Submitted on: 01.09.2016

Religious education projects with collaborative teaching and technology tools

Sau Ching Helen, Cheung
Librarian, HKSKH Ming Hua Theological College, Hong Kong, China
E-mail address: helen@minghua.org.hk

Copyright © 2016 by **Cheung Sau Ching Helen**. This work is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0

Abstract:

Technology is the tool that can help theological colleges in many areas such as providing education platforms, making connection with the community and reaching existing students and even potential lay people. However technology cannot replace the strength of collaboration of people and community. In this paper, two projects of HKSKH Ming Hua Theological College Lai Wong Yan Lin Library (MH Library) will be highlighted. One project provides religious courses to people around the world; the other project is for local secondary schools students using the theme of "Life Education with positive thinking" to help their personal growth and digital literacy skills. These projects show how a theological library team acts as an academic link for a theological college to spread knowledge and creates inter-religious possibilities beyond the physical limitation of the College buildings. The MH library team uses collaborative teaching (religious and Life Education courses by teachers; digital literacy skills by librarians), and develops IT tools (especially the MH Global Classroom System and online IT tools) as learning and communication platforms for teachers, students, public and outside organizations with different religious and non-religious backgrounds.

Keywords: Religious, Life Education, technology, collaborative teaching, digital literacy

1. Introduction

1.1 About Ming Hua College

Hong Kong SKH Ming Hua Theological College (MH College) is in the Province of Hong Kong and Macau in the Anglican Communion. MH College aims to fulfill missions by providing theological education opportunities to members of the Anglican Communion, to people with an interest in various religious faiths around the world and also to people with no religious beliefs. The college also provides lay training programs and Bachelor and Master Degrees of Divinity. Also, it aims to educate men and women to serve as ordained and lay leaders of the Church, and to participate in dialogue, conversation and education programs with Anglicans and non-Anglicans around the world, as well as endeavouring to strengthen ties with all our Christian neighbors such as those in Asia (MH, 2016).

To achieve these goals, Ming Hua College has continued to develop its courses, resources, IT tools and cooperation projects. Like other libraries, MH library acts as a resource center and academic link for the College. The library team includes the librarian, library assistants and a computer officer. The MH library team helps with the development of the College and connections to other institutions for educational activities. Among these, "Global Classroom system" and "Life Education in positive thinking" our outreach programs have been developed. The MH senior management team includes the principal, vice principal, academic program director and librarian, all of whom support these projects.

1.2 The Ming Hua Global Classroom system (appendix 1)

In 2014, the MH Global Classroom system took 9 months to plan, select IT tools, equipment, develop its database and website as well as to carry out usability testing. The Global Classroom system and website was launched in March 2015. This online classroom system is used to provide religious based courses for people around the world. For example the professor for the course "Who wrote The New Testament" resides in the United States. He has used the system to give live lectures to students anywhere in the world (e.g in Hong Kong, South Africa & United States). At the same time, teachers and students can have live discussion and interaction with each other and also, people who cannot attend live courses can use video revision. With the help of this Global Classroom, scholars and students have more flexibility with their teaching and learning. The Global Classroom was launched in March 2015 and up to April 2016, over 4,600 people from 89 countries have received religious based lessons without the limitation of regional and physical limitations. This Global Classroom has also helped students to develop their views on globalization and their understanding of the needs of people from other countries.

1.3 "Life Education in positive thinking" project

"Life Education in positive thinking" is a library outreach project. Since Oct 2015, Ming Hua Theological College Library has implemented a collaborative project with four secondary schools in Hong Kong. Like youth students around the world, Hong Kong students face great pressure on study, personal growth and expectations from family. For example, only around 18-20% of Hong Kong secondary school students can enter universities in Hong Kong (GovHK, 2015), as the competition for places is very high and this causes bad effects such as suicides and young people losing their confidence. We are eager to help students in Life Education. Therefore, this Ming Hua project has two main parts: the first part is to help students to develop learning skills to lessen their pressure in study. This relates to project based learning which is a compulsory subject in Hong Kong secondary schools. As project based learning requires multiple skills (Kuhlthau & Maniotes, 2010), Ming Hua Library uses collaborative teaching with various subject teachers, including those teaching religious studies, liberal studies, language subjects & teacher librarians, with a view to helping students in subject knowledge, digital literacy and writing skills. Also, online IT tools have been selected or developed (appendix 2). These include Pbworks which is an online platform for students' collaborative writing and learning. Also use of the citation machine tool and plagiarism checker tool is taught to students and teachers. In addition, participating students can use the digital library and the Global Classroom system of Ming Hua.

