



Blended Learning Guide



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Blended Learning Guide

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Introduction

E-learning is a key component of WebJunction's services to the library community. Since our launch in 2003, WebJunction has provided online courses to the library community, along with tools and resources to help library organizations maximize the full potential of e-learning. We believe that blended learning—a mix of online training methods and in-person training—offers libraries a powerful strategy for delivering engaging, high-quality training.

Several WebJunction programs have provided us with significant knowledge about the potential of blended learning to enhance library staff training. Our ongoing Spanish Language Outreach Program utilizes a mix of in-person training and online support to maximize its impact and create a community of interest for library staff interested in implementing outreach to Spanish speakers. Similarly, the Rural Library Sustainability Program employs the same blended model to train rural library staff in ways to help sustain their public access computing programs and their libraries in general. WebJunction's Learning Partner Beta Program offered eight library organizations a unique opportunity to test a virtual classroom environment with synchronous and asynchronous functionality and provided them with training, tools and support to create and deploy online learning programs.

Based on our experience with these programs and other research we have conducted, we believe that blended learning has the potential to increase the learner's understanding and application of new skills by leveraging rich, interactive learning content while controlling training costs.

Through this guide, we hope to provide an introduction to potential blended learning tools and offer examples of successful programs implemented in organizations providing library staff training. We hope you find these examples useful and inspiring—please let us know!

Structure of this Guide

We begin this guide with an overview of blended learning, including the advantages and challenges of implementing blended learning as well as a summary of

blended learning modes. The guide provides seven case studies that detail blended learning programs implemented by library organizations around the country to meet the training needs of their staffs. Rounding out the guide are five quick guides that each explore a specific blended learning mode in more detail, as well as a checklist of questions for your organization as you begin to plan a blended learning program.

Defining Blended Learning

Classroom instructors have historically utilized a range of learning activities to help learners master learning objectives. A mixture of lectures, visual diagrams, assessments and group activities has long been the mainstay of classroom training. Blended learning is a combination of all these many approaches.

Blended learning comes in many shapes and sizes. In one course, an instructor may assign weekly self-paced online modules to a group of learners and also periodically bring the group together for in-person sessions, presentations and group discussions. Another blended learning program may bring together a menu of online reading materials, self-paced tutorials and podcasts, allowing learners to choose the mode that best meets their learning style and then demonstrate their understanding of the materials by completing an online assessment.

The definition of blended learning is a combination—or blend—of different online learning modes, or of online and in-person learning. Blended learning is becoming increasingly common with the availability of both synchronous and asynchronous online learning options.

Advantages

Blended learning can serve as a valuable approach for libraries wanting to incorporate an online component into their staff training. Blended learning offers libraries and their staffs a way to begin exploring online learning while still retaining part of the traditional classroom experience with which learners and trainers are already familiar.

Libraries that have already implemented online learning solutions may also find that they can increase learner satisfaction, deepen their understanding of materials, and improve rates of course completion by pairing other learning methods with online learning.

Blended learning has the potential to engage a variety of learning styles, enrich the overall learning experience, and provide greater consistency in the content and quality of training being delivered.

Learners are offered more convenience and flexibility utilizing online learning modes while maintaining some of the interaction and individual attention provided in face-to-face training. Blended learning also reduces the amount of class time for learners while providing a higher degree of accountability for learners.

Work and learning are increasingly becoming integrated. Library staff rely on quickly accessing and putting into practice information they need to do their rapidly changing jobs. By integrating learning into daily work activities, rather than segregating learning into something that happens off-site, blended learning can help library staff more quickly apply new skills to their daily work. Blended learning also provides opportunities to provide follow-up learning activities and review of learning materials that can boost retention and offer additional resources for learners needing additional help.

Library directors and managers are looking for ways to enhance employee skills and performance but need to balance these goals with often modest training budgets and coverage of services while staff are being trained. Reducing travel cost and training time outside the library along with increased scalability and ease with which content can be updated are also key advantages to implementing a blended model.

Challenges

There is a saying in the e-learning world that “if content is king, then technology is God.” This holds true when it comes to blended learning as well. Ensuring that participants have the needed hardware, software and bandwidth cannot be overlooked when implementing blended learning. The technology skill level of learners and facilitators can also be a key challenge for blended learning. Providing adequate technical support and training to participants and facilitators is critical to successful blended learning.

Incorporating a blended learning approach may also entail a cultural shift both on the part of participants and their managers. Learners are much more familiar with in-person training, and managers may be more accustomed to sending staff to an off-site training where the time and space is clearly carved out for learning. Successful implementation of blended learning requires the active support and encouragement of managers and supervisors throughout the project.

To learn effectively online, learners need a quiet, dedicated space on a staff computer to participate without interruption. It's often difficult to find that space and carve out time for online learning while putting aside the daily demands of working in a library. Blended learning places more responsibility for learning in the hands of the learner and, for some learners not accustomed to independent learning, this can be challenging. Building in support for learners from instructors, supervisors and peers helps to increase course completion rates and learner satisfaction.

Blended learning also requires an intentional approach to instructional design so that the program is blended in design, not just in delivery. Professional development for instructors to learn online teaching strategies and facilitation skill is important to any successful blended program. Instructors must also be familiar with all of the technologies that will be used in a blended program and be able to support learners. Finally, instructors must also learn to integrate methods of assessing student learning within the context of blended learning.

Making the Case for Blended Learning

While those involved in library staff training may already be sold on the benefits of blended learning, we realize that it is important to provide information that can help make the case for blended learning to those in leadership positions.

Initial research into the benefits of blended learning indicates that it improves performance and helps control training costs. In her September 2006 article for *Learning Circuits*, “How Blended Learning Changes What We Do,” Allison Rossett cites research findings on blended learning that indicate it provides:

- Increased cost-effectiveness
- Increased productivity

- Enhanced employee retention
- Reduced training time
- Reduced time and cost to update and distribute online learning resources

As content and skills become more complex and change rapidly, blended approaches to learning are frequently required to achieve complex and ever-changing learning objectives. In addition, learners want and expect flexible learning opportunities that provide them with the opportunity to engage in training that meets their learning styles.

The need to develop training quickly and scale training to meet the needs of large, geographically dispersed audiences are also compelling reasons for implementing blended learning.

Tips to Get Started

Creating a successful blended learning program requires thoughtful analysis and design—just like any training program! Simply tossing together a mix of different online learning methods and in-person training won't guarantee good learning outcomes or adoption of the program. To be successful, both the design and the implementation of blended learning needs to be intentional. Here are five key strategies for designing and implementing blended learning:

Designing

- Clearly define your training objectives
- Identify the skill gaps of learners and the characteristics of your audience
- Match the content needed to achieve your training objectives with the most appropriate mix of learning methods
- Build in good instructional design (including assessment) that takes into account how adults learn
- Utilize subject matter experts when creating content

Implementation

- Establish support for the blended program from your leadership and managers
- Communicate the importance and urgency of the learning program to your learners
- Teach learners how to learn online
- Ensure learners' success by providing them with appropriate technology and technical support
- Keep learners engaged and motivated by facilitating and supporting your program

The key to successful blended learning is clearly defining your learning objectives and then carefully selecting the best mix of training methods. Consideration should be given to the content of the course—how frequently it changes, the level of interaction it requires and its complexity. Other key considerations include your target audience's motivation and familiarity with technology. Time, budget and personnel resources should also be considered. The size of your audience and whether you will need to reach an audience spread across a large geographic area are also key determining factors when designing your blended learning course.

Designing the course is only half the equation. Marketing, launching and supporting the program are also essential to the program's overall success. See Appendix A for a checklist of questions to consider as you begin creating a blended learning program, and Appendix B for a comprehensive list of Additional Resources.

Blended Learning Modes

Blended Learning Continuum

There is no magic formula for selecting the best mixture of training modes to use in a blended learning program. Once you have clearly defined your training objectives and evaluated the skill gaps and characteristics of your audience, you can align the content with the most appropriate mix of learning

modes. The following blended learning continuum and quick guides provide an overview of several different modes of blended learning that can be part of your mix.

Blended learning modes offer a continuum of interaction levels for learners as well as a range of high and low-tech options for course designers.

Live In-Person	Synchronous Virtual Collaboration	Asynchronous Virtual Collaboration	Self-Paced Asynchronous
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructor-led classroom training • Hands-on labs • Coaching/mentoring • On-the-job training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live Online Learning • Online chat/IM sessions • Conference calls • Video conferencing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online discussion boards • Listservs • E-mail • Blogs • Wikis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online tutorials • Simulations • Online self-assessments • Archived Webinars • Podcasts • CD-Roms

Modes Quick Guides

This section also offers a more in-depth exploration of these five potential blending learning modes:

- Discussion Boards
- Online Instant Messaging/Chat Sessions
- Podcasting
- Rapid E-learning Software Tools
- Web Conferencing

Discussion Boards



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Background

Discussion boards are an asynchronous communication tool involving a user (usually an instructor) posting a question or assignment, and learners posting their responses at a later time. Because they are asynchronous, discussion boards allow the learner more time to reflect on a topic or question before posting a message. They can also help instructors monitor the participation and understanding of learners in a course. However, because discussion boards are asynchronous, it can be easier for learners to put off their participation unless clear expectations and requirements are established for discussion board use.

Discussion boards can play an important role in blended learning programs, especially those using online, self-paced tutorials, by helping to facilitate the informal interaction that typically takes place during face-to-face training. This informal interaction among learners, as well as between learners and the instructor, strengthens learning. By keeping the tone of discussion boards conversational and lively, instructors can provide an environment, albeit a virtual one, for this type of interaction among learners.

