



Digital Badges for Creativity and Critical Thinking: Portland State University

CASE STUDY: Curate, Credential and Carry Forward Digital Learning Evidence: tiny.cc/cccdle

Context: Educators at Portland State University deployed badges in three undergraduate Community Health courses to certify information literacy and critical thinking skills. Funded by an internal grant from the Provost's reTHINK PSU initiative, Digital Badges for Creativity and Critical Thinking was viewed as a 'proof of concept' project to help the University understand badging. Three courses used badges: (1) Our Community Our Health, the breadth introductory course to Community Health; (2) Community Nutrition, a course focused on understanding, researching, and analysing community nutrition assets and gaps; and (3) Social Gerontology, a course aimed at understanding the social and economic implications of population aging.

[1] What are we doing?

We developed a badge curriculum that would teach and assess students' understanding of and skills acquisition in: Website Evaluation (Web Ninja); Information Formats (Source Sleuth); Database Searching (Keyword Hacker); Citing and Plagiarism (Recorder); and Contributing Knowledge to the Information Landscape (Silver Pen). Prior to deploying badges in the three classes, students participated in a survey that measured perceptions of their information literacy skills and approaches to learning. Throughout the classes, Professors and the Librarian worked to gather student feedback about the badge curriculum and badges in general.

[2] How are we doing it?

Badges for this project were created and awarded using Credly. Students received assignment instructions and content in the University's course management system, Desire2Learn, and in person.

[3] Who is involved?

Digital Badges for Creativity and Critical Thinking was a collaborative project between Portland State University's Library, School of Community Health, and Office of Academic Innovation. Three Professors, a Librarian, and an Instructional Designer planned and executed badges.

[4] Why are we doing it?

This project aimed to better integrate information literacy and critical thinking skills into undergraduate Community Health Courses. These skills, often referred to as co-curricular skills, are not often certified or assessed in disciplinary courses. By integrating certification of co-curricular skills into courses, students were better able to recognise and value the skills they learned.

[5] What are the challenges?

Major challenges to implementing digital badges were primarily technological. In the future, better integration between course management systems and badging systems will alleviate many of these challenges. While some students understood the value of the badge curriculum and use of badges in courses, some did not. This novel approach, which students had not experienced in other courses, raised questions about the utility of badges and their pertinence in achieving passing grades, or even the weight given to micro-certifications by potential employers. Some students felt badges infantile, and denigrated the importance of their learning. During this project not all badge activities and assignments were graded. In the future, we will integrate badges as part of grading, to ensure that all students engage with and take seriously badge instructional content.

[6] Where is it heading?

The re-designed course assignments that integrated badges continue to be used within these courses, even if badges are not used to certify students' skills. The collaboration between the Library, School of Community Health, and Office of Academic Innovation continues and has strengthened relationships. The team will be analyzing survey data collected from students and disseminating those findings.

Resources: [Digital badges for creativity and critical thinking](#); Ford, E, Izumi, B, Lottes, J & Richardson, D 2014, 'Badge it! Using digital badges to certify information literacy skills within disciplinary curriculum', *Reference Services Review*, 43(1). [Digital badges: a tool for library instruction](#), Presented at Online Northwest 2015
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