural part of the environment [of learning]” according to Oblinger.

Adopting Modern Technology

Today’s college students are immersed in mobile, multimedia technologies. Smart phones and iPods are often the first tools of choice for communicating and delivering information. Librarians have joined the new media revolution and are viewed by users as leaders with new information technologies. As such, it is natural for libraries, as purveyors of digital content, to offer media presentations for telling the library’s story.



Sony Video Walkman

A Sony Video MP3 media player was selected for this project. The Sony Walkman (as it is commonly called) is well known for its sleek appearance and many convenient features that allow for easy use. The Walkman’s enhanced interface and high capacity make it highly functional. As an added benefit, the Walkman connects to a Bluetooth headset, making it an ideal device for personal communication. The Sony Walkman delivers a quality experience for students.

Budget for the Project

For libraries, even small projects can be expensive especially when technology is involved, but for this project, a modest budget achieved good results. The total project cost less than \$2,000, with most of the cost going towards media players, professional services, and assorted supplies. It should be noted that these costs do not include the services of the librarian who managed the project, librarians and others who wrote the script, and the media technologists who shot, edited, and produced the video.

BUDGET FOR SEN TOUR		
item	description	cost
Sony digital media player Model NWZ-A828KBLK	8 GB memory and Bluetooth headsets	\$1,050 (\$350/unit, total of three units)
Supplies and promotional items	frames to hold signs, special pencils, bookmarks	\$310
Professional services to read and deliver script	person with a BFA degree trained in theatre for two full days of on-site shooting of video	\$500

Branding and Program Content

Branding is a major consideration for attaining customer acceptance and loyalty. As such, the self-guided tour described in this paper is called SEN Tour, a name picked to resonate with the science, engineering, and nursing (SEN) students served by the library.



Technology usually dazzles users, but content is king. A good script and an inviting opening statement are important as well. SEN Tour begins: “Welcome to Rodgers Library, one of the branches of The University of Alabama Libraries. Primarily we serve students and faculty in the sciences, engineering, and nursing. We have the latest and best resources to help you find the information you need. It’s a place to study, learn, and conduct research, or just make yourself at home.”

This introduction sets the stage for sixteen stops on the video tour at various locations in the library, beginning with the building directory and continuing with circulation services, the copy and scan center, group study rooms, and more. The entire script for the tour is about 2,100 words and before conversion to the video format, takes less than ten minutes to read in its entirety.

Production Phase



While a typical library is not a media production studio, creating an attractive, compelling video is still possible with proper equipment, careful planning, and staging. For SEN Tour, this phase of development was handled by a digital media specialist and a student videographer from the University Libraries' Sanford Media Center.

Pre-production on-site in the library was essential before actual videotaping could occur. A two person crew spent two half-days viewing the building's internal layout. With many large windows, two floors, and shooting to occur during an active semester, pre-planning was essential to define appropriate camera angles, draw up diagrams, and choreograph the tour narrator. After this information was documented on paper and video, the library's media specialist was ready to begin production.

Two full days of intensive activity followed onsite, including multiple re-takes of each scene/stop and some in-camera edits on the fly. As is typical in videotaping, re-takes offered the editor various options to achieve the most desired outcome.

A Canon XL2 video camera was used for all filming. This device records to a small videotape known as a Digital Video Cassette (DVC, MiniDV). This high-end video camera offered superb visual clarity for the Sony Walkman's compact screen size.

B-roll shooting began a couple days later to add reference imagery to the tour. Framing close-ups, specific points of reference, as well as external shots of the library building, took an additional four hours. Since B-roll does not require a live person, audio narration or "voice-over" was recorded later in a studio, using a condenser microphone and audio software.

Editing and Production

The digital media specialist also handled editing and final production. After reviewing over eight hours of raw footage and after choosing the best shots, each shot received a catalog entry along with a corresponding stop number. The final video had to be both eye-catching and informative and needed to engage faculty, staff and students, as well as casual visitors to the library.

Editing MiniDV tapes required considerable care and precision, especially the part related to processing time codes. Logging time codes was achieved by creating a list of in-points and out-points in order to simplify management of the process. After keying time codes into the video editing software (Final Cut Pro 6), the footage was captured to the computer in real-time.

Post-production involved more editing and consumed considerable time. Attention focused on trimming clips to line up with B-roll footage, shifting clips around the timeline, correcting audio problems, and color correcting to neutralize the multiple light sources used. The editing concluded with the addition of a copyright-free musical score, created by the digital media specialist.

