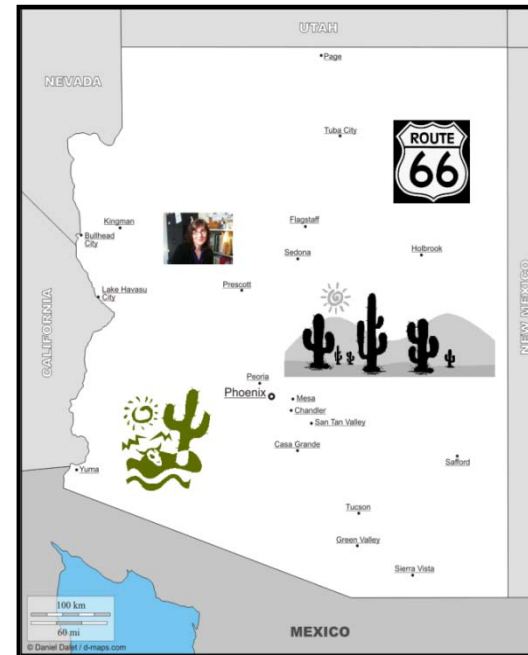


The Distance Librarian: Figuring Out the Virtual, Co-Taught, One-Shot ... in a Pinch, from Afar

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In many cases, remote library instruction is offered to geographically dispersed, or distance, students by a librarian who is on-site in the library or elsewhere on campus. But what happens when the librarian is off-site and the students are in the library? A telecommuting collection-development librarian—a state away—and a campus-based instruction librarian endeavored to find out.

Working with a willing professor and technology on hand, a 21st-century instruction session—focused on location and retrieval of primary sources—was created, using a combination of free and fee-based applications and equipment. Users' information learning needs were met, the existing level of service was maintained and, in the process, the institution's instruction horizons were expanded.

Why We Did It

UC Santa Cruz librarian with 5 subject assignments and instruction responsibilities relocated to Tucson mid-year and stayed on as a telecommuting librarian

No instructional back-up for remote librarian and no decrease in instruction requests

UCSC has no formal distance-education infrastructure

University Library instruction rooms currently only set up for in-person instruction

Although dual screens and projectors were once features of one of the instruction rooms, this is no longer the case...and viewing angles were never optimal for viewing different content on each screen (instructional desktop on one, librarian on other)

No telephone—never mind teleconferencing capability—in instruction rooms

✓ Therefore, used Library Administration's conference room for small classes of approximately ten History students

Equipment & Applications Used

Polycom conference telephone—for voice-to-voice contact

Data projector—to display shared teaching desktop

2 laptop computers—one for use as the shared teaching desktop; other for visuals of librarians, instructor, and students in each location

