

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND

LIBRARY SERVICES

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Library Services' policy in relation to Information Literacy skills development

Introduction

Library Services is keen to build on existing good practice to ensure that all students who have undergone a programme of study at UWE become truly information literate. This can aid their employability through providing them with the skills to help in finding work and the knowledge needed, once in employment, to manage their information needs.

There are various definitions and models of information literacy. Generally, an information literate person is deemed to know when and why they need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner. So, to be information literate requires an understanding of:

- a need for information
- the resources available
- how to find information
- the need to evaluate results
- how to work with or exploit results
- ethics and responsibility of use
- how to communicate or share findings
- how to manage findings.

Current experience

Clearly, librarians have a part to play in aspects of this, but very much see the development of information literacy skills in students as a collaborative effort with academic staff. The module learning outcomes within many programmes cover aspects of the above in different ways, and often implicitly. Certainly, some librarians are heavily involved in training students in the use of the resources available, how to find and evaluate information and some librarians also cover issues of ethics, particularly relating to copyright, referencing and plagiarism.

However, current practice suggests that not all students are consistently provided with the opportunity to learn and then to develop these skills. In some cases, the opportunities are not appropriate or may be ad hoc.

Recommendations

In terms of library input to the information literacy skill set, the following recommendations are proposed, based on the principles of embedding, timeliness and integration:

- students receive training at every level of their programme in order to build up knowledge and understanding of working with information (rather than just the skills in the mechanics of using certain resources)
- such training is made available at an appropriate point within the year so that students can appreciate its relevance and apply it directly to their learning and assessment
- learning about information literacy is consolidated through integration into formative and/or summative assessment tasks

To achieve these recommendations requires subject librarians to work closely with academic staff, and especially programme leaders, to identify relevant opportunities, activities and tasks. This will occur at the curriculum planning stage of any new programmes, and will ideally take place on a regular basis with the teaching team as programmes develop.

Resources

A tool for identifying the information literacy skill set and where it might be developed within and across programmes is already available on the library web site (http://www.uwe.ac.uk/library/info/academic/il_audit.htm)

A set of resources to support students' independent learning, and also to be used in a blended learning mode with academics and librarians, is available in the iskillzone on the library web site (<http://iskillzone.uwe.ac.uk/RenderPages/RenderHomePage.aspx>)

Both of these resources can be open to adaptation and development in line with discipline needs.

Library Services has also invested in a Web Developer and has a small e-learning team to develop online resources to be used to support information literacy, recognising that addressing the needs of distant and mobile learners can improve the learning environment for all students.

Good practice

A selection of examples of the use of new technologies to integrate information literacy into the curriculum can be seen in the appendix. The examples cover use in modules at all levels and include support for professional programmes.

Future

Information literacy is a set of skills that spills over into other areas of skills development, including IT and academic writing. The outcomes of the LTAC sub group on Academic Literacy, and the development of the GDP, point

towards the need to clarify, and the opportunity to raise the profile of, skills development across the university. It is clear that collaboration between services and faculties is crucial in order to reduce duplication of effort and to avoid gaps in students' knowledge. Building on years of experience working with faculties and in being able to identify what works well, Library Services is keen to implement a policy, in collaboration with academic staff, on the development of IL skills and to ensure that embedding, timeliness and integration are key factors.

What this means

For the faculty (in conjunction with librarians)

Identifying in which modules (including core modules and GDP, perhaps) particular IL skills will be developed, at each level, and how the learning will cumulate throughout the programme.

Agreeing on when the learning will take place in order to maximise its effectiveness (induction week, for example, is not always the best time to train students in the intricacies of a series of complex online databases!).

Creating an opportunity for students to be assessed on these skills, at each level, within the wider assessment strategy of the programme.

For the library (in conjunction with academics)

Developing a framework that offers ideas and activities for the learning that could take place at each level, building on existing good practice.

Creating more interactive online materials to support IL training, and guidance on how best they can be used, in blended learning mode, with students, including through academic staff and Peer Assisted Learning.

Providing training for all subject librarians, to particular levels, in pedagogic skills and use of new technologies in teaching so that they can feel confident in designing and delivering teaching in a range of situations both face to face and online.

Appendix - Good practice examples

Developing Business Knowledge

The success of timely information literacy development can be seen in Developing Business Knowledge at Level 3 – a core module with around 350 students. The assessment is a 6,500 word literature review which is due in March. An interactive learning unit offers advice on search techniques, appropriate information resources and sources of help is available on Blackboard. In mid November, the students' normal fortnightly seminar takes place in the Library, giving them an opportunity to ask questions and discuss their literature review with a business librarian. Students then reflect on this in their learning journal, which is assessed. Uptake and feedback has been very positive from both students and the module leader.

