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Julie Miller

Butler University, jl mille5@butler.edu

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Catalyst for Collaboration: EWU Libraries and Career Services Partner on a Renew Washington Grant

by Julie Miller

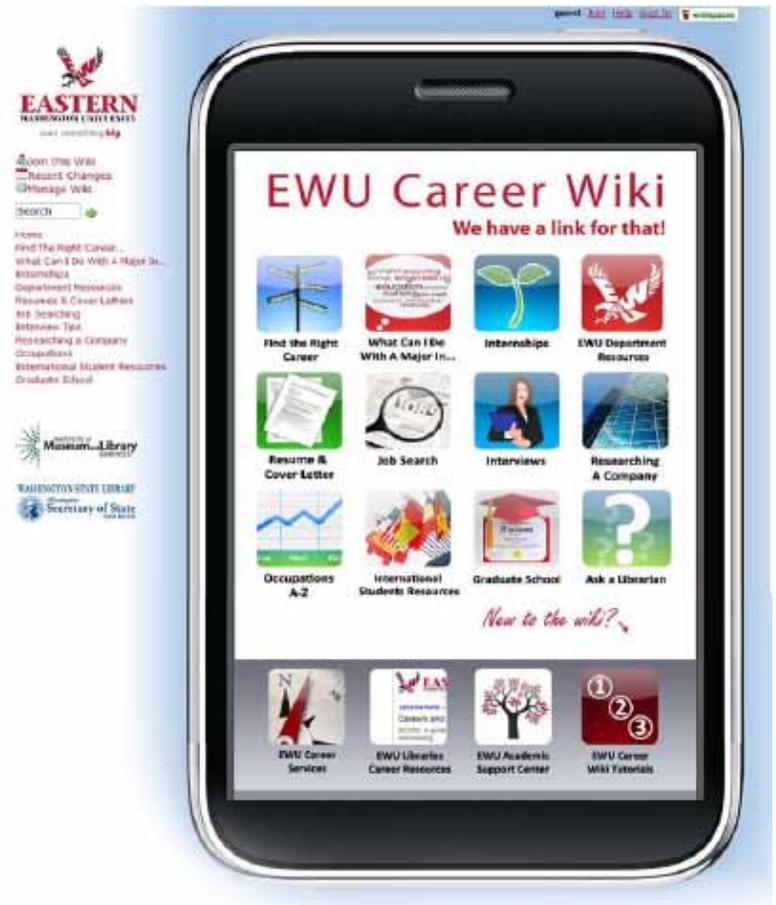
“Targeted Competitive Hard Times Grant Now Open,” read the header of the email. “The purpose of this grant cycle is to provide grant funds to help libraries initiate new services, enhance existing services, conduct outreach and partnership efforts, or complete other activities that are identified as important to the library in addressing the needs of people needing access to employment-related information, resources, and services.”

Like most libraries in the current economy, Eastern Washington University (EWU) Libraries are seeking new revenue streams, including grants. But the detail of this announcement from the Washington State Library that really caught my eye was support for partnerships. Academic libraries are always looking for ways to partner with departments and programs within the college or university. The more we collaborate, the greater our impact on students. I hit the forward button, selected the email address for Virginia Hinch, director of EWU’s Career Services, typed a short message—“Gini, are you interested?” and hit “Send.”

“Once we settled on the idea to develop our own career wiki, the proposal nearly wrote itself.”

Within a week I met with Gini Hinch and her colleague Kendra Selles to brainstorm ideas that address the needs of EWU students and alumni seeking career information. The conversation kept coming around to the decentralization of employment resources at the university: the library has career-related collections, Career Services has its own collection, and faculty who teach capstone courses often develop their own “libraries” for students. Gini and Kendra had seen a career wiki demonstrated by Purdue University at a professional conference for career counselors in higher education. The wiki provided “one-stop shopping” for career resources, enhancing access and visibility. Eureka!

Julie Miller is the associate dean of libraries at Eastern Washington University.



The EWU Career Wiki uses a smart phone design that is accessible and engaging to college students.

Once we settled on the idea to develop our own career wiki, the proposal nearly wrote itself. Project LAUNCH (Learning and Using New Career Help) was funded as part of the Washington State Library’s Renew Washington grant supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Project LAUNCH is a collaboration between EWU Libraries and EWU Career Services to increase access to and use of existing career resources for EWU students and alumni. The project has three objectives:

1. To develop the EWU Career Wiki to provide “one-stop

Continued on page 16

shopping” for career resources from across the institution so students can find and use employment information, locate job opportunities, and prepare for the interview process.

2. To purchase fifteen web cameras to circulate to EWU students to use with InterviewStream to practice their interview skills. The web-based Interview Stream platform is made available through EWU Career Services; the web cameras, which circulate from the library, increase student access to the resource, which requires video interaction.

3. For library and Career Services staff to offer each other in-service training, sharing knowledge about resources and services in order to assist students in the use of or referral to employment resources and services.

Project LAUNCH hired two terrific EWU students to design the wiki and develop its content. The students came up with the idea of using a smart phone design. Smart phones are similar to the wiki: collaborative, dynamic, visually attractive, and easy to use. On the technical side, wikis and smart phones both use a graphic interface, are organized with sub pages, and foster creativity.

The students developed the wiki during Spring 2010 and piloted it over the summer, using SurveyMonkey to get student feedback. The students who took the survey were extremely positive about the wiki’s usability and content. “Very cool layout. Creative and quality. It comes across [as] very professional and current,” one respondent commented.

We are rolling out Project LAUNCH to its target audiences—EWU students, faculty, and alumni—this fall. We have already accomplished more than we anticipated:

- As of Oct. 18, the EWU Career Wiki has had 22,998 views (excluding views for the purpose of editing) by 1702 unique visitors (more than thirteen views per visitor). According to the analytic tools provided by the wiki platform (Wikispaces), 99% of the visitors have been from the U.S., but the site has also been visited by web users from Australia, Canada, China, Great Britain, Mexico, and other nations.
- Wikispaces featured the EWU Career Wiki on its blog, promoting it to other Wikispaces users as a positive and creative example of use of the platform.

- The web cameras are available for circulation to EWU students, faculty, and staff. Although the cameras are meant for use with the InterviewStream web program, we hope folks are also experimenting with Skype and other web tools that may help them find employment in their chosen field.
- EWU Libraries and EWU Career Services staff have partnered on presentations at orientation sessions for new and returning faculty, and we are discussing opportunities to collaborate on conference presentations and publications as well.

Project LAUNCH has been a great partnership between EWU Libraries and Career Services, and we are now reaching out to faculty to develop their own career resource pages on the wiki. For more information, visit the EWU Career Wiki at <http://ewucareerguide.wikispaces.com>. 

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