Sara Q. Thompson

# Setting up a library iPad program
## Guidelines for success

**B**riar Cliff University is a Catholic Franciscan institution of roughly 1,100 students, served by the Bishop Mueller Library's staff of four full-time employees and a dozen student helpers. Over the past several months, we have been looking at many ways to proactively help our patrons become more comfortable with new technology, such as ebooks, ebook readers, PDF annotation software, and mobile interfaces.

In Summer 2010, the campus IT department approached the library with the possibility of having iPads to check out, and we jumped at the chance to provide such a service. We saw iPads as having the potential to introduce some of the new information management tools to our patrons.



Each iPad is checked out in a bag with a power cord, Pogo stylus, and screen cloth.

We found helpful information about existing iPad loan programs from MIT's Lewis Music Library,[1] Wake Forest University,[2] and Virginia Tech University.[3] The online documentation for these three examples gave us a valuable starting point as we outlined our own workflow, procedures, and policies.

## iPad procedures and policies

We started with two 16 GB Wi-Fi iPads. The iPads are in Apple cases, labeled with the library's contact information, and checked out in a small laptop sleeve that has a front pocket for the power cord and a microfiber screen cloth.

One computer in our staff area is the central hub for the iPads. We used iTunes Gift Cards to create an iTunes account for the library. We set up one iPad with apps, Web site bookmarks, home screen shortcuts, and other content. Then we resynced this iPad to iTunes, which created a backup we could use to populate the second iPad. Since then, Apple has introduced an App Volume Purchase Program to facilitate app purchasing for institutions.

We also use this backup to restore each iPad after it has been checked out. Device

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backups can be managed from within iTunes by going to Preferences, the Devices tab, and selecting backups to delete. We only keep the most recent backup so that our student helpers know exactly which one to choose when an iPad is returned at night.

We decided the best way to protect the library and the patron was to use some of the restrictions available in the iPad's general settings. We turned off the ability to download new apps or make any iTunes Store or App Store purchases on the iPad. We also sign out of the library iTunes account before checking out the iPads. This prevents the library's iTunes account from being used by patrons, and it prevents patrons from logging into their own iTunes account to purchase apps, since these apps would just be wiped out on the iPad's return. We do ask our patrons for app suggestions and have fulfilled those requests when possible.

We use a reservation system rather than a first-come-first-serve or waiting list approach. This allows faculty to reserve an iPad in advance for conferences, and it allows students to plan around their schedules. Since we already had a laptop loaning program in

place that allowed laptops to be taken out of the building, we made the same policy for the iPads. We set our late fee at $15 an hour and the lost fee at $700. For the initial pilot project, we set the loan periods at 24 hours for faculty and staff, and four hours for students. This semester, our iPads will check out to students for two days instead of four hours. We hope the longer loan period will make it easier for students to get comfortable with the device and experiment with more of the apps.

When an iPad is returned, we use the "Erase all content and settings" option in the iPad's Settings menu to wipe out any files, logins, or browsing history left behind by the patron. We then restore the iPad with the backup in iTunes which resets the device back to our settings.

Staff at Briar Cliff University organized the apps into folders, and gave each folder a name with a number indicating how many apps are inside. The library's home page is a bookmark on the iPad's dock bar. Visit this article online for detailed images.

## Patron feedback

We gave each patron a very short paper survey with just three questions: What apps did they use and/or enjoy most? What apps do they want to see added? Do they have any other questions or comments?

In the first month of our iPad pilot program, we checked out the iPads to 22 differ-

ent patrons: 6 faculty/staff and 16 students. We had 12 survey responses with the following app suggestions: two, specific subjects (Business, Physics); two, media editing (video, photo specifically); four, games; and four, no suggestions.

In the survey responses, six patrons reported using Safari the most, two used Facebook the most, and three said they looked at all the apps. One of the benefits of being in a small library is that I was able to speak with many of the patrons when they returned the iPads. Most patrons were simply curious and wanted to find out what the device was like. I have heard from other patrons that they have not checked out an iPad because they are not sure what exactly they would do with it. On the other hand, interest in the iPads has encouraged conversations on campus about ebooks and the future of textbooks, with librarians being included in the discussion. The library also took advantage of the interest stirred up by the iPad program's launch to begin a regular biweekly discussion group about technology with faculty and staff.[4]

To promote the iPad program, library staff gave demos to several groups on campus, including student government, administrative staff, nursing faculty, and a few student clubs.

