

Enhancing Library Services via Podcasts, Screencasts, and Vodcasts

Abstract

This project will address two areas of need that have emerged within OWLS. First, InfoSoup patrons have expressed a need for more information about InfoSoup and all of its associated resources. They also have requested instruction (e.g. “mini-tutorials”) on how to use them. Second, OWLS member libraries rank 3rd in the number of programs per capita and 2nd in programming attendance per capita of the 17 Wisconsin public library systems. There is a need for our member libraries to make their programming more accessible to more patrons and to get more bang for their programming bucks. Both of these needs can be addressed by the production of podcasts, screencasts, and vodcasts that can be provided online for patrons’ use at their convenience.

OWLS staff will be responsible for creating online instructional materials (e.g. podcasts, screencasts, or vodcasts) for patrons on the use of InfoSoup, its patron features, and online databases and research tools. These materials will then be promoted on the InfoSoup homepage, help pages, Research Tools page, and on member library web sites. To enable the production of these materials, a recording and editing workstation will be created for staff use which will include the following software and equipment: a desktop computer, group microphone, individual headset/microphone, portable voice recorder, video camera with tripod and wireless microphone system and extra SD memory cards, Camtasia Studio, and ePodcast Producer.

OWLS will also create a ‘Casting Kit that will circulate to member libraries to enable them to create their own podcasts, screencasts, or vodcasts. The ‘Casting Kit will be made up of the same contents as the OWLS equipment and software listed above, though a laptop will be substituted for the desktop computer. Training and documentation will be provided on how to use the ‘Casting Kit and assistance with the production of materials will also be provided. The Kit will enable member libraries to move traditional library services and programming to the web, thereby extending their resources outside the physical walls of their buildings, reaching patrons who are either unable to attend programs when scheduled or who prefer to attend “virtually.”

Online evaluation forms will be linked to from materials developed, so that the usefulness and effectiveness of the resources can be examined. We will also survey patrons twice throughout the year to see if the materials developed are increasing the use and awareness of library resources and if patrons are finding the format easy to use and informative. Statistics on the use of the materials will be gathered, as will statistics on the use of the ‘Casting Kit.

The creation of podcasts, screencasts, and vodcasts will greatly enhance library services to patrons as they can be provided online, in context, and will be available at any time, day or night, for use in any location as often as the user would like. The evaluation tools available today will allow us to respond to patron and library input, so that we are truly providing what our libraries and patrons need. This project

will provide incredible opportunities for future creative projects that can be developed collaboratively by OWLS and our member libraries.

Needs Assessment

This project will address two areas of need that have emerged within OWLS. First, there is a need to provide better information to patrons about how to use InfoSoup and all of its associated resources. Second, there is a need for member libraries to make their programming more accessible to patrons.

The migration to a new integrated library system in 2006 resulted in the creation of InfoSoup (www.infosoup.org), the online public access catalog (OPAC) for OWLS member libraries and area patrons. InfoSoup has been very successful and has resulted in increased use of system and member library resources (e.g., the number of holds placed increased an estimated 25%). Much time and effort has been spent enhancing the catalog since its original release, and new pages (Readers' Page, Teen Reads, Family Page, Local History, Digital Collections) provide additional access, along with the Research Tools page, to subscription databases and other resources the system makes available.

We recently surveyed patrons (319 responses) about their use of these added features and discovered a general lack of knowledge about the resources we offer. Even patrons who are aware of their existence (47%) aren't using them regularly. The majority of respondents never use them (a range of 72% to 91% for each resource listed). Even the most heavily used resources were only used a few times a year by most respondents.

