SHPT SCHOOL OF LIBRARY SCIENCE,
SNDT WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY,
MUMBAI

DSIR SUPPORTED PROJECT ON
DEVELOPING AND OFFERING TRAINING PROGRAMMES ON
CONTENT DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

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Background:
The SHPT School of Library Science, of the SNDT Women's University, is a department offering courses leading to the B.L.I.Sc. and M.L.I.Sc. degrees, and also a Ph.D. programme in Library and Information Science. Since its inception in 1961, the School has been committed to providing quality education to meet the needs of the contemporary job market, and helping working professionals to upgrade their knowledge and skills. Thus, the college revises and upgrades its regular courses from time to time, and also provides short-term continuing education programmes on contemporary topics.

The development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has opened up many avenues in the job market, especially for women. One such avenue is Content Development for Internet/CDs. To build capacities, especially among women, to undertake content development work on a full time or free-lance basis, the college proposed to develop and offer training programmes in this area.

A proposal was submitted to the Dept. of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), under the Technology Information Facilitation Programme (TIFP). The proposal was approved vide letter no. DSIR/R&D/TIF027/2004-05 dated March 18, 2005, and a total grant of Rs 4.40 lakhs was sanctioned. The first installment of the grant, an amount of Rs 1.60 lakhs was released on March 16, 2005. The second installment of the grant, i.e. Rs Two lakhs was released vide letter no. DSIR/TRG/TIF030/2004-05 dated March 29, 2006.

The Project commenced on May 15, 2005. The Project Investigator is Dr (Ms) Bharati Sen, Head, SHPT School of Library Science; and the Co-Investigator is Dr (Ms) Perin V. Marolia, Lecturer, SHPT School of Library Science.

Objectives, Tasks and expected outcomes of the project:

The specific objectives of the project are:
1) To design core curricula for content development and management.
2) To implement two pilot courses, and use the feedback to revise and refine the course curricula.

The activities are identified as follows:
1) Curriculum development
2) Publicity, selection and enrolment of participants

3) Identification of resource persons
4) Conducting two pilot courses, evaluating the candidates and courses
5) Identifying/producing relevant course material
6) Workshop for refining and finalizing the curriculum.

Outcomes:
1) A tried and tested model curriculum, which may be replicated and offered on a regular basis
2) Guidelines for implementation of the course by other institutions
3) Two batches of trained content developers.

Activities undertaken under the Project:

Phase 1: Curriculum Design:

o The faculty members held discussions with various experts in relevant areas, with the aim of identifying the topics to be included in the course.
o Books and journal articles on content development and management, website development, information architecture, etc. were consulted. Relevant information was downloaded from the Internet.
o Existing courses on content development and management were searched, in the print literature, and on the Internet, and the topics covered were noted.

On the basis of the above, the first draft of the syllabus was prepared.

A meeting of the Project Advisory Committee was held on June 29, 2005. The draft syllabus was taken up for discussion at this meeting. The suggestions made by the members of the committee were incorporated into the course content. (Minutes of the meting – Appendix 1)

On July 8 and 9, 2005, a two-day workshop was conducted, to work out the detailed course curriculum The workshop was attended by experts from the fields of IT, technical writing, information management and related areas, as well as librarians involved in content development and management. Each unit of the course was taken up for intensive discussion, and the suggestions of the participants were noted. The workshop also discussed matters relating to course schedule, resource persons, student evaluation, practical work, etc.

Further, the faculty members of the college attended a workshop on Formulation of Educational Objectives, conducted by the Dept. of Educational Technology, SNDT Women's University. The knowledge obtained here was used to refine the course curriculum.

The department established contact with CDAC to take up the matter of content creation in Indian languages and Indian scripts. Consultations were held with Dr Alka Irani of CDAC, regarding the Janabhaaratii package, and Dr Irani was invited to give a

demonstration at the SHPT School of Library Science. It was decided that a session of Janabhaaratii would be included in the course, and the content of the session was worked out. The school has subsequently maintained discussions with Dr Irani and her team, and a beginners' level manual for creating Indian language content using the phonetic keyboard in Janabharatii has been developed by Dr Perin Marolia, Lecturer, SHPT School of Library Science. (Appendix 2)

All the above inputs were assimilated to create the Course Curriculum for the first Pilot Course, along with a lesson plan.

