Virtual Literature: Replacing Literature Textbooks with Free Web Resources

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PROBLEM

In 2008, the Florida Legislature passed legislation that pressured Florida colleges to make textbooks more affordable for all students. The resulting workgroup recommended using library resources as a substitute for textbooks.

INTERVENTION

In 2015, a Lake-Sumter State College (LSSC) instructor requested a library guide for her literature classes to accommodate students who could not afford the textbook. The project grew into a complete Virtual Literature Library (VLL) that replicated the components of traditional literature textbooks, including primary sources, biographical materials, and critical analysis.

The VLL is the master repository for the literature. Instructors can pick and choose the works they want in their individual course guides. The VLL includes:

- Easy to reproduce boxes for literary works
- Critical analysis and biographical sources
- Video and audio content if available

OUTCOMES

Pilot Phase in 2016
- 7 instructors in 7 unique sections
- 238 students in 3 delivery modes
- 9349 total page views

Fall-Spring 2018
- 11 instructors in 36 unique sections
- 734 students in 3 delivery modes
- 32,964 total page views

Benefits for Students
- An average of $153.28 savings
- Improved papers
- Easy to access

Benefits for Faculty
- Control over primary sources
- Flexibility in creating courses
- Improved student success

The most promising outcome was improved student performance which resulted from having primary and secondary sources readily available. Faculty members report that student papers and discussions improved after students began using the critical articles as a model for good literary analysis.

THE PROJECT

The home page of the Virtual Literature Library serves as the master repository for all works in the project.

Each content box includes the primary sources in various versions and secondary sources covering the author’s biography and critical analysis using credible sources from literature databases.

TOTAL NUMBER OF WORKS

The VLL consists of primary and secondary sources. It contains 343 unique literary works and a total of 138 biographical and 961 analytical sources.

CONCLUSIONS

- The VLL has been a building block for improved relationships with college faculty. Library course guides are more popular for all subject areas as a result.
- This initiative has paid the way toward reducing textbook costs in other discipline areas.
- Students benefit from examples of the credible sources they need to use as they are conducting their own research.

“I loved the convenience of it. If I have internet access, then I have all of my reading with me, anywhere, anytime.”

- Student

“They have access to many different types of media, which leads to robust discussions in class and online. They are using sources more effectively...”

- Faculty Member