In the second part of the project, different professionals such as the principal of Ming Hua College, counselors and some well-known people have been invited to present talks for students regarding the topic of "Life Education in positive thinking". Different activities such as sharing sessions, drama and visits to Ming Hua College are included in order to develop students' positive thinking and attitude towards life.

Ming Hua College aims to use this project to broaden the vision of young people and to provide a larger arena for students to view their lives by providing different types of interaction. No matter if the secondary schools have a religious or non-religious background they are all welcome to join this project. Also, secondary schools are given the option to join both parts or just one part of the project. Currently over 2,500 students (two schools from the Anglican Community and two schools from other institutions) have received workshops or talks via this project.

1.4 Inter-religious dialogue and Life Education

Inter-religious dialogue or Interfaith refers to people of different religions or different groups coming together to share and discuss their beliefs showing respect and tolerance of each other's views in religion, to cooperate with positive interaction, and to provide members of other religions with the same opportunity (Questions on islam, 2009; CoisTine, 2016). As Ming Hua is an education institution, MH projects focus on education programs and courses for inter-religious possibilities. The

MH global classrooms are focused on adults. The courses in the Global Classroom cover various topics that can help with inter-religious dialogue such as “the Future of Religion”. Also, speakers and students are from all over the world that can open discussions.

Courses are given on Life Education can be very broad based, covering social and life skills, civil education, moral education, health education, environmental education and career education (HKEDB, 2016). And as mentioned in the above, the weaknesses of the youth of Hong Kong are also addressed in the MH project, which is focused on helping them to develop positive thinking.

1.5 Collaboration, IT tools and digital literacy skills

As shown in figure 1, collaborative teaching, IT tools (e.g.Global Classroom system & Pbworks) and digital literacy skills are key features of these two projects.

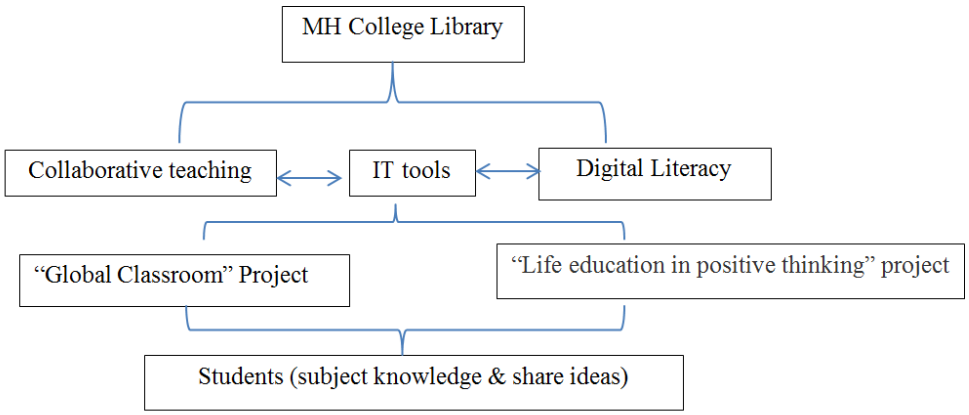


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of MH projects

2. Literature Review

2.1 Collaborative teaching

Collaborative teaching means two or over two teachers have used his/her own expertise and work together for teaching (Kuhlthau, 2010). A number of research projects have shown that collaborative teaching can benefit the learning of students such as by providing more comprehensive teaching materials to students (Bakken, Clark, Thompson, & Thompson, 1998) and by giving more support to students and assisting students to complete assignments in higher quality (Chu, 2009; Kuhlthau, 2010).

The two projects described in this paper concern the Ming Hua Library Team providing library workshops to train students’ digital literacy skills while Ming Hua faculty members and secondary school teachers teach their own subject courses. In addition, invited speakers who share their expertise knowledge and skills in religious or Life Education topics are involved in these two projects. We use our own expertise and work together for teaching, designing and evaluating the programs.