ReadyTalk Audio & Web Conferencing—for desktop sharing and control functionality

Google video chat—for video image of remote librarian

Steps for Set-Up



Conference room with teleconferencing equipment, but little else

Steps for Set-Up



No computers, no projectors, no screens

Steps for Set-Up



Teleconferencing microphones allow everyone in room to be heard

Steps for Set-Up



Polycom teleconferencing microphone

Steps for Set-Up



First, a data projector

Steps for Set-Up

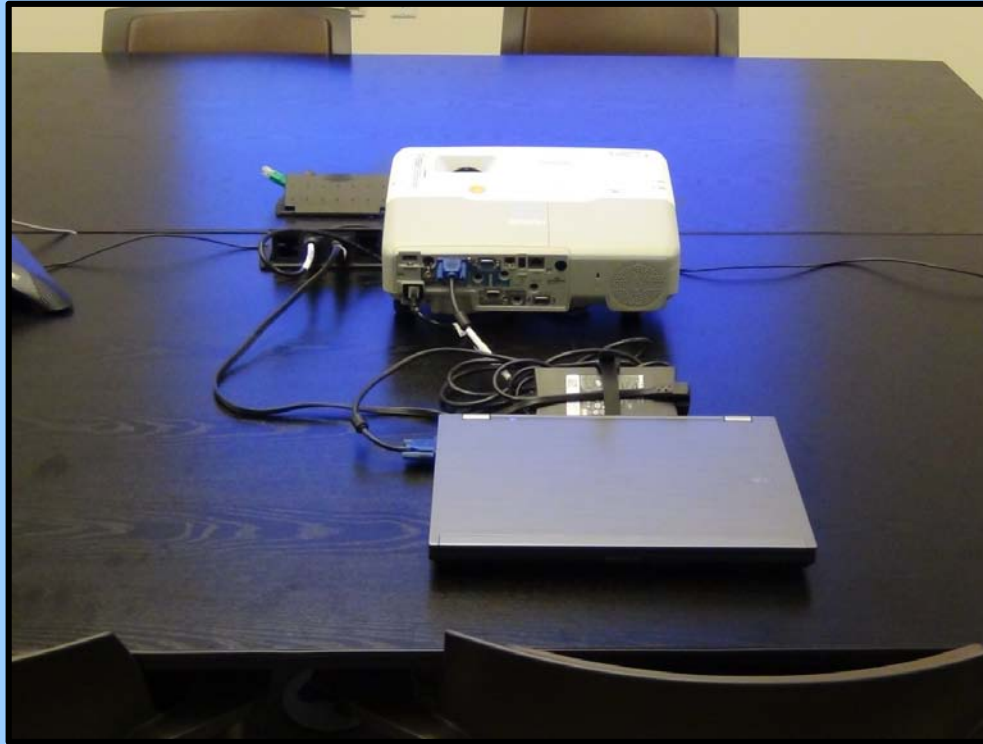


Steps for Set-Up



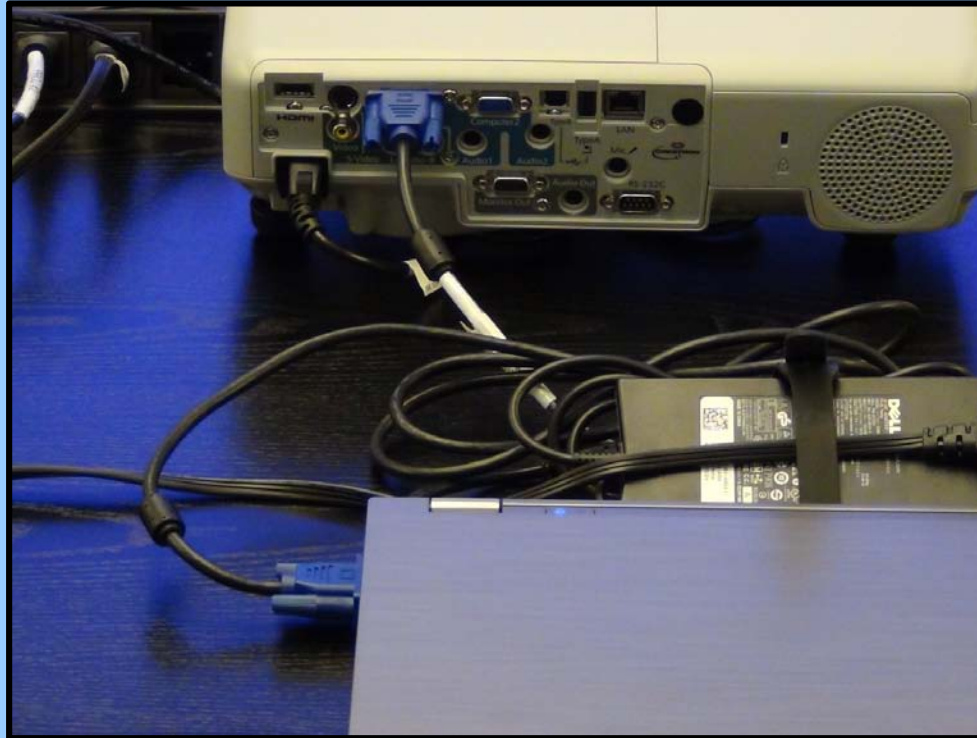
Connect and activate projector, ensuring screen image is level and visible to entire room

