

## **Outreach: Connecting the business school with library digital skills instruction**

Emily Nickerson

Business Librarian, McPherson Library, University of Victoria, [enickerson@uvic.ca](mailto:enickerson@uvic.ca)

Rich McCue

Digital Scholarship Commons Manager, McPherson Library, University of Victoria,  
[rmccue@uvic.ca](mailto:rmccue@uvic.ca)

### **Introduction**

Attending faculty or departmental meetings is one of the key outreach activities for liaison librarians to build and maintain relationships with faculty members. Active listening and engagement at these events allows librarians to learn about the research and teaching needs of faculty members, and identify potential areas in which to offer support. This article will share experiences from the University of Victoria Libraries on how outreach and deepening personal relationships with faculty members created new, and unexpected opportunities for collaboration between libraries and the business school.

### **Excel Instruction & Assessment Collaboration**

At a business faculty council meeting in 2019 there was a presentation by the business school's Assurance of Learning team for the BCom program. Assurance of Learning (AoL) "is a systematic, continuous improvement process to ensure quality at the program-level with the goal of improving student learning" (Gustavson School of Business, n.d.). The program is meant to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum, teaching, and learning outcomes at the business school and ensure that students are gaining the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to succeed.

At the time, the AoL team was examining four learning goals for the upcoming year. One of the stated goals was: "Graduates can use Microsoft Excel as required by employers." The AoL team was searching for an assessment tool to measure the achievement of this goal. Assessment tools are typically class projects or assignments that the AoL team would collect and analyze. The final step is to use the data collected to improve the program. This could involve revising the curriculum, adjusting teaching methods, or implementing new assessment tools.

After the meeting I followed up with the team to inquire further about this learning goal and suggested they connect with our Digital Scholarship Commons (DSC) team in the Library, which provides an Introduction to Data Analysis with Excel workshop (Digital Scholarship Commons, n.d.a). The DSC offers a wide range of customizable digital skills instruction at the invitation of instructors, or as drop-in workshops in the library (Digital Scholarship Commons, n.d.b).

The AoL team was unaware of this offering and were excited after reviewing the Excel workshop lesson plan. I connected the AoL team with the DSC manager to explore the possibility of using their Creative Commons licensed Excel workshop to meet the AoL data analysis goal. After their first meeting with Rich McCue, the DSC manager, it became clear that a partnership to provide Excel instruction and assessment to business students had the potential to work well. There were a handful of AoL standards that the DSC Excel workshop did not cover, but Rich was able to add instruction and activities for those standards over the following weeks for the AoL team to review and approve. Another facet of the collaboration was for the DSC to provide informal credentials for the successful completion of the DSC Excel workshop to verify that students met the workshop learning objectives (McCue & Johnson, 2022).

The next two cohorts of incoming business students successfully completed the Excel workshop and met the AoL standards. While the assessment worked well to ensure that the students met the standard, because of the large number of business students taking the course, evaluating each completed activity became a significant extra workload for DSC staff. After consulting with the AoL team it was decided that the Business School would set up a Learning Management System course shell for the workshop, link to the DSC Excel curriculum, and create a Learning Management System test for students to take to ensure they met the AoL Excel standards.

### **Other Digital Skills Instruction - 3D Printing, Laser cutting & NVivo**

Other opportunities for library based digital skills instruction arose in the recent past as a result of library staff relationships with individual faculty members. One of those collaborations involved an Entrepreneurship (ENT) professor and a DSC manager who was a former student of the instructor. While the ENT professor was preparing to teach a prosocial entrepreneurship class, he was notified by the DSC manager about the wide range of workshops the DSC offered. After reviewing the available curriculum, the professor decided that the 3D design and print workshop would be a good fit for their class in order to provide their students with basic prototyping skills for physical objects. The feedback from both the professor and students regarding the active learning workshop was positive. More recently, the ENT professor has requested the DSC laser cutting workshop for two of his classes in order to introduce them to the prototyping tools as well as the other hardware and free digital fluency skills workshops available to them.

Other digital skills instruction for the business school has included the Data Visualization with Tableau and Qualitative Analysis with NVivo workshops. Thanks to the Creative Commons licensed teaching materials created by the DSC, I have been able to adapt the DSC lesson plans for NVivo to meet the distinct needs of students in two different courses: Data-driven Decision Making and Customer Experience Management. In the latter, we used Google reviews for a local hotel as our data source for their customer service marketing research assignment.

### **Conclusion & Lessons Learned**

Digital skills enable business students to develop innovative solutions to business problems, design new products, create new business models, and identify emerging trends. As such, skill building in this area is in demand and libraries can help through providing technology support for digital tools, and developing or adopting instructional resources. Faculty members don't always know what exists so continual outreach is key. Showing up, listening, and looking for how we can support the goals of the faculty and individual faculty members takes time and trust, but is well worth the effort.

### **References**

Digital Scholarship Commons. (n.d.a). Excel Workshop. <https://lib.uvic.ca/xls>

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