After a rewarding career in a Washington D. C. government agency, Ron was seeking change and when the opportunity to become faculty in distance education presented itself, he jumped at the chance. With his appointment being billed as 50% research, he figured that he would finally have the time to work on the book he has always wanted to write.

Because of the nature of the distance learning program, Ron relies heavily on digital material and content must be available whenever his students are ready to access it. To deliver course lectures, he records PowerPoint slides synced with voice. Ron wants to stay current and keep his students abreast of the latest developments, but updating his slides at the beginning of the semester is a large and complicated task. As he makes changes to slides, Ron works with the library’s instructional designers to help him get new audio added to the existing lectures.

Ron has great visions for using technology in learning and collaborates with the library’s instructional designers to create innovative new tools. He has worked with the library’s instructional designers to develop an interactive Flash syllabus for his course that acts as a map connecting the various learning objectives, activities and resources for the course.

Between the difficulties in managing online grading and online ‘classrooms’ Ron spends closer to 75% of his time on teaching and the remainder of his time on administrative commitments. One of his major challenges is finding readings to augment his course. Keeping up with his former mentors and networking at conferences allows him to stay abreast of key topics/issues in his field and often supplies him with resources that he can incorporate into the classroom. Ron has no qualms in using non-traditional sources like Department of Defense policies to demonstrate concepts. Ron finds that often these types of electronic resources are better at explaining and applying concepts and make the learning experience more salient. Once he finds a valuable document or article, Ron will go through the PDF document and bookmark the relevant sections to reduce his students’ load – frequently they are working full time in addition to attending classes.

In addition to using real world resources like the Congressional Quarterly Budget Tracker, Ron also requires his students to visit the library – virtually, of course. Although Ron has a library controlled module embedded in his CMS, many of his students use the course web page developed by the librarian. He’s also informally polled his students and most of them prefer to contact the librarians via virtual reference, usually chat.

Ron has his students use the library specifically for a major article review assignment. Students not only have to review the articles but construct arguments with supporting peer-reviewed documents. Given his library’s vast collection of online resources, Ron really appreciates how easy it is for his distance learners to connect with the library and quality resources.

Ron frequently works with the librarian assigned to his course for his own research. He will record citations as he reads industry publications, but not know how to find them through his library. He consults his librarian often to track down these articles.