During the summer of 2012, the College of St. Scholastica (CSS) implemented a new online teaching certification course. The purpose of this course, called the Teach Online course, was to instruct new and prospective faculty with the policies and procedures of the institution as well as to teach them how to use the learning management system of the college. A committee consisting of the course designers, program directors, the Distance Education Librarian, and instructors teaching the course were brought together to design and create the course.

The committee decided to introduce the course participants to the CSS Library’s resources and services. The Distance Education Librarian collaborated with the designers and instructors to incorporate eTexts and eResources tailored to the learning outcomes of the course. It was also determined that it would be beneficial for faculty and students if an eText from the Library’s collection of ebooks could be used. This would allow for access to all no matter where the students or instructors were located. Most importantly, using an eText from the Library’s collections would not cost anything for the instructors or the students. Follow up research provided interesting and useful guidance on their effectiveness. The information obtained reinforces our intention of using these approaches again in the future.

Upon completion of the development phase, we piloted the Teach Online course with senior online faculty. Adjustments were made based on their initial feedback. Since then, five more cohorts of current and prospective online faculty members have taken place. The participants in the course came from a variety of backgrounds, including education, business and management, and nursing. After the participants completed the requirements of the course they were asked to share their views about eTexts and eResources. Based on feedback from these six cohorts of faculty, 37 out of the 61 people completing the course responded to our survey.

Faculty Experiences and Perspectives with Using an eText in an Online Course

With the concept of using an eText becoming increasingly more prominent in the literature, it was interesting to explore faculty experiences and perspectives on using these resources themselves. All participants were current or future online instructors taking the course as a professional development opportunity. Thus, through completing this required certification course, they were able to evaluate eTexts and eResources as a learner while also considering their benefits from a teacher perspective.

Made Use of the eText

One of the strategies and aims of the Teach Online course was to introduce the instructors to the use of eTexts in their online courses. This idea was embraced by the participants of the course with 33 out of 37 of the respondents using the eText.
Implementing eTexts and eResources: Lessons Learned

Evaluation of the eText’s Ease-of-Use

Of those responding, 62% had favorable responses, 22% were neutral and only 16% found the eText difficult to use. Among the comments from the various participants, they found the most difficult component to be downloading the eText to their various devices. As technology continues to evolve, the CSS Library will continue to look for new ebook collections that will be engaging to the reader as well as easy to use and have the ability to be downloaded to multiple devices.

Availability of eText

Some of the more negative responses to the previous question about ease-of-use may be due to the fact that we had five concurrent licenses, and some people noted that they found all copies in use at certain times. Those finding eTexts readily available were in the majority with 28% agreeing that they had few difficulties accessing the eText. Seven people were neutral, but two were unable to access the eText. This alerts us that more copies of the eText may be needed or that we will need to find a subscription that will allow for concurrent users. Changing ebook vendors may result in us having to identify a new eText in future cohorts.
Implementing eTexts and eResources: Lessons Learned

Faculty Interest in Implementing eTexts in their Online Courses

Of the 37 respondents, 34 or 92% would consider using an assigned eText in an online course that they teach. However, in the comments area, several faculty noted that they would like to provide students with an option to also purchase a paper-based version of the same book.

Faculty Experiences and Perspectives with Using eResources in an Online Course

In exploring the value of electronic resources available through the College’s Library, we asked participants to provide information on those resources they used most frequently and also those they found most useful.

Most Used Resources

Of all the resources provided, our survey results indicate that several of them were highly used. The top most-used elements in order of popularity included the LibGuide, eText, Guest Lecture by Distance Librarian, and linked Articles within e-Journals. Our findings indicate that both overall resources provided through the LibGuide as well as the more specific approach of providing an eText, a Guest Lecture by the Distance Librarian, and Linked Articles within e-Journals were among the mostly highly used and valued eResources provided by the Library.
Implementing eTexts and eResources: Lessons Learned

Figure 5. This chart shares the number of different eResources used by the participants of the Teach Online course.

Most Useful or Highly Valued Resources

Although they were in a slightly different order, the most frequently used resources were also the most highly valued. The LibGuide, Guest Lecture, and the eText were the most highly rated of all the eResources provided in this course.

Figure 6. Based on responses from the participants of the course, the top three most useful resources were the LibGuide created for the course, the Guest Lecture by the Distance Librarian, and the eText.

Lessons Learned & Conclusion

The faculty who participated in this faculty development course were very happy with the development of this course. Many did not realize the wealth and depth of the resources and services that are available to them and their students. It is with this knowledge that we look to the future to begin

Among the lessons learned, the vast majority of the faculty were very excited and willing to consider incorporating eTexts in their online courses with the caveat that copies of the physical book be made
available for students either through putting copies on Reserve in the Library or by requiring the students to purchase their own copy.

We also learned that some faculty were worried about the number of eTexts available through the Library. Most instructors would want multiple copies of the eTexts to ensure that student could access the text at the student’s point-of-need. To resolve this issue, the CSS Library will begin to locate ebooks within collections where we can have unlimited users at all times.

One instructor did ask if all textbooks would be available within the ebook collections of the Library or in other collections. The answer is unknown at the moment. The Library will need to work with instructors on an individual basis to identify whether their desired text would be available. The library will also need to identify whether the text will be available for use in collections that allowed unlimited, simultaneous use, or if they would only be available for purchase individually. This is based on the sole discretion of the publisher but it is hoped that many will begin to loosen their limitations in the future.

Finally, the faculty were found the top benefits for using an eText from the Library were the convenience of using the Library and its collections; the cost advantages for students and the faculty, especially with looming higher education costs and strapped student and departmental budgets; and the flexibility of the digital format allowing for 24/7 access anytime, anywhere, on almost any device.