CREATE YOUR OWN CEPHALONIAN METHOD ADVENTURE: AN INTERACTIVE SESSION

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INTRODUCTION

We wanted [the session] to have the illusion of being 'student driven' while at the same time we controlled the overall structure and content. It needed to be lively and pacey, delivered in a way that was striking and memorable and which engaged the students for the whole session. We wanted a format that was different from the norm, that would keep us on our toes and present us in a more dynamic light; the latter to encourage attendance at future information literacy workshops. -- Morgan & Davies, 2004, p. 2

Many libraries face the challenge of doing more with less, or reaching more students with fewer staff. Similarly, some libraries face a time crunch—perhaps with a plethora of offerings for groups visiting campus or attending orientations for different services, the library representatives must make a bigger splash in a shorter amount of time.

To meet these challenges, libraries have turned to the Cephalonian Method as it offers a fast-paced, flexible, and creative solution.

WHAT IS THE CEPHALONIAN METHOD?

The Cephalonian Method is an instruction method that is based on a format used by tour guides on the Greek island of Cephalonia and adapted by librarians at Cardiff University

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in Wales. At its core, it is a question and answer session where the audience asks the session leader important questions about the content. The key, though, is that the questions have been devised in advance, printed on colored cards, and distributed to the audience at the beginning of the session. (Morgan & Davies, 2004, p. 2)

The questions and answers can be used on their own, or in conjunction with visuals, words, and/or music in a supporting slide presentation.

WHEN AND WHY TO USE THE CEPHALONIAN METHOD

There are two main benefits to using the Cephalonian Method. First, it naturally incorporates a variety of voices into the session. This method transforms what is, in many cases, a potentially "'boring' and 'uninspiring'" (Morgan & Davies, 2004, p. 2) monologue delivered by a librarian into a lively question and answer session with the audience. Second, the method provides scripted questions, making it easier for the leader of the session to make certain that all necessary topics are covered. This opens the door for others to deliver the session, such as trained undergraduate or graduate students.

This method can be used in various classes, at various levels. Questions can be devised to highlight library basics, such as hours, locations of facilities, and the functions of various service points, meeting the needs of the most novice library users. Questions can also prompt demonstrations and introduce concepts, leading to a deeper understanding of library and research resources.

Additionally, the method is adaptable to groups of various sizes. In an ideal class, each participant will have a question, but the format also works well if only some of the

participants have a question card. In these larger groups where perhaps half of the audience has questions, it may add a sense of anticipation ("Who has the next yellow question?") where the audience might otherwise be completely passive during the session leader's monologue.

It's also flexible: using a core set of questions devised specifically for sessions for a first-year experience course, the authors removed and added questions or adjusted answers to meet the needs of other groups attending library and information research orientations. For example, the authors used the format with groups ranging from students on campus as part of a pre-matriculation program, as well as members of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, who are 50 and older, many with long histories of using local public libraries. Because both groups have different library borrowing privileges, and different goals for their future library use (academic in the former case, recreational in the latter), creating an effective orientation merely meant creating new answers to the same questions.

The Cephalonian method naturally presents information in thematic chunks. For example, questions related to a specific service point become one cluster, while questions relating to online searching or catalog use become another cluster. The format also accommodates different learning styles. Those who learn best by listening hear the answers to questions, but those who benefit from more active participation have prepared questions they can ask for themselves. If the session incorporates a tour of the physical facility, kinesthetic learners may feel more comfortable as they learn about the library. Adding music and visuals to supporting slide presentations can also enhance the session.

An unexpected bonus to this method is the sense of a supportive environment in which students can ask their own questions. At URI, many instructors noticed that as audience members heard their own voices asking questions—albeit the predetermined ones—it opened the flow to additional unscripted questions.

PLANNING

Preparing to develop a Cephalonian style learning experience requires some groundwork. Whether you are developing new material or refreshing sessions you've offered before, start by reviewing the desired learning outcomes, group size, and learning styles of your audience. How much information does the group need to know, and how much can they absorb in the allotted time frame? The size of the group may dictate the physical location you will use to implement the Cephalonian method; if the group is large you may need an auditorium or theatre style seating arrangement. A smaller group, perhaps a class of 30 or less, provides more opportunities for movement through a building or actual use of a computer classroom with more involved learning activities.

Consider how long your session is, and how much of the session will be delivered using the Cephalonian format. Will the format be used just for a 45 minute tour of the library and service points? Will the format be used for a portion of a longer session? At URI, the format has been primarily used to deliver tours at the beginning of sessions, to prompt demonstrations, explanations, and hands-on use of the library's catalog in a classroom setting, and to conclude the session with questions intended to remind students of important points.