In another phase, the edited video was exported to a file format compatible with the Sony Walkman. Most portable video devices support only specific formats. Hence, the computer exported a test video using multiple codecs in order to obtain the optimal choice. With video, quality and size of files can vary quite considerably depending on the format. Since the visual portion of this video tour would be presented on a screen no larger than two inches, the format was crucial.

The amount of time required to export video varies depending on equipment used and preferences. In this case, it turned out to be a 20:1 ratio. This ratio yielded a small video file that retained both clarity and quality. The choice codec was used to export all seventeen stops on the tour, separately. After backing up the files, the video was ready to load on the Sony Walkman.

During the process of loading video, the computer recognized the Sony Walkman via USB and the device opened up in a new window. Dragging and dropping the files from one window to another made the winding down process very user-friendly. The Sony Walkman's menus and options authenticated on-screen and became available for loading in pre-sets to facilitate later operations.

Finally, the Sony Walkman was paired with a unit-specific headset to achieve synchronization, using Bluetooth technology. The pairing process allows the Sony Walkman and a headset to find and "listen" to each other and only each other. This protocol eliminates potential problems associated with interference from other headsets of the same brand/style.

The Sony Walkman is a very accommodating device with ample storage space, even for large media files.

Marketing SEN Tour

Creating awareness and excitement is an important aspect of launching any new product. As such, colleagues were introduced to the video at a Library Forum held at the University of Alabama Libraries, before announcing SEN Tour to the full university community.

Marketing began with roll-out to the general faculty as soon as the video was in production. From a link on the library's home page, faculty in the sciences, engineering and nursing were urged to take a look at the new product.

In addition, administrators, including academic deans and directors of special academic units such as the Honors College, the International Honors program, and the Capstone International Center, were engaged to create a broader awareness of SEN Tour among other key constituencies.

Teaching faculty helped to promote SEN Tour as well. For example, faculty in the College of Nursing agreed to tell students in freshman classes about SEN Tour. With this approach, beginning nursing students take SEN Tour as part of a class assignment.

Throughout the marketing campaign, the library promoted SEN Tour in-house via specially designed fliers and promotional pencils and bookmarks. The pencils were intended to urge buy-in and promote participation, enticing students with a special message: "Try SEN Tour, A Video of Rodgers Library."

Finally, students were given an opportunity to learn about SEN Tour with a visit to "Scholars' Station," the library's instruction room. SEN Tour was shown on a jumbo screen and students could come in and view the library's newest video orientation program at designated times and days.

The Training Phase

Staff training is imperative when introducing any new technology. All faculty and staff in Rodgers Library viewed the SEN Tour video together and learned how to operate the Sony Walkman and headsets. Student assistants who work in the library, which is open 24/5 (twenty-four hours a day, five days a week), were also given special training for operating the Walkman, as well as instructions on how to check-out the equipment. Since users must learn a few details before operating the Walkman and headsets, early training of staff and student workers was essential for the successful launch of SEN Tour.

Circulation of Media Players

Special policies and procedures were developed, to ensure appropriate use of the Walkman and headsets. In addition, the well-documented policies and procedures were deemed essential for training library staff. Finally, a transaction log was created to monitor use of the service. All documentation was placed at the library's Circulation Desk for convenient access.

Conclusion

SEN Tour: A Video Guide to Rodgers Library may be viewed at www.lib.ua.edu/libraries/sel

For SEN Tour to succeed several elements came into play: a persuasively written and important message, a capable person to deliver the library's message, state-of-the-art equipment for video recording and production, a high-tech Sony media player, and the expertise of media specialists.

SEN Tour illustrates how a basic library service can be easily transformed from a time-consuming and costly operation to an effective and modern presentation using technology. It is also an example of how modest resources can make a difference. At the core of the project was innovation, an essential ingredient for progress in many worthwhile library endeavors.

As intended in the innovation grant which funded this project, work on SEN Tour focused mainly on product development and implementation. It's anticipated that data on use and student satisfaction will be gathered over a period of several months during which time students will have had ample exposure to SEN Tour.

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APPENDIX (FULL TEXT OF SCRIPT FOR SEN TOUR)

A VIDEO TOUR OF RODGERS LIBRARY FOR SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

Introduction:

Welcome to Rodgers Library, one of the branches of The University of Alabama Libraries. Primarily we serve students and faculty in the sciences, engineering, and nursing. We have the latest and best resources to help you find the information you need. It's a place to study, learn, and conduct research, or just make yourself at home.

Video Tour Instructions:

During this tour, we will acquaint you with our computers, special facilities, collections, and explain many important services. In less time than it takes you to walk across campus, you'll be ready to use the library with confidence. The Sony Walkman you are holding is loaded with seventeen stops. Each stop describes a collection or service which is offered at a specific location in the library.

