

Instructional Tutorials Task Group - Final Report to the Services Council

June 1, 2010

Introduction

As the TRLN Services Council seeks to make use of collaboration to improve all areas of library services provided by TRLN members, an interest developed in exploring the usefulness of creating joint instructional tutorials. To this end, an Instructional Tutorial Task Group was formed in December 2009 and worked together through April 2010. The members of the team included Kawanna Bright, NCSU, Elizabeth Gorman, NCCU, Diane Harvey, Duke, and Kim Vassiliadis, UNC, chair. Derek Rodriguez provided support from TRLN and they also had extensive help from UNC School of Information and Library Science graduate student Julie Greenberg.

The Services Council charged the group:

"...to determine the effort required to create and maintain online web-accessible instructional video tutorials on a collaborative basis. The task group will conduct its work by creating an online video tutorial on the topic of plagiarism. The content of the tutorial should be institution-neutral and suitable for multiple audiences to facilitate reuse. The task group should work with interested parties on the campuses, such as writing centers and honor courts, as needed to ensure the tutorial's content meets local needs."

To fulfill both parts of the task group's charge (creating a shared tutorial on the topic of plagiarism, and investigating the necessary effort involved in the collaboration), this report includes the following sections:

- Overview of the Process
- Description of the Final Product
- Estimate of Effort Involved
- Discussion
 - Benefits of Collaboration
 - Challenges of Collaboration
 - Challenges to Adoption
 - Success Metrics
- Conclusion

Overview of the Process

The task group began its initial planning with a conference call on December 15, 2009. They then met four times in person, with one additional conference call. The group came to the first meeting already knowing that the tutorial focus would be plagiarism. This subject was chosen both because it applies to all academic institutions and because it allowed the group to create a product that filled an existing need: UNC's Honor Court had specifically requested the UNC libraries to create such a tutorial. At the first meeting, the group discussed large scale issues, including primary audience, format preferences, and learning outcomes. During the second meeting, members narrowed down and prioritized the topics that the tutorial would cover, divided responsibility for drafting each section, and viewed examples of plagiarism tutorials from other institutions to generate ideas about format. The third meeting, a

conference call, involved examining a mock-up tutorial that Julie created, and the fourth meeting involved a more thorough editing of the mock-up with content included. At the fifth and final meeting, the group discussed changes made to the tutorial after receiving feedback from UNC's Writing Center as well as the final report.

Between meetings, the members communicated via a task group wiki and via e-mail in order to research tutorials created by other campuses. They also drafted learning outcomes and, later on, content for different modules of the tutorial. The work of building the code for the tutorial fell largely to Julie, who created a shell and a theme for the tutorial, then incorporated the content drafted by other members.

Description of the Final Product

The task group determined that the best delivery format from a pedagogical perspective seems to be a mixture of short videos and static HTML pages, keeping in mind that not all students have access to a robust internet connection. The final product is an online tutorial that uses HTML, Adobe Flash, and Adobe Captivate files to present a mixture of static and interactive information. HTML can be reused by other institutions adapting the tutorial for their campus web site's 'look and feel'.

The tutorial is broken up by sections, and by pages within the section, to limit the amount of text and scrolling on any single page. The tutorial features a boy and his robot, to add an element of fun, which appears both in small segments of animation and in interactive questions to allow students to test their knowledge during and after the tutorial.

Because the task group members from UNC had a tighter deadline than members from other institutions, the product was created with a UNC heading and with some UNC-specific information. The group has worked to make most institution-specific information either easy to edit or appear in a "pop-up" window, so that only links and small amounts of institution-specific text would need to be changed.

