Working Smarter, Not Harder: Teaching Students and Staff with Screencasting

Karen Sobel, Reference & Instruction Librarian | Margaret Brown-Sica, Systems Coordinator | Denise Pan, Electronic Resources & Serials Librarian

University of Colorado Denver

Identify Need → Create → Market → Assess

Why screencasts instead of in-person training?

- Delivered on-demand. Posted on a website they can be accessed 24-7.
- Consistent and repeatable. Make once and the learner can play as often as needed.
- Offering alternative instruction options.
- Empowering the user. Providing self-service options.

Who is the audience?

Screencasts can effectively teach or train anyone.

- *Instruction*: students, teaching faculty
- *Systems* : students, teaching faculty, library employees
- *Technical Services* : library employees

How did you make your screencasts?

- *Adobe Captivate* – to create tutorials in Flash format
- *Adobe Dreamweaver or Contribute* – to post on Internet

What are some best practices?

- Faster is better. Screencasts are most useful, when they are available for learners. Don't try to make the "perfect" tutorial. Sometimes "done" is good enough.
- Take smaller bites. Divide screencasts into shorter episodes. They are quicker and easier to make. Plus audiences of all ages have short attention spans.
- Planning up front saves at the end. Best to prepare and practice before you record.

How did you publicize your screencasts?

- Location of the audience (within or outside of the library) often determines marketing strategy.
- When possible, place screencasts at the point of need.
  - *Instruction*: on subject/class guides, in the classroom, instructor web pages, Course management software (e.g. Blackboard)
  - *Systems*: where user accesses the application (e.g. on the web page for meeting schedule software)
  - *Technical Services*: library intranet, personal web page, in the library catalog on an e-journal record

How do you know if your screencast is effective?

- Typically, the shelf-life of a screencast is shorter than a Twinkie.
- It important to build-in a method of gathering feedback from your audience. Some strategies are word-of-mouth comments, website traffic, or surveys.
- Based on this user input, you can make decisions to create an additional, revise an existing, or delete an outdated screencast.

For examples from Instruction, Systems, and Technical Services, see our personal web pages. URLs are provided on handout.