Faculty respond: How do you use online teaching materials?
(Original title: What do faculty need from digital libraries and what’s stopping them?)
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Study Methodology
We completed five focus groups at a range of higher education institutions. Participants included STEM faculty from a variety of disciplines. While this is just the first phase of the research we are beginning to see patterns of motivation to use materials, the kinds of materials sought, and how faculty filter these materials. We are also gathering descriptions of barriers faculty encounter in using online resources.

We are drawn to the question of how faculty work practice affects use of online learning materials and how digital libraries can align their services with this practice. Our preliminary knowledge about work practices of faculty from a variety of institutional types is summarized in the center panel of this poster.

Future plans
From the responses to these and future focus groups we are designing a survey. The survey will be administered nationally. We hope to better understand more about work practice and the services that can be provided by content providers like digital libraries to educators. And, you can help.

Content and Form of Materials: What are faculty looking for when they are searching for teaching materials?

- Mostly search for images, videos, animations, simulations, examples, and real-world data
- Sometimes search for and use syllabi, others’ course materials, and primary literature
- Ready search for pedagogical resources, but will use them when the resources are embedded with the materials

Motivation and Use: When and why are faculty looking for online materials?

- TIMEFRAME: Must have resources right before a class, but they have usage in course planning
- Gaining access to complex ideas: Great interest in finding new ways to teach difficult concepts
- Real world curriculum: Strong desire to have access to data sets, examples from industry
- Most recent research

Filtering and Assessment: How do faculty find, revisit, and assess the value of materials online?

- Role of Google and bookmarks: Searching appears to be more common than browsing
- Adoption of “good enough” strategy
- Balance is struck between finding “perfect” materials and not spending too much time
- What makes a resource “good”: This has a very wide set of responses, and many noted they needed to evaluate resources themselves

Can you help?
We are beginning to recruit institutions to participate in the survey. In return for helping us deliver this survey in your institution, we will share the aggregated results from your campus and the overall results of the survey. Plus, you will be helping MERLOT and other digital library projects provide content and services that are aligned with faculty work practices.

Interested? Please contact:
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