A week in the life

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I'm responsible for managing the 'R+D' (research and development) activities in the Academic Services division of the University of Warwick Library. This involves project work aimed at promoting our support and resources to users as well as researching new tools and technologies for implementation within our services.

MONDAY

I've been taking a Warwick management course this year and this morning we have our last workshop. To round up the course we're meeting as a learning set to feed back to each other on our personal development outcomes. We're presenting these to the group, and everyone's line manager is joining us. The management course has covered three main areas: 'managing ourselves'; 'managing others'; and 'leading change'. The workshops each term have been really informative and enjoyable but the smaller learning sets of six staff from a variety of departments and roles across campus have been invaluable in providing us with an arena in which to discuss specific challenges, gain different perspectives on a situation and share good practice.

The presentations were a nice way of consolidating the year's learning by reflecting on our achievements and describing examples of how we've put our learning into practice within our day-to-day activities. The highlights of the course for me have included stakeholder management planning, learning about motivational theories to engage and encourage my team, and performance management practice through role-playing and forum theatre. These have been greatly relevant to me, as much of my work involves project management as well as working with or supporting other teams within our division.

After our presentations we break for a quick sandwich lunch and then finish off by discussing how we want to take things forward. It's great that others from the group want to keep in touch as we've learnt a lot from sharing experiences and I have valued the peer support.

I rush off from this session to a Staff Liaison Group meeting in the main Library. This is an advisory group to our library's senior management team and we provide a point of referral for library staff comments, suggestions and concerns on issues that affect the staff across the department. Today we're putting together ideas for a department open day. We hold these twice a year, and they provide the opportunity for all staff to attend a whole day of activities designed to keep us up-to-date with developments as well as providing a networking opportunity and a chance to collaborate with others on university-wide issues that impact upon the library. After discussing a variety of ideas we draft a proposal for the day and arrange to put this forward to senior managers for approval.

It's now gone 4 o'clock and my day ends in tying up some loose ends: catching up on the emails that have come in while I've been out of the office, preparing my agendas for upcoming meetings this week and prioritising my weekly project plan.

TUESDAY

I get some time to catch up on my project work today. I use my morning to confirm arrangements for later meetings as well as helping one of my new members of staff with some spreadsheets she's putting together to provide us with statistical data for the Academic Services Division. The statistics report the number, type and nature of any information skills sessions that our team have delivered and any staff–student liaison group meetings they've attended within the academic departments. Monitoring statistics and building evidence of the impact and value our services have on the student experience is incredibly important – for the profession as a whole – especially in light of coming changes to student tuition fees, which no doubt will affect students' expectations.

I also use my morning to finish off a report I've been working on. During January and February this year I worked with our division's research support wing to design and implement a survey exploring the perceived information skills needs of our university's research staff. This was emailed to 1655 members of staff across campus and we received over 400 responses. I've been going through the results, which the finished

report will outline, as well as drawing conclusions and recommendations from these findings.

After playing a quick game of squash at lunch time, I have a one-to-one meeting with a member of my team to talk about progress on specific objectives. She's been working with our Academic Support Librarians to redesign some of their subject webpages and will soon be supporting the library's research support wing that will shortly be launching their new webpages for university researchers.

After this I have another meeting, this time with our Library's Corporate Support Manager. We are putting a survey together to explore the effectiveness of communication within our department. We wish to see which communication channels are the most popular or which people may not be as aware of.

The last hour of my day is spent putting the finishing touches to my survey report. I add my last references and email this to the research support wing.

WEDNESDAY

My morning begins with a development team meeting. As both members of my team are part-time and relatively new, we haven't had much opportunity to get together as a group so we're pleased to have the chance. I provide updates about the work of the other wings in our division and we then do a 'round robin' so we can all update each other on the work in progress. I check for any support needs (we're all going on video-editing training very soon) and schedule our next team meeting for three weeks' time. We all then dash to a divisional team meeting where the manager of our Library's Teaching Grid and Learning Grid outlines the Grids' new marketing strategy and staffing plan. The Teaching Grid provides academic staff at the University with an experimental teaching space to practise new and innovative pedagogical methods in a supportive and technology-rich environment. The Learning Grid is a 24x7, multimedia-enabled, flexible facility encouraging student-led learning in a range of different environments. Unfortunately I need to leave this meeting early as I'm going to speak to IT Services with our Corporate Support Manager, our Academic Support Librarian for Warwick Business School and our department's Enquiry Support Officer. We are developing new library webpages targeted at new and prospective staff and students. We have our content ready but wish to make some dynamic changes to the standard layouts of our pages. At the meeting IT Services talk us through our options.

After a short lunch break I head to a meeting with our HR Manager about staff recruitment and end the day with yet another meeting, this time with my line manager. We discuss my personal development over the last year, the skills and knowledge that my recent management course has provided me with and we discuss how my new team is bedding in. We also talk about ideas for a presentation I will be delivering at Radboud University, Nijmegen, in the Netherlands in June. I was fortunate enough to receive Erasmus staff mobility funding for this trip and during my five-day placement there I will meet library staff, be toured around their facilities, complete some work shadowing and deliver a presentation and workshop. I will also have the opportunity to visit Utrecht and Delft universities during my stay.

THURSDAY

After a meeting-filled week I have more time to myself today. I need to put together my presentation for my Erasmus trip. I intend to discuss creative practice in libraries with an emphasis on space development by first outlining the developments that have taken place at Warwick, discussing drivers for change and creative use of space. I will then get my Dutch colleagues to break into groups for a workshop based on these topics, after which I will go on to describe how the Academic Services development wing which I manage supports creative developments and innovation within our division through web-based initiatives and ensuring a needs-focused approach. We can then use the time remaining to share ideas and practice between us more informally.

Between putting together my presentation and the workshop, I have a brief meeting about video-editing needs within the department. Using different media to reach and cater for a broad audience of users is becoming more and more important as users' needs and available technologies become more diverse. As a consequence, our library now offers a range of virtual support to supplement more traditional services. Creating e-learning tutorials or promotional materials that incorporate video clips is a growing area of work for us. In the past various members of staff in our library have been responsible for creating these, but demand is now so great that other approaches may need to be taken. Today's meeting helps me

to explore the issues and possible solutions for the library.

Friday

This morning was taken up with an Academic Services management team meeting. We've recently held a divisional away day as a chance for us to reflect on our new divisional structure and some of the practical issues that surround that. This was also an opportunity for staff across the division to get to know each other better and identify ways for greater (inter-)team working. Feedback from this day was reviewed and plans for taking things forward discussed.

In the afternoon I complete an A0 poster I've been putting together showcasing our service facilities: the Teaching Grid, Learning Grid and Research Exchange. This will be used to promote and explain our facilities at library open days, external conferences and other events. It describes the environments and resources available, as well as the support provided by advisers, and is illustrated with photographs. Once it is finished I send it round to the facility managers for approval and suggestions of any changes. I then spend the remaining hours of my working week confirming the final arrangements of my Netherlands Erasmus trip with Delft and Utrecht universities. It looks like I'll now be attending a symposium while I'm out there all about research data management. This is something to look forward to as I begin to pack up my things and get ready for my weekend…