### Challenges

- Needed a Web environment for information literacy instruction. 50% of the student population is off campus, without access to a physical Lesley library.

- Needed a quick and effective student login process to enable student practice searching in a “live” EBSCO database tutorial.

- Create a tutorial that is interactive, easy, specific, and interesting, to promote successful student research.

### Solutions

- Created Searchpath tutorial to help Lesley student population in diverse environments learn about and access library resources without the need for authentication.

- Lesley software solution: open-source Searchpath tutorial from Western Michigan University; with PHP and Flash.

- EBSCO Publishing developed a password system consisting of the first five digits of a student’s identification card to enable “live” database searching within the tutorial.

### Benefits

- Lesley students across the country learn to access, evaluate, and use information for their research.

- New students have ease of access to practice database searching in EBSCO.

- Lesley University Library on interaction with students - “We are their resource. The more smoothly things operate for staff and students, with less library intervention, the better it is for us.”

- View Searchpath at [http://www.lesley.edu/library/searchpath](http://www.lesley.edu/library/searchpath)
Overview

To accommodate the library needs of a substantial distant learning student population that represents 50 percent of its enrollment, Lesley University Libraries developed Searchpath, an online tutorial environment where students can learn information literacy concepts, practice database searching, and access research services by remote library access. Essential for the solution’s effectiveness is the tutorial’s password login process created by EBSCO Publishing, which allows users to search databases from within the tutorial modules. Searchpath debuted in 2004 and has enabled more than 800 Lesley students nationwide to build a strong foundation in library research, in both undergraduate and graduate fields of study.

Challenge

Lesley University, located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is unique in terms of its academic programs and student needs. Fifty percent of the student population, graduate and undergraduate, learns off campus at remote sites through distance education, including independent study and/or online learning across 23 U.S. states, and around the globe. These students have no physical access to a Lesley library building, yet require the same access to specialized subject research services as their on-campus peers. “We are their resource,” states Constance Vrattos, the Libraries’ associate director. “We need to create the best Web environment for student research with Lesley’s online library resources.”

Creating the environment posed two challenges. First, the tutorial vehicle for teaching students how to use the Libraries’ online resources would have to be effective and interesting enough to hold the user’s attention; in short, it had to be fun. Second, the solution would also require easy access for on-campus and distance students alike. Web access to library e-resources via referring URL at the actual library building would need modification to accommodate off-campus use. For that, Vrattos and Holmes turned to EBSCO Publishing’s Customer Support Team for advice and assistance.

Solution

An analysis of the challenges during the 2003-2004 academic year yielded Searchpath, an interactive and comprehensive series of engaging, online tutorial modules that create an environment within which students can learn information literacy concepts and practice database searching within Lesley’s library system. (See Figure 1.) The tutorial was funded by an information literacy grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC), and models open source software developed by Western Michigan University, also called Searchpath, and the University of Texas TILT Tutorial.

Lesley revised the content and design of their own modules with PHP open-source web page programming and original illustrations to better match the needs of its graduate degree students in education and human services.

With Searchpath, students learn to access, evaluate and use information appropriate for their research. A central feature is the opportunity to practice searching in a live EBSCO database, with all accessible features. The tutorial features six self-paced instruction modules covering academic information sources, narrowing a topic, choosing keywords for searching, finding articles and assessing online
materials. Other modules review searching the Web and avoiding plagiarism. Each module includes text and interactive activities, followed by a brief quiz. The quiz results may be e-mailed to the instructor for accountability.

Figure 1: http://mail.lesley.edu:81/searchpath/

The fourth module, Finding Articles, features EBSCO’s Academic Search Premier database, with coaching to help students perform a keyword search, view full-text articles, and assess the results. The EBSCO Publishing Customer Support Team developed a Searchpath password login for Lesley, consisting of the first five digits of a student’s identification card. (See Figure 2.) This gives students quick and effective entrance into the live version of Academic Search Premier within the tutorial, bypassing the library’s referring URL link to EBSCO’s electronic databases, which might otherwise restrict or prevent access. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 2: http://mail.lesley.edu:81/searchpath/mod4/11-database.php
The EBSCO password solution does not check an Internet protocol, or the previous web page a user visits before attempting a login. Instead, it incorporates login rules into a separate URL, forcing users to enter the site by means of the five-digit code only. “EBSCO Publishing is the first vendor we think of for online partnerships,” concludes Vrattos. “Customer Satisfaction is always more than ready to help us find creative and effective solutions for our staff and students. The more smoothly things operate for them, with less library intervention, the better it is for us,” concludes Vrattos.

Since the program’s debut in September of 2004, over 800 students have completed the Lesley Searchpath tutorial and built a quality foundation for their library research. Students based in Alaska, California, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, and Washington state have completed the tutorial as part of their Masters in Education program with Lesley. Reaching out to its constituents with technology solutions, the Lesley University Libraries have successfully extended online resources and a thorough, well-conceived vehicle of resource instruction to a national audience.