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

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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
- 15-minute Q&A period

In no workshop did we get to the hands-on exercise. This was due to the attendee’s confusion over lecture material and their questions on topics outside the scope of the workshop. We determined our descriptions of the workshops didn’t best convey the topics covered, and our emphasis on theory and best practices left listeners confused as to how the information applied to their own research.

However, we felt that these deceptions with attendees highlighted areas we could improve for the Fall semester’s iteration of the workshops. We conducted research into pedagogical techniques that would complement 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.

Team Teaching
One pedagogical technique we pursued was inviting instructors from another discipline to team-teach 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 the Help Desk Interns. Their strengths in the areas of storage, backup, and security solutions were especially relevant.

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

Our colleagues from IT expressed similar interest in the librarian approach and felt their own pedagogical approaches to research data management services. We were able to add depth of technical detail, whereas in earlier workshops the best we were able to provide was advice on further reading.

Informal Polling
Extremely informal—no claim on expertise, 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, with the goal of 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’

This deliberately interactive style resulted in visibly captivated attendees who had questions relevant to the material, actively shared anecdotes, paid attention to the screen, and demonstrated engaged body language.

Works Consulted


Gamer, W. Humor in pedagogy: can it be used to aid learning? College Teaching, 54(3), 153-159.


Legal and Ethical Considerations
There May Be a Law About That

Who Owns Data?

Sharing and Preserving
The Future of Your Data

Humar: Humor as a pedagogical tool is a tricky business, as it is quite possible to do more harm than good. Between the subjective nature of humor, the fleeting duration of pop culture references, and the jargon Heavy, it is clear that humor is not the most reliable form of communication for teaching serious subjects. However, if used correctly, humor can be a powerful tool in the hands of a skilled and experienced teacher. For example, a study by Shibley IA (2006) found that humor can improve student engagement and comprehension in the classroom.

Methodology
Our methodology involved inviting instructors from another discipline to team-teach 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 the Help Desk Interns. Their strengths in the areas of storage, backup, and security solutions were especially relevant.

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Academic Support and User Services