Bridging the Distance: Evans Library Video Tutorials

By Cheryl Davis, Distance Learning Librarian

The Evans Library has created a series of video screencasts to assist students in using the Library resources available to them. These screencasts are available on the Library website, lib.fit.edu, under the “How Do I” section. Click on the link for “Watch tutorials about the research process.”

The Conducting Research Series contains modules which cover a variety of topics related to using library resources at Florida Tech. The 12 modules are:

- Understanding Your Assignment
- Defining Your Topic
- Search Strategies
- Examining the Scope of Information Resources
- Finding Books and eBooks
- Finding Articles
- Using the Internet for Research vs. Using Library Resources
- Managing Reference Information with RefWorks
- Summon: Searching and Refining Results – Evans Library
- Summon: Managing Results and Citations: Evans Library
- How to Use your ILLiad account: Evans Library
- Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery: Overview

Each module can be viewed separately, but for maximum benefit, we suggest that students view the entire series and then revisit those modules as needed. Remember, these are available to your students for viewing 24/7!

If you have any questions, I am here to help. I can be reached at (321) 674-8766 or at cdavis05@fit.edu. And, you can always use our Ask a Librarian service at http://lib.fit.edu/services/askalibrarian.php

Next time I will tell you about another great Library resource that will help us all to bridge the distance. ♦

The Social Side of Evans Library

By Rebecca Weber, Instruction Librarian

Evans Library is now on Facebook and Twitter. See you there!

Follow us on Twitter: @EvansLibrary1
Like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/evanslibraryfl
Helping Students Understand the Benefits of Study Groups
By Maryellen Weimer, Ph.D.

Would your students benefit from participation in a study group? Are you too busy to organize and supervise study groups for students in your courses? I’m guessing the answer to both questions is yes. If so, here are some ways teachers can encourage and support student efforts to study together without being “in charge” of the study groups.

Promote study groups
First, include a list of reasons why students should join study groups in the syllabus or on the course website. Maybe there’s a short podcast available in which you talk about the usefulness of study groups. Better yet, if you’ve got some students who studied together in a previous course, ask them to make some comments about their experiences. Second, talk regularly in class about study groups. You can repeat all the benefits, suggest activities that involve good group study strategies, or propose some things they could study together (like problems they could solve, questions they could discuss). You also can solicit feedback from study groups in class or mention content you discussed with a group during office hours.

Make study groups an option
Encourage students to organize their own groups, but offer to help with the process. Nudge them with reminders, such as “Send me an email if you’re interested in being part of a study group.” Have study groups “register” their members, and then report on meeting times and activities. Suggest study activities for the group (ideas like those offered in the next item). Invite the group to meet with you during office hours or to send questions electronically. Offer registered study groups that report regular meetings a bonus point incentive depending on the average of their test grades. Let all students know that joining a study group is an option throughout the course.

Demonstrate the value of a study group
Too often when students study together, it’s pretty much a waste of time. If they’re reviewing for a test, they talk about how it can’t possibly be that hard and thereby relieve themselves of the need to study. Or they “go over” their notes, reading what they’ve written but never with any discussion. Group studying is too often accompanied by eating, texting and regular side conversations.

In order for students to get the most value from their study sessions, you’ll need to help them come up with a different set of strategies. You can do so by holding a review session and asking students to form potential study groups (it’s up to them if they want to meet as a group more often). Give the groups tasks like these:

1. For three minutes everybody reviews their notes and lists five things they think will be on the test and then for five minutes they share lists and create a group list of the items most often mentioned. During the exam debrief, students revisit their list of things they expected to see on the exam. Were those things on the exam?

2. Everybody takes three minutes and writes a question about some content they don’t understand or wish they understood better. The group devotes a specified amount of time to each question, looking for relevant content in their notes and the text.

3. The group has 20 minutes to make one crib sheet that everyone in that group can use during the exam.

Offer proof that study groups improve performance
Compare the scores, points or grades of those working in study groups with those who aren’t. These are data which should be collected across several sections of the course.