2.2 Information Technology tools

When considering the digital literacy skills of members in theological colleges and churches, the usability of IT tools is the main issue of concern. Ming Hua Library has used five usability attributes from Nielsen (1993, 2012) to develop its digital library in the past. Again, these five attributes have been used as guidelines to develop IT tools for these two projects.

i) Learnability: Users need to be able to easily learn how the system works so that they can speedily start to use the system to carry out their required tasks.

ii) Efficiency: Once a user has learned how to work the system, the system should be efficient, thereby providing the user with the opportunity to be as highly productive as possible.

iii) Memorability: A casual user should be able to use the system when returning to it after a period of some time, without experiencing problems and without having to relearn the system in depth.

iv) Errors: The error rate of the system should be low and it should not be possible for there to be any major errors. If there are any errors then they must be easily recoverable.

v) Satisfaction: Users should feel that they like using the system and that it is pleasant and easy to use.

2.3 Digital literacy

To help users find and evaluate information, use the IT tools for their communication, study and learning in religious and Life Education projects, MH library has provided a range of library workshops to equip users' digital literacy. Also, if students have digital literacy, this may help them to have different viewpoints and more understanding of different faiths, cultures and promote inter-religious dialogue.

What is digital literacy? Some authors (Anderson, 2007; Covello, 2010; Matusiak, 2010) regard digital literacy as an umbrella term, with subdisciplines in information and computer literacy and the emergence of technologies such as Web 2.0. Covello (2010), drawing on the work of Calvani, Cartelli, Fini, and Ranieri (2008), observed that "digital literacy has been defined as an umbrella framework for a number of complex and integrated sub-disciplines or literacies comprised of skill, knowledge, ethics and creative outputs in the digital network environment" (p. 3).

There is no unique or "hard" definition of digital literacy, nor is there agreement on whether it is a subtype of information literacy or a separate concept. Having considered the proposed definitions in previous research, for the purposes of these projects, Ming Hua Library regards digital literacy as the ability to locate, evaluate, use information effectively and ethically as well as the ability to use computer software and IT applications in a digital environment.

2.3.1 Development of digital literacy for users of the Ming Hua Global Classroom

As a number of MH students are studying part-time, the Library has to provide efficient courses in an efficient time period. Therefore, MH library invites students to do an information literacy quiz and perceptual survey of the MH digital library and resources, which is option based. These instruments are adopted from Chu (2005) and Cheung, et al., (2011) which are for university students. Based on the results of these tests, some hints are provided to the library team who can then adjust the content of the library workshop for students. Also, the MH library team can provide workshops more accurately based on the needs of students. In most cases, students attend the Global Classroom course mainly to learn how to use the system and use the MH digital library. Therefore the library workshops for them focus on using the Global Classroom system, the MH library discovery tool (library catalogue), use of online databases, bibliographic tools as well as searching strategy.

As the Global Classroom is both new to teachers and students, before launching the system, the MH library team provides training to teachers and students. Participants can either take a workshop face to face or live via the Global Classroom. Also, training videos about how to use system, MH digital library, online databases, bibliographic tools are available on the MH library website are available so users can learn in anytime and anyplace.

In addition, different users like faculty members, students and elderly users have been invited to try to use the Global classroom in order to get feedback by discussion and observation of users to find out the usability of the system.

2.3.2 Development of digital literacy for "Life Education with positive thinking" project

To find out the digital literacy skills of secondary school students, tests and exercises related to information literacy have been adopted from TRAILS by Kent State University Libraries (2015) and Chu, et al., (2012). Students have to do the pre and post quiz and exercises during the project. Also, ANOVA will be used to analyze the changes (significant differences) in levels of digital literacy skills of students. In addition, a questionnaire will be sent to students, at the end of the project, for their views about how the project has helped them to develop digital literacy.

Usually, project based learning requires students to submit a research report. This being the case, MH Library has adopted the framework of process writing from Flower & Hayes (1981 & 1983) and project based learning from Harada & Yoshina (2004) to provide workshops/training during their writing process of the report.

Based on the pre results of digital literacy of students, the framework as above and discussions with teachers of the secondary schools, the MH library team have tailor-made and outreached to these secondary schools to provide library workshops for the students including identifying and evaluating different material sources, effective searching skills, use of Wiki (Pbworks) as a collaborative writing platform, what plagiarism is, what summarizing, paraphrasing and synthesizing are and the use of online tools such as citation generator tools and plagiarism checkers etc. Also, demonstration videos on how to use the major IT tools in this project are provided to teachers and students.

