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iAdapt

Bringing mobile technology to the library classroom

In spring 2012, Salem State University librarians made a proposal to the library administration for a mobile technology initiative, specifically to employ the use of iPads in information literacy instruction classes. Six instruction librarians were given iPads and then spent the next academic year incorporating the mobile initiative into classes. This article is an account of the successes and failures of bringing mobile devices into the instruction classroom. While primarily positive, the program would need to be reconsidered to move forward uniformly.¹

Making the case and challenges

The initiative was designed to be integrated across disciplines. The six instruction librarians, as subject specialists, represent most of the disciplines across campus. Our campus has a laptop initiative that has been in place for at least the past six years; however, there has been little movement on behalf of our Information Technology (IT) department to initiate a directive on the use of mobile devices. Our campus also uses Apple products in the art, communications, and music departments. Generally speaking, there is very little IT support for Apple products, and certainly even less for mobile devices.

Our library has been following news of the use of mobile devices in the classroom for a couple of years.² While the information we acquired did not provide concrete answers

to our questions of how and why we would want to introduce mobile devices into the classroom, we were certain that we needed to be at the front of a push for embracing new technology. The portability of mobile devices—and the structure of searching via apps—would eliminate the use of traditional search engines to find information and create what has been commonly called the “vertical search.” The use of apps helps students decipher signal from noise, eliminating the need to “filter” the larger web. Additionally, many of the instruction librarians want to use apps to direct students easily and efficiently to information needed for a project or a paper. Accessing apps would eliminate the often cumbersome task of navigating the library homepage to get to a morass of database listings.

For students at our university—a public higher education institution comprised of a large number of commuters—apps eliminate the need to “log-in” through a proxy server while off-campus. Mobile technology, then, would help us bridge the gap/barrier to often overwhelming library and web research.

The trouble with our suppositions is that while most students did in fact have

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mobile devices, the nature of our instruction classes—often one-shot with changing assignments—would require too much class time in explaining apps and getting students to download a particular app. For many of the apps that are linked to databases, such as EBSCO, Gale, and Naxos, a password is required, making access to the app almost equally as cumbersome as accessing the database through the library homepage.

Those who are familiar with the above apps will realize that some apps are marketed specifically to smart phones while others are marketed for tablets. This does not account for the constant updates that often make a particular app obsolete, even if just for a few weeks until another update is available. This renders an app useless for what can seem like an eternity to students. One of the other challenges is that librarian research on apps for class requires a constant vigilance and rechecking for compatibility on Apple and Android devices, not to mention the often requested Kindle-based app.

Taking the long view

Our yearlong initiative involved a great deal of prep time for the instruction librarians. Most of the summer and the beginning of the fall 2012 semester (September through December) was spent reappropriating the app as a tool for learning. By the spring semester, many of the librarians transitioned to a more pedagogical approach. This marked a contrast from the start of the mobile initiative, which showcased the iPad and accompanying apps as a potential tool void of the pedagogical context for its use in class and with specific assignments. Instead of showcasing ways in which apps could and would help students, the instruction librarians moved toward an integrative approach. Many of the librarians were proactive in working with faculty by suggesting apps that already complemented what the professor was doing in class.

The librarians, for example, would use brainstorming apps or political or judicial debate apps—apps that are free, require minimal or no log-in requirement, and easily

supplement what the class is already doing; this became the rallying cry for integrative use of the mobile device in the classroom.

While collaborating with students and faculty was a large component of getting the university excited about the mobile initiative, the librarians changed the conversation about mobile devices on all levels: we worked directly with faculty, used the device for one-on-one research help with students, and marketed classes and workshops to the larger campus community, specifically targeting faculty. Many of the librarians were involved in offering workshops for faculty in preparing for in-class use. We (the authors) teamed up with the Center for Teaching Innovation in offering workshops, targeting an “embrace it” approach to programmatically employing widespread use of technology in the classroom. The result of two workshops, “Cool apps every college should use” and “Notes on apps from the library stacks,” sold faculty on the importance of mobile use in the classroom. Faculty wanted these mobile devices, and they wanted them used in the classroom as part of their curriculum. The case for librarians on the cutting edge of technology, and on the precipice of a pedagogical breakthrough, led the charge for taking the library to the pockets of the university.

While the instruction librarians used the iPad primarily for instruction in the classroom, we were quite conscious of the portability and flexibility of extending research to students across campus through a “roving reference” model.³ Salem State University is divided into three campuses. Librarians cannot always expect students to physically turn up at the library asking for assistance, so instruction librarians reach out to the students outside the physical confines of the library by going to their study lounges, dorms, and computer labs on the various campuses assisting them with database research, citations and to increase app awareness. As the instruction librarians equip themselves with mobile devices, it increases the visibility of the library and its staff and resources as focus is given to the individual needs of the users.

In addition to outreach for university students, the education resource librarian developed methods of using the library to complement information literacy for preschool students to increase their grasp on technology and literacy resources by reaching out to the Salem State Preschool.⁴ The librarian demonstrated appropriate apps related to the preschool's semester project and read interactive stories during Read Across America Day. The use of new technology enhances and improves the student's learning experience, and is beneficial to better preparing students in the digital age. Using the iPad is essential for instruction librarians to see the world through the eyes of students of all ages, making a parallel with outreach and classroom initiatives at all levels of learning. With our iPads in hand, the idea of roving instruction librarians certainly reinforces the idea of delivering service at the point of need.