Best uses

- Group discussions
- Resource sharing
- Posting class assignments

Benefits

- Offers free, easy access with an Internet connection
- Can preserve discussions for later review or for new learners
- Allows learners to access the discussion boards at a time convenient to their schedules
- Provides learners with more time for reflection and creation of articulate responses
- Provides interaction for learners and ability to ask questions of classmates and instructor
- Can track and measure learner participation in discussions
- Allows learners—on some message boards—to preview and edit their posts as well as include attachments such as course assignments

Challenges

- Time lapse between postings can slow the momentum of discussions and make it difficult to receive immediate clarification on a question or comment
- Commitment to monitoring discussions is required of instructors and learners
- Many learners and instructors need initial training on use of message boards
- Participants are unable to observe facial expressions, tone or body language, which can cause misinterpretations
- Instructors need to develop good facilitation and moderation skills to encourage participation by all learners

Topic: Reader's Advisory Notebook

[Reply to this Topic](#) [Back to Topic List](#)
[Search Forum](#)

Replies: 4 - Pages: 1 - Topics: [Previous | Next]
 Last Post: Dec 22, 2005 8:17 AM by: saxton

bowlings Posts: 2 Registered: 12/20/05	<p>Reader's Advisory Notebook Posted: Dec 20, 2005 10:22 AM Reply</p> <p>Do any of you keep a Readers' Advisory 'Notebook' at your desks to refer to for quick suggestions? I am in the process of updating our library's fiction notebook and am looking for a better way to organize it. Any suggestions?</p>
blg3 Posts: 1,247 Registered: 6/20/04	<p>Re: Reader's Advisory Notebook Posted: Dec 20, 2005 12:50 PM Reply ↑ in response to: bowlings</p> <p>I'd like to hear more about your 'Notebook'. I tend more</p>

Discussion board tools

A range of high-cost to no-cost discussion board tools is available to support blended learning programs. There are many different discussion board software packages available for purchase, but for most libraries, these packages are more robust than needed. Some learning management systems include discussion board software. WebJunction also provides private discussion boards to Community Partner members. Most blended learning programs' discussion board needs can be met by free tools such as Google Groups.

Additional resources

WebJunction Moderators Kit:

<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=8216>

WebJunction's All Aboard Discussion Policies and Guidelines:

<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=8349>

WebJunction's Step-by-Step Posting Primer:

<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=8347>

Woolley, David R. "Forum Software for the Web: An Independent Guide to Discussion Forum and Message Board Software":

<http://thinkofit.com/webconf/forumssoft.htm>

Bender, T. *Discussion-Based Online Teaching to Enhance Student Learning: Theory, Practice and Assessment*. Stylus Publishing, October 2003.

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Backroad Connections Pty Ltd 2002, *Effective Online Facilitation* (Version 2.00). Australian Flexible Learning Framework Quick Guides series, Australian National Training Authority.

<http://pre2005.flexiblelearning.net.au/guides/facilitation.pdf>

Black, A. "The Use of Asynchronous Discussion: Creating a Text of Talk." *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education* [Online serial], 5(1), 2005.

www.citejournal.org/vol5/iss1/languagearts/article1.cfm

Woolley, David R. "Forum Software for the Web: An Independent Guide to Discussion Forum and Message Board Software."

<http://thinkofit.com/webconf/forumssoft.htm>

At Mother Goose Programs™ we have just begun to use WebJunction's "All Aboard" as a vehicle for the 60+ librarians who are participating in our National Science Foundation-funded project, "What's the BIG Idea?: Science and Math for Young Children in Your Public Library." The discussion board is useful because it allows the participating librarians from four states to communicate with each other and share ideas.

—Joan Nagy

Associate Director, Mother Goose Programs

Tips/tricks

1. Demonstrate how to use the discussion boards to learners, preferably in-person, and follow up with individual learners who need additional assistance getting started.
2. Provide clear discussion board participation guidelines to learners, including instructor expectations, rules of conduct and examples of what constitutes adequate participation.
3. Begin by having the instructor post an introduction and share information about his or her background and personality; learners should be encouraged to do the same.
4. Acknowledge individual discussion contributions by learners so that they feel heard.
5. Focus the discussion by carefully preparing questions or assignments in advance.
6. Monitor the discussion or assign a monitor to keep learners focused on the topic.
7. Monitor the quality and regularity of the postings, and if individual learners appear to not participate, or post messages that are off-topic or are not substantive, communicate with those learners privately.
8. Consider making the discussion board private or password protected so that learners feel free to share their thoughts and opinions with only their classmates.
9. Summarize the discussion before moving on to a new thread.



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Online Instant Messaging/ Chat Sessions

Background

Many learners are familiar with using instant messaging (IM) or chat for very informal and quickly composed messages to friends or colleagues (e.g., AOL Instant Messenger, MSN Messenger, Yahoo, etc.). Effectively integrating chat into a blended learning program requires defining the objectives for using chat sessions, establishing a clear structure and ground rules for the sessions, and effectively moderating discussions.

Effective chat sessions take preparation by the instructor. Chat is a synchronous tool involving all participants being online simultaneously and often interacting at the same time. While this makes it a very dynamic and fast-paced mode of interacting, learners often don't have very much time to reflect on discussion topics. To combat this, instructors can prepare students in advance with specific discussion topics or questions to consider prior to the start of the chat session. Because chat sessions happen in real time, instructors also need to establish clear procedures ahead of time to prevent learners from getting off-topic or from simply all responding at the same time.

Many instructors are also finding instant messaging to be an effective one-to-one tool for conducting virtual "office hours" and for providing more responsiveness to student requests for additional help.

Best uses

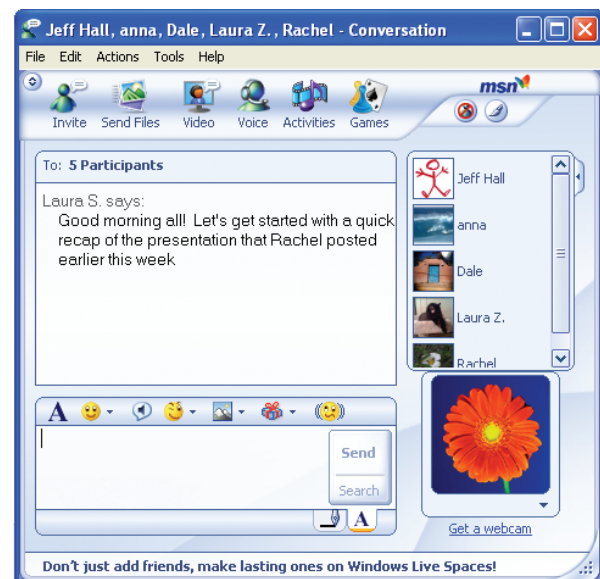
- Informal check-ins
- Small group discussions
- Set "office hours" for students to ask instructor clarification questions

Benefits

- Free, easy access and simple for participants and facilitators to learn
- Offers the ability to preserve transcripts
- Provides immediate feedback for learners and ability to ask questions in real time
- Allows learners to develop a buddy list and have access to other learners when they are online to ask questions, etc.

Challenges

- Can be difficult to keep conversations focused
- Can't observe body language, tone or facial expressions during chat
- Can be difficult to know when someone has completed his or her response
- Delayed conversations due to Internet traffic
- Presents scheduling challenges
- Provides limited time for reflection on questions due to pace of chat



Chat session utilizing MSN Messenger

Online chat/IM tools

Consider using a multinet network IM program. There are many competing IM networks for users, with AOL Instant Messenger, MSN Messenger and Yahoo! Instant Messenger as the leaders. A user of one network can't communicate with someone on another network. Trillian for Windows (www.trillian.cc) or Meebo (<http://www.meebo.com>) and Gaim (<http://gaim.sourceforge.net>) for other operating systems lets you operate on multiple networks simultaneously. Another option to consider is AIM Express (www.aim.com/aimexpress.adp? AOLP=0) because it does not require learners to download any software.

Additional resources

Introduction to Chat:

<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=756>

Chatting with Confidence: Instant Messaging Security:

<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=11993>

Introduction to Instant Messaging:

http://www.sociallibraries.com/course/wiki/index.php?title=Introduction_to_Instant_Messaging

Bender, T. *Discussion-Based Online Teaching to Enhance Student Learning: Theory, Practice and Assessment*. Stylus Publishing, October 2003.

"How Americans Use Instant Messaging." Pew Internet & American Life Project, September 2004:

www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/133/report_display.asp

Smith, C. "Synchronous Discussion in Online Courses: A Pedagogical Strategy for Taming the Chat Beast," 2006: www.learningcircuits.org/2006/July/smith.htm

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"Seven Things You Should Know about Instant Messaging." The EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative, 2005.

www.educause.edu/LibraryDetailPage/666?ID=ELI7008.

Smith, C. "Synchronous Discussion in Online Courses: A Pedagogical Strategy for Taming the Chat Beast," 2006. www.learningcircuits.org/2006/July/smith.htm.

Sotillo, S. "Using Instant Messaging for Collaborative Learning: A Case Study." *Innovate: The Journal of Online Education*, Vol 2 Issue 3, February/March 2006.

"For learners in our Anytime, Anywhere Answers online course, the chat medium was the message. Using person-to-person IM and chat meetings meant that the learners, who are themselves chat reference providers, immersed themselves in IM culture. They were encouraged to have fun with the emoticons, sounds and avatars and gained a much better understanding of chat reference users as a result."

—Mary Ross

Staff Training and Development Manager,
Seattle Public Library

Tips/tricks

1. Decide what your objectives are for using chat and set clear expectations for how chat/IM will be used during the course.
2. Establish clear etiquette and security guidelines for chat.
3. Monitor and facilitate the session to keep it on topic and to keep all learners engaged.
4. Keep the number of participants small in order to enable meaningful dialogue.
5. Establish a protocol so that learners will know when someone has completed his or her message (i.e., ask learners to add an asterisk [*] at the end of their sentences) or has a question or comment (i.e., ask learners to indicate they have a question or comment by entering "?" or "!").
6. Give learners the floor during the chat.
7. Send prepared messages privately to latecomers rather than interrupting the chat.
8. Be aware that those with less technological skills or experience may be hesitant to participate or have trouble typing as quickly as other learners and actively try to engage learners who are not participating.
9. Summarize the major points at the end of the chat session and save a transcript.
10. Encourage learners to use emoticons to help convey mood.
11. Offer practice sessions for those not familiar with chat.

