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ILS and RTP: Support to researchers provided by Information and Learning Services as part of the Research Training Programme at the University of Worcester, past, present and future.

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to investigate the involvement of Information and Learning Services (ILS) staff in the delivery of the Research Training Programme (RTP) at the University of Worcester, UK, with a focus on researcher receptivity, that is, how research students receive and engage with the session delivered. This article proposes that by constantly reflecting on the development of that part of the programme delivered by ILS and by examining feedback from the sessions, it is possible to improve and increase the level of researcher receptivity. It is hoped that such examination and reflection will be of value and relevance to the IL community. This article outlines the support given to research students at the University of Worcester since 1998, examines the changes leading to present programme delivery and reflects on considerations for future support. The article is underpinned by reference to current research undertaken in international (albeit Western-centric) contexts and the rationale behind programme development is embedded in the current adult learning and teaching theory. In an increasingly competitive research environment where funding is dependent on a statistically monitored research output, the aim of such support is to integrate any IL contribution into the wider research training programme. Thus resource discovery becomes part of the reflexive research cycle. Implicit in this investigative reflection is the desire of the IL community to embed IL into research support programmes which are perceived by researchers as highly valuable to the process and progress of their work.

Keywords

research support; researcher training; doctoral studies; postgraduate information literacy

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1. Introduction

This article is concerned with the development of information literacy (IL) as an embedded element of the Research Training Programme (RTP) at the University of Worcester (UW) and with factors affecting student receptivity, that is the students' willingness to engage with the IL sessions to enhance their research activities. This article does not therefore address the content of the sessions in detail, although lesson plans illustrating the content of the IL sessions provided can be found in Appendix A. The account presented here includes past, present and future support for research students at Worcester since information literacy has been integrated into the research training programme for approximately twelve years, therefore it is possible to trace a clear path of progression, adaptation and development, and to assess some factors affecting student receptivity over this period of time.

Information and Learning Services (ILS) is an integrated service comprising Library, IT and Media services. Since the inception of RTP library staff and the member of academic staff responsible for programme agreed to include library based sessions in the programme and the target audience consisted of full and part time research students undertaking doctoral research and working towards either a PhD or an MPhil.

The period investigated in this article runs from 1998 to 2009, during which time the research student profile has not significantly changed. There is a core of full time research students the majority of whom are early career, post masters individuals. Approximately 40% of the research student body are part time and can be described as predominantly mature learners who are working whilst pursuing further study. The subject profile of this student body is cross-disciplinary.

The University of Worcester further developed research support in 2008 in response to a growing research agenda across all Departments. The application for Research Degree Awarding Powers was the driver for this RTP development. Within ILS, a Research Team was created to manage the Research Collections, develop the Worcester Research and Publications Repository (WRaP) and support all research students and academic staff.

2. ILS Contribution to the RTP 1998 - 2008

The RTP began in 1998, at which time the Graduate School supported approximately fifteen research students. At the beginning of the RTP, library staff delivered first one, then two information literacy sessions. The content of the earliest session included orientation and introduction to library services, an introduction to electronic resources and an introduction to efficient internet searching. The use of bibliographic software was included as a separate session from 2004, before UW had a site licence for any such software. The session therefore introduced students to the bibliographic software by demonstration on an individual PC. Students were encouraged to purchase their own bibliographic software which was available at a discounted rate. Initially (1998-2003) the RTP training was delivered on Saturdays in order to accommodate the work commitments of part-time students, while the majority of the full-time students were also able to attend weekend training thanks to their flexible timetable.

Evaluation of the sessions was achieved by using feedback forms distributed at the end of each session and the information generated by this feedback informed subsequent planning. Unfortunately the data generated by these early evaluation forms is no longer available and therefore the account of RTP presented in this paper is based on the data from more recent evaluation exercises is discussed below.

