Embedding the Library User Experience in a Learning Management System for Improving Student Onboarding

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Identifying a Gap
The world has been changing...

“While libraries were once ‘the heart of the university,’ their value is no longer taken for granted. Librarians are increasingly facing the task of demonstrating the value they provide to the university communities they serve. Universities are expected to provide information on assessment and evaluation of their educational efforts. In this environment, it is not surprising that the academic library, as a creature of higher education, finds itself working to identify measures to more clearly demonstrate the library’s value by its influence on institutionally relevant outcomes—faculty productivity or student outcomes.”

And still, we all know how important the library is

“This study provides additional support for the ongoing importance of students’ use of academic libraries and the critical roles that libraries play in students’ academic development, engagement, skills, and achievement.”


But the student’s library experience is still challenging

“The exercise brought students to the threshold of the library, where many, so to speak, stumbled....

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Promoting early library experiences can relieve library anxiety and encourage a sense of belonging in the academic settings.

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First-year students’ estimates of their IL abilities do not square with objective measurements of their skills. Students are convinced that the problem lies in the library’s lack of organization and not in their lack of understanding.

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First-year students might be overwhelmed with the complex concepts before they work up the courage to enter the library. A better approach allows them to practice basic IL skills in a safe environment with no grade at risk. “

“I Felt Like Such a Freshman”: First-Year Students Crossing the Library Threshold. Paula R. Dempsey and Heather Jagman

The Gap and Ways to Bridge It
The first encounter of a student with scholarly materials

• Typically, students first need the library when their lecturer requires them to read something for class.
• More formal or less formal ways for the lecturers to let students know what is needed.
• Very often, the library is not involved.
Real-life case

“In regards to the readings, it is wholly dependent on the professor. Some upload everything in a more or less chronological fashion and, with the help of the syllabus (located in a different section of the blackboard chain), one knows what is required, when. Others, upload only what we need for the upcoming assignment. For many of the classes, we are required to utilize resources other than readings posted on blackboard. This information is either communicated in the syllabus or through notifications on blackboard. And most courses do not offer a comprehensive, at-a-glance summary of all of the reading (that would be great!”

-- First-year student, NYC, October 2018
The starting point and the solution

- To make the library experience obvious and familiar to students, the library should be more involved in teaching and learning from the outset.
- The solution: use course reading lists, embedded in the learning management system, as a vehicle to improve collaboration between academics and the library.
- The result: improved student’s onboarding library experience.
Our Vision

Create an end-to-end integrated environment for developing and accessing reading lists, organically binding students, academics, and the library by:

• Allowing very simple, straightforward interaction
• Adopting universal conventions for creating and using lists
• Regarding students and teachers in a similar manner
• Making the library a partner in a non-intrusive way
• Promoting engagement and collaboration
Course resource lists
Course Resource Lists

• Resources of all types that together present the literature that students need to read, watch, or process in other ways to become acquainted with a topic.

• Typically include both required and additional resources.

02181295 Twentieth-Century Berlin: An Urban Historical Perspective (englisch)

ECTS Points: 5
Language requirements: min. English B2

Urban history is a form of historical inquiry that enriches our understanding of cities and urban landscapes, often using an interdisciplinary approach. This course is an introduction to specific points of interest in the political, social and cultural developments in Berlin between the 1920s and the 1990s, showing how they illuminate German twentieth-century history. It links city sites, monuments and buildings to collective memory and political debates.

We learn about the fascinating stories of twentieth-century political events, places, people, buildings and monuments in Berlin presented by three urban historians, and we also learn the basic principles and approaches of urban history. We make urban history come alive through audio-guide narrated city walks, develop our own piece of micro-history by researching neighborhoods, and take part in an urban planning project — restoration of the Alexander Haus in Groß Glienicke — that brings this city's urban history into the present.

Literatur:
User experience principals for a reading list solution

• First and foremost, it must be very easy for students to obtain course reading of all types.
• Then, reading lists should be where students look for them.
• In addition, to help students make sense, reading lists should be structured, annotated, and, when relevant, aligned to the course schedule.
• For the above to work well, reading lists should be evaluable by the academics and the library, reusable, copyright compliant, and synchronized with the library collection.
The design of the user experience
Three main interactions

• Consuming a list: mainly students but also academics and the librarians
• Developing a list: academics, academic assistants, and librarians
• Communication: all stakeholders
Consuming a list—here is what counts

• Clarity: when you look at a list
  • You know what it is about
  • You understand the hierarchical structure easily
  • You immediately know whether it is a concise list or a long and complex list

• Glanceability: You can easily scan the list without really reading it—find items by various parameters
  • You understand the markers and symbols immediately, without training

• Calmness: the layout must be typographically accurate to avoid stress

• Reassurance: the main actions that you can take are evident from the list
Developing a list

- Stay within the ecosystem (the web, library, desktop, other tools)
- Minimize mental layering—start-to-end actions
- Consolidate decision-supporting data
- Provide clear and direct actions
- Lead to simple hierarchical structure
- Expose functionality gradually
- “What you see is what you get”
- Maximize the use of conventional, mainstream functionality—e.g., drag and drop
- Automate library workflows
Communication

- Enable a gradual, continuous process—offloading stress and workload for both the library and the academics
- Provide built-in notifications
  - Academics <-> library
  - Academics <-> students
The Outcome
Berlin in the Twentieth Century: A Cultural Topography

Reading list

Introducive Literature

Berlin in the Twentieth Century: A Cultural Topography

In preparation for these field trips, we will read each chapter from our primer in English and decide on short German language excerpts from the works mentioned in that chapter, which we shall then read and discuss in class. Both text and video from the analysis in this dual linguistic modality will allow us to reflect on both the theories of translation and comparative literary studies, each assuming a position to be taken on the place in which we find ourselves in the present moment in which we work together to elaborate a new understanding of the concept of the city as a cultural act of representation.

Collaborators:

[Names of Collaborators]

Student Discussion:

[Discussion Questions and Prompts]

Library Discussion:

[Library Discussion Questions and Prompts]
I really liked…

“… the way it was set out. It was logical and easy to understand all aspects of navigating the site and the content was clear to see and simple to access. It's valuable to have guidelines like this, to access easily the recommended materials that align with the course, as it gives a foundation to a path of research. I like the collaborative nature of this also.”

“It was simple to understand, seems to be an easier way to find the readings required. Will most likely help students who are new to the university.”

“The amount of effort applied to make all relevant information accessible to all is very much appreciated and a big thank you for having done what the staff at the library have done.”

“… how easy it was to use, very helpful for weekly readings having each week clearly displayed, very easy to read too and stylish.”
Observations

“Students have said that they love the organizational structure, with sections that follow and match what they see in the syllabus. It’s easy for them to find the articles because they’re centrally located. Some have even said that it makes them more likely to use library resources!”

“We didn’t need to do any training for the students; they just started using it.”

“In the short space of time that we’ve been using Leganto, reading lists have become a student expectation... A typical comment: ‘There is no list in this course, why not?’ It’s actually gone beyond that, to students asking why there aren’t more journal articles in the list. Students are not only expecting the reading-list links to be there, they're looking more critically at the content in the lists.”
Thank you!
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