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# Reinvigorating a Library Workshop Series: Moving Workshops into the Online Environment

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# **REINVIGORATING A LIBRARY WORKSHOP SERIES: MOVING WORKSHOPS INTO THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT**

**MANDI GOODSETT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

More than ever, college students engaging with their institutions' libraries are distance students who may never physically set foot in the library building. Even on-campus students have hectic schedules which often prevent them from taking advantage of library assistance and instruction. For these and other reasons, librarians at Cleveland State University decided to reinvigorate their in-person information literacy workshops by supplementing them with an asynchronous online plagiarism workshop. In the process, the coordinating instruction librarian solicited help in designing the online workshop content from a number of stakeholders on campus, including other subject specialist librarians, a representative from the Office of Academic Programs, and the Writing Center Director. The result of the library's transition to online library workshops included time saved on the part of the librarians and increased student participation, all at very little cost for the library.

## **CONTEXT**

Cleveland State University is located in downtown Cleveland, OH, and serves approximately 17,000 students, many of whom are commuters. The student population also consists of many international students, especially from Middle Eastern countries, and non-traditional students who are returning to school after a break. The needs of this diverse population guided the development of the structure and content of the workshops that the Michael Schwartz Library decided to offer in the spring of 2015.

The Learn It @ the Library workshop series was offered by a selection of the library's ten subject librarians and a few library IT staff members. The topics of the workshops ranged from how to use Microsoft PowerPoint to how to read a scholarly article. The workshops were advertised on the library's website, social media sites, digital and print signage, and on pre-printed Post-it® Notes. In addition to being entered into a drawing for a library goody bag, attendees were given the option of receiving a signed form after completing the workshop, which they could bring to their professors for extra credit. Each workshop included some formal assessment of student learning, but the librarians also wanted to gather the impressions of attendees, and did so using a workshop survey.

Unfortunately, initial attendance at these workshops was very low. On average, the number of attendees was between two and five, and almost all of these participants were campus staff members. Because our target audience was undergraduate and graduate students, the participant make-up and level of participation was disappointing, but it motivated us to consider a new approach to library workshops.

## **ADAPTING AN IN-PERSON WORKSHOP TO A LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

### **Why Online?**

The literature exploring the advantages of online compared to in-person learning is thorough. Among the reasons for embracing online learning is the fact that more students are experiencing their education at a distance (Zhang, Goodman, & Xie, 2015). This growing population of distance students can often only benefit from library instruction if it is presented in an online format. Even students who are not distance learners may prefer the convenience of the online environment, where they can experience the content whenever and wherever they choose (Thornes, 2012). While online learning has been shown to take as much if not more time to prepare than in-person instruction (Bottorff & Todd, 2012), content in online settings can be prepared at a time that is more convenient for the librarian, saving her time when she needs it most (Zhang, et al., 2015). Faculty may also appreciate the flexibility of online library instruction, which doesn't take valuable time away from their course material, but still allows their students access to important information literacy topics (Webb & Hoover, 2015). In our case, the modular format of the workshop made it convenient for faculty to embed the entire workshop into their Blackboard course with little effort, and they appreciated this added flexibility.

There are pedagogical reasons to move library workshop materials online as well, including the opportunity for multiple modes of presentation (Webb & Hoover, 2015). While the theory of learning styles has been largely disproven by recent studies in the field of educational psychology (Pashler, Roher, & Bjork, 2008), research does show that students may have learning preferences and appreciate the array of images, text, audio, and interactivity that online tutorials can provide (Mestre et al., 2011). In addition, when learning material is offered online, students from a variety of comfort/skill levels (including English-reading skills) can experience the material at a comfortable pace, repeat material as necessary, and consult outside sources if needed (Su & Kuo, 2010). More advanced students aren't forced to experience material they already know and can move at a quicker pace if they prefer (Thornes, 2012). These reasons formed the basis for our decision to develop online versions of our workshops, and guided our creation and presentation of the online tutorials.

