

CONNECT, COMMUNICATE, AND LEARN: HOW LIBRARY INSTRUCTION PROGRAMS BENEFIT FROM LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

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Imagine these scenarios: A librarian teaching an instruction session wants to know how the previous librarian taught that session for the same instructor last year. Another librarian is short on time and ideas and wants an easy way to prep for an upcoming class. A library instruction coordinator wants to get a sense of what other librarians are doing in instruction sessions. These familiar situations require more than a file cabinet full of instructional materials. An easy-to-navigate and intuitive method of sharing ideas and resources internally with the instruction team is increasingly in demand.

This paper illustrates that by using a campus learning management system (LMS), a library instruction program can create a rich resource center full of ideas, strategies, activities, and other relevant program documents. This paper also recommends best practices, including Gilchrist and Zald's (2008) assessment cycle guidelines, for using an LMS in a library instruction program, and provides a case study of how their instructional team makes use of Indiana University's LMS, Oncourse. Finally, this paper shares the results of a nationwide survey of instruction librarians' experiences using LMS and other web-based sharing tools in their own programs.

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION IN THE LIBRARY: LMS AND OTHER SHARING SITES

The LMS, also known as a course management system (CMS), "is a software system that is specifically designed and marketed for faculty and students to use in teaching and

learning." (Bell & Shank, 2004, para 8). Faculty use LMS to deliver and present instructional content and foster interaction between faculty and students. (Bell & Shank, 2004). LMS tools permit students to upload assignments and faculty to evaluate and assign grades. The LMS also allows instructors to upload resources in the form of relevant documents and link to external sites of importance and relevance to the course.

The literature on the use of LMSs in academic libraries tends to focus exclusively on embedding library content and materials into LMS course sites. For example, an early instance in the literature (Dempsey, 2003) describes embedding access to library materials through LMS sites. Bell and Shank (2004) describe how libraries can help achieve learning outcomes through the integration of library content in LMS sites. Karplus (2006) describes the delivery of information literacy instructional materials in a library Blackboard site. Jackson (2007) provides recommendations for library use of LMSs. Other examples in the literature include the linking of course-relevant LibGuides in Blackboard course sites (Daly, 2010). Nevertheless, to date, the literature does not address the internal use of LMSs for library instruction teams seeking to store and share instructional materials, which is the primary focus of this paper and presentation.

The literature does, however, address general use of internal sharing sites within libraries, which indicates that this is an important trend worth addressing. Thomas (2010) describes how libraries might use an intranet for internal communication and sharing of information. Battles (2010) also describes the use of an intranet within a library for communication and collaboration. Diffin, Chirombo, and Nangle (2010) describe the use of Microsoft SharePoint for information access and knowledge sharing within the access services department of a library. Other collaborative tools libraries might use internally

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for communication and collaboration include wikis (Chu, 2009) or cloud computing sites like Google Docs (Buck, 2009; Riley-Huff, 2010). Still, though, there seems to be a gap in the literature with specific reference to library instruction program use of internal sharing sites. This paper and presentation attempt to address this gap by illustrating the benefits of using LMSs as a sharing tool in library instruction programs and identifying best practices for doing so.

THE LMS IN THE LIBRARY INSTRUCTION PROGRAM: BENEFITS

Sharing

The most obvious benefit of using an LMS is the way in which it facilitates sharing of instructional materials. Depending on the platform used, an LMS provides a space for uploading and downloading documents, a discussion forum, a wiki, and other tools that enable communication and collaboration. The LMS our instruction team uses is OnCourse, Indiana University's Sakai-based system.

One of the major items that our instruction team shares is instructional design plans. In particular, we follow Gilchrist and Zald's (2008) instructional design approach, which provides a structural backbone for instructional planning. In Fall 2010, after the Coordinator of Instruction learned about this model at the ACRL Institute for Information Literacy Immersion Program, our library instruction team adopted this format for planning and delivering instruction sessions, in particular for First Year Seminar (FYS) courses. Gilchrist and Zald outline the steps for instructional design as follows:

Table 1: Gilchrist & Zald, 2008, p. 168

1. Outcome:	What do you want the student to be able to do?
2. Information Literacy Curriculum	What does the student need to know in order to do this well?
3. Pedagogy	What type of instruction will best enable the learning?
4. Assessment	How will the student demonstrate the learning?
5. Criteria for Evaluation	How will I know the student has done this well?

For each FYS library instruction session, the librarian prepares an Outcomes, Curriculum, Pedagogy, Assessment, and Criteria (OCPAC) plan and shares it on our library OnCourse site. This allows others to see what the librarian has planned and adopt similar teaching ideas or practices in their own sessions.

