# SCONUL

# A review of the literature on current practice in the development of employability skills

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## Acknowledgments

## About SCONUL

The Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) represents all university libraries in the UK and Ireland, irrespective of mission group. It promotes awareness of the role of academic libraries in supporting research excellence and student achievement and employability, and represents their views and interests to governments and regulators. It helps academic libraries collaborate to deliver services efficiently including through shared services, and to share knowledge and best practice.



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# 1.  Introduction

Employability is an ongoing and current concern for Higher Education institutions (Higher Education Academy, 2014b; Thompson *et al.*, 2013; Harvey, 2003). The marketisation of Higher Education (HE) (BBC News, 2010; Wyness, 2013) has meant that data about graduate destinations is increasingly a tool to market institutions and inform the choices of prospective students (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2014; Unistats, 2014; Universities UK, 2010, p.4). Graduate recruiters have a limited budget for recruitment and will commonly target only a few institutions by visiting them to meet students at careers fairs and presentations or advertising their vacancies (High Fliers Research, 2014, p.30; Marszal, 2013). Indeed, the most recent edition of the Graduate Market notes that "The country's leading employers have been actively marketing their 2014 graduate vacancies at an average of 18 UK universities" (High Fliers Research, 2014, p.6).

This report seeks to collate and review the literature on current practice in the development of employability skills. This is with a view to demonstrating the contribution of libraries to employability and the development of 'graduate attributes' and situating libraries' 'traditional' information literacy role in the new broader academic skills landscape. It aims to provide SCONUL with the basis to develop an advocacy tool for libraries within their institutions and explore further work with partners (e.g. National Union of Students (NUS) and employer bodies).

## 2.   Defining employability

Before reviewing current practice in the development of employability skills it is necessary to define the concept of 'employability' and the frequently associated idea of 'graduate attributes' (Thompson *et al.*, 2013; Hinchcliffe and Jolly, 2011).

The Higher Education Academy (2014) points to a 'widely accepted definition of employability' as cited in their *Pedagogy for employability* publication:

> a set of achievements, - skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (Higher Education Academy, 2012, p.4).

This suggests that such 'achievements' may be quantifiable, yet the definition provided immediately after this in the same report (Higher Education Academy, 2012) hints at complexity in its acknowledgement that "the emphasis is on developing critical, reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing the learner" (Harvey, 2003, p.3). In other words, it is difficult (and perhaps not desirable) to reduce employability skills to a checklist of attributes.

This shift to viewing employability less as a set of clear-cut attributes and more as a complex form of learning development is summarised by Hinchcliffe and Jolly (2011). They argue for a "four-stranded concept of identity that comprises value, intellect, social engagement and performance", in preference to the "traditional model" (Hinchcliffe and Jolly, 2011, p.1). This is supported by Snowden (2013) in his address to the Members' Annual Conference as president of Universities UK:

> Employability is in the end a complex blend of skill, attitude, experience, motivation and interest, underpinned by the ability to learn and to apply that learning to the challenges that work presents.

The general consensus appears to be that employability, whilst encompassing more than an academic degree alone, is not just skills-based either. For libraries and librarians it is important to remember that the definition is not standardised and remains contentious. Any attempt to demonstrate their contribution to the development of employability skills or 'graduate attributes' must keep in this mind.

## 3.   What do employers want?

Whilst definitions of 'employability' are not stable, they must inevitably consider what it is that employers want from the candidates they recruit. Several studies have addressed this, with particular reference to new graduates (CBI, 2011; CBI, 2013; Pennington, Mosley and Sinclair, 2013).

The annual survey by the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) looks at employers' education and skills needs. The most recent of these surveyed organisations collectively employ over 1.2 million people (CBI, 2013). It found that although 30% of vacancies now require "degree-level skills", having "the right attitudes and aptitudes" is rated as the "most important consideration" when businesses recruit graduates, taking priority over other factors including degree subject and degree classification (CBI, 2013, p.54). Similarly, whilst Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) degrees are valued, 45% of employers complained that those with this background did not arrive "rounded, grounded and ready for work" (CBI, 2013, p.6). The fact that 62% of these employers criticise their employees' IT skills suggests one route for demonstrating the relevance of information literacy skills (CBI, 2013, p.38). Indeed, the businesses surveyed by the CBI (2013, p.9) wanted to see higher education institutions do more to help students "develop work-relevant skills" (49%) and improve "the business relevance of undergraduate courses" (49%). These are areas where libraries can demonstrate a contribution.

