Running an Online ER Program Using Google Docs

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This workshop introduced an efficient online book report system for teachers to set up and manage Extensive Reading Programs using Google Docs. Attendees can move through the simple setup procedure and create their own online ER management system. The online ER system is a valuable tool for teachers to administer student online book report forms and to monitor learners' progress.

Introduction of the Tools

All the tools used are free and cloud-based, so they only require a computer connected to the Internet. Current users of Gmail can simply click on the *Documents* link in their Gmail window. There are a number of alternatives to the tools listed, but the authors feel that the Google suite offers the most integrated package, and is therefore preferred here.

Google Forms / Spreadsheet:

Google Forms is a graphical interface to Google Spreadsheet which allows users to gather spreadsheet data through simple web pages. The data can then be easily manipulated with basic spreadsheet commands similar to those used in Microsoft Excel.

Google Sites:

Google Sites is a basic website hosting facility. Sites can be useful for users who want to make the results of their ER program available on a read-only basis to the public, their students, or other teachers.

Brief Demonstration of the ER Management System

Figure 1 shows a sample form created with the template used in this tutorial. Video tutorials demonstrating the system can be accessed online at https://sites.google.com/site/docsforesl/tutorials

Figure 1. Example of a basic ER online book report form created with Google Docs.

Customised Setup

Each participant used the templates to create and personalise his/her own ER management system. The entire system is cloud-based and attendees left the workshop with a ready-to-use ER program.

Note: You need to have a Gmail account that you are happy to use with the students in your ER program. You might wish to make a new one to share with the other teachers at your school.

1. Go to the Google Docs for ESL Homepage: https://sites.google.com/site/docsforesl/

2. Click on the first link - *Extensive Reading (ER) Program Management*.

3. Click on *Use This Template* for the ER Online Book Report.

4. Click on *Theme: Tiny Pink Flowers* and choose the theme that you would like to use. *Apply*.

5. Hover over: *What is your Department?* Click on the pencil icon to *Edit*. Customize the question according to your school's needs: Department Name, Class Number etc.

6. Repeat for: Who is your English teacher for this class?

7. Close the window and go to your Gmail account and click on *Documents*. Here you will see a document called Copy of Extensive Reading with Graded Readers. Right click on it and rename it as you like, e.g. Book Report Form - 2012 Spring Semester.

8. Open the Doc. It will open up as a spreadsheet (of course, there are no responses in it yet). Change the default security setting. Click on the padlock at the top of the page to change the sharing options. Next to *Private to only me*, click "*Change*" and select *Anyone with the link*. This will allow your colleagues to access the full form.

9. Click on: *Form*, then, *Go to live form*. This is what your form will look like to students.

10. Send the link to your students! You can either mail them or post a weblink. To mail your students, clicking on *Form*, then *Send Form* and then enter their mail addresses. To copy the URL of the form go to a URL Shortener site, e.g. http://goo.gl/ or http://tinyurl.com/ and use these free services to shorten your form's URL. You can use the shorter link to send students or print on posters and flyers, or, post the link into your Web Page, blog, wiki etc.

Note: You should not edit a form after you have started taking responses from students—otherwise, it will give you untidy data. To edit the form, click on *Form*, then *Edit Form* if there is anything else you want to change.

Additional Features and Information

You can track the progress of your students by clicking on *Form*, then, *Show Summary of Responses.* Other alternatives for handling the data can be found in our tutorials at https://sites.google.com/site/docsforesl/tutorials

Reference

More information on a variety of other uses for Google Docs in university language programs can be found in our previous paper:

Firth, M., & Mesureur, G. (2010) Innovative uses for Google Docs in a university language program. *JALT CALL Journal, 6*(1).