

Biography of Michael Whitchurch

Michael Whitchurch is the Virtual Services/Learning Commons Librarian at Brigham Young University's Harold B. Lee Library. He has engaged technology from the time his parents purchased their first computer in 1986. His interests lie in a variety of technology related fields, including mobile services and user interface design, information management, and information seeking behaviors. In particular he is interested in how technologies can assist in the seeking, creation and dissemination of information.

Michael received his MLIS from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in May 1999. Shortly thereafter he began working as an instruction librarian at the University of Utah (U of U) where he became involved in using Course Management System (CMS) technology for library instruction. Particularly his interest lay in how to present effective online research instruction to students. After a short time with library instruction, and as a result of his involvement with CMS in instruction, he was asked to assume the role of WebCT (CMS) Administrator for the U of U campus. In this role he trained faculty in managing content for and effectively using WebCT and online technologies for curriculum.

After five years of training faculty and maintaining WebCT, he accepted a position at Brigham Young University (BYU), where he has been for almost ten years, as the head of the Information Commons (now Learning Commons) in the Harold B. Lee Library. He began at BYU shortly after the Commons opened and, through much iteration, developed a thriving "No Shhh! Zone" where collaboration and innovation occur frequently. The goal of the Commons was, and still is, to aide students in the whole information process. Beginning at the development of a concept or research idea through researching and creating the end product, be it a paper, multimedia presentation, or other academic work.

While managing the Commons he collaborated with the Office of First-Year experience, Freshman Mentoring, the Writing Fellows and the Writing Center. These collaborations were intended to establish a presence in the library, including space where interactions occur. Non-traditional service to students in a centralized location presented opportunities to show the value of libraries in all aspects of academic life.

Recently his job responsibility grew to include coordination of Library Virtual Services. Though he had been doing much of the virtual services work unofficially, this new role centralized all of these types of service in one place. In this position he coordinates the library virtual services including chat/text reference (synchronous reference), LibGuides (Subject Guides), LibAnswers (online help), reference statistics tracking, the library tour (required for all First-Year Writing students), and other virtual services. In addition he is a Mobile Services advocate where he coordinates, tests, and evaluates mobile technologies and services for potential implementation at the library.