DEVISING QUESTIONS

Once the framework has been established, move on to content. Think about what level of student will attend the session: Are they incoming freshmen or advanced level students? What do they need to know to get started in the library? How much experience might they already have? Too much information will overwhelm, and not enough will leave them confused. Start by listing the questions that are asked at the library service desks on a regular basis.

Merinda Hensley, in her handout for her LOEX 2008 presentation, provides the following tips: "Formulate questions based upon the knowledge you would like the students to take away from the session. Feel free to interject appropriate humor into your questions. Questions must be able to stand alone since they will [be] asked in random order." (p. 2)

Most importantly, questions and answers should be written so that they can be read aloud in a friendly and conversational tone. For each question develop an answer that fits concisely into two or three bullet points. If the question needs more than three bullet points to answer, consider breaking the question into parts. Following this, be sure that both the questions and the answers are brief and to the point, while still answering the actual question. Presenters must practice the question and answer sets so that they don't find themselves rambling into other questions, or worse! Carefully read and review the questions and answers in order to eradicate as much library jargon and as many difficult words as possible. Review questions and answers for evidence of possible bias making sure that all material is as inclusive and respectful, both to the presenters and to the audience, as possible. Finally, avoid writing questions that address overly sensitive or political issues. As an example, the authors' first experience with the Cephalonian method included a question that was soon discarded: "Can I have a pizza delivered to the Library?" It turned out that question only stirred up new ideas about how to get food delivered to the library (which is not allowed).

AESTHETICS, DESIGN, AND LEARNING STYLES

"The Cephalonian Method is a fusion of colour, music and audience participation which is designed to appeal to the senses." (Morgan & Davies, 2004, p. 2)

Meeting new groups for tours and orientations inevitably means providing instruction for audiences with a variety of preferred learning styles. Even in its simplest form the Cephalonian method addresses several learning styles including auditory, visual and kinesthetic, but designing your question cards, selecting supporting materials, and planning your pacing

is still important. The authors took the path of simplicity and used the library as the theme, set, and props, and saved the technology for a hands-on portion of the session that included active learning in a library lab. In this case, students were prompted to ask about how to find books using a Cephalonian style question.

But using whatever tools you have at your disposal—the colors of your cards, physical props, slide presentations, music— you can design a session incorporating an array of attention-getting elements as you see fit. If your session takes place in an auditorium setting with a projector, it's simple to add institutional branding, images, text, music, and color using presentation software in order to create a session that will both inform and provide mild entertainment value for your audience.

If you've been at an institution for some time, you may already know your target audience's learning styles, but also plan to accommodate any disabilities or challenges your audience may have. For example, make sure whatever typeface you use is large and readable, and accommodate those with colorblindness at the outset by including the names of the colors on your colored cards. If your session includes a considerable amount of movement or climbing stairs, consider alternate routes that will allow those with physical disabilities to fully participate. Finally, audiences generally respond positively to the visual and audio elements of a Cephalonian-style orientation, but some students may also find this to be a case of information overload. Test your completed session with several potential audiences if possible.

TESTING QUESTIONS

Review the questions that you've created to see if they can 1) stand alone and 2) be asked in any order during the presentation. This is an important step that cannot be overemphasized. Share your question bank with colleagues and test the question and answer sets in real-time. Reading the questions and answers aloud is a true test of their general readability. If you are able to do a test-run with a sample group of your target audience, all the better. This will also help you to revise questions as needed and to weed questions that are redundant, unnecessary or inappropriate for a particular audience. A review of the question sets after the program runs is also recommended.

Finally, be prepared to create answers to questions asked "on the fly" during the actual session. One question will often prompt another student to ask a tag-along but unexpected question.

RESPONSES FROM LOEX 2012 SESSION PARTICIPANTS

Participants in the session spent time developing questions and answers that could be used in a Cephalonian-style tour at their home institutions, and worked with partners to test the language of the questions, the ability of the questions to be asked in a random order, and the clarity and brevity of answers. All were invited to share their questions via a Google Form

after the conference, and some participants anonymously left their questions with the authors after the session. The questions spanned a variety of topics, including basics relating to library hours and services as well as more conceptual information about finding and evaluating sources. A list questions and answers is included in the Appendix.

