



A Library Lab Grant Proposal

Scope Note

While academic libraries in the 21st Century continue to expand electronic and digital content within their collections, the provision of such content requires substantial focus on ensuring that students can successfully search and find said content. Subsequently, students are presented with a spectrum of content channels and accordingly spend much of their time locating electronic and digital content. However, with the rapid growth of the mobile device and apps market, students now have an added challenge in choosing the best mobile device and apps for academic use. Which apps best facilitate collection, organization, consumption of the electronic and digital content that they have located? How do students, in turn, harvest their consumed content for the generation of scholarly work for courses in which they are enrolled? How can the library community expand its services to help students make the best decision when the mobile device and app market is expanding at the speed of obsolescence?

Context

Harvard University Library websites are rich with information to help students navigate the information domain. Over the last several years the Library has also developed online features so students may present research questions to librarians (Ask Us), provide feedback (Tell Us), obtain University news (RSS or e-newsletter subscription) and check-in on the buzz of the moment (FB and Twitter).

Together these features comprise a portfolio of engagement venues. Continuing to diversify that portfolio with another venue that will deliver students to a dynamic level of engagement to address mobile device and app use on campus is at the core of **h4ckademic**.

Definition

h4ckademic is a dynamic website that will utilize social media like features to “student source” the identification of the best apps for academic use on mobile devices. The primary aim of **h4ckademic** is to provide a single virtual resource that will allow students to log-in, identify the mobile device they use, see a selection of top academic apps related to that device, use and vote on those apps accordingly. Imagine *Pinterest* – but for student academic apps that will help Harvard students expand the use of their personal mobile devices to meet their academic needs and on the backend allow reporting on this activity to clarify Library/IT instruction and support.

Need/Value-Added

The combined speeds of information and technology advances make it impossible for any librarian or group of librarians to stay ahead of mobile device and app market expansion – there are not sufficient resources to meet such a need. Conversely, students will collectively raise and address issues amongst themselves with the Library never knowing there was a question in the first place. On the front end, **h4ckademic** will facilitate the push of student2student device and app polling while capturing valuable data on the back end -- data that will confirm the local mobile device footprint for the University and its Schools. Such information will enable both Library & IT to continuously learn about student

mobile device preferences and the way students use their mobile devices for consuming digital and electronic content – from semester to semester and year to year.

Objective

We propose to create **h4ckademic** based on the inauguration of local student mobile device affinity groups (mDAGs) at the Gutman Library in Jan/Feb 2013. Students from GSE and across the university will be invited to join mDAGs and attend workshops. Local expert users will share with the **h4ckademic** project lead their model for managing academic workflow on their mobile device and best apps. Expert user information will in turn contribute to the demonstration that will be delivered in mDAG workshops. Information captured from mDAG activities during these sessions will be used to develop baseline information for prototyping which will then inform the form and content of the **h4ckademic** dynamic website.

Scalability

h4ckademic will be a lite and scalable service that can be incorporated into the existing HUL web architecture. As well, **h4ckademic** might also be attractive to University partners such as MIT, and may even prove useful to edX users.

Principal Investigator/Project Lead

Carol R. Kentner
Digital Course Content Manager
Gutman Library
6 Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138
617.496.4799
carol_kentner@gse.harvard.edu