3. ILS Contribution to the RTP 2009 – 2010

When the Graduate School based Research Support and Development Officer took over the RTP in 2008, part of his remit was to rewrite and deliver the RTP which covers all aspects of research training. Library staff were involved in the review of RTP in order to ensure that sessions delivered by ILS were embedded in the programme. The current RTP is designed for Stage 2 researchers, that is Doctoral students, under the Seven Ages of Research model designed by Jo Webb, Pat Gannon Leary and Moira Bent (2007 p.85).
Programme and session planning are based on, 'situating the doctoral learner rather than information literacy skills at the centre of the discussion' (Green and Macauley, 2007 p.320). This was achieved by consulting the new cohort of students as to their preferred timing for the information literacy sessions to establish their ownership of the RTP from the outset, and also to validate the changes in the content of these sessions following the evaluation data from previous sessions. During the planning process, the Research Support and

Development Officer and the Research Librarian discussed whether full time and part time students should have separate sessions and how such sessions might impact upon student receptivity. Whilst recognising these groups have different needs, it was acknowledged that separate face-to-face sessions would not be possible given that cohort numbers are currently too small to establish a localised, physical Community of Practice, despite the fact that this approach is promoted by Green who argues that the benefits of the cohort as a community foster 'common, mutual engagement and shared repertoire of resources and practices'. In her paper 'Fostering a Community of Doctoral Learners' (Green, 2006 p.170) the benefits of such a community are applied to both the existence of a physical community, that is where the students are able to meet in person, and a virtual community in which the students participate in an online forum. To date the emphasis at the University of Worcester has been on fostering a physical community of practice since the community of research students within any one cohort does not exceed twenty students. Within such a small cohort, students become familiar with each other's work during the course of the RTP, where they meet on a weekly basis. Students are encouraged by ILS staff to participate in external virtual communities in their subject areas.

As mentioned earlier, this article does not discuss what is covered during the sessions, since the content of these sessions is constantly being reassessed in order to meet the needs of successive cohorts of students, although there is one foundational principle that is applied to all sessions, that is the contextualisation of the material presented. The continuous revision of the content is based on one of the principles cited by Knowles' theory of andragogy (1984) which proposes that adult learners' need to know why they need the learning presented to them. Therefore, the contextualisation of information literacy within the research process as a whole provides a rationale for the information literacy sessions. Competency in information literacy contributes to the researcher's resolution of 'the complex and sometimes incoherent process and rationale for research' (Green and Macauley, 2007 p.327) by enabling the researcher to recognise trends in the literature available. Once this process of ordering has begun, the researcher is able to formulate a structure or framework within which her thesis can begin to take shape, that is, it becomes 'coherent'. The researcher thus begins a cyclical process which Green and Macauley have articulated as 'gathering, organising, reflecting and synthesizing' (Green, 2006 p.176). Throughout the training sessions, information literacy is therefore placed within the wider context of this cyclical model of research and is promoted to the students as integral to the research process.

Discussion between library staff and graduate school staff continued after the first restructured delivery of the RTP in September 2009. In order to further embed the library contribution into the wider Programme a shared second session was introduced. The Research Support and Development Officer from the Graduate School presents a general introduction on referencing and plagiarism prior to a hands-on bibliographic software training delivered by library staff. This session integrates the library contribution into an existing session and ensures closer collaboration between the Graduate School Officer and library staff. The benefits of collaboration are discussed by Bent, Gannon-Leary and Webb (2007 p.93), who emphasise that collaborative delivery is beneficial because it enhances the students' engagement and it also sends a message that 'the Library' is integrated into other aspects of training such as the wider remit of the research process. Other researchers such as Michael Moss and Gail Craswell (Craswell, 2007) not only emphasise the potential need for fundamental change but also the necessity for greater collaboration 'between the academy and information professionals' (Moss, 2008 p.125). Craswell is more specific as to who should be collaborating when she discusses 'the need for liaisons between graduate school offices, academics and librarians' (Craswell, 2007 p.93).

