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Online Video Tutorial Critique

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Introduction

Video tutorials are often used in libraries for things common questions that patrons have, but are more complex to explain in just a few words. Librarians may refer the patron to the video, then ask the patron to return if there are any additional questions. This is especially true for librarians at universities, as they have many other duties and might not have time to explain the same concept or idea multiple times. One such question may be "How do I locate good resources for my assignment?" A video from a mid-sized university library attempts to answer this question in a video entitled "How to locate scholarly articles."

Critique of instruction

This video was obviously professionally created and designed to attract the audience, which is obviously first year college students. The video was just over 3 minutes long, which is the perfect length to keep a student's attention. The purpose of the instruction was clear, the instructor introduces it within the first few seconds of the video as "how to locate scholarly articles in library databases," however, for the first full minute, he's discussing why a student should use information from the library instead of from other locations, then he discusses what a database is. His humorous tone does keep the audience's attention; he uses phrases and words that the students would be using to appear more friendly and on their level. The purpose is fairly clear, and students know what they should be learning through this video. There is no prerequisite knowledge, other than the need for finding scholarly articles.

As for the actual content of the video, I find it lacking slightly. There seem to be several gaps in instruction. At one point the instructor simply says "find the research guide for your class" but doesn't explain how to do this. In the video he does point to the section on the website where the list is located, however, I think it may have been more clear if he would have said "browse this list to find your

research guide" or even "search your class name in this box to find a research guide associated with your class". It's a simple and short change, that would have made things clearer. Also, he instructs the viewer to click on the "find articles" tab, however, on the several research guides that I browsed, I couldn't find this tab.

After that he explains what databases are and that the research guide will have a list of "a bunch of databases to choose from" But he doesn't explain which one to select. Also throughout this entire video, he never explains what a scholarly article is. There was another video that explained what scholarly articles are, but there was no reference to this video in the one that I originally watched. The instructor does treat the audience with respect, however, some of the humor might be considered slightly rude, and be a turn off for some, especially the non-traditional students. The video does end rather abruptly, and I don't think it does a sufficient job of really explaining how to find scholarly articles, though that was the goal stated at the beginning.

Gagne and instruction

Many of Gagne's events of instruction can be found in this brief video, however due to the nature of videos, several are also missing. This video instructor does an excellent job of gaining the viewer's attention. Through the unique style of the video, to his down to earth humor, he motivates to viewer to keep watching. The instructor also describes the goal. Although I feel he didn't accomplish the goal very well, he does explain what he's trying to do with this video. The material to be learned was presented through images and voice, as described in Gagne's fourth step of instruction. Some learning guidance was present throughout this video, but since it was so short, it was only a very small chunk of learning guidance. The instructor does a nice job of the sixth instructional event of eliciting performance or practice. He goes through several steps in which the viewer should follow to find the scholarly articles. Since it is a video, it can be paused while the viewer follows the steps.

The third event of instruction is not prevalent in the video. I could find nothing that mentioned prior knowledge or stimulated recall of information. Due to the one way flow of information in a video, no instructor feedback (#7) or assessing of knowledge gained (#8) were found. Due to the brevity of this video, the last event of instruction, enhancing retention and transfer, were also difficult to find as well.

Suggestions for Improvements

Some improvements that I would suggest for this video, is to spend less time telling the audience why they should use the library, and what a database is and more time explaining what a scholarly article is, why scholarly sources should be used, then how, specifically, to find said articles. This video is aimed for first time library users, and they probably don't know some of the library lingo. This video does keep the audience's attention, but doesn't properly deliver on its promises. However, I feel that most students watching this video would find it amusing enough to go on to watch more of these videos in order to learn what they need to do.

Reflection

I did enjoy the instructor's humor, and wish I could model my instruction after this. It is a tight line to walk though, because as mentioned earlier, it would be a turn off to the wrong audience. I don't think I have the personality to attempt this type of humor. The video also made me look at my own instruction. I found the way this instructor started going off topic in order to explain a necessary piece of information. I started thinking about how many times I might have done this. This necessary information would be better located at the very beginning of class. With just a little more planning and practicing, I might discover some of these necessary tidbits and be prepared to explain them without suddenly veering off course. I was also confused about the end of the video. It never references other videos or even tells the students how to find more information about this. I usually try to write my email

address on the board during my instruction sessions, so the students can email me personally to ask a

questions that either they didn't think of until after class, or were too embarrassed to ask in front of

their peers. The video's lack of this connection was a bit of a concern. I will try to always remember to

tell everyone how to contact me later. I also think I will ask for more feedback, check for understanding

before going on to another topic. I would also either define what a possibly new term means or ask if

they already know what it means.