Southeast Archives Education Collaborative S·A·E·C

3rd Report from LSU to IMLS on the SAEC Project

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Institution: LSU
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***Calendar Overview**:*

Sept. - Dec. 2003	Alpha:	Run classes (1st semester), evaluate.
Jan. - May. 2004	Beta:	Run classes, evaluate (2nd)

Activities Initiated and Completed

The Southeast Archives Education Collaborative continued its program during its third six months of existence and completed the following activities:

Management

We held monthly electronic meetings (October - March) of the Advisory Board. The January Meeting occurred as a three-day on-site meeting in Baton Rouge.

In response to the budget shift caused by the loss of GCSU from the Collaborative, two of the three sub-contract partners have re-written the subcontracts; the third is under way.

Course Delivery

We completed delivering our first semester's classes.

Evaluation

We developed and administered a collaborative-wide evaluation for the collaborative aspects of the classes we offered. We loaded it on South Carolina's Flashlight account, where 28 of 33 students responded to it. We have "frequency" data on the results which we have picked over rather carefully. Each originating school evaluated the individual courses and shared the data with its receiving partners.

Dissemination

We delivered a panel presentation at the Association of Library and Information Science Educators in January, 2004.

Dow presented a paper at the Conference of Louisiana Colleges and Universities in March, 2004.

Activities Initiated and Still Ongoing

In the past six months, we have continued some activities and initiated others we have not yet completed:

Management

We continue to routinely update the Website to reflect project development.

Course Delivery

Classes began in January and will be complete in May. We're giving a class from UKy and one from AU, both with enrollment at all sites.

Evaluation

We continue to refine our evaluation instruments. We will conduct student evaluations at the conclusion of this semester's courses and integrate student responses with the previous semester's evaluation. Dow will do a more though SPSS analysis in the summer.

Dissemination

We have been accepted to present at the regional Educause conference in June 2004.

We have been accepted to present at the SAA's Pre-conference meeting on archival education in August 2004.

We have two articles underway for publication.

Problems:

While we had technical troubles in the first semester, typically on Thursday evening, our technical problems became much more pronounced this semester. They included from poorly prepared student monitors in the control booths, unexplainable audio loops and static, and sites suddenly dropping out of the video conference. The South Carolina class on Thursday nights in the first semester and the Auburn class on Thursday night in the second semester were especially hard hit, and we have mobilized all forces to address the issues. At this writing the monitors have been brought up to speed and the specific technical causes of the interference seem to have been put to rest. The causes proved difficult to locate and, when found, surprised everyone. While we have identified the specific technical gliches, we still have no answer to the question of why they appear so fiercely on Thursday nights and not on Wednesday night.

The LSU Office of Procurement Services and Property Management has raised questions about some on-campus contracts involvement with this grant. The matter is under review and scheduled for discussion at a meeting in May.

Comments:

The evaluations have proved gratifying. I've added a long portion of the presentation I did to the Conf. of La. Colleges and Universities in March:

> ***"When asked to comment, students in the first course wrote:***
>
> > 'Distance education technology allowed me to take a crucial course which I otherwise would have been unable to take.'
> >
> > 'A lot of the information was available on the internet, so if i missed it in class because of the technology inconsistencies, i could look it up myself later.'

‘It allows the school to include courses it does not have in its curriculum.’

‘Overall it was a challenge, but I feel I learned something useful.’

‘I loved this class. It was tough–we learned a whole new language in just 3 short months. But, I feel that knowing the content of the course will improve my chances for employment, and I’m glad I was able to learn XML, EAD, TEI/MEP in a classroom rather than in a workshop.’

“IMLS is serious about evaluation. It requires PIs to attend a two-day workshop on outcomes based evaluation, and this PI spent a lot of time sorting out what we would evaluate and how and how often.

“In the case of SAEC, we have two levels to evaluate. Each course should receive some sort of evaluation, and, in fact, each other partner school routinely evaluates courses at the end of each semester. In addition we need to evaluate the collaborative effort, which comes down to two issues for students: 1) the opportunity to take classes not offered on the home campus, and 2) the impact the technology has on the learning process. As stated previously, the partners agreed upon indicator thresholds that we would use to consider the program a success.

