Educational Developers Caucus (EDC) GRANTS 2018-19 Final Report

Title of Project:
Research on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Upgrade of Annotated Literature Website

Principal Investigator:
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Overview of the project:

This project, begun in 2013 with an initial EDC grant, focused on the creation of a web-based database of short summaries of key literature and resources on topics about post-secondary teaching and learning. The intent was to be useful to university and college scholars including faculty and educational developers from across all disciplines who wish to improve their practice or conduct research pertaining to these topics. The website now provides annotations of over 100 topics about post-secondary teaching and learning (see sotlannotations.com). Evidence of the value and impact of the website is shown in the over 1200 visitors from 13 countries over the last two years.

An institutional (Brock University) grant provided for a graduate student to do a review of the site and its usability, including use statistics prior to the EDC grant period. The review revealed some challenges: The website did not work well with mobile devices, which could deter visitors from accessing the website's resources. Evidence of this is the high visitor traffic landing on the home and table of contents pages. Far fewer views were noted on the annotation pages. For example, in 2017 the website's traffic statistics showed over 1200 visitors directed to the site from over 50 websites. However, the majority viewed only the home page and table of contents. This phase of the project therefore focused on a website redesign to provide greater flexibility, usability, and tagging for search engines to encourage higher use.

The Wordpress site was upgraded to a premium template (average cost approximately $120/year) to allow for easier navigation and accessibility via a variety of mobile devices. Automatic content resizing allows text to be viewed the same way across a variety of screen types. In addition, a dedicated domain name (included with upgrade cost) is likely to be more appealing to web search engines and more memorable to site users. Other updates included:
- Widgets and plug-ins were added to improve the website's functionality
- Numerous tags were added for annotations not previously tagged
- Create 3 sub menus (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods) under TOC menu
- The search bar was made more visible
- Promotion via EDC, STLHE, and ISSOTL listservs and via Twitter and FB
- Additional entries created by graduate students (separate from the grant)
- Created category sidebar on homepage so TOC is accessible from homepage

Budget
The majority of the budget ($2997.00) went to salary and benefits ($2058.89) for the Research Assistant. An additional $223.36 was spent on the Wordpress website for two years. I request the option to hold the remainder ($714.75) towards upcoming years for the website.

Respectfully submitted, Nicola Simmons