Steps for Set-Up



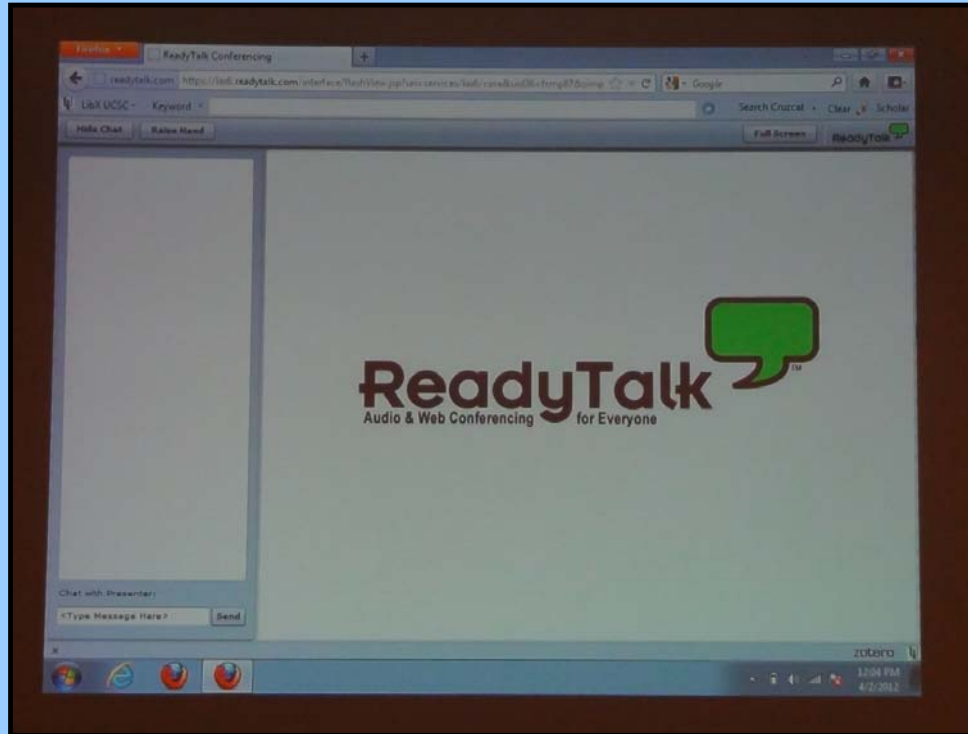
Next, connect the first laptop

Steps for Set-Up



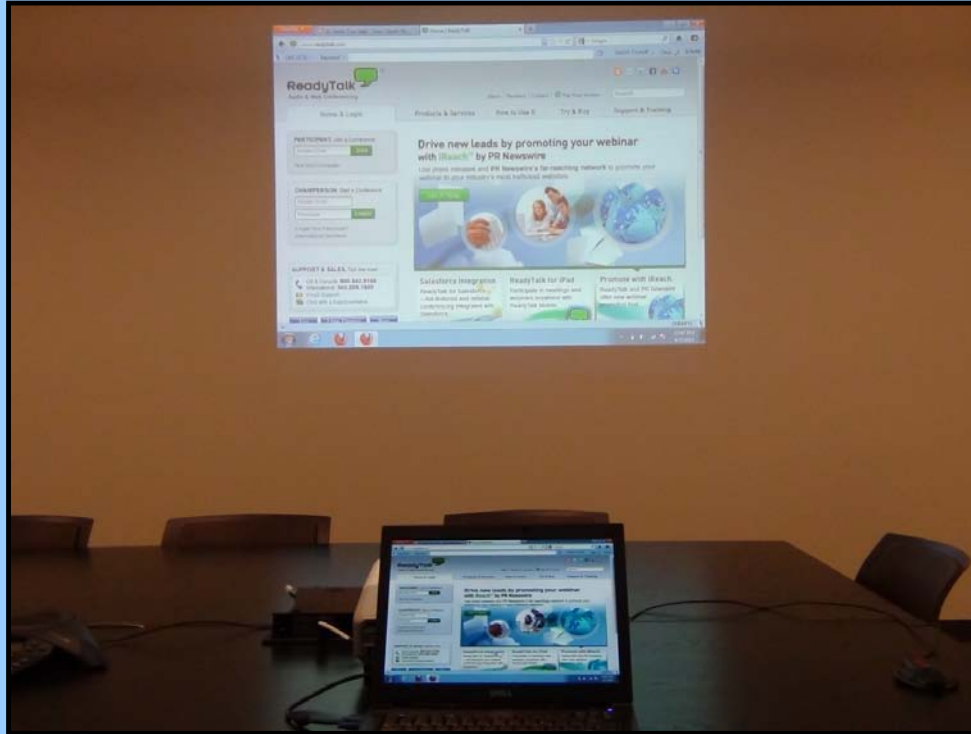
Laptop connected to
projector's computer input