Perhaps the most interesting result came from our open-ended question asking what tools or topics they would like to see added to InfoSoup. People not only respond to the question, but they also added anything else they wanted to say about InfoSoup and our resources. Some complained about problems they have or things they would like to see changed in the OPAC. For example, "If someone forgets their PIN there is no direction given on the web site regarding how to access their 'forgotten' PIN or how to obtain a new one." Others suggested that promotion and/or instruction on the use of the resources we provide might be helpful. One patron asked, "Are there 'mini tutorials'...about what information can be found thru each resource plus how to use each resource?" Another stated, "I love the service. If there is not already a tutorial to instruct on all the info available on it, I might suggest that would be helpful." It is clear that patrons would like more information about available resources and how to use them, as well as further instruction in the use of InfoSoup and the included patron features. Online instruction such as podcasts, screencasts, and vodcasts on the use of the catalog and the resources available there would greatly enhance services to patrons, as it could be provided in context on the InfoSoup site and could be available for patrons to use at their convenience as often as they require.

OWLS member libraries do a significant amount of programming for their patrons. They rank 3rd in the number of programs per capita of the 17 Wisconsin public library systems and 2nd in program attendance per capita. Our libraries are currently investing time and resources in programming, but they would like to make their programming more accessible to more people.

Adding an online component to traditional library services, such as booktalks, library tours, and library sponsored programs would greatly enhance service to patrons who are either unable to attend or prefer

to attend "virtually." When member library directors and OWLS staff met on August 23rd, the directors indicated interest in this project and the opportunities it would provide them to extend their services and programming beyond their walls.

In addition, 50 OWLS member library and system staff members have registered to participate in Project Play (<http://projectplay.owlsweb.info>), an online learning initiative that will explore emerging technologies and their use in libraries. (13 of our 17 member libraries are represented in the registrations.) Topics such as blogging, podcasts, vodcasts, RSS, and wikis are included in the program. The interest in the project and high registration for it show that our member libraries recognize the need to learn more about new ways to reach their patrons.

Making equipment available and providing training on how to create podcasts, screencasts, and vodcasts of select program offerings would help meet the need of our member libraries to make their programming more accessible to more people and would multiply the value of their investment in such programming by giving them more bang for their programming bucks.

National polls are also revealing interesting results on people's use of technology today. The PEW Research Center reports on Generation Next: "They use technology and the internet to connect with people in new and distinctive ways" (<http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=300>). PEW also reports that the majority of adult internet users in the U.S. (57%) report watching or downloading some type of online video content and 19% do so on a typical day; three in four young adult internet users (76%) report online consumption of video (<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/552/online-videos-go-mainstream>).

In *Library 2.0: A Guide to Participatory Library Service* by Michael E. Casey and Laura C. Savastinuk, the authors state "Here's the truth: We are losing the interest of our users. We no longer consistently offer the services our users want. We are resistant to changing services that we consider traditional or fundamental to library service. We are no longer the first place many of our current and potential customers look for information." The need to reach users in new ways outside our library walls is very evident in today's world. Providing online instruction, promotional information, and traditional library programming via podcasts, screencasts and vodcasts are essential ways to meet our users where they are on their terms.

Objectives and Evaluation

1. OWLS will create online instructional materials (e.g. podcasts, screencasts, or vodcasts) for patrons on the use of InfoSoup, its patron features, and online databases and research tools.
2. OWLS will promote these instructional materials on the InfoSoup homepage, help pages, Research Tools page, and on member library web sites.
3. OWLS will create a 'Casting Kit' that will circulate to OWLS member libraries, containing the software and equipment required to create podcasts, screencasts, and vodcasts, including instructional information on the use of the software and equipment.

4. OWLS will provide a variety of training opportunities (one-on-one, small group, online) on the use of the 'Casting Kit for OWLS member libraries.

Results Measurement

1. Links to an online evaluation form will be included with each instructional podcast, screencast, or vodcast created for the public.
2. OWLS will survey InfoSoup patrons to evaluate if the materials developed increased the use of the resources covered and if the materials developed were perceived as being helpful and worthwhile.
3. Statistics on the use of the online materials will be gathered and evaluated.
4. At training sessions on using the 'Casting Kit, attendees will be asked to complete a form to evaluate the session and suggest improvements.
5. Use of the kit and member library projects created with it with it will be tracked to assess overall use and effectiveness of the materials included in the kit.
6. Statistics on the use of resulting projects posted online will be gathered and evaluated.

