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A Reflection on the Galileo Knowledge Repository (GKR) Virtual Internship

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By Changwoo Yang

"Each GKR partner site has final responsibility for collecting, submitting, and organizing their IR content; however, many do not have the appropriate staff or training to do this work. …. These library staff also will interact with the Valdosta State University (VSU) Master of Library and Information Science Program, which will provide 2-4 students interns to serve as content submitters for GKR sites " (Walters & Graham, 2009, 6)

The Galileo Knowledge Repository (GKR) http://www.library.gatech.edu/gkr/ internship is designed to provide service to GKR sites needing assistance and to give students hands-on experience using a modified version of Dublin Core in a digital repository environment. Because the GKR internship is a virtual internship, student interns do not have to come to the GKR partner sites. The student interns work virtually from any remote location that has Internet access. Selected student interns are assigned to the GKR partner institutes and work as content submitters. Interns are required to complete a minimum of 120 hours of work during the summer semester to earn three credit hours (MLIS 7960 Supervised Fieldwork) in the Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) Program at Valdosta State University. Some of those hours are spent in reading training materials and training with the faculty supervisor or the site supervisor.

In this report, intern selection criteria, the training process, content submission, and the challenges/lessons learned from the GKR internship are discussed.

Selecting Virtual Interns

As a VSU faculty supervisor for the GKR interns, I announced the GKR internship positions through e-mail to all enrolled MLIS students in the middle of the spring semester in 2011 and 2012. Candidates were required to submit a cover letter and resume. Students who want to work with the GKR must meet the following criteria: first, prospective interns must be able to work independently, communicate well, have access to the Internet, and possess a willingness to learn. Because interns are not present at a worksite and mostly work independently, communication skills through various tools such as e-mail, telephone, and the video conferencing, self-management skills, and current technology skills are highly recommended. Second, interns must have background knowledge of metadata and digital repositories.

Before I selected seven interns for the summer of 2011 and six interns for the summer of 2012, the GKR Manager, Marlee Givens, contacted each GKR partner site individually to figure out potential projects for interns. She then informed the faculty supervisor of the institutions needing interns and the number of students they needed. After I carefully reviewed the applicants' cover letters and resumes, I made my selections for the following institutions based on the information about their workloads:

Summer 2011 - Albany State University, College of Coastal Georgia, Georgia Health Sciences University

Summer 2012 - Albany State University, College of Coastal Georgia, Georgia Southern University, Georgia Institute of Technology, University of Georgia, Valdosta State University

Intern Training

Once students were selected and before the semester began, the interns had to turn in work

agreements detailing their responsibilities. Before the students were assigned to the partner institutions, they had one or two virtual training sessions with the faculty supervisor and guest speakers. Synchronous virtual training was held via an online conferencing system at the beginning of the semester. The training sessions covered topics related to Institutional Repositories (IR), GKR metadata guidelines, and content submission workflow (with demonstrations). Then the interns practiced creating communities and collections and submitting content to the training site. They also played with other administrator settings. Upon completion of the training, students were assigned to a partner institution and were asked to contact the assigned institutions' supervisor. Some of the interns had another orientation session with the site supervisor and the GKR project manager. Having a supplemental training session with the assigned institution was helpful because of variations in item submission processes and different metadata guidelines or instructions among institutions.

Item Submission

The partner institutions archived various items such as newsletters, commencement programs, photos, research reports, annual reports, and library magazines which were digitized by the Digital Library of Georgia based on approval by the GKR content and metadata committee for the digitization request. The digitized items were delivered to the interns via e-mail or Dropbox, http://www.dropbox.com. Some content was also available on the website. The submission instructions and metadata guidelines were shared via Google Docs http://support.google.com/docs/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=49008. Items were submitted to the staging area for the partner institutions (Albany State University, College of Coastal Georgia, and Georgia Health Science University) at the GKR training site or submitted to the supervisor for review.

In addition to the content submission, when they had finished their wok for the assigned institutions, some of the interns conducted copyright research in SHERPA/RoMEO http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/ to find information about academic journal and publisher copyright transfer agreements. They also corrected errors and edited metadata to enhance the quality of the metadata.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

All student interns completed 120 work hours and fulfilled the other requirements, such as submitting fieldwork logs and a reflection essay; they all received satisfactory grades at the end of the semester (the internship grade is either an S(satisfactory) or a U(unsatisfactory)). The student interns submitted a total of 450 records and 1445 records to GKR in 2011 and 2012, respectively.

There are benefits of virtual internship not only in terms of flexibility of time and place, but also in terms of cost for both employers and interns. However, there were also several challenges that student interns faced. As several students stated in their reflection papers, the most significant challenge of the internship was communication. Because this is a virtual internship, a lack of communication between an intern and a site supervisor can cause confusion and misunderstanding, which can delay the project. Therefore, open and consistent communication via various communication channels, such as e-mail, instant messenger, discussion boards, and the telephone, on a regular basis for exchanging ideas, guidelines, and feedback should be maintained. The site supervisor must also be willing and available to answer the interns' questions.

Another key component for success of the virtual internship is to provide enough work for interns along with clear goals and guidelines. Some interns had a hard time completing required work hours because the assigned institutions did not have enough work or clear guidelines, which can cause time management

problems. Institutions need to establish a well-organized and structured workload for interns. Engaging them in the process of setting up project goals and outcomes provides a clearer understanding of the project and enhances their work performance.

While the faculty supervisor for the VSU MLIS program provides adequate training and supervision, additional training must be provided as needed. For example, if the interns are physically located near the assigned institutions, they will be able to have additional training sessions with their site supervisors at the site related to different item submission processes or different works. It will be helpful if the site supervisor and the faculty supervisor evaluate and provide feedback throughout the internship period, not just the end.

Overall, the GKR virtual internship program in 2011 and 2012 was very successful. Student interns enjoyed and were very satisfied with their GKR virtual internship experience.

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References

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