

Final Project: PGCMLS Employee Research Training

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PGCMLS EMPLOYEE RESEARCH TRAINING

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System is a large library system with twenty-four branches, around two-hundred employees and a vast collection of physical books. In 2007, an initiative began to provide patrons with access to even more resources and a change to an electronic Integrated Library System (ILS) began. Additionally, investments were made so that the PGCMLS could provide patrons with access to thousands of more electronic resources both on physical library desktop computers and remotely from their own homes. Unfortunately, due to the nature and laws surrounding the e-resources, many of them have yet to be integrated into the ILS.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

A librarian at the Prince George's County Memorial Library System was kind enough to talk with me about various resources offered to members of the library and how staff members go about helping their patrons. The PGCMLS has an extensive website that grants easy access to resources, digital services, and tutorials for most services offered. As well, they provide in-person classes and one-on-one meetings for those who request the help to learn how to effectively utilize all available resources. The library system serves people of varying backgrounds. Their patrons start from about the age of two years up to over eighty-years of age. Students and professionals can find useful resources to aid in their required research and continuing education.

One issue that effects both librarians ability to do their jobs and the quality of patrons service is a lack of integration of e-resources into their ILS. Most patrons who go into the library to physically speak with a librarian want hard copies of books. The electronic resources allow the PGCMLS to have resources for most topics. However, the problem is that many of the electronic copies of e-Books have not been cross referenced with their ILS, which means that the librarians

PGCMLS EMPLOYEE RESEARCH TRAINING

struggle to efficiently provide resources to common or unusual types of reference questions inquired about throughout the year.

There is a felt need for instruction regarding the above mentioned issue from the interviewed librarian. After thorough use of the library's website to examine how easy various resources are to access, such as e-Books, and digital services are to use, such as language learning software, it was clear to me that some information would be best found with the help of a librarian. Especially if the person looking for information isn't knowledgeable about the utilization of technology. Alternatively, many patrons of the library simply do not have easy access to technology outside of their local library buildings. Due to the lack of cross references included for electronic resources on their ILS, librarians would like to have a training available to them. The training will aid in the efficiency in which they can recommend online resources for patrons inquiring about a long list of common inquiries throughout the year.

Speaking with a handful of experienced librarians (five or more years of experience within the PGCMLS) would allow me to gain the information needed to create an online training which would allow both old and new librarians to further understand which resources are available to recommend to patrons for the numerous inquiries. No one librarian would be able to know all of the common inquiries librarians within the library system have from year to year. So the training would need to address a compilation of common yearly inquiries, filling in knowledge gaps for different staff members, as each employees experiences with patrons have been different to a certain degree.

LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS

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The PGCMLS has a relatively even ratio of male and female employees. The employee's ages range from late teens, who are typically interns, to over the age of fifty. A notable amount of employees have been with the same system for over twenty years. Most employees who actually help with patron inquiries either enjoy research themselves or have a passion for providing other's with educational materials. So much of their motivation to use the proposed training as a tool to access more resources is intrinsic. However, a system-wide desire to increase customer satisfaction and employee research efficiency has been noted.

To give an idea of two types of employees who often receive common or unusual inquiries which require accessing e-resources, there are many interns who work at multiple branches part time and there are librarians who work at one branch forty hours a week. Often, the interns are interested in pursuing a career in research or potentially as a librarian and they tend to be comfortable with all technology used on the job. Librarians on the other hand tend to value physical resources, but recognize how much more information there are on various databases not yet in their ILS. As well, many librarians have the most knowledge on available resources, physical or electronic, but know that due to the vast amount of databases available to look through, they may not always find the best resources or access them in an efficient manner.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Below is a list of learning objectives organized with the 2001 version of Bloom's Taxonomy in mind (Dirksen, 2016, p. 67). The following list will show the desired learning objectives librarians, including library assistants within the Prince George's PGCMLS, to acquire by the end of the proposed training program.

Remember

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- 1) Recall effective search engine keywords and search sequence techniques.
- 2) Locate available databases outside of the PGCMLS Integrated Library System (ILS).

