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# Delivering library instruction with screencast software: a Jing is worth a thousand words!

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# **Delivering Library Instruction with Screencast Software: A Jing is worth a thousand words!**

## **Background**

Southern Cross University is a regional university originally based in Lismore, in far northern NSW. It now also has campuses at Coffs Harbour, Tweed Heads and the southern Gold Coast and a satellite site for Nursing at Port Macquarie.

SCU offers a range of degrees in the School Health and Human Sciences and, as a member of their Liaison Librarian team, I am mainly responsible for Nursing and Psychology. In terms of library service, our main campus Library is based in Lismore with additional libraries at the Gold Coast and Coffs Harbour, where I'm based.

My liaison role includes planning, developing and co-ordinating information literacy programs and resources across all three campuses, for both Nursing and Psychology. My role also involves teaching sessions at Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie, and providing reference service via email, phone or face-to-face – whatever approach the client decides to make.

Originally both Nursing and Psychology were offered as internal degrees at single campuses. Under those circumstances, it was easy to deliver library instruction in face-to-face tutorials, & have the majority of students attend. Now, however, SCU is expanding its unit offerings across a range of campuses, and is committed to offering units in a range of delivery modes. And, of course, our students undertake clinical placements anywhere from the Gold Coast to Broken Hill, often still with assessment tasks to complete.

In Nursing this year we enrolled almost 800 students across all of these campuses. In Psychology, numbers vary across units, but this year we have had up to 280 in some – again, this is across all campuses and includes external enrolments. As a result of this, it has become increasingly clear that the Library needs to be able to provide training and reference assistance in other formats, not just in face-to-face sessions.

Last year our Librarians began using the screencasting software program Jing to help supplement our face-to-face training and to try to expand the options of learning for our students. Screencasting software allows you to record a video, with audio, of your onscreen demonstration, training or presentation, which your clients can watch at their time of need – 'just-in-time' training, delivered online any time of the day or night. As well as demonstrating 'live' on-screen action, the video can also include stills, such as a power point slide, or screen shots with captions, highlighted text or call-outs, to emphasise particular points. The video can be shared with a link via email, or on the web.

There are various software products available such as Camtasia Studio or Macromedia Captivate – we had actually used Camtasia Studio a few times to produce some short video clips but for various reasons, we hadn't made extensive use of them. I should point out here that other papers are very supportive of these products and have been more than happy with the tutorials they have been able to produce (Cox, 2004; Wales & Robertson, 2008; Winston-Brown, 2010).

The recent availability of a range of free, easy to use programs has opened up far more options for the creation of simpler on-the-fly recordings and it was with renewed interest that we looked more closely into the use of a new, free screencasting product, Jing. We were alerted to this program by a colleague in Queensland and once we started using it, could see it had great potential.

### **Literature Review:**

The term screencasting actually came into being in 2004. Various software programs enabling this process had actually been around for probably ten years prior to this. Jon Udell – author, information architect & internet specialist – authored a blog from 2002-2006 and during this time asked for suggestions regarding a name for this technique of recording what you were doing on a computer (2004). Of all the responses he received he liked the term ‘screencast’ & decided that whenever he recorded or talked about such a presentation he would use the term - & so it was born.

These days library instruction is generally offered in a variety of formats to enable clients to learn in the manner, and at the time, that best suits their needs. The research into this area of library instruction provides comparisons of the success of online versus face-to-face tutorials, comprehensive analyses of what makes a good online tutorial, as well as outlining individual case studies of applications. Much of this literature looks at longer tutorials containing menus, interactive links and quizzes which usually have text added for explanation - many of the earlier tutorials analysed do not include sound (Armstrong & Georgas, 2006; Dewald, 1999; Oud, 2009; Su & Kuo, 2010; Wales & Robertson, 2008).

A number of other libraries are now offering training in this manner and it is proving to be both popular and successful (Carr & Ly, 2009; Cox, 2006; Gravett & Gill, 2010). Staff at the Kellogg Library at California State University found that the use of screencasts made offering assistance online to students faster, and that they understood the process much more easily. Many students enjoyed using this form of instruction, including the fact that they could view the clip as often as was needed to be successful in attaining the level of skill they desired (Carr & Ly, 2009).

There have been a small number of papers written in relation to the use of screencasting in the way we’ve been using it, and also its use as a reference tool (Carr & Ly, 2009; Kroski, 2009; Sparks, 2010). These all provide strong support for our use of Jing. A number of blogs and websites also discuss the use of screencasting & the merits or otherwise of the various software programs available. Whilst this information may not be classified as scholarly (let alone peer-reviewed) it provides useful insights and tips into the use of the software and the technique of screencasting in general.

