Ransom! Database Search Game

Matt Lee

Someone has kidnapped all of Minitex's blue resource sharing tubs! And we need your help to figure out who did it.

That's the premise of an ELM learning game we launched this month called Ransom!. Have you tried it? Take a moment to check it out. The evaluations we've received have been routinely positive and comments feature words like fun, engaging, and useful.

Is it useful to you? Perhaps as a professional development tool for your staff? Several mystery solvers have indicated that they'll share the game with their staff as a way to introduce non-reference folks to ELM and/or help them brush up their knowledge.

Are you interested in creating a similar game for your library users? The structure of Ransom! is very simple and uses exclusively free Google tools. If there's interest, we'd be happy to put together a guide to show you how to build something similar. Drop a comment.
Microaggression

Jennifer Hootman

Recently I attended a workshop on “Identifying and Responding to Microaggressions” developed by the University of Minnesota Libraries’ Diversity Outreach Collaborative. I have been hearing a great deal about microaggression within the library professional community over the past couple of years, and I have personally experienced it myself. So, I was looking forward to what I might learn and share in the workshop.

It was led by Jody Gray, Diversity Outreach Librarian, Jody Kempf, Coordinator for Instruction and Outreach, and Todd Fenton, Manager, InfoNow of the University of Minnesota Libraries. They incorporated a meaningful variety of presentation, video (http://z.umn.edu/microaggressionssting), small group discussion and large group sharing.

From the website The Microaggressions Project:

“The term “microaggressions” was originally coined to speak particularly to racialized experiences.”

“Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.”

The concept, however, has been expanded to include all social otherness. Microaggressions are typically defined within the context and intersection of power, privilege, and identity (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, education level, ability).

Experiencing microaggressions can create uncomfortable and unsafe environments in the workplace, home, school, and public spaces, for example. Microaggressions, regardless of intention, can negatively affect one’s work and life experience.

The workshop also included four handy tips for those of us who experience microaggressions in our
daily lives.

1. remain calm
2. assess the situation (e.g., Are you safe? Is it worth the risk to confront?)
3. model the behavior you’d like to see
4. focus on the event and not the person

If you're interested in learning more about this topic or any others from the Diversity Outreach Collaborative, check out their calendar of events.

**Information Literacy Interactive Tutorial**

*Jennifer Hootman*

The ILI-L listserv typically yields a number of good ideas, conversations, tips, and resource links. Recently, I learned about the Information Literacy Interactive Tutorial through the listserv. The tutorial was created by The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) based in Glasgow, Scotland.

It includes six major steps: Question, Sources, Find, Evaluate, Combine, and Share & Apply. Within those steps you’ll find instruction, activities, and links to more resources. Be sure to check out the Al & Pete videos in step 2, for instance – entertaining!

Most importantly, you can download the zip file for the tutorial and edit with any text editor.

Perhaps the tutorial will serve as a source of inspiration for your instruction.
MLA 2014 Pre-Conference: PLD Day

Carla Pfahl

I attended Public Library Division (PLD) Day as part of MLA’s Pre-Conference Workshop in Mankato the day before the MLA Conference. The workshop, “Get It Together: Reclaiming Our Purpose for the 21st Century,” was presented by Valerie Gross, President & CEO, Howard County Library System in Maryland, and was based on her newest book, Transforming our image, building our brand: the education advantage.

Gross spoke of the power of language and how changing the language used at the Howard County Library System helped put the library system on new terms with the public, schools, and legislators. By aligning themselves with the same (or similar) language used about schools, Gross was able to explain what the library did for the community and it was as if a veil had been taken away. She reports that most community members were able to understand what the library did and its value for the community without further explanation.

When the new language (e.g., using “Children’s Class” instead of “Storytime” and “Instructor or Teacher” instead of “Librarian”) was given to library staff, Gross commented that several staff were so enthusiastic of the changes that they wanted to begin using them immediately. The language accurately reflected the work they did and how they viewed their own roles in the library. They have also made partnerships with local organizations and schools for programs outside of their library such as the annual event Battle of the Books, A+ Partners in Education, Blossoms of Hope, and even hosting local farmer’s markets and area branches.