Side by side the following activities were carried out:
- o Selection of software for purchase.
- o Purchase of books and other course material.
- o Development of course materials, in consultation with experts and resource persons.

Phase 2: 1st Pilot Course:

Pre-Course Activities:
- o A brochure and application form for the course were produced. (Appendix 3)
- o Brochures and application forms were sent out by mail/courier and also by e-mail
- o Resource persons were contacted, and the schedule of lectures was worked out.
- o Participants were registered.

Course implementation:
- o The first course on E-Content Development and Management commenced on September 21, 2005, with 17 participants.
- o Sessions were held every Wednesday from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. and every Saturday from 10.30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- o Theory sessions were interspersed with practicals.
- o Side-by-side, the participants selected the topics for their projects.
- o The Project Investigator and Co-investigator continuously monitored course sessions
- o Lectures/practicals concluded on December 23, 2005.
- o Participants continued to work on their projects. Each participant was assigned a guide for project work. Most of the participants have submitted their projects.
- o Certificates have been given to the participants who have completed the course.

Feedback and revision:

- o Feedback was received from course participants.
- o Resource persons were also asked to give their suggestions for improving the course
- o At the end of the first course, the feedback from students and resource persons, plus observations of the Project Investigator and Co-investigator were reviewed,

and modifications were made to the course content. Thus the revised syllabus for the second course was evolved.

Phase 3: 2nd Pilot Course:

o The second course on E-Content Development and Management commenced on January 31, 2006, with 8 participants.
o The general model of the first course was followed, but required modifications were made.
o Sessions were held every Tuesday and Thursday from 4.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. and every Saturday from 10.30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
o Lectures/practicals were completed on April 13, 2006. Participants are working on their projects.

As laid down in the proposal, the course curriculum is to be finalized at a one-day Workshop to be held after the completion of the second course. This Workshop is to be held on Tuesday May 9, 2006.

Our Experiences:

- The time allotted for certain units in the 1st course proved to be inadequate. This was the case with certain topics that require practical exercises, e.g. Technical Writing, Photoshop. In order to acquire a basic proficiency and confidence, the candidates felt a need for extra time for practice. Therefore, in the 2nd course, the time allotted to these units had to be increased.
- As a result, the time allotted to some other units had to be cut down, e.g. Content Management and its Context; Social and Legal Issues.
- During the 1st course, there was more emphasis on FrontPage, the HTML editor, while HTML itself was dealt with at an introductory level. However, while working on the projects, participants felt that a better knowledge of HTML commands would be useful. Therefore, during the 2nd course, more time was allotted to HTML. Also, the more versatile HTML editor, Dreamweaver was introduced. It was concluded that adequate emphasis should be given to both HTML and Dreamweaver.
- The unit named "Writing for the Internet" should more appropriately be entitled "Writing Skills".
- During the 1st course, the unit on databases covered basic database concepts, plus practical work on MS-ACCESS. However, this was not found to be meaningful. Although the participants could design and create databases, they could not incorporate them into their web pages, as this would require a knowledge of SQL, PHP, etc which are well beyond the scope of this course. During the 2nd course, database concepts were covered, but ACCESS was not taken up.

- Feedback from course participants indicated that structured exercises/assignments to be done individually for practice, were very useful. Students who had put in enough practice found the project work easier.
- Visiting lecturers were identified from industry and from academic environments. Those who were working as professional trainers were found to be more effective.
- Participants must have adequate computer skills, language skills and reading skills.

Guidelines:

- In order to run the course successfully, adequate technology infrastructure must be available. Ideally, there should be one student per computer, or maximum two students per computer. Students should also be provided lab facilities where they can practice individually.
- A broadband Internet connection should be available.
- Software required: MS Office, Acrobat Writer, Photoshop, Dreamweaver, Flash, Finereader.
- In addition to the class contact hours, students should put in an equal number of hours for extra practice.
- Sessions should ideally be of two hours each.
- The syllabus has a sequentially arrangement of units. But while conducting the course, two or three units may run parallel.