Communication and Collaboration

The LMS has built-in mechanisms that allow for communication and collaboration. In particular, OnCourse has discussion forums, a resources folder for uploading documents, a chat room, and a wiki. Currently, we use the discussion forums to share the OCPAC plans for FYS library instruction sessions. The instruction coordinator sets up a forum for each semester of teaching, and within that forum, each librarian starts a discussion thread to post her OCPAC plan. Other librarians can then comment on that plan, or they can copy and paste it to a new thread in order to use it as the basis for their own OCPAC plan. Another useful feature to facilitate communication is that whenever a new message is posted, librarians will receive an email or see the number of unread messages when they log in. Figures 1 and 2 below illustrate what the forum looks like.

Figure 1: Library Resources Forum

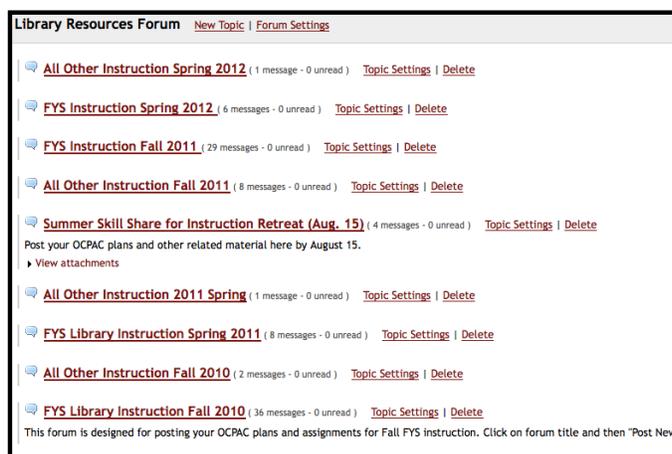
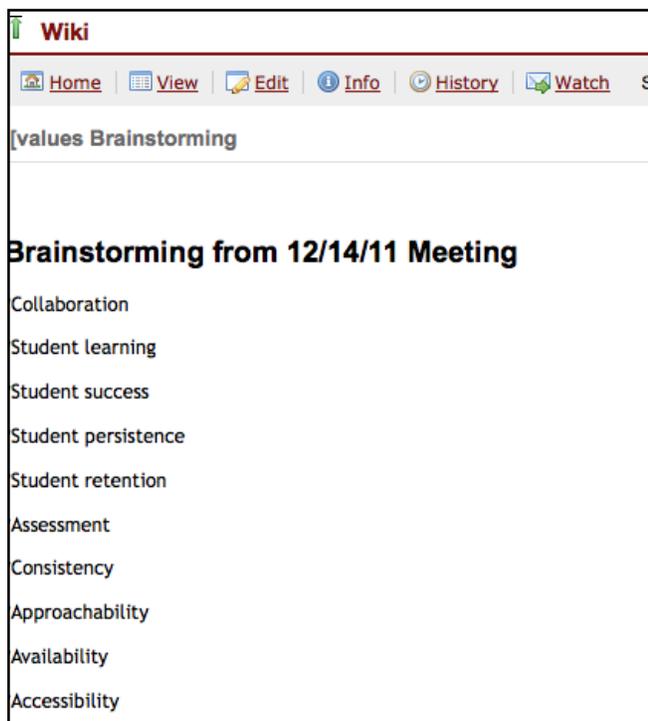


Figure 2: Discussion Forum Threads for Each OCPAC Plan

Thread	Authored By	Date
FYS Lucinda Woodward and Peter Galvin (two classes concurrently) (Maria) (1 message - 0 unread)	Maria Teresa Accardi (maccardi)	Aug 30, 2011 12:24 PM
FYS P102 Robin Morgan (Kate) (1 message - 0 unread)	Kate Banet Moore (kabmoore)	Aug 30, 2011 7:35 PM
FYS S104 Greg Roberts and Dana Gohmann (Maria) (1 message - 0 unread)	Maria Teresa Accardi (maccardi)	Sep 12, 2011 11:09 AM
FYS A102 Anne Allen (Kate) (1 message - 0 unread)	Kate Banet Moore (kabmoore)	Sep 13, 2011 7:38 PM
FYS P102 Todd Manson (Maria) (1 message - 0 unread)	Maria Teresa Accardi (maccardi)	Sep 16, 2011 10:23 AM
FYS L101 Pam Connerly (Kate) (1 message - 0 unread)	Kate Banet Moore (kabmoore)	Sep 19, 2011 8:57 AM
FYS S104 Joe Wert (Maria) (1 message - 0 unread)	Maria Teresa Accardi (maccardi)	Sep 19, 2011 1:36 PM
FYS W131 Bill Sweigart (Maria) (1 message - 0 unread)	Maria Teresa Accardi (maccardi)	Sep 19, 2011 1:39 PM
FYS S163 Greg Phipps (Maria & Hong) (1 message - 0 unread)	Maria Teresa Accardi (maccardi)	Sep 20, 2011 8:55 AM
FYS S121 Diane Reid (Hong) (1 message - 0 unread)	Hong Cheng (chengh)	Sep 20, 2011 5:29 PM

The wiki feature in OnCourse also provides a space for communication and collaboration among librarians. Our instruction team is currently using the wiki to brainstorm our program vision, mission, goals, and core values. Figure 3 below provides a snapshot of our use of the wiki.

