In June 2008, at the U.S. Census Bureau, the IT Educational Services Staff, Systems Support Division was charged with assisting its Help Desk supervisors and managers with becoming ITIL certified. ITIL is the most widely accepted approach to IT Service Management (ITSM) in the world.

Lisa Lawler, Instructional Systems Specialist, Website Services and Coordination Staff (WSCS) Systems Support Division, implemented a blended learning approach that would enable the help desk supervisors and managers to engage in pre-work, onsite instructor-led training, and have access to other informal learning assets that would prepare them to sit for the ITIL v3 certification exam.

Lawler’s first goal was to find an instructor-led training vendor that could provide onsite training and then proctor the exam. With that element secured, she set out to piece together a blended learning program that would engage the supervisors and managers before and after the live training.

Her next step was to add an informal learning element to the blend. “I immediately thought of Book24x7 and the ITIL Collection,” Lawler said. Her goal, she indicated, was to blend the collection into the training program, providing access to Book24x7 as informal support post-course.

“Books24x7 online reference books are well suited to use after you get back to your desk and want to try to apply what you’ve learned in the classroom. We highly recommended it to our IT professionals for post-course and on-the-job performance support,” Lawler said.

With the blended elements in place, Lawler sent out an e-mail introducing the learning program. “They were given entire blended learning strategy with instructions on how to use each self study component,” she commented, “and for the most part, the feedback was excellent.”

Lawer offered the TestPrep as an optional pre-course component of the blended learning program, but recommended it as a way to gauge how prepared students were for the actual exam. “This gave the supervisors an idea of what topics they could expect on the exam and the topic areas where they would need to pay attention.”
and received on-the-job performance support via Books24x7 after receiving their ITIL certification. "Providing follow up and on-the-job performance support is a very important element for ensuring the effectiveness of any training program," she said.

In thinking back on the program, and the internal award that she won for its success, Lawler commented, "Books24x7 was the most successful and important component," she added. "I really see Books24x7 as a valuable on-the-job performance support tool; successful both before training as a self study tool and afterward as reference."

Lawler also said that the success of the program was very much due to the support she received from her learning strategist from SkillSoft. "Our SkillSoft learning strategist was instrumental in helping us design the program," she said. "He made sure that we had everything we needed to put the ITIL blended learning strategy together and make everything work."

Blended Elements
ITIL® Powered by Books24x7® is a collection containing the official ITIL curriculum guides. The most widely accepted approach to IT Service Management (ITSM) in the world, ITIL is a best practices framework that enables businesses to deliver high-quality IT services and more effectively manage IT operations. Version 3 of ITIL was released in May 2007; this collection covers both this new V3 as well as the previous version (V2) published 1998-2000. This collection is offered through a partnership with the publisher, TSO, as well as the copyright holder, OGC (UK Office of Government Commerce).

TestPrep Exams allow learners to test their knowledge in a simulated certification-testing environment, for many of the most popular certification exams from Microsoft, Cisco, Oracle, CompTIA and PMI. Each SkillSoft TestPrep Exam maps to 100% of the objectives on the vendor exam. TestPreps can be taken in two modes: Study Mode and Certification Mode. The un-timed Study Mode allows learners to assess their knowledge and receive detailed responses after each question. For additional information, students are directed to specific sections of relevant courses for further study. The against-the-clock Certification Mode is designed to mimic a certification exam. In Certification Mode, detailed feedback is available after the exam has been completed.

The Census Bureau has been a customer of SkillSoft’s for over 10 years. It utilizes the following SkillSoft learning assets for its day to day learning needs:

- Business Courseware
- IT Skills Courseware
- Desktop Skills Courseware
- ITIL® Powered by Books24x7®
- ITPro™ Collection
- OfficeEssentials™ Collection