CONCLUSION

As a way to revitalize part or all of a library orientation or library and information research session, the Cephalonian Method is a flexible option that can increase student engagement and help students find their own voice in what might be unfamiliar, intimidating, or potentially "boring" territory. With its overall ease of presentation and adaptability to a variety of circumstances, the method is a powerful addition to librarians' instructional toolkit.

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APPENDIX 1

Cephalonian Method Worksheet and Tip Sheet

Laying the Groundwork

- How much of your session do you plan to devote to using this method? Part of the session or the whole session?
- Where will you be leading the session? In your own classroom or on the road?
- What overall content do you intend to deliver using this method?
- What audience are you intending to reach?

Devising Questions

- What are you trying to let your audience know about?
- What would an audience member be likely to ask you if he/she wanted to know about it?
- Develop an answer that fits concisely into two (maximum three) bullet points.

Testing

- Does your question stand alone? (You may not be able to tell until you do a test run.)
- Should the question really be *two* questions? Is it too complicated to answer as it is?
- Does it convey what you want students to know?
- Is it memorable and useful? Is it easy for your presenters and your audience to remember, and does it convey important information?
- Is it brief and to the point?
- Is it clear and jargon free?

Gussy it up

If you are in a classroom or auditorium, consider using:

- Props
- Music
- Branding
- PowerPoint slides with the answers (so all can see)

Repair Kit

- On the fly: Be prepared to create answers to unanticipated questions
- Pre- and Post-Program: Review with colleagues; consider each question's effectiveness.
- Look for any redundancy or serious overlap of information. Streamline wherever possible.
- Revise questions for which the answers didn't seem to "flow" or took too long to answer.
- Consider any snags that appeared in the delivery, or awkward moments that you want to avoid next time!

Taking it Home: Why Cephalonian? or, Getting Buy-In

- Cephalonian accommodates multiple learning styles.
- Students hear their own voices asking questions, and frequently start asking their own.
- It makes sessions more flexible for both students and instructors: rather than a "script," you generate a template with bullet points.
- Questions can be added or removed from sections to accommodate time constraints, different groups, etc.

Review the presentation, contribute to the Question Bank, and see others' questions at:

http://bit.ly/loexcephpres

Questions? Ideas? Contact us!

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APPENDIX 2

Sample Questions Created by Participants

Submitter: Sunem Beaton-Garcia   **Institution: Broward College**
Q: Can you proofread my paper?
A: We have a wonderful writing center on the 2nd floor. They also have a service called smarthinking which allows you to upload your paper from home.

Submitter: Carolyn Caffrey   **Institution: University of Wisconsin Superior**
Q: Can I access databases from off-campus?
A: Yes, all you need is your 16 digit student ID.

Submitter: Eboni A. Johnson   **Institution: Oberlin College**
Q: How do I find books in the library?
A: Use OBIS (the library catalog) to search by keyword or title.
Once you find the right item, write down the call # and use the library map to help you navigate to the right shelf!

Submitter: Debra Oswald   **Institution: Sinclair Community College**
Q: Do you hate Wikipedia as much as our professors do?
A: Probably not. :-) I would NEVER cite Wikipedia in a college-level paper, but . . . I have used it to get quick background on a topic and it's useful for finding terms that you can then search in a library database. Sometimes the links in the bibliography lead to scholarly sources that you could use in a college paper.

Submitter: Polly Wilkenfeld   **Institution: Ursuline College in Ohio**
Q: Why can't I use Wikipedia for my paper?
A: You can but you must verify everything in a reliable source. The library is all about giving you suggestions.

Submitter: Anonymous
Q: What if I want an article you guys don't have?
A: Make sure you check journals by title. Use free interlibrary loan to get it from a different library. You need an account first.

Submitter: Anonymous
Q: Do you have my textbook?
A: Sometimes. You'd find out whether or not we have it by searching the library catalog.

Submitter: Anonymous
Q: What do I do if a book I want is checked out
A: You can recall the item through a link in the catalog record. And you can ask that it be brought to any library location on campus to be picked up.

Submitter: Anonymous
Q: Where do I find peer-reviewed articles?
A: Lots of our databases have a feature where you can limit your results to just scholarly articles.

Submitter: Anonymous
Q: How do I make sure I'm using good information?
A: [Use the] CRAAP Test

Submitter: Anonymous
Q: Can I check books out from Special Collections?
A: Everything in Special Collections has to stay there. You're welcome to come in and see (and use) Special Collections materials in your work!

Submitter: Anonymous
Q: What if I forget all this stuff?
A: Ask a librarian. You can call us, email us, text us, chat w/ us, and talk to us at the reference desk.