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ACRL Instruction Section Website: Primo Bonus Site of the Month

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Bonus Site of the Month

Analyze Your Research Strategy Tutorial

http://portlandstate.qualtrics.com//SE/?SID=SV_dc04orNn31xNlBP

Authors: Kimberly Willson-St. Clair, Claudia Weston Irla, and Meredith Farkas

Institution: Portland State University

Interviewees: Kimberly Willson-St. Clair and Claudia Weston Irla
Interviewer: Amanda Clossen

Q: What led to these tutorials being created?

A: Meredith Farkas, the former head of instruction at the Portland State University Library, was part of a faculty team awarded a grant through the Provost Sona K. Andrew's Challenge 2012.

The Provost's Challenge allocated $3 million in 2013 to fund and support 24 innovative faculty/staff activities to accelerate online learning and the use of innovative technology in educational delivery, and to improve student success and graduation. (http://www.pdx.edu/oai/rethink-psu)

This tutorial project was incorporated into one of four grants awarded to University Studies. University Studies is the interdisciplinary, core curriculum at Portland State University that spans a student's undergraduate program from the freshman inquiry theme through the sophomore and junior cluster to the community-service-based senior capstone. Community-based learning is a key component of the entire curriculum for University Studies. You can learn more about this unique core curriculum here: http://www.pdx.edu/unst/.

The five online tutorials that include *Analyze Your Research Strategy* were a part of the University Studies Online General Education Pathways grant, which can be accessed at http://www.pdx.edu/oai/provosts-challenge-projects-63. This website contains detailed information on the project including status reports and initial planning, development, and implementation time frames.

The tutorials are primarily for freshman just learning academic research skills, as well as sophomore and junior transfer students who might need remedial instruction about the research process and academic library services.

Q: What were the goals of the project and how were those goals developed?

A: Five research tutorials were developed to provide online research support for University Studies courses with a special emphasis on providing a transitional pedagogy for transfer students at the sophomore and junior levels. The five tutorials consist of a general introduction to the PSU Library, another to learn how to cite sources, and three tutorials about the research process. The first research tutorial, *Analyze Your Research Strategy*, introduces the student to the research process: http://guides.library.pdx.edu/home/howto.

Q: Who was involved in the creation of *Analyze Your Research Strategy*? Did you collaborate with any stakeholders outside the library as you developed the tutorials?

Meredith Farkas created the original tutorial, *Develop your Research Strategy*, as part of the PSU Challenge Grant. The University Studies Online General Pathways project started in July 2013 and by December 2013, the first pilot tutorial was completed. By October 2014, all five of the modules were finished and ready to pilot.

Claudia Weston Irla and I significantly revised the tutorial and renamed it *Analyze Your Research Strategy* because we used the ASE research model (Analyze, Search, Evaluate) as the instructional process. In this way we could structure the three research tutorials and focus the *Analyze Your Research Strategy* tutorial on the central idea of reading entries in scholarly subject encyclopedias so that students can discover the scholarly language of their topic's discipline in order to analyze it and find keywords. Thus, students begin to learn the scholarly language of the disciplines through the research process. This pedagogical approach supports the threshold concept of the ACRL Framework scholarship as conversation.

Claudia Weston Irla worked with University Studies faculty to assess the first iteration of the five tutorials by reviewing the student feedback. The first edition of the tutorial, called *Develop Your Research Strategy,* was too long and took about 45 minutes or more to complete. Now the tutorial takes about 25 minutes to complete. All five tutorials were revised over a six-month period in 2015 by Claudia Weston Irla and me.

Part of the revision entailed focusing the content by basing the three research tutorials–*Analyze Your Research Strategy*, *Search for Resources*, and *Evaluate Your Resources*–on the ASE research process developed by Dr. Melissa Gross and Dr. Don Latham in 2010 to address remedial research skill development at community colleges. The ASE research project was developed with funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The scholarly work of Gross and Latham is worth reading. I recommend their 2007 article, "Attaining Information Literacy: An investigation of the relationship between skill level, self-estimates of skill, and library anxiety," in *Library & Information Science Research*. I have presented on the ASE research instruction model several times including recently at the Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy in 2015.

