Fifth birthday of a new approach to LIS education in North Wales

Paul Jeorrett
Pennaeth y Llyfrgell a'r Gwasanaethau Myfyrwyr / Head of Library and Student Services
Prifysgol Glyndŵr / Glyndŵr University
p.jeorrett@glyndwr.ac.uk

The foundation degree in Library and Information Practice at Glyndŵr University is nearly four years old and has now seen two cohorts of students successfully graduate: 21 new professionals altogether. The course grew from a seed of an idea in 2008 to bring a fresh approach to professional training for the library and information sector. In the FdSc Library and Information Practice we have always emphasised the importance of the need for new professionals to be flexible, adaptable individuals who can manage change innovatively, imaginatively and proactively, recognising new opportunities and grasping new challenges. The course team includes practising professionals and academics from computing and IT to blend practical library skills with the demands of an increasingly changing technological world. The regular visits to a range of libraries across the sectors is one of the stengths of the course, adding variety and ensuring currency; in addition, guest lecturers bring a wealth of experience from all aspects of library services. We hope to be one of the first to succeed in getting professional accreditation under the new framework, as the course is closely mapped to CILIP's Professional Knowledge and Skills Base.

The FdSc is unique in the library and information education sector in its mode of delivery, with eight modules running over 2 years. Using blended learning, each module begins with a week, usually based in Wrexham, North Wales, including intensive lectures, tutorials, field trips and completion of an assignment. The module is completed by the student in their work environment using a combination of work-based learning and support through Glyndŵr University's Moodle VLE.

The programme has a strong practical component in modern librarianship and equips students with a variety of relevant professional skills; it develops the in-depth knowledge of library and information services essential in a profession revitalised by the digital age, and high-level skills in the organisation, management and retrieval of information using modern tools. The table shows what is included in the modules.
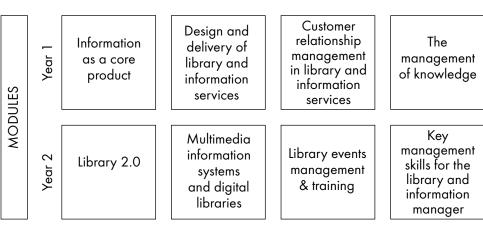
This what some of our students have said about the course:

> I'm working on this rather broad and strange brief that involves web design, e-books, self-e-publishing, social media, and technology awareness as well as looking after some of the basic support for the LMS and public network computers, it's a lot of fun but I'm definitely playing technology catch up, the FdSc has been a massive help on this one!

> This course has given me answers to questions, that I didn't know that I needed to ask, in order to do my job effectively.

> I was a little apprehensive before beginning my studies… but I have thoroughly enjoyed the entire course, I have discovered a real passion for virtual services and Web 2.0 and thanks to this course I am about to begin a new career in that area.

> The chance to mix with other staff from a wide variety of library / information settings has been valuable.

MODULES					
	Year 1	Information as a core product	Design and delivery of library and information services	Customer relationship management in library and information services	The management of knowledge
	Year 2	Library 2.0	Multimedia information systems and digital libraries	Library events management & training	Key management skills for the library and information manager

As a result of FdSc Library and Information Practice student demand, we have developed a BSc (Hons) Library and Information Management, a one-year top-up for those who have completed the foundation degree or who qualified a while ago and wish to update their CPD profile. The first cohort of eleven BSc (Hons) students graduates in October 2013. The course uses the same model of delivery as the FdSc, with the addition of a dissertation. Neither course would exist without the support of funding from Welsh Government CyMAL (the Welsh Museums Archives and Libraries advisory body), which offers bursary support for prospective students working in libraries throughout Wales.

If you or any of your staff want to be part of this exciting new way to train LIS professionals, please get in touch either with
Paul Jeorrett (p.jeorrett@glyndwr.ac.uk) or
Nicola Watkinson (nicolaw@glyndwr.ac.uk).