## **Project Background**

We began making a range of clips for students and academic staff: some were made in answer to a specific reference query, others were made in response to a lecturer's comments "students don't know how to..." others to supplement a face-to-face tutorial relating to a specific assessment task.

So this was all very good – lecturers were very happy with the product, and we thought they were a great idea, but what if students didn't want to watch them & didn't think they helped at all? I thought it would be a good idea to find out if students actually liked using the clips and found them useful. As librarians we often like to think we know what's best for our clients, but that doesn't necessarily mean they think the same way!

## **Aim of the Study:**

When the request for papers for this conference was posted, I thought our use of Jing clips would fit with the theme of the conference and that it was something others might be interested in. I had already produced three clips relating to a literature review assessment task in the nursing unit Medical Surgical 2, for which I had some very limited feedback. Our students fill out a general 'Feedback on Teaching' questionnaire at the end of their session and, as I'd worked closely with the Unit Assessor and delivered a tutorial session for him, I asked him to add 2 questions to the end of the section relating to the library tutorials. 44 students responded to the questionnaire and of those only 14 viewed clips but they all thought they were useful (7 didn't answer; 23 didn't view clips).

I then approached one of my Psychology lecturers, Dr Gail Moloney to mentor me through the process of conference presentation.

Gail suggested an opportunity to work with her students in Introduction to Psychology 2. Typically, students in this unit had trouble coming to grips with using APA referencing style. She suggested I make a clip about APA, saying the students had difficulty citing in text and producing a reference list. We could then assess the effectiveness of the use of screencasting for students.

## **Method:**

I produced two clips on APA style – one relating to the use of in text referencing & the other to generating a reference list. These clips made use of static powerpoint slides rather than the action of navigating a web page, but I was able to narrate the slides easily & move the mouse over sections of the citations as I pointed out particular features.

I developed two online surveys using Survey Monkey to match each of the clips – the questions were the same for each clip.

Gail allocated the students to answer one survey or the other, according to the month of their birth. 52 students responded to the questionnaires – a response rate of about 21%.

The first section of the survey asked about the clip itself and the second section asked about student characteristics (see Appendix 1).

## **Sample:**

The sample of students was fairly similar whichever clip they viewed. Students ranged in age from 19 -55, 35 identified themselves as female; 14 as male. For the vast majority English was their first language, and most were enrolled in a degree other than Psychology. For the purposes of this paper I haven't explored the relationship between these characteristics and their use of/or preference for the clips.

Initially I wanted to know if the students found the clips easy to use, how they felt about screencasting as an option for library instruction and lastly, if they believed the clips improved their ability to reference using APA style.

## **Results:**

You can see from these graphs that most students found the clips easy to use. Likewise, the majority felt it was a suitable method of delivering library instruction. Students responded to a statement using a 7 point Likert Scale where 1 meant they strongly disagreed with the statement and 7 meant they strongly agreed with the statement.

The results for my last question regarding a preference for method of instruction, were more mixed. Not everyone would rather view a screencast to receive library instruction over a face-to-face tutorial. This is supported in the literature. There always seem to be mixed reactions to using online instruction as the only option for receiving training (Ganster & Walsh, 2008; Su & Kuo, 2010). This may change for future generations but at the moment, especially for an institution like Southern Cross and the student population we attract, offering training in a variety of modes will be a reality for some time to come.

Lastly, when we compared the mean results for student's self assessment of an improvement in competency after viewing the clips, it had risen demonstrating that students believed that viewing the clips increased their competency.

## **Conclusions:**

Overall, the results were all positive, confirming the anecdotal responses I had already received. In short, the clips were easy to use and students felt it was a suitable method of instruction. The preference over face-to-face tutorials wasn't so clear cut but students believed their competency improved after viewing the clips.

## **Implications:**

There is definitely a place for using screencasts in this way to complement our face-to-face library tutorials, so we'll continue to produce them as the need arises.

I think they offer a great tool for providing assistance to remote clients.

After marking the students' papers, it was apparent some students were still having problems with referencing but there was no way of knowing if those students had viewed the clips since it was voluntary.

Next session, Gail will make viewing the clips compulsory as part of a tutorial exercise. Using our Blackboard management system it is possible to build it into student assessments.

I would also put this strategy forward to Nursing staff – this would ensure that all students have received training in a particular research skill they need to acquire to successfully complete their assessment tasks.

