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Team Teaching, Humor, and Informal Polling Techniques in NECDMC - Based Research Data Management Workshops at Brandeis University

Melanie Radik, Gina Bastone, Raphael Fennimore, and Brian Haungs

Introduction
Spring semester 2015, Brandeis Library & Technology Services Research and Instruction unit launched research data management workshops based on the NECDMC curriculum. The workshop lesson plan was very structured and closely modeled the NECDMC modules. The one-hour workshop was expected to consist of three sections:
- Co-presented material in unscripted lecture format
- NECDMC module's hands-on exercises
- Q&A

However, we felt that these lectures were too focused on data management topics and not engaging enough for attendees. We conducted research into pedagogical techniques that could improve the material and mix of attendees. We came to the conclusion that three techniques could be incorporated to improve student engagement and material comprehension, and these techniques would complement a shift in focus from theory and best practices to best practices and Brandeis-specific solutions.

Legal and Ethical Considerations
There May Be a Law About That! Who Owns Data? Legal and Ethical Considerations

Sharing and Preserving
The Future of Your Data

Informal Polling
Extremely informal – no robbers or spies, just several deliberately phrased yes or no questions placed throughout the workshop.

We encouraged attendees who indicated they had personal experience with the topic to share their stories. We instructed our test audiences to share, with the rest professionals contributing a wealth of user stories from adventures in desktop support and hardware repair. Did you know it’s possible to acquire internal water damage to your laptop/ hard drive in high enough humidity?

This deliberately interactive style resulted in visibly captivated attendees who had questions. We instructors had our own anecdotes to share, with the IT professionals contributing a wealth of user stories from adventures in desktop support and hardware repair.

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Team Teaching
One pedagogical technique we pursued was inviting instructors from another discipline to lead the workshops with us. We partnered with colleagues from the Technology Help Desk and Question Support sections from IT. The Desktop Systems Specialist from the Hardware Repair Shop and Help Desk Interns. Their strengths in the areas of storage, backup, and security solutions were especially relevant.

Collaborating on slide and lecture design alone provided valuable insights into the different approaches to research data management services. We were able to add depth to technical details, whereas in earlier workshops the best we were able to provide was access to further reading.

Our colleagues from IT expressed similar interest in the librarian approach and felt better prepared to field data management questions that range beyond traditional IT areas.

Conclusions
While we did not have a large enough sample size to perform rigorous evaluation of learning outcomes, we can state that student engagement during the workshops was noticeably greater, their questions were more on topic, and showed true understanding of the material and its relevance to their personal research.

We even have evidence of attendees applying this knowledge. One attendee, who from comments and questions made it clear he had never performed a backup of his main laptop, was astonished to learn that Brandeis sells heavy-duty desktop external drives equipped with Rebit, a third-party backup software. He even had evidence of attendees applying this knowledge. One attendee, who from comments and questions made it clear he had never performed a backup of his main laptop, was astonished to learn that Brandeis sells heavy-duty desktop external drives equipped with Rebit, a third-party backup software.