Going beyond a library tour:
Leading one-shots using iPads and QR Codes

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According to the 2011 ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology report, "institutions and instructors do not fully harness [technologies] to create opportunities for more varied, inspiring, and beyond-the-classroom learning experiences." The challenge for libraries is how to use technologies to excite and provide experiential learning for students so that they can improve their information literacy skills.

Using iPads in conjunction with QR codes, a structured fifty-minute session was developed to engage students with information. In groups of 3-5, students completed the activity together. Each group was given the same activity but with different topics and sources to examine. At the end, we all came back together to talk about what they found, if they had any further questions, and to show them some last minute things, as well as assess learning.

The activity begins with a preface in order to give the students context. The preface states that the students have an assignment due in two weeks and s/he needs to find two scholarly/peer-reviewed articles. The body of the activity includes three major parts: each with a scenario, a QR code to scan, and questions to answer. In part one of the activity, I take the students out to the print periodicals because their scenario states that they have searched Google and found an article but it is not available in full-text; it is, however, available in print. The students scan the QR code to get the bibliographic information for the article and head out to find it in the stacks.

As a group, they flip through the pages and answer evaluation questions. In part two, the students are told that the first article is not scholarly/peer-reviewed. S/he has a friend who suggested using WorldCat Local because there is the option to limit it to just those types of articles. S/he searches WorldCat Local and is able to find an article. The problem, again, is that it is not available electronically but is available in print. The second QR code is scanned, the group finds the journal, and answers the same questions as before. The last part indicates that the student needs two articles for the assignment. Now s/he has the opportunity to search for an article. Scanning the QR code, the student is taken to our WorldCat Local advanced search page.

There were many challenges and advantages with this format but it allowed the students to get out of the classroom and to explore the library in teams to find the differences between scholarly and popular articles, primary v. secondary sources, and to use WorldCat Local to find their own articles.