

UNDER THE HOOD: GET PAST ROADBLOCKS AND SUCCESSFULLY INTEGRATE THE LIBRARY INTO A MOOC

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INTRODUCTION

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have swept into higher education and many college and university libraries are seeking to stay on the leading edge of the trend. It can be easy to focus on roadblocks: navigating fair use, having meaningful interactions with thousands of students, and providing support to faculty in a non-traditional context. However, while the challenges seem daunting, they can be managed through self-assessment, clear communication about services, and the formation of partnerships both within the Library and throughout the University.

In Fall 2013, the University of Virginia Library explored the ways in which we could engage with faculty and students in the MOOC context. As an experiment, the Library offered to connect a librarian with a faculty member producing a first-time MOOC in order to investigate opportunities for collaboration. Our objectives at the beginning of the project were open-ended. In addition to providing subject expertise, we hoped to discover potential pitfalls, areas of caution, and the possibilities generated by a deep partnership between the Library and the faculty teaching a MOOC.

GETTING, USING, AND MAINTAINING ACCESS

From the outset, we proactively sought opportunities to immerse the Library into every aspect of producing a MOOC. We contacted the Program Coordinator for the University's Online Learning Environment, responsible for MOOC administration and Coursera liaison, to discuss the experiment and the benefits of including the Library from the ground up, specifically noting that this was an opportunity to transcend assumptions and explore potential. She connected us to a faculty member whose MOOC, "Plagues, Witches and War: The Worlds of Historical Fiction," was in the early planning stages. The Library also met with the Associate University

Counsel to discuss areas of caution and awareness. Since the class was offered both as a MOOC and as a residential seminar, it generated complex issues surrounding FERPA and residential student participation in the MOOC.

Six months prior to the course start date, the Library began meeting with the faculty member and TAs to discuss their course development needs. Since the goal was to identify any area where the Library could add value, we did not limit the services we offered to a particular suite of tasks. We engaged with the team during each step of the process, from filming segments and planning the syllabus to monitoring discussion boards and social networks, and encouraged the team to identify areas of need, whether or not they were currently sustainable or immediately achievable.

Communication quickly rose to the top as an area where the Library needed to maintain attention. Faculty assumptions about information and Library services often seem to be tied to their residential experience. It is incumbent upon the Library to articulate the ways we can support their teaching and enhance the student experience in an online environment. We found that it was critical for the Library to stay alert to the timeline of the project, proactively maintain contact, and identify areas where the Library could contribute.

EXPLORING IMPACT AND MOVING FORWARD

Much of the Library's value was to facilitate collaboration between specialists, including University Counsel, Library subject experts, and instructional technologists. The team explored the use of Library audio-visual equipment and spaces and the faculty member met with a Library media specialist about filming techniques. Subject librarians sought out maps in the public domain and the resources to animate them. The Library monitored discussion boards for areas to engage with students and enrich the learning

experience. We also noted other potential areas of impact, including creating subject guides and instructional videos and assisting the faculty member in the creation of learning goals that supported student success in an asynchronous, technology-driven environment.

A well-resourced partnership between the library and a MOOC could combine any of these services to create a rich learning experience for students and facilitate the development of a sophisticated suite of support services for faculty members. However, each of these opportunities can be seen by as a daunting hurdle to overcome. Library administration must carefully weigh the resource hours spent assisting unaffiliated students, and librarians must flex in new ways, among them helping students find meaningful material without access to library databases and learning to navigate complicated copyright terrain. We recommend considering the following issues before engaging in a MOOC collaboration in order to effectively manage resources and expectations:

1. Identify the resources that the library is willing to commit to the project, including staff time to develop expertise with the online learning environment and copyright.
2. Meet the faculty and TAs early and communicate with them often. Consistent participation in meetings generates ideas for new services and provides an organic opportunity to look for red flags in fair use.
3. Communicate the services the library will offer and value each service adds to the class. Concrete, accessible terms with practical application demonstrate impact most clearly.
4. Develop staff knowledge of fair use and copyright and understand how the university will handle those issues in MOOCs. Partner with legal counsel to facilitate resolution of the many unique and inevitable questions about what resources can be used.
5. Set expectations for student interaction. Monitoring class discussion forums can require significant time depending on the activity level of the students. Consider creating one forum devoted to reference questions.
6. Establish a plan for facilitating contact with university specialists, including legal counsel, information technologists, subject specialists, and administrators. Create a group email that includes the library, faculty, TAs, and other partners to prevent communication gaps.
7. Record what worked and time spent in order to gauge future participation.