Turnkey Student Training: Transforming Communication and Content with a Wiki

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The Wiki Experience at DePaul University

Where did the wiki begin?
The DePaul University Library's Reference Department began developing a wiki for student training and support in 2006. More than an online "reference binder," it was a sea change in how we communicated with our students and each other.

It allowed us to:

- Collaborate to build ever-improving training materials for new student workers.
- Give students our expertise and institutional memory even when we weren't in the building.
- Make the transition between student supervisors a snap.

Where is the wiki now?
As the wiki grew, and departments beyond reference began to see its advantages, the library administration approved development of a suite of interconnected wikis, integrated via a single entry portal. The Library Intranet was born.

As part of this process, the library:

- Funded a subscription to PBwiki (now PBWorks), our wiki host, to obtain better access, support, backups, and visual consistency with our library brand.
- Established the Internal Knowledge Management Committee, charged with oversight of the wikis, policy creation, and training responsibilities.

Lessons Learned for Wiki Development

Getting started with wiki-based training:

- Think about the structure of your current training program, and consider how it might translate to a wiki format—initial training or ongoing.
- Make use of any checklists or other documents you have as a starting point.
- Gradually add content that supports your in-person training.
- Ask colleagues to contribute entries on topics within their area of expertise.
- Don't be intimidated or feel you have to develop everything at once.

Tips to make your wiki successful:

- Name your pages logically & include common keywords so they can found with an easy search
- Add links to a sidebar or other navigation tool; these should include frequently accessed pages & a link to an a-z list of all entries
- If you use tagging, think carefully about your tags, and try to standardize a basic list; after that, let people think up their own supplementary ones
- Standardize page formatting, within reason, to establish a comfortable look & feel
- Make the most of a powerful tool: linking between entries; try never to duplicate information!
Suggested readings:


Suggested web sites:

Select a wiki tool that's right for you: http://www.wikimatrix.org/

Thank you for coming!

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