12-2-2007

Poster: South Central Medical Library Conference

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Help Wikis in Higher Education: Collaborative by Nature or Design?
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OBJECTIVE
Qualitative study designed to uncover participants' experiences as contributors and reviewers in two graduate courses using course wikis.

SETTING/PARTICIPANTS
13 graduate students (3 males and 10 females) enrolled in two graduate-level courses in law and education that incorporated course wikis. Education students created a wiki for designing online courses as a course requirement. School of Law students created a wiki for students participating in the Law Clinic. Students initiated the wiki.

METHODS
We interviewed participants using a descriptive survey to gather their perceptions of their experiences related to:
- collaborating to create and review contributions
- deciding what to contribute
- interacting with the wiki
- comparing a wiki with a course management system
- effective uses of wikis

WIKI
A set of related Web 2.0 pages that can be authored collectively. Authoring occurs in a Web browser with minimal working knowledge of HTML. Changes are made through "live edit" in the browser window. A wiki is an application as well as a concept.

RESULTS
Participants posted content related to courses and projects. They read and used each other's contributions, "like wiki articles" such as "10 Errors Not to Make" because they thought it might be perceived as "informative or "disrespectful." They also felt they lacked the time to edit others' work.

The wiki created a "collective picture of what we all know" and "reinforced the idea that we had something to contribute." Experts were identified through contributions to the wiki. Although posting content to the law clinic wiki was initially required, it has since become self-sustaining through student interest.

Wiki require negotiated "reputation," "intimate community," "formal reviews," and "more authority." Some were eager to discuss contributions within the wiki pages.

CONCLUSIONS
Designing wikis to actually be collaborative workplaces and guiding students to feel comfortable editing others' contributions requires much more investment of thought and planning.

Recommendations include:
- Students and instructors collaboratively plan the purpose of the course wiki and its structure
- Guidelines for creating content and deciding when content is ready for publication and revision be established
- Roles, tasks, and timelines be scheduled
- Support provided through course discussions, job aids, resources, and discussions provided on critically reviewing others' work, and making useful recommendations for edits and revisions.

added anything used based became better change children class clean clarify collaborate commented content contribute didn't different discussion doesn't done email emerged everyone expertise feedback files finding going helpful ideas into interests learned learner-driven lists and longer looked list manual material module and mail notifies others past people person posted procedures project provide requires really reflect reflects requires required reviewed resource review section sent shared something step seemed struggles students staff suggested sure think topics tried used violence added wanted wiki work yes