### **“Don't Be a Copycat: Plagiarism 101”**

The Michael Schwartz Library's first attempt at providing an online library workshop was in the fall of 2015. The workshop we decided to translate to an online environment was among our most highly-requested among faculty: our plagiarism workshop. We decided to use the university's learning management system, Blackboard, to host the online workshop as an asynchronous “course.” Because the workshop was developed as a single module within Blackboard, it was easy for staff members of our eLearning Department to insert the module into the courses of other faculty upon request. With the help of a library science practicum student from Kent State University, the coordinating instruction librarian created four sub-modules using online tutorials and other activities. The theme for the workshop, “Don't Be a Copycat: Plagiarism 101,” was chosen both for its light-hearted nature (and capacity for expressing cat puns) and because we knew we could find public domain or Creative Commons-licensed images of cats to use throughout the tutorials. All of these images were carefully cited throughout the presentation as a model for students.

A key step in promoting this online workshop was our decision to market it directly to our *ASC 101: Introduction to University Life* course instructors and 100-level English instructors. ASC 101 is a course that all first-year students are required to take, and the subject matter of the course is meant to orient the student to college life at Cleveland State University. The instructors immediately showed interest in the workshop and many students in these courses were encouraged or required to participate.

In the first semester of the online workshop, the library continued to offer the in-person version of the workshop, but split it into two distinct parts. Each part was offered twice throughout the semester for a total of four offerings. Thirteen students attended at least one of these four workshops, and, of those, three completed both parts. In contrast, 50 students enrolled in the online version of the workshop, and thirty-nine of them completed it (which included both parts of the in-person workshop) to earn a certificate of completion. This marked increase in enrollment encouraged the librarians, and led the library to develop another online workshop (the content of which can be found at the following research guide, under “Evaluating Sources Workshop:” <http://researchguides.csuohio.edu/onlinelibworkshops>).

### **Figure 1: Plagiarism Workshop Enrollment Fall 2015**

The online workshop was presented in four sub-modules, each consisting of one tutorial and an activity, and the entire set of sub-modules was framed by a pre- and post-test. The first sub-module discussed what plagiarism is, and asked students to read a short scenario, reflect on it, and decide if it is an example of plagiarism or not. The next sub-module addressed some reasons why it is important to cite information, and students were asked to explore one of several infamous cases of plagiarism, explain what the consequences were for all involved parties, and decide what could have been done differently. The third sub-module, on integrating sources, benefited greatly from assistance by the university's Writing Center Director, who designed the assignment that was used in the workshop. Finally, the fourth sub-module gave the students an opportunity to practice citing sources in MLA or APA style. The in-person version of this content was taught using Citation Relay, a fast-paced, interactive game developed by librarians at the University of Northern Colorado (Cuthbertson & Ellis, 2014). Translating this engaging and competitive activity

to an online environment proved challenging to the librarians developing the final online sub-module. We decided to use an interactive tutorial to scaffold the content, first by asking the student to identify mistakes in some citations, then asking him or her to put the pieces of a citation in order, and, finally, giving the student two sources to cite correctly in MLA or APA style. While the student was not engaging actively with the content by rushing to a white board or consulting with teammates, he or she still needed to engage cognitively with the content, so we found the translation of this activity to the online environment to be successful.

## **Collaborations**

In the course of developing the plagiarism workshops (both online and in-person), we collaborated a great deal with other academic departments and among our library team. While one librarian served as the coordinator of the workshops, she co-presented parts of the workshop with other librarians, including one who helped facilitate the fast-paced chaos of Citation Relay. The Writing Center director also co-presented part of an in-person workshop.

In developing the content for the plagiarism workshop, the coordinating librarian also consulted a research associate from the Office of Academic Programs who had worked with students being disciplined for committing plagiarism, and who had written his dissertation on plagiarism at Cleveland State University. His insights about faculty detection of academic dishonesty and student motivation to plagiarize were enlightening and useful. We also worked at length with the university's eLearning Department, which is responsible for managing Blackboard. eLearning created the course shells that we used for the online workshops, enrolled each student, and provided trouble-shooting for any technical issues that occurred within the Blackboard course.

These collaborations were essential to the success of both the in-person and online workshops. Upon reflection after the workshops were developed, the coordinating librarian realized that careful consideration of collaborations should be an integral part of creating and planning library workshops. For a worksheet on transitioning in-person library workshops online, including building such critical collaborations, see Appendix A.