Steps for Set-Up



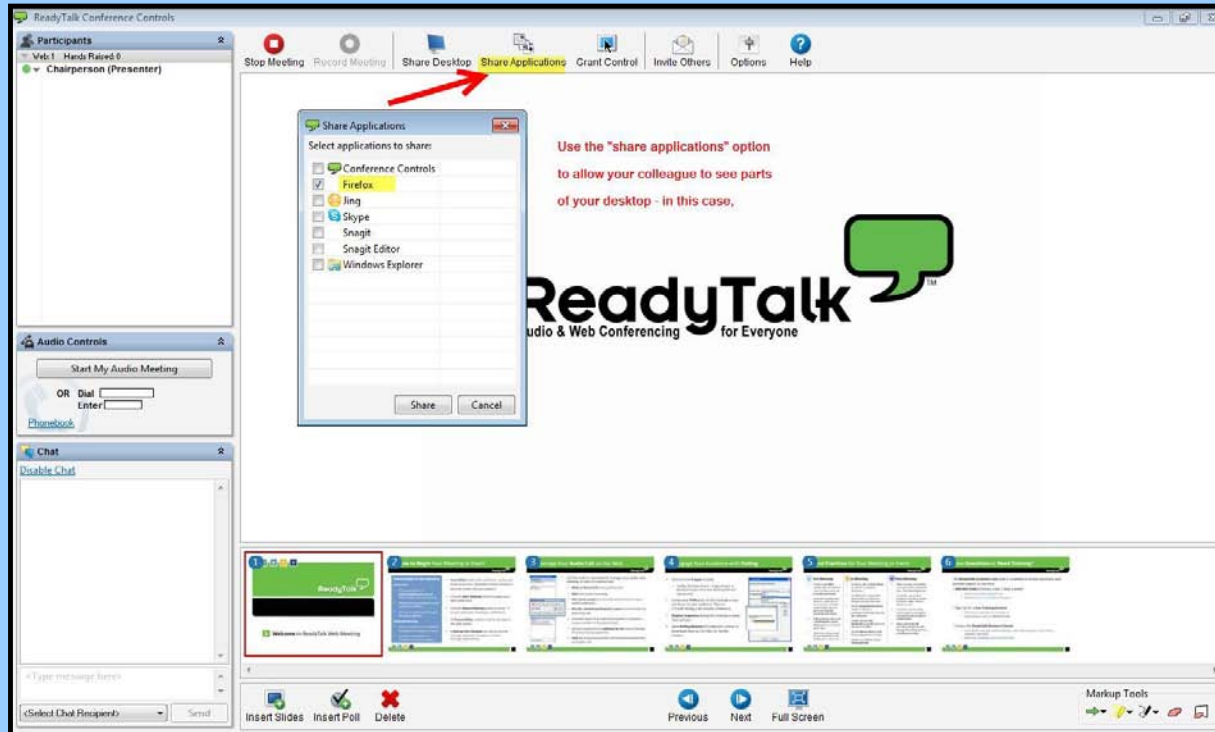
Open ReadyTalk site on laptop connected to data projector—this one will display shared desktop