This 2013 survey cites an earlier guide for students produced by the CBI and NUS, which sought to define the skills required by employers (CBI, 2011). Of the seven "key capabilities" included in the latter document, "business and customer awareness", includes the ability to understand "the key drivers for business success" (CBI, 2011, p.13). This is the skill identified as the weakest by employers in 2011, with 44% stating dissatisfaction with "levels of awareness among their candidates and recruits" and only 5% describing themselves as "very satisfied" (CBI, 2011, p.15). It remains one of the least satisfactory areas in the 2013 survey, with only 49% of employers describing themselves as "satisfied" and 3% "very satisfied" – not a great improvement overall (CBI, 2013, p.57). Yet this is perhaps the most pertinent area for librarians, who are well-placed help to equip students with the skills for finding and evaluating information about businesses.

Other capabilities potentially addressed in part by information literacy (IL) include "problem solving" and "application of information technology" (CBI, 2011, p.13). Despite this, the CBI and NUS make no mention of library involvement, although students are directed to their careers services (CBI, 2011, p.9).

Pennington, Mosley and Sinclair (2013) were funded by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to carry out a collaborative project with the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) and the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR), which looked in part at employers' views of graduates. It reinforces much of what the CBI (2011, 2013) has already noted about academic performance not being the most important factor, with most employers placing "motivation and interest, organisational fit, skills and work experience higher up their list of desirable criteria" (Pennington, Mosley and Sinclair, 2013, p. 9). Again of interest to librarians is their statement that employers "expect students and graduates to know something of the graduate job market" (Pennington, Mosley and Sinclair, 2013, p.10). Pennington, Mosley and Sinclair (2013, p.13) note that roughly

three-quarters of employers agree that "students using their careers service had a head start in the graduate job market". However, they also outline the significant number of graduates who "admit that their contact with their careers service was limited" – perhaps suggesting a role for libraries in helping them to increase their "reach into the student body" by providing a different route into these services (Pennington, Mosley and Sinclair, 2013, p.14). There certainly is an obvious opportunity here for library services to play their part in promoting careers services – through the contact they have with students throughout their time at university – as outlined by Tyrer, Ives and Corke (2013). It is also worth remembering that this is mutually beneficial, with Secker (2012, p.14) acknowledging students' lack of awareness of the "expertise of librarians" and tendency only to seek help from other departments at point of need – and perhaps, crisis.

Hinchcliffe and Jolly (2011) point out that as the HE sector has grown it is perhaps inevitable that the concept of what a graduate is has broadened and there may be a resultant gap between university and employer perceptions. They also suggest that employers may not wholly recognise "the identity a graduate presents" (Hinchcliffe and Jolly, 2011, p.564):

> Employers operate with a loose, tacit notion of graduate identity which varies according to their own requirements, determined by size and sector. [...] They need some kind of basis for conceiving this potential, and this basis is provided through the idea of graduate identity, suitably refracted and diffused in the light of their own requirements and experience of graduate recruits. (Hinchcliffe and Jolly, 2011, p.565)

Thus the examination of employer requirements does not help much with the attempt to define 'employability skills'. Nonetheless, it highlights some key areas in which librarians can contribute and articulate that contribution to HE partners and businesses.

# 4.  Careers theory

Pennington, Mosley and Sinclair (2013, p.7) identify the significance of career planning. Indeed, they argue that students should be advised to carry out "research and planning" rather than leaving their career choice to serendipity (Pennington, Mosley and Sinclair, 2013, p.9). Careers practitioners in different institutions utilise a range of models to support their approach to career planning and guidance (Careers Service, University of Bristol, 2014; Careers Group, University of London, 2014). These typically include a 'research' element, but the role of information professionals in providing or interpreting careers information is not well-established and few career services employ professionally qualified librarians (Wiley, 2011).