## **CREATING TUTORIALS: USING FREE ONLINE TOOLS**

When the decision was made to offer one of our workshops online, we knew we needed to choose a tool or tools that would allow us to convey the information in an online environment and conduct instructional assessment. While we had access to tools that could create videos or screencasts, research has shown that students prefer and experience higher-quality learning when the content is presented in an interactive format (Hutchings, Hadfield, Howarth, & Lewarne, 2007; Rempel & McMillen, 2008; Silver & Nickel, 2007; Thorne, 2012). However, we also had very little in our budget for creating tutorials. For these reasons, we limited our search criteria for tutorial tools to those that allow for interactivity, and are free. While we choose a single tool to create all of our tutorials, three tools that came up in our search, and which are especially interesting and potentially useful, are described here.

Vialogues (Videos + Dialogues), offered through EdLab, is a free online tool that allows instructors to use an existing video from YouTube or Vimeo to make an interactive tutorial. The user uploads the video into Vialogues and adds time-stamped questions throughout. These questions can be multiple-choice or discussion questions that encourage students to respond to a prompt and to one-another's comments. This social learning feature has positive pedagogical implications and requires little additional work. Unfortunately, in order for students to respond to questions in Vialogues, they must sign-up for, and be logged-in to, a personal Vialogues account. This is understandably inconvenient for point-of-need instruction, or when working with students uncomfortable signing up for such accounts. However, the benefit of having students create a Vialogues account is that it allows for consistent and straightforward tracking of student learning for assessment purposes, as every student response is clearly linked to the student.

Instructors can use another free, online tool, Zaption, again by selecting an existing YouTube or Vimeo video. Zaption then allows instructors to add interactive and learning assessment elements throughout the video. Some of the interactive elements that can be added include multiple-choice, check box, short answer, and drawing questions. This tool also allows the instructor to add a discussion question that will show viewer responses in a time-stamped, threaded discussion, a feature also available in Vialogues. However, when the discussion tool is used in Zaption, no other questions can be added while the discussion is visible, making the tool less robust than Vialogues. In addition, feedback cannot be provided to students who respond to questions in Zaption tutorials. For pedagogical reasons, this is another disadvantage to using this tool, as research shows the importance of customized feedback to successful student learning.



## Figure 2: Tutorial Embedded in Blackboard Module

The tool that we chose for our online workshops is called Microsoft Office Mix, and is widely available, although perhaps less well-known in the academic library community. Mix is a free add-in available to anyone with the 2013 version or later of Microsoft Office. The tool adds additional features to Microsoft PowerPoint, such as the ability to record slides with audio, to screencast, and to include assessment question widgets that ask the viewer to respond to multiple choice, short answer, or poll questions. Because much of our work was conducted in PowerPoint to begin with, this tool was a natural choice for our online tutorials. In addition to its easy-to-use, familiar interface, Mix has a robust user community which can provide inspiration for the novice Mix user. While the creation of tutorials in Mix is easy, collecting assessment data has proved complicated and unsuccessful for our library. Unless the URL for the tutorial is sent directly to the student, assessment is (or at least has been for us) impossible to track. However, tracking student assessment through Mix is something we are continuing to experiment with, and the tool's benefits have outweighed this drawback thus far.

Many more free, interactive tutorial tools are available for instructor use than the three mentioned here. A full listing with example tutorials can be found on the research guide for this presentation: <http://researchguides.csuohio.edu/onlinelibworkshops>. Of special note are HapYak and Guide on the Side, both of which have been used for library instruction at Cleveland State with success.

## CONCLUSION

### What We Learned

While the transition to online library workshops was mostly successful, we learned from our mistakes and experiences. We had the highest enrollment from students in first-year courses, and it became clear that collaboration with first-year instructors played a large role in the workshop's overall enrollment increase. We also learned the importance of transparency with the students regarding the workshop process. Some students were impatient to begin the workshop once they had registered, unaware that the coordinating librarian needed to see the student's registration, ask the eLearning Department to enroll the student, and then send a welcome email inviting the student to begin. The same was true at the end of the semester, when a large number of students simultaneously completed the workshops and were eager to receive their certificates, as the workshop had been required as a graded component of their course. The coordinating librarian began to add wording to the instructions for the course urging the students to expect 24 hours between their last assignment submission and the receipt of their certificate of completion. This allowed the coordinating librarian a reasonable amount of time to grade the assignments and create certificates for successful students.