Oliver Obst mentions an unexpected side effect of a library iPad program in his column for the *Journal of the European Association for Health Information and Libraries*:[5] faculty who already own iPads are visiting the library for app suggestions and technical advice. We are seeing a similar trend at the Bishop Mueller Library, which has carried over into iPad training sessions for the Student Support Services department, where all of the staff have iPads and read department-relevant books together with the ebook apps.

Two library patrons use the Share Board app to collaborate on a virtual whiteboard.

## App selection

We have a little more than 100 apps installed on the iPads.[6] Most were free, but we did set aside $100 in iTunes gift cards, which we used to purchase 15 apps. Almost half of our "app allowance" was spent on productivity apps such as the iWork suite and QuickOffice—a total of $45. Another $23 went to the reference apps Elements, Star Walk, BirdsEye Lite, and World Factbook. Once a week, we download updates in iTunes on the central hub computer and temporarily lift the restrictions on the iPads in order to add any new apps, resync them, and then lock the restrictions again.

The first "app" we installed on the iPads was actually a shortcut to our library's home page. When viewing a Web page in Safari on the iPad, you can tap the plus sign in the toolbar and select "Add to Home Screen." By default the icon is a miniature screenshot of the Web page, unless the Web site administrator has created an icon specifically for iOS devices.[7] To see an example, try saving one of these Web sites to the home screen of an iPad, iPhone, or iPod Touch: Wolfram Alpha Mobile, New York Times, WorldCat Mobile Web Beta, or Briar Cliff's library.[8]

There are plenty of different ways to approach app selection and maintenance on the iPad or any similar device:

• At the very minimum, someone in your library will need to regularly check for updates to your apps and the operating system. In November, an operating system upgrade will be available that will allow for better app organization and wireless printing, which will require set-up by staff in order to take advantage of these new features.[9]

• Provide patrons with an easy way to suggest apps and set a maximum price that the library will pay for an app or a maximum total for all apps.

• Follow one or two app recommendation sites on either Twitter or your RSS reader. See The Unofficial Apple Weblog (TUAW)[10] and MacWorld[11] for examples.

• AppShopper[12] is a Web site and free app that monitors app prices and new releases. This is a great way to find out when a paid app is temporarily free or on sale.

• If you want to keep up with the hundreds of new apps released each day, Apple offers an iTunes RSS generator[13] on its Web site where you can create an RSS feed according to genre (such as Education, Reference, or Books), cost (free or paid), and popularity or date added.

## Evaluating apps

It is easy to be misled by the plethora of free apps available, but many of these freebies are simply limited versions of paid apps, or require a paid subscription (such as the *Wall Street Journal*'s app), or simply function as gateways to in-app purchases (many free games require additional purchases after the first free round). Other apps require a connection to a sister program on a personal computer or only apply to certain geographic areas.

Three easy ways to quickly narrow down your app wishlist:

1. Carefully read the reviews in the App Store. By default, you will only see "most helpful" reviews for the current version. Be sure to select "most critical" from the dropdown menu and "all versions" to see more ratings and reviews.

2. Look for reviews of the app on other Web sites such as Gizmodo, MacWorld, and TUAW.

3. Search for the app's name on YouTube, where you might find demos from the developer or other users. Seeing the app in action is a good way to make sure you understand what it does.

## Not by apps alone . . . adding content to iPads

For the temporary use of a library loan, iPad apps that sync to a patron's content in the cloud or on another computer have the potential of helping the patron quickly access their own materials. Dropbox, GoodReader, Evernote, Instapaper, Pandora, and Netflix are just a few examples of apps that use accounts patrons can have independently of the iPad. By resetting the iPad between loans, the patron's login information is cleared out.

Unfortunately, the restriction against in-app purchases applies to Apple's iBooks app, so patrons are not able to download books from Apple's iBookstore. Amazon and Barnes & Noble, however, redirect patrons to their respective Web sites, so the Kindle and Nook apps are not affected by the in-app purchases restriction. The ebook app Stanza does not require any account at all and provides easy access to free ebook catalogs, such as Project Gutenberg and Feedbooks. We pre-loaded the library iPads with titles in Apple's iBooks app, including a couple examples of Vooks —ebooks with embedded video.

One of the most excellent resources for content is iTunes U—a section of the iTunes Store that provides free educational content from universities around the world. A library might choose to ignore apps altogether and focus solely on iTunes U materials. Some of the available media includes archival videos from the Library of Congress, lectures from Stanford and MIT, lessons from Open University, and ePub chapters from Shakespeare's First Folio, available from Oxford.

## Questions

The hardware and software are changing rapidly, so for the time being, we are approaching our iPad program as a sandbox —a way to test new tools and try out our

old tools in a new setting. We still have a lot of questions: Should we write an app collection development policy? How often can we afford to look for new apps? Will more ebooks become apps instead? Should we add records to our catalog for content on the iPads?