Understand

- 1) Identify the key subjects that each of the top databases include.
- 2) Give examples of the types of e-references available to inquiring patrons, outside of those available in the ILS (e.g. book excerpt, article, full children's book).

Apply

- 1) Practice searching for uncommon subjects in the correct available databases.
- 2) Instruct other staff and patrons on finding helpful resources outside of the ILS.
- 3) Produce effective results through efficient searches in appropriate databases.

Evaluate

- 1) Compare top search results to prioritize e-references for patrons to potentially obtain.
- 2) Recommend only e-references which will help answer, or aid in the research of, an exact inquiry.
- 3) Interpret the resource type correctly (e.g. section of a book, complete source, scholarly article).

Create

- 1) Construct a citation for patrons to use in the desired format (i.e. MLA, APA, Chicago Style).

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- 2) Develop a brief list of the types of available e-references found in a particular database. These sources would be for staff use to reference and help with future inquiries at all branches.
- 3) Generate a brief bibliography for the patron to utilize if additional research or resources are needed.

MESSAGE DESIGN PLAN

Goal: This online course aims to teach librarians, library assistants and interns about the electronic resources available to patrons, how to efficiently locate effective sources for difficult inquiries and how to generate bibliographies of found e-resources for future use.

The instruction will be formatted as a self-paced, web-based, half-day training. This format was determined as necessary to ensure all employees who would benefit from this training can receive it, due to rotating schedules and the number of locations within the PGCMLS. Two to four employees will be able to take the training at a time in a designated conference room which are available at all branches. The course can be accessed on desktop computers or laptops, depending on each locations' hardware availability.

The training interface will look similar to the PGCMLS website and Search Page, in order to reduce extraneous cognitive load for the users who are used to conducting daily work with that layout. The training will include a combination of video lectures, written text and instructional videos to demonstrate the step-by-step process they will need to take to produce the desired results, brief quizzes and interactive practice scenarios. Image 1.1 gives a sample Course Content Menu, to help illustrate which of the above and below mentioned items of instruction will be included when.

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Introduction – Video Lecture	
A. Why this training is important and what it will cover.	
B. When to Access Resources	
C. Where to Find Available Databases	
M1 – Video Lecture	
A. Database Overviews	
1.	Database “Group 1” (covers x, y and z subjects similar to one another)
a.	Quiz
2.	Database “Group 2”
b.	Quiz
3.	Database “Group 3”
c.	Quiz
M2 – Video Lecture	
A. Covers common questions asked depending on the month.	
B. Example 1 – Story Format on Unusual Patron Inquiry (Show Difficulty Finding Any e-Resources)	
C. Example 2 – Story Format on Unusual Patron Inquiry (Include Solution to Finding e-Resources)	
M4 – Video Lecture on Bibliographies for Future Use	
A. Video of Available Citation Generator Tools	
B. Interactive Simulation to Create Bibliography	
M5 – Practice	
A. Final Simulation(s) for Guided Practice	
Conclusion	
A. Available After-Training Resources to Access in the Workplace	

Image 1.1

As illustrated in image 1.1, various tools for instruction will be implemented in order to allow the learner to retain the presented information and utilize it effectively. Written text will be used sparingly outside of the video lectures and interactive material, only being included when necessary. Each database outside of the ILS that may need to be accessed have distinct logos, which will be included both in video lectures and in a resource document allowing the learner to visualize the logo that goes with specific subjects covered in individual databases. Image 1.2 provides an example of the image shown next to the database name, then the key topics it covers to search within for e-resources.


Image	Database	Key Subjects
 Image Source	ABC-CLIO Solutions	African-American History, Black History Month, Biographies

Image 1.2

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As for practical application of the tools presented, during module one multiple-choice questions will appear during lectures to maintain interest and help to point out key learning objective topics. Brief quizzes will be given after each “Group” section, to test learner knowledge on key subjects available at various databases that were covered. Next, simulations will be provided which allow the learners to be presented with various real-life patron inquiries and produce effective solutions to them. Examples will be shown and then an interactive program will be available that looks just like it would when they are at work helping a patron. The benefits of this would be immediate application of new knowledge, yet there are tips and answers at every step to help the learner when needed. The interactive materials will not be the same as the examples given in video lectures, allowing the training to cover more common questions while still teaching all the necessary tools to meet course goals.

