The Emergence of iPads in the School of Medicine

By Erin N. Wimmer, Nancy Lombardo, Tallie Casucc, & Bryan Hull

Objectives

Integrating new technologies in educational settings can be simultaneously challenging and rewarding. In this presentation, librarians from the Eccles Health Sciences Library will discuss their experiences in working with the School of Medicine to integrate iPads into the curriculum. Challenges included:

1. Providing training and support for more than 200 students
2. Defining how students currently use iPads in clinical clerkships and how this might change with the new all-student device implementation
3. Ensuring that the integration of iPads and their uses in the curriculum are relevant to student needs
4. Assessing obstacles to acceptance of iPads and electronic resources/apps

Methods

The School of Medicine issued iPads to incoming first- and second-year students for the purpose of test-taking and attendance. Librarians worked with faculty to identify additional curricular uses for the devices and to determine mobile-friendly resources students could use easily use. Through orientations, class sessions, and LMS modules, librarians provided instructions to students on setting up and using their devices and accessing library resources to support their learning. In addition, technology support was provided to address additional questions or problems the students had. Students sought assistance configuring their devices and accessing apps, including a suite of medical apps purchased to support this new initiative. This initiative raised questions about how medical students participating in their third-year clerkships might take full advantage of the devices. For many years, librarians have worked with the Pediatrics clerkship to maintain and provide resources for handheld technologies—including PDAs, iPods, and iPads—to be used during the rotation. Soon students will come to the rotation with their own devices and issues, including app licensing and availability need to be addressed.

Results

A committee, including School of Medicine faculty, staff and students, and library faculty and staff, was created to share ideas for strategic planning and expanding use of iPads by School of Medicine. The committee will evaluate the connection between the School of Medicine’s mission and vision for the iPad implementation and the integration of the devices in the curriculum. Recommendations will be made to facilitate the success of the program, including providing additional training for School of Medicine faculty, identifying additional electronic resources to facilitate learning, integrating iPad use and training into additional areas of the curriculum and resources needed to sustain the program.

Conclusions

Using technology to facilitate pedagogical trends in higher education requires forethought, collaboration, and communication. The rewards of a thoughtful implementation are well worth the obstacles faced. Librarians and professors can work together to make these initiatives meaningful and successful for students.