Have you Web 2.0'd today? The answer to this question is probably yes. More and more people are blogging, using social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook, or contributing to Wikipedia. In fact, Web 2.0 in legal scholarship is becoming almost commonplace, as it has always been there. After all, even librarians who berate their students for relying on Wikipedia as the new de jure 'good research must start where they've gone there once or twice themselves and recognize the amazing way it has organized massive amounts of information.

Web 2.0 has even invaded some law firms, with wikis on intranet as a knowledge management tool and blogs written by attorneys as marketing tools. Students will see these technologies in practice. Therefore, it seems natural that they should become exposed to such technologies as part of their law school experience.

This article focuses on one effort by Wake Forest University School of Law to provide such exposure to Web 2.0 and wikis in particular. This year's librarians requested that creating an Advanced Legal Research Wiki (ALR) provide an alternative format for the required pathfinder in the course. Students would choose to create wiki entries on their selected topics, or create the traditional paper version. This is the story of Wake Forest's Advanced Legal Research Wiki (available at http://law.law.wfu.edu/advancedLegalResearch), from conception and implementation to evaluation and reconsideration. It has proved to be an educational experience not only for the students, but for the librarians as well.

Why a Wiki?

Wake Forest's ALR course is new in its seventh year and each year students in the course create pathfinders as their senior thesis project. The library professors who teach the course create their own course

Wake Forest's Advanced Legal Research Wiki.

Each summer, the pathfinders are discussed for broken links and substantive changes in the law that may impact the pathfinder as a whole. An all-electronic format, such as a wiki, makes the updating of each year's pathfinders a more manageable task and allows students to learn and develop skills that are useful for the field of law.

Final thought: the likelihood that students will encounter wikis in law practice is increasing everyday. Librarians have begun using them for courses and knowledge management projects, and some attorneys use them to organize practice-specific information. The [cite] DA [district attorney] is experimenting with wikis for the investigative side of our work.\* Sometimes these librarians create a cluster of pages within a wiki that are not part of any external library catalog. Therefore, as ongoing resources (available both electronically and in print) are added to the wiki, the site grows in functionality. This allows students to maintain a database of information in a manner that is not subject to demand someone enter the information on their own as is the case with creating a paper copy.

*Carol Barnett, law firm, Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren S.C., is thinking about creating a wiki for the law firm.*
using wikis as well. "There has been talk in a number of the practice groups about using one to share information on that particular area of law," she said.

The common theme about Web 2.0 technologies is that they are interactive and collaborative in nature. So is the practice of law. Although online PDF files provide a stable format in which to publish students' pathways, they are lonely entities and they suffer from the fact that other are unable to contribute their knowledge in order to make them more valuable resources.

**Picking a Wiki**

Knowing you want a wiki is just the first step. You must then determine which wiki you want. Compared to which wiki you have been using Wikinotes, or Wiki was a great first step in seeing all of the wiki programs available. Wiki-Note, ultimately chose MediaWiki (http://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/MediaWiki) for many reasons.

The first and possibly the most important reason is that the university was already using MediaWiki. This was a relief for many reasons. First, any concerns that content collected during many years might suddenly disappear for whatever reason, were alleviated because the content would exist on university servers.

Second, the fact that other departments on campus were using MediaWiki (either for classes or as a medium through which to collect frequently accessed information, such as procedure manuals) meant that there were people on hand who could be contacted for technical (and moral) support.

Finally, MediaWiki was also a popular choice in that it is the program behind Wikipedia. From a marketing standpoint, it was assumed that students would already be familiar with MediaWiki and more likely to contribute to a tool that resembled closely another tool they use almost daily.

With that said, even though both the university and the main library were actively using MediaWiki, access to that software was not necessarily readily available to the PCL. The main library at Wake Forest Z. Smith Reynolds Library (ZSR), agreed to host the ALR Wiki, but the university's Information Technology (IT) Department had some concerns about security. The IT Department offered to provide the PCL with 100 megabytes of space and set up the wiki on a university server, which is what ultimately happened.

Another option would have been to choose a wiki unfamiliar with the university, such as a PLE (http://pblog.com). However, the law school tried to work with the university as much as it could, and it was willing and able to provide MediaWiki and a secure server space. It may be that there will be security issues in allowing outside users to participate in the wiki—something that will be discovered this semester.

**Learning Curve**

Once the wiki was in place, there came a couple of relatively substantial hiccups in the road. First, in the matter of maintaining such library responsibilities, the librarians had to learn how to use the wiki so they could teach it to the students. The hope had been to get the wiki created during the December break and have a portion of it in place six times before the spring semester began. However, it wasn't until after the semester started, which means the librarians were learning to use the same tool the students were using.

Second, the librarians needed to sell to the students the idea that the final grade in the course would be made up by producing an electronic-only work product. It became apparent very early on that just because a student knows what Wikipedia is does not necessarily mean that want to use it, or contribute to, something that looks like it.

And speaking of a tough sell, it was quite the marketing endeavor to get the students on board with the wiki.

The computer department, which produced new technology (and the speed at which they are willing to do so) is quite wide. The same through word and clear in the training class on how to write and edit the wiki. A brief draft in the demonstration of the technology during that class (which inevitably seems to happen when demonstrating new technology) was the defining moment for some. Still holding in reserve the wiki, the few who were quickly overwhelmed and more interested on the idea of using the wiki, the students were lost forever.

However, it would be fair to say that the students' ability to engage in a self-directed analysis of using a new technology is far superior than one might assume. Some students liked the idea of writing in the wiki not because they were intimidated by the technology, but because they were concerned about the amount of work involved in contributing to it. At one student's suggestion, "I think I'd rather do a wiki because I like the ability to link text and the more interactive nature of the wiki, but I have two major exams this semester, two presentations, and a paper to write, and I don't want to have to spend extra time trying to figure out how to make the wiki work if I encounter problems."