Recent models of career development have looked explicitly at the role of online careers information in particular. In a guide to 'Building Online Employability' for academics at the University of Derby, Longridge, Hooley and Staunton (2013) consider how students can use online environments to research and build their career. They make no mention of libraries or information professionals but acknowledge that:

> The easy availability of online information masks the fact that there is considerable skill in knowing how to ask the right questions of this sort of information and interpret what you are being told. (Longridge, Hooley and Staunton, 2013, p.6)

Evaluating information in this way is a key tenet of IL models (Secker and Coonan, 2011; SCONUL, 2011). However, Longridge, Hooley and Staunton (2013) are drawing on the concept of 'digital career literacy' and the framework of 'Seven C's' Hooley (2012, p.6) has proposed. Several of these overlap with IL, particularly 'critiquing', which is defined as "the ability to understand the nature of online career information and resources, to analyse its provenance and to consider its usefulness for a career" (Hooley, 2012, p.6). Hooley touches on IL but points out that it has attracted criticism for undervaluing "socially transmitted forms of information". He argues that this would be "a considerable limitation in any attempt to repurpose the concept for career, where implicit and socially transmitted forms of knowledge and information are recognised as being of crucial importance" (Hooley, 2012, p.6). The lack of recognised information sources does provide both a challenge and opportunity for any information professional attempting to contribute to the development of employability skills. However, librarians are already involved in helping their users to navigate socially mediated online information (Joint, 2011; Nicholas *et al.*, 2011; Oakley, 2013). Indeed, the ANCIL (A new curriculum for information literacy) model of IL includes "Finding and using people as information sources", including in person and online through social media (Secker and Coonan, 2011, p.12).

Overall this suggests that there is scope for IL to incorporate socially mediated forms of information and for digital career literacy to utilise IL skills. Yet there is clearly work to be done to raise awareness of this amongst careers theorists and practitioners.

# 5. Employability frameworks

Employability frameworks are one way in which HE institutions have sought to acknowledge the contribution the broader academic skills landscape makes to the development of 'graduate attributes' and employability skills. For example, the Higher Education Academic Record (HEAR) provides a standardised approach for undergraduate students to record their achievements at university so that this can be shared with prospective employers (GTI Media, 2014; Higher Education Academy, 2014a). The different opportunities provides by universities, e.g. through volunteering and institutional skills awards (see below), provide good evidence for the HEAR.

The HEAR section about 'further activities' seems ideally suited to include IL and yet it is difficult to find evidence of this having happened (Higher Education Academy, 2014a). The University of the West of England (UWE) (2014) sample report does mention IL but in the course details rather than section 6. Another issue identified by Pennington, Mosley and Sinclair (2013, p.7) is that many employers are unaware of HEAR. However they argue that it still has potential for influencing student behaviour in the future. Indeed, whilst Secker (2012, p.8) does not come from a careers perspective, she mentions HEAR – and employability in general – as a potential "impetus for change" when trying to convince academics of the value of IL.

The Learning Literacies in a Digital Age (LLiDA) research study (Jisc, 2013) considers a range of literacies required by UK learners in Higher Education and Further Education and includes both 'employability' and IL in its 'framework of frameworks' (Beetham, McGill and Littlejohn, 2009, pp.4-5). As in later surveys of employers already mentioned in this review (CBI, 2011; CBI, 2013) Beetham, McGill and Littlejohn (2009, p.5) include 'business and customer awareness' within their employability framework. However, whilst acknowledging that employability often provides "the stated rationale for an integrated approach", they criticise the lack of careers staff engagement in their study and note that:

> [...] although 'employability' extends beyond careers, we draw a tentative connection between the lack of engagement with the 'literacies' agenda by careers staff and a tendency for 'employability' itself to be poorly articulated and supported. There is a need for further work to extend perceptions of employability beyond conventional careers services to include approaches to learning, programme design and engagement with employers. (Beetham, McGill and Littlejohn, 2009, p.6)

A follow-up initiative from Ashley *et al.* (2012) built on the frameworks from LLiDA but apparently did not include careers staff or address the employability framework directly. Instead, they focused on the need for librarians to engage with other frameworks beyond IL alone, such as digital literacies (see also Hooley, 2012).

Clearly there is more scope here for practitioners from different areas of HE institutions to collaborate in considering these various frameworks and their implementation.

## 6.   Institutional skills awards

One of the stated aims of HEAR is "promoting institutional skills awards, where they exist, that allow students to reflect on their life-wide learning and considering the extent to which these can be supported through the curriculum" (HEA, 2014c). An example of this is provided by Perkins, Christie and Snelling (2010) and their outline of the development of a co-curricular award at the University of Aberdeen. The fact that AGCAS has established a Skills Awards Task Group indicates the growing prevalence of such awards. This group have provided a number of resources for other institutions (AGCAS, 2012c) and their position statement notes that, although they are not always called 'skills awards', this type of activity is increasingly seen as "important to provide added value", following calls from government, professional bodies and employers to "enhance the support offered to increase graduate employability" (AGCAS, 2012b, p.1).