Recalibrating

While instruction librarians led the charge in creating a dialogue on campus about programming with technology in the classroom, we realized that a wider conversation needed to take place so that every student can participate. IT has traditionally been seen as a leader for technology on campus, however it was the instruction librarians who took a risk in introducing mobile technology into practice. Our IT department was generally supportive of our efforts, even attending our workshops. With our campus-wide technology initiative still mandating laptops, the instruction librarians were beginning to stare down a slow pathway to mobile nirvana. With the recent opening of a new library and learning commons, questions arise

as to whether librarians will seek iPads as a permanent part of the classroom technology to facilitate mobile learning. Now that our campus has recently introduced a new general education curriculum, and opened a state-of-the-art facility, librarians are holding steady in owning the future of education. We are employing more collaboration and a wider conversation. The digital divide makes it difficult for students to purchase a laptop *and* a mobile device. Like many campuses across the country, our network is not always the most reliable. Wi-Fi access was sometimes spotty on the iPads we used for class. Even

the cable used to hook up the iPad to the classroom projectors was too short to really be mobile within the confines of the classroom. The cord that connected the iPad to the classroom projector, a.k.a. the "dongle," would take too long to calibrate its picture onto the screen.

The instruction librarians worked from the assumption that the iPad, though new to the classroom, must be used as a bridge. We reinforced the abstract notion of "going where the students are." While the jury is still out on

the overall success of the mobile program, librarians have been viewed, in the words of our colleagues, as leaders in digital initiatives and information. The long view is that there is work to be done, but librarians are speaking the language of faculty, and drawing a seat at the table as we demonstrate the future in practice of higher education.

Notes

1. A special thanks to our colleagues and administration in the library for helping to make the mobile initiative a reality.



Author Jason Soohoo using the iPad to work with preschool students.

2. Suzanne Julian, "Reinventing classroom space to re-energise information literacy instruction," *Journal of Information Literacy* 7, no. 1 (2013): 69-82. Our university has not implemented a universal iPad program, but Julian points to the ease and general success of students using the iPad in the classroom.

3. Megan Lotts and Stephanie Graves, "Using the iPad for reference services: Librarians go mobile," *College & Research*

Libraries News 72 (April 2011): 217-20, <http://crln.acrl.org/content/72/4/217.full.pdf+html?sid=0668456c-5592-4891-90a2-52b954761733>

4. Hanna Rosin, "The touch-screen generation" (cover story), *Atlantic Monthly* (10727825) 311 (3) (04): 56-65. It is hard to ignore the changes in learning at all levels when bringing tablets to the classroom of college-level students. ❧

("Last sale?" cont. from page 71)

readers' Kindles when it determined that the seller did not have the necessary rights. One of the vanishing books was Orwell's *1984*.) Imagine cultural usage entirely dependent on the person writing the license.

In July 2013, the Department of Commerce released a "Green Paper"⁸ on copyright that solicited comments on digital first sale. In response, the Library Copyright Alliance expressed concern about the "proliferation of licensing" and advocated "restrictions on the enforcement of contractual terms that attempt to limit exceptions to the Copyright Act such as first sale or fair use."⁹ Why? Because copyright's exceptions are as important to its scheme as the exclusive rights themselves. Many librarians are concerned that digital technology has upset the balance between users' and owners' rights. In effect, we are back to 1908, except that now the notice that the publisher inserted in that book would have legal force, and would be accompanied by more restrictions.

What would legal reform look like? A far-reaching option would be the introduction of a digital first sale right that cannot be waived by contract. Short of this, Congress could grant libraries specific rights allowing them to lend, preserve, and archive electronic materials. Courts might continue to allow fair use to shelter beneficial activities. Finally, private initiatives, such as the Digital Public Library of America and related academic projects, could step in to offer their own solutions to preserve

libraries' freedoms. These efforts to restore balance are important: publishers' concerns are legitimate, but the cultural freedoms that first sale protects should not depend entirely on a licensor's whims, either in 1908 or today.

Notes

1. U.S. Copyright Office, DMCA Section 104 Report (2001).

2. *Vernor v. Autodesk, Inc.*, 621 F.3d 1102 (9th Cir. 2010).

3. *Kirtsaeng v. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.*, 133 S.Ct. 1351 (2013).

4. U.S. Copyright Office, DMCA Section 104 Report (2001).

5. *Capitol Records, LLC v. ReDigi Inc.*, 934 F.Supp.2d 640 (S.D.N.Y. 2013).

6. The Social Science Research Council's recent study summarizes the evidence. See Joe Karaganis and Lennart Renkema, "Copy Culture in the U.S. and Germany" (January 2013).

7. Maria A. Pallante, "The Next Great Copyright Act—Twenty-Sixth Horace S. Manges Lecture" (March 2013).

8. Department of Commerce's Internet Policy Task Force *Green Paper on "Copyright Policy, Creativity, and Innovation in the Digital Economy"* (July 2013).

9. Library Copyright Alliance's Response to the Request for Comments on the Department of Commerce *Green Paper, Copyright Policy, Creativity, and Innovation in the Digital Economy* (November 2013). ❧