Although the drawback of wiki writing is arguably substantially easier to learn than HTML editing, it is nevertheless a time commitment that some students did not see the benefit of making.

The wiki is not a replacement for other reasons. Despite the belief that creating a document in a word processor can sometimes be difficult, it nonetheless provides what many would argue are indispensable features. Among these are spell checking, grammar checking, basic text editing, and the ability to highlight text and add images. The only saving grace was the fact that text can be copied and pasted directly from their word processor directly into the wiki.

Granting much of the disappointment with the wiki stems from the fact that these formatting options were designed to achieve a certain presentational effect. This lack of power means the course they post on the wiki would be boring compared to what they could produce in word processing programs, and who wants to work on something boring?

Although there are only a few students using the wiki so far, those who have found that it is quite exciting about the work the are producing. There were those who liked the idea that linking sources is more convenient to a reader in the wiki than through a PDF of a print publication. They also believed that people would be willing to turn to the wiki for answers that they would in the traditional print publications. Other students were excited about the opportunity to see how law and technology can connect.

Another student was pleased to be using a wiki as part of the course.
the first to participate in a new technology. Their enthusiasm became apparent very early in their wiki entries.

**Concerns and Realities**

In preparing this article, the authors elicited feedback from academic law librarians about whether they are contemplating using a wiki in a legal research class. Those who replied with interest in using wiki repeatedly expressed concern about the collaborative nature of the wiki and how that might impact evaluating student work.

Collaboration among students versus each student doing his/her own work has not really been an issue. First, access to edit the wiki was limited to the students in the class and the professors. There was no fear that outside voices might alter the content the students provided. All the students in the class have the right to look at their fellow students' wiki pages. They were not forbidden under any type of potential honor code violation. In fact, viewing other students' entries was encouraged.

One student was head and shoulders above the others in terms of how he had formatted his page. What better guide to formatting than looking at someone who is doing it well? Also, there was no concern about one student assisting another, since all grades are relative to one another (and, quite honestly, the students were simply too busy with other commitments to contribute constructively to their fellow students' pages). Further, there was no fear of one student sabotaging another because of the “track changes” feature available in MediaWiki.

Since the pathfinder is the students' semester-long project, one critical (and related) issue is how wiki entries will be evaluated compared to print pathfinders. Students have weekly assignments where they research their topics in the resources taught that week. Thus, they are writing pieces of their papers all the way along. The course is structured in this way to reduce the likelihood that papers will be written in the week before they are due.

After two months in the course, students have completed assignments in secondary sources, current awareness, cases, statutes, and legislative history. The professors read these each week and make comments so the students can add to their research as they go along. The wiki entries have grown into more robust articles much more quickly than the print pathfinders, which caused the professors to notice several interesting things.

First, from a quantitative standpoint, it puts those students writing in the wiki further along than the students choosing the traditional print pathfinder—perhaps because the wiki people are actually creating the final product as they go, whereas the pathfinder people are still creating their “chunks” of the final project.

Second, from a qualitative standpoint, it is possible to assess the quality of the work with the wiki; the librarians can comment on the entire body of work as the students add content. A larger qualitative issue issue that may arise is how to grade a wiki against a pathfinder, since papers have always been evaluated against one another. The two predominant criteria for evaluation are content and format. If there are three top papers as far as content is concerned, does the person who took on the challenge of the wiki win the top spot in the class? The answer to this question remains to be seen.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the overall look and feel of the wiki. Although the students were given a generic template upon which to organize their entries, not all have strictly followed it, thereby creating an inconsistent organizational scheme. For the future, a style guide may become necessary to implement a common look to all of the entries. The major format problems that occurred most frequently were too many long text entries without headers (to break up the information so that it was easier to visually follow) and the overwhelming use of bullets to arrange information. Bullets, like anything in life, should be used in moderation.

The final issue that cannot be addressed until sometime this summer is whether law librarians from other institutions will be allowed to contribute to the ALR Wiki. Although this was always something the librarians had hoped for the wiki, because the wiki is hosted on a university server, security concerns must be considered.

In addition to security, there’s a potential issue with quality control. Because the pathfinders are updated each summer, it would also be expected that efforts will be made to make sure the wiki stays current. If the wiki were opened up, with the hope that it would be updated by people outside of Wake Forest, would it be possible to control effectively and efficiently the quality of the changes that are made? The answer is likely no. Therefore, with this wiki (and for any wiki put out as an academic endeavor), the quality needs to be maintained by limiting who has editing rights. Determining who can have such rights will inevitably change over time.

To Be Continued …

Because the draft of this article was due well before the end of the spring semester, the story of the ALR Wiki is not yet complete. It is possible that there could be a huge surge of participation by the end of the semester from students who had not considered using the wiki, but who realize the format is more accessible or more appropriate for their topics than they first thought. And, of course, the converse is just as likely. Comments the authors received from other academic law libraries on how they are using wikis as a component to a legal research class indicate that Wake Forest is in good, yet still small, company.

Future plans for the wiki include significant participation from the librarians who will write entries on major topic areas for the class, including secondary sources, case law research, statutes, legislative history, administrative law, and Internet research for lawyers. It has become clear that to make the wiki a viable and valuable resource, there must be a commitment to writing and maintaining it throughout the year, not just during the semester when Advanced Legal Research is taught.

Because of the wiki’s ease of use, it’s even possible that it will replace the current course management system in how the librarians post assignments to first-year law students. At this point, the professors are pleased with the students’ wiki contributions, and the plan is to carry the project forward through future ALR classes. However, next year’s ALR students should consider themselves warned: they may have to wiki through the course, whether they like it or not.

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