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The story of iLIP: Developing an Online IL staff development programme for library staff

Themes: Practical approaches to Information Literacy

Information Literacy (IL) is important, it is a key transferable skill required by all in today's digital global society. Librarians have a great deal of experience in this area and are in an ideal position to teach or facilitate the teaching of IL, or are they? Do all librarians understand what IL is? If they do, do they have the skills to teach it? Have they the pedagogical skills required to design courses and content, learning outcomes and assessment? The library schools do not teach the skills required and yet research has shown that teaching (both formal and informal) is becoming a core to many librarians' jobs. So how do librarians gain the skills required for teaching and developing IL programmes? CILIP now runs courses on pedagogy and as with most courses they are usually run in London and are expensive to attend. There are IL seminar days and conferences, which help show best practice and new initiatives. The CILIP CSG (Community Support Group) IL GROUP, are developing a regional training programme but that is in its infancy and will initially concentrate on helping all sectors to understand what IL is and why it is important. As more teaching is required it is probably a case of 'learning on the job' or depending on a few people who do have those skills to try cascade the information to their colleagues. The Library at Imperial College London has recognised a need to work with its librarians to develop both their IL and teaching skills.

In 2004 Imperial College developed an Online IL programme (OLIVIA – Online Virtual Library Assistant) for its students. The programme was 'housed' in the VLE WebCT but the content was written in HTML. This meant that there was an immediate skills gap for the librarians who were involved in the creation and development of future 'OLIVIAS', what was a VLE, how do you use it and how do you use Dreamweaver? The Library recognised further training was required and an initial IL staff development programme was developed. This programme has covered areas such as how to use Dreamweaver and WebCT along with the methodology of creating, designing and analysing an online programme, user needs analysis etc. Themed seminar days are also run on key IL areas such as plagiarism.

The OLIVIA programme was released to the departments only if five to ten hours IL teaching was built into the student timetable for librarians. A blended learning approach is used but this style of teaching is 'librarian intensive' and for those not used to teaching this is a challenge. At this point it was decided to develop an online 'Information Literacy Internal Programme', iLIP. The programme was to provide support in the form of various units such as 'what is Information Literacy', 'teaching toolkit', 'teaching with OLIVIA' etc. The programme was released to staff in August of 2005. This paper will consider the wider issues of IL and staff development in the sector, the development of Imperial College's IL staff development programme and the creation of its online programme iLIP.