Approaches to Teaching Metadata Course at the University of North Texas

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Metadata and Networked Information Organization and Retrieval (hereafter referred to as Metadata) is one of the courses taught on the undergraduate and graduate levels at the Department of Library and Information Sciences (LIS), University of North Texas (UNT). This course was developed in 2001 and taught by Dr. William Moen and later redesigned by Dr. Oksana Zavalina. Itis currently taught by Dr. Oksana Zavalina and doctoral candidate Serhiy Polyakov. The Metadata course is one of the required for the Information Organization program of study in the Master of Science academic program and is an elective or a guided elective for other programs of study. This course was originally offered in a blended mode but is currently delivered in the completely online mode that allows for meeting the needs of the distance students. The instructors use Blackboard Learn learning management system (see FIG. 1) for delivery of the course materials, grading, assignment submission, and asynchronous communication. The GoToTraining online meeting service is used for the live online meetings. The Metadata course is offered during Fall, Spring, and Summer terms with enrollment between 24 and 51 students in each term.

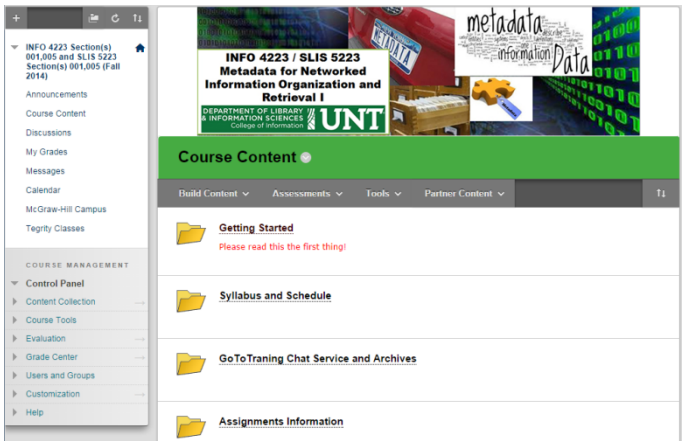

FIG. 1. Course content page in the Blackboard Learn learning management system.

Among the main topics covered in this course are: components of a metadata scheme; data content and data value standards and rules; syntax for encoding metadata; DC, MODS, and VRA Core item-level metadata schemes; EAD and DCCAP collection-level metadata schemes. During the term each of the students explores an additional assigned topic, and students make metadata research presentations on a variety of concepts, standards, and schemes beyond the main topics. The course does not have a required textbook but recommended textbook is *Metadata* by Marcia Zeng (Zeng & Qin, 2008). Also, selected chapters from *Metadata for digital collections* (Miller, 2011) are included in the readings. The learning modules (written lecture materials) on the main topics of metadata are developed by the instructors. Learning modules include links to external readings, such as articles, standards documentation etc. and require answering one or more questions on each topic and discussing these questions with other students in the discussion

forum. Instructors give lectures—presentations of the course topics—during the live online weekly meetings via the GoToTraining communication service. This service allows for sharing screen of a presenter, using voice and text chat, and recording the sessions into the archive. In addition to the coverage of the course topics, the online meetings include exercises, discussions, and time for questions and answers. Most of the online meetings also incorporate individual and group presentations made by students.

Students work on a major group project creating metadata records for digital objects using all metadata schemes covered in the learning modules of the course. This project includes creation of item-level records for several objects by each student and collection-level metadata records for one collection of objects per group. Students have a chance to utilize both HTML and XML syntaxes for encoding the records and can use any text editor as well as specialized metadata creation tools that are added as plugins to the NoteTab Light editor. The group project is the most challenging and comprehensive activity in this course and students work on this project in the second half of the semester. The project helps the development of the skills based on the knowledge obtained in this course, and improves students' team work and communication skills. The deliverables of the project are group reports and presentations by the student groups.

The course facilitates the development of practical skills by offering students the opportunity to create metadata records for real-life digital library or repository. For example, in the Fall 2012 semester, students in this course participated in creating metadata records for 213 submissions of various kinds accepted for the iConference 2013 hosted by the College of Information, UNT. Instructors developed a workflow in which conference materials were distributed among the students and students had to submit them to the designated repository. Students deposited the materials to the IDEALS iSchools repository (https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/handle/2142/34699) and created DC-based metadata records for each of the objects (FIG. 2). The IDEALS real-life metadata project was a one-time opportunity but instructors of Metadata course cooperate with UNT Libraries on providing student with a regular opportunity to contribute metadata records to The Portal to Texas History.

FIG. 2. IDEALS repository: iConference 2013 collection.

The approaches to teaching Metadata course in UNT include combination of theoretical preparation, team work, and extensive practical experience which are very important assets on the job market.

References

Miller, Steven J. (2011). *Metadata for digital collections: A how-to-do-it manual.* New York, NY: Neal-Schuman Publishers.

Zeng, Marcia L., & Jian Qin. (2008). *Metadata.* New York, NY: Neal-Schuman Publishers.