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Chan, L. et al 2002. *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> [Retrieved 22 January 2007].

RIDLs: a collaborative approach to information literacy

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The Research Information and Digital Literacies (RIDLs) coalition was established in June 2012, with a one-year grant from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). RIDLs is a network of organisations and individuals with a shared interest in advancing and promoting information literacy (IL) in the UK higher education (HE) research environment, through the implementation of a defined programme of activities. One of the distinctive features of RIDLs is therefore that it is not simply a forum, but a collaborative venture aimed at achieving practical outcomes.

RIDLs seeks to take IL beyond the library world with which it is traditionally associated; although the invaluable role of librarians in helping to develop the information skills and know-how of university students and academic staff is recognised, the engagement with other players is equally important. Thus the coalition has brought together stakeholders from the realms of graduate training, research data management, academic information science, and from such diverse organisations as Jisc, Vitae, Jorum, the UK Council on Graduate Education (UKCGE), the Higher Education Academy (HEA), the Digital Curation Centre (DCC) and the Society for Research in Higher Education (SRHE).

With its initial programme nearing its end, RIDLs will have achieved the following:

- It has established itself as a representative body with a common purpose, working methods and a membership that has expanded over the past year.
- On that basis, it has fostered and helped to develop creative interrelationships between groups of players. Organisations from different domains, which had little or no relationship in the past, now have a forum where ideas may be exchanged, and where activities are developed jointly.
- RIDLs has developed a resource, in the form of a provisional set of criteria aimed at describing, reviewing and assessing information literacy training interventions. These criteria now require recognition as a consistent and reliable resource for the use of anyone involved in the scoping, development and running of training interventions.
- In conjunction with the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL), RIDLs has identified a documented set of good practice cases in information literacy training from a representative range of institutions, and covering a variety of interventions. These too need to be disseminated.
- Working with partners such as Vitae, UKCGE and SRHE, RIDLs has contributed to a series of awareness-raising regional workshops.
- RIDLs has scoped and is overseeing a research project aimed at assessing the landscape in training/awareness raising for open data skills – an important and topical area which has received little attention to date.
- RIDLs is exploring international relationships, in particular through the participation of several of its members in a proposal under a recent European Commission FP7 call on open access training resources; although this has been turned down, the process of formulating the bid provided a valuable opportunity for international networking. A dialogue has recently been initiated with UNESCO, on the basis of its programme on information and media literacy.

Under these various headings, different RIDLs members have taken the lead, and have contributed proactively to move forward the programme. This has underlined the ethos of RIDLs as an initiative which is largely driven by the motivation of its members.

But what of the future? RIDLs has been successful in achieving most of its initial objectives, but is it sustainable as a lively and viable initiative beyond its first year? It is time now to reflect on what might be possible, and discussions have already taken place, for instance at LILAC 2013. Questions to be addressed include whether there is a genuinely useful and ongoing role for such a collaboration; what activities it might engage in; what outputs it might produce; and whether it should extend its scope beyond the HE research environment in the UK.

There is some suggestion that RIDLs might foster new sets of relationships, to place research-associated IL in a broader context, for instance with reference to transferable skills; this could bring into play stakeholders from careers advisory services, learned societies and professional bodies, and conceivably non-academic employers. Within a university setting, it might take advantage of such expanded relationships to increase its relevance to academic researchers themselves – a community with which RIDLs has admittedly had little direct contact to date.

Implicit to any consideration of the future is the extent to which RIDLs can demonstrate value; and, crucially, what input (in terms of time, networking/outreach and financial support) might be reasonably expected of organisations that are part of the collaboration – which of course relates to how partner organisations perceive the value that they derive from their participation. The future financing of the initiative is a particular challenge: the renewal of the HEFCE grant is far from certain, and if RIDLs is to survive, imaginative ways will have to be found to identify resourcing opportunities.

The next few months will show whether an endeavour such as RIDLs has a continuing and distinctive role to play in an IL environment that is not short of initiatives and developments. Views and ideas are welcome.

Resources

Research Information and Digital Literacies (RIDLs)

<http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/>

RIDLs Strand 2: Criteria

<http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/strand2/>

RIDLs Strand 3: Good practice

<http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/strand3/>

RIDLs Strand 5: Project work

<http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/strand5/>