It’s Alive! Digital Embedded Librarian



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**Learner challenge:** Developing information literacy skills while meeting students at their point of need. While a workshop at the beginning of a semester will work for some, for others, the information is forgotten for a number of reasons including information overload, other personal concerns, and more. By the time the first research assignment comes due, they are struggling with research. How do I meet students at their point of need and help them develop these skills?

**Technology-enabled solution:** Using an on-going Zoom meeting/room embedded directly within a course shell in the LMS.

An embedded librarian can be defined as a “service model [that] often include an academic librarian who participates in an academic course on an ongoing basis, teaching information literacy skills…The role focuses on providing services to user groups away from the physical library, so that they can work more closely with the members of those groups” (Network of the National Library of Medicine, n.d.). This idea, coupled with my learner challenge, have prompted my investigation of using Zoom Meetings to create virtual office hours or drop-in space embedded within a course shell in my College’s LMS.

Before moving to an entirely online learning environment, my library offered bookable appointments for students who needed assistance with research or assignment-related queries. The questions ranged from the technical (how to access full-text, use database limiters) to more theoretical (developing a research question, synthesizing research into a literature review). After moving online, we still continue to offer bookable virtual appointments. Everything is housed within the Library website, however, and there hasn’t been a huge uptake of this valuable service. A third challenge that I would like to address is promoting this service. I think having online office hours directly embedded within the course shell will better promote this service. The course shell is something the students, ideally, access every day. If I had a widget within the landing page, students would see it every time they log in and be made aware of the service.

Some planning and consideration I will have to do will be to connect with and promote this idea to faculty. This may take quite a bit of time, and would need to be timed to coincide with course planning for the next semester. Another step will be to create a widget to embed within our Brightspace instance. It is pretty easy to embed widgets, but I will have to investigate whether I have to code something from scratch, or if something can [be built within Brightspace](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/le/widgets/instructor/create_custom_widget.htm). As I do not have much background in html coding, I will need to connect with my colleagues that do.

A time-saver is the fact that Zoom is used widely at the College. There is plenty of support from IT and our Teaching and Learning department that I will have no problem learning the more advanced features of Zoom. There is only a slight learning curve for students as well. Once they log into the interface, or attend one of our Tech Workshops, they will have a basic understanding of the functionality. The perks of using Zoom is its flexibility. I can simply have a video conversation with a student or group, or I can share my screen to demonstrate a procedure, like limiting results in a search, for example. Students can also share their screen with me so I can provide formative feedback as they demonstrate their searching processes. The software is free to students registered with the College, and the installation is quick and painless. This is why I have chosen Zoom over other meeting platforms.

Simple is often better. This technical solution, while not addressing course outcomes (as I do not teach in the typical sense), provides much needed support to students as they gain skills to meet the learning outcomes of the course(s) I (hope to) be embedded in. I hope to develop this plan and service model over the next few semesters with guidance and participation from my fellow librarians, and build upon the already innovative service solutions my library provides.

Reference  
Network of the National Library of Medicine. (n.d.). *Embedded Librarian*. US National Library of Medicine. <https://nnlm.gov/data/thesaurus/embedded-librarian>