Future Benefits

The activities of this project will continue to benefit OWLS member libraries and area patrons well into the future. With the appropriate software and equipment in hand, additional instructional resources can be developed and posted online on a continuing basis. The evaluation methods described above will allow for better refinement and development of tools and projects, so that we truly are providing what our libraries and patrons need. In addition, the 'Casting Kit and resources that will be made available to member libraries will provide incredible opportunities for future creative projects that can be developed collaboratively by OWLS and our member libraries.

Planning and Implementation

Activities

OWLS Library Services Manager, Beth Carpenter, will coordinate the activities of this project. She will be assisted by OWLS Computer Technician (Julie Leopold), Electronic Resources Librarian (Evan Bend), and Library Automation Manager (Gerri Moeller).

January 2008 - February 2008

1. Equipment and software will be purchased for OWLS staff and the 'Casting Kit. (Library Services Manager)
2. Software will be installed on OWLS staff computers. (Computer Technician)
3. Recording and editing lab will be set up at OWLS for staff use. (Library Services Manager, Computer Technician)

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4. Options for online storage and provision of podcasts, screencasts, and vodcasts will be evaluated. (Library Services Manager)

March 2008

1. Software and equipment training will be developed and provided to OWLS staff. (Library Services Manager)
2. An online evaluation form for the instructional materials will be developed and tested. (Library Services Manager, Electronic Resources Librarian)

April 2008-July 2008

1. 'Casting Kit for OWLS member libraries and instructional materials on its use will be prepared. (Library Services Manager)
2. Training for member libraries on the use of the 'Casting Kit and a training evaluation form will be developed. (Library Services Manager)
3. Supplemental materials regarding legal, copyright, policy and content issues of podcasts, screencasts, and vodcasts will be developed for circulation with the 'Casting Kit. (Library Services Manager)

April 2008 - December 2008

1. OWLS staff will develop and post instructional materials (podcast, screencast, or vodcasts) for patrons on the use of InfoSoup and additional resources. (Library Services Manager, Electronic Resources Librarian, Automation Manager)

August 2008

1. Initial evaluation of materials produced will be conducted by examining statistics and user evaluations. A survey of patrons and staff will be conducted. (Library Services Manager, Automation Manager)
2. Booking and circulation procedures for 'Casting Kit will be developed. (Library Services Manager, Automation Manager)

August 2008-September 2008

1. Training for member libraries on the use of the 'Casting Kit will be provided, including instructions on where/how to post projects when completed. (Library Services Manager, Electronic Resources Librarian)

September 2008-December 2008

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1. Booking and circulating the 'Casting Kit to OWLS member libraries will begin. (Library Services Manager)
2. Member libraries will be assisted with the creation of podcasts, screencasts, and vodcasts, as requested. (Library Services Manager)

December 2008

1. A second evaluation of materials for patrons will be conducted by examining statistics and user evaluations. Patrons and staff will be surveyed. (Library Services Manager, Automation Manager)
2. The 'Casting Kit and training in its use will be evaluated by examining use and project statistics. Member libraries will be surveyed. (Library Services Manager)

Relevance to Planning Documents

This project is relevant to the first priority identified in OWLS Technology and Resource Sharing Plan 2007-2010 (<http://www.owlsweb.info/plans/tech07-10.pdf>): Member libraries will continue to be assisted and supported in their use of technology. This priority includes providing training to library staff, supporting library PCs, assisting libraries with the development of electronic content, enhancing InfoSoup to make it more helpful for library patrons, and implementing new services requested by member libraries as feasible.

