Kindling Interest in New Technologies: Graduate Education Students Experience E-books

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Description of the project:

What is the role of ebooks in education? How should an academic library work with faculty members and students to provide this technology and encourage its use?

Ebooks, particularly the Kindle, are new to the world of information and education. Little evaluation has been conducted on the effect of these materials on students and learning, or even how they can be used in the classroom or library. Most libraries are just starting to circulate mobile device books such as Kindles or the Sony Reader so there is almost no research on implementation of this technology. Most information on the use of Kindles or other devices is currently on blogs some of which are written by librarians. One of the few articles based on research available states that "the Kindle reader ignited a re-evaluation of the usefulness of e-book readers in an academic setting" and that "the Kindle, as a specific implementation of e-book reader technology, is a significant contribution to the evolution of reading. (Clark, Goodwin, Samuelson and Coker, 2008

Working together, a Penn State Great Valley librarian and an education faculty member developed a research project around the implementation of ebooks, particularly the Kindle DX, into the curriculum for EDLDR 540 Technology Applications in Educational Leadership, a graduate education course that is part of the program that trains students to become K-12 school principals. The instructional goal of the project was to help students develop an understanding of the uses of ebooks, and to have them experience the technology that most of their students and some of their faculty are now using. This knowledge will enable principals to decide whether the

technology is being used appropriately to promote learning or is just there to add glitz to the class. In addition, the project allowed students to read reserve materials, required readings, and books anytime or anywhere from the mobile device.

The Library portion of the study involved the development of best practices for the implementation of mobile ebook technology in libraries and allowed the researchers to gain insight into how adult patrons use and view ebooks as part of their information and reading repertoire. Kindles were added to the Library's circulating collection and signed out to students in the class. The Library was responsible for selection of materials that supported the class syllabus and maintenance of the Kindles and the materials stored on them.

The research project was qualitative in nature and began with a pre- semester survey that was distributed to all students in the class asking them about their conceptions of Kindles and ebooks as well as how they might be used in education and libraries. The students then used the Kindle throughout the semester and a post-semester survey was administered that asked about their experience using the Kindles and sought information about new perspectives they had developed with regard to the role of ebooks in both education and the library.

A qualitative content analysis was performed on the pre- and post- survey results. Conclusions from this analysis will be reported as part of the presentation along with recommendations about the use of ebooks in the classroom and library as well as best practices for the implementation of ebook technology in libraries.

References

Clark, Dennis T., Goodwin, Susan P., Samuelson, Todd and Coker, Catherine. "A qualitative assessment of the Kindle e-book reader: results from initial focus groups." *Performance Measurement and Metrics* 9.2 (2008): 118. Social Science Module, ProQuest. Web. 28 Oct. 2009