A 2011 survey by the Skills Awards Task Group elicited responses from 67 different institutions running awards, many of which had been "developed collaboratively" with other staff in their institution (AGCAS, 2012b, p.1). Mann (2011, p.3) notes that 74.1% of responses related to awards that had been operational for less than two years. This demonstrates the growth in number over a relatively short period and helps to explain the variety between different institutions. Indeed, Mann (2011, p.3) relates that the majority of awards are individual and not based on models used elsewhere. This represents a challenge for librarians attempting to contribute to their delivery, since there will be no single approach to content or management. Most awards do have a compulsory element and inclusion in this represents the best way for librarians to establish the relevance of their training. This will not always be possible and so an alternative approach for libraries is to offer help with what Mann records as the top three challenges: scalability, staff resource and academic buy-in (Mann, 2011, p.5).

Contribution to skills awards is a key way for libraries to become involved in employability development and demonstrate the value of their information literacy sessions. Several major employers endorse skills awards, as demonstrated by the presence of representatives from Enterprise Rent-A-Car and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) on the AGCAS (2012c) task group. Stockton (2012), representing PwC, presented on how universities can "continue to add value to the employer" via skills awards.

Stockton (2012) and Towlson and Rush (2013) cite a number of institutions offering employability skills awards. Based on these two lists and information available from AGCAS (2012c) it is possible to gain some idea of their number and variety [see Appendix A]. However, the difference in approach to the content and management of these awards does mean that they are difficult to compare and some institutions keep details of workshops behind a password [see Warwick in Appendix A]. Indeed, very few institutions explicitly mention the library and it would be necessary to contact the majority of them individually to check this. However, it has been possible to identify some institutions where library staff have a role in delivering elements of a skills award.

Towlson and Rush (2013, p.312) single the York Award out for particular mention as "probably the most comprehensive and resource intensive package" with "input from local employers as well as specific staff at the University". Yet an email from Millson (2014), Online Training Manager at University of York Careers, confirmed that the library's only

involvement in the York Award is contribution to the assessment process, which is something in which all staff are entitled to be involved if they are interested in assessment. Involvement in this way is still valuable, since it creates links between the different services and may be a starting point for future collaboration.

Other schemes, such as the Sheffield Graduate Award, do not require any teaching - as confirmed by Murison (2014), Careers Information Officer at the University of Sheffield. However Sheffield's website shows that they do invite academic staff to suggest for inclusion "activities students can undertake which are not assessed or accredited as part of their course" (University of Sheffield, 2014). This is a potential opportunity for library staff to promote their own sessions to students without delivering anything new. It suggests that the onus is on the library itself to seek out these opportunities. This appears to be the approach taken at Loughborough University (2013), which states on its library website that students can earn points towards their Employability Award by attending "two or more Library workshops from the Get the Know-How programme". This is less clear on the Careers and Employability Centre's website, perhaps because the criteria for inclusion are quite broad and open to discussion (Loughborough University, c.2014). Key database training at UWE (c.2014) is similarly an approved element in their institutional skills award.

There should be an opportunity for more direct library involvement in the majority of skills awards. This is because most include something similar to "business and customer awareness"; an employability skill which this literature review has already noted is well-suited to delivery by librarians (CBI, 2011, p.13). This is supported by the ANCIL model's inclusion of 'information handling, problem solving and decision making in the workplace' within their 'social dimension of information' strand (Secker and Coonan, 2011. pp.15-16). As the ANCIL model makes clear, the skills to find, critically evaluate and use information that students need for their degrees are readily applied to the workplace. Being able to find and use key business information is also often key to securing a role, as Whitmell (2012) notes. This provides a clear marketing tool for such sessions.

The Durham Award includes "commercial awareness" in its list of key skills or competencies sought by employers and defines this as a general "understanding of business issues and priorities" (University of Durham, c.2013, p.16). In an email, Speight (2014), Head of Academic Support in Durham University Library, confirmed that Careers and Library staff jointly deliver a Commercial Awareness session:

> This is aimed at students who are applying for jobs and getting them to think about how they can demonstrate that they are commercially aware as well as academically literate. It's centred around getting them to think about what commercial awareness is in its widest sense and then showing them how they can use Library resources to research companies ahead of an interview and then use that knowledge to help them stand out from all the other applicants.

In other institutions it appears that either careers advisers or employers themselves may provide this sort of content [see Leicester in Appendix 1].