In addition, at the end of the project, interviews with teachers and the student focus group and surveys will be used to get feedback about the usefulness of this project, the collaborative teaching and the IT tools.

3. Research questions and methodology

The research aims to discover the outcome of these three main features of the projects. Mixed methods is also used and this can be seen in the following research questions as below:

- Collaborative teaching
- IT tools (Global classroom system & Pbworks)
- library workshops (digital literacy)

Questions	MH Global Classroom Instruments for collection of data	"Life Education" with secondary schools Instruments for collection of data
3.1 How useful is collaborative teaching in the projects for helping students and teachers?	Feedback from teachers and students from workshops	-Questionnaire -Interviews with teachers and target group of students
3.2 How useful are the IT tools for the projects?	-Feedback from teachers, students and MH IT staff -Observation when users use the Global Classroom system	-Questionnaire -Interview with teachers and target group of students, -Observation when users use the IT tools
3.3 How useful are the library workshops (digital literacy) in helping students?	-pre quiz & perceptual questionnaire -feedback from workshops	-Pre and post quiz -Exercises after workshops - Post questionnaire

4. Findings

Questions	MH Global Classroom	"Life Education" with secondary schools
4.1 How useful is collaborative teaching in the projects for helping students and teachers?	-Collaborative teaching is helpful for teachers and students. -Teachers can focus on teaching subject courses. They are relieved from having to take on extra burdens of work in order to teach students how to use IT tools like the Global Classroom system and searching information skills. -Collaborative teaching is not limited to faculty members & librarian, it also includes faculty members therefore helps students to develop wider views on topics by collaborative teaching from two or more faculty members.	Anticipated outcome in the end of the project (July 2016): -As subject teachers such as religious and language teachers may not have expertise in digital literacy, this project can help them to train students and provide teaching materials in these areas. -Students can have extra support and resources for their learning. -Talks by speakers in different fields help to provide different viewpoints for studying, learning and thinking about life. -Students' interaction with speakers and peers during the seminars helps students to build confidence in learning and speaking in public.
4.2 How useful are the IT tools for the projects?	-With the Global Classroom system, people around the world can have the chance to receive religious education. -Scholars/faculty members can do collaborative teaching via the Global Classroom. For example, a course can be taught by a local faculty member to scholars in other countries. - Teachers/ Church members can use this system to teach and hold meetings. -The system provides a platform for people to interact with each other, and spread knowledge.	Anticipated outcome in the end of the project (July 2016): Various IT tools are used in this project such as Pbworks, Global Classroom videos, MH digital library & online tools. -These tools can support students learning such as collaborative learning, & help them to practice their digital literacy skills. -These tools can support collaborative teaching between the MH library team & teachers. -Teachers can more easily track the work of students such as when students do writing in Pbworks (Wiki), teachers can find out the learning progress of students, their writing process and the cooperation situation of students. - With the help of Pbworks, Students can do collaborative writing & collaborative learning as well as group discussion not just in school, but also from home. Also, the cooperation process helps students to work with others and respect peer views.

4.3 How useful are the library workshops (digital literacy) in helping students?	-Pre quiz: The results showing students' digital literacy are in general average. But middle aged or elderly students feel less confident in digital literacy skills such as using IT tools and using the digital library. -After the workshops and their attendance at several global classroom classes, teachers & students feel more at ease and confident in using the system. -Students especially those who have not felt confident and have fewer skills in digital literacy and use of the Global Classroom system can have support from the library for their learning. -Learning how to evaluate and search for information can help students with discussions and inter-religious dialogue based on sources, and could lead to tolerance and a better understanding of their own and other religions.	-Pre quiz (Nov 2015) & after workshops exercises (Dec2015-Jan 2016). *The results show students need help regarding 1) whether their research topic is too broad or narrow, 2) Boolean searching 3) what are first hand and second hand sources, and 4) how to do citation and referencing. (*These example results are from a participating school.) -Anticipated outcome at the end of the project (July 2016): With this projects, participants students have more chances to use IT tools and practice digital literacy skills, so their overall digital literacy skills should be improved such as searching and evaluating sources regarding Life Education topics. - As this project includes summarizing, paraphrasing, synthesizing and effective searching for information to define topics and resources to write content of their research report, students could be improved in these areas.

