Barcelona, Spain: The Logistics of Teaching in an International Setting

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Overview of the workshop

One week, twenty-five hours of class time, "Information Resources in Engineering" workshop for twenty-four librarians from the University Libraries Consortium of Catalonia (CBUC), in Barcelona, Spain.

Preparation considerations for international teaching

No chance to retrieve forgotten items:
This was not being taught in a “nearby” classroom where something forgotten could be easily retrieved. Whatever was left behind was unobtainable.

No time to modify plans:
This course did not extend over several weeks so that material could be changed in response to class feedback. There would be no time to modify the schedule or rewrite the handouts. Content had to be correct from the beginning.

No option to “wing-it” to cover technical problems:
This was not a short conference presentation where technical failures would only cause a slight inconvenience. Barcelona participants had committed themselves to one week of attendance and some had traveled significant distances. Backups of backups were required in order to guarantee that the lessons could be delivered.

No protracted ad-libs:
In most courses if the material runs short and the time runs long, some ad-libbing can fill the void. In this setting, handouts were crucial to communicating the material. It was necessary to have more than enough material to fill the entire week, and to make sure that handouts were available for all topics.

Scheduling the lecture topics

The schedule for the workshop was 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM, Monday through Friday. Ideally, lecturing and canned demos in the morning followed by hands-on in the afternoon would be best. This would allow participants to gain information about the material and then have an immediate chance to practice. It would also give participants a more active role during the afternoon when attention wanders and eyelids begin to droop.

However, just as in the U.S., the internet response time was much better in the morning than it was in the afternoon. Therefore, it was necessary to schedule hands-on during the first part of the class, and lecture at the end.
A Daily Schedule of Topics Covered

DAY 1: Basic Boolean; Searching OVID; Engineering Databases

I. Introduction to the course
II. Basic Boolean strategies
III. Searching Compendex and INSPEC using OVID
IV. Engineering related databases: general and subject specific

DAY 2: Searching OVID & WOS; Engineering Disciplines & Communication

I. Searching on OVID, simultaneous searches across databases, removing dups
II. Searching Web of Science - citation searching
III. Traditional engineering disciplines – an overview
IV. The interdisciplinary nature of engineering research
V. How do engineers communicate and find their information?

Day 3: Searching CSA; Searching IEL; Publishers and Publications; Digital

I. Searching Cambridge Scientific Abstracts on Cambridge
II. Searching IEL full text
III. Publishers: commercial, society, government, manufacturers, universities
IV. Publication types: journals, books, meetings papers, standards, etc.
V. Full text online digital materials
VI. Students and WWW resources

Day 4: Searching SilverPlatter; Selecting Databases; Internet Issues

I. Searching on SilverPlatter
II. Selecting bibliographic databases for the collection: issues to consider
III. Academic publishing on the internet: what effect does it have?
IV. Issues concerning citation of electronic works

DAY 5: Searching; Miscellaneous Resources

I. Hands-on time for all resources
II. Document delivery resources
III. List-servs
IV. Table of Contents services: UnCover, publisher specific
V. Demo and hands-on of presentation software
Databases Available for Hands-On Practice

OVID –
  CSA - Environmental Science & Pollution Management
  Ei Compendex
  INSPEC
  NTIS
  PsycINFO

ISI -
  Web of Science

IEEE -
  IEL

Cambridge Scientific Abstracts
  Metadex
  Pollution Abstracts
  Water Resources Abstracts

SilverPlatter
  Aerospace
  Ei Compendex
  INSPEC

Vendor Contacts

Six weeks before the workshop, I began to contact vendors to set up database access. That was barely enough time. Some vendors such as ISI and IEEE responded quickly, and IEEE even offered to have their Spanish representative attend the session. Other vendors such as SilverPlatter were very difficult to get a response from.

Presentation Tools Used

PowerPoint
  Used for all lectures
  Backups on floppies

Lotus ScreenCam
  Searches canned in the U.S when internet response was fast
  Canned searches played during the afternoon in Spain when response was slow
  Backups were placed on an internet site for retrieval if needed

Adobe Web Captures
  Used for simulating a “live” search without going online
  Backups on floppies
**Handouts**

Two versions of handouts were used for all lectures
- PowerPoint – slides of the lectures
- Class notes – detailed notes of all the material in the lecture

Some participants used the PowerPoint handouts and filled in their own notes. Others followed along in the detailed notes and did very little writing. In this situation where there were different levels of English comprehension, I felt it best to provide as many options as possible for absorbing the material.