Another institution which lists commercial awareness as one of the skills students may choose is the University of Bath (2013). This includes different levels from "understanding of the structure and function of the organisation and what it is trying to achieve" to the ability to

"outline the most recent successes and setbacks of the organisation" and ability "to judge customer opinion, behaviour and spending patterns, sense of marketing potential and change, awareness of competition" (University of Bath Students' Union, 2013, p.13). It is not easy to identify the involvement of library staff in the University of Bath's skills award. However, Dell (2014), a Careers Adviser at the University of Bath Careers Advisory Service, confirmed that library staff deliver sessions which count towards the Bath Award.

Manchester Metropolitan University Careers & Employability Service (2013) offers a series of Employability Development workshops. Nelson (2014), one of their Careers & Employability Advisers and a member of the AGCAS Skills Awards Task Group, confirmed that Library Services run sessions within this and that attendance at these can be used towards the MMU Futures Award. At present, the sessions delivered by Library Services are 'Researching commercial companies and industries for applications and interviews' and 'Social media for work not play; how to manage your digital identity' (Nelson, 2014).

At the University of Bristol Careers Service, social media training sessions are delivered jointly by careers advisers and information specialists from within the service itself (Wiley, 2012). All sessions count towards the Bristol PLuS Award, which is thought to have improved attendance (Wiley, 2012). As well as collaborative training, information specialists run sessions about how to research employers 'for applications, interviews and assessment centres' (Riley, 2014). The presence of qualified information professionals in the service itself means that the library have not been involved to date. However, this review has already noted that this is not a common staffing arrangement in HE careers services (Wiley, 2011).

In their article Tyrer, Ives and Corke (2013) describe how the use of shared space led to closer working between the World of Work Careers Centre (WOWCC) and Library at Liverpool John Moores University. As a result, library staff began to deliver a key part of their World of Work Skills Certificate in relation to 'Organisational Awareness' – helping students to research the employment sector and specific organisations (Tyrer, Ives and Corke, 2013, p.186). Library staff designed "bespoke workshops" which used "industry databases and other electronic library resources" and helped to develop research skills (Tyrer, Ives and Corke, 2013, p.186). In an online exchange, Corke (2014), Delivery Team Manager at the WOWCC, reported that this workshop no longer exists after "failing attendance" made it unsustainable. However, she was keen to stress that this is a general problem with all sessions that are not embedded into the curriculum and that the workshop may reappear in online form in the future (Corke, 2014). This demonstrates that inclusion of library content in a skills award is not a panacea.

# 7.   Best practice examples

Having said this, the collaboration between the two services at Liverpool John Moores has helped to promote understanding of each other's work and demonstrate the role that librarians can play in developing employability (Tyrer, Ives and Corke, 2013). Involvement in a skills award may be the ideal but improved relationships across the institution are perhaps more significant longer term.

Skills awards are also not the only area in which librarians can make a contribution to employability skills development. Examples of content from sessions led by information professionals within careers services – not solely for skills awards – include Blackett (2014) and Riley (2014). See also Towlson and Rush (2013) on the involvement of library staff in delivering commercial awareness sessions and University of Durham (2014) for an example of an academic librarian working collaboratively with a careers adviser to deliver training on social media. Oakley (2013) provides a helpful overview of the advantages to libraries in providing this sort of training, in terms of collaboration with other parts of the institution, the obvious contribution to the employability agenda and as another way of promoting information literacy:

> [...] used critically, social media is a valuable information source for current awareness and learning materials. (Oakley, 2013, p.25)

Another example of librarians delivering training in using social media is provided by Woods and Murphy (2013) in their report on 'Get the Digital Edge: a digital literacy and employability skills day for students'. This was part of the Jisc-funded Project DigitISE and the University of Westminster (2013) blog provides further information and lists all the sessions, including 'Researching your companies online for your job interview'. An event run for librarians themselves the year before this was 'Librarians, information literacy and employability' (De Montfort University 2012). Employability was also a strand at the Librarians' Information Literacy Annual Conference (LILAC) in 2013, further demonstrating the existence of interest and good practice in this area.

On the theme of digital literacy in relation to employability, the Jisc two year 'Developing Digital Literacies programme' (2011-2013) included projects that focused on various aspects of employability. The InStePP project at Oxford Brookes University (Francis, 2013) developed and tested systems and processes for the recruitment, development, support and recognition, through professional accreditation of work experience, of digitally literate students. These students, termed e-pioneers, worked with staff for two years on mutually beneficial enhancements to the digital learning environments at Oxford Brookes. As such, they derived personal benefit from partnering with staff and, through the work experience, gained substantial enhancements to their employability. Another project in the digital literacies programme, undertaken at the University of Greenwich (2013), aimed to reduce the gap in our understanding around how transition and attainment of graduate attributes is linked to digital literacies. The project developed a model to support digital maturity linked to graduate attribute development.