Podcasting

Background

The term podcast is a combination of the words *iPod* (Apple's popular digital music player) and *broadcast*. The term is a bit misleading because users can listen to podcasts on other digital music players, smart phones or desktop computers—and they don't have to tune in to a specific broadcast time. Essentially, podcasts are digital audio programs that can be subscribed to and accessed on a variety of digital audio devices at the listener's convenience.

What makes podcasting different from simply posting streaming audio or audio recordings on a Web site that users can download is that users subscribe to an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed and the feed (called an aggregator or podcatcher) automatically updates anytime a new podcast is posted. This “push” technology saves listeners from having to check individual sites for new podcasts.

The first step in creating a podcast is recording and editing the content. The MP3 audio files that are typically used in podcasts are fairly simple to create and don't require high-priced equipment. The next step in the process is publishing the edited podcast to an MP3 format and uploading it to a Web server. The final steps in the process are generating an RSS feed and publishing your RSS feed URL. Multiple tools, many of them free and open-source, exist to help with all of these steps (see **Podcasting tools**).

Best uses

- Lectures
- Interviews with field experts
- Recording classroom presentations or role playing exercises
- Audio content that has previously been created and could be used as supplemental material

Benefits

- Allows learners to subscribe to content and receive updates automatically
- Requires little monetary investment to get started
- Provides content that is portable and available on demand
- Appeals to auditory learners
- Provides a way for learners to review material

Challenges

- Considerable time is involved for the creation of a podcast—including planning the content, recording, editing and publishing
- Users must have sufficient bandwidth to download the podcast
- Podcasts are not a one-time thing; the strength of the format is that it continually provides access to new information, but this requires careful planning and a commitment to continue producing content
- Learners cannot quickly “skim” through a podcast in the same way that they can skim reading materials for the main points



Infopeople is using podcasts as a way to reach out to more audiences. Initially, we converted our video webcasts to podcasts so that more people could catch the webcast content. We then started branching out into original content. Listening to MP3 audio files seems to be a much easier undertaking for folks than configuring a desktop or laptop for viewing and listening to webcasts.

—Eileen O'Shea, Consultant, Infopeople

Podcasting tools

- **Podcatchers/aggregators**
Juice: <http://juicereceiver.sourceforge.net/index.php>
PodNova: www.podnova.com/index_about_podnova.srf
HappyFish: www.thirstycrow.net/happyfish/download.aspx
- **Audio editing software**
Avid Pro Tools (Windows): www.avid.com/products/xpressStudio/proToolsLE/index.asp
Garbageband (Mac): www.apple.com/ilife/garageband/
- **Audacity:** Open-source, free, multiple platform (Windows, Mac, Linux) application that will record your audio and export it as an MP3 with the help of the LAME MP3 encoder, which is also available for free
- **RSS feed generation services** (these services help you create the XML files that let podcatchers find your podcast):
Feed Burner's SmartCast: www.feedburner.com/fb/a/home
Poderator: <http://poderator.com/>
- **Soup to nuts solutions** (these services offer combinations of recording capabilities, RSS feed generation, bandwidth, file hosting, blogs/Web sites):
Odeo Studio: <http://studio.odeo.com/>
Hipcast (formerly Audioblog): www.hipcast.com/
Podomatic: <http://podomatic.com/>
Ourmedia: <http://ourmedia.org/>

Additional resources

- Library-focused podcast resource by Greg Schwartz:
<http://podcasting101.pbwiki.com/>
- "A Beginner's Guide to Podcasting, Part 1 & 2." Sirsi Dynix Institute Web Seminars, presented by Greg Schwartz:
www.sirsidynixinstitute.com/seminar_page.php?sid=62
- McElhearn, Kirk. "Beginner's Guide to Podcast Creation," July 2005, ilounge.com:
www.ilounge.com/index.php/articles/comments/beginners-guide-to-podcast-creation/
- Podcasting Legal Guide:
http://wiki.creativecommons.org/Podcasting_Legal_Guide
© 2006 Colette Vogele of Vogele & Associates, Mia Garlick of Creative Commons and the Berkman Center Clinical Program in Cyberlaw. "This Guide was produced as part of the Non-Residential Fellowship Program of the Center for Internet & Society at Stanford Law School."

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www.learningcircuits.org/2005/jun2005/0506_trends
- McElhearn, Kirk. "Beginner's Guide to Podcast Creation," July 2005, ilounge.com.
www.ilounge.com/index.php/articles/comments/beginners-guide-to-podcast-creation/
- Schwartz, Greg. "A Beginner's Guide to Podcasting, Part 1 & 2." Sirsi Dynix Institute Web Seminars.
www.sirsidynixinstitute.com/seminar_page.php?sid=62
- "Seven Things You Should Know about Podcasting." *Educause*, June 2005.
www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7003.pdf

Tips/tricks

1. Plan, organize and prepare your content.
2. Make it engaging and entertaining for listeners.
3. Keep it short and content-rich.
4. Use multiple speakers if possible.
5. Incorporate music to indicate the opening and closing of the podcast or between segments—but be aware of copyright issues. For more information visit the Pod Safe Music Network:
<http://podsafemusicnetwork.com/>
6. Get permission before recording anyone.
7. Invest in a good microphone, which is available for as little as \$100.
8. Prepare and publish notes about your podcast that include links to information you mention.
9. Include metadata at the beginning of your podcast (title, speakers, date) to help identify the context and to prepare for the likelihood of the content being repurposed later.
10. Provide instructions and links for your learners to download a podcatcher and subscribe to your feed.



Rapid E-learning Software Tools

Background

Rapid e-learning software allows you to quickly and cost-effectively create self-paced tutorials, either from PowerPoint presentations or by recording your computer screen. In the past, creating a tutorial frequently required working with an outside contractor for months and could cost tens of thousands of dollars.

Today, many organizations find that with a minimal investment in rapid e-learning software they can use existing PowerPoint materials and convert them into Flash-based online tutorials that can be authored in a matter of days or weeks and made accessible to learners online. Some of the available software packages include assessment and tracking capabilities that are AICC- and SCROM-compliant. AICC and SCROM are both standards for how a course communicates with a learning management system (LMS). Courses that follow these standards can be imported into any compliant LMS and work correctly in terms of learner tracking and course content sequence.

There are even some rapid e-learning development tools that are available for free. While these tools provide only basic features, their output can rival that of the professional tools that cost between \$300 and \$600.

Two main types of rapid e-learning software

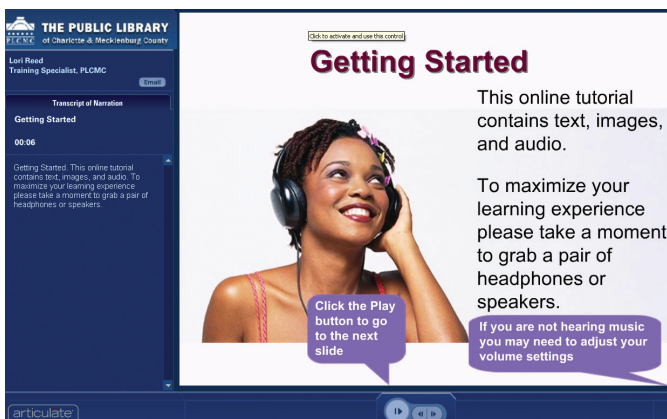
- **Screen casting software:** These tools allow you to record your computer screen and add narration. The recording can be converted into Flash or other video formats. Screen casting is often used to demonstrate software or Web sites. Some of these tools allow you to create interactive software simulations.
- **PowerPoint to Flash conversion tools:** This type of software lets course designers take existing PowerPoint slides, add narration and convert them to Flash presentations. The top products in this category create course navigation menus and allow you to insert quizzes, animations and supporting documents.

Best uses

- Providing basic knowledge transfer for learners in sessions that are less than one hour in length
- Standardizing training for all audiences that does not change often
- Repurposing existing PowerPoint course materials for self-paced tutorials
- Deploying training quickly to a wide audience

Benefits

- Trainers or subject matter experts can avoid spending valuable time delivering the same training over and over again
- Software tools are fairly inexpensive, easy to learn and offer a huge cost savings over outside development
- Software quickly creates professional-looking materials
- Software allows organizations to leverage existing content
- Most trainers and learners are familiar and comfortable with PowerPoint
- Tools allow course designers to quickly update and edit tutorials after they are authored
- Tutorials can be integrated into an LMS
- Self-paced tutorials allow learners to participate when their schedules allow
- Software quickly provides training to a large number of learners or learners who are spread out geographically



Self-paced tutorial by the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County

Challenges

- Instructional design skill is critical for creating engaging self-paced tutorials
- Time needed to develop and create training is still longer than for in-person training
- It's tempting to recycle in-person training and simply convert it to a boring, ineffective self-paced tutorial
- Learners with dial-up access may experience significant delays downloading tutorials
- Learners need computers with speakers or headphones, an up-to-date browser and flash plug-in versions
- To be successful, learners need to be comfortable with technology and online learning
- The free, rapid e-learning tools are not as easy to use and often do not include features such as menu navigation, interactivity or AICC/SCORM compliance

Screen casting tools

All of these tools record onscreen activity, allow you to add narration and output various video formats, including Flash video:

- **Adobe Captivate:** www.adobe.com/products/captivate/ SCORM- and/or AICC-compliant, also creates simulations

- **Camtasia Studio:** www.techsmith.com/camtasia.asp SCORM- and/or AICC-compliant
- **Viewlet Builder:** www.qarbon.com/presentation-software/viewletbuilder/ SCORM- and/or AICC-compliant, also creates simulations
- **Viewlet Cam:** www.qarbon.com/presentation-software/vc/
- **BB Flashback:** www.bbsoftware.co.uk/bbflashback.aspx
- **CamStudio:** www.camstudio.org/ Free, open-source, no SCORM or AICC
- **Wink:** www.debugmode.com/wink Free, no SCORM or AICC

For updates to this list, go to:

<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=14521>

Additional resources

Chapman, Bryan. "PowerPoint to E-Learning Development Tools: Comparative Analysis of 20 Leading Systems." Brandon Hall, 2005.

