
SCONUL working group on information literacy

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The SCONUL working group on information literacy has been actively working on a number of initiatives designed to invigorate and re-invigorate interest in information literacy through contact, collaboration and profile-raising events.

The action plan for 2008–9/10 identifies a number of strands, some designed to achieve a short-term win, others – such as building up relationships with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and European and international information literacy organisations – have longer-term aims. This short update provides a flavour of the recent and current work of the group.

PROGRESS ON INFORMATION LITERACY AND RESEARCHERS

A successful one-day seminar, 'Information strategies for researchers – where are we making a difference?', jointly organised with CONUL (Ireland's Consortium of National and University Libraries) and held at Dublin City University, attracted over 80 delegates. The seminar covered papers from a range of perspectives: career researchers, librarians supporting the needs of researchers and librarians working on strategic initiatives (at both institutional and national levels) designed to integrate information literacy into formal structures.

A review of the seminar appeared in the last issue of *SCONUL Focus*¹ but, as a reminder, the key messages from the day can be summarised as:

- researchers are not a homogeneous group – attention needs to be paid to the different priorities and needs of individual researchers as their careers progress

- the complexity of a researcher's environment is in part informed by the variations which exist across disciplines and the different forms of research undertaken
- the focus for training should be on the complex processes of information management, rather than on information literacy alone
- practical advice for early career researchers might focus on support for publication
- the importance of collaboration with stakeholders is a key success factor – at all levels, faculty, institutional, national and international.

Following on from this successful event, other activities have included a collaborative partnership with the North West Academic Libraries (NoWAL) consortium² to deliver a series of workshops to enhance academic librarians' support for researchers and planned discussions between ourselves RLUK (Research Libraries UK) and the CILIP CSG (Community Services Group) information literacy group, to identify how best to maximise our combined expertise. And there exists the potential to feed into and inform the modelling of the 'academic library of the future'.

The *impact of the '7 pillars model'* on the design and delivery of information literacy across the UK forms part of the on-going research activities of the group; phase one of this study is to gather some quantitative feedback from member institutions in order to build up a comprehensive overview of the use and implementation of the model. This will be supplemented by an event to mark the tenth anniversary of the launch of the 7 pillars model for information literacy in 2009, which we hope will attract participation from national and international information professionals. The 7 pillars model has afforded the profession a key point of reference; for many colleagues it has offered a credible starting point for discussion about information literacy with academic colleagues; it has provided a framework on which to build instructional materials and content for the delivery of information literacy; and it has established SCONUL as a key driver in the development and uptake of information literacy across the higher education sector. The enduring nature of the model – the fact that it is still being used as an exemplar for good practice – is in no small part due to the professional and intellectual acumen of the founding members of the SCONUL working group for information literacy.

This event will be, in part, a celebration of the model, but more significantly it will examine how

the model has been interpreted, built on, customised, improved, used and re-used and even perhaps abandoned for an alternative approach. It will look to the future and the place of information literacy in relation to life-long learning and employability. It will aim to challenge and question assumptions made about information literacy that are implicit within the model and consider what options the future holds and the role the SCONUL WGIL might play. It is hoped that the event will attract presenters from across the globe who can demonstrate the impact information literacy has had on their professional practice and its role in changing and influencing relationships with key stakeholders at all levels: local, national and international.

More details about this event will be publicised in early in 2009.

The group is aiming to further joint working and collaboration with the HEA and a number of options have already been discussed with David Sadler, the HEA's director of networks. More specifically, the group aims to look at ways to jointly promote the roles of the national teaching fellows (NTFs) to colleagues; to conduct a survey of SCONUL members' perceptions of the HEA; to examine ways in which librarians can play a more active role in the HEA ICS (Information and Computer Sciences) subject centre; and concurrently to explore ways in which the subject centre can support the staff-development needs of librarians. Work on these and other activities will continue into the future, with the key objective of raising the profile of information literacy for a wider audience.

Contact has also been made with the LearnHigher Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL)³ and in particular the strand of the work of the CETL that has a specific focus on information literacy. Bob Glass from the department of information and communication at Manchester Metropolitan University has discussed with the group a number of joint initiatives which might be pursued; these include acting in an advisory capacity for the development of learning objects, making a contribution to a planned publication on 'literacies in HE' and providing support for various research initiatives.

Further dissemination of the work of the group will take place at the 2009 LILAC conference, where the focus will be on developing support for researchers.

For further information on any of the above initiatives, contact Jan Howden, chair of SWGIL (j.howden@gcal.ac.uk) or Alison Mackenzie, secretary of SWGIL (Alison.Mackenzie@edgehill.ac.uk).

REFERENCES

- 1 www.sconul.ac.uk/publications/newsletter/44
- 2 www.nowal.ac.uk
- 3 <http://www.learnhigher.mmu.ac.uk>