# Journal of Information Literacy

## Project

# Welsh Information Literacy Project: Phase 4 2013/14

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## 1. Introduction

In previous issues of the *Journal of Information Literacy*, we have reported on the first three phases of the Welsh Information Literacy Project (WILP) (Head and Jackson 2011; Jackson 2012; Murray 2013). Here we provide an update on the project's fourth year, its second based at Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, the further education college for north west Wales.

The overall aim of the project is "to promote the understanding and development of information literacy in education, the workplace and the wider community in Wales" (Welsh Information Literacy Project 2014). It is a cross-sector project funded by CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries Wales, a division of the Welsh Government.
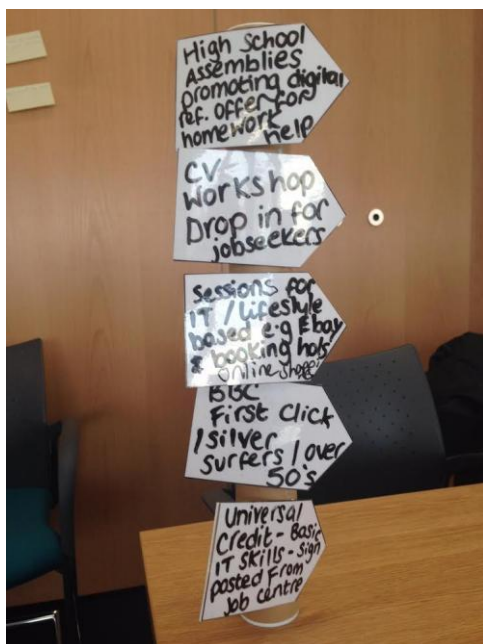
The focus of Phase 4 has been:

- developing information literacy (IL) amongst public library staff;
- developing IL amongst secondary school pupils by working with school librarians and teachers;
- creating Information Literacy Champions networks for further education (FE) and higher education (HE).

## 2. Public libraries

The public library strand has focused on developing the IL of library staff in order for them to be able to better support the information skills of the wider community. All Welsh local authority library services, except for two, have undertaken some form of IL training with their staff, supported by the project. The feedback from public library staff has been very encouraging with some recurrent themes:

- Great interest in IL skill development;
- Very positive about the opportunity to consider differing enquiry levels;
- The diverse range of enquiries was highlighted;
- Concerns of lapsed staff training with regards to enquiry work have been raised and addressed;
- Staff could voice that they need more support;
- Queries raised about the online location of best practice and qualification resources in the future;
- Possibility of developing online IL training similar to that which currently exists for reader development;
- Requests for more high profile marketing of Agored Cymru qualifications and support in their delivery.

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A number of authorities have used the Agored Cymru IL units to formalise, and provide credit for, the IL training. In total approximately 100 staff from five authorities have undertaken the Level 2 award and a number have progressed on to take the Level 3 award.

The training has focused on how public libraries can use existing activities as hooks for promoting IL in a wide range of contexts.

One authority, Caerphilly, has also undertaken work with public library users (Digital Fridays), continuing their tradition of supporting information skills delivery in cooperation with other local providers.

## 3. Schools

The project team continued to work on embedding the Information Literacy Framework for Wales into schools across Wales. In Phase 4 there was more focus on working with public libraries to support local schools, although some work continued to be done directly with schools as follows:

- Cowbridge High School (Vale of Glamorgan) carried out work with pupils with a reading age of 8 years. However, this was unsuccessful because the units were regarded as too high level for this reading age. The school therefore considered using WILP materials with higher reading age pupils;
- Coleg Cymunedol y Dderwen (Bridgend) used the Framework and material with year 7 pupils on a weekly basis;
- Vale of Glamorgan and Conwy Libraries undertook successful pilots in their local authorities on supporting the IL needs of pupils transitioning from primary to secondary school;
- The project worked with Welsh Government staff to identify content for Hwb (the all-Wales schools Virtual Learning Environment) to make resources created as part of the project available to teachers across Wales;
- Awareness raising was undertaken with PGCE students at Bangor University and Aberystwyth University to highlight the importance of IL as a key skill for learners of all ages.

## 4. Academic libraries

HE and FE library staff from across Wales were invited to nominate staff to become Information Literacy (IL) Champions. The role of the IL Champion was based on the successful IL Champion role established with public and school library staff. This model was originally used by CyMAL for the library marketing champions, although the IL networks are more virtual communities of practice. The primary role of an IL Champion is:

- To be the main contact point for all IL issues;
- To attend any IL meetings as appropriate;
- To assist in the delivery of IL training and encourage appropriate staff to partake in such training;
- To communicate and promote the latest IL initiatives/campaigns to library staff and users;
- To monitor and feedback on all IL activity where necessary;
- To ensure local IL strategies and plans are consistent with the national strategies;
- To advise the WILP project officers about relevant activities of interest/concern;
- To assist in developing yearly IL plans;
- To contribute to IL advocacy.

By January 2014 27 staff had joined the HE/FE IL Champions network. Both WHELF (Welsh Higher Education Librarians Forum) and the Colegau Cymru (Colleges Wales) Learning Resource Managers Network have pledged support for the Champions network to ensure their continuation beyond the end of the project.

## 5. Advocacy

A range of methods is used to promote the project aims and activities to practitioners across Wales and beyond. There are regular posts by the project on Twitter and we currently have over 1,400 followers (@welsh_info_lit).

The project officers continue to update the WILP website, which is hosted by the National Library of Wales at http://welshlibraries.org/skills/information-literacy/. All the resources mentioned in this report can be obtained from the project website.

A range of advocacy materials have been produced, which are available on the website and which highlight the importance of IL in a number of contexts, such as for employers or schools.

## 6. Conclusion

Phase 4 of the Welsh Information Literacy Project has further successfully demonstrated the possibilities for embedding IL amongst both library staff and their users outside the traditional academic preserve of HE and FE information skills provision. Furthermore, the project has continued to develop new models of supporting IL delivery – through the use of accredited units of learning and through the creation of virtual communities of practice (CoP). We believe the models of delivery we are using are applicable to other parts of the UK and beyond, and address the pressing need to improve the IL levels of those in work, those seeking employment and those moving on to higher studies.

We are currently implementing an exit strategy which will see the successful sector-specific virtual CoP handed over to relevant professional organisations. The schools CoP will come under the responsibility of the Schools Library Association, the public library CoP will be run under the auspices of SCL Wales (Society of Chief Librarians), whilst WHELF and Colegau Cymru will have responsibility for the academic CoP.

## 7. Phase Five (2014-15)

The objectives for the current phase are as follows:

- To identify five case studies with a range of community groups (young adults, homeless, NEETs, University of the Third Age etc);
- To identify two case studies on employability (council staff in Gwynedd, job seekers);
- To manage the exit strategy for handing over the running of the virtual communities of practice to the relevant sector groups;
- To organise an all-Wales end of project event.

## Acknowledgements

## References

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