De Vries, Jennifer and Josh Bersin. "Rapid E-Learning: What Works." Bersin & Associates, 2004.

Tips/tricks

1. Invest in a good microphone for recording audio portions.
2. Check for background noise in the recording area.
3. Script audio and practice delivery prior to recording.
4. Integrate charts, diagrams and digital photos.
5. Build in as much interactivity as possible by posing questions to learners and taking advantage of assessment and quiz tools.
6. Create animations to engage audience and develop greater understanding.
7. Incorporate music.
8. Use multiple speakers or presenters, especially for longer tutorials.
9. Provide date information so that learners will know when the presentation was created.
10. Link to supporting information articles and resources.

LibraryU Certificate of Completion (02/24/06:41)

LibraryU
Lisa Barnhart
LibraryU Project Coordinator

ATTACHMENTS

Details of Review completion

Course: Readers Advisory Services

Lesson	Score	Status	Test Date
Readers Advisory Services	100	Passed	May 12 2006 8:58 AM
Genre Fiction	100	Bookmarked	May 12 2006 9:01 AM
Difficult Aspects of the Readers' Advisory Interview or That Sinking Feeling	100	Passed	May 12 2006 9:05 AM
Marketing Tip	100	Bookmarked	May 12 2006 9:08 AM
Congratulations	100	Passed	May 12 2006 9:42 AM

These are the lesson Reviews that Jane has attempted to complete

Scores for each Review are listed in this column

The status for each Review is also indicated

LibraryU Self-paced Tutorial

PowerPoint (PPT) to Flash presentations

All of these tools will convert an existing PowerPoint presentation to Flash (swf) format suitable for use on the Web:

- **Articulate Presenter:**
www.articulate.com/presenter.html
Top-rated, navigation, sound, editing, insert Flash animations, SCORM/AICC
- **Adobe Presenter:**
www.adobe.com/products/presenter/
Formerly Breeze, very similar to Articulate, includes XML tags, which enables content to be indexed and fully searchable
- **iLecture:**
www.lib.uiowa.edu/commons/ilecture/index.html
Currently in beta, free from the Information Commons Production Services Team at the Hardin Library for the Health Sciences, University of Iowa
- **OpenOffice:** www.openoffice.org/
Converts PPT to Flash, no sound, no animations, no auto-play, free
- **Powerbullet Presenter:** www.powerbullet.com/
Converts PPT to Flash, with animations and embedded sound, free

Sources

- Archibald, D. "Rapid E-Learning: A Growing Trend." *Learning Circuits*, 2005. <http://www.learningcircuits.org/2005/jan2005/archibald.htm>
- Bersin, J. "Making Rapid E-learning Work." *Chief Learning Officer Magazine*, 2005. http://www.clomedia.com/content/templates/clo_article.asp?articleid=1008&zoneid=62
- Chapman, Bryan. "PowerPoint to E-Learning Development Tools: Comparative Analysis of 20 Leading Systems." Brandon Hall, 2005.
- Schooley, C., K. McNabb, and L. Fossner. "Rapid eLearning Creation Tools Become Hot Technology." Forester, 2006.
- "Seven Things You Should Know about Virtual Meetings." The EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative, 2006. <http://www.educause.edu/LibraryDetailPage/666?ID=ELI7011>

"We have been very happy with Articulate Presenter. The tool makes it easy to develop high-quality, self-paced learning modules, and our users don't need high bandwidth connections to utilize the modules. The response from our users has been very positive, and we plan to develop additional self-paced modules."

—Karen Burns
Administrator, Southwest Iowa Library Service Area



Where minds meet.™

Web Conferencing

Background

Live online learning has many names: synchronous learning, virtual classrooms, e-meetings, webinars, webcasts. All of these are about delivering information live over the Internet to multiple learners who can be located anywhere—and they most commonly use a Web conferencing tool to transmit that information.

During a Web conference participants sit at their own computers and are connected to other participants via the Internet. Using a Web conferencing application, presenters are able to display content, usually in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, on the screens of all the participants. The presentation is accompanied by voice communication, either through a traditional telephone conference call or through Voice over IP (VoIP).

- **Web cobrowsing:** when a presenter “pushes” a Web site out to participants’ computers enabling each participant to then interact with the site and browse individually.
- **Annotation tools:** tools that allow a participant to directly draw or type on the content area of the screen for all to see—either on a blank “white board” or directly over a presentation slide.
- **Public and private text chat:** the ability to send text messages either to all in attendance or individually to specific participants.
- **Streaming video:** the ability to transmit video inside a Web conferencing application; commonly used to transmit live webcam images.
- **Polls, quizzing and surveys:** tools that make these available in real time inside a session and often allow for instant display of the results as well.
- **Recording or archiving:** the ability to record both the visual and audio content of a session for future playback.

Other Web conferencing features may include

- **Application (or screen) sharing:** the ability to share a live view of an application, such as a Web browser or spreadsheet. Participants are able to view every movement of the presenter’s cursor, making it possible to teach software applications remotely. The presenter may also be able to give students control of the application so they can try the task themselves.

Best uses

- Time-sensitive announcements or demonstrations for large audiences
- Question and answer sessions that use guest speakers or subject matter experts
- Software application training
- Collaborative meetings for team members in different locations
- Discussion or follow-up sessions as part of a blended learning program

“Web conferencing worked very well for our organization because it allowed us to provide training in multiple branches simultaneously and across large geographic areas. We have learned that in order for Web conferencing to be successful we have to lay the groundwork by making sure users have the needed programs on their workstations, users have time to become familiar with the tools beforehand, and users and their managers have bought into the program.”

—David Bullock

Media Services Supervisor, Information Technology Division,
Cuyahoga County Public Library

Benefits

- Saves travel time and costs for participants
- Allows the presenter to adjust the pace and/or complexity of information being conveyed in response to immediate interactions and feedback between presenter and participants
- Allows the presenter to gauge student comprehension of material using discussion and polling
- Enables experts to address a group of learners from any location and respond to questions in real time
- Provides ability to demonstrate complex software applications remotely
- Allows sessions to be recorded and archived for learners to review and for those who cannot attend the live session
- Creates a sense of community for learners and instructors who might not otherwise interact with each other

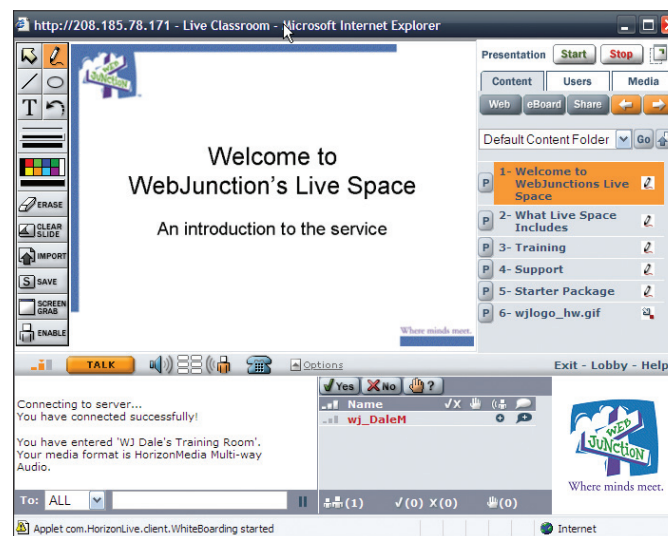
- Involves a social interaction with other people that can make training more engaging compared to other e-learning modes

Challenges

- Presenter needs to develop specialized facilitation and moderation skills to encourage participation by all learners
- More difficult than in-person training for presenters to gauge participant comprehension and involvement on the fly
- Several technical hurdles for users, including Internet connection speed, needing to install software, needing a headset, etc.
- Thoughtful design required to keep participants engaged
- Participants may find it difficult to limit the distractions of their workplace during training

Tips/tricks

1. Provide participants with technical requirements needed to participate, links to any downloads or plug-ins needed, and instructions for accessing technical help.
2. Provide clear instructions for logging into the Web conference and encourage participants to test their systems several days before the start time.
3. Offer suggestions for limiting participant distractions.
4. Spend time at the beginning covering the basics and setting ground rules for interaction.
5. Have a “producer,” or assistant to the presenter, to manage the technical side of the Web conference and the chat sessions.
6. Have a back-up plan that allows for technology problems (for example, have screen shots of the Web site to be shown just in case the site is down).
7. Limit the time to one hour or less.
8. Build in interactivity by using polls, multiple-choice questions and chat features to keep learners engaged and help them retain the material.
9. Build in fun and humor whenever possible.



Synchronous Training using WebJunction's Live Space Tool

Tools

Web conferencing services are typically hosted by a vendor and made available either on a usage basis (pay per use) or for a fixed fee (pay per “seat”). Many vendors charge set-up fees. Also, be aware of potential overage charges for exceeding your number of seat licenses.

