

Electrified.ca: Get excited about e-learning!

Laurie Prange
Yukon College Library
500 College Drive
PO Box 2799
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 5K4
Email laprange@gmail.com

Are you like me and sometimes get frustrated by the lack of periodicals for library professionals that overlap into e-learning? Do you also wish that sometimes the periodicals for our profession were easier to read, less "researchy" and more "user-friendly"? Do you wish sometimes that your favourite blog could expand upon a particular posting? Or that there was a periodical out there containing simple, clear, fun to read articles like your favourite glossy magazine? Do you wish that you had an outlet for contributing your own writing, but without the need to maintain the site yourself? Well, me too! And when I couldn't find what I was looking for, I decided to launch my own ezine.

Starting an ezine is far simpler than starting an online journal, but still has its challenges. I am luckier than most: having operated a successful blog since March 2006 (<http://www.lauriethelibrarian.ca>), I already had some idea of the work and time commitment involved. In addition, I already knew from my readers what kind of information they wanted to both read and share. All I needed to figure out was the design of the ezine, how to convince a few people to write articles, and where to find the financial resources to get my project off the ground.

The first thing I did was look at my favourite ezines to examine what made them so appealing and made me want to return regularly. My absolute favourite ezine is Knitty.com. To me, what makes this ezine popular is that it has a very distinctive writing style and mode of presentation. I wanted to find a way to reproduce the knitting instruction style - similar to that of cookbook recipes - for instructional articles that would be of immediate

use to librarians and e-teachers. Two other successful ezines that I draw inspiration from are YouGrowGirl.com and FirstMonday.org. Both of these are clear in their purpose despite their very different style of presentation, yet meet the needs of their readership. I too wanted to create an ezine that would suit the needs of my colleagues. All of these ezines make it easy for their readers to write their own articles and share their expertise without the hassle of doing the hosting of a blog, for example. This is exactly what Electrified.ca is about: being approachable, useful, and easy to contribute to for the benefit of all professionals.

Next, I had to find others to contribute writing. This proved a difficult task as many librarians are often too busy to write professionally. Of course, this was one of the major reasons why I wanted to launch an ezine. I believe it will take some time for professional librarians to realize that they don't have to write a full research paper in order to have something worthy of publication, and that Electrified.ca provides the very solution we have all been waiting for, but that is exactly why I wanted to launch this publication. I want to provide an avenue to those practitioners who only have time to write a 500 word article, but have excellent knowledge to share. In addition, some of us have the need to add items to our curriculum vitae and shorter articles is a viable option. After some convincing, a little bit of begging, and a lot of positive affirmation, I received two article submissions and promises from others to contribute to future issues.

The kind of article that I'm looking for is written in an approachable manner - not so academic as we are used to seeing - and is instructionally-based. If you have figured out how to deliver something you think others will want to try in their own library or classroom, then this is something you should submit for publication. For example, I am looking for articles on how to create online learning objects, set up special online services, or teach information literacy in a unique style. It is also a good forum for bringing awareness to your other projects, such as a blog, academic articles, or a book you are selling. By sharing knowledge in a smaller, more approachable venue, your readers will know where to find more of your kind of expertise. As the ezine becomes profitable, I plan to pay authors for their work, a perk one doesn't find in most academic publications!

With the idea in place, I had to find the funding to launch my project.

This turned out to be the toughest challenge: how do you convince a bank, a non-profit agency, or a body awarding government grants to provide money to launch an online magazine? Quickly, I found that the traditional avenues to fund these projects were not open to groundbreaking enterprises. So, what to do? On a fluke, I entered the Canada Savings Bond contest *Tell Us Your CBS Story*. With my essay of 250 words, I managed to convince the judges that my idea of launching an ezine for librarians and e-teachers would be worth their grand prize of a \$1000 Canada Savings Bond - and I won!

With all three elements in place, the first issue was released in October 2006. Now those of us who are into witty, short, instructional articles on e-learning and online librarianship have a forum for sharing. Go to <http://www.electrified.ca> today!