In terms of student-centred learning, a collaborative approach encourages 'an understanding of information as a process of discovery and constructing meaning … rather than a process of accumulating' (Green and Macauley, 2007 p.328) divorced from the 'reflecting and

synthesizing' (Green, 2006 p.176) stages of the research cycle. In line with this view, research training promoted by RTP focuses on a more holistic process of knowledge construction which emphasises the wider interpretation of IL training that fosters knowledge creation as opposed to promoting knowledge acquisition and consumption.

Webb, Gannon Leary and Bent note that librarians who are also researchers possess 'an understanding of the research process' (Webb et al., 2007 p.222) and this role is acknowledged by the students who are therefore more willing to attend librarian-led training. Webb et al. substantiate these claims by presenting evidence from their own research (Webb et al., 2007p. 222).

4. ILS Contribution to the RTP 2010 onwards

When the RTP next runs for the new cohort of research students in 2011 Library staff delivering the information literacy sessions plan to include a supportive member of academic staff into the third session, which includes advanced internet searching and an introduction to the Worcester Research and Publications Repository (WRaP). All research students are encouraged to submit their publications for upload into WRaP. They also are required to submit their theses on completion, thus they are introduced to the repository during the early stages of their study. The upload of their research into WRaP fosters an understanding of information literacy as integral to the cycle of 'gathering, organizing, reflecting and synthesizing' (Green, 2006 p.176) that feeds into the final stage of disseminating the results of the study. In other words, the students experience what it means to operate as researchers by correlating their complex IL behaviour with the publication of research output.

Although the focus is on support to research students registered on the RTP, all the training discussed in this paper is relevant to supporting the researcher anywhere in the institution or in any of the UW Partner Colleges. In practice this means that the training needs of research staff are largely the same as that of research students in terms of session content and the contextualisation of content within the research process. Therefore, a key element of future support is to run sessions for internal and Partner College staff. Sessions have already been piloted in collaboration with the Academic Liaison Team (ALT). Future plans include wider provision and promotion of such sessions. Delivery will be shared between the ALT and the Research Team.

5. Student Receptivity and the Skills Audit

In order to address Knowles' posit that adults feel more engaged in the learning process if they know why they need the learning presented to them (Knowles, 1984), the first information literacy session starts with a Skills Audit exercise (this can be found in Appendix B of this article). The students are requested to answer all the questions except the final one which asks: 'Have you identified any areas where you would like to improve your skills?' Therefore the students are not able to answer the final question until they have completed all three sessions. Feedback received from the Skills Audit exercise can not only be used to identify gaps in knowledge and competence which inform the planning of subsequent sessions, but also provides evidence that self-identified knowledge gaps increase the students' attention to and appreciation of the content of the sessions provided as shown by the following response: 'This training has shown me how to make use of various valuable resources of which I was previously unaware' (Unidentified student). It should be noted that although this student does not identify which resources she refers to, during the sessions the students discuss unfamiliar resources and this information is collected by the librarian in order to inform future IL sessions.

Another student comments on the positive outcome of the IL session: 'I came to this session a little nervous as my skills were so poor. I have learnt so much & I have no doubt that my

research will benefit' (Unidentified student). Given that the Skills Audit form is completed anonymously it is difficult to follow up on these types of comments, although when students come for further one to one tuition on resources covered in the IL sessions it is possible for library staff to probe further and elaborate on the concrete benefits of these sessions. Feedback from informal one to one tutorials is not recorded and therefore this data cannot be presented in this article.

6. Conclusion

This article has briefly discussed the ILS contribution, in the form of IL sessions, to the Research Training Programme at the University of Worcester and presents the following conclusions.