- **WebJunction’s Live Space:** <http://webjunction.org/livespace>
Combines Horizon Wimba’s conferencing tool with enhanced library-specific training and support
- **Horizon Wimba:** www.horizonwimba.com/
Extended training features like breakout rooms, shared cursor control, etc., mainly for academic and nonprofit institutions
- **Illuminate:** www.illuminate.com/
Extended training features like breakout rooms, shared cursor control, etc.
- **OPAL:** <http://opal-online.org/>
Lower cost, basic solution for libraries, with shared programming between libraries
- **Centra Live:** www.saba.com/centra-saba/
Highly rated, full-featured virtual classroom and meeting space with several different versions available for different uses
- **WebEx:** www.webex.com/
A top-rated professional Web conferencing tool aimed at business use for meetings and training
- **Adobe Acrobat Connect:** www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnect
A visually appealing, Flash-based conferencing tool with highly configurable layout and display options
- **DimDim:** <http://dimdim.com/>
Open-source Web conferencing, in both free and “enterprise” versions; still new and under development

Additional resources

WebJunction’s Synchronous Learning Expert Online Program:
<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=13896>

WebJunction’s Synchronous Survival School:
<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=14972>

Live Classroom Best Practice Tips:
<http://data.webjunction.org/wj/documents/14685.pdf>

101 Tips to Motivate the Online Learner:
<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=13879>

Tent Card for E-learners:
<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=14188>

Door Hanger for E-learners:
<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=14041>

Building Success for E-learners:
<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=13874>

24 Hours in the Life of a New Synchronous Learner:
<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=13803>

24 Hours in the Life of a Synchronous Trainer:
<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=13864>

E-learning Tips:
<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=13139>

Ryan, Ellis. “A Field Guide to Web Conferencing.” *Learning Circuits*, 2005.

Hofmann, Jennifer. *How to Design for the Online Classroom: Creating Great Interactive and Collaborative Training Using Web Conferencing*. Brandon Hall Research: www.brandon-hall.com/publications/lol/lol.shtml

“Seven Things You Should Know about Virtual Meetings.” The EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative, 2006:
www.educause.edu/LibraryDetailPage/666?ID=ELI7011

Sources

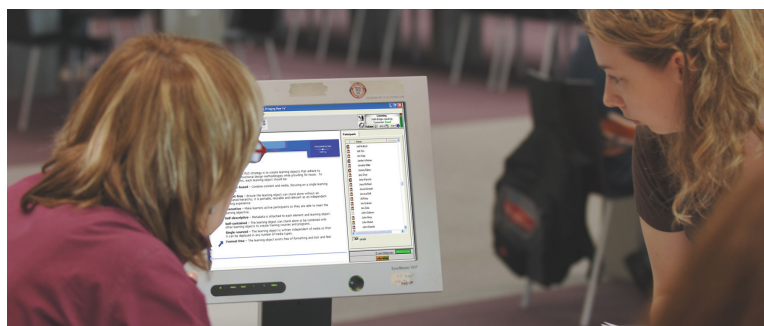
Hofmann, Jennifer. *How to Design for the Online Classroom: Creating Great Interactive and Collaborative Training Using Web Conferencing*. Brandon Hall Research.

———. “Be an Active and Participative Instructor.” *Learning Circuits*, 2003.

The Pedagogical Value of a Live Virtual Classroom: An Introduction to Horizon Wimba Live Classroom, 2005.

Ryan, Ellis. “A Field Guide to Web Conferencing.” *Learning Circuits*, 2005.

Web Seminar Planning Checklist. Raindance Communications, Inc., 2005.



Blended Learning Modes Summary Chart

Mode	Best Uses	Benefits	Challenges
Discussion Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live Online Learning • Online chat/IM sessions • Conference calls • Video conferencing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online discussion boards • Listservs • E-mail • Blogs • Wikis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online tutorials • Simulations • Online self-assessments • Archived Webinars • Podcasts • CD-Roms
Online Instant Messaging/Chat Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal check-ins • Small group discussions • Set “office hours” for students to ask instructor clarification questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free, easy access and simple for participants and facilitators to learn • Ability to preserve transcripts • Immediate feedback • Learners can develop a buddy list and have access to other learners when they are online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty keeping conversations focused • Inability to observe body language, tone or facial expressions • Difficulty knowing when response is complete • Time delay • Scheduling challenges • Limited time for reflection on questions
Podcasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lectures • Interviews with experts in the field • Recording classroom presentations or role-playing exercises • Audio content that has previously been created and could be used as supplemental material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners subscribe to content and receive updates automatically • Little monetary investment required to get started • Content is portable and available on demand • Appeal to auditory learners • It provides a way for learners to review material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time involved for creation of podcast—including planning the content, recording, editing and publishing • Users must have sufficient bandwidth to download • Careful planning and a commitment to continue producing content are required • Learners cannot quickly “skim” through a podcast

Blended Learning Modes Summary Chart (cont.)

Mode	Best Uses	Benefits	Challenges
<p>Rapid E-learning Software Tools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing basic knowledge transfer for learners in sessions that are less than one hour in length • Training that is standard for all audiences and does not change often • Building on existing content for self-paced tutorials • Training that needs to be deployed quickly to a wide audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainer can avoid repeated delivery • Software tools are fairly inexpensive, easy to learn, and offer a huge cost saving over outside development • Quick creation of professional-looking materials • Ability to leverage existing content • Software builds on trainers' and learners' familiarity with PPT • Tools allow course designers to update and edit tutorials • Tutorials can be integrated into an LMS • Learners can participate at their convenience • Training provided quickly to a large number of learners or learners spread out geographically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional design skills are critically important • Time needed to develop and create training • Temptation to recycle in-person training and simply convert it to a boring, ineffective self-paced tutorial • Learners with dial-up access may experience delays downloading tutorials • Learners need computers with speakers or headphones, an up-to-date browser and Flash plug-in versions • Learners need to be comfortable with technology and online learning
<p>Web Conferencing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important announcements, updates or demonstrations for large audiences • Q & A sessions utilizing experts • Remote software application training • Meetings or discussions for learners in different locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saved travel time and costs • Immediate interaction and feedback • Ability to adjust instruction and check for comprehension • Sessions can be archived • It quickly fosters a sense of community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructors need facilitation skills specific to live online learning • Technical hurdles for users • Thoughtful design required • Learners may find it difficult to limit workplace distractions

Blended Learning Case Studies

Now that you have an overview of several different possible blended learning modes, we want to share how other organizations have successfully used blended learning in their training programs. The following seven case studies provide examples of the creative and innovative ways that library organizations are implementing and benefiting from blended learning. Several common themes emerged from each of the successful blended learning programs:

- Supplementing online training with in-person sessions helps establish expectations and build a sense of community
- Providing excellent technical support and opportunities for learners who need additional technology training was a critical factor for success
- Incorporating multiple delivery methods offers learners a range of learning experiences that can deepen their understanding and application of learning content

The case studies offer illustrations of a range of blended learning programs currently being offered by library organizations. We plan to create additional case studies about organizations utilizing blended learning. Please tell us about your program at:
<http://webjunction.org/blendedlearning>



LibraryU offers free Web-based training to librarians 24/7

LibraryU gives three examples of how e-learning programs evolved into blended learning programs that better meet the needs of library staff

SITUATION In 2001, several Illinois library systems and public libraries came together with the goal of developing convenient online training for Illinois librarians. They wanted to be able to offer consistent training to their staffs but also make it accessible anywhere and anytime. Using LSTA grant funding, LibraryU was created with the idea that librarians would author the content modules. However, after two years, momentum for the project slowed due to lack of time and the challenge of learning the authoring tool.

Recognizing the importance of the project, the Illinois State Library aggressively pursued funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to revitalize the project, and with an initial \$200,000 grant, *LibraryU: Reloaded* was launched. The State Library hired project manager Lisa Barnhart to oversee the initiative. Although there was new life in the project, there were still challenges to be faced, including:

- The research and purchase of a more user-friendly Learning Management System to hold the online courses
- A lack of uniformity and consistency in module formatting and continuity
- A change in content focus, from replacing or supplementing training that needs to be taught on a frequent basis to providing library staff with complete skill sets

SOLUTION LibraryU addressed some of the initial problems with the following actions:

- A project coordinator and technology consultant were hired to handle the management and technology development of *LibraryU: Reloaded*.
- A team approach was used to develop consistent content, where subject matter experts submit their work as plain text, which is uploaded into the Web-based training software by project managers.
- After building a base of asynchronous content, LibraryU partnered with OPAL (Online Programming for All

Highlights

LibraryU: Web-based training for Illinois

- Provides cost-effective Web-based training that can be accessed anywhere, anytime and just-in-time
- Provides convenient, relevant technology training for library staff throughout the state

Libraries), a Web conferencing service, to blend multiple elements of online programming into another program, LibraryU Live!, which reached more learners and provided interaction for learners.

The development of LibraryU Live! allowed LibraryU to match its courses with the preferred learning styles of more learners. The basic formula used in each LibraryU Live! session involved creating a LibraryU self-paced learning module and supplementing it with synchronous sessions using OPAL. During the synchronous sessions, the presenter and participants interacted via Web conference. The recorded archive of the synchronous session was then added to a permanent asynchronous module for future use on LibraryU.

In addition to LibraryU Live!, Library U offers three different blended learning experiences:

- A day-long event about digital audio that utilizes prereading and a Web conference
- A multiweek course about intellectual freedom that includes homework and required discussion board postings
- A two-hour Web conference on Internet security that includes follow-up discussions via discussion boards between the participants and presenter

continued

LESSONS LEARNED From these three successful blended learning experiences, LibraryU learned some excellent lessons:

- “Producers” who support trainers delivering content play a key role in the successful delivery of a synchronous online session. LibraryU staff discovered they were most successful when they utilized the following model:
 - One producer acted as a moderator who could also field general questions.
 - Another producer provided technical assistance to participants through private text chats without disrupting the presentation.
 - Whenever possible, a third producer was positioned in the same physical location as the presenter to provide support, solve problems and exchange text messages with the other two producers.
- Creating asynchronous content that was made available to users prior to a synchronous OPAL presentation gave participants an additional source of information to turn to during the presentation and then became a vital part of the archived package for future users to view.
- The multiweek workshop provided participants with more opportunities for learner participation and engagement. However, in general, the participants viewed the experience as a bit too demanding in the level of participation and accountability. This will be best addressed by clarifying what is expected of learners at the beginning of the next multiweek course LibraryU offers.
- In general, the two-hour synchronous presentation format of LibraryU Live! is most successful with a medium-size group. This confirms that users come to LibraryU to gain practical, relevant information in a quick and less demanding format.

