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Ronald Wheeler

Boston University School of Law

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CASE STUDY

By Terrance Manion and Ronald Wheeler

A Tale of One CALI Lesson: Librarians Share a New Approach

Here at Georgia State University College of Law, teaching librarians initially adopted classroom technology more in response to student demand than based on any established practices in instructional technology pedagogy. In an effort to remain relevant to our students, we arbitrarily adopted every technology that was available—online course management systems, electronic reserves, discussion lists, digital cameras, presentation software, classroom polling systems, interactive whiteboards, and on and on. We chose to err on the side of technology saturation, incorporating each technology into our courses without asking what pedagogical value the tool offered or what was being accomplished by using it.

Since that time (and probably in part because we used technology so indiscriminately), the Georgia State College of Law hired an instructional technologist. Most of the faculty share our enthusiasm for and interest in using instructional technology, as well as our confusion about how to best employ technology in teaching. Thus, our instructional technologist has been busy helping faculty members flesh out their teaching goals by asking hard and direct questions about what they hope to accomplish with technology and then evaluating and selecting appropriate instructional technologies to achieve those goals. As a result, the college of law is now seeing a remarkable increase in the amount of instructional technology

being used by faculty and, even more importantly, has confidence that these technologies are being used effectively as teaching tools.

So when it came time to pen a sequel to our 2005 Computer-Assisted Legal Instruction (CALI) lesson on Georgia primary research (see *Computer-Assisted Legal Instruction (CALI) Lesson, Georgia Legal Research—Primary Source Material* by Elizabeth Adelman, Nancy Johnson, Nancy Adams, and Terrance Manion at www.cali.org), the librarians involved were eager to include the instructional technologist in the process. Having collaboratively written a couple of CALI lessons before, the group thought we would adopt a similar approach as in the past—assign the sections individually, patch them together later (with the help of a schedule dictating when each could work in the authoring software, so as not to overwrite another's work), and finally pepper the lesson with questions to reiterate the important points. With our instructional technologist on board, we could call upon her expertise in evaluating the interactive question types

offered in the CALI authoring tool in order to select appropriate questions for our lesson.

By limiting the instructional technologist to that role, however, we grossly underestimated the contributions she could make to the project. Certainly she would help us select appropriate questions to best reinforce our teaching points, but she ended up playing a much


more influential role throughout the development process. She encouraged a far more challenging and rewarding writing strategy than we anticipated, and one that translated into a more effective CALI lesson.

Step one:

When we first met to lay out a plan, the instructional technologist asked

the authors to identify our criterion-referenced objectives for the lesson. (Of course, she did not use so many words. We only later found out that was what we actually did). The task itself involved defining and documenting in some detail what we hoped to accomplish in the lesson. After some negotiation, which proved helpful to get all the authors on

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the same page, we had a detailed list of our goals. We then engaged in a multi-week process of storyboarding and staging using these objectives to guide us through the development process.

Step two: The storyboarding and staging strategy developed by our instructional technologist simplified the writing process exponentially. As a result, the librarians could focus more of their attention on developing content to meet our teaching goals.

The subject of the CALI lesson was Georgia secondary source material, and it focused on how and when to use specific materials when completing Georgia legal research. The librarians jointly developed a story line that navigated the researcher through the various objectives we created. This included selecting an area of law that lent itself to the various resources in both print and electronic formats. Once we made these decisions, we were able to better estimate the number of sections we wanted the lesson to have and the approximate number of pages we needed in each section.

Each librarian took ownership of two sections of the lesson by identifying a legal research problem or issue that gelled with the storyline, choosing a secondary source to use in conducting research, carrying out the research from beginning to end, and illustrating the research process with text, screen shots, and photos. Whenever we strayed from our stated teaching goals, we were reminded (most often by the instructional technologist, although we

caught on by the end of the project) of our original objectives and would quickly find our way back on course.

To facilitate the staging process, the instructional technologist created an Excel spreadsheet on a shared drive that each of the librarians could access. The spreadsheet was divided into sections corresponding to the sections of the lesson. Each section was further divided into the individual pages. Each librarian was then responsible for adding his or her content (text, photos, screenshots, and in some cases screencasts). The instructional technologist was responsible for transferring the content from the spreadsheet (which served as our collaborative space) into the CALI authoring tool. She alone interacted with the authoring tool and was singularly responsible for adding, editing, uploading, and saving the content using the software.

Once every two weeks we would meet as a group, review the lesson, and see whether it was meeting our stated objectives. If the lesson contained errors or changes were necessary, the librarians identified those changes on the spreadsheet, and the instructional technologist made the changes.

From the technology-reluctant librarian's perspective, this process had numerous advantages. It allowed librarians to focus almost entirely on legal research content and how best to achieve our teaching goals. The librarians did not have to spend time or energy learning the intricacies of a new authoring

platform or video capture software. For some, learning to navigate unfamiliar software such as CALI Author can be scary, debilitating, and even prohibitive. However, having the support, guidance, and input of an instructional technologist can relieve all of those worries. In this particular case, the process benefited all parties as the instructional technologist was eager for an opportunity to gain experience with the authoring tool before approaching other faculty about developing possible lessons.

Finally, collaborating with the instructional technologist on this project had a number of unexpected benefits. Our instructional technologist was really excited about the project—she never failed to be upbeat, positive, and enthusiastic. Her energy suffused the entire project and made it more fun than it otherwise may have been. She was also quite the taskmaster, checking in with each of us weekly (sometimes even more often) to learn of our progress and ask us to review the changes to the lesson. Her enthusiasm and project management skills kept the project on track. ■

Terrance Manion (terrance@gsu.edu) is director of technology and librarian at the Georgia State University College of Law Library in Atlanta. Ronald Wheeler (wheeler@gsu.edu) is associate director of the Georgia State University College of Law Library.