

Built Around a Blog Using Web Technology to Reach and Teach Students

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With the advent of online social networking and the freely available information movements of search engines and wikis, students are used to an immense amount of technology before even setting foot in a library. As such, school libraries are faced with the task of adapting traditional information delivery techniques and instructional interactions to this new media-literate generation, through the use of new Web technologies.

At Drexel University, we are reinventing classic tools for library education, such as librarian-authored research guides, information literacy teaching sessions, and even librarian-student interactions with the help of such tools as WordPress, Drupal, LibraryH3lp, and Flash applications. We are using widely available, often Open-Source, technologies with large peer-developer support bases in order to share ideas, obtain contrasting viewpoints, and contribute to this movement in school libraries the world over. We are building features into Wordpress to turn the blogging software into a dynamically-displaying research guide tool, using Flash Video to make library instruction engaging, and using social networking tools to establish sound lines of communication between students and subject librarians.

Our results are more hits to the Drexel Libraries website, more students seeking one-on-one help from our librarians, and students' utilizing texts and resources that, without this technology, would not have been surfaced. Students become aware that help and information is there through identification with the technology that is being used.

Through usability studies and research, we have gathered that students know that certain things work based on their experiences with web technology and are more open to using tools that they recognize when doing research. Through our development and implementation of specific Web 2.0 technologies, we are helping students become aware that a library is not something old and antiquated but a source of targeted, invaluable information, capable of meeting their education and research needs.

This poster details our findings from one-on-one usability testing with students and other users. The poster also illustrates the new dynamically-updateable research guides that we have built and are easy to set up for any school library to use. Other joined efforts detailed include our use of LibraryH3lp and other instant messenger services, Flash applications developed in-house, and our ongoing research and development of widgets and tools to help students gather sound information quickly and effectively. This poster details the successes of our goal of using new web technology to encourage and assist students in the learning process that begins in the library.

Open Source, social media, open data

References

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Biographical Notes

Katherine Lynch is a web developer for Drexel University Libraries in Philadelphia, PA. She primarily works in web development for higher education, developing on Open Source projects including Drupal and Wordpress. Her other research includes web accessibility, social media, and open data. She can be reached at her website, <http://www.katherinelynch.org>.

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