



Information Literacy by Design: An e-Learning Wiki for Librarians

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Introduction

E-learning has many meanings for librarians; in its most simple form we use electronic media to provide access to online learning tools and resources. Central to our e-learning mission are the information sources we identify, select, collect, and organize. However, the means by which we build information fluency with these information tools is paramount to their discovery and exploitation. To this end we construct learning tools that support exposing knowledge, expressing ideas, employing information and data, and using resources ethically by evaluating, respecting, and preserving their content.¹

In our educational role, librarians transmit a perspective on our information world. In creating online learning tools we are equally afforded an opportunity to reflect our understanding of educational principles that inform both design and content:

- Learning theory: What do theories tell us about how people learn best online?
- Best teaching practices: Which teaching methods are most successful online and why?

¹ Warlick, D.F. (2004). *Redefining literacy for the 21st century*. Worthington, OH: Linworth. Warlick describes the movement from the 3Rs to the 4Es:

From reading to **exposing knowledge**: decoding information especially multimedia; constructing digital libraries.

From writing to **expressing ideas**: combine the best of writing and multimedia to make arguments compelling.

From arithmetic to **employing information**: use numbers to support arguments and solve problems; use software to manipulate information.

Ethics: Information is both power and property; assess, respect, and maintain it.

- Research process: What research models help learners gain a holistic view of the stages of investigation and why is this important?
- Information literacy: What concept of information literacy do we articulate and use to ground our learning activities?

In consideration of the positioning of libraries and librarians in the broader e-learning process, the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) began an e-learning working group in 2005. CARL consists of 27 university libraries plus Library and Archives Canada, Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (CISTI), and the Library of Parliament. CARL has three basic goals:

1. To provide organized leadership for the Canadian research library community in the development of policies and programmes which maintain and improve the cycle of scholarly communication;
2. To work toward the realization of a national research library resource-sharing network in the areas of collection development, preservation and access; and
3. To increase the capacity of individual member libraries to provide effective support and encouragement to postgraduate study and research at national, regional, and local levels.

The website at <http://www.carl-abrc.ca> offers reports and discussion papers on current issues in the library profession. CARL's interest in e-learning resulted in a report outlining directions for libraries and e-learning and a webpage of supporting materials for librarians. The webpage evolved into a wiki to be developed collaboratively by librarians in Canada and beyond.

Purpose and Development of the e-Learning Wiki

Online library tutorials come in many forms. The notion of "tutorial" in this context is that of a virtual learning object that entails substantial content and interactive problem solving by participants. It is not restricted to a list of resources as in a subject guide and it is not limited to a description of search techniques. A tutorial includes ideas about processes, concepts, and patterns of information gathering and application that are used as a scaffold to the specifics of resource selection and use.

There are many different approaches to the creation of online library instruction. Options include linking to an existing website elsewhere, adapting a resource with a Creative Commons licence to meet your needs, or designing your own custom site. The last method is frequently the path of choice even though it poses the most challenges. Online instruction can also be seen as a vehicle to reflect on critical themes that drive how information literacy development is grown within an institution. Online learning is expanding on campuses around the world in both face-to-face and distance courses. How can libraries position themselves to be part of the strategic planning of e-learning initiatives?

In speaking with librarians involved in designing online instruction, common questions arise:

- What types of online learning activities help students understand information literacy concepts?
- What are the key design principles that enable quality learning in an online tutorial?

- What forms of evaluation reveal what students learned in a tutorial?
- Where can I read about lessons learned from librarians who have already done this?
- How can librarians get involved with e-learning initiatives on your campus?

E-Learning for Librarians: an Ideas Playground is hosted at <http://library.queensu.ca/wiki/elearning/>.

E-LEARNING FOR LIBRARIANS: AN IDEAS PLAYGROUND

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Introduction to e-Learning for Librarians: An Ideas Playground

Welcome! This playground is a space to share ideas on the design and development of e-learning tools for information literacy. Members of the librarian and teaching community are invited to contribute to these pages and to share examples of successful e-learning experiences in the [Gallery of e-Learning Case Studies](#). Content of the wiki comes from the suggestions of colleagues and librarians attending the annual Workshop on Instruction in Library Use and the Canadian Library Association conferences. Please register yourself to contribute to the wiki. Click LOGIN (lower left menu) then click Register so we know who is making changes.



This site is not a repository for tutorials but a place to learn about good online learning practice. If you've been asked to design a virtual information literacy resource, you may want to look for answers to these questions:

- What types of online learning experiences help students understand information literacy concepts?
- What are the key design principles that make for quality learning in an online

The purpose of the Ideas Playground is to offer starting points for learning about the underlying infrastructure on which to build library tutorials that enable student learning of information literacy skills. At this time, the following sections are available:

Sections in e-Learning for Librarians: An Ideas Playground			
Introduction	Learning theory for librarians	Gallery of e-learning case studies	Standards for e-learning
What is e-learning?	Principles of good library instruction	Models for e-learning partnerships	Tips and tools for e-learning
Role of librarians in e-learning	Principles of enhancing learning with technology	Starting points for libraries and e-learning	Learning object repositories

Though still in its early stages it includes selected readings, concepts of information literacy, best practices in online instruction, and a gallery of case studies from libraries across Canada in which librarians describe the principles and technology used in creating their work. Best practices include technical tips and tools as well as core design principles that underscore how to create a supportive online learning environment such as those described by David Jonassen²:

- Problem space: Provide problems that allow learners to construct and apply knowledge (case study, rule application, analysis, comparison; check Bloom's Taxonomy for continuum of critical thinking objectives)
- Related realistic materials: Provide examples of cases to support learning from which the learner can extrapolate
- Information resources: Provide references, readings, and websites.
- Cognitive tools: Use tools that support information collection and analysis such as concept mapping software or those described at <http://www.visual-literacy.org>
- Conversation and collaboration tools: Incorporate ways of sharing learning such as discussion forums, chat, whiteboards, virtual reference, email, and listservs.
- Social/contextual support: Provide opportunities for both general communication and mentoring in one-on-one and peer group situations.

The wiki is not an archival repository of tutorials but a forum for creators to offer advice on content and design and to share challenges and feedback on student learning with their resource. Links to online works and contact emails are provided so that questions and comments can be shared directly. Interested librarians are encouraged to contribute and help to build and sustain this initiative. Register yourself to allow login and open access to the editing of content pages.

² Jonassen, D.H. (2000). Toward a design theory of problem solving. *Educational Technology Research and Development* 48/4, 63-85.