

---

# UCL subject librarians get WISE in Moodle



Angela Jeffkins  
Information Skills Trainer  
Royal Free Hospital Medical  
Library, UCL Library Services  
Tel: 020 7794 0500 x33201  
E-mail: a.jeffkins@ucl.ac.uk

Subject librarians at UCL (University College London) spent a busy summer this year remodeling and developing 'WISE', UCL Library Service's comprehensive online guide to finding and using information, ready for its launch in Moodle on the first day of the new academic session.

## BACKGROUND

WISE originated from a need to provide training in transferable skills for graduate students, as identified by the Roberts Review<sup>1</sup>. UCL Library Services was commissioned by the UCL Graduate School in 2005 to provide online training in transferable skills within the areas of information literacy, and the first module of WISE (WebCT Information Skills Environment) was launched in WebCT in 2005, accompanied by a series of owl logos to portray the WISE theme:



## CONTENT AND DESIGN

WISE consists of a series of subject-based modules, the structure of which was derived from the SCONUL 7 pillars of information literacy model<sup>2</sup> to ensure that all areas of information literacy were being addressed. Users can work through an entire subject module to develop knowledge across all areas of information literacy, or dip in to any module where necessary to develop the skills they need to complete a particular assignment, for example. A set of information skills standards were drafted, to be incorporated into the modules as a benchmark for the assessment of skills.

## THE MOVE TO MOODLE

UCL's decision to replace WebCT with Moodle provided an opportunity to update and remodel the existing modules, to launch modules for the remaining faculties and to move towards an inclusive approach whereby all UCL users, from new students to experienced researchers, would find WISE a useful resource to develop their information literacy skills.

Much of the content of WISE is in the form of webpages, which meant the migration to Moodle was simply a case of uploading the pages to the new platform. Other elements, such as quizzes and glossaries, were migrated by UCL's Learning Technologies Support Service (LTSS). A new template was developed for the webpages to improve navigation, incorporating elements such as a menu bar and 'Next' and 'Back' links.

The name 'WISE' was retained for reasons of continuity, and it was decided that it could stand as a name in its own right, and did not necessarily be seen as an acronym (WISE comes from 'Web Information Skills Environment').

A new module was created, aimed at those new to academic work. WISE for Beginners introduces the importance of information skills and aims to get users started on searching for information. The original subject-based modules take users beyond the basics and are more geared towards those carrying out research, from undergraduate students working on their dissertation through to PhD students or research staff.

The move to Moodle also provided an opportunity to rethink the way in which online training on the use of specific resources was presented. Original versions of WISE included pages of screen shots and text. With the move to Moodle

we looked to make these sections more lively and interactive by incorporating Informs interactive tutorials and short demonstrations to illustrate particular points using Wink software.

## **PROMOTION**

Online information skills training at UCL was not designed to replace more traditional face-to-face training, but to complement it and provide an optional alternative. WISE brings choice and flexibility to the user, providing information skills training at their desktop at exactly the time when they need it, and so they can revisit it as often as they wish.

WISE has been used by subject librarians in hands-on training sessions, whereby students have been asked to go in to certain parts of the modules, to link to an Informs tutorial, for example. The introduction of more interactive elements and self-assessment are likely to provide further opportunities for integration in face-to-face sessions. This is an important tool in promoting WISE, as students get to see and access it first hand and are therefore more likely to return to the site another time.

More traditional promotional means have included the use of posters and fliers distributed in the libraries, information on the library website<sup>3</sup> and a feature in the library newsletter<sup>4</sup>.