Relevant goals and objectives include Goal A, Objective 3; Goal C, Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 12; Goal E, Objectives 3, 6, 7, and 8; Goal F, Objective 3. These goals and objectives focus on 1) providing enhanced information resources to patrons via InfoSoup, including developing local library content and promoting local library resources, 2) enhancing web services provided to member libraries, and 3) providing training to member libraries in using technology resources effectively.

This project is also consistent with goals and objectives contained in the LSTA Five-Year Plan for Wisconsin 2008-2012 (<http://dpi.state.wi.us/pld/pdf/lstaplan07.pdf>). Relevant objectives include Objective 1B, 1.4, and 1.7. These objectives focus on encouraging libraries to provide electronic content and information, facilitating access to materials in various electronic formats (including downloadable audio and video) and the exploration of innovative uses of technology to improve services.

Budget

1. Salaries, wages, and employee benefits related to this project will be paid for by OWLS from our operations budget.
2. Library collection costs are not applicable to this project.
3. There will be no contractual services used.

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4. Other operating expenditures, such as mileage for training trips and other office expenses will be paid for by OWLS from our operations budget.
5. Capital expenditures will be made for purchasing software and equipment for the creation of podcasts, screencasts, and vodcasts.

Equipment and software required for the 'Casting Kit includes: a laptop with recording and editing software; a microphone for recording in a group setting; an individual headset/microphone for recording & editing; a portable voice recorder for recording "on the move;" and a video camera for creating vodcasts of library programming and instructional materials. Software purchased will allow for easy editing of recordings, along with features like automatic RSS creation, archival CD burning, and the ability to record telephone interviews via voice over IP. The 'Casting Kit will also require the purchase of a carrying case and packing material for the safe circulation of equipment to member libraries.

The OWLS staff recording/editing workstation will require the same equipment included in the 'Casting Kit with a desktop workstation rather than a laptop. A storage case for recording devices will be required, but will not circulate.

In addition to the 'Casting Kit and the OWLS staff workstation, software will be purchased for the Library Services Manager, Automation Manager, and Electronic Resources Librarian to allow recording and editing processes to be done in their offices on their own workstations.

Detail of capital expenditures:

'Casting Kit

Laptop (average cost = \$2320) – example: Dell Latitude

Group microphone (\$145.95) – example: Blue Snowball with tripod and ringer

Individual headset/microphone (\$75.96) – example: Sennheiser PC 160 PRO

Portable voice recorder (average cost = \$150.00) – example: iRiver or Olympus

Video camera (\$583.99) – example: Sanyo Xacti HD2

Video camera tripod (\$47.75) – example: Bower 67" tripod

Wireless microphone system for video camera (\$149.99) – example: Sony WCS-999

Extra SD memory cards for video camera (\$38.69 x 2 = \$77.38) – example: SanDisk 2.0 GB

OWLS Staff Recording/Editing Workstation

Desktop computer (average cost = \$2250) – example: Dell OptiPlex

Group microphone (\$145.95) – example: Blue Snowball with tripod and ringer

Individual headset/microphone (\$75.96) – example: Sennheiser PC 160 PRO

Portable voice recorder (average cost = \$150.00) – example: iRiver or Olympus

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Video camera (\$583.99) – example: Sanyo Xacti HD2

Video camera tripod (\$47.75) – example: Bower 67” tripod

Wireless microphone system for video camera (\$149.99) – example: Sony WCS-999

Extra SD memory cards for video camera (\$38.69 x 2 = \$77.38) – example: SanDisk 2.0 GB

Camtasia Studio (5 x \$249.00 = \$1245.00)

Screencast and vodcast editing software for use in the ‘Casting Kit & OWLS staff workstation, and by the Library Services Manager, Automation Manager, and Electronic Resources Librarian.

ePodcast Producer (3 x \$249.95 = \$749.85)

Podcast recording and editing software for use in the ‘Casting Kit & OWLS staff workstation, and by the Library Services Manager.

Carrying Case for ‘Casting Kit & storage container(s) for OWLS staff equipment (\$300.00)

Total for capital expenditures = \$9326.89