In her workshop, she talked about the heightened perceived value of products. Her continued example was that of generic (tap) water versus Evian bottled water and identifying what it is that commands the extra money we spend to purchase the Evian water. Part of that, she explains, is the perceived value of quality we have of the Evian product – which mainly comes from the language. With that in mind, libraries can accomplish the WOW factor through the language we choose to use to talk about ourselves, our work, our organization.

Another point she makes is that, according to the PEW Report, How Americans Value Public Libraries in Their Communities, nearly one third of Americans don’t know what libraries do. However, Gross remarked that it was very likely that all or nearly all 100% of Americans know what schools do.
The solution, Gross believes, is to change the words we use. Historically, the message libraries have shared is that libraries are important; we just have to tell them (the public, legislators) our story. However, the problem with that is that we have to explain what it all means. A smarter, simpler no-explanation-needed solution is to change the words. Businesses often use language change as a simple marketing tool: used car v. certified pre-owned vehicle; prune v. dried plum; gambling v. gaming; liquor v. spirits – it all means the same but prettier words attract more people. For libraries, the one word to change, to use for our image/vision is “education.” What we do not want to say is: we play an educational role; we support education – this vision is too small. Rather, we ARE education – education is our role. This gives libraries an equal footing with schools.

Their words have transformed Howard County Library into the 2013 Gale/Library Journal Library of the Year. Gross highlights that libraries need to define their vision as a strong education system that delivers “high-quality public education for all ages.” The role of the libraries can be explained as “Three Pillars.” If libraries equal education, then the three pillars that comprise the overall educational mission and curriculum are:

1. Self-Directed Education
2. Research Assistance & Instruction
3. Instructive & Enlightening Experiences

While it is important to give a clear understanding of the role of the library in the community, Gross mentions that we should not lose important words that have described libraries for decades: discovery; curiosity; fun; play – these are emotionally embedded in people.

One exercise we did in the workshop was to say who we are and what we do in six words or less. For one of those exercises I used: We provide engaging and enlightening experiences. This workshop was certainly enlightening for me. As for PLD, the workshop was very successful and they are looking to continue a PLD Day in some annual format. For more information, or provide feedback, contact PLD, the Public Library Division of Minnesota Library Association.

Back to November 2014

MLA 2014: Virtual Reference Tips

Beth Staats
A session of particular interest to me at MLA this year included a panel consisting of Carla Pfahl (Minitex), Jill Smith (Anoka County Library), Karen Pundsock (Great River Regional Library – GRR), and Greg Argo (Concordia University). “Tips, Tools, and Tricks: Increasing Usage and Improving Value of the User Experience in Virtual Reference Services” offered a look at what public and academic libraries are doing right and what they might be doing wrong. Carla started off the session by highlighting the success of the AskMN chat widget. This is a small chat window embedded in the ELM Portal and within many of the ELM databases. This Widget can be found in EBSCO, Gale, ProQuest, and Britannica databases. Carla is currently working with LearningExpress so you should be seeing it there soon too. Over the past several months Carla has seen AskMN usage changing since more people are using the chat widget to ask questions than the chat form.

Greg said that Concordia University's virtual reference usage has increased with a change in branding. Instead of the old Ask-a-Librarian link, they changed the text to “Get Help Now.” They also moved the chat icon to the upper right corner of the web page. In addition, he worked on creating helpful interview scripts that allow Concordia librarians to perform better virtual reference interviews. Greg mentioned that this chat service helps to magnify their customer service opportunities. Staff can work with patrons in real-time and then follow up with patrons via email. Concordia University follows up on all questions answered by non-Concordia librarians (questions answered by librarians via QuestionPoint 24/7 Back-up).

Karen, Great River Regional Library, said that many questions they get via their chat form relate to patron technology problems and issues. Many questions are library account and library card based (e.g., how do I reset my pin?). GRR originally launched chat using Meebo, but in 2012, they joined the QuestionPoint cooperative. They use some paraprofessionals to answer local questions since they get so many relating to account information.

Jill, Anoka County Library, did some marketing to let people know about their virtual reference that started in April 2013. They created a QR code, business cards, posters, a web banner, and did some community outreach as well, in hopes of making people aware of the service. Jill said that if she could do it over again she would get reluctant staff involved earlier in the process of creating a VR service. One tip Jill mentioned is to make sure that the text and language used to promote and use the service is simple and clear for patrons to understand. She also mentioned that Anoka County Library gets many questions via VR about local history, account management, and eBooks.