4.1 The benefits of collaborative teaching

Faculty members and the colleagues can find more about library resources, services and the assistance they can get from the library team. A library is no longer just for borrowing books. Libraries can help in many ways like providing digital literacy with their curriculum, assisting in design and evaluating pedagogy. And for teachers in secondary schools, the collaborative teaching with MH library team helps them to try a new way of teaching and students benefit from learning in Life Education and digital literacy skills.

Also, with collaborative teaching, the library team such as the librarian and the computer officer know more about the needs of teachers, students and their curriculum. It helps the library team to select or develop suitable electronic resources; IT tools as well as tailor-made user guidelines and workshops.

4.2 The benefits of IT tools

With the help of IT tools, we can increase the opportunities for collaborative teaching, collaborative learning, the sharing of ideas and communication. For example, the Global Classroom tool system lets teachers do collaborative teaching as well as allowing students to engage in peer discussion without the limitation of location. Furthermore, the Wiki system (Pbworks) lets students do collaborative writing and collaborative learning for group projects. During the learning of IT tools, students can help each other. For example, some secondary school students in the MH library workshops showed they were falling behind when they started to learn using Pbworks. As Pbworks can show all the work of group members, peers can see whether group members follow the steps to use the system. If not, peers help group members who cannot follow.

4.3 The benefits of digital literacy

Digital literacy training helps users have the confidence to use IT tools, find and evaluate information effectively, synthesize, summarize and paraphrase their findings as well as how to avoid plagiarism. This also helps students to have more open-minded viewpoints for their discussions such as in the case of Life Education and inter-religious dialogue.

Also, MH library uses common learning skills "digital literacy" to work with secondary schools with different religious backgrounds. This can help to start people cooperating and learning more about each other, their cultures and different religions. This could also lead to further cooperation in other areas such as education programs.

Conclusion

With these projects, MH library can outreach many more people and support them. Also, these projects can ensure that more people find out more about MH College and the Library. This helps to build up connections with other communities and other projects. For example, MH library will have a librarian internship program with a university in Japan this summer and the "Life Education" project with secondary schools will continue, as more schools would like to join the new semester starting in September 2016.

Acknowledgments

The Ming Hua College would like to thank the following Hong Kong schools for their support

Pui Tak Canossian College
Christian Alliance Cheng Wing Gee College
S.K.H. Tsang Shiu Tim Secondary School
S.K.H. Lam Kau Mow Secondary School

References

Anderson, P. (2007, February). What is Web 2.0? Ideas, technologies and implications for Education. JISC Technology and Standards Watch, 1-64.

Calvani, A., Cartelli, A., Fini, A., & Ranieri, M. (2008). Models and instruments for assessing digital competence at school. Journal of E-Learning and Knowledge Society, 4(3), 183-193.

Cois Tine (2016). A journey together: building mutual respect, understanding and cooperating. Retrieved from http://www.coistine.ie/what-is-interreligious-dialogue

Cheung, H., Chu, S. K. W., Fong, N., Wong, P. T. Y., & Fung, D. (2011). Developing multiple literacies for BSc Information Management students. Paper presented at CITE Research Symposium 2011, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong.

Chu, C.B.L., Yeung, A.H.W., & Chu, S.K.W. (2012). Assessment of students‟ information literacy: A case study of a secondary school in Hong Kong. Paper presented at CITE Research Symposium 2012, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Chu, K. W. Samuel. (2009). Inquiry project based learning with a partnership of three types of teachers and the school librarian. Journal of the American Society for Information Science and technology, 60 (8): 1671-1686.

Chu, S. K. W. (2005). Development of information search expertise of research students (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong.

Covello, S. (2010). A review of digital literacy assessment instruments. Retrieved from http://www.apescience.com/id/fulltext/research-on-digital-literacy-assessment-instruments

Flower, L. S., & Hayes, J. R. (1981). A cognitive process of writing. College Composition and Communication, 32, 365-387.

GovHK (2015), Census and Statistics, Higher Education. Retrieved from http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/so370.jsp

Harada, V.H., & Yoshina, J.M. (2004). Inquiry learning through librarian-teacher partnerships. Worthington, OH: Linworth.

