

**LASSIE: Libraries and Social Software in Education**

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**Case Study 3: citing and referencing  
podcast**

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# Overview of Case Study

This case study explored the value of podcasting, or screencasting as a way of making training materials available to distance learning students. The case study will include details about how the podcast was created, any problems experienced from the perspective of the trainer. It will also gather feedback from students who used the podcast about how it compares to face to face training.

## 1. Background

Podcasting is becoming increasingly popular as a way of making presentations or talks available to wider audiences, who either can't attend a face to face session, or might want to review the teaching materials after the session. Video lectures are increasingly being made available to students and providing information literacy sessions in this way is of particular benefit to distance learners, who have traditionally not been able to attend library training.

While this is not strictly social software, podcasting is recognised as a related development and is worthy of exploring as part of this project.

## 2. Aims and Objectives

- To create a podcast and make it available from the LSE Library website
- To document the process of creating the podcast
- To gather feedback from students about their attitudes towards the podcast
- To gather feedback (anecdotally) from academic staff about the podcast

## 3. Overall Approach

This case study is based on experiences of the project team in creating a podcast. It also included survey methodology to gather feedback from students who had used the podcast.

## 4. Project Outputs

- A podcast on citing and referencing
- Evaluation report on the process of creating a podcast by a librarian
- Evaluation report based on student feedback

## 5. Benefits

This case study will be of interest to any librarians considering using podcasting to complement or replace some of their face to face training. The case study will include information about the software and hardware requires, any issues to consider and the benefits to students of this type of training.

## 6. Results

### 6.1 The creation of the podcast

The motivation behind the creation of a podcast were varied but included the following:

- Citing and referencing had become an increasingly popular class at LSE and at certain times of year several hundred students wanted to attend a face to face training class, but the number of trainers and number of individuals who could be accommodated was limited. For example, during an event organised by the Teaching and Learning Centre known as MSc Support week, the number of requests to attend this class far exceeded the available places in sessions
- The training team in the Library were keen to experiment with online training as an alternative or supplement to face to face classes.
- The Centre for Learning Technology had experimented with recording several of their staff development sessions using newly purchased software and the results had been successful.
- Video lectures were becoming increasingly common at the LSE in academic teaching and students were responding positively to these resources being made available.

The podcast was actually created during a scheduled classroom session. Due to confusion over the time of the class, students failed to turn up, so the teacher decided to run the class as if the students were in the room and record the session.

The following equipment was required to make the recording:

- Laptop with powerpoint presentation
- Radio microphone, plugged into laptop to capture the audio to a high quality
- Camtasia software to capture the screen output and audio.

It was decided a video of the lecturers speaking was not required.

## 6.2 Editing the files

The resulting material was captured in Camtasia (Available as a free trial from: <http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.asp>) and required some editing before it was suitable for use on the web. This included:

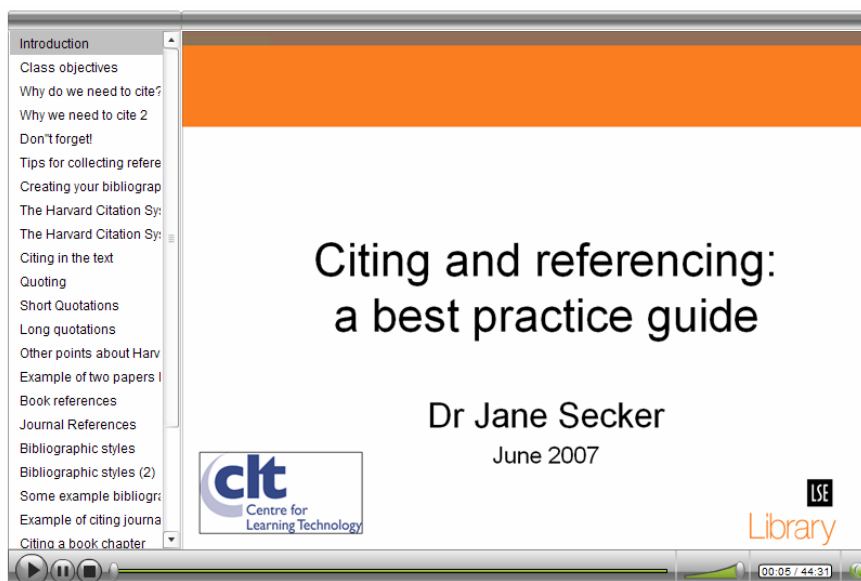
- Editing the audio to ensure the sound quality and volume was consistent. Interestingly, as the trainer decided to sit down part way through the session, the sound level dipped and so the volume in the second part of the audio file had to be increased
- Editing the performance to remove pauses and any mistakes during the session. This was easily done in Camtasia, and meant the gaps between slides could be reduced in length
- Creation of entry points or flags in the file to enable the creation of a menu that allows users to jump to the relevant slide in the powerpoint.
- Editing of the file to create a Flash movie suitable for output on the web.