Define study groups broadly
Students tend to think of study groups for exam preparation, but that isn’t the only kind of student collaboration that promotes learning. If there are regularly assigned readings for the course, students can get together to discuss the reading. Again you might let them do this first in class with a good set of prompts so they see how dialogue can enrich and deepen their understanding of the assigned material. Readings are easily discussed in virtual environments, which means the group doesn’t have to find a time when everybody can meet. If various writing assignments are required in the course, students can form peer editing groups. Rubrics, checklists and prompts can help them get beyond superficial feedback (“you might need a comma here”) to the kind of helpful critique that improves the writing.

Readers, what strategies have you used to encourage effective study groups?
Editor: What suggestions do you have? Would a discussion on this subject be of interest in the Faculty Lounge?
Marshall Jones

Marshall Jones is the director of CoPLA online and is also a faculty member who teaches both main campus traditional and online courses. He teaches several courses online, including Theories of Crime and Behavior, the Psychology of Leadership, Serial Killers, and Program Development and Evaluation. Jones has been teaching online since 2000; he taught online for two other universities before coming to Florida Tech.

He learned to teach online by, in his words, “being thrown to the wolves.” He quickly realized that his main classroom strength of connecting with students was negated online. No longer could he use non-verbal cues to gauge student engagement and understanding. In a face-to-face (F2F) course, he can instantly see if students understand the material; this is difficult online.

Jones finds it difficult to have to repeat himself five different ways to five different students, so he provides his class with a one-sheet Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) form that contains important syllabus and contact information about the course that he encourages them to print and keep handy. This FAQ is to aid them with important course information. An FAQ is a great way to keep your students from asking the same questions over and over.

While teaching online is different from a F2F course, teaching online offers opportunities that might not occur on campus. For example, many of his students are practitioners, already in the field. He loves it when they challenge the ideas in the class. He believes these discussions result in a rich learning environment. This real-world experience is one of the many benefits of online education.

His recommendation to those considering teaching online is simple: if you have had F2F classroom success, those things will not necessarily translate, so different skills will need to be developed. His three main tips for success are use existing infrastructure and training opportunities, learn what works for you online, and care about your students and subject.

Honors: Joe Hellebrand and Jia Campbell

By Jim Reynolds, Academic Program Chair for Online Criminal Justice

Two of our online adjuncts recently received very different honors.

Bryon D. Price, Criminal Justice, was recently appointed Chief of Police for Oak Grove, Missouri, following a 25-year career at the Kansas City Police Department.

Joseph D. Hellebrand, Criminal Justice, and Chief of Police for the Canaveral Port Authority Police Department, was on the winning team at the Dancing With Brevard charity event. Chief Hellebrand was teamed up with Professional Dance Instructor Jia Campbell from the Melbourne Ballroom. There were a total of 14 teams in competition. Dancing with Brevard is an annual charity event that raises money for KLD Kids, a local nonprofit organization that provides education and prevention services for children grades K–12. This year’s event was held at the Shingle Creek Resort in Orlando on June 1.
Reset, Extend Tests

As an instructor, you can extend the quizzes indefinitely yourself in the course site. To do so:

1. From the course site, click on the “Course Admin” tab at the top
2. Click on “Testing and Grading”
3. Click on “Review/Grade Online Tests”
4. Click on the “Batch Reset” link next to the first test you want to change
5. Find the student’s line and click on the box for “Disable Restricted Test Access”
6. Scroll to the bottom and click “Submit”
7. Scroll to the bottom and click on the “< Test Listing” link
8. Repeat steps 4–7 as needed for each test

The extended tests are also fairly easy, once you have done it once or twice. But the basic path is:

1. Course Admin tab > Tests and grading > Review/Grade Online Tests > Batch reset (on the week test you want to adjust. Don’t worry this step will not affect any student exams)
2. Choose “Adjust time on a test” from the drop down menu.
3. Then you can add time to the adjusted time box.

Different classes have set different times. Most of our students with disabilities are allowed double time for tests. So if you give a section an hour, set the ADA test for two hours. ✈️

“Without struggle, there is no progress.”
—Frederick Douglas