Steps for Set-Up



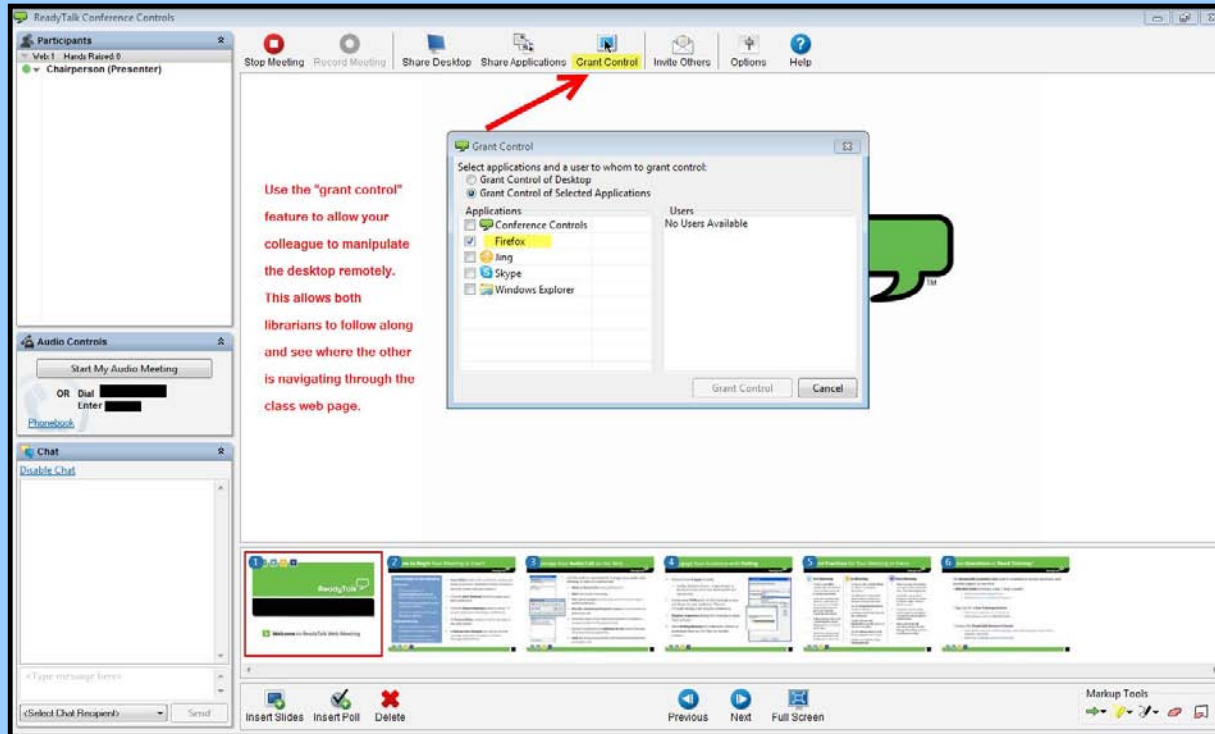
...and be certain browser image displays via projector

Steps for Set-Up



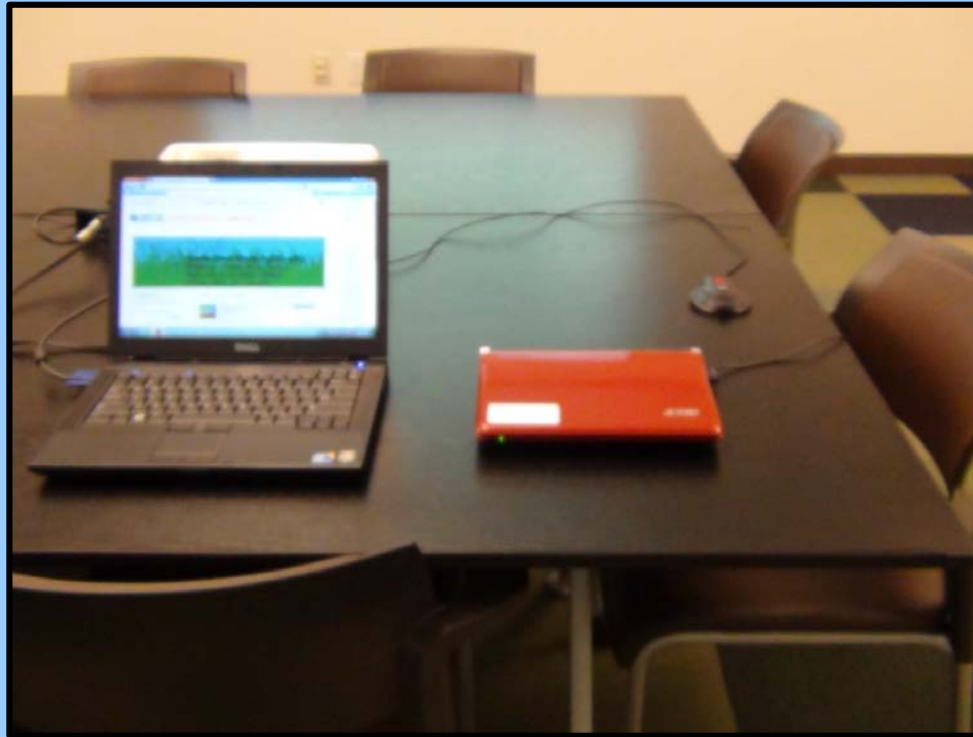
Librarian acting as chairperson/presenter of the ReadyTalk conference shares Web browser with other librarian

