

# TURNKEY STUDENT TRAINING

## Transforming Communication and Content with a Wiki

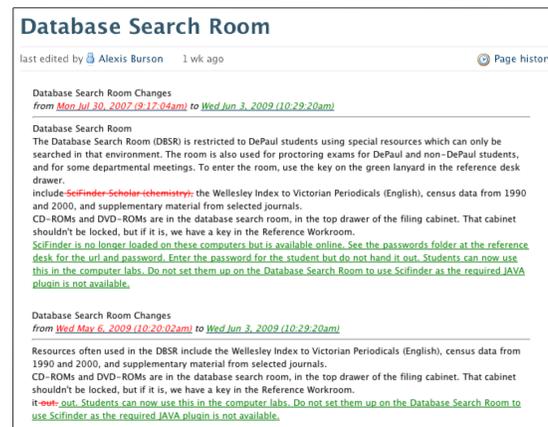
### Hilary Kraus & Missy Roser

#### Why a wiki?

Like many reference departments, we rely on student workers to help us staff our desk. We face common challenges as we try to ensure students provide excellent service to library users:

- Frequent student turnover
- Limited time and resources for training
- Cumbersome and repetitive production of training documents

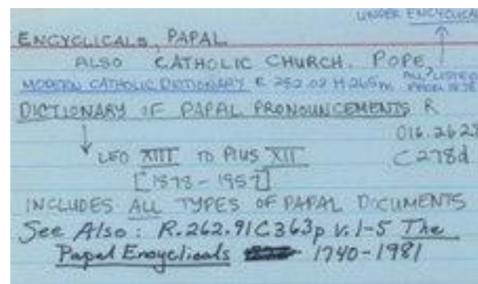
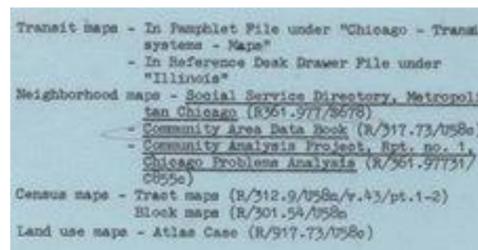
In 2006, we replaced our traditional training checklist and binder of supporting documents with a **wiki**, a web-based tool editable and accessible anywhere, at any time, and by anyone we invited.



Pages are written with our student assistants in mind, and reinforce training.

#### Our students said:

- I loved the wiki!
- A very useful and easily accessible ‘on the job’ manual.
- Allowed students to see the department as a whole work space ... allowing them participate in a way that they felt comfortable.



How students used to be trained, courtesy of the reference files.



A training day page. Each “checklist” item links to a content page on the wiki.

**“The best aspect was the interactivity— if your colleague discovers a better or quicker way of answering a question, then you have the benefit of their insight (and of contributing your own).”**  
— a former student assistant

#### Successes

The wiki enabled us to:

- Collaborate to create **ever-improving training materials**
- Build an archive of our **expertise & institutional memory**
- Establish a baseline for **consistent, reproducible training**
- Gave students an easy way to independently **access information & gain new skills**

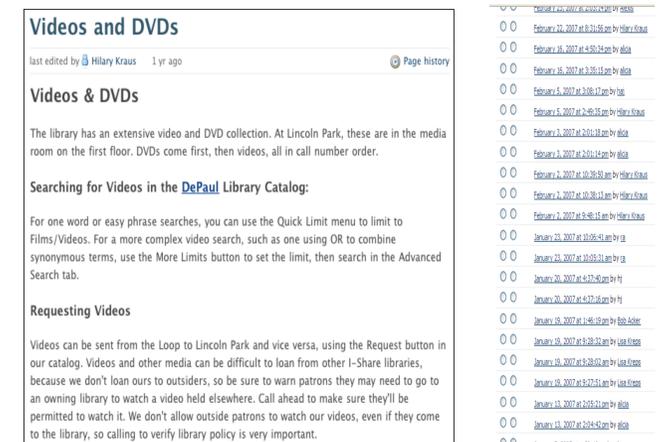
#### Challenges

The wiki required:

- Yet another **login**
- A fair amount of **set-up time** to seed substantial content & establish look & feel
- A **learning curve** for new users
- Time to **develop & execute training**
- A commitment to ongoing **content creation & maintenance**

#### What we learned

Our **wiki** enjoyed tremendous success and ultimately led the library to establish an intranet based on the same model. Now every department has documentation and training online, easily accessible to their own workers and others for refreshers or to answer a question after hours. It’s helped build a culture of communication and cooperation throughout the library.



Pages are continually developed, edited, and revised by students and staff members—especially during the wiki’s initial stages.

#### Our colleagues said:

- The wiki is incredibly easy to use. Anyone can do it.
- I adore the wiki. It's like having a longtime coworker who knows all the answers every minute of the day.
- A *huge* improvement over the network drive and paper files.
- In terms of training, the wiki is a godsend.
- I found that the wiki helped me avoid information overload.