

Featured Web Site: Library Instruction Wiki

**Reviewed by Robert Stevens
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When I first heard about the Library Instruction Wiki I must admit that I had no idea what a wiki was and consequently, following my natural impulses as a reference librarian, I began my investigation. For those of you who are also encountering the term for the first time allow me to provide a brief introduction. Wiki is essentially a collection of web pages which, through collaborative software, are entirely accessible to anyone for editing. Although this may initially seem like an invitation to chaos it is a concept which, upon closer inspection, can actually work quite well but how well any given wiki develops depends of course on the credentials and vigilance of its contributors. In the wide open wiki universe it is always the community of users who ultimately define the quality of what is, by nature, perpetually changing content.

Originally designed by computer programmer Ward Cunningham ten years ago, it is estimated that there are now over 30,000 wiki pages on the web. Clearly there is much out there to discover (and edit, if you so choose). You can browse through a wiki encyclopedia

(Wikipedia) or visit a timely and active wiki devoted to sharing knowledge about a possible flu pandemic (the Flu Wiki) and now, thanks to the Oregon Library Associations Library Instruction Roundtable, you can even drop in on a wiki devoted entirely to library instruction.

The Library Instruction Wiki (<http://instructionwiki.org/>) is still in its infancy but there are already some interesting things to be found there and encouraging signs that a more substantial growth spurt may be on the way. There are no rules, only suggestions, and a nice insight into the spirit behind this endeavor can be found in the rules section where it states that those who developed and launched it “trust the community of users to create a product that reflects its needs”. It is out of their hands and into ours and it is worth checking out. The Library Instruction Resources section, of special interest to those of us who are trying to find new tools and ideas to use in our own library instruction sessions, is a good place to start. Subdivided into five areas including a glossary and a brief list of suggested readings, the structure is intact but, as can be expected with a

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Please consider submitting your instruction
research, reviews, and reports.

new wiki still looking to broaden its pool of contributors, the actual content is still a bit lean.

There is good news and bad news to report. The good news is that the fifteen resources in the handouts and tutorial section that I browsed on my first few visits were uniformly of high quality but several days later they had all disappeared. Perhaps this sudden loss of content is the nature of a wiki beast that operates without rules or maybe it is just one of those ubiquitous glitches of the web but my most recent check of the Library Instruction Wiki fortunately revealed all these resources restored and, even better, expanded. I suppose growing pains, however frustrating they may be, are to be expected and even welcomed because they are, after all, evidence of quick growth.

How the Library Instruction Wiki continues to evolve and mature will inevitably depend on the librarians who decide to participate and the caliber of information they choose to volun-

teer. While truly embracing the wiki spirit may be difficult for some librarians (who, like myself, have a perfectly understandable preference for more controlled environments), the relative ease of adding and editing pages combined with an ongoing need for solid tips and quality resources for instruction, should be enough to get people involved.

It is, without a doubt, exciting to contemplate the great potential of this little wiki and ideally the community of contributors will grow, the content will expand and it will join the ranks of other trusted information literacy websites. For those of you who would like to contribute a handout or tutorial but are wary of your wiki posting getting changed and edited beyond recognition you can simply do what these first contributors have done and provide a link to your resource after completing a simple resource template. If the wiki concept is still a bit murky for you, the Help section provides refreshingly clear and concise tips and instructions.

Library Instruction Wiki ...stop reinventing the wheel... Create an account or log in

new to wikis? how to add and edit.

Navigation

- Main Page
- Instruction Resources
- Style Guide and Templates
- Recent changes
- Help/Using the Wiki

Find

Toolbox

- What links here
- Related changes
- Special pages
- Random page
- Community

article | discussion | edit | history

Main Page

Thursday November 03rd, 2005

Welcome to the Oregon Library Instruction Wiki, a collaboratively developed resource for librarians involved with or interested in instruction. All librarians and others interested in library instruction are welcome and encouraged to contribute.

Find Library Instruction Resources

The Library Instruction Wiki was designed to help librarians learn from one another. Use the wiki to find handouts, tutorials, suggested reading, and more!

Add content to the wiki

This page will give you the basics you need to add content to the wiki and to edit existing content. If you're the type to jump right in, it's easy to do that from here. If you'd like a little more guidance, you'll find that here too!

Keep up with changes to the wiki

There are a number of ways to keep up with the latest changes to the wiki, use the page to find out how.

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