Now that the tutorial is complete, UNC will package the content and supporting html, css, and videos in a zip file or on CD for sharing with TRLN partners. Once a tutorial is developed, it is expected that a tutorial's content should not change drastically or frequently. Therefore the task group did not believe it was necessary to host the tutorial centrally. If content needs to be reviewed or altered significantly in the future, developers and writers can share changes among themselves. The UNC version of the final tutorial will be available at this link: <http://www.lib.unc.edu/plagiarism>

Estimate of Effort

There were several different stages of work involved in the process of creating the plagiarism tutorial. Initially, it was necessary to develop goals and organize a division of labor; this was accomplished through a 30-minute conference call on 12/15/09 and a one-hour meeting on 1/7/10. During these meetings the group looked at similar tutorials at peer institutions and then devised a set learning outcomes that could be best incorporated into a tutorial. Each member also devoted two to three hours in between these meetings developing ideas in preparation for the next collaborative session. After this, a meeting was held (approximately one and half hours in duration) on 1/29/10 to finalize tasks and distribute content responsibilities. During this meeting the group chose a set of specific outcomes, and each task group member was assigned a specific module that would address one of the

learning outcomes. They were each responsible for creating the content and determining the best layout for the section.

During the next phase, each participating member spent approximately five hours developing content for her/his chosen module and adding it to the TRLN wiki site. Content was reviewed by all during a 45 minute conference call on 2/24/10, and was then integrated into the plagiarism test site from the wiki page, and mock-ups of the Flash videos were inserted. Next, an hour and a half in-person meeting was held on March 11th at the Library Services Center to review the content as it now appeared on the test site, and determine what edits and modifications should be made. Participants then devoted approximately two hours each to making these individual edits to the wiki page, and the changes were integrated into the test site. In addition to these distributed tasks, Kim Vassiliadis spent approximately 10 hours developing the HTML and CSS framework for the site and finding and inserting images. Additionally, a graduate student, Julie Greenberg, spent approximately 150 hours teaching herself Flash, developing the content for the Flash videos, and adding the content to the site.

NCCU will most likely be the test site for transferring a tutorial from one institution to another. Upon completion, UNC will share the tutorial content with NCCU staff either by sending them zipped in an e-mail, or by sending a CD through the TRLN courier. Hafsa Murad, Libby Gorman, and Yan Wang will work together to incorporate the tutorial into the Shepard Library website as opportunity arises, likely after a planned update to the website sometime over the summer. They will report back to the TRLN Services Council on the effort required to implement the tutorial.

Discussion

Unsurprisingly, the easiest sections to collaborate on for this tutorial were those that did not apply to a specific institution; for example, the definition of plagiarism, explanations of why citations are important, and demonstrations of how to quote, paraphrase and summarize. Nevertheless, for the tutorial to be useful at each library, some institution-specific information needed to be included. About 20% of the tutorial pages include content specific to UNC. These pages will need to be adapted for use in other institutions. In many cases this would merely consist of substituting the University's name. The "Get Help" page in particular would need editing, since it contains information and resources specific to UNC (e.g., the UNC Writing Center), but the Flash videos and related review questions do not contain site-specific information.

Benefits of Collaboration

Collaboration definitely worked well for the process of planning and drafting tutorial content. In the pilot we found it efficient for staff from one institution to take on the technical aspects of implementation (creating web pages/video) and for staff at other institutions contribute discrete portions of content. It allowed the task group to draw on various backgrounds and experiences and to divide the work of drafting the tutorial. Tutorial collaboration may also benefit TRLN in terms of the technical process of building tutorials--the structure that was created for the current tutorial could conceivably be reused for future tutorials, saving time and effort. An additional benefit is that, even as each institution must adapt the tutorial for its own use, having some content and product to modify is arguably more efficient than starting from scratch at each library.

Challenges of Collaboration

Task group members found it challenging to arrange meeting times that worked for all members. This was ameliorated somewhat by conference calls. A large proportion of our time however, was spent creating a process for collaboration, so there may not be as much of a need for as many meetings in future collaborations. Another practical challenge was creating the tutorial on a collaborative timeline-- in our case, a request by the UNC Honor Court provided the external frame in which to achieve our goals, but it is conceivable that future tutorials might be affected by conflicting timelines from different libraries.

Challenges to adoption

An early question the task group faced had to do with which software tools to use to develop the tutorial. Creating the tutorial with tools that are unsupported at one or more institution would be a barrier to adoption. The group settled on the use of Captivate and flash video along with php driven web pages. There are additional technical and maintenance questions to be answered as the tutorial is introduced to other library sites, such as whether the specific coding used will be easily adapted and whether files created in one type of software (Captivate) can be maintained by another (Camtasia). Also, as NCSU's set of "Library Online Basic Orientation (LOBO)" set of tutorials is driven by a CMS and has its own style, it is unlikely that NCSU will be able to use the video and interactive quizzes from the Plagiarism Tutorial. , NCSU should be able to borrow content from the tutorial for use in LOBO, if desired. However, NCSU also lacks staff at the present time to implement the tutorial.