As you take this tour, watch for signs labeled SEN TOUR. Each sign is keyed to a stop on the Walkman.



You may go at your own pace. When you finish the tour, return the Sony Walkman and headphones to the Circulation Desk. Okay, you are ready to begin the tour. Enjoy Rodgers Library!

STOP 1 – Building Directory:

Think GPS - from the building directory you can navigate to any point in the library. Just take a moment to scan the building directory and you'll get a quick take on how to find service points, collections and special areas. The building directory is a guide to both the 1st and 2nd floors.

STOP 2 – Circulation/Reserves:

Many people know that the Circulation Desk is the place you checkout book and periodicals. In Rodgers Library, you can check-out laptop computers and headphones from here as well. Also this is the place where your professor may place reserve materials, such as lecture notes or special readings.

For your added convenience, books may also be checked out using the self check-out machine located in front of the Reference Desk.

How long you can keep a book varies: Undergraduate students may check-out materials for 30 days with 3 renewals; graduate students and faculty for the entire semester with 2 renewals.

Bound periodicals are checked out to graduate students and faculty members for 5 days with 1 renewal. Current periodicals cannot be checked out.

Reserve materials circulate for various limited amounts of time: 2 hours in library use only, overnight, or 2 to 10 days. The computer on Circulation desk is used to look-up items on reserve. The laptop computers are for in library use only.



STOP 3 - Copy or Scan Documents:

Is your backpack a little too heavy? If so, copy machines, located in the Copy and Scan Center just across from the Circulation Desk and on the 2nd floor, might be the answer.

The scanning feature on our copiers is especially useful, since you can capture a periodical article or other document electronically and send the results to your e-mail account.

Copy machines accept Bama Cash from your Action Card or a Community User Card. The machines do not accept dollar bills or coins.

Money can be added to your Action Card or Community User Card by using the Card Value Added machine located in the Copy & Scan Center. You may also go online to the Action Card Office and purchasing value with your credit card.

STOP 4 – Reference Help:

When you want to get a quick start in the library, ask for help from librarians and staff at our Reference Desk. From the Reference Desk, we can point you in the right direction or answer more in-depth questions about finding specific information in a variety of sources.

We can show you how to search databases including the library's catalog. We can also answer questions about our many services, such as how to borrow books from other Alabama libraries. If you need guidance for downloading electronic documents or locating books in the library's stacks, be sure to ask.

If you need still more help, feel free to make a personal appointment with a librarian. You may also send us your questions by e-mail and we will reply - usually the same business day.

The Reference Desk is open during most regular business hours and in the early evening until 9:00 pm, Monday through Thursday.

STOP 5 – Introductory Subject Guides:

Finding specific library resources can be a challenge, even for professionals. Our subject guides offer an excellent road map to begin your research. Using subject guides you can discover information in nursing, geology, electrical engineering and other disciplines. The printed subject guides point to both print and electronic resources.

Our subject guides can also be viewed as Web pages on Rodgers Library's Web site. When viewed on the Web site, the subject guides offer the added advantage of allowing you to click through to many of the references we've identified for you.

Subject guides are found in the Reference Guides display mounted on the wall in front of the Reference desk. Feel free to take one or more with you.

STOP 6 – New Book Shelf:

Did you know that Rodgers Library receives hundreds of new books each month? As soon as the new books arrive, they are shelved on the new book display. If a new book catches your interest, you can take it the Circulation Desk for check-out.

After a couple of weeks on the new book display, books are removed from this area and shelved within the permanent book collection on the second floor. We welcome your suggestions on new books to add to the library's collection.

STOP 7 – Current Periodicals:

Current periodicals might be your best friend when it comes time to write a research paper. Rodgers library subscribes to more than 1,500 titles. Our print journals are shelved in the current periodicals area. Many of our titles are electronic journals only, accessible from computers anywhere on campus or from home.

The print journals are filed by broad subject areas, using the Library of Congress call numbers. The scheme uses the letter "Q" for science titles, the letter "T" for engineering titles, and the letter "R" for nursing titles.

To find periodical titles we subscribe to, simply do a search in Rodgers Library's online catalog. Remember, current print periodicals cannot be checked out, but you can easily copy or scan articles with machines in our Copy and Scan Center.

STOP 8 – The Reference Collection:

Sometimes just a snippet of information is enough. If you need a definition of a term, a brief description of a topic or process, or some specific data, our reference books are very helpful. Encyclopedias, dictionaries, and handbooks make up most of the Reference Collection.