“[After sorting out] how we would judge the success of the project, we developed a survey instrument which we posted through SC’s Flashlight server, and asked the students to respond to it; 28 of 33 combined EDAM and Government documents students did. In addition, we met with the students informally, to gather more three-dimensional and anecdotal data.

“21 of 28 students (75%) took the course they did because they thought ‘the subject matter looked interesting.’

“18 of 28 (64%) took the course they did because it was ‘critical to future success in my chosen profession.’

“12 of 28 (43%) took the course they did because ‘I could not get it from my home institution.’

“12 of 28 (43%) took the course they did because ‘this course complements the curriculum offered by my home institution.’

“We also determined that we want the students to succeed academically in these classes, and set a goal that 90% of the students will fall within or better than the standard deviation of the mean of their classmates in class performance. The EDAM class had an average grade of 94.44, [100-93=A] with a standard deviation of 3.82, which made the range of ‘normal grades’ from 98.25 to 90.61. Two students scored higher–one at Kentucky and one at South Carolina–and two students scored lower–one at Kentucky, and one in South Carolina.

“Three questions addressed the pedagogical aspects of the DE experience, in terms of self-reported learning behaviors. When asked to agree or disagree with the statement that ‘I feel uncomfortable interrupting the instructor during video conferences,’ 7 agreed, 21 (75%) disagreed. When asked to agree or disagree with the statement that ‘I feel uneasy speaking in front of students I have never met,’ 9 agreed and 19 (68%) disagreed. When asked to agree or disagree with the statement that ‘I have difficulty paying attention to the lectures,’ 6 agreed, 22 (78%) disagreed.

“Comments on their response to the class included,

‘[A great asset was] interaction with students from other regions.’

‘The greatest asset was the ability to speak with the professor over the video link.’

‘[Assets include] Ability to see and hear students in other geographical areas, learn their views and ideas.’

‘[Barriers include] Not in the same room with everyone else. That inhibits discussion. Don’t get to know remote students.’

‘[Barriers include] Shyness/Social anxiety.’

‘The limitation of one microphone turned on at a time, coupled with limitation of seeing only the person currently speaking, ... tended to lead to less classroom interaction than in a face-to-face setting.’

“Another goal we set for ourselves: 80% of the students will indicate satisfaction with the DE delivery system for the class. We may have trouble meeting that. Comments included:

‘We would lose contact with the host site at least once per class period, sometimes more often, which cuts into everyone’s time and can become really frustrating....’

‘...the presence of an individual familiar with the operation of ALL the technologies used during class periods would be a great improvement....If the technology doesn’t work, students cannot get full and complete instruction!’

“At the end of the first course, changes were recommended, but they all involved a mechanical change – re-ordering the Bb site, using a new software package, etc.

“Did it work?

“Did the students succeed academically? Yes. I believe they did

“Did the academic programs benefit from offering the course in a collaborative environment? No question. At the January 2004 meeting the group set forth a five year schedule, extending well beyond the terms of the grant funding; this is a good thing and we want to keep it going.

“Have the institutions benefited? Yes. This program has allowed all the institutions a chance to explore alternative ways to present distance education. It also has allowed us all to learn about our partner/colleagues in much greater depth than we might otherwise – offering us ‘good ideas’ to adopt from each other.

“Has the funding agency benefitted, thus far? It has forwarded the IMLS’s agenda of promoting collaborative efforts to create and sustain a nation of learners.

“Finally, our ongoing collaborative effort yielding evaluation and assessment data to inform the profession. The Archives Educators Section of the Society of American Archivists plans a full day pre-conference on archival education, and we will bring lots to the table for consideration.

“Over the remainder of the grant funding period, we will offer another two semesters of classes and collect the data it generates. Beyond that, we have begun to write a second proposal which we think of second stage development. We know that we have lots to offer, and in that proposal we’re going to explore ways to make what we’re doing available to the world needing continuing education, but without drowning ourselves in numbers. We’re also going to experiment with offering three classes a week.”

Submitted by:
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