THE POWER OF CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS: TOOLS AND SOLUTIONS TO AUGMENT YOUR INFORMATION LITERACY AND LIBRARY PROGRAMS

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The paper provides an understanding of a proprietary content management system (CMS) that aims to help librarians in managing virtual reference services. Furthermore, the presentation covers the advantages of having a digital platform where librarians have the opportunity to create and communicate with their patrons in their most convenient time. It is also an avenue for instructional librarians to handle Information Literacy sessions in its most efficient way since IL is already an integral part of reference service.

Keywords: content management system, Springshare, Kazakhstan

Introduction

Any library would agree that to be efficient in communicating with users, there should be a stable platform that acts as an intermediary between the sender of the message and the receiver of information. To establish a good connection between the library users and its librarians, easy to use library tools are created to help the librarians in reaching out more to its community. These technological tools are also effective in disseminating information as well as serve as a storehouse of online content for reference and instruction librarians. In this sense, library websites or portals should be user-friendly. Seadle (2006) pointed out that, «libraries have begun to realize that their web presence is potentially

as rich and complex as their online catalogs, and that it needs an equal amount of management to keep it under control». A well-designed website is the facade for any library. For the patrons of the digital era, it is the first resort for basic information, direction and know-how. The target of the library portals is to be a one-stop shop of all information products and to get that information in the most expeditious and user friendly way. Library portals support scholarly communication and research of the library community.

Content Management Systems

A content management system, or CMS, fosters these services and manage content of the library. A CMS is designed «to create, customize, and manage information» (Patnaik & Mishra, 2015) and is utilized by all industries to organize information and knowledge (Wan, Li & Gao, 2016). Just like any other industry, «CMS has become the most favorite option among library professionals as it enables them to quickly build, deploy and maintain content-rich website without the full knowledge of programming languages» (Patnaik & Mishra, 2015).

Examples

Based on complexity of CMS there are a variety of tools already available. Simple ones are Weebly, Wix, and Squarespace. More robust versions may worth a cost, though there are various open source tools available nowadays. Wordpress, Drupal and Joomla are examples with architectural complexity and design flexibility and these are utilized by many libraries. Those tailor-made for libraries are LibGuides from Springshare, BiblioCMS, Omeka, and many others. Large institutions with budgets worth millions of dollars might use frameworks which requires a lot of coding knowledge. Finding the right CMS is indeed a process and it all boils down to the CMS evaluation committee.

Springshare: CMS used in NU Library

In 2012, the library started subscribing to Springshare introducing LibGuides (Annual Report on the Activity of Nazarbayev University Library, 2012). At that time, they produced 18 LibGuides. In 2016, they updated into version 2 where they produced 73 LibGuides. Springshare is a library technology vendor established in 2007 to help non-tech savvy librarians create easy to use virtual services (Springshare, 2019). The Springshare CMS (can also be called SaaS or Software as a Service)

suite is mostly used for managing the various information services of the Library. The NU Library is using the LibGuides, LibAnswer, and LibCal. The library caters to the research, information and instructional requirements of our patrons using the various platforms provided by Springshare. These tools are very beneficial for the Reference and Instruction Librarians to create and manage their Information Literacy program.

Information Literacy

Since the early years of the NU Library, there was an attempt to provide Information Literacy sessions although most of them can be called one-shot sessions. In 2017, the reference department started to standardize the Information Literacy program and in 2018, four modules were developed to materialize this initiative. Currently, the IL is seeking to be recognized as either a credit or non-credit bearing course as part of the general mandatory courses that freshmen students should take.

So how does Springshare augment the IL program and even other library programs?

Ask a Librarian service is used for online query handling. A lot of our users use these services as chat, video conferencing with a librarian, or email queries to the Reference desk using these service widgets. The LibAnswer app helps the Reference Department in responding to immediate questions via chat. The LibAnswer can also provide a queuing system where any librarian can grab the question and answer them accordingly. In addition, it helps us to identify common questions thus we can create FAQ or Frequently Asked Questions. In 2018, the number of questions answered by the patrons was a whopping 6, 921 based on the reference analytics statistics data. This includes 508 research consultations, 503 questions answered through chat service and 396 queries answered by Ask a Librarian service. The queries were predominantly asked by students topping the higher user category, with 3,793 queries.

Currently, NU Library has 125 LibGuides of which many are specifically tailor-made topic guides for IL sessions. According to Dobbs, Sittler, & Cook (2013) «the easy-to-use tools in Springshare's LibGuides help you organize webpages, improve students' research experience and learning, and offer an online community of librarians

sharing their work and ideas.» Yap (2018a) also added that LibGuides can be updated anytime, anywhere when there is a need to change the content or information. The one shot sessions provided by reference librarians make use of LibGuides by creating session based topic guides and use this platform to upload and enumerate information, rubrics, video tutorials for enhanced learning of students. We use LibGuides as an online location where students can access resources based on links shared in the sessions and they download handouts, rubrics and worksheets to work upon. In a similar study, Yap (2018b) pointed out that LibGuide utilization is low and needs to be promoted intensively. Although the page views went high from 19, 957 views in 2017 to 39, 404 views at the end of 2018, the return on investment (ROI) is not yet reached.

LibCal is great tool for organizing library workshops, one shot sessions, events and making appointments. It provides a background information about the event and a registration link where a librarian can monitor the number of interested participants. It also provides a built-in post-evaluation link of the activity sent to those who registered for providing feedback of the activity. While, LibCal can be used to inform and provide students information about upcoming session and workshops, LibWizard is another one of the Springshare tools that can be utilized for conducting surveys. LibWizard is ideal for creating, sending and analyzing surveys. For example, Information Literacy session surveys or user-feedback can be done thru this tool. Currently, we are yet to discover the power of LibWizard.

Each student has its own unique learning styles. The library's role is to provide access to information at any given time even if the library is closed. The availability of online tools and its countless benefits, just like what Springshare showcases, helps the librarians in assisting students in their search and exploration of information. The millennials of the present generation are active and fast learners, but what they need is a promising and expeditious information and the knowhow and skills to access and explore the various technological platforms and databases of the ever changing information scenario on the technology landscape. What the Reference Department needs to address is to conduct a good marketing plan and promote its services particularly its LibGuides.

Also, publish more unique LibGuides that can augment the Information Literacy program of the library.

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