In March 2011, Briar Cliff University announced that all freshmen would be receiving iPads in Fall 2011. The library will be spearheading the training for students and for a faculty pilot program that begins right away. This new opportunity raises new questions as our institution moves forward with its commitment to mobile devices.

If iPads and apps and ebooks will be completely different in two years, what can we do now to prepare?

The answer: play.

## Notes

1. MIT, "Lewis Music Library Student Manual—iPad," libstaff.mit.edu/lewis/circ.html#iPad (accessed March 9, 2011).

2. Wake Forest University, "Apple iPad Usage Policy," zsr.wfu.edu/about/policies/technology-ipad.html (accessed March 9, 2011).

3. Virginia Tech University, Art and Architecture Library, "iPad loan policy," www.lib.vt.edu/artarch/ipad-policy.html (accessed March 9, 2011).

4. Oliver Obst, "iPad lending project: First Results," *Journal of the European Association for Health Information and Libraries* 6 (2010), jeahil.wordpress.com/2010/10/14/ipad-lending-project-first-results (accessed March 9, 2011).

5. Briar Cliff's technology discussion group is called Let's Talk and the notes can be found at bcutalks.wordpress.com/.

6. To see the full list of apps installed on our library iPads, go to bcutalks.wordpress.com/ipad-apps/.

7. "How to create an icon for iOS screens," www.ofzenandcomputing.com/zanswers/3012 (accessed March 9, 2011).

*divs/acrl/about/membership/duesfaqs/FAQ_Proposed_Bylaws_.pdf.*

**Approved the suggested revisions to the** special instructions for appointments for the Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship Committee, Excellence in Academic Libraries (Nominations) Committee, Marketing Academic and Research Libraries Committee, Membership Recruitment Committee, Membership Retention Committee, Membership Promotion Committee, and (Dr. E. J.) Josey Spectrum Scholars Committees to align them with ACRL's policies.

**Based on the effectiveness and success** of the ACRL Leadership and Recruitment and Nominations Committee (LRNC), moved it from pilot status to permanent committee status.

**Approved changing the name of the** Women's Studies Section to the Women & Gender Studies Section, effective January 9, 2011.

**Approved the Annual Conference 2010** Board meeting minutes. ✎

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8. Wolfram Alpha Mobile, m.wolframalpha.com/ and WorldCat Mobile Beta, www.worldcatmobile.org/.

9. "iOS 4.2 Software Update," www.apple.com/ipad/software-update/ (accessed March 9, 2011).

10. The Unofficial Apple Weblog—App Reviews, www.tuaw.com/hub/app-reviews.

11. MacWorld App Guide, www.macworld.com/appguide/index.html.

12. AppShopper, itunes.apple.com/us/app/appshopper/id387037496?mt=8.

13. iTunes RSS Generator, itunes.apple.com/rss/generator/. ✎

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provide the service they require when they require them.

**Notes**

1. Reg Carr, "What users want: An academic 'hybrid' library perspective," *Ariandne* 46 (2006).

2. Satish Nambisan, S. "Designing virtual customer environments for new product development: towards a theory," *The Academy of Management Review* 27 (33, 2002): 392–413.

3. Jean Skyes, "Improving the student experience—How can the library help? *New Review of Information Networking* 13 (1, 2007).

4. Eric R. Blume, "Customer service: giving companies the competitive edge," *Training Development Journal* 42 (9, 1988): 24–27.

5. Judith Broady-Preston and Joanna Felice, "Customer relationships and libraries: University of Malta, A case study," Aslib Proceedings 58 (6, 2006): 525–36.

6. Judith Broady-Preston, Joanna Felice, and Susan Marshall, "Building better customer relationships: Case studies from Malta and the UK," *Library Management* 27 (6/7, 2006): 430–45.

7. Barbara Sen, "Market orientation: A concept for health libraries," *Health Information and Libraries Journal* 23 (1, 2006): 23–31.

8. John Christiansen, "The Official Home of the Fish! Philosophy," www.charthouse.com/productdetail.aspx?nodeid=11037 (June 18, 2010).

9. Elisa F. Topper, "Fish or pickle? Customer services in libraries," *New Library World* 110 (1/2, 2009): 92–94.

10. Chris Lawer, Are you becoming customer-centric? OMC Consulting Ltd. (2004).

11. Chenicheri Sid Nair, Phillip Adams, and Patrice Mertova, "Student engagement: The key to improving survey response rates," *Quality in Higher Education* 14 (3, 2008): 225–32. ✎