

Editorial

Power to the people – focusing on the importance of staff development

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This issue of *SCONUL Focus* turns its attention to staff development. This is perhaps a logical follow-on from the previous issue on leadership as we acknowledge the importance of investing in the development of staff at all levels so they are equipped with the knowledge, skills and attributes required in our changing profession.

The first article in this issue takes us to the beginning of the journey. As in the issue on leadership, the *SCONUL Focus* editorial team posed a number of questions to experts in the field relating to the topic in question. In this instance, the interviewees are representatives from some of the UK and Ireland's library schools. Our intent was to find out their opinions as to the skills and attributes they believe their students should be graduating with, give them the opportunity to demonstrate how their courses are relevant to the profession in ensuring that students are 'industry ready' on graduation, and to consider the challenges for the future.

Following on from this, the next crop of articles provides some specific examples of how those in the early stages of their career are being supported. Jane Burns describes a practical application of the use of reflective writing using the medium of blogging to support library school students at University College Dublin. Ros Pan and Avril Patterson, from the same institution, describe how a pre-course intern programme has been developed and delivered at UCD library, demonstrating an intrinsic link between the library and the library school, whilst Caroline Hetherington offers her experience of being a graduate trainee in library services at the University of Birmingham. She articulates both the benefits she gained from the projects she worked on, and the skills she believes she brought to the team. This section is rounded off with an article from Kathryn Smith, providing an overview of the history of the Academic and National Library Training Cooperative (ANLCT) Library Assistant Award in Ireland and the impact of the award in creating staff development opportunities at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

Collaborative approaches to staff development across organisations can be a good way to meet needs where institutions are facing the same or similar issues, whilst they also have the potential to realise economies of scale in the current challenging financial climate. With this in mind, Thomas Baldwin and Rachel Telfer describe the growth and development of the cpd25 programme of the M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries and consider its impact and the benefits. On a similar theme, a multi-authored article from librarians in the Wales Higher Education Libraries Forum Research Group details how librarians are supporting research in Wales through a collaborative approach to staff development and capacity building.

Perhaps not surprisingly, a recurrent theme to emerge from the library school representatives relates to the requirement that students develop enhanced digital and IT skills. The article by James Clay picks up this theme by describing how Jisc has developed a digital capability framework and other resources, in order to equip leaders and staff with the tools they need to improve digital capability at a local or institutional level.

Attending conferences, undertaking training, participating in registered professional development programmes or being part of wider professional groups are other methods regularly used to meet staff development needs at an individual level. With regard to participation in professional groups, Lisa Anderson from the University of Birmingham outlines the benefits she feels that both she and her employer gain from her involvement in the BIALL (British and Irish Association of Law Librarians) Professional Development Committee (PDC). With reference to professional accredited programmes, Laura Connaughton and Regina Richardson from Maynooth University recount their experiences in attaining Associateship and Fellowship awards from the Library Association of Ireland.

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If we are to maximise value for the money invested in any of these activities, how might we cascade the learning within the organisation? The article by Jo Alcock and Annmarie Lee shows how staff at Birmingham City University's Library & Learning Resources are attempting to do just that by the establishment of a regular LIKE (L & LR Information and Knowledge Exchange) event.

Another theme to emerge from our email questionnaire survey of our library school representatives was people (or softer) skills. Penelope Dunn and Laura Woods from the University of Huddersfield report briefly from the first Relationship Management in Higher Education Libraries conference held in Stirling in November 2015 and go on to look at approaches to relationship management at their own institution, considering both current and future developments. On a similar theme, Leo Appleton and colleagues from the University of the Arts London describe how they have engaged students through a user experience (UX) project at their institution. The use of UX methodology aimed to engage students in both the design and planning of new builds as well as to impact on the learning spaces that they currently occupy.

Other articles included in this issue include a job swop initiative for library assistants at Maynooth University, a range of CPD opportunities offered to staff at the library of Dublin Business School and a self-directed achievement scheme for staff working in the library at the University of Ulster.

It is also important to ensure that the development needs of managers (and future leaders?) are not overlooked. With this in mind, Sue Hodges from Bangor University describes the development of coaching skills for managers programme in the library there, noting how it is being rolled out to other departments in the organisation.

As usual, we have accepted other articles to include in this issue, not directly related to staff development (although it could perhaps be argued that all articles included have some staff development aspects if they are representing examples of innovation in many areas of our profession). So articles on the use of digital badges for information literacy at Middlesex University, creating pre-arrival support for international students at Coventry University and using the COUNTER Journal Report 2 to make evidence-based decisions in relation to e-resources development at the University of Portsmouth have made their way into issue 67.

Perhaps as the title of this editorial hints, our people remain one of our greatest assets in developing services and ensuring we can remain relevant, maximise our impact and demonstrate value. So this issue probably only scratches the surface in identifying many initiatives that will be emerging in individual institutions, across organisations, from professional bodies and through academic courses. However, I hope it provides some inspiring examples and offers food for thought to those of you with an interest in this area.

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