**Distribution of handouts:**
- Masters were sent as e-mail attachments to Barcelona
- All photocopying was done in Barcelona previous to my arrival
- Handouts were distributed as topics were covered
- All handouts were posted on a web site for access by participants

**Backups for handouts:**
- Floppy
- WWW server

**Computer considerations**

- Brought my laptop with me
- Newer laptops run on 110v or 220v
- Surge protector was not purchased
- Plug-in adaptor is necessary
- Verify resolution on computer is compatible with projector provided at the site

**On-site contact person**

The assistance of this person is critical. This person should be someone who will be in attendance at the workshop every day and who can provide answers to the questions that will arise during the planning stage and the workshop itself. Some of the information / assistance that this person can provide includes:
- List of vendors and / or databases that the participants are already familiar with
- Specifics on the number and type of computers in the classroom
- Mailing address for vendors to send material to
- Confirmation that vendor supplied material has arrived
- Information on the projection system in the classroom
- IP addresses for the classroom if demo databases will have IP controlled access
- Arranging for a computer technician to be on-site before the first class
- Feedback on the class as it progresses

The ability of the contact person to locate resources and provide answers can have a significant effect upon the quality of the workshop and the ease with which it is set up.
Benefits of being “over prepared”

One of the best parts of the trip was interacting with the librarians in the workshop. Each day after class was completed, it was time for a two or three hour lunch. Because all handouts, lessons, and demos were prepared, (some might say over-prepared), before arriving in Barcelona, there was time to enjoy these interactions. Also, even with long lunches there was still time for sightseeing in the evening, and a quick review of the next day’s material late at night. It’s definitely advantageous to have all the course work done ahead of time so that there’s time to interact with the librarians and see the sights.

A related benefit of the lunches and interaction after class was an opportunity to gauge how the material was being received. Was there any difficulty comprehending the material? Was I talking to fast? Was the material too easy? Too difficult?

Time Line for Barcelona Preparation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January, 2000</td>
<td>Initial contact made about teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Get feedback from Barcelona instructor of previous year</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 1, 2000</td>
<td>Clarify Virginia Tech policy</td>
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<td>Was time in Barcelona “vacation” or “consulting”?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Policy about taking VT laptop to Barcelona</td>
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<td>Policy about printing materials at work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Policy about prep time for Barcelona lessons</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 3, 2000</td>
<td>Ask for details about the Barcelona teaching environment:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lecture room or computer lab?</td>
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<td>Response time on the WWW?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Databases, full text, etc. already available?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vendors that students are already familiar with?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Instruction time and schedule for classes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 11, 2000</td>
<td>Submit tentative syllabus and possible dates to CBUC</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 22, 2000</td>
<td>Confirm dates for teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Task Description</td>
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| February 23, 2000 | Confirm hotel reservations made by CBUC  
Make flight reservations                                                                 |
| February 28, 2000 | Find out about laptop, surge protector setups for Spain                                                                                           |
| March 1, 2000    | Begin work on class lessons                                                                                                                        |
| March 15, 2000   | Apply for passport                                                                                                                                |
| March 23, 2000   | CBUC appoints contact person for the class  
Begin working with contact person on class details                                                  |
| March 29, 2000   | Begin contacting vendors about database availability                                                                                              |
| April 3, 2000    | Get IP addresses for computers in lab                                                                                                            |
| April 14, 2000   | Send introductory e-mail to course participants with URL for selected online resources                                                           |
| April 15, 2000   | Begin sending handouts to Barcelona via e-mail attachments                                                                                         |
| April 16, 2000   | Continue to work with vendors to set up product access                                                                                            |
| April 17, 2000   | Confirm credit card payment options for hotel                                                                                                     |
| April 28, 2000   | More handouts sent to Barcelona for copying                                                                                                       |
| May 4, 2000      | Another e-mail sent to course participants with:  
Info on the course content  
Request for questions they may have                                                                 |
| May 8, 2000      | Some vendor material not yet arrived in Barcelona                                                                                                 |
| May 8, 2000      | Send Powerpoint handouts of all lectures to Barcelona                                                                                              |
| May 10, 2000     | Final info from Barcelona:  
Confirm class time  
Confirm ability to get into classroom 1 hour early  
Confirm computer technician available for set up                                               |
| May 11, 2000     | Final materials from vendors arrives in Barcelona                                                                                                 |
| May 12, 2000     | Depart for Barcelona                                                                                                                              |
| At the present   | I still get occasional e-mails from students                                                                                                     |