Q: Did you discover any surprising advantages or disadvantages as you used the Qualtrics software?

One advantage that Claudia and I took advantage of is how easy Qualtrics makes it to analyze how students answer the quiz questions. This helped us in revising the tutorials. We were able to easily identify problem areas based on how students answered the questions. To be able to add comments to the quizzes is a nice feature of Qualtrics.

A disadvantage to using Qualtrics is the inability to revert back to earlier versions. We became very good at editing copies of tutorials as drafts and then updating the final edition once the language was finalized. Editing in Qualtrics can be tricky because you can lose formatting and content quickly, especially photographs and images. It

is important to keep all drafts of a project for reference. We renamed the revised tutorials to reflect active language and the ASE research model, then we renamed the first edition of the tutorials with the prefix 'Archive,' so we could readily retrieve lost language, ideas, or images.

Q: Since implementation, what type of analysis or evaluation have you done or are you planning on doing?

Piloting the tutorials was an integral part of the Challenge grant process. Changes were made based on faculty and student feedback.

Additionally, with colleagues at University Studies, Claudia Weston Irla led a usability study to evaluate how the tutorials were used by students and what their thoughts were about the tutorials. The main criticism was that the tutorials were too long. When looking at the answers to the quizzes, we also realized that either the content was confusing or the quizzes were misleading. This led to the significant revision of the tutorials by Claudia Weston Irla and me. Through the revision process, we realized that the quizzes had too many questions and many depended on the concept that the students had a topic to work on. We wanted the tutorials to have a broader appeal so that self-motivated students could use the tutorials on their own.

We are currently evaluating the online accessibility of the tutorial for users who are visually impaired. The tutorial will be updated to reflect best practices in this area.

The assessment at the end of the tutorial is just for Claudia and me, so that we can make changes to the *Analyze Your Research Strategy* tutorial to bolster its online pedagogy. Answering the assessment questions is not mandatory for completion of the tutorial.

Q: How have you promoted *Analyze Your Research Strategy* to students and faculty? What has been the reaction been so far?

This tutorial is available from the PSU Library How to Guides & Tutorials web page, and it is readily available from the homepage of the general University Studies Library Guide that is featured on the PSU Library Subjects Guides web page: http://guides.library.pdx.edu/unst. The PSU Library created a widget that is part of every D2L online learning module for University Studies courses. Students have access to the default subject guide for University Studies, which include the tutorials, through this widget.

All of the marketing of this tutorial has occurred within University Studies by targeting the faculty, and mainly, the student mentors. We approach the University Studies faculty to ask them to encourage their mentors to use the tutorials during the mentor sessions.

At this point in time, we do not plan on engaging faculty in conversations about how the tutorials are used, but we will continue to ask them to encourage their mentors to use them. We plan to continue to market the tutorials directly to the undergraduate peer mentors and the graduate mentors for administration during their sessions with smaller groups of students.

The University Studies program provides scholarships to undergraduate peer mentors for freshman inquiry, and graduate mentors for sophomore clusters. Thus, marketing is directed at the mentors so that the tutorial can be used as a teaching tool during their three sessions with smaller groups of students. Mentors spend as much time

or more with the students in their 5-credit courses. In the mentor sessions, the students have the opportunity and the time to learn new research skills. The mentors can ask the students to take one or all of the tutorials, then turn in their results for evaluation, but not grades. The mentor sessions provide a great way for first-year experience students–freshmen or transfers–to relax, learn, and catch up in a caring atmosphere of their peers.

Most students responded positively to the questions on how helpful they found the tutorial, which indicates that they learned something new. Not surprisingly, some students stated that they already knew the material, so they did not find the tutorials useful.

Q: Any advice or recommendations to those who may create a similar product?

It would be best to look at platforms beyond Qualtrics – there might be platforms that are easier to edit and change. Qualtrics is quite good for the quizzes so that instructors (or in our case, mentors) can receive the answers. Articulate Storyline 2 may be a viable alternative. If anyone would like to chat about this tutorial or the other four tutorials, you can contact Kim Willson-St. Clair at willsons@pdx.edu.

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