Hayes, J. R. and Flower, L. S. (1983). Uncovering cognitive processes in writing: An introduction to protocol analysis. In P. Mosenthal, L. Tamor, and S. Walmsley (Eds.), Research on writing: Principles and Methods (pp. 207-220). New York: Longman

Hong Kong Education Department, EDB (2002). Personal Social & Humanities Education, key learning area curriculum guide (primary 1-secondary 3). Retrieved from http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/kla/pshe/PSHE%20KLA%20Guide%20Eng.pdf

Kent State University Libraries (2015). TRAILS: Tools for Real-time Assessment of Information Literacy Skills. Retrieved from http://www.trails-9.org/

Kuhlthau, C. C.(2010). Guided inquiry: School libraries in the 21st century. School Libraries Worldwide, 16(1), 1-12.

Kuhlthau, C. C., & Maniotes, L. K. (2010).Building guided inquiry teams for 21st-century learners. Literacy, 1, X1. Retrieved from http://www.schoollibrarymonthly.com/articles/kuhlthau&maniotes2010-v26n5p18.html

Matusiak, K. (2010). Use of digital resources in an academic environment: A qualitative study of students' perceptions, experiences and digital literacy skills (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertation and Theses database. (Pub. No. AAT 3437964)

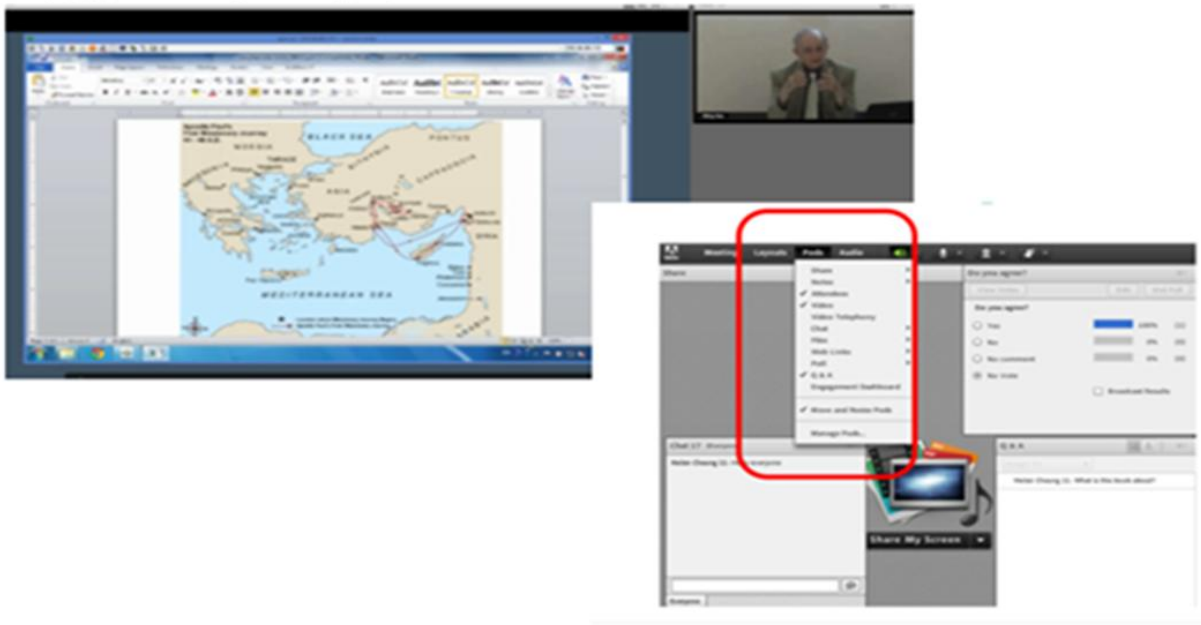
Ming Hua College (2016, Feb 1), About Us [Website].Retrieved from http://www.minghua.org.hk/en/about