Firstly, that staff delivering the training, both from the Graduate Research School and from ILS, have found that working collaboratively is the most appropriate way to develop and deliver the programme since collaborative working embeds information literacy into the programme and places it on an equal footing with any other training sessions. This approach challenges students' perception that information literacy sessions can be viewed as a non-essential add-on. This is in line with the approach proposed by Green and Macauley who argue that that the deeper Information Literacy is embedded into the wider research training programme and the more it is perceived by research students as integral to the cycle of 'gathering, organizing, reflecting and synthesising' (Green and Macauley, 2007 p.327), the more receptive researchers will be.

Secondly, that when research support sessions have been run for academic staff, their training needs have been found to be the same as those of research students. It is therefore possible to offer the same content within the sessions, although the timing at which this IL training is most accessible to staff needs to be considered very carefully.

Thirdly, that when the IL sessions are underpinned by adult learning theory such as Knowles' theory, adults feel more engaged in the learning process if they know why they need to learn about information literacy. ILS staff found that using this approach with mature research students made them more willing to engage with the RTP. In particular the following strategies were adopted:

1. The research students were consulted as to the time when the sessions were delivered, thus giving them a degree of ownership of the planning process.
2. Research students were more open to engagement with the content of the session after they had completed the Skills Audit since they had self-identified their information needs.
3. Research students were more willing to participate in the sessions after the content of the sessions (information and resource discovery) had been positioned within the research cycle of 'gathering, organizing, reflecting and synthesizing' (Green, 2006 p.176)
4. Research students' attention was increased by co-delivery of sessions using specialist ILS staff, such as interlibrary loans staff and research repository staff.

It is hoped that the conclusions drawn from this paper will be of use to IL educators facing similar challenges. It can certainly be argued that the integration of IL into the Research Training Programme will continue to foster greater collaboration between library and faculty staff at Worcester University with the aim to further enhance the learning experience of its research students.

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Appendix A

Lesson Plan Session 1

Lesson Plan			
Session title: Building Your Bibliography Session 1: Using the library online resources and databases. Venue PL 1002			
Session Leader: Rachel Johnson			
Date: 05/10/2010	Time: 17:00 – 18:30	Length of session: 2 hours	No of students 14
Learning outcomes: Gain an overview of how much you know (Skills audit) Know how to formulate a search strategy Know how to use all aspects of the Resources Online Know how to access and search generic e-databases			
Introduction	Session leader	Why are we doing this? Where does it fit into my study? Place in research cycle. To develop transferable skills in how to search and research effectively in generic terms and in one's specialist subject area. So that: - You recognise when you need information - Know where to find the information - Know how to use it - Understand the ethics of using it? - Keep safe? - Know how to evaluate it	5 mins
Skills Audit	Session leader/ student	Fill in **Skills Audit questionnaire** leaving last question unanswered	10 mins
Formulation of search strategy	Session leader/ Student	*Give out Handouts on Search Strategy* Explain need to: 1. Formulate the research question and its scope 2. Identify important concepts within the question 3. Identify search terms to describe those concepts 4. Consider synonyms and variations of those terms 5. Prepare the search logic Think about search logic – Youtube video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oa66AxTbjxA (start 3:11 in and go to 5:58 then 6:22) Activity: Students to consider abstracts on sport, archaeology, allergy science, business, psychology <u>or</u> diagrammatic brainstorm with research question as centre. Work in pairs/threes – peer assess each others key words Then apply method to own research subject.	5 mins 3 mins 10 mins
Introduction to Resources Online	Session leader/ Students	*Give out handouts on Getting Started* 1. Library catalogue : author/title/keyword search. Point to handout – no need for demo. Mention:	5 mins