For more information about LibraryU
visit www.libraryu.org.

State Library of Iowa uses statewide videoconferencing to offer certification course

Blended learning helps library directors take part in an interactive course while staying at the helm of their libraries



SITUATION Twenty years ago libraries in Iowa had the foresight to develop a voluntary certification program for library directors across the state. Beginning in July 1999, the certification program became required for those libraries that wished to receive direct state aid. Iowa's objectives for requiring certification of public library directors are to:

- Improve library service in Iowa by developing the skills of public library staff
- Encourage public librarians to acquire, maintain and develop their skills through basic and continuing education
- Provide recognition for public librarians
- Enhance the public image of librarians and libraries
- Provide guidelines that public library boards may use in developing staff hiring policies

In 1986 the State Library purchased a public management training curriculum from the University of Wisconsin extension, adapted by the University of Iowa's School of Library and Information Science. The State Library utilized this comprehensive curriculum, developing two in-person management trainings that library directors can attend to obtain their certification. In Iowa, director certification is a requirement for a library to receive state funding. However, the comprehensive nature of the curriculum posed a problem because many library directors were hesitant to attend a week-long training session.

SOLUTION The State Library of Iowa overcame the challenge of requiring directors to attend a week-long training by utilizing a blended learning approach in its Public Management Training Program. The State Library structured the eight-week course to include an initial five-hour, in-person orientation session. The remaining seven course sessions take place over videoconference that uses the Iowa Communications Network (ICN), a statewide, state-administered fiber optics network that provides high-quality full-motion, two-way interactive video, data transport and long-distance voice communications. ICN connections are available in Iowa schools, community colleges, universities and over 50 public libraries.

Highlights

State Library of Iowa

- Blends in-person orientation with eight interactive sessions
- Uses state videoconferencing network so learners can participate remotely
- Achieves higher enrollment and completion rates as a result

“Leaving their libraries for an entire week of training is daunting for many library directors.”

—Michele Leiniger
Iowa Continuing Education Consultant

Using ICN connections makes it much easier for directors across the state to take part in the program because they are able to access the ICN in their local communities. Additionally, by breaking up the program into one in-person and seven remote sessions, library directors are better able to manage the time they are away from their libraries. Overall, directors find the blended training format more convenient and less of a burden on their already busy schedules.

LESSONS LEARNED Although ICN serves as a useful tool for this training, instructors have to be prepared to troubleshoot technical problems and respond to the needs of students who are viewing the training in multiple sites. To lessen some of these issues and reduce the isolation students can experience by attending much of the class remotely, the State Library is supplementing its current course design with additional online elements. In addition to in-person and follow-up video sessions, the course now includes use of private message boards for course discussions and a class Web site to house course syllabi,

continued

articles and assignments. Plans are underway to include Webinars as part of the course beginning next year. The State Library continues to refine its management course, not only by infusing new online tools into the course but also by frequently updating the content of its course as the needs of libraries continue to change.

The following elements are key success factors in the State Library of Iowa's blended approach:

- Using highly qualified instructors who have experience working in small, rural libraries
- Holding an initial in-person session to serve as a springboard for the rest of the course and for preparing students to use message boards during the course
- Responding to the busy schedules of their students by reducing the homework assignments from every session to every other session
- Making assignments and the course final project practical, applicable and relevant to the current work of students
- Using technology to increase the flexibility of student interaction with course material and to significantly reduce the travel time needed to attend the course

Maryland's DLDS maximizes investment in online training

Blended learning approach capitalizes on both high-quality, online learning and high-touch, in-person training



SITUATION Maryland's Division of Library Development and Services (DLDS) invested in a subscription to Ninth House—an online learning vendor that provides self-paced online courses and simulations in management development. Ninth House offered rich content from leading management gurus that was easily scalable, reduced staff training time, and was far less expensive than sending staff to similar in-person workshops. Still, Ninth House was a significant investment, so the Maryland DLDS wanted to maximize its investment and help learners apply course content.

SOLUTION The staff at the Maryland DLDS decided on a blended approach and developed a plan for grouping learners into teams. Each team was comprised of ten to 15 managers or aspiring managers selected by their supervisors to participate in the program. The teams met in person for a kick-off session before beginning their online courses and monthly 2.5 hours of in-person follow-up sessions. With the help of a facilitator, the teams used the orientation session to:

- Establish ground rules and team expectations
- Learn how to use the course software
- Discuss meeting logistics for future sessions

The individual teams reviewed the course catalog and selected the topics they were most interested in covering as well as the number of topics they planned to tackle. Each learner was then responsible for completing the scheduled online course prior to attending the next in-person monthly session. At the in-person session, a facilitator reviewed the content, answered questions, checked for understanding and helped the learners apply key lessons to their own daily work.

LESSONS LEARNED Now in its fifth year, the program has allowed over 100 of Maryland's library staff to take part in high-quality management and leadership development training at a significant cost savings for the state library. Learners have appreciated the flexibility and convenience of the online courses, and the user-friendly

Highlights

Maryland DLDS

- Pairs high-quality, online courses with monthly in-person facilitated sessions
- Puts learners in teams to work together to review and apply content to daily work
- Achieves cost savings and high completion rates as a result

“In-person kick-off sessions were essential to the program's success!”

—Nini Beegan,
Maryland Online Learning Consultant

courses have appealed to learners with a variety of technology skills levels. When learners have encountered technical issues, Ninth House has provided excellent technical support. By supplementing online training with small in-person sessions, Maryland has been able to:

- Maintain high program completion rates
- Help learners transfer new skills and concepts to their work through interaction with their peers
- Establish clear expectations and ground rules during kick-off sessions

Taking a team approach has also been a key factor in the success of Maryland's program. Creating teams has helped learners stay motivated and accountable to their team members. It has also allowed Maryland to group learners regionally and reduce travel costs and time involved in attending monthly follow-up sessions. Team members also engage in evaluation and celebration. Both of these program elements are appreciated by learners and help the program continue to improve and evolve over time.



PLCMC encourages its staff to rediscover the joy of learning

Engaging and motivating learners was the key to innovative program's success

SITUATION In the last few years, Helene Blowers, the Technology Director at the Public Libraries of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County (PLCMC), witnessed an explosion of new and emerging Web 2.0 technologies—most of which were free and readily available on the Internet—and recognized their potential for libraries. Blowers also realized that the tools were valuable only in the hands of trained staff members. She began conducting in-person Web 2.0 workshops, but with a library system of over 540 staff members, the workshops were not reaching enough staff. So, Blowers decided to blend online elements into the training, in order to overcome the following challenges:

- Encouraging staff to explore new technology and discover applications for new tools in their daily work
- Recognizing that good training doesn't always result in good learning if learners are not properly engaged or motivated
- Infusing a sense of self-discovery and autonomy in the experience
- Reaching a large number of staff

SOLUTION With the support of several other PLCMC staff, the Learning 2.0 program, based loosely upon Stephen Abram's article "43 Things I (or You) Might Want to Do This Year" (*Information Outlook*, February 2006), was developed. This program was completely built on Web 2.0 technologies that are freely available on the Internet including Blogger, Flickr, Odeo, YouTube, PBWiki and Bloglines.

Library staff members were invited to participate by completing "23 Things" over a three-month period. The first week was spent learning about the "7 1/2 Habits of Highly Successful Lifelong Learners" through an online tutorial developed by Lori Reed, training specialist at PLCMC, and establishing the basic concept of the learner taking on learning by himself or herself. The second week introduced the participants to blogs and required each learner to begin and maintain a blog throughout the process in order to trace his or her thoughts about the learning process. Blogging also helped create dialogue among learners, both in person and online. Each week additional tasks were posted to the

Highlights

The Learning 2.0 Program

- Encourages the exploration of new technologies by staff
- Introduces staff to new, freely available Internet tools that will help them support PLCMC's mission
- Rewards staff for taking the initiative to complete 23 self-discovery technology exercises

Learning 2.0 blog, and many staff members began taking part in the challenge in weeks five and six because of the positive feedback provided by initial participants.

Each learning discovery task was designed in two parts: 1) to give the staff member exposure to a new technology and 2) to present an optional challenge. For example, one task was to go to Flickr and find a picture while the challenge was to take and post a picture on Flickr themselves. Fifty percent of the participants completed the optional challenges, and 352 of the library's 540 staff members started a blog during the program. Overall, 226 staff members actually completed the entire program.

The participants' blogs encouraged discussion and learning among participants, both online and over the reference desk. Participants shared their ideas and lessons learned via their blogs, which provided support to learners as they completed their 23 Things. Managers were inspired to carve out time for their staff to work on their 23 Things before the doors opened each day. Some staff also had 23 Things theme days, purposefully making time to work on their challenges during the work day. Supplementing the tasks learners were completing with online discussion and reflection as well as in-person support from supervisors and coworkers, the program increased the rate of completion and deepened learners' understanding.

continued

As an incentive, each participant who completed the 23 Things received an MP3 player (a logical incentive that could also help them become more familiar with the libraries' expensive new audiobook subscriptions), and one lucky recipient won a laptop. The incentive drew learners into the program, but the engaging tasks and fun of discovering new tools kept many of them motivated to finish.

