



PERSPECTIVES ON...

## Interactive Training Materials Developed by Spanish University Libraries



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### ABSTRACT

The main features of interactive training materials produced by Spanish university libraries are described. A total of 365 materials that are both technologically and educationally interactive were selected. The results show positive indicators such as a considerable increase in production and the diversification of technological media. While libraries are actively involved in the creation and development of training materials, the general conclusion is that most are still at an early stage in the context of the information and knowledge society, which fosters learning of information skills, virtual training and adaptation to different learning styles.

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### INTRODUCTION

Spanish university libraries have pioneered the dissemination of library services and resources by training the users. Until the 1990s the training materials were guides or manuals created with word processors or PowerPoint presentations. For specific services, such as bibliographic databases, most libraries used the materials of the distributors though some created their own.

As of 2000 the context was changed by several factors. First, with the creation of the European Higher Education Area information skills became compulsory in university curricula, and this change involved the whole university community. Second, Spanish library associations followed the international trend of disseminating and fostering information literacy. In this new context the Spanish university libraries were faced with new challenges: incorporating new subjects that had not been taught previously; incorporating new teaching methods; and adapting training materials using emerging technologies that encourage interactivity, online training and self-training. More than ten years after the start of this process, we analyze and describe the state of Spanish university materials and discuss the areas for improvement.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The international literature includes many articles focusing primarily on case studies that explain the creation and implementation of tutorials (Sult, Mery, Blakiston, & Kline, 2013), and even the use of educational platforms in teaching information skills (Kratochvíl, 2013).

Dewald (1999) expanded the study to a set of tutorials and provided general recommendations. Anderson, Wilson, Livingston, and LoCicero (2008) examined a representative sample of 274 tutorials of American medical libraries, providing general instructions to improve specific aspects such as design but without making a systematic evaluation. Donaldson (2000), Michel (2001) and Bury and Oud (2005) evaluated materials through a survey and pointed out the usefulness of tests for detecting strengths and areas for improvement.

Another line of research has been followed by studies that test the effectiveness of training by comparing the results of students doing virtual and classroom training and evaluating the knowledge acquired. Bracke and Dickstein (2002) compared the results obtained by students who had followed classroom training and students who had followed virtual training. The results were unfavorable to the students who had followed the virtual training, leading the authors to conclude that the most effective method of training is an intermediate system that links tutorials to a preparatory class, and highlighting the need for support by a librarian to answer questions. Kendall (2005) presented a longitudinal study of the results of two academic years, assessing what students had learned about models of bibliographic citation. The study concluded that tutorials have had a great impact on learning and have improved the integration of teaching materials in the virtual environment.

In Spain the literature on training materials is still very limited and highly focused on tutorial design projects and case studies. Few studies describe a significant set of tutorials. An exception is the study by Sastre Miralles (2000), which analyzed the online tutorials and guides of 44 Spanish university libraries. Although her conclusions were very general, she made a number of recommendations for improving the materials, such as the inclusion of a subject index and an alphabetical index to facilitate the location of the databases. Marzal García-

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Quismondo, Calzada Prado, and Vianello (2008) established an evaluation model of usability that is applicable to any virtual training material. Finally, Somoza-Fernández and Abadal (2009) described the materials created in Spanish university libraries. The conclusions drawn from these studies are that most of the materials deal with a specific resource of the library, there are few self-training materials, and the most complete tutorials are usually adaptations of materials from English-speaking institutions.

This study aims to describe the evolution of materials currently created in Spanish university libraries in order to determine whether the situation has changed in the last four years.

## OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

We understand training materials to be resources that libraries produce in order to answer questions about information sources and services, and ultimately to teach concepts and practices related to information skills.

This study aims to describe the main characteristics of the interactive materials developed in Spanish university libraries and their learning and research resource centers (hereafter CRAIs). In the current context, university libraries are actively involved in the implementation of information skills in undergraduate studies and in the creation of information resources and services for teaching, learning and research.<sup>1</sup> In view of this situation, the analysis of training materials is of special interest. Taking as a starting point the 2009 study, we traced the evolution of interactive training materials in the last four years.

For the location of the materials we consulted the websites of university libraries from the REBIUN directory of Spanish university libraries (<http://www.rebiun.org/bibliotecas/Paginas/default.aspx>) and selected a total of 74 libraries, CRAIs, research centers and university library consortia. Priority was given to the sections related to training, such as user training, self-training, reference and information resources, and those related to the dissemination of the library and its services.

