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.

Training Day 2: Procedures & Responsibilities

- Mailer mail departmental procedures
- Get to know your basic responsibilities as a reference assistant
- Locate the library’s web site so we can help patrons navigate it effectively
- Reference Desk
  - Automation & circulation procedures
  - Triage (move transactions on wiki)
  - Phone lines - travel & library work
  - Email automation
    - Forwarding, transferring, e-mailed, campus phone codes
  - Functions, interlibrary loans, web, & interlibrary requests
  - Remote access & special instructions
  - Library maps
  - Library links

- Library Links
  - Lab computers & student computer (what’s on the computer, logging in)
  - Call through printer, troubleshooting, occasional walk-up guide
  - Patron references (what’s changing; changing forms, troubleshooting, getting more from A to Z)
  - Lab responsibilities: patrons, phones, & labs

Changing Websites

- General info
  - Library: undergraduate
  - Library: undergraduate
  - Library: undergraduate

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

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.

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
- Give 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

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 this of training, the wiki is a godsend.
- I found that the wiki helped me avoid information overload.

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.

Turnkey Student Training

Transforming Communication and Content with a Wiki

Hilary Kraus & Missy Roser

Video & DVDs

- The library has an extensive video and DVD collection. At Lincoln Park, there’s an on-the-ready rack on the first floor. Clicks from there, their videos, all of their number.

Getting for Videos in therolls: Library Catalog

In one world, you can locate a video at the library catalog and then the video is in the catalog. Others may find it online. It’s a search for the video and the video is found.

Replaying Videos

Videos are used in the video that is found by the video. The video is in the catalog. The video is in the future. The video is in the future. The video is in the future. The video is in the future.

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