Steps for Set-Up



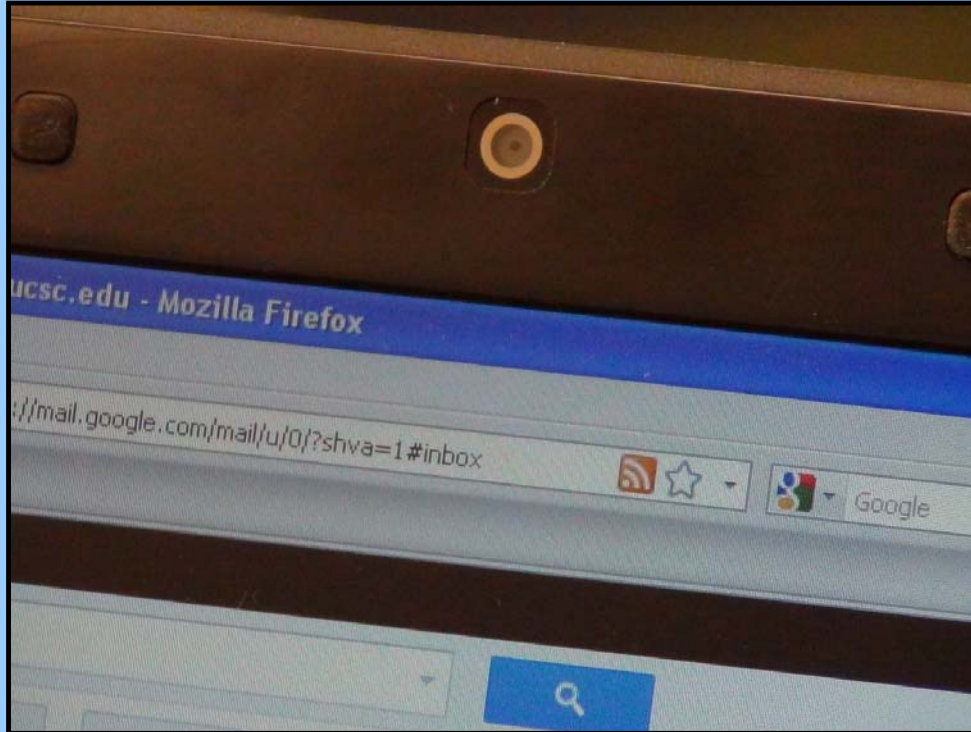
...then grants control of desktop to colleague, allowing both librarians to simultaneously manipulate desktop and see each other's navigation

Steps for Set-Up



Laptop number 2 : Allows remote librarian to see on-site students, instructor, and librarian

Steps for Set-Up



...with the aid of its built-in camera

Steps for Set-Up



Position laptop no. 2 camera for view of room

Steps for Set-Up



Use Google video chat to both allow remote librarian to view classroom, and class to view remote librarian