In some cases, the subject matter of a given tutorial may be of interest to multiple constituencies on a given campus. For instance , the current project was driven by a desire at UNC to create a plagiarism tutorial for the UNC Honor Court. The UNC Libraries, the UNC Honor Court, and the UNC Writing Center each had stakes in the outcome of the project. At NCSU the Scholarly Communications Office takes an interest in this topic and at Duke the office of academic affairs provides web content on this topic. Multiple layers of decision making are therefore seen as a potential barrier to full-scale adoption of the plagiarism tutorial. However, tutorials based on more library-specific content would more likely be sharable, as the decision to adopt and adapt collaboratively constructed tutorials would be internal to a member library.

Success Metrics

A variety of metrics may be employed to determine the usefulness of the tutorial. An institution could use Google Analytics to measure the length of visits to the website and use the number of visits to the last page of the quiz as evidence of completion. Another approach would be to trigger an email sent to an administrative email address each time a user completed the quiz. A third approach would allow students who complete the quiz to send an email to their instructor at the end of the quiz. Obtaining qualitative feedback from stakeholders and library colleagues can guide development and help assess the perceived value of the tutorial to campus constituencies.

Conclusion

Working collaboratively across TRLN libraries to create online tutorials is viable and effective, and such collaborations could take place in the future without necessarily requiring a new task group. Since this group was able to create the content without extensive meeting time, the challenge of setting up meetings could also be minimized. A future group interested in creating a tutorial might meet once at the start of the process to determine learning objectives and divide up topics, then work virtually and perhaps meet once more at the end of the process.

The more general or conceptual the tutorial, the easier it will be to develop a collaborative product. If the tutorial needs to include institution-specific information, the tutorial needs to be structured in a way that that material can be inserted and adapted. Collaboration benefits from the perspectives of library staff from across the institutions and from shared technical expertise. In some cases, one library might take the lead (such as with the pilot plagiarism tutorial); while in other cases each library might share more equally in the tutorial's development. The group did determine that creating content for a tutorial is an excellent opportunity for collaboration.

Lessons learned from this pilot project include:

- Articulating clear goals for the project are important (e.g. UNC needed to produce a plagiarism tutorial)
- Developing learning outcomes for a tutorial helps guide the storyboard process.
- As libraries create tutorials, it is important to involve internal and external stakeholders during the content creation, review, testing, and deployment phases of each project.
- Creating an assessment mechanism at the beginning of the project is critical.
- Inventorying the technical expertise available for a project is necessary (for tutorial production, maintenance and adaptation for individual libraries).
- Inventorying other peer institutions' tutorials for best practices is recommended to avoid 'reinventing the wheel'.
- Understanding the technical requirements and constraints of participating libraries is important when deciding on the technical sophistication of the final product (e.g. some libraries do not want their tutorials that use Flash; some libraries have accessibility concerns)
- Ensuring a large proportion of the content is institution-neutral would increase the likelihood of content re-use. Tutorials covering library-focused topics (finding articles, evaluating scholarly vs. popular literature, etc.) should face fewer administrative barriers to adoption.
- While efficiencies were found through collaborative tutorial development, the payoff for collaboration likely increases with the complexity or difficulty of the tutorial topic. Libraries should collaborate on projects which are too difficult or 'too big' for a single library to take on.

Where can we go from here? NCSU has begun a very successful series of "back story" tutorials focused on topics such as peer review, lit reviews, and Wikipedia <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/tutorials/> Perhaps TRLN libraries could collaborate on new tutorials in this series, applying the lessons learned in this project. Another way to move forward would be to survey TRLN libraries to determine tutorial topics that are high priority. Library staff interested in collaborating on Instructional Tutorial creation could use the TRLN Library Instruction Listserv, trln-instruction@listserv.unc.edu to share ideas.