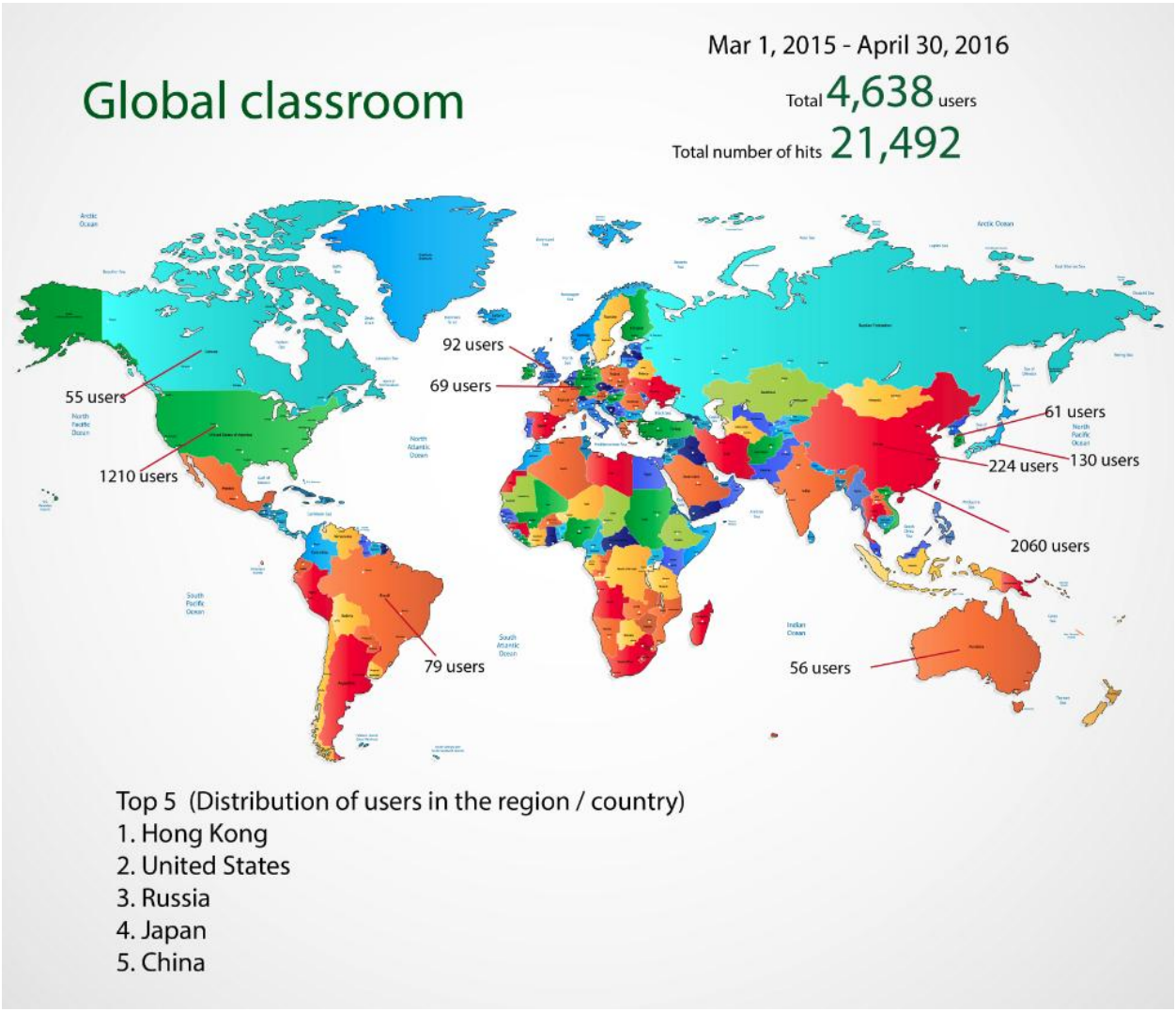
Nielsen, J. (1993). Usability engineering. UK: Academic Press.

Nielsen, J. (2012, January 4). Usability 101: Introduction to Usability [website] Retrieved from http://www.nngroup.com/articles/usability-101-introduction-to-usability/

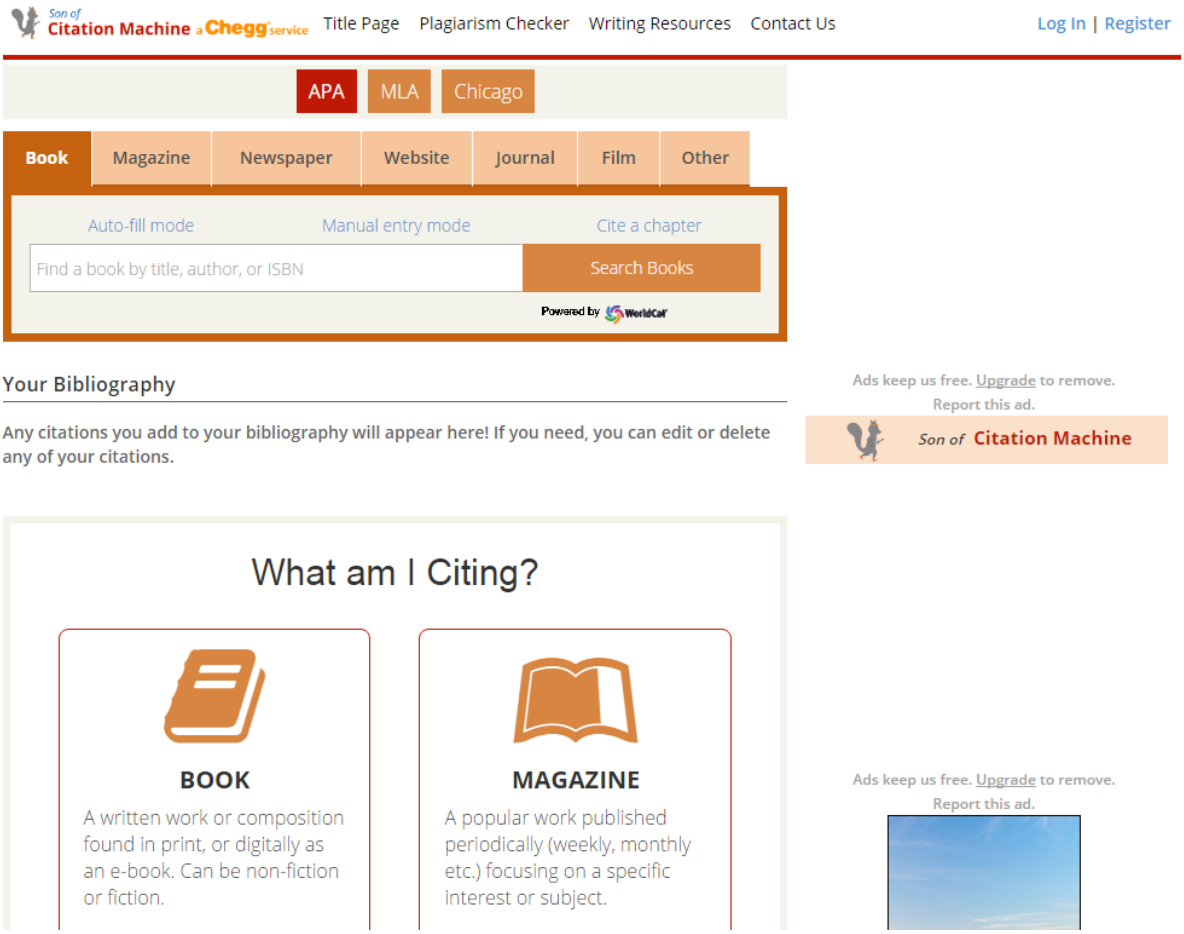
Questions on islam (2009).What is the Interfaith Dialogue? Has it got a Relationship with Missionaries? What are the Religious Foundations of Interfaith Dialogue? Retrieved from http://www.questionsonislam.com/article/what-interfaith-dialogue-has-it-got-relationship-missionaries-what-are-religious-foundations

Appendix 1
Ming Hua Global Classroom
http://gclass.minghua.org.hk





Appendix 2
Collaborative writing in Pbworks



Plagiarism Checker

Check For Plagiarism

To use this plagiarism checker, please copy and paste your content in the box below, and then click on the big green button that says “Check for plagiarism!” then sit back and watch as your article is scanned for duplicated content.

It's gone. Undo

What was wrong with this ad?

Repetitive Irrelevant Inappropriate

Google

copy and paste your text below:

1 2 3 4 5 ⇐ Select a sample text

Paste content here to check Plagiarism

Limit: 1000 Words per Search Total Words: 0

OR // Select a file: (.docx/.txt)

Select File No File selected..

Advance option // Exclude a specific url:

URL that you want to ignore

Enter Security Code

ENTER CODE