Since the training will be presented using desktop or laptop computers and the internet, basic technical support will likely be needed at various points for some trainees. Any technical difficulties that arise should be within each location’s IT employee’s capabilities and remedied quickly. Built-in support for finding the correct keywords when conducting a search or locating the appropriate database will be available throughout simulations to help the learner understand how to find the desired results from common, but difficult, inquiries. However, if more support is needed, there will be one or two employees available over-the-phone to help learners produce solutions. This same over-the-phone service will be available to all PGCMLS employees after the training as well, in order to provide lasting support for particularly difficult inquiries that arise each week.

Each module will be relatively brief and broken up in a way that facilitates practical application for the materials being covered. Each video lecture will have narration and

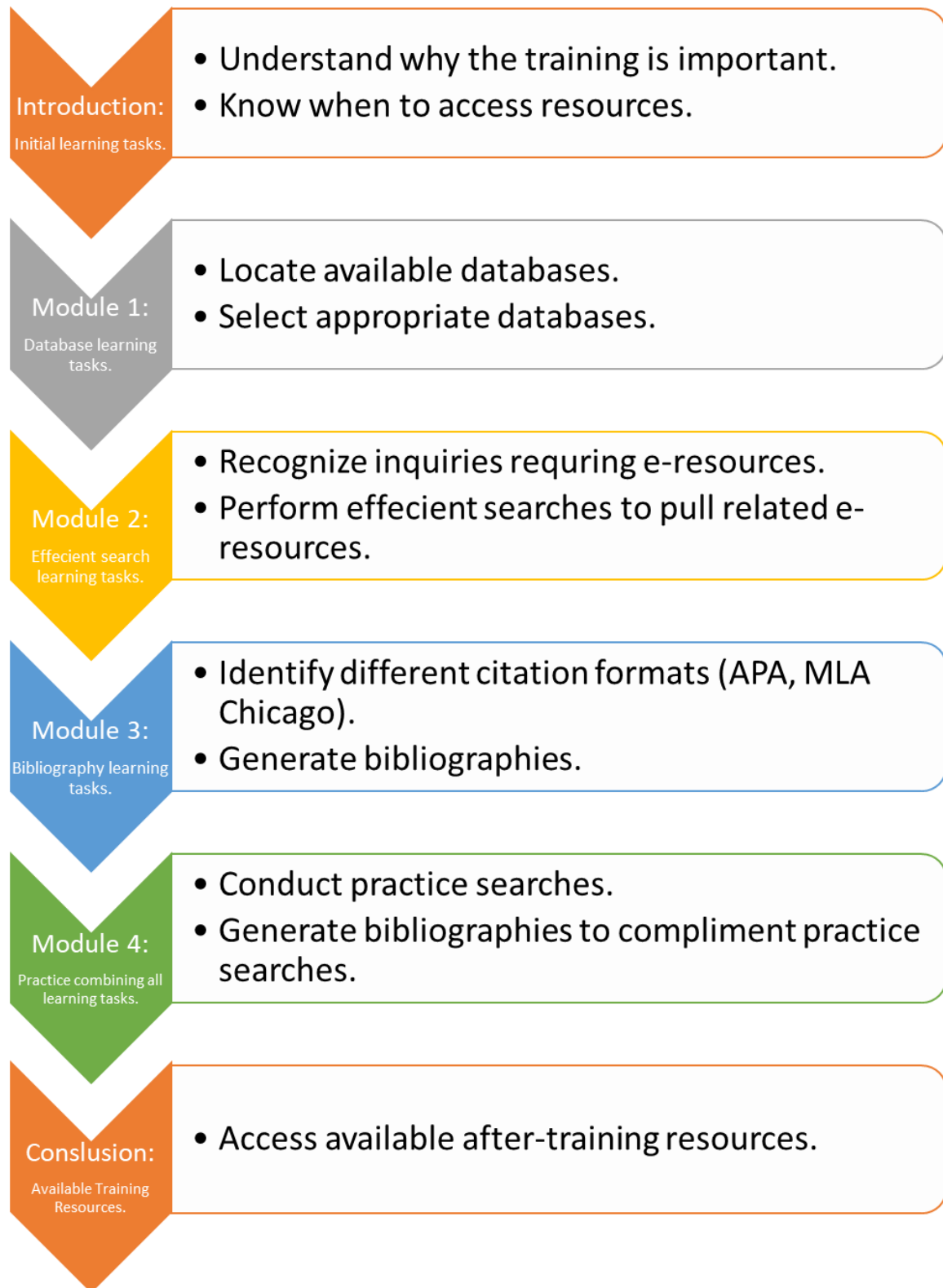
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illustration. For those who require it, the written form of the lecture will also be available. By presenting the lectures in this way, the hope is that the benefits of self-paced learning will outweigh any limitations that may be present due to the training being on-line and without other classmates or an instructor. With the material being presented and the differing availabilities of trainees schedules, the discussed format and design was determined to likely be the most efficient for users to reach the desired goals of the course.

