

Navigating eBay for Collectors

LIS 560 – Training Module, Part B

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1.0 Introduction

Many people collect objects of all kinds. For someone expanding or maintaining a collection, eBay can be an invaluable resource. Many people know about the basics of buying and selling items on eBay, but many may not know how to shop wisely, how to use information on eBay in other ways, or how to use some of the features, such as user forums, to find even more information.

This training module seeks to provide a grounding in the basics of using eBay to locate and shop for collectibles, suggest ways to find useful information about collectibles markets, and expose students to user forums and other lesser-known areas of the service.

2.0 Lesson Plan: Navigating eBay Workshop

2.1 Outcome

- Students will be able to find and bid on collectibles in eBay.
- Students will be able to find market and pricing information about collectibles, as well as evaluate the trustworthiness of sellers.
- Students will be able to find and participate in social community areas of eBay.

2.2 Skill

- Ability to locate and bid on an auction.
- Ability to locate and interpret supplementary research information.
 - Ability to locate and interpret seller ratings.
 - Ability to find and interpret past auctions for collectibles.
- Ability to locate and use community features (Discussion Boards, Groups, and Neighborhoods).

2.3 Target Audience

The target audience for this class will be collectors. Although collectors can be sorted into several types according to goals and level of involvement in the collecting activity (Lee and Trace 2009, Case 2009), all collectors are interested in expanding their collections, so they are interested in shopping and sourcing information. Lee and Trace (2009) explicitly mention a need for specific information about how to use eBay, both in terms of understanding the technical aspects and navigating transactions wisely; Case (2010) says, “the bidders and sellers on eBay can be seen to form a social network, responding to the information needs of its members,” and many collectors make use of these resources. The collectors expressing these needs and looking for this kind of community will be the audience, and the class will endeavor to provide the skills that they are seeking. Because the class is envisioned as a part of a public library outreach program, the expected students would represent a broad cross-section of different types of collectors. They are likely to have an interest in technology and some level of comfort with using it, although there may be a range of skill level represented.

2.4 Material Needed

The material needed for this program is a computer with an Internet connection and a data projector, at minimum. Optimally, each student would be able to use a computer to follow along in exploring the eBay site; in promotional material (such as posters or flyers), students would be encouraged to bring their own laptops to use and bookmark important links during the class. Handouts with eBay screenshots will be distributed to each student.

2.5. Program

2.5.1 Introduction

The instructor begins the session with show-and-tell about items that students collect. The flyers, posters, or other material promoting the class will suggest that students bring an item from their collections to share and discuss. As backup, the instructor can bring a few items from their own collection or that they have borrowed. As the items are being shared and discussed, the instructor should encourage students to tell stories about how items in their collections were acquired. Most collectors have some favorite stories about this, and even students who didn't bring objects can participate in telling them. After students seem to be warmed up and engaged, instructor can bring up eBay, asking who has used it before to acquire collectibles, and then briefly enumerating the goals and tasks that will be covered in the class. Finally, the instructor can pass around the handouts, encouraging students to follow the diagrams and take their own notes.

This opening should help students connect with each other and the class topic. The instructor can get their attention by perceptual arousal in examining the objects, and establish relevance with the subsequent discussion of acquisition stories and the segue to discussing eBay and the class goals, both concepts of the ARCS model. (Keller, as referenced in Small 1997) Furthermore, it will help engage Type 1 learners by showing them the relevance of the class topic to their interests and letting them share memories and experiences with others. Providing handouts so that students can follow along and make notes should help Type 1 learners by helping provide overall context, Type 2 learners by providing diagrams, and Type 3 learners by giving them a means to construct their own meaning via notes.

2.5.2 Body of the Lesson

Skill 1: Ability to locate and bid on an auction.

Steps

1. Discussion to assess prior eBay experience and skills.
2. Lecture and demonstration about how to search for auctions and bid.
3. Students find auctions themselves and bid (with or without finalizing).
4. Discussion of experience and questions.