The Interactive guide to the Law Library

The Interactive Guide to the Law Library evolved from a print resource book produced to support professional legal studies programmes. It is a web based guide which includes podcasts, video clips, tutorials and content related to specific legal information resources. Practical legal research is an embedded core skill which pervades both the Bar Vocational Course and Legal Practice Course. Both programmes are offered on a full time and open learning basis and both programmes require the students to be competent in the use of print and electronic resources. The challenge for the library service has been, and still is, to develop support which is not timetabled for delivery at a specific point but which can be accessed when required and at point of need. The print resource book is still given to students and the interactive guide complements by providing live activity and therefore active engagement with the material. Both the resource book and interactive guide are used as tools within formal workshops held by academic staff.

Market Analysis for Private Investors

The integration of information literacy development into the curriculum is demonstrated by a level 2 module Market Analysis for Private Investors. The assignment is a 'game' in which groups of students set up and trade a virtual portfolio of shares. The group that makes the largest 'profit' wins. Business librarians are involved in 2 consecutive lectures and seminars – team teaching with the module leader. A learning unit approach is used to convey search techniques and sources of company information. It includes an interactive online tutorial: by completing this students actually set up their share portfolio. Student engagement in these activities is excellent – their introduction has led to a significant decrease in the additional support needed by this cohort.

Managing Change

An example of an integrated approach is demonstrated in Managing Change at Level 3. The pedagogic approach focuses on enquiry based learning. The assignment centres on a group storyboard presentation reflecting the way in which an organisation (chosen by the students) has responded to a particular driver of change. The 'story' needs to be told from the perspectives of

different stakeholders. The business librarians work with the module leader to identify topical imperatives for change and a short list of organisations from which the students may choose. The information literacy input takes place in seminar slots where academic staff are also present, and uses a similar topical subject. The main focus is on evaluation of items identified by searching the internet, company websites, and online press, rather than academic literature. This is followed by an opportunity for groups to start their research and discuss sources and findings with both academic and library staff. Later, the librarians are invited to the final storyboard presentations and participate in the peer evaluation that contributes to the module mark.

Building Legal Information Skills (BLIS)

The integration of information literacy skills into summative assessment takes place in the Legal Method module at level 1. BLIS comprises a set of online tutorials covering core areas of competency for the level 1 undergraduate in law. The tutorials were originally created using Course genie and later Wimba create.

New Image.PNG - Windows Picture and Fax Viewer

UWE Bristol University of the West of England

Building Legal Information Skills (BLIS)

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Getting Started in BLIS

Finding the law is part of being a good lawyer.

This tutorial prepares you with the foundation skills to help you research assignments, cite legal authorities and shows you how to explore and evaluate a wide range of the available resources to support the academic stage of your legal training.

What do I do?

Work through each tutorial in your own time and at your own pace. Start with the tutorial on 'Database search strategies'.

- Database search strategies
- Case law
- Legislation
- Secondary Sources
- Plagiarism
- Referencing

As you work through each tutorial you may be directed to images of primary sources or given exercises to complete.

Complete the exercises in each tutorial. These are an essential part of your learning.

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Built With Wimba Create by the UWE Law Librarians (c) 2009

Each of the six units stands alone and students can work through the set independently and in any order once the foundation module on Database search strategies has been completed.

Within the framework of the Legal Method module students are scheduled to attend their first seminar workshop in the library PC labs. The PC labs accommodate 50 students and seminar groups are grouped to fill the lab.

One of the law librarians and one member of academic staff facilitate a workshop where students are introduced to BLIS and the first assessment in Legal Method. The focus of the workshop is entirely hands on with students starting the BLIS modules in a supportive environment where any queries can be fielded straightaway. This is usually the very first time students have used the VLE to access module information and students link to BLIS from their module pages rather than the law library web pages. The embedding of BLIS within the course content on the VLE reinforces a message of integration between library and Law School.

The assessment follows at the end of November. The assessment software on the VLE was used. All questions were multiple choice to allow for automatic grading since the cohort for 2008/2009 numbered 366.

Feedback was provided to students in the format of a PDF document, with solution and working for every question. Each answer was linked to where the student should have acquired the knowledge, e.g. "See page 34 of your Legal Resource Book or the BLIS Case Law Tutorial (citing a law report)".

Library Services staff
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