		– Own account, renewals, reservations – Other library catalogues – COPAC – Update blog 2. Subject homepages – demo Business, Education or English – Finding journal articles will give most useful journals databases. 3. Latest news (ILS blog). Mention RSS and say it will be covered later for those who don't already use it. 4. Electronic Reference – good for general reference e-books. For subject based print reference sources see also subject area in Peirson Library. Students explore Resources Online using own subject as search	Up to 10 mins
Introduction e-databases	Session leader/ Students	Access from Resources Online - E-resources - PERI Academic Search Complete Search: - Postgraduate research (nb. A string of words is interpreted as a phrase) - AND writing - Look at one – show email, save, print - **Expalin the Getit@UW button** - Mention refine search scholarly journals - Show at Search History - Show at Visual Search – Doctoral research and writing (filters: full text) *nb. If you like concept mapping see www.webbrain.com* - Show Help on Setting Preferences and option of MyEbscoHost *(Give out handouts)* - Point out Export Practical searching **–** students own subjects in ASC More specialized electronic resources: Subject Liaison Librarians – availability and support – contacts – see Subject pages A-Z Journals list: good if you have a reference but not for searching for articles. Look up 'Educational Review' – explain access. - **Further explain current position on Getit@UW button**	10 - 15 mins 10 mins
Introduce PILOT Access to PILOT	Session leader	Inform students what it is. Explain content referred to throughout sessions is expanded in Pils. Demo PILOT module 1 Search Strategy and Databases section Access PILOT. Encourage to explore resource in own time. Students – SSO – Blackboard – PILOT Staff – Staff Homepage – Blackboard – network username and password or initial.surname and password Students log on to Blackboard	10 mins
Handouts		Skills Audit. Planning a Search Strategy. Getting Started. MyEbscoHost.	

Assessment: No assessment
How will you know the learning outcomes have been reached by the students? When available -Evaluation sheets for session given out and completed at end of session. Evaluation also included in feedback on the whole module.

Lesson Plan Session 3

Lesson Plan				
Session title: RTP401 Building Your Bibliography II: Internet resources and keeping up-to-date.				
Session Leader: Rachel Johnson				
Date: 12/10/2009	Time: 17.00-18.30	Length of session: 1.5 hours		No of students 15

Aims:
    • Effective web search techniques using strategies covered in first session
    • Effective use of web to manage information and save time
Learning outcomes:
Use a range of search tools effectively
    ✓ Use delicious.com to store and share bookmarks
    ✓ Efficient internet searching
    ✓ Log in and check Google Reader (or your own newsreader)
    ✓ Add a selection of news feeds to Google Reader
    ✓ Manage your own feeds
    ✓ Identify sources of Open Access resources including the Worcester Research Repository (WRaP)
    ✓ Identify services available to researchers from the British Library				

Activity	Student or Leader	Content	Timing
Delicious demo	Leader	Show delicious site – www.delicious.com	5 mins
Delicious	Students	Students set up delicious areas and access RJ's shared sites. See handout for instructions. Can also be accessed via PILOT **NB** Reminder to evaluate sites found.	15-20 mins

Effective use of Google	Leader/ Students	Remind students about importance of formulating a clear search strategy. Demonstrate:
		    1. Google www.google.co.uk (UK version)
		        • Search: postgraduate study skills (note sponsored links, vast number etc)
		        • "postgraduate study skills" (phrase search)
		        • As above – pages from UK
		        • Advanced search – domain (e.g. gov.uk, ac.uk).
		Other tips in Advanced Search:
		    • Minus sign e.g., internet marketing (*without the words*) advertising
		    • Site specific e.g. for population of Worcester see
		www. statistics.gov.uk
		    • Similar words or synonyms – Boolean operator 'OR' e.g. woman or female
		    • File type: e.g. ppt
		
		Search 'postgraduate study skills' with ppt and ac.uk as demo
		
		Give out **Efficient Internet Searching** Handouts
		
		    • Evaluate – who, when, where, why, who for?
		    • Often does not provide very up to date results –
		    • News
		Internet searching Students search for own resources
		
		Students own searching
			10 mins
			
			10 mins

Google Scholar	Leader	Google Scholar. (See options under 'more') also http://scholar.google.co.uk Pulls together academic resources, mainly journals and books.	

