

PERSONAL SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING PROJECT

Extracts from a nurse's account of learning to use the CD-ROM in the Nurse Education Centre Library - 1998

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The following was submitted by a nurse to a self directed learning project, and is reproduced with her permission. She worked on the project with Veronica Rowland at Guernsey.

We felt that it was particularly interesting as it provides insight into information seeking behaviour, and the learning objectives and outcomes could be useful when planning teaching /training sessions.

Introduction

The Code of Professional Conduct (UKCC 1992) requires the registered nurse to be accountable for his/her practice. To be accountable, nurses must be able to explain their choices, actions and omissions throughout their decision-making process. When looking at areas on which to base this project, the author has tried to incorporate this interpretation within the choice of subject and the subsequent learning project.

The chosen subject will be centred on the use of the CD-ROM in the Nurse's Library. This choice was initially guided by personal negative past experiences that resulted in failure to get a successful result at the time, but also an unwillingness to use one again. I want to conquer the fear of failure and enhance my abilities to access research data and thus make better nursing decisions.

Aim

To increase personal skills in the use of the CD-ROM computer within 6 weeks.

Objectives

"I want to conquer the fear of failure and enhance my abilities to access research data and thus make better nursing decisions."

At the end of 6 weeks I will :-

1. Be able to demonstrate how to access the CD-ROM effectively without supervision.

2. Have considered and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the CD-ROM.

Action Plan

1. Consider resources available to achieve the aim and objectives.
2. Carry out a library index search (written) and read about nurses' use of computers.
3. Seek assistance from the librarian and discuss my learning needs.
4. Ask for a one-to-one lesson from the librarian on how to use the CD-ROM.
5. Review and revise Action Plan.
6. Look at, discuss and decide on further learning needs.
7. Evaluate and assess the learning achieved.
8. Devote a minimum of 1 hour per week on the CD-ROM without supervision for 4 weeks.
9. Revise Action Plan.
10. Discuss with librarian the aim and objectives of this self-directed learning project.
11. Demonstrate that Objective 2 has been covered.
12. Evaluate the learning project, including some assessment.
13. Conclusion.
14. Present work to course tutor.

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Action Plans

1. Resources:

CD-ROM computer

Motivation

Time

Looking/Listening skills

Peer support

Librarian – positive attitude

Research literature

Communication skills

Feedback

Practice

Availability of demonstrations

Others skilled in its use

2. Library

Basing the use of CD-ROM and use of technology for accessing information by nurses, on which to start, time was spent in the library looking for research literature, on these subjects. This was done by using the library index and by looking at recent articles and studies in various nursing journals. These provided further references within them. A selection was chosen, to be read and incorporated into the rationale for choice of a self-directed learning project. Throughout this reading, the overwhelming consensus would appear to be that of the importance of the use of information technology within evidence-based nursing practice.

3. Librarian

I approached the librarian about my personal learning needs for this project, by asking to speak to her privately. The outline of the project was then discussed and we negotiated the amount of input I would need from her. We decided on an initial 1 hour session for an introduction to the CD-ROM. This was scheduled for the following week.

The choice of the project was necessary, I felt, to gain several things:-

- a). It was an opportunity to "admit" a learning need, and to state how I felt about a personal challenge.
- b). The librarian had the necessary skills in the use of the CD-ROM.
- c). I felt that I needed a physical demonstration in its use, rather than a list of written instructions.
- d). To an extent, I could control how I learnt the skills and knowledge that I lacked, and the environment in which I did it.
- e). It would give me confidence knowing I could ask for assistance as and when it was needed.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the CD-ROM

The advantages and disadvantages have been considered and discussed throughout the project with my course tutor, Librarian, peers and others. This brief written paper will reflect only a personal view, which commenced with my own perception in the choice and introduction of the subject.

Advantages

1. A most obvious advantage would appear to be that of having the potential to gain access to a huge database within the CD-ROM. This can then eliminate the need to carry out a paper-based search within the library. In theory, therefore, this way of accessing data frees the individual from the tedium of unsuccessful searches uses library skills only.
2. Use of the CD-ROM can also save time by giving quick access to abstracts on various topics. This facility allows the user to read through and decide the relevance of an article instead of having to read the whole item.
3. The database contains work throughout the wide field of nursing journals, including those readily available within, or close, to the library itself.
4. CD-ROM software appears reasonably up-to-date.

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5. CD-ROM software is found in all major, and most nursing, libraries.

6. CD-ROMs can be used 24-hours a day on some sites. Usually, no charge is made for use.

7. Using CD-ROMs can facilitate interest in the use of computer technology generally.

8. Many librarians will instigate searches on behalf of clients unable to reach the library.

Information gained from the CD-ROM can be kept and used for reference, or built upon, or used in clinical practice.

Disadvantages

1. Despite being consumer-oriented, a degree of knowledge and skill is needed to use any computer as a tool. This can be quite daunting to those with limited or no computer skills.
2. Time needs to be spent either practising, or being shown how to use the CD-ROM, to gain competencies.
3. Strategies have to be learnt, including the ability to organise knowledge, identify appropriate keywords, and how to narrow and widen searches.
4. Often, abstracts are accessed which have no relevance, or are unobtainable.
5. Abstracts might be missed by the inappropriate choice of keywords.
6. To gain the full use of the CD-ROM appears to need considerable time and practice. This needs motivation and the availability of the CD-ROM; and possibly another person skilled in its use, who is willing to act as a facilitator in this area.

CONCLUSION

The project worked very well. By choosing a new skill, which I really did need to know about for my personal and professional development, I gained a very positive outcome from the experience.

While the actual learning involved in the project has been, and, I am sure, will prove to be of huge benefit in the future, the project itself has given me a lot of satisfaction. Also my clinical practice will benefit, particularly in the area of teaching and assessing.

Autumn Study Day Attendees heard a OVID exclusive.....

OVID will be offering BNI in the spring!

We are hoping that they will be able to come along to our spring study day, but following the general reaction at the autumn study day OVID will have a queue of us (along the lines of the Harrods sale!) as soon as BNI is available.

We were also fortunate to be given passwords to try out all of OVIDs online products for 2 weeks - and got to see that the "futures bright, the futures full text". OVID are also going to offer librarians the opportunity to select specific titles to be accessed in full text - with no minimum number of titles. This might help those stretched budgets.

I'd love to hear from a LfN member who currently subscribes to the Nursing Collection, does it reduce ILLs? Are students only using the Nursing Collections as it's so convenient and missing other references? This would be an excellent review for the Bulletin!

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