LEARNING TASKS DIAGRAM

Goal: This training aims to teach librarians, library assistants and interns about the electronic resources available to patron's, how to efficiently locate effective sources for difficult inquiries and how to generate bibliographies of found e-resources for future use.

Prerequisite to Training: An ability to access and navigate the pgcmls.com website with an employee account.



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TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

The training will be hosted online and available to all employees for three weeks, allowing adequate completion time since the PGCMLS has long weekly operating hours and many employees work rotating schedules. The training will be developed using the online platform Versal, which will provide an affordable way to provide access to and develop the training. As mentioned previously, the training will be accessed primarily through desktop computers at each branch. There are individual log-in accounts for employees to track their progress, but the estimated completion time is four hours long. The technology being used should not require operation training as it is the same hardware used on a daily basis for completing similar daily tasks.

As for the software technology being covered, a brief tutorial for optimal navigation will be an optional feature for employees. Since the layout will be similar to the employee portal they already use, and the functions they will complete with each learning objective is already available to them during their daily work, there will be no brand new navigation or command functions within the training. All exercises completed by trainees in the training program will be able to immediately be applied during their work within their daily employee portal.

TRAINING IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION

The trainees will be required to complete exercises which allow them to apply the lessons on selecting the correct databases, efficiently selecting adequate e-resources and generating bibliographies for both internal and external use. This will allow them to immediately apply new skills in a practical exercise which can immediately translate to a research inquiry from a patron.

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If any employees find themselves unsure of where to look for particularly unusual or difficult inquiries, a e-resource expert will be on-call for all branches to access when necessary.

Throughout each module lecture, check-point questions will appear to help trainees maintain attention and retain key information for meeting training objectives. After the lecture, a brief quiz will be taken, as well, to ensure employees are understanding which databases are best to select for different questions. After that, the skills application exercises will allow the training program to track individual and overall understanding of the course objectives from the employees exercise outcome.

CONCLUSION

After completing a number of employee interviews, working within the PGCMLS search system and public databases, completing training technology research and applying instructional design principles, it was determined that an online employee training would be beneficial. The technology needed to complete the training is either already available at each of the branches for employee use, or is within budget to achieve library system wide goals. By allowing there to be a level of independence in when the employees take the training within a designated time-frame, it is more likely that the training can be beneficial for employees who regularly assist in research inquiries. The online platform will act as a tool to let each trainee immediately apply the skills and then translate that to the workplace. Upon completion of the training, each employee should be able to more efficiently locate effective e-resources and generate bibliographies for patrons, increasing customer satisfaction and PGCMLS research results.

References

Dirksen, J. (2016). *Design for how people learn* (7nd ed.). Berkeley: New Riders.