		Some full text, mostly just abstract
		Use as index
		Check A-Z List to check if UW hold journal.
		e.g. Reflective practice nursing – cited by – leads to more references
		
		NB can set up Refworks export preference in Google Scholar e.g. *children's literature*
		       Narrative therapy
		       Minus education
			5 mins

		Students own searches	5 – 10 mins
RSS feeds	Leader/ Students	Google Reader – see first handout for instructions Demo RJ – Google reader Google and sign in – follow handout Can also be accessed via PILOT	15 mins
Open Access Publishing and WRaP JD to demo. SB -	Leader / Students	For general information about Open Access Publishing see PILOT **Introduce Janet.** Demo WRaP and explain purpose. Students to browse resources currently available. SB to show what can be done.	10 – 15 mins

British Library
 	
SF to explain
	Leader/
	Students
		Inform students of services available from BL.
		Show website.
		  • Use for ILLs
		  • Provides Zetoc service – for instructions on setting up Zetoc alerts see first handout
		  • Useful information on supporting researchers www.bl.uk
		  • Catalogue – largest physical collection in UK
		  • Visits – see website
		  • Joining – see website
		  • Training days – see website and Grad School blog
		  • Digital resources – e.g.19th c newspapers
		Introduce Su. And finally … EThOS – give out handouts and demo site
			10 mins

Skills Audit and Evaluation sheet	Students	Students to complete the last question of the Skills Audit sheet. Students to complete evaluation sheet and submit both sheets to lecturer.	10 mins

Assessment: No assessment

How will you know the learning outcomes have been reached by the students?
Evaluation sheets given out and completed at end of session. Evaluation also included in feedback on the whole module.

Additional notes: Handouts: Finding and Managing Information via the Web. Efficient Internet Searching.

Appendix B

INFORMATION LITERACY CHECKLIST

LIBRARY RESOURCES

1. Can you list a number of different sources in which you might expect to find information to use in your research? YES/NO

2. Have you made use of:
    *   e-journals? YES/NO
    *   databases (e.g. bibliographic indexes)? YES/NO
    *   electronic reference sources?
        YES/NO

LOCATING AND ACCESSING RESOURCES

3. Do you know how to conduct a systematic literature search? YES/NO

4. How would you trace details of books published in your subject area?
    a) at University of Worcester

…………………………………………………………………..
    b) held elsewhere

        …………………………………………………………………..

5. Do you know how to trace relevant journal literature and conference papers? YES/NO

6. Which of the following have you done when searching electronic resources?

    *   Applied search logic (AND, OR, NOT) YES/NO
    *   Used truncation (e.g. *) YES/NO
    *   Searched for phrases YES/NO

7. Have you identified databases relevant to your subject accessible via the library web pages? YES/NO

8. Are you aware of the reciprocal borrowing schemes available to you? YES/NO

9. Are you aware of the resources available via Repositories and Open access publishing? YES/NO

CURRENT AWARENESS

10. Do you use blogs, discussion lists, and/or social networking sites to develop subject awareness? YES/NO

11. Do you use any current awareness alerting services / RSS feeds? YES/NO

INTERNET AND DATABASES

12.   Could you list the comparative advantages and disadvantages of search engines and subject specific web resources?   YES/NO

EVALUATING INFORMATION

13.   Do you feel confident to evaluate the quality of the information you find?   YES/NO

14.   List 3 reasons why the quality of a web site may vary from that of a printed resource

        …………………………………………………………………………………..

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15.   Would you routinely make use of the peer-review tick box in an electronic full text service? Why or why not?

        …………………………………………………………………………………..

ORGANISING AND COMMUNICATING INFORMATION

16.   Are you familiar with the referencing scheme preferred by your discipline, including how to reference electronic material?   YES/NO

17.   Are you aware of copyright regulations in relation to use of published material and the publication of your own material?   YES/NO

18.   Do you know how to use bibliographic software to organise your references? YES/NO

AND FINALLY…..

19.   Have you identified any areas where you would like to improve your skills?

        …………………………………………………………………………………..

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