LESSONS LEARNED At the conclusion of the Learning 2.0 program, Helene captured the lessons learned in her blog (www.librarybytes.com/2006/11/nine-seven-best-practices-on-learning.html). Here is a summary of what she learned:

- Engage and motivate learners to drive the lessons home
- Build in extra discovery time and expect learners to begin the program after its initial launch
- Allow participants to blog anonymously so that they are willing to share their honest and open feedback
- Use Web 1.0 methods (e-mail, Intranet) that learners are already familiar with to continually communicate with learners
- Focus on “discovery” and offer challenges for learners who are ready and able to do more
- Encourage staff to work together and learn from each other
- De-emphasize “doing it right”; a little information gives you confidence to seek more
- Practice transparency and enable radical trust—the library needs to trust its staff and communicate with transparency. (Allowing them to blog openly was a huge part of radical trust; this developed stronger relationships between library staff and the administrators)
- Continually encourage staff to “play”; librarians were hesitant to use work time to practice their new skills, so creating a learning habit was a difficult challenge for most to overcome



LE@D solves the problem of lost time and productivity by bringing library training to the desktop

In-person training sessions were not proving feasible or practical in such a large geographical area

SITUATION Dale Fleege, former coordinator of the North East Texas Library System; Phil Turner, University of North Texas's Vice Provost of Learning Enhancement; and Arlita Harris, former Associate Dean of the School of Library and Information Sciences, wanted to create library training courses that could be replicated and utilized for all libraries across Texas and the nation.

Previously, Dale had been bringing in costly subject matter experts for face-to-face training sessions that required his staff to travel long distances and often close their libraries while they were in training. This process was time-consuming and expensive, and it did not offer much opportunity for additional learning or follow-up support once the training was completed.

Interested in finding a better way to approach this problem, this group created Library Education @ Desktop, or LE@D, which sought to incorporate the following elements into the new staff training program:

- The ability to participate as a group or individually
- Content developed by recognized subject matter experts
- Content based on results of needs assessments that gather input from a broad range of administrators, staff and supporters in various institutional sizes and locales
- Courses that can be completed in one to two hours and offer students the flexibility to work at their own pace

SOLUTION Through the LE@D program, short, self-paced training modules designed specifically for library staff were developed. The first course, called "Library Privacy and Confidentiality: Law and Policy," was created just after the passage of the Patriot Act. Developers promoted the course only among the North Texas Library system to see what type of response they would receive. When 515 participants signed up for the first course the developers knew they were on to something!

The group then applied for a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to design seven minicourses.

Highlights

Library Education @ Desktop

- Provides a series of online continuing education courses for library staff
- Offers high-quality, Internet-delivered continuing education so economically that entire library staffs can be trained

Their grant funding allowed them to keep the fees to learners very low and provided an inexpensive and rapid way for large numbers of library staff to participate in online training developed specifically for their needs.

LE@D courses are developed after reviewing past course evaluations to identify areas of interest and need. Subject matter experts are identified and asked to provide the content while LE@D instructional designers polish and format the course. Facilitated by someone from LE@D, the learners' experiences blend the asynchronous self-paced course material with online discussions that allow participants to share experiences and support one another during and after the training.

Often, a group of library staff from the same organization participate in LE@D courses. Library managers can purchase a course at a discount for his or her whole staff. The facilitator from LE@D acts as the common thread among the participants and helps them bring their learning experiences back to the day-to-day life of their libraries. When individuals purchase the courses separately, they are grouped with others who are taking the same training and are assigned a LE@D facilitator. Interestingly, LE@D facilitators have found that these discussions can sometimes be more productive among a group of peers who do not work together because the autonomy allows for a more free and in-depth discussion.

continued

LESSONS LEARNED The LE@D developers began the program by requiring that a minimum of 35 individuals participate with one facilitator. However, the realities of staff turnover and individual training needs among groups from the same organization resulted in LE@D developing a course format that can better accommodate individuals and groups, which was a very successful change.

LE@D began offering training packages for new employees, new managers, youth librarians, etc., to tailor training to the learner's specific role or situation. Training packages are available to individuals or can be purchased at a discount for groups.

The developers of LE@D offer the following steps in order for an organization to integrate an online training plan into its library:

- Promote—using broadcast e-mails, by creating a registration link for staff on your own Web site, and offering continuing education credits
- Participate—establish your continuing education coordinator as a course facilitator for your LE@D class, allowing him or her to build LE@D expertise
- Integrate—recognize and reward staff members who reach milestones, establish usage and completion goals
- Follow up—discuss courses in your staff meetings, share experiences, collect feedback
- Share—tell LE@D staff the success stories in your organization. Share with them so they can share new ideas, best practices and techniques for getting the most from LE@D courses with other organizations

For more information on LE@D, visit
www.leadonline.info



Where minds meet. SM

Washington State Virtual Reference Project develops a groundbreaking VRS training program

Blended learning encourages mastery of core competencies needed to deliver Virtual Reference Services

SITUATION In May 2001, the Washington State Library undertook an ambitious LSTA-funded initiative to provide all Washingtonians access to Virtual Reference Services (VRS). The Washington State Library determined that in order to successfully implement VRS, library staff delivering the services needed to learn multiple skills. They researched the existing training on VRS and found that what was available consisted mostly of training by the VRS software vendors. They quickly realized that project success depended on the development of a virtual reference training program for library staff that was able to:

- Meet the needs of varied types of libraries participating in the statewide project, including small public libraries in rural eastern Washington, large public libraries in urban areas, community college libraries and university libraries
- Reach staff with different levels of education and experience: some had MLS degrees, others did not; some had been providing VRS for a year or longer, others were still in the planning stages
- Apply to libraries using different VRS packages (LSSI, 24/7, QuestionPoint, Groopz)
- Address the needs of learners who had very little experience with online learning
- Be scalable and deliverable across a large geographic area

SOLUTION In 2002, the Washington State Library contracted with Mary Ross of the Seattle Public Library and coworker Daria Cal to create “Anytime, Anywhere Answers” (<http://vrstrain.spl.org>), a unique blended learning program designed to teach library staff across the state the core competencies needed to provide VRS. Implemented in November 2002, the program was relevant to staff using a variety of virtual reference software tools and focused on developing the critical skills and abilities that are necessary to deliver effective virtual reference transactions.

The training provided a unique blend of online and in-person learning activities, including face-to-face and virtual meetings, synchronous and asynchronous learning, and individual and

Highlights

Washington State VRP

- Integrates learning technology and skills needed to deliver VRS
- Utilizes online tools to help foster a community of learners
- Takes a blended approach and is scalable and deliverable across the state

“Online chat sessions reinforced the skills learners need to effectively provide Virtual Reference Services.”

—Mary Ross

Seattle Public Library Staff Training
and Development Manager

collaborative experiences. The curriculum was designed to help learners explore virtual reference from the user’s perspective while encouraging best practices and creating an ongoing learner community willing to share experiences with these new services. Throughout the course, instructors helped learners interact with materials and activities while encouraging them to reach their own conclusions rather than providing them with all the answers. Utilizing a blend of online and in-person learning activities helped learners quickly get up to speed on using technology tools, such as instant messaging (IM), chat and cobrowsing tools that are essential to providing VRS.

Since the fall of 2002, more than 150 staff members have participated in Anytime, Anywhere Answers classes and have reported on their high quality and usefulness. The in-person orientation was essential to the success of the program. Bringing everyone together built trust among the learners

continued

who would be collaborating together online. Instructors were also able to establish clear expectations, introduce a variety of technology tools quickly, and identify any learners who might need additional assistance. Combining library staff from all over the state and from all different types of libraries via the training provided a variety of perspectives and experiences.

LESSONS LEARNED Instructors found it very helpful to work in pairs because it allowed them to provide learners with more individual attention and feedback. Keeping the class size to no more than ten students was another important factor in the success of the program. It was also essential that learners have a context for the learning taking place in the course. Students who were not currently providing VRS or who were not about to begin providing services did not have a context for the learning and were not as successful in the course. (Two other workshops, “Virtual Reference 101” and “Going Virtual,” were developed for different audiences needing to become

knowledgeable about VRS.) Throughout the course, instructors worked to keep the class (especially the chat sessions) fun and used online discussions to foster a community where students could share information and collaborate.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Virtual Reference Training: The Complete Guide to Providing Anytime, Anywhere Answers, by Buff Hirko and Mary Bucher Ross (2004) is available from ALA Editions (ISBN 0-8389-0876-4). The book not only describes the AAA curriculum, its development and results, but also offers many insights and observations from class participants and trainers.

The Washington State Virtual Reference Project has contracted with Seattle Public Library to convert the AAA trainer-led classes into a self-paced, Web-based tutorial called *Virtual Reference Adventure: Choose Your Own Experience*.



Pairing in-person training with an active online community created a stronger learning experience

The need for the program to be scalable and reach a national audience inspired the use of blended learning techniques

SITUATION WebJunction's Spanish Language Outreach Program equips local library staff with knowledge and resources to reach out to Spanish speakers in their communities and increase their access to technology provided by the libraries. To date, the program's workshops have trained over 1,700 library staff members in 12 states about proven marketing techniques, understanding cultural differences, providing technology training, and partnering with local community organizations serving Spanish speakers.

The need to scale the program quickly and reach 46 states over a four-year period, along with the desire to create an online community focused on serving the needs of Spanish speakers, inspired the use of both in-person and online learning techniques. A combination of training formats was investigated as program staff considered how best to deal with the following issues:

- Trainers across the country needed ongoing training as they implemented what they learned at the institutes
- Trainers needed a way to easily share their successes and challenges as they began implementing their workshops
- Library staff participating in the workshops needed easy access to a variety of resources and additional support for the development of their own outreach activities
- Program staff wanted a way to both solicit and easily share the resources, best practices and tools that trainers and participants in the field were creating
- Program staff wanted to make materials available into the future, even after the four years of the grant were over

SOLUTION The program was developed using a blend of in-person training and online support to maximize its impact and to create a community of interest around serving the needs of Spanish speakers that would carry on into the future. Because WebJunction is an online community for library staff, it was only natural to blend face-to-face training with online resource sharing and discussion boards that are available on WebJunction.org.

