MOOCs as Continuing Professional Education

The Case of Library Advocacy Unshushed

Wendy Newman
Senior Fellow
University of Toronto iSchool
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Are we at a tipping point?

- WHO’s offering MOOCs in LIS?
- WHY are universities doing this?
- HOW do you create a MOOC?
- WHAT are the impacts?
- What are librarians’ roles?
- Can this grow?
LIS programs offering MOOCs

- University of Syracuse iSchool
- San Jose State University, School of Information
- University of Toronto iSchool
- MOOCs also offered by iSchools at Georgia Tech, U of Washington, U of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, U of Michigan, Drexel
- New MOOC on public libraries (Indiana – April 2015)
- No comprehensive list – others?
Many considerations . . .

ALA Midwinter panel 2014

- **Hope** about reduced costs in higher education;
- **Concern** about models and roles in jeopardy;
- **Optimism** about global learning and sharing;
- **Skepticism** about authority and accreditation

Retention rates - issues

Business models – sustainability
Hype Cycle (Gartner)
- 2013 New York Times “Year of the MOOC”
- 2014 MOOCs “in the trough”
Institutions’ reasons include

• Build/strengthen reputation
• Provide professional development
• Explore delivery and business models
• Strengthen relationships and recruitment
• Explore and evaluate pedagogy and open platforms
• Contribute to innovation
My reasons include

- Interest and experience in online learning
- Unmet demand for evidence-based advocacy education
- Availability of infrastructure and support
- LIS school responsibility
- My inner Indiana Jones
Participants’ reasons include

• Primary: professional development for librarians and related information professionals

• Also: opportunity for library supporters; networking of isolated practitioners (small libraries; areas/countries with special advocacy challenges); exchanging stories and examples

• Secondary: curiosity, credentials, credits
Diverse offerings and platforms

• Credit or adaptation of credit course
• Continuing education credit systems
• Unlimited or capped enrollment
• Optional premium certificates (fee)
• Many platforms, including Coursera, edX, FutureLearn
Creating Library Advocacy
Unshushed

Small, mighty team
All librarians!
Faculty: Wendy Newman
Course designer: Gwen Harris
Student assistant: Carolyn DIneen
University: Online Learning, Library
Designing Library Advocacy Unshushed

- University of Toronto MOOC Resource and Planning Guidelines
- NEW learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, attitudes)
- Tasks and activities
- Assessment: Self? Peer?
- Facilitating community within the course
- Time to create: hundreds of hours!
Outreach and Partnership
Library Advocacy Unshushed

- Partnerships

  - Social media: Twitter @LA101x and Facebook accounts
  - Articles in professional journals in [UK](http://uk) and [Italy](http://italy)
  - Lively discussions outside the MOOC!
Weekly Units (6)

- Objectives
- Short video lectures – 5 to 10 minutes
- Readings – core and suggested (open)
- Quizzes (some graded)
- Discussion questions (some graded)
- Guest video interviews
Guests: storytelling, applying, interpreting, commenting
Impacts of MOOCs in LIS

- Need more assessment, but so far... 
- High professional demand and uptake 
- Sparking conversations 
- Integrating research into PD 
- Faculty learning, too 
- Visibility of LIS schools in continuous PD 
- Forthcoming book on MOOCs in LIS
Impacts on Participants

- Compelling qualitative data
- Lankes: “a desire for deep conversations about librarianship”
Final Assignment Reflections

• Focus: learning and action

• Deeper understanding and commitment: leadership in advocacy as core component of professional practice

• Better understanding of evidence – unstuck?

• Changes in confidence and behaviour?
Typical Participant Reflection

“I have noticed that we tend to make a lot of issues about ourselves and we always make the case why it’s so important to save the library for the library’s sake. Rather we should be focusing on a community-centric approach that appeals to the values of the community and the impact on their lives. . . This changes how I will approach my advocacy in the future with regards to relationship building, storytelling, assessing environments, and framing messages.”
Typical reflection

“I will work hard to build relationships with community members, and especially with decision makers by cultivating mutual interests and providing assistance whenever possible. I will foster these relationships and . . . be ‘at the table’ as often as possible when important community decisions are being made. My presence, and the presence of other advocates, will help to integrate us into community decisions. Additionally, I will plug into the belief systems of those to whom I am trying to advocate, as mentioned in week 4.”
Newly appointed library director

• “Just to wrap up, I will say that the timing of this course has been fortuitous. I feel armed to go into this community and help them ensure their library has a future.”
Inspired to act

• “Library Advocacy Unshushed has given me necessary information and skills to effectively advocate for the future of my library and community. I can’t wait to get started.”
On the LA101x Facebook page

• “It was my first MOOC and I couldn't have asked for such knowledgeable instructors, practical information, and insightful comments. Thank you.”

• “This class was a fantastic experience.”
Librarian in Portugal

• “I will remember in my professional life, thanks to this course: Advocacy is not just about marketing and persuasion at a specific moment or time of need, but a daily work, gaining trust and support of all of the community (not only decision makers) . . .”
Can this grow?

• Enable deeper dive than conferences, blogs
• Improve accessibility of research
• Help with recruitment into profession
• Connect programs and practitioners
• Model roles of librarians in design and implementation
• Models for sustainability: sponsorship? licensing? others?
Thank You!!

wendy.newman@utoronto.ca

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