

Flyer 220

Internet Training in ARL Libraries
March 1997

INTRODUCTION

In response to significant technological changes taking place in higher education, ARL libraries are offering courses and workshops on the Internet and the vast resources of the World Wide Web. These course offerings range from a basic overview of the Internet to how to publish on the Web. This new teaching responsibility for libraries has developed for several significant reasons: 1) libraries are providing access to more electronic information; 2) significant demand exists among faculty, staff, and students for classes and workshops on the Internet and the Web; and 3) very few academic departments are offering classes on utilizing Internet and its accompanying Web technology.

This survey was intended to gauge the number of academic libraries who are offering workshops and classes on the use of the Internet and the Web. While the survey proves libraries are embracing this new teaching responsibility, it also demonstrates they are doing it in very different ways depending on their facilities, relationship with computing centers, and available personnel.

SURVEY RESULTS

In the spring of 1996, a survey on Internet instruction was distributed to the then 119 ARL member libraries. The survey asked about instruction methods, instructional facilities, planning, technology, publicity, and documentation of the existing courses. A total of 56 responses (47%) were received.

INSTRUCTION

Ninety-one percent of the respondents offer or plan to offer Internet training to their users, and 93% provide this type of instruction on a routine basis. At four of the five institutions that do not offer this service, Internet training is handled by computing centers rather than the library. Most libraries (86%) have a formally designated person, often a reference or bibliographic instruction librarian (57%), in charge of coordinating the bibliographic instruction program.

Most of the respondents offer a series of non-credit independent workshops for faculty, staff, and students. The majority of the instructional sessions (66%) last

between one and two hours. Forty percent of respondents offer training on how to use the Internet for subject specific retrieval of information, and 39% provide instruction on the history of the Internet, the Web, FTP, Gopher, and Telnet, as well as explanations of search engines. The third major category of training focuses on writing HTML (16%); as yet, none of the libraries surveyed offered instruction in writing Hot Java. Nearly two-thirds of the libraries have created Web pages to assist in instruction, while roughly one-third of the libraries use PowerPoint or a similar presentation program during Internet instruction.

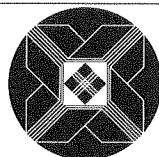
Instruction in using the Internet is given primarily in two ways. First, libraries offer instruction as a series of independent non-credit workshops in which library users can elect to attend any or all of the courses (45%). Second, libraries have integrated the use of the Internet into previously existing workshops and courses (44%). The majority of these courses are oriented almost equally towards the needs of the students, faculty, and staff; only a few libraries (12%) offer workshops for community (i.e., nonacademic) users.

A number of libraries offer Internet instruction in non-library campus buildings using a variety of the technologies currently available. These include computer networks (21%), image projectors (19%), overhead projectors (18%), and laptop computers and monitors (15% each). Fewer libraries demonstrate the Internet using a modem and a telephone line (11%), and fewer yet use a wireless modem (1%).

Sixty percent of responding libraries collaborate with other departments and their computing center. Most (41%) offer between 11 and 20 workshops per semester or quarter; 30% offer between 5 and 10 workshops per semester or quarter, and 20% offer more than 30 workshops per quarter or semester. These classes are most commonly offered throughout the academic session (81%); only 11% offer them as frequently as every week.

FACILITIES

Ninety-two percent of the libraries surveyed have at least one classroom for the purpose of Internet training, but less than half (46%) have classrooms that contain



computers in sufficient numbers that each student is permitted to have their own computer to work with. A sizable percentage of libraries (28%) have classrooms in which students have to share terminals, and slightly fewer libraries (20%) offer Internet instruction that features a passive learning approach, with the instructor teaching from a monitor and the audience observing but practicing elsewhere.

In addition to having electronic classrooms, 70% of the libraries responding use other rooms in the library for Internet instruction. Small classrooms predominate, as do lecture rooms, though several offer instruction in open areas and in large auditoriums.

PLANNING

In almost every instance, instruction on the Internet has been integrated into existing library budgets (84%). Courses are planned predominantly by librarians (38%), but also by library administrators (21%), library support staff (18%), and faculty (14%). Library faculty (29%) and coordinators of bibliographic and Internet instruction (28%) have the most influence in determining the subjects in which instruction is offered, though teaching faculty and committees also offer significant input.

TECHNOLOGY

The majority of Internet instruction is conducted on networked IBM or IBM clone machines with LCD panels and an image or slide projector. Macintosh platform computers are used in very few electronic classrooms (9%). Also, instruction using laptops and portable systems, large monitors, modem/telephone lines, and, especially, wireless modems is rare. Ethernet is the most common way to connect to the campus network for the workshop sessions. Clearly, the technology is constantly changing. Many libraries have recently upgraded to Windows 95 or Windows NT and Web-based library catalogs.

PUBLICITY

Libraries rely mostly on posted flyers to publicize Internet instruction (26%). Other common methods include placing announcements on their Web pages (21%), advertizing in the campus newspapers (18%), mailing flyers (15%), and posting on electronic lists (12%). A number of libraries publicize their classes by announcing them to various organizations and by giving these organizations information to disseminate. The classes are targeted to undergraduates and graduates as well as staff

and faculty. Community members are welcome at a majority of these free workshops, but the workshops are not widely advertized throughout the community.

DOCUMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Only two of the surveyed libraries have a vision statement for providing Internet workshops. The majority of the libraries surveyed offer a user evaluation form, though a sizable number offer the instructor an opportunity for peer review. Web feedback pages and Internet responses are used by only a minority of libraries, and none of them videotape instructional sessions for evaluation.

ISSUES AND TRENDS

It is clear from the responses of the libraries participating in this survey that there is a need for instruction in using the Internet and its ancillary technologies (i.e., HTML, Web browsers, etc.) Most, though not all, were in the process of creating or expanding their physical facilities to accommodate an electronic classroom. A classroom with 12 to 16 computers is the norm. These workshops on most campuses are very popular. One-on-one instruction is ideal, but this is difficult to attain given the numbers entering higher education and the fiscal realities facing most academic libraries. Group instruction is the norm; this instruction is being conducted more and more in classrooms designed, wired and equipped to access the Internet.

Libraries will continue to integrate instruction of the Internet into their presently existing orientations and subject oriented instruction. Web instruction should also become a regular part of the goals, objectives, and strategic vision for the library's future services. It is also clear that although most of the responding libraries are offering instruction in using the Internet, the majority of these libraries do not yet have a specific policy statement governing this instruction or a consistent means to evaluate this service. Finally, it is clear that instruction on using the Internet has become an accepted part of the regular duties of academic librarianship.

This Kit and Flyer were compiled by Jon E. Cawthorne, University of Oregon and Richard Bleiler, University of Connecticut, and were prepared as part of the OMS Collaborative Research/Writing Program.