Highlights

Spanish Language Outreach Program

- Equips local libraries with knowledge and resources to reach out to Spanish speakers in their communities
- Enables trainers to quickly reach library staff across their states
- Encourages national development of online communities among trainers and workshop attendees

Pairing both online and in-person training elements helped the program support both trainers and participants:

- Before the State Library trainers arrive for the in-person, three-day Training Institute, they attend an online Webinar that provides an overview of the program, addresses trainer expectations, and demonstrates how to use the program's resources and discussion boards.
- An online community is developed as trainers introduce themselves on the WebJunction discussion boards and use the discussion board to post a brief homework assignment.
- Meeting face to face during the Training Institute helps the trainers further develop a sense of community that carries over to a more supportive network as they deliver workshops in their states.
- Over the six months that trainers deliver local workshops, they post about their experiences and share resources and ideas that help libraries reach out to Spanish-speaking users.
- The resources posted to the discussion boards are later shared as documents and links on WebJunction to support individual program participants and the larger library community after the program has ended.

continued

A free online course, launched in March 2006, was developed after the first round of workshops. This course makes content available to staff unable to attend in-person workshops and new staff hired after the program is over. This course is also a valuable resource for workshop attendees who would like an additional opportunity to review key concepts.

Another online element, a series of monthly Webinars, focuses on providing additional information on topics that are covered during the in-person workshop—this online component was recently implemented and is an example of how new elements can be added to the blended mix as a program expands.

LESSONS LEARNED By the end of the Spanish Language Outreach Program in late 2008, the program will have trained over 150 trainers, who will have conducted over 400 workshops across the country. Incorporating online elements has been essential to expanding the program quickly and meeting the needs of trainers and participants.

While the in-person training was important for creating a deeper connection among the geographically dispersed trainers, the online components have allowed the group to interact with each other at multiple levels throughout the entire program.

The positive impact of blending in-person training and online learning elements has also inspired the Spanish Language Outreach Program to utilize a similar approach to support workshop participants. Workshop participants are encouraged to post their completed outreach plans to the discussion boards, and some participating states are using conference calls or Webinars to hold follow-up sessions with their workshop participants.

Adding additional online components over time has also been important to the success of the program. Both the online course and monthly Webinars keep participants connected to the community that has developed and provide additional resources for trainers and participants to use as they work with Spanish speakers in their communities.

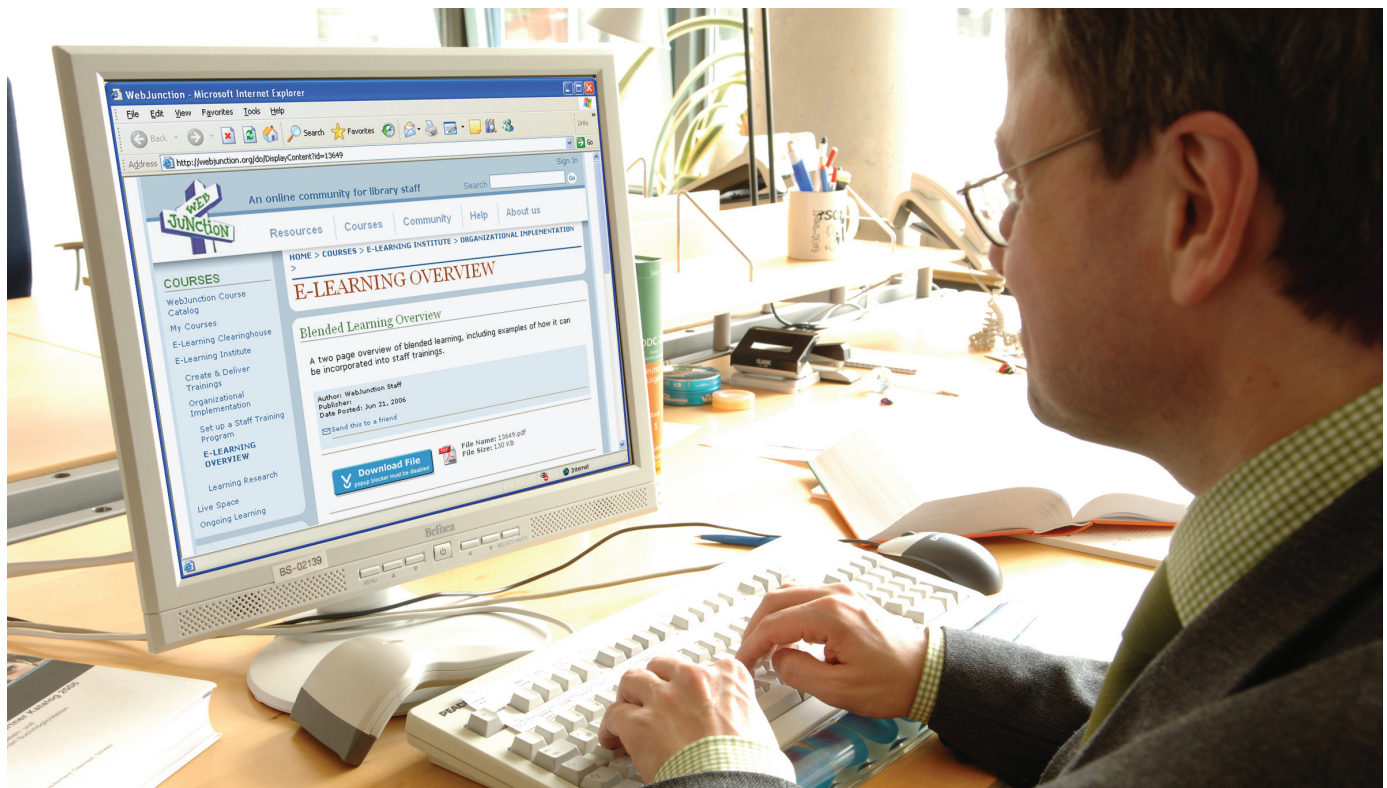
Conclusion

Blended learning offers exciting opportunities for both library organizations developing training and their learners. Many of the learning methods and options discussed in this guide would not have been possible ten years ago, and there is little doubt that additional technologies and online tools that can support blended learning are on the horizon.

The benefits of blended learning, such as increased learner satisfaction and understanding of materials, along with improved course quality and completion rates, are powerful reasons for library organizations to

explore blended learning. The increased cost-effectiveness, reduced training time, and the ability to easily update training materials offer additional compelling reasons for library organizations to embrace blended learning.

We believe that the use of blended learning for library staff training will continue to grow over the coming years. Visit <http://webjunction.org/blendedlearning> to learn more about blended learning and look for future reports from WebJunction as we continue to examine the use of e-learning by library organizations.



Appendix A

Blended Learning Guide Getting Started Worksheet

The following worksheet provides a list of key questions that every organization should consider prior to embarking on the development of a blended learning program.

Internal Assessment

Organizational culture and readiness play a large role in the success of any blended learning program.

- Does the leadership of your organization support blended learning?
- Does your organization have the technology infrastructure in place to support blended learning? If not, do you have the support to build it?
- What is the total cost of the technologies involved in implementing your blended learning project, including annual fees, staff time and training, etc.?
- Have staff members been identified to develop and manage your blended learning program? Are they familiar with or willing to learn about the technology and techniques involved in implementing blended learning?
- Is the proper support in place to help learners?
- How will you successfully market your blended learning program to your audience?
- How will you work with managers to set expectations for their staff members' participation in blended learning?
- How will you evaluate the impact of your blended learning program?

Target Audience Assessment

Understanding your target audience's experience will allow you to more effectively implement a blended learning program.

- What are the knowledge and skill gaps of your learners?
- What is the size and distribution of your audience?

- Are learners comfortable using the technologies that will be part of your blended learning program? How will you support learners who need help overcoming technology barriers?
- Do learners have access to the Internet and to the technologies needed to successfully participate in your blended learning program?
- Are your learners open to new ways of learning and to learning new technologies?
- Are your learners motivated to participate in and complete the program?
- How will you encourage your learners to make time to participate?

Learning Content Assessment

Clearly defined learning objectives are the essential building block of any successful blended learning program.

- What are the key learning objectives that need to be taught?
- What instructional strategies and methods will best support your learning objectives?
- What level of interactivity does the learning material require?
- What methods of instruction will best meet the needs of your learners?
- Can you make updates to the content of your blended learning program quickly and efficiently? If not, will the cost (financial and staff time) of updating the material be worthwhile?
- How will you assess and track your learners' completion of the program?
- Do your learners need to obtain certification on the topic?
- How quickly does the training need to be up and running?

Appendix B

Resources and Additional Information

Additional WebJunction Resources

- WebJunction's E-Learning Institute:
<http://webjunction.org/do/Navigation?category=14520>
- *Trends in E-Learning for Library Staff: A Summary of Research Findings*:
<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=14077>
- "E-Learning's Next Wave":
<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=14622>
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For updates and more information about the
Blended Learning Guide please visit WebJunction at
webjunction.org/blendedguide or contact WebJunction at info@WebJunction.org.

WebJunction is a thriving online community of library staff actively learning and sharing knowledge to build vibrant libraries. In the spirit of social software, WebJunction supports peer-to-peer discussions, cooperative content sharing and broad access to online learning with over 27,000 registered members and 50,000 unique monthly visitors. WebJunction is an OCLC service with support from the library community, partners in state library agencies and other library service organizations, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

OCLC Online Computer Library Center is a nonprofit organization, headquartered in Dublin, Ohio, that provides computer-based cataloging, reference, resource sharing and preservation services to more than 59,000 libraries in 112 countries and territories across the world.

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