Back to November 2014
MLA 2014: Outreach to Hmong Populations

Matt Lee

The Twin Cities metro area is home to a larger Hmong population than any other metro area in the U.S. (although California claims more Hmong residents than Minnesota as a whole). Mark Pfeifer of the Hmong Cultural Center and Chaleng Lee of Hennepin County Libraries presented “Outreach to Hmong Populations and Hmong-Related Resources for Libraries” to help MLA attendees learn more about that diverse population.

The session presented a review of Minnesota's many different Hmong populations, covering demographics, dialects, housing trends, religious beliefs, represented clans, and evolving economic indicators. The session materials provide statistics, background, and sources. You'll also find guidance for interacting respectfully with traditional (read: older) Hmong people.

The session also introduced the Hmong Cultural Center's Resource Library: http://www.hmonglibrary.org/. The Library is the most comprehensive Hmong studies research library in the U.S., but it is still relatively small. Pfeifer is the solo librarian and collects all manner of material related to Hmong studies, including what is most likely the largest collection of Hmong studies theses and dissertations, a collection of academic journal articles (some dating back to the 19th Century), and archives of a number of Hmong newspapers. The Library is located in St. Paul and is open to the public. A virtual library featuring a smaller collection of online materials is available.

Back to November 2014

MLA 2014: Tech Services Time Travel

Mark K. Ehlert, Minitex/DCME

I attended the Wednesday afternoon session “Tech Services Time Travel” led by Lori Veldhuis (Dakota County Library) and Rebecca Ganzel (Augsburg College). The themes for the session centered on timeliness and efficiency.

Rebecca outlined how she arrived at her new position to find a significant backlog of materials waiting for her—some 2800 items. Using a combination of workflow checklists, stats-crunching spreadsheets,
and logistical reorganization (e.g., naming carts), she and her students cut that backlog in half over the course of a single year while steadily managing the flow of new acquisitions.

Lori recounted Dakota County's 2006 process improvement initiative. Officials attended library staff at the county's nine branch libraries to calculate the time staff spent performing various tasks (even going so far as to use stopwatches!). By 2012 most library branches had met their goals, but one part of the initiative remained unfinished: a measurement process to monitor compliance. This led to a time study. Yellow paper flags, serving as log sheets for statistics, were inserted in various materials to track their way through the technical services pipeline—from receipt to cataloging to processing. Staff engaged in the process by drawing up step-by-step documentation and entering data into spreadsheets. In the end, the time study turned into a successful assessment tool to measure average workflow timings for incoming library materials.

**Back to November 2014**

---

**MLA 2014: Program Logic Models**

*Matt Lee*

Logic models are not new, by the admission of consultant Cheryl Kessler and Marcela Sanchez of Hennepin County Library, but they can be useful for building and refining library programs and for evaluating outcomes. Kessler and Sanchez presented their experience using logic models in programming within Hennepin County in the session “Developing and Using Program Logic Models: A Case Study."

A program logic model visually displays everything related to a specific library program, from the audience to the activities to the intended outcomes. It provides structure to the planning process. A project group plans out the resources at hand and the intended audience. They determine outcomes they'd like that audience to achieve and build activities to support those outcomes. Indicators are created to measure whether the audience achieves the outcomes.

Logic models help organizations to strategically plan events – to see everything they need to put into a program and to define everything their audience will get out of it. Kessler recommended the *Logic Model Guidebook* by Knowlton and Phillips as a practical guide to the process.
Upcoming ELM Webinars

There are a number of ELM webinars scheduled through December. Register for one – we bet you'll learn something new!

Here's a sampling of what's on tap:

- ELM Advanced
- LearningExpress Job & Career Accelerator
- LearningExpress Library K12 Resources
- Google, Library Resources, & Your Students
- History Day Resources in ELM

See the full listing at http://minitex.umn.edu/Training/.

