Out Googling Google: Rethinking Library Instruction for Online Students

Providing students with library instruction greatly enhances their ability to produce quality research projects, but providing that instruction to students enrolled in online courses can be challenging. While the number of electronic resources available remotely for distance students continues to grow, there is evidence that students still need assistance and instruction on how to identify and evaluate resources for relevance to their own work. This best practice session will look at how one University, with a growing number of online programs, is rethinking how library instruction is delivered to students at a distance.

Using a homegrown system, the University Library is currently able to provide online tutorials as part of both face-to-face and online classes. These tutorials are graded by librarians who provide students with individual feedback related to a topic of their choice. Allowing students to use their own topics instead of canned searches allows for more meaningful learning and greater student buy-in. This model has been successful for a number of years.

While these tutorials make sense when librarians have no say in how the course is structured, when librarians are part of the course development team, the idea of the embedded librarian becomes more realistic. During the winter quarter 2008 the University Library will be piloting an embedded librarian model for a graduate research class in the School of Public Services. In this model the librarian will receive short assignments at targeted intervals throughout the course, will have office hours, and will participate in online discussions. This model will allow for even more meaningful integration of library instruction concepts into the research curriculum.