Some technical assistance was provided by colleagues in the Centre for Learning Technology, however, generally Camtasia was fairly straightforward to use and no major technical issues were experienced.

Finally a new web page was created as part of the Library Training section of the website. This page had a link to the Flash movie, but also had a range of related resources from the citing and referencing class, such as the handouts and suggested readings. All the files, including the holding web page, the Flash file and the resources needed to be uploaded to the Library website.

The citing and referencing podcast is available from:

[http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/inskr/citing\\_referencing.htm](http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/inskr/citing_referencing.htm)



## 6.3 Launch of the podcast and initial feedback

The podcast was launched in June 2007 to coincide with a time when many masters students at LSE were working intensively on their dissertations. It was highlighted on the news section of the library website and also sent out in liaison librarians' newsletters. An entry was posted on both the LASSIE blog and also the CLT blog to highlight the podcast. It has also been made available as a resource for students from the Information Literacy website (<http://www.informationliteracy.org.uk>)

Feedback was received fairly quickly in the form of e-mails both from LSE students, but also from other librarians outside the LSE and from colleagues working on a project relating to academic writing and plagiarism (insert reference). A member of academic staff at LSE saw the podcast highlighted on the CLT Blog and was particularly impressed with it. He not only recommended it to his students – including a link from his online course in Moodle. But he also invited the LASSIE project team to an external meeting to review a set of resources he had been developing as part of a joint project between LSE and at the University of Lancaster. More details are available about this project at: <http://www.lums.lancs.ac.uk/departments/owt/Research/sdaw/>

The final slide of the presentation gave the trainer's e-mail address and a considerable number of queries relating to specific aspects of citation were received over the summer from students who had undoubtedly accessed the podcast. They often mentioned this in their correspondence. A librarian at another university also requested if the podcast could be used at their institution as they thought it would be highly valuable for their students.

#### **6.4. The Online Survey**

Despite considerable anecdotal evidence that the podcast was useful, the LASSIE team were keen to collect more structured and detailed feedback about the value that users' attributed to this resource. Therefore, a short online questionnaire was devised in July 2007. This was created using the online tool, Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>) and publicised via the Library website and via the project blog.

The survey is reproduced in the Appendix 1 and focused on asking students generally what they liked and disliked with the podcast and how they used it. It was made available from the project blog but the response rate was fairly poor, therefore several lecturers at LSE were contacted and asked to circulate it to their students. A small prize was offered as an incentive to get people to complete the survey.

#### **6.5 Survey Results**

The survey first asked respondents how they found out about the podcast and an e-mail directly from their department seemed to be most effective in publicising this resource to them. A small number of students reported finding the podcast on the Library (or CLT) website and a number claimed to have found it through 'other' means, which may include the LASSIE project blog for example.

In general about half of all respondents spent 5-10 minutes viewing the podcast, with a about a quarter spending longer than 10 minutes and a quarter spending less than 5 minutes. In free text comments boxes several people mentioned that the podcast should ideally be kept fairly short to retain interest. The vast majority of the respondents reported that they used the menu system on the podcast to jump around to the sections they were interested in. Very few people reported that they watched it from start to finish. Again in free text comments people reported that they particularly liked the menu system that enabled them to only watch the sections they were interested in.

Overwhelmingly respondents wanted more library training materials produced in this way, with almost 90 percent reporting that they would like more podcast training sessions. Question 5 asked people to consider if they preferred online training to face to face classes and the results were fairly conclusive that both types of sessions should be offered. People liked the convenience of the podcast being available online and the fact they could refer back to it at any time. They also reported being too busy to attend training sessions, or not wanting to sit through a whole class when they had very specific questions. However, there was also a clear sense that online training could not replace face to face training and should be well designed and of an appropriate length. The following quotes come from students who completed the survey

"I prefer to take a face to face training for it will be more effective when I have questions. But I do hope that an online training is maintained for my reference after the face-to-face training."