K12 Students and AskMN

Carla Pfahl

Now that the school year is underway and students are deep in the learning process, we’re seeing more activity from K12 students with AskMN. We love connecting with kids and teachers, during or after school. Our chat service is available 24/7, and students can ask their question at any time. Here are some helpful hints to ensure a successful and productive session:

What to expect

http://referencenotes.minitex.umn.edu/category/november-2014/
AskMN librarians will help students find resources such as websites, magazine articles, and books for their assignments. We try to share our search strategies and starting resources with students.

**Try it out**

Teachers and school library staff should try AskMN before telling students about it. [Contact us](http://referencenotes.minitex.umn.edu/category/november-2014/) to tell us your school will be using AskMN for an assignment or to request a demonstration.

**Asking questions takes time**

Asking and answering a question on AskMN can take 15 – 20 minutes or more. Students using AskMN in the classroom or the school library should begin their session near the beginning of the period.

**Introduce students to AskMN with a simple assignment**

Students get more out of AskMN if they know what to expect. The first time students use AskMN, it should be to find out what, who, or when. Examples of assignments include:

- researching biographies
- state reports
- country reports

How and why questions are also welcome, but students coming to AskMN for the first time can become disappointed and frustrated that we don't answer those questions directly.

**Stagger Questions**

There are a handful of librarians available at any given time in AskMN. Librarians can become overwhelmed very quickly when an entire class logs into the service simultaneously, this increases wait times for students seeking assistance. It is preferred if teachers and school librarians have students stagger their questions by allowing 3-4 students to ask a question every 15 minutes.

When you are ready to introduce AskMN.org to your students, setting student expectations will ensure they have a good and productive experience. You can find more information about how AskMN can work for students [on our website](http://referencenotes.minitex.umn.edu/category/november-2014/). Students may also find [Homework Rescue](http://referencenotes.minitex.umn.edu/category/november-2014/), an online tutoring service available through metro-area public libraries and some select public libraries in Greater Minnesota, a
New Collections in Minnesota Reflections

This summer and fall we saw an influx of new materials to Minnesota Reflections, including the addition of seven exciting new contributing organizations.

Minneapolis Institute of Arts

The MIA has shared 130 museum exhibit catalogs in Minnesota Reflections. This collection documents the museum’s rich history of interpreting and sharing art with Minnesota.

Jones-Harrison Residence

Located on the shores of Minneapolis's Cedar Lake, the Jones-Harrison Residence was established in 1888. It is believed to be the longest continuously operating home for senior citizens in Minnesota. The Residence contributed 56 images and text-based materials that document life at Jones-Harrison.

Northern Lights: A Look at Minnesota Books and Writers

Perhaps you remember this television program which was sponsored by the Hennepin County Library and Metronet? It originally aired on Metro Cable Channel 6 from 1988-2002. Over the course of 15 years this series featured interviews with numerous Minnesota authors, illustrators, artists and members of the literary arts community. The video interviews have been digitized from the original media held in the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society. To date we have added 119 interviews, with more coming in the next few months!
Saint Paul Almanac

The Almanac is a Saint Paul-based literary organization that creates opportunities for relationship-building through the sharing and dissemination of people's stories. Every year they publish the Saint Paul Almanac, and all issues to date are now available in Minnesota Reflections.

Quatrefoil Library

The Quatrefoil Library is a Minneapolis-based lending library that collects, documents and circulates gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer materials in a safe and accessible environment. They have contributed issues of their newsletter Focus Point as well as the run of the newspaper The GLC Voice.

The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University

Minnesota Reflections now contains materials from the library of these two Catholic and Benedictine residential liberal arts colleges located four miles apart in Central Minnesota. The college library contributed 117 text-based materials that document early Minnesota history, missionary work, and the history of the Diocese of St. Cloud.

Plymouth Congregational Church

The Archives of the Plymouth Congregational Church collects, preserves, organizes and shares the church's history. Documents submitted to Minnesota Reflections include church records 1858–1882 and newsletters that report the involvement of church members in World War I.
One-Second Poll: SWETS Bankruptcy

SWETS Information Services, a content management company, recently declared bankruptcy. Is this?:

- Scary
- Not scary
- I don’t even know what SWETS is, so I'm not... sweting it.

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

And here are the results of last month's poll:
If money were no object, which would you choose?

- 39% iPhone 6
- 30% iPhone 6 Plus
- 32% Neither

(44 responses)