Tasks

1. Discussion to assess prior eBay experience and skills.

- Ask students whether any of them have used eBay before, and let them describe past experiences.
 - Discuss problems they might have had or gaps in knowledge.
2. Lecture and demonstration about how to search for auctions and bid.
 - Instructor will talk about how to use search to find auctions of particular items, as well as how to browse categories.
 - Instructor will show an auction listing, going over various parts of the page and features to look for, such as photo enlarge, add to Watch list, information about seller, end time, auction vs. Buy It Now, shipping details, etc.
 - Instructor will discuss how bidding works, how to add a bid, and what will happen as the auction progresses and ends.
 - Instructor will try to cover knowledge gaps identified by the discussion.
 3. Students find auctions themselves and bid (with or without finalizing).
 - Each student with a computer will try on their own to find an auction, examine features discussed in the lecture, and go through the steps of entering a bid. Students can stop before finalizing the bid, or actually enter the bid as they choose.
 - If they prefer, students can pair up and work on this together as teams. This will also help any student who does not have a computer.
 - Instructor will watch students and give feedback, help, or praise as called for.
 4. Discussion of experience and questions.
 - Instructor will ask students how the exercise went, letting students share what they did and how they went about finding and bidding.
 - Instructor will ask if there are any questions, and try to answer any that arise, also inviting other students help answer questions.

Skill 2: Ability to locate and interpret supplementary research information, specifically ability to locate and interpret seller ratings and ability to find and interpret past auctions for collectibles.

Steps

1. Lecture and demonstration about seller ratings and feedback.
2. Students locate an auction, then research the seller's ratings and feedback.
3. Lecture and demonstration about how to locate past auctions and what they can find out about the market and current selling prices of items from examining past auctions.
4. Students locate items, then look at the past auction history.
5. Discussion and questions.

Tasks

1. Lecture and demonstration about seller ratings and feedback.
 - Instructor will discuss seller ratings and information (such as location), and demonstrate how to locate feedback and interpret rating numbers and symbols.
2. Students locate an auction, then research the seller's ratings and feedback.

- Each student or pair of students with a computer will locate an auction, then look for feedback and ratings for the seller of the auction.
 - Instructor will watch students and give feedback, help, or praise as called for.
 - Students will decide whether they would or would not buy from that seller, and why.
3. Lecture and demonstration about how to locate past auctions and what they can find out about the market and current selling prices of items from examining past auctions.
 - Instructor will discuss where to find finished auctions and what a buyer can learn from examining them, such as which items sold or didn't sell and what price they sold for.
 4. Students locate items, then look at the past auction history.
 - Each student or pair of students with a computer will locate a product section and find the past/finished auctions for that group of items.
 - Instructor will watch students and give feedback, help, or praise as called for.
 5. Discussion and questions.
 - Instructor and students will discuss whether the searches for sellers and past auctions were successful, and how any problems could have been solved.
 - Students talk about why they would or wouldn't buy from the sellers and explain their reasoning.
 - Instructor asks students what they think they could infer about the market for a collectible from examining the finished auctions – fair price for a particular item? Desirability in the current market? If an item didn't sell, could you analyze why, such as condition, bad description, wrong pricing? What else?

Skill 3: Ability to locate and use community features (Discussion Boards, Groups, and Neighborhoods).

Steps

1. Instructor demonstrates and explains three eBay community features: Discussion Boards, Groups, and Neighborhoods.
2. Students locate and examine these areas.
3. Discussion about social areas of eBay, how they are different, and how they could be used by collectors.

Tasks

1. Instructor demonstrates and explains three eBay community features: Discussion Boards, Groups, and Neighborhoods.
 - Instructor shows how to locate each of the three areas.
 - Instructor demonstrates how to navigate each area, and what can be found in each.
2. Students locate and examine these areas.
 - Each student or pair of students with a computer will locate each community area, and take note of what looks interesting or useful in each.
 - Instructor will watch students and give feedback, help, or praise as called for.