Perhaps the most valuable promotional activity has been raising awareness amongst academic teaching staff. Activity so far has focussed on asking known academic champions to lead the way and further liaison will build on this. So far it has taken two main forms:

- 1 *Academic staff using WISE in their teaching:* An area of information literacy that is often presented to students by academic staff is plagiarism and citing. Some academic staff have chosen to make use of WISE directly in teaching sessions in this area.
- 2 *Integration with other Moodle courses:* Most taught courses at UCL now have an accompanying Moodle course created by the academic teaching staff. Many of these courses contain sections on information skills, which have been created without consultation with library staff. Now we are beginning to identify these courses, raise awareness of WISE amongst the owners of the courses and offer to provide subject-specific, quality content in

their courses. By adapting content from WISE we have produced brief 'tasters' within other Moodle courses, that link back to WISE.

In order to encourage other Moodle users to explore WISE, we are currently investigating the use of 'blocks' in Moodle as a promotional tool. The default Moodle screen has menus displayed down each side which contain 'blocks', elements which are customisable and can display various Moodle features, such as a calendar, RSS feeds, search tools, etc. We aim to develop 'blocks' that can be displayed in other Moodle courses and contain subject specific links to the relevant WISE module.

## **OBSTACLES**

The biggest obstacle to the development of WISE right from the start has been staff time. The content of the modules is extensive and as such has taken a long time to produce, with coverage for some faculties being more extensive than others. The majority of the modules were developed by subject librarians as part of their responsibility to provide information skills training in their particular subject areas, on top of their regular workload. Once the Arts and Humanities module had been created, the authors of other modules could adapt this content for their own subject areas, but in most cases this was still a lengthy process. As a lot of the content refers to the use of online resources, it is constantly going out of date and requires time to amend and update.

Despite the increased pressures on their workload, in general subject librarians found the development of the modules to be a worthwhile and rewarding experience. They were able to develop technical skills, creating web pages, Wink demonstrations and Informs tutorials. It provided opportunities to refresh their knowledge of resources in their area and ensure they were up-to-date. It was also important that the content should be developed by those who are now promoting it and making use of it in their face-to-face training sessions.

## **FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

Although WISE is now available in a complete and usable form in Moodle, it is still in its infancy and has great potential for further development. Some of the priority developmental areas we have identified include:

- 1 *Content and interactive elements:* Although we have integrated interactive guides to a number of key resources in each subject, further development is needed to cover all the relevant resources. This will also lead to further use of WISE within information skills training sessions.
- 2 *Integration with academic teaching and other Moodle courses:* In order for WISE to be successful it is vital for us to integrate links in other Moodle courses. Through liaison with academic teaching staff we hope to develop further integration within their Moodle courses and make WISE a resource which they value and to which they can refer their students.
- 3 *Self assessment to an information skills standard:* It is important that students should be able to measure their knowledge and skills and record their development. We are currently drafting plans in liaison with SLAIS (UCL's School of Library, Information and Archive Studies) and UCL CALT (Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching) to align the draft skills standard developed for WISE with key skills identified for UCL students with the aim of providing online self-assessment tools linked to WISE. Through collaboration with the Graduate School we aim to fulfil the original aim of WISE, to provide research students with transferable skills, and test and record their progress in this area.
- 4 Jenkins A. Get WISE with Moodle! *Library News Online: the newsletter of UCL Library Services*. (20). 2008

[All websites accessed 21 December 2008]

We feel that WISE has an exciting future and great potential to become an essential tool for UCL students and staff alike to develop or update their information literacy skills.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 Roberts G. SET for success: the supply of people with science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills: the report of Sir Gareth Roberts' review. London: HM Treasury, 2002.  
Available via [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/ent\\_res\\_roberts.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/ent_res_roberts.htm).
- 2 SCONUL Advisory Committee on Information Literacy. *Information skills in higher education: a SCONUL position paper*. London: SCONUL, 1999.  
Available at [www.sconul.ac.uk/groups/information\\_literacy/papers/Seven\\_pillars.html](http://www.sconul.ac.uk/groups/information_literacy/papers/Seven_pillars.html).
- 3 For more information on WISE see [www.ucl.ac.uk/library/wise.shtml](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/wise.shtml).