At LILAC, Abson and Lahlafi (2013, p.14) queried whether librarians' "choice of language" may mean "we are missing an opportunity to demonstrate our value" in relation to information literacy in the workplace. They also highlight the need to develop "truly

transferable skills in our students" and cite Sokoloff (2011) who has highlighted the need for information literate employees within small and medium enterprises (SME) (Abson and Lahlafi, 2013, p.14). Luker and Nephin (2013, p.11) provided examples of embedded 'digital literacy' at Leeds Metropolitan University, including sessions on 'Finding business and company information to prepare for employment'. Another session mentioned by Luker and Nephin (2013, p.13) is 'information literacy skills in the workplace' which asks students to imagine themselves as a researcher in a role relevant to their own degree.

Even the simple act of a careers service providing a link from its own website to the library's helps to demonstrate the relevance of training offered. For example, the University of Leeds (2014) encourages users to seek out library sessions to develop their skills. Although the link from the University of Sheffield Careers Service (2014) to general skills development may eventually lead a user to the library's own training, the University of Sheffield University Library (2014) pages about 'information literacy in the workplace' are extremely clear and demonstrate well the relevance to employability.

# 8.   Enterprise and entrepreneurship

The Quality Assurance Agency Scotland recently commissioned a report (Mason, 2014) that suggested the very core of universities must embrace enterprise. The report argues that institutions need to move entrepreneurship out of business schools and embed it in every department. This might be done by offering sessions on entrepreneurship both within the curriculum and through extracurricular programmes across the university. It suggests that "the world of education has to embrace enterprise and entrepreneurship, helping students to determine if entrepreneurship is a viable career choice and emphasising its importance in employability" (page 9).

As such, this resonates closely with the employability agenda and could provide librarians with further opportunities to collaborate with staff in faculties and careers services, using their skills and knowledge as described throughout this document.

Professor Allan Gibb, at the University of Durham, who provides the forward for the report, has written many key works on the subject of entrepreneurship within universities (e.g. 2006, 2009) and is a useful source of further information on this topic.

# 9.  Summary of findings

There is a need to be aware of the changing nature of the employability landscape, since definitions can vary. Employability is, to some extent, a contentious term and implies that something more than a skills based approach is required.

Libraries can provide a strong contribution to employers' requirements for students to develop work-relevant skills, especially in relation to evaluating information, digital literacy, improving the business relevance of undergraduate courses and developing skills in enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Collaborative working between libraries and other student services – particularly careers – benefits all parties and can lead to successful library involvement in employability skills development programmes. Library staff should aim to contribute to institutional skills awards, either through accreditation of their existing teaching or by delivering bespoke information literacy sessions. Delivering sessions that form a core component of the award are the best option, where possible. Business and customer awareness elements and digital literacy are well suited to delivery by librarians. Library services need to be proactive about offering to contribute to existing awards and training as careers staff may not initiate this.

Librarians should think carefully about the title of any sessions offered and learn from the expertise around them about how best to market their skills and sessions. Opportunities to co-present with someone from a non-library background can provide an opportunity to demonstrate librarians' expertise to a larger audience. Librarians should consider running training for colleagues in other services in order to raise librarians' profile within the institution and increase possibilities of working collaboratively in the future.

Library staff should avoid creating standalone content without support from others in the institution, e.g. running training in the library without consulting colleagues elsewhere may lead to a duplication of effort and lack of institutional buy-in. Similarly, undermining existing work or teams needs to be avoided, e.g. if there are information professionals within the careers services who already deliver employability training, it may be possible to collaborate with or train them to demonstrate library resources.

Scalability, staff resource and academic buy-in are all things with which the library can offer to help (Mann, 2011, p.5). Also, as library staff come into contact with a large number of students, either face to face or via online enquiry services, they are in a good position to direct more students to their careers services thereby improving relationships across the institution.

Links from other services' websites to the library's information are valuable in order to demonstrate the relevance of the library's offerings. Linked with this is a need to ensure Library web pages (and staff) clearly outline the relevance of their training offer for employability skills development.

Universities will have an employability strategy. If a group exists in relation to this, membership is a good way of forging links, establishing