The selection criteria for materials were as follows:

- Any subject was included, provided that the authorship of the material belonged to the institution.
- Only open-access materials were consulted: everything hosted on intranets or with restricted access was excluded.
- Materials produced by commercial distributors or producers of databases were also excluded. These materials are still used mainly through the libraries when they are accessed through a specific environment. The offer has been diversified with translations to Spanish and webinars. The aim was to discover what is currently being created within libraries.
- We did not include materials such as PowerPoint, SlideShare or Prezi presentations, which we consider to be media for oral communication rather than training. Although these formats present information attractively, they are not effective in virtual training if used alone.
- Guides, manuals, tutorials and brochures in PDF or HTML were also excluded. Although libraries develop them for clearly formative or informative purposes, they lack a technological and educational support that encourages interactivity. Most Spanish university libraries have many support materials in PDF or in HTML.

The final sample included 365 materials, a considerable number in comparison with the 72 materials found in a 2009 study using the same selection criteria.

## RESULTS

We found a significant increase in the number of libraries producing interactive materials since 2009. At present 53 Spanish libraries (72%)

have created at least one interactive material and 21 libraries (28%) have not created any. In 2009 only 17 libraries (24%) had created their own interactive material. However, 7 of the 53 institutions account for 51% of the production of materials (University of Barcelona CRAI, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona CRAI, Carlos III University Library, UOC Library, University of Murcia Library, Madroño Consortium and University of Alicante Library) and 22 institutions have only one material.

The subject matter included mainly searching in and functioning of library resources, information on services, and to a lesser extent information literacy and information skills. Excluding those that appear only once, the results for the subjects of the materials are presented in Table 1.

The *Technology* section includes all materials that explain procedures related to library resources, such as proxy settings and printing from the library computers. The materials are mainly linked to specific information sources and querying them. Materials related to information skills (plagiarism, copyright, open access, etc.) are still few in number.

Another important finding is the correlation between the design of materials and the subjects taught. A total of 289 materials (79.18%) were created from screenshots, 60 (16.44%) were videos and 16 (4.38%) were created in HTML. The screenshot is the main format used in the design of materials because it clearly illustrates the search process in a particular environment. With regard to audio use, 210 materials (57.53%) narrate the content, 125 (34.25%) include only text, and 30 (8.22%) incorporate music and text captions.

The types of materials are also directly correlated with the subjects. *Guided demonstrations* explaining how to find information in a resource are the most widespread type. *Presentations* include materials that explain library services and guided visits to libraries. *Manuals* include the more extensive materials incorporating screenshots or video footage explaining a subject exhaustively; they cannot be considered tutorials even if the authors catalogue them as such. *Tutorials* include any material that contains more extensive training objectives and exercises to consolidate what has been explained. The 365 materials are grouped as found in Table 2.

Of the materials, 66 (18%) are stated by the libraries to be for self-training. However, in 299 cases (82%), this information is not specified,

**Table 1**  
Subjects of interactive materials

Subject	Total	%
Database searching	67	(18.36%)
Library services	54	(14.79%)
Catalogue searching	44	(11.78%)
Reference management software	26	(7.12%)
Loan renewal and reservations	23	(6.30%)
Technology	16	(4.38%)
Institutional repository	11	(3.01%)
Searching for electronic resources	11	(3.01%)
Search engines	6	(1.64%)
Moodle	6	(1.64%)
Information skills	6	(1.64%)
Finding information	5	(1.37%)
Loans	5	(1.37%)
Electronic journals	5	(1.37%)
Information sources	4	(1.10%)
Information and computer skills	4	(1.10%)
Booking rooms	3	(0.82%)
Open access, copyright	3	(0.82%)
E-books	3	(0.82%)
Journal citation reports	3	(0.82%)
My account	2	(0.55%)
Plagiarism	2	(0.55%)
Scopus	2	(0.55%)
Google Scholar	2	(0.55%)
Web	2	(0.55%)
Impact factors	2	(0.55%)
Remote access	2	(0.55%)
Library resources	2	(0.55%)

<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.rebiun.org/aprendizajeInvestigacion/Paginas/default.aspx>>.

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