Steps for Set-Up



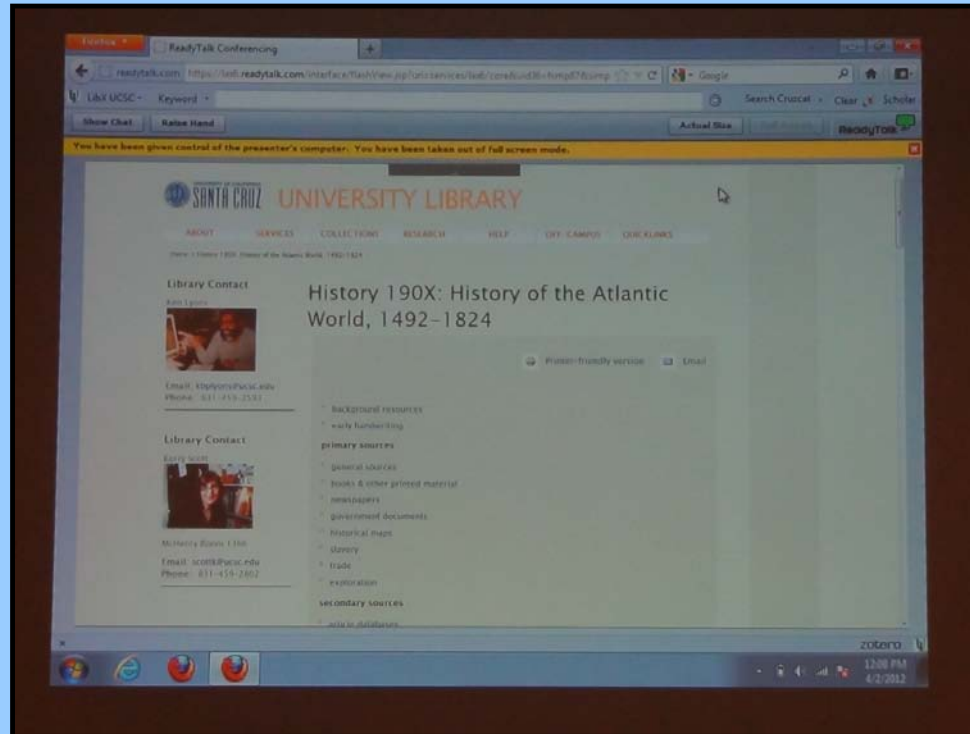
Now use teleconferencing equipment...

Steps for Set-Up



...to establish voice contact between remote librarian and those on-site

Steps for Set-Up



With desktop shared and voice contact established, both remote and local librarian are ready to co-teach class from disparate locales

Tips on Preparation

Allow *ample* time to set up and test all equipment and connections, and perform a dry run before actual class session

Both on-site and remote librarians should have two computers each—one for shared teaching desktop, the other camera-equipped and devoted to video, enabling remote librarian to see on-site students, and they, her

Be certain number of students is small enough to be heard and seen by remote librarian (or work with campus Media Services to get better audio support)

What We Continue to Discover

Being able to use a room with two screens and projectors—or **Steelcase media:scape** dual monitors—would allow teaching desktop on one, remote instructor on the other

Although Google video chat will allow remote librarian to be seen and heard by students, teleconferencing equipment affords better-quality, two-way audio

For larger classes, teleconferencing equipment will probably not be sufficient as questions cannot be heard across a large room—engage campus Media Services for possible solutions, such as a microphone the on-site librarian can circulate to students with questions

Likewise, large classroom will require loudspeakers to enable students and faculty to hear remote librarian (easy to do in fully-equipped classroom)

Student & Faculty Reaction

Students

“The remote library session was not much different from having an in-person-only library instructor.”

Did you learn what was needed for the class as well as in a completely on-site class?

“Yes.”

Would you be willing to work with a remote librarian again?

“Yes, definitely.”

Faculty

“I think it was very helpful.”

“It was easy to see how you were navigating the websites on screen.”

“I think [the students] found it useful.”

“Thank you for a lovely and useful presentation!”

“I was there [for one of the remote sessions], and I thought it worked pretty well. I’d like to go ahead and do it [for my own class].”

Outcomes

Synchronous teaching on-the-fly affords the instruction librarian—without the luxury of a formal distance-education curriculum, IT support, or extensive media facilities—the means to maintain or even broaden subject-specific, upper-level, research instruction offerings.

Although distance instruction aims to provide geographically disparate students with the same learning experience, allowance must be made for students' in-home technical issues and distractions. Remote co-teaching reverses and complements this process, providing students subject expertise from afar in a consistent, controlled learning environment.

As the librarian complement continues to contract, yet the demand for upper-level library instruction expands, subject expertise must be shared across multi-campus university systems. Remote co-teaching facilitates librarians collaborating on subject-specific instruction across campuses, and even between institutions. This has implications for the University of California's Next Generation Initiatives—and any other institution's consolidation plans—for all library services and functions.