

Business Literacy and Informational Tutorials (BLITS)

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Abstract

Rollins College proposes the creation of Web-based tutorials to provide computer-assisted instruction for business research. Online tutorials will instruct students on basic information fluency skills and theoretical aspects of business planning, marketing, and research. The self-paced tutorials will assist students in locating and making effective use of business information sources. The tutorials will be designed to support courses currently being offered in the International Business degree program, the undergraduate minor program in Business Administration, and the Crummer Graduate School of Business.

Rationale

This proposal was inspired after the reference librarians at Rollins College noticed repeated difficulties our students had in grasping business concepts, such as the distinction between an operating ratio and an operating expense. Students were attempting to use the wealth of publicly available business resources on the Internet to understand business concepts, but they lacked the critical thinking and information fluency skills to locate relevant information and use the information appropriately.

Federal regulations require corporations doing business in the United States to make a large amount of information publicly available. Most of this information is freely available on the Internet, and there are currently dozens of directories such as Yahoo that compile exhaustive lists of links to such resources. Students tend to become overwhelmed when presented with the abundance of information, and they lack the expertise and experience to navigate the Internet to find and recognize relevant information.

We propose the creation of Web-based tutorials that will instruct the students how to navigate and manipulate data necessary to become sophisticated business researchers. Students from the MBA program will prepare tutorials on the theoretical and practical aspects of business research. Because ever-increasing numbers of students choose to do research from their dorm rooms, these tutorials will reach them at the place they are most likely to be studying. While most students know how to locate information on the Internet, they often lack the information literacy and critical thinking skills necessary to evaluate appropriate use of the information. Our business research tutorials will enable students to locate reliable information sources. Beyond locating information, the computer-based tutorials will provide instruction on analyzing, structuring and interpreting the data to assist users in developing useful business plans and reports.

Preliminary Description

Our goal is to create a sophisticated computer-based resource that will train, guide, and direct business research at Rollins College. Tutorials will be included in a Web site to teach students how to use information fluency skills to address topics such as how to gather historical stock prices, how to identify corporate competitors, to how research Initial Public Offerings, how to compile a marketing plan, how to find information about competitive business intelligence, and where to locate tools for determining operating ratios. Annotated directories will point students to sources of online business information. Embedded throughout the lessons will be links to online sources for current information. These tutorials will combine links to online resources with suggestions for traditional library research, educating students when to use which resource. In sum, the computer-assisted instructional tutorials will teach students to be fluent in business information sources on the Internet. The tutorials will enable students to define and articulate their information needs, access needed information effectively and efficiently, critically evaluate information sources, and to use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.

A librarian and a business faculty member will guide our project. They will work closely with two graduate students from our MBA program and a student with specialized Web page design skills.

Preliminary meetings in the Spring and Summer will be used to hire and educate the students about the goals of the project. Specific topics for the instructional section of the Web site will be assigned, and the graduate students will begin the research and writing of these tutorials. The Web site will begin to take shape over the summer, and will be ready for public use in January 2002. After members of the Business School and the Arts and Sciences faculty have had a chance to become familiar with the site, they will be encouraged to use the site in their Spring 2003 classes.

The academic work will be performed by graduate business students, who have a clear understanding of what resources are required for both academic and professional business executives. The Crummer School supports an MBA program for both full time students, and an evening program for working professionals. We will be targeting students from the day program, who will have both the time to take on the work, as well as benefit from the academic research that will be required of them. The business faculty member will provide guidance on the selection of the educational portions of the page. A librarian will assist in the design and organization of the page, insuring logical development and quality control, and relevancy to the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards. An undergraduate student with computer programming and design skills will do the technical work in creating the computer-based instructional tutorials. The site will be loaded onto the Olin Library homepage, and will be maintained by Olin librarians.

Follow-up and Evaluation

Graduate and undergraduate faculty will be encouraged to direct their students to the online tutorials. Librarians will create assignments that will use the tutorials as a starting place. The page will have embedded links for patrons to supply feedback. We will

notify academic reviewing sources, such as the Scout Report, of our Web site and solicit evaluation. We will also notify ACS of the completion of the tutorials, so that other ACS colleges may be made aware of the resource.

Dissemination of Results

The project's librarian will report to ACS with our experience in developing and promoting the computer-based tutorials. The tutorials will be publicly available, and linked to other major directories.

Suggestions for Replication

It is our goal to encourage the creation of more freely available computer-based instructional resources with substantial educational and academic value. Students frequently use the Internet to find information, but few sites move beyond mere compilation of links to provide self-paced instructional material. Our computer-assisted tutorial model can be replicated for any number of academic disciplines.

Calendar

June-July: Hiring of students.

August-December: Student research, and initial construction of page.

January: Debut of page