Figure 3: The Instruction Program Wiki



USING THE LMS AND OTHER SHARING TOOLS IN INSTRUCTION PROGRAMS: SURVEY RESULTS

Given that our use of an internal LMS was proving to be popular, useful, and successful, we were curious to see what other library instruction programs were doing to communicate and collaborate within the instruction team. In December 2011, the co-authors launched an IU Southeast Institutional Review Board-approved survey asking instruction librarians to comment on their use of LMSs or other sharing sites in library instruction programs. The survey was sent out via the ACRL Instruction Section listserv ili-l. The main reason to adopt this channel is that it's an active forum for instruction librarians nationwide and it has a positive history of responding to surveys. The survey altogether attracted 125 participants and they were not required to answer each question. From the results of two demographic questions in terms of institution and library position, the survey attracted many instruction librarians and coordinators of instruction programs from four-year public/private universities and community/technical/junior colleges. The full survey results are available at <http://www.mariataccardi.com>, and below is a summary of our survey findings:

- More librarians use sharing sites other than LMSs. Of the 125 respondents, 29% reported using an LMS, while 71% reported using other kinds of sharing sites in their instruction program.
- The most popular LMS used is Blackboard (42%), followed by Moodle, Sakai, and Angel. Considering Angel was merged with Blackboard in 2007, the actual number of libraries that use Blackboard is higher.
- Other sharing tools used include intranets (30%), Google Docs (23%), a shared network drive, Microsoft SharePoint, LibGuides, wikis, and email.
- Of those who use LMSs, 76% recommend their usage. Of those who use other sharing sites, 94% recommend their usage.
- In terms of sharing materials, librarians use LMSs most frequently for sharing classroom activities (76%) and lesson plans (71%), followed by learning outcomes, assessment results, and other uses.
- For other sharing sites, the most popular content shared with other librarians is also classroom activities (72%) and lesson plans (64%).
- On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being "Very Unhelpful" and 5 "Very Helpful," the overall mean rating for all listed aspects (facilitating communication, sharing lesson plans and other materials, fostering a sense of teamwork) of using the LMS is 3.44.
- On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being "Very Unhelpful" and 5 "Very Helpful," the overall mean rating for all listed aspects of using other sharing sites is slightly higher than that of LMS at 3.64.
- Respondents using other sharing sites were more likely to rate the use of that site as "Unhelpful" or "Very Unhelpful" than those using LMSs.
- On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being "Very Difficult" and 5 being "Very Easy," both LMSs and other sharing sites users indicate similar difficulty in terms of obtaining access, creating and customizing sites, sharing, and gaining instruction team buy-in.
- For both categories, gaining buy-in had the most "Difficult" or "Very Difficult" ratings.

USING THE LMS AND OTHER SHARING TOOLS IN INSTRUCTION PROGRAMS: RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES BASED ON SURVEY FINDINGS

- It is advisable to get administrative approval for whichever site you use. One institution reported using Google Docs, but due to security issues, they were forced to migrate all of their content to

the institutionally-approved product, Microsoft SharePoint.

- One useful piece of advice regarding the use of LMS: “Use the same networking skills you use with faculty to foster relationships with your LMS administrators. IT does not have to be a barrier for using the LMS.”
- Good training in using the tool is important, regardless of which kind of tool is being used.
- Survey responses indicate that SharePoint is an ineffective tool and is not recommended.
- Survey responses suggest that Google Docs is a popular tool and comes highly recommended, but users should beware of the security issues mentioned above.
- It is recommended that regular reminders be sent to librarians to check the site and upload materials.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Given our successful use of an LMS, we were surprised to see that more programs tend to use other sharing tools with apparently greater success. Why, then, use the LMS? One primary reason is security. This was mentioned as an issue in using Google Docs. Since authentication is required to log into the LMS, the content is secure, protected, and backed up by institutional IT departments. In addition, since a university account is required to authenticate to the LMS, personal information linked to a Google account, for example, would not be connected to the LMS. A second reason to use the LMS is stability. As an institutionally-supported tool, there is an investment in making sure the LMS is up and running smoothly. Cloud computing tools like Google Docs may not be as reliable. Of course, any institutionally-approved tools, like an intranet, will share these same characteristics, but a final important reason that distinguishes the LMS is ease of use. Our survey indicated that while instruction team buy-in was more difficult for use of LMS than other sharing tools, the ease of use of the LMS for communication and collaboration purposes was rated higher than the use of other sharing tools. Our survey sample is small, and further research might prove more telling, but it is not unreasonable to conclude that the LMS appears to be easier to use, access, and customize for internal use among the instruction team.

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