Purdue University's Management and Economics Library Educates All Undergraduate Students

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Until recently, the user instruction program of Purdue University's Management and Economics (M&E) Library was concentrated almost completely in two areas: (1) first week student orientation sessions, and (2) occasional lectures to subject-specific courses. This approach was not completely unsuccessful, the library reached a total of more than 2,400 students campus-wide during the 1996-97 academic year. The orientation sessions, however, often presented problems. The students were given too much information before they were ready to use it, and the research strategies that were taught appeared to be forgotten by the time they were needed. Also, the subject-specific lectures during courses reached only a fraction of the entire student population that needed instruction. The spring 1997 semester brought about a significant change in this approach to teaching information research skills and familiarity with library resources to undergraduate students in Purdue's School of Management.

The 2,000 undergraduate students in the School of Management are divided into two divisions, lower and upper. The upper division courses are reserved for those students who have successfully completed a set of prerequisite courses without dropping below a minimum grade level. Completion of these courses usually occurs during the second semester of the students' sophomore year.

Historically, students of the School of Management have been required to take MGMT 301, a course exploring careers in business, interviewing skills, resume writing, and other related topics. During the fall 1996 semester, the MGMT 301 course was completely redesigned by the School of Management. While this was happening, the Purdue Libraries Curriculum Committee was developing a three-tiered program for user instruction designed to reach Purdue students at all academic levels. At the beginner level, students learn how to formulate a topic into searchable parts and gain an understanding of how information is organized. The intermediate level expands this general understanding of information organization into a subject-specific arena. The advanced level culminates with detailed instruction on finding subject-specific information from both inside and outside of the Purdue Libraries.

The redesign of MGMT 301 coincided with the introduction of the library's curriculum in the fall of 1996. With this curriculum in hand, the M&E Library faculty petitioned the School of Management's Undergraduate Curriculum Committee to have library user instruction included in the redesigned MGMT 301 course. This request was well received, and library user instruction was made one of three required modules in the course and scheduled for the sixth week of class. Drawing upon the library's three-tiered curriculum model, we incorporated the beginner and intermediate levels of instruction into the M&E Library's module for the MGMT 301 course.

The library module for MGMT 301 included five parts:
1. Completion of PLUTO (Purdue Libraries Universal Tutorial Online). This interactive Internet-based program, **http://thorplus.lib.purdue.edu/tutorials**, teaches the basics of Boolean searching and where to locate information within Purdue's departmental and school library system. It electronically tracks the progress of the student and records when the program has been successfully completed. This program was to be completed before the week of class assigned to the library module.
2. In-class lecture about the resources of the M&E Library.
3. Hands-on database instruction in the M&E Library.
4. Completion of an assignment requiring use of both print and electronic resources.
5. Module evaluation by the students.

The PLUTO program instructions were distributed by the class coordinators, and the requirements of the library's component were outlined during a class period early in the semester. The PLUTO part of the library's module went relatively smoothly, and by the time the week of our module arrived, more than 80% of the class had completed the PLUTO program.

In previous semesters, the MGMT 301 course had been required for graduation from the School of Management, but not necessarily before advancing to the undergraduate upper division which, as identified earlier, usually occurs during the second semester of the sophomore year. Consequently, there were almost 500 students during the Spring 1997 semester who were required to take MGMT 301. (In future classes, there should be no more than about 200 per semester.) These 500 students were divided into four sections, and Brent Mai, Coordinator of User Instruction, went to each of these four class periods at the beginning of the library module week.

Drawing from the course's historic focus on careers, we decided to use the search for company information as the focus for developing search strategies and identifying specific resources. During the class periods, Mai defined the difference between publicly-held and privately-held companies, introduced the students to the documents publicly-held companies must file with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and discussed the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) Code structure as a way to identify companies within an industry. PowerPoint slides were used during the classroom presentations. Mai also distributed annotated bibliographies of resources available for searching for public and/or private company information and for searching for companies by industry.

Hands-on lab sessions were held later that same week. The M&E Library computer instruction area includes fifteen workstations that have access to the M&E Library's building-wide CD-ROM network. Earlier in the semester, the students had been asked to sign-up for the library's lab sessions, with no more than thirty students in each of twenty-three lab sessions. Beginning immediately following the final classroom presentation, one-hour hands-on computer instruction was conducted by Mai or Judy Nixon, director of the M&E Library, in the library on the hour, every hour, from 3:00 p.m. one afternoon through 9:00 that evening, all day the next day from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., and from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. the following day.

The hands-on instruction picked up electronically where the PLUTO program had ended. The PLUTO program introduced the concepts of Bool-

ean searching and proximity indicators. The library's lab sessions advanced those skills by searching for specific kinds of information in several different databases: *ABI/Inform*, B*usinessDateline*, *F&S Index*, and *Compact D/SEC*. The general nature of business information included in *ABI/Inform* was discussed, the regional focus of *BusinessDateline* was demonstrated, the product and industry-specific nature of many of the *F&S Index* publications was displayed, and the statistical components of *Compact D/SEC* were identified. Throughout the hands-on lab sessions, the various primarily print resources examined during the classroom sessions were re-introduced and compared, noting similar and different kinds and amounts of information when compared to the electronic databases being examined.

At the conclusion of each of these training sessions, the students were given a homework assignment which was to be completed and returned to the class coordinators office within two weeks. The assignment asked them to identify the SIC Code for a specific industry; identify the five largest publicly held companies (in terms of annual sales) within the U.S. segment of that industry; identify the largest privately held company within that same industry; locate and photocopy the cover of the annual report for one of the above identified companies; identify the CEO or president of the same company; uncover how much this executive was being paid; and locate, mark, and download an article or abstract on a given current business topic from one of the databases on the library's CD-ROM network.

The students could use any combination of print or electronic resource to answer the questions. However, the sources used were to be identified. The best sources for this type of information had been identified several times during the classroom instruction and lab sessions. Using a variety of SIC Codes and current business topics, sixty-three different assignments were possible, thus minimizing the opportunity for students to share their answers.

The final component of the library's module was the course evaluation. The library's module did not have an independent evaluation, but was included in the general course evaluation with open-ended questions relating specifically to the library's module. Results of this evaluation were rather unexpected. The hands-on labs and the homework assignment received the most positive feedback from the students. The PLUTO program received the highest *negative* evaluation, with many students claiming that it was a complete waste of time. Many students indicated that the classroom lecture could be easily combined into a slightly longer hands-on lab session rather than

having two separate class periods. Further evaluation of the students re-
sponses will be done, but this last suggestion about combining the classroom
and lab sessions has already been implemented for the fall 1997 class.

As a required component of the MGMT 301 course, it was necessary to
monitor the progress of each student through the library's sessions. Comple-
tion of the PLUTO program was electronically monitored, attendance was
taken at each of the classroom and lab sessions, and the homework assign-
ment and course evaluations were submitted to the course coordinator.

In general, the library module was successful in its attempt to introduce
a broad group of students in the School of Management to outlining exactly
what information they need to know when presented with a business-type
question and what are some of the basic resources that may be helpful in
answering the question. By the end of the spring 1998 semester, all upper
division students in the School of Management will be required to have taken
MGMT 301 with its mandatory library module. The M&E Library will have
then successfully completed across-the-board instruction for the minimum
information strategy competencies identified by the Purdue Libraries Cur-
riculum Committee at the beginning and intermediate levels. Course and
assignment-specific user instruction opportunities are already available in the
School of Management for teaching at the advanced level. These opportuni-
ties will continue to be developed and expanded.