

## PANORAMA OR FOCUS?

(Poster)

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### IL training in the Veterinary Science Library

The Veterinary Science Library, Szent István University, Budapest has been engaged in user education as a curriculum subject both for undergraduate students of veterinary science and zoology (5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> semester), and for graduates participating in continuing education courses, doing their PhD, or for interested faculty members. The subject, entitled *Library informatics*, is compulsory for students of zoology, and postgraduates, however, it has been optional for students of veterinary science.

In the beginning, the course took eight hours covering the basics of searching, database searching practices, and some introduction into making references. In the middle of the 1990s, a textbook was also compiled for students both in Hungarian, and in English. As the number of information sources increased, and the use of the internet has become a matter of everyday routine, the course had been extended to 16 hours. The textbook was revised, re-edited, and made available online. Supplementary tutorials and aids were also used during the courses and made available on the internet (<http://library.univet.hu>).

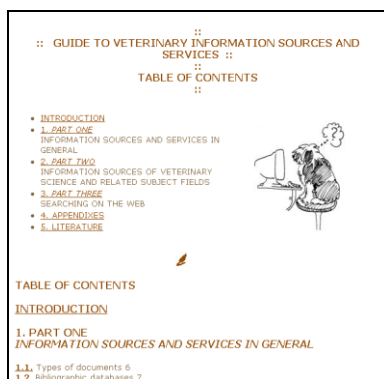


Figure 1. Opening page of the online textbook (English version)

As experiences and the material, readily available on the internet, accumulated, the compilation of a distance education course was considered. In 2005 the first version of the course was developed by means of the Moodle courseware. It consisted of 18 chapters (modules), some mandatory, some optional depending on the target group. It was hoped, that by this flexible online course, available any time from anywhere, students of veterinary science as well as vets working in the countryside would be more motivated to improve their information related skills.

In 2006 the English version of the online course was elaborated. Relying on the Hungarian experience it was already reduced to 9 modules. This was the first time that foreign students had the alternative to do the course in the classroom or online. Only 12 of over 40 students have chosen the online course. Both groups have been asked to fulfill a detailed questionnaire about the course.

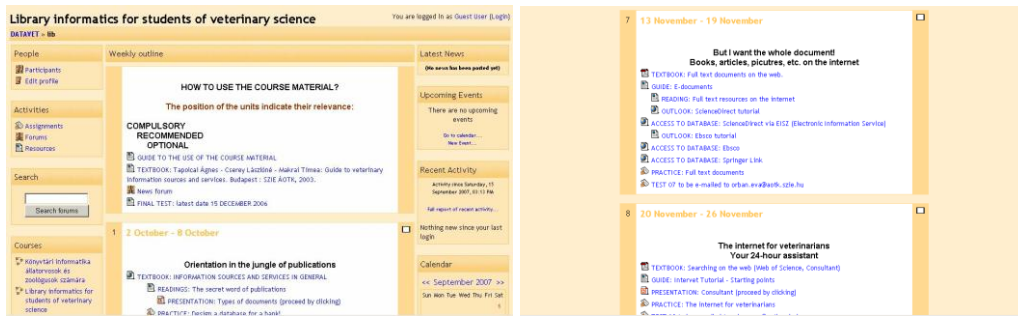


Figure 2-3. Parts of the menu of the online course (English version)

## Problems

The problems revealed by student feedback and experience were:

- library-information terminology, notions and tools (even Boolean logic) are difficult to cope with for students,
- they are overwhelmed by too much material (several databases, websites, etc.),
- there is a lack of motivation (thesis writing in “distant” future).

Making the course available any time did not help on the lack of motivation: on the contrary, less industrious students tended to leave the course for the last minute, or not to finish it at all.

We have concluded that a more pragmatic and empathic approach is required. We have to make a shift from the librarians’ all-inclusive approach towards the more ‘down-to-earth’ needs of users. In stead of presenting students with a complete panorama of veterinary information sources, we should focus on the development of a few skills that could be trained on different sources. The needs of students requiring information sources only for a short essay or clinical problem solving have also pushed us towards reducing our study material.

## Solutions: focus instead of panorama

We have concluded that our training should be more focused, and as far as possible, more gradual. Steps made or to be made in the future are the following.

- Freshmen’s visit to the library have been turned into an introduction to the use of the library and a presentation of its website.
- A multiple choice interactive section will be inserted into the course material dealing with the use of Boolean and proximity operators.
- A quick reference card style ‘search school’ is being published in the library’s newsletter (included also in the journal of the Chamber of Hungarian Veterinarians) and on its website.

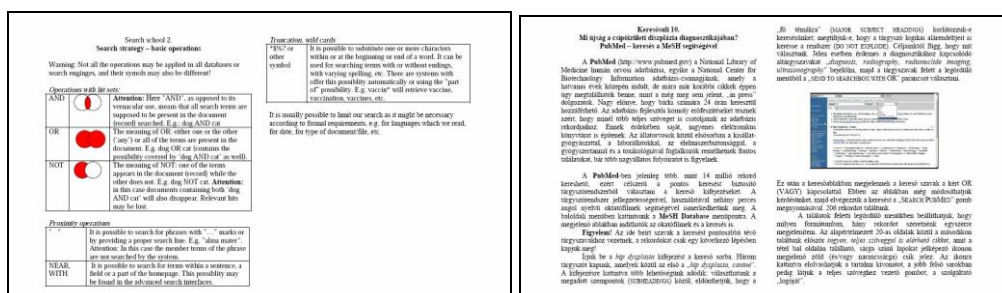


Figure 4-5. Examples of the quick reference card style ‘search school’, focusing on one single problem

- Brief extracurricular courses (with background material on the internet) are offered flexibly for students writing essay and for veterinarians.



Figure 6. The online material of brief extracurricular courses (English version)

- Personal tutoring is provided for faculty, practitioners and students.
- Better marketing of these possibilities: using posters, news, forum, direct marketing, etc. is necessary.

It is also a very important duty of the library to convince academic staff to participate in the IL training of students, not only by giving tasks that "have to be solved in the library", but also by integrating these tasks in the requirements of the subject, and by revealing more of their personal information searching habits, and strategies.