### Future Directions

The lessons we learned have informed our decisions about how to offer the online workshops in the future. We'd like to continue to market the workshops to first-year course instructors and garner their feedback as we develop these and other online workshops. We have already begun to offer another online workshop—this one on evaluating sources—and would like to offer a third on finding sources by Fall 2016. We are also in the process of developing digital badges to frame these three workshops as quests that students can complete in order to earn a meta-badge.

### Takeaway

While in-person library workshops have long been considered an important contribution to information literacy instruction, our experiences show that online library workshops can save librarians time when they need it, increase student participation, and cost the library very little. With the help of the workshop transition worksheet (Appendix A), the anecdotal evidence of our workshop experiences, and the free online tutorial creation tools discussed here, your library can become better-equipped to share information literacy instruction with your students in an educational environment increasingly dependent on online learning.

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## APPENDIX A

### In-Person to Online Workshop Transition Worksheet

## Transitioning an In-Person Library Workshop to an Online Environment

1) *Workshop Topic:* \_\_\_\_\_

2) *Backward Design*

What do you want your students to be able to do?

Learning Outcome #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Learning Outcome #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Learning Outcome #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Learning Outcome #4: \_\_\_\_\_

3) *Assessment*

How will you share the relevant content for each learning outcome? How will your assessment change to accommodate an online environment? What technology will you use? Will you create online tutorials? Videos? Worksheets or forms?

Learning Outcome	Method for Sharing Content Online (i.e. tutorial, research guide, video, etc.)	In-Person Assessment	Online Assessment	Tools/technology Needed for Online Workshop
1				
2				
3				
4				

4) *Platform*

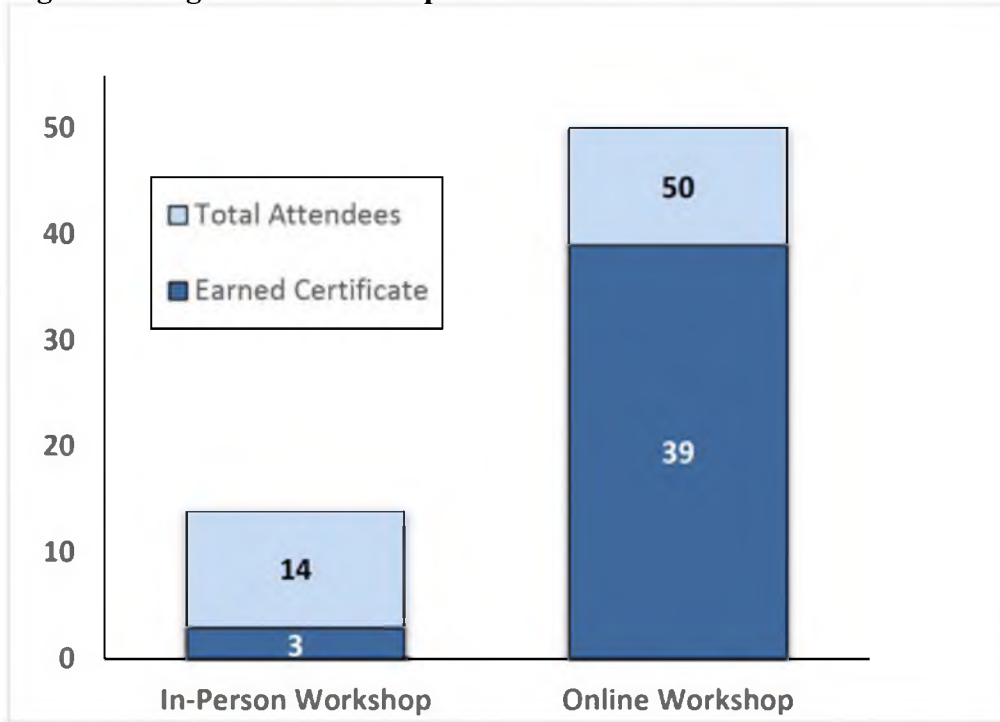
How will your students access and experience this online workshop? Will you use your learning management system? LibGuides? A website? A wiki?

5) *Collaborations*

Who will you need to collaborate with to accomplish your goals for this workshop? Your eLearning Department? Other librarians? Faculty?

**Images for Tables and Figures (Editor will put in body of the text later)**

**Figure 1: Plagiarism Workshop Enrollment Fall 2015**



**Figure 2: Tutorial Embedded in Blackboard Module**