Our Reference collection is on the first floor and covers science, engineering and nursing subjects. The reference books are organized by Library of Congress call numbers, using the letter “Q” for the sciences; “T” for engineering; and “R” for nursing. Reference books are for use in the building only.

For your convenience, some reference information is found in electronic books and is accessible through the libraries’ online catalog.

STOP 9 – Print from Computers:

Do you need to print what you’ve found on a computer? From all of our computers, you can print documents at Pharos UniPrint stations located near the Reference Desk and on the 2nd floor.

To print, simply click on File and Print, enter your name and an identifier in the pop-up box and then go to a Pharos UniPrint station to release your document to a black-and-white printer.

You must swipe your Action Card at the Pharos UniPrint station before your document is released to the printer. The cost is \$.05 per sheet.

Should you choose to print in color, a high-quality laser color printer is available at the print station on the 1st floor. For color printing the cost is \$.15 per sheet.

STOP 10 – Group Study Rooms:

When Facebook or online chat do not suffice, you can always meet classmates face-to-face in a Group Study room in Rodgers Library. Our group study rooms are designed and equipped for collaborating and sharing information. Three group study rooms are located on the first floor and a fourth group study room is on the second floor. All the rooms feature ample work space, seating and dry erase boards.

The Nightingale Room on the 1st floor and the Cahaba River Room on the second floor can be reserved for up to two hours. To ensure that a room is available when you need it, make a reservation in advance by calling or speaking to staff at our Circulation Desk.

The Great Bear Room and the Rocket Room located on the first floor are open on a first-come-first-served basis.

STOP 11 – Treat Corner:

Treat yourself! The vending machines have a variety of bars, chips, crackers and other snacks. Health drinks and Pepsi products are available too. Drinks are allowed at study spaces and study rooms throughout the library.

We ask that you eat food purchased from the vending machines at the dining tables located in this area. You can also take the food outside and eat while you are seated on benches in front of the building.

For your convenience, the vending machines accept BAMA cash or regular money. While in the Treat Corner, you can watch the weather or catch the latest CNN News from a large-screen monitor mounted on the wall beside the dining tables.

STOP 12 – Computer Workstations:

If you like one-stop service, our computer workstations are a good solution. While at computer workstations, you may:

- use tutorials for learning about how libraries work
- consult special databases for finding information
- view or download content
- and access a variety of tools to communicate with us

Our workstations are also a gateway to myBAMA, Google, Yahoo, Facebook and other services on the Internet.

Since our services and collections are highly automated, your computer at home or computers in other buildings on Campus will give you about the same results that you get from computers found in Rodgers Library.

STOP 13 – Scholars' Station:

Scholars' Station is a special area with high-end computers loaded with an abundance of software, such as Microsoft Word, Dreamweaver, and Adobe Photoshop.

You can also access scholarly information, view your professor's class-related Web pages, go on the Internet – even scan documents.

In Scholars' Station you can work on projects alone or with your classmates.

Occasionally, Scholars' Station is used as a classroom by librarians to teach students and faculty how to use the library. Training sessions on various topics, such as techniques for searching databases, are posted on the calendar near the entry to Scholars' Station. Some may interest you.

STOP 14 – Silent Study Zone:

In the library, even a whisper or soft greeting may be too noisy for some students. Our answer is the Silent Study Zone on the entire north-half of the 2nd floor. You can plan for a few minutes or many hours of deep study in the Silent Study Zone without any interruptions. Remember, all the open spaces in Rodgers Library are quiet and designed to help you concentrate while you study.

STOP 15 – Book Collection:

Yes, the Internet is a dandy tool, but our books may offer a better way to learn about new subjects or simply brush up on concepts you'd like to understand a little more. The book collection is found on the second floor just off to the right when you reach the top the staircase. In a pattern common to all of our collections, the books are arranged on the shelves by the Library of Congress call numbers - generally "Q" for the sciences; "T" for engineering, and "R" for nursing."

To find specific books in our collection, as well as books in other UA Campus libraries, simply do a search by author or subject using Rodgers Library's online catalog.

STOP 16 – Older Bound Periodicals:

On the second floor you will find our bound periodical collection. This collection has periodical titles that are usually more than two years old. Like the current periodicals on the first floor, the bound volumes are arranged on the shelves by the Library of Congress scheme - "Q" for sciences, "T" for engineering, and "R" for nursing. To view a full list of all our older periodicals, simply do a search for the titles you want to read in Rodgers Library's online catalog.

STOP 17 – Thank You:

Thank you for taking this tour. If we can help you in any way, ask us. Remember Rodgers Library is your library. Enjoy!

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