“screencasts are great for students with busy schedules. also many skills classes are often booked too quickly to get a spot.”

Students were asked to comment on things they liked about the screencast and the comments included:

- the use of examples
- they found the screencast easy to navigate and simple to use – they liked the menu and the fact you could navigate yourself to the section of interest
- They liked the commentary with the slides
- Several reported that they learnt how to cite from using it!

We asked for any suggestions for improvement to the screencast and the following issues were raised:

- Some students asked for more examples, or more relevant links to things their lecturers might have told them, or other topics to be covered (such as the Electronic Library and Endnote)
- Several reported that the screencast should be easier to find on the LSE website
- Two people also suggested there needed to be some video, humour or screenshots to make the presentation more visually appealing and engage the learner.

The survey results showed that the vast majority of respondents who completed the survey were based at the LSE, although 4 people from outside LSE did complete it. Almost 60% of respondents were masters students, with four PhD students and 5 members of staff completing the survey. Only two library staff participated in the survey. 80% of respondents fell into the 18-24 or 25-34 age category which suggests the group may be more receptive to using technology for teaching purposes. However this may be a reflection of the age of LSE students?

## **7 Conclusions and recommendations**

Information literacy and advice about using library resources, both electronic or otherwise, is a particular challenge for those supporting distance learners. Library induction sessions are difficult unless the students spend some time visiting the campus. However, developments in technology mean that these students don't have to miss out on the training classes that full time students can attend. Online training may also appeal more to students who don't see the need to attend a library class, but subsequently run into problems when staff are not around. The provision of timely and appropriate support is a challenge, yet our experiences of developing a podcast showed that with relatively little investment of time and resources, a reasonably professional product can be produced.

The method we used to produce the podcast using Camtasia to capture a live performance meant a minimal investment in time on behalf of the trainer. The trainer could be confident that any mistakes could be edited out at a later stage, or for example if a student asked a question that was off-topic, that this could easily be removed. Some time and expertise was required to edit the file, but the training needed was fairly minimal.

While podcasting, or video lectures cannot replace the experience of face to face teaching, our research suggests they are valuable and appeal to students who may not have the time or inclination to attend a face to face library training class. Even students who were prepared to attend a training session felt that the online resources were useful for reference or revision after the class. Students clearly felt that the Library should develop additional online training materials as supplement to the face to face programme. This information will be fed back to the User Education Team at the LSE. Finally, the method of publicising the podcast clearly impacted on whether students were prepared to use it. The podcast was made available on the Library website in July 2007, but many students did not access it until November 2007 after being sent an e-mail from their tutor. In endorsement of a resource by a member of academic staff was clearly an important factor that motivated students to use it. Ensuring online training materials are embedded into academic programmes is therefore essential if they are going to be used by the maximum numbers of students. This is in line with current thinking about information literacy training more generally, that it is most effective when embedded into a course.

## Appendix 1: The Citing and Referencing Podcast Survey

1. How did you find out about the Citing and Referencing screencast?
  - E-mail from my department
  - E-mail from friend or colleague
  - Link from Library website
  - Link from CLT website
  - Other
  
2. How much time did you spend using the screencast?
  - Less than 5 minutes
  - 5-10 minutes
  - 10-20 minutes
  - More than 20 minutes
  
3. When using the screencast, tell us a bit about how you used it. Please tick the answer(s) that best corresponds to your behaviour.
  - I viewed the podcast from start to finish
  - I used the menu to jump only to the sections I was interested in
  - I listened to some sections several times to make sure I had understood them
  - I didn't do any of the above
  
4. The Library is considering producing more training materials in this format. Do you think this is a good idea?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Don't know / unsure
  
5. Please tell us more about whether you think screencasts or other online training is useful for learning. It would be helpful if you could tell us whether you would prefer to attend a face-to-face training course or make use of online resources.
  
6. Please use the space below to comment on the aspects of the screencast that you enjoyed and have helped you learn.
  
7. Please use the space below for recommendations or suggestions for improving any aspect of the screencast.
  
8. Are you:
  - Based at LSE
  - Based at another university
  - Based outside higher education
  
9. Are you:
  - An undergraduate student
  - A masters student
  - A PhD student
  - Another type of student
  - A member of academic staff
  - A member of administrative staff (including library staff)
  
10. Please tell us which age range you are in
  - Under 18
  - 18-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - Over 55