"A Gentle Introduction":
Strategies and Best Practices for Designing Hybrid Instruction

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Introduction

In the aftermath of COVID, hybrid teaching and learning has taken a prominent place in education as a new method for reaching learners outside of the classroom. As hybrid instruction expands, instructors need to implement hybrid learning strategies to be accessible, inclusive, and intelligible for both in-person and online learners. The "Gentle Introduction" workshops at UIUC demonstrate the effectiveness of hybrid learning, as well as offer suggestions to others who want to adapt hybrid strategies for their own instruction.

Workshop Description

The "Gentle Introduction to" workshops covered a wide range of topics under the umbrella of digital humanities (DH). As their name suggests, these workshops were designed introductions to DH and AI topics for a humanities-based audience, as well as for other individuals interested in beginner-friendly DH resources.

These workshops were all part of the Savvy Researcher (SR) workshop series, which were sponsored by the University Library and included a wide variety of workshops covering different aspects of research and information management.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Mary Ton, who I collaborated with on this project and who organized and lead many of these workshops. Without her, none of this would have been possible. I also want to thank the staff at the Scholarly Commons for helping us troubleshoot the audio and visual set-up for our workshops. Lastly, thank you to Merinda Hensley for organizing all Savvy Researcher workshops, including ours.

Methods

Designing hybrid instruction consisted of three major stages: pre-workshop preparation, the workshop itself, and post-workshop recording production.

Stage 1: Pre-Workshop

Pre-workshop preparation focused on designing presentation materials that were accessible to both in-person and online participants. In particular, we anticipated participant issues accessing the slides and attached links. To address this, we created short, easy to remember short URLs to our slides, along with QR codes to the slides for all participants to access. We also made sure powerpoint materials were colorblind-friendly and added hyperlinks to all resources mentioned in the slides.

Stage 2: The Workshops

For the workshops themselves, we wanted to ensure online participants felt welcomed and that they could contribute to the conversation, especially as the presenter was in-person. To address this, a chat moderator monitored the virtual space throughout the workshop. They greeted participants, addressed technical issues, shared links to all resources mentioned in the slides or by the presenter, and responded to virtual participants' questions and shared them with those in-person.

Stage 3: Post-Workshop Production

This stage sought to make the workshops' content accessible for those who weren't able to attend the initial workshops. The hybrid workshops were recorded over Zoom and then uploaded to Mediaspace, UIUC's video sharing platform. The recordings were then edited, and auto-generated captions were cleaned for accuracy and clarity. Once this was finished, both attendees and anyone on the workshops' waitlist were notified and sent the recording link.
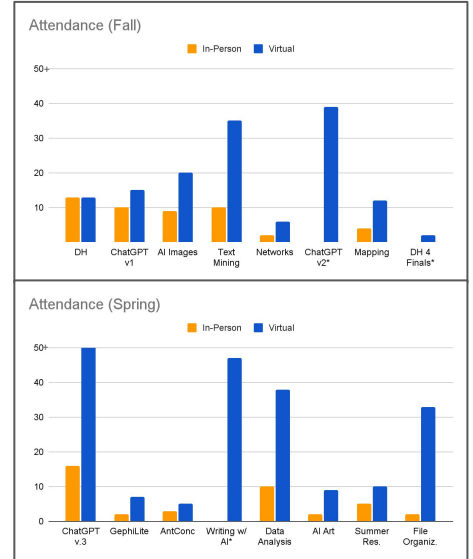
Outcomes

The workshops saw good attendance throughout the fall and spring semesters. Workshops with an (*) by their name were held virtual only; all other workshops were held hybrid.

Notably, **virtual attendance consistently ranked higher than in-person attendance**, with only one workshop ("DH" in the Fall Semester") seeing equal attendance between the two modes. No workshop saw higher in-person attendance than virtual. Workshops on AI were especially well attended. In particular, ChatGPT version 3 in the Spring Semester had 89 virtual attendees. Overall, 599 unique participants attended the workshops synchronously. Attendees were primarily graduate students (39% of attendees), staff (33%), and faculty (17%).

Post-workshop surveys further attest to the heightened interest in virtual and hybrid workshops. Analysis of Fall 2023 post-workshop surveys found that, of the 29 people who responded:
- 4 preferred **in-person;**
- 19 preferred **online**;
- 6 had **no preference**.

The workshop recordings also saw high viewership. All recordings were added to a Channel in Mediaspace titled "Digital Humanities @ Illinois". Checking the Channel Analytics for August 1, 2023 to May 1, 2024 found that channel videos were played 548 times in that period, and over 4965 minutes were viewed. The most viewed workshops in these series were the two fall workshops on ChatGPT - which were played 74 times and 55 times respectively - and the workshop "A Gentle Introduction to Digital Humanities", which was played 74 times. While many of the viewers were in Urbana-Champaign, the recordings reach audiences across the US and in India, Canada, Hong Kong, and other countries.

Attendance (Fall) — In-Person / Virtual. Categories: DH, ChatGPT v1, AI Images, Text Mining, Networks, ChatGPT v2*, Mapping, DH 4 Finals*

Attendance (Spring) — In-Person / Virtual. Categories: ChatGPT v.3, GephiLite, AntConc, Writing w/ AI*, Data Analysis, AI Art, Summer Res., File Organiz.

Additional Resources

DH@Illinois Mediaspace channel:
go.illinois.edu/dhchannel.

"Designing Hybrid Workshops" Libguide:
go.library.illinois.edu/hybrid.

Next Steps and Conclusions

Mary Ton and I plan to analyze the data received from the workshops over the summer, with the intent of publishing research on our findings at a later date. Plans for future evaluation will consider how our workshops were received in the wider context of all Savvy Researcher workshops; how AI workshop attendance compares to DH workshop attendance; and how users found and engaged with our workshop recordings.

Overall, our findings currently point to a heightened need for virtual and hybrid workshop offerings. While many participants may prefer in-person workshops, more and more patrons are demonstrating a preference for online offerings. With this in mind, libraries should carefully consider how to integrate virtual and hybrid offerings into their current instructional practice, balancing both the need for accessible offerings with their current capabilities.