Brenda Harlow
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Pasadena City College: Train the Trainer Workshops

For my service-learning project, I chose to work with the folks at Pasadena City College (PCC) New Media Center (NMC) my former employer. Our overall goal for the New Media Center was to present about three workshops to trainers and interested attendees in subjects the media center were interested in learning and providing workshops. After learning about the workshops subjects my personal goal was to learn how to present an efficient train the trainer workshop. After much discussion, we narrowed the topics down to MathML, Wikis, and Blogging. With our limited time on our schedules, we managed to schedule three dates on the official New Media Center lab workshop schedule.

Topic 1: Introduction to MathML

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) MathML programming language was by far the most difficult subject to learn in order to train. The Webmaster for PCC approached me about doing a workshop about this topic and I was a bit hesitant about doing a workshop on it. It was a subject that she had wanted to learn so she could understand the needs of the Mathematics department. After looking at the language and thinking about the requirements of the service-learning project, I decided that this off all the workshops best emphasizes the course objectives and colleges objectives with respect to accessibility of information to all.

MathML represents a way to post mathematical equations on a website that can be read by anyone or supported technology. This means that people can read the equation, highlight it, and copy/paste it. Additionally the use of MathML can help people

who are low-vision or have no vision. Screen-reader software that supports the technology can read the equations instead of getting the traditional image with no alternate text or poor alternate text. This is a big benefit for those students as they can independently hear mathematical information for courses.

Presentation wise, the future trainers and math faculty who attended the workshop found it to be very informative, but perhaps a bit too much information. The PCC Webmaster and I agreed that it has too much information for your average faculty member but for trainers, it was all information that the trainers need to know. After the presentation I spoke with the PCC Webmaster who would be one of several people responsible for implementing MathML for faculty. She felt that the presentation gave her a basic understanding of the subject and that she could build on it. More importantly, she saw the beginnings of a dialogue between math faculty and the web developers develop. It is both of our hopes that this MathML dialogue will continue through the creation of MathML workshops geared toward teaching faculty how to create MathML content. The math faculty who attended suggested running the workshops over the summer. From this we hope to create a legacy of equal access to mathematical information for all students.

Topic 2: Introduction to Wiki

Wikis represent the next generation of web technologies in that they allow for user generated content that anyone can edit within a simplified markup language. For some areas of the PCC website such as the Career Center, this kind of web content generation is a needed. The Career Center is planning on helping students create an online portfolio. A wiki would allow both the student and counselor work on a portfolio without having to learn complicated web programming or technologies.

In this presentation, I learned not only how to use and teach wiki creation, I learned valuable presentation skills. My delivery of workshops is fine, but I have had very few hands on workshop presentations so the order of the topics could have been better. I needed to make sure my audience knew there would be some additional information after the hands on section by letting them know in advance what was coming up. This information was best delivered after the hands on as it provided a basis for the trainer and media center to plan their own wiki install.

As for how the train the trainer portion of the presentation, the PCC Webmaster is already in the process of setting up the PCC Career Center in setting up Wikis for students. They plan on using them as e-portfolios for students where both the counselor and student can edit the content. This center is just the first of many wikis to come at PCC.

Topic 3: Introduction to Blogging

Blogging represents a new web technology that allows a person to have his or her own online journal or blog. These journals range from personal diaries to scholarly works to commentary on world events and more. Blogs usually are open for anyone to read or comment on, but some are private for only selected individuals. Recently blogging has become popular in all levels of education. A blog can give faculty a place to have a scholarly journal or students to post a reflective assignment journal.

In terms of training blog trainers, this is by far the easiest concept for technologist to understand. A blog is basically a web-based journal created from software by a user. What makes blogging difficult is not so much the technology, but deciding on a topic to write about and the actually writing of blog posts on a semi regular schedule. My future

trainer required very little instruction on how to create a blog and write a post. Rather she was more interested in finding out how to teach blogging and how it can be used in education. I felt in this respect I was able to provide her with ample examples of how to use blogging as well as articles about how faculty and staff are already using blogging in education.

Creating a Legacy

The legacy I set out to create was one of accessibility and providing training to those who may teach faculty these skills later. For this much, the training was a success. A dialogue between instructional technologist and math teachers has opened on MathML training. Ideas are flying around on how to start using wikis in the college with the Career Services office being the first group to start piloting wiki creation. Blogging has been found to be an interesting tool to produce content. To those who viewed the presentations ideas on how to uses these 'new' technologies are coming faster than they can be implemented.

Overall I found that this project was a very good experience. I learned a lot about the technologies I presented and also how to present to a future trainer. I hope to present the blogging and wiki presentations to the CSULB College of Education in the future. I was also contacted about presenting the wiki and blogging presentation in the spring at PCC. If anyone were to do a similar project, I would suggest that they carefully plan their presentations. Weeding through the different resources available can be difficult when planning the presentation. The ability to discern which resource is a good one from which is a bad resource is critical. As a trainer your goal should be to present reliable information in order to teach future trainers.