I would like to carry out another survey with Nursing students to add to the data I've already collected.

There is other data from this study that could be looked at – it would be worth correlating the preference for instruction style with age or English as second language.

### **Advantages of Jing**

We found the use of Jing removed many of the barriers staff experienced in trying to produce video tutorials. One continuing problem for libraries is that creating these tutorials often requires a lot of time & skill building (Gravett & Gill, 2010; Oud, 2009; Sparks, 2010; Su & Kuo, 2010). As I mentioned earlier, we had actually produced a few short screencasts using the product Camtasia, but had given up due to lack of expertise, time and energy. We found Jing was so much easier to use and didn't require great technical skill. Admittedly, you only have 5 minutes of recording time, & there is no edit function, but we felt the ease of use far outweighed these issues. The changing database interface issue is also an ongoing problem – Jing reduces the angst around this issue. It's not so daunting to have to re-do a short clip of a few minutes, rather than re-produce a 20 minute tutorial containing slides, call-outs or other advanced features(Gravett & Gill, 2010).

Funding can also be a problem for some libraries & Jing solves this. The basic program is free, but you can upgrade to Jing Pro for US\$14.95/year. This gives you a larger storage space on their server, allows you to customise & remove their logo from your clips.

Jing also reduces many of the barriers students experience in attempting to use some of the longer, more complex online tutorials. (Gravett & Gill, 2010; Tempelman-Kluit & Ehrenberg, 2003). If you have a web browser on your computer, you can view the clip – you don't need any special programs. To play the clip, you press an arrow in the centre of the screen & you're away. The files are stored on the TechSmith site – no problems with servers or storage space or intranet access.

Comments I read in other papers that “users were not interested in committing much time to lengthy tutorials” and that they “wanted succinct information” (Tempelman-Kluit & Ehrenberg, 2003 p. 89) also reflected feedback we had received from our face-to-face tutorials. Whilst working within a timeframe of only five minutes – Jing clips are restricted to this – may seem a disadvantage to some, I've found it's actually a positive point. It ensures that the tutorial is focussed on a key concept and avoids the temptation to get bogged down in details and include too much information in the one clip. It is better to produce, say, three short tutorials so the information is chunked for students, than to make one long, rambling episode. This also gives clients the opportunity to view just the one section they need, and/or repeat the tutorial on one particular skill they're having trouble with. The more relevance the information has to your client, the more likely they are to engage with the content (Cox, 2004; Educause Learning Initiative, 2006; Su & Kuo, 2010).

In our online world, students are looking to be able to receive help and training over the web (Oud, 2009) and for distance education or remote clients it's invaluable. Students are interested in viewing the information when they want it, whether that's late in the day or in the early hours of the morning. Research indicates that students believe such online tutorials to be useful and enjoy using them (Armstrong & Georgas, 2006; Ganster & Walsh, 2008). The versatile nature of screencasting makes it an ideal choice for meeting these kinds of criteria.

SCU Library does provide some basic skills online tutorials by Web-ezy which are customised for our interface and resources. However, they are not particularly popular with students and use older technology and it's expensive to have them updated, which is a problem given that databases are given to regular interface and function changes. Again, Jing seemed a much better option for producing online tutorials. We were able to integrate the use of these clips into various units, either by way of Library subject guides or by placing links to the clips in Blackboard unit sites.

### **Some tips:**

It's important to do as much preparation for your screencast as you can, though this will depend to some extent on the reason you're making the screencast in the first place.

Write an outline of your topic, do a run through online, then write out your script as you work through the steps online again. Run a technical check – make sure your microphone is working – so many times I would record a clip only to find my computer had reverted to 'mute' for no apparent reason.

Turn off your phone, put a sign on your door – 'do not disturb' or 'I am recording' – close down other programs on your computer – you don't need your email beeping in the middle of your recording! Sometimes it seemed like every time I was recording the phone would ring or someone would come to the door or use the printer right outside my office.

Speak clearly, not too fast, try to be natural.

My personal favourite – 'Let go of perfection' (Gregory, 2010). Don't get too hung up on making the perfect screencast – you could be there for hours! As I read on the Robin Good website – "screencasts containing little hesitations or mistakes are often as, or more, effective than a highly polished and edited one, as they convey a spirit of credibility and trust that highly packaged presentations have long lost" (Good, 2006). You can also add a personal touch – mention the lecturer's name or the client who's asked for the information.

Leave it overnight and view it with fresh eyes and ears in the morning.

And finally, if possible, have someone review it & check that the links work & that it all makes sense before you share your work.

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