Information Literacy
Good Practice Informing Common Practice

Information literacy is delivered throughout UK Higher Education institutions, predominantly under the purview of the library service. Since October 2012, SCONUL has been working with the Research Information Network (RIN) on an information literacy and digital scholarship research project known as RILADS (http://rilads.wordpress.com/). The aim of the project is to deliver a small number of key outputs contributing to a wider investigation into the support available to students, staff and researchers to enhance digital literacy. This report focuses on the first strand looking at the identification and promotion of good practice in information training in UK HE.

The promotional strategy, using social networks, print media and personal contact, led to the gathering of a long list of 42 potential examples. Questionnaires, informed by criteria for describing and evaluating courses and resources, were sent to named people, predominantly from the area of academic library services, involved in delivering and developing these resources. 27 completed forms were returned. A shortlisted set of links to 15 good practice examples are listed below.

The questions covered three main areas:

- Who is the course or resource designed for, and why?
- What knowledge, skills and competencies is the course or resource intended to provide?
- How is the course or resource delivered?

From our analysis we drew the following recommendations:

Learners
- Identify your learners by career stage and discipline.
- Assess learners' needs using a variety of channels (internal discussion; national debate; development needs analysis; existing frameworks such as NSS and other feedback gathering exercises; research development office; student feedback; staff experiences; formal research into needs and demands for the resource within the institution).
- Consider current as well as future transferable skills.
- Use some or all of these factors to establish demand: participant feedback; tutor feedback; graduate school feedback; development needs analysis; top down; external influence; formal internal research; staff request; and existing demand.
- Analyse attendance statistics when developing and launching new resources.
- Consider the discipline-specific nature of some literacies. It may be appropriate for those developing online resources to incorporate this flexibility in some way.
- Consider the accessibility of both online and face-to-face resources carefully in their design in order to ensure their inclusivity.

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- When prior knowledge is required ensure this is made clear in the rubric and booking process.
- Clearly state learning outcomes in the rubric and at the introduction of each session; and evaluate them at the end of each session.
- Wherever possible, clearly link resources to institutional and departmental policy on researcher development.
- Get the most out of resources by making them transferable and adaptable.

Topics

- Topics covered by resources in our survey included: citation and referencing; publishing and dissemination; plagiarism; fraud and copyright, and assessment and analysis of information sources; information searching, discovery, data protection and FOI; data management and curation. Also: subject specific resources, social media literacy, bibliometrics, evaluation of materials, general study skills/research methods, IT skills.
- Use The Seven Pillars and Vitae's RDF lens to map resource topics.
- Blended learning appears to be the most widely used approach in the delivery of this type of information. In most cases the resources / courses are multi-session, requiring regular commitment. Assignments are rarely used and only one course is assessed.
- Involve an appropriate range of services within the institution in the design and delivery of these resources wherever possible in order to maximise the value that can be brought to these projects from staff with experience outside of the library setting.
- The key skills required of staff (teaching, research and technical) are paramount in terms of their need in developing good practice resources.
- A combination of experience, CPD and iterative evaluation is appropriate in developing good practice resources.
- It is strongly recommended that budgets are carefully drawn up when developing new resources, and that time, the major resource required, is clearly allocated to those responsible.

Evaluation

- Gather detailed statistics during each iteration of such courses as their analysis can inform decisions on timings, content, and gaps in uptake.
- Pre- and post-course questionnaires can be used to identify progress.
- Gather qualitative feedback from participants.
- Consider the use of formative and summative assessment in curriculum-embedded modules to evaluate successful meeting of learning outcomes.
- Gather feedback from the departments or other units in which the learners work.
- Inform iterative course development through regular evaluation and reflection.

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A number of self-selected information literacy resources have been evaluated using formal criteria, leading to a shortlisting of a selection of 15 good practice examples. This is not to say that every aspect of each of the shortlisted examples is perfect – this project is not about finding 'the best' information literacy resource – but the benefit of this selection is that those charged with developing resources to serve a similar need may efficiently access some examples – and ultimately, perhaps, that 'good practice' may become 'common practice'. The recommendations above are drawn from the report. They may be of value to those planning to develop good practice resources. The value of the criteria in this research has been to provide an analytical framework for such evaluations (for the researcher) and act as a reflective tool (for the developers/deliverers). Hopefully some of the recommendations and comments within the report, combined with a reflective look at the examples – and contact with their helpful representatives – may assist those attempting to deliver good practice information literacy in UK HE in 2013 and beyond.

The criteria, a selection of completed questionnaires and conference presentation slides can be found on the project website: http://rilads.wordpress.com/. The short list of fifteen good practice examples is listed below:

- **Cardiff University**, Embedded information literacy: Postgraduate students, integration of information and digital literacies into the University Graduate College skills development programme.

- **Cranfield University**, Online information literacy tutorial: Undergraduate / postgraduate students, highly interactive online tutorials on a wide range of IL issues; attractively and imaginatively packaged.

- **Glasgow Caledonian University**, PG IL module ('Pilot'): Postdoc researchers, online tutorials on wide range of IL issues (developed for postdocs, but also suitable for graduate students).

- **Loughborough University**, eMRSG: East Midlands Research Support Group: early career researchers, online interactive tutorials on disseminating research outputs and reference management. Resource developed jointly by four East Midlands HEIs.

- **LSE**, MY592: Postgraduate students, structured 6-week course on many aspects of IL.

- **Open University**, Ready to research: Postgraduate students, a set of online tutorials, structured within a broad range of IL topics.

- **Oxford University**, Research Skills Toolkit: Postgraduate students, a set of interactive online resources.

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- **University of Bath**, Information Skills for Research Postgraduates: Postgraduate students, extensive programme of courses throughout the academic year, mostly on literature searching, but also on copyright, plagiarism, use of databases. Some discipline-specific resources.

- **University of Birmingham**, Raising your research profile, Workshops on publishing, bibliometrics and social media.

- **University of Durham**, Training Resources 1213: Postgraduate students, range of IL courses.

- **University of Edinburgh**, Research Data MANTRA course: Postgraduate students, online tutorials on all aspects of research data management.

- **University of Manchester**, Media & Information resource: Postgraduate students, researchers, podcast-based online resource covering wide range of IL issues.

- **University of Nottingham**, Effective Literature Searching: Postgraduate students (early stage), 5-day course on literature searching.

- **University of Salford**, Salford Postgraduate Research Training (SPoRT): Postgraduate researchers, wide-ranging programme of workshops reflecting the structure of the RDF; selected sessions available on aspects of IL.

- **University of Warwick**, Digital Researcher: Early career researchers, module-based, 18-week online learning programme on social media in the research lifecycle.

The project is now focusing on the outputs of the JISC 'Developing Digital Literacies' programme, investigating the enhancement of digital scholarship skills of information professionals, using the SCONUL definition: "*Digital scholarship: the ability to participate in emerging academic, professional and research practices that depend on digital systems.*" This strand was presented by the researcher at the SCONUL Dublin conference. It is anticipated that findings will identify gaps in provision and efforts will be made to make proposals on how these might best be filled. These proposals will be targeted towards SCONUL members and other information professional stakeholders in an effort to guide them in developing and maintaining services and resources which enable digital scholarship.

Outputs from SCONUL's contributions to the JISC Developing Digital Literacies programme can be found at http://jiscdesignstudio.pbworks.com/w/page/48784891/SCONUL DL

Outputs relating to RILADS can be found at http://rilads.wordpress.com/, queries relating to the project email inskiprilads@gmail.com / Twitter @rilads