3. Discussion about social areas of eBay, how they are different, and how they could be used by collectors.
 - Instructor leads students in a discussion about each community area, helping them to understand the differences and strengths in each (Discussion Boards help with specific questions, Groups are organized around specific pursuits, Neighborhoods form around broad areas of interest and are more about social interaction).
 - Students talk about what they found interesting in each area, and which they would find most useful for various collecting tasks.

Notes

In this plan, I included tasks and activities that should appeal to different kinds of learners. Type 1 learners will be engaged by using the hands-on searches to find auctions related to their interests, and by discussing their experiences afterward. Type 2 learners will be engaged by listening to the lectures and demonstrations, by the instructor asking about their questions and knowledge gaps, and by discussing and categorizing eBay features. Type 3 learners will be engaged by step-by-step demonstrations, by the exercises in which they can find information and try the techniques themselves, and discussions where they can talk about what they know and analyze how to do a search or evaluate a seller. Type 4 learners will be engaged by working in teams, setting their own tasks (such as deciding what kind of auction to look for), and by the instructor calling on them in discussions to explain how they solved a problem or help troubleshoot another student's problem.

The plan addresses the needs of several of Gardner's multiple intelligences as well. Screenshots and diagrams in the printouts and demonstrations on the projector engage visual learners. Lectures and written instructions engage linguistic learners. Giving students tasks and problems to solve engages logical learners as well as kinesthetic hands-on learners. Working in teams helps to engage interpersonal learners, and reflective discussions help to engage intrapersonal learners.

I continued to apply the ARCS model to this lesson plan as well. I maintained Attention by giving students questions and problems to solve and then letting them perform searches. Allowing them to choose their own searches and explore community areas to find parts related to their interests helped maintain Relevance. Giving students tasks to complete, helping them to complete them, and then discussing how they completed them successfully provided opportunities to increase Confidence, and praising good efforts and showing how they can successfully use the service to promote their goals provided Satisfaction. Giving opportunities to ask, get, and give answers to questions as the class progresses will also help build Confidence and Satisfaction.

3.0 Evaluation/Conclusion

To finish the class, the instructor will summarize what was presented, and then ask for any remaining questions on the topic content for discussion. If the instructor is comfortable doing so,

students can be invited to return to the instructor later if they have any questions or problems in using eBay that they want to discuss.

Finally, the instructor should hold an informal discussion about the class itself to evaluate its effectiveness and research further instruction. They should invite students to discuss whether they felt they learned useful information, what else they might like to learn that wasn't covered, whether they might like the library to present similar sessions in the future, and so on. The instructor should also pass out written evaluation forms, to provide a feedback channel for those who may not be comfortable discussing their opinions in public.

4.0 Further Training

According to the literature review, collectors are avid users of online resources and eBay as a group, so sessions on advanced eBay techniques and selling on eBay might be useful, as well as a survey of other online information resources and social networking websites focused on collectibles. Collectors who take the class might be encouraged to form their own social/support group that meets regularly to discuss collecting and particularly to share information and troubleshoot issues together in following collecting pursuits online, or even use an established online social service to form an online social group together (such as a Facebook group).

5.0 Bibliography

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Appendices

Appendix A: Workshop handouts

To be created: Handout would consist of screenshots of eBay, marked to show important and relevant features. This will give students a take-home reminder of what was covered, as well as providing them a place to take their own notes and mark the diagrams to suit their own needs and interests.

Appendix B

Workshop Evaluation

Please answer the following questions and return this to your instructor or any other staff, to help us improve our workshops for future attendees. Thanks!

What did you learn from this workshop that you expect to be most useful?

What did you learn that you didn't know before you attended?

What parts of this workshop were the least useful?

What did you want to know about eBay that the workshop didn't cover?

Do you think the pace of the workshop was too fast, too slow, or just right? Were there some parts of the workshop that you wish had gone faster or slower?

Was the level of participation comfortable, or did you want more or less participation sections?

Was there anything the instructor did that you found particularly helpful or unhelpful?

How would you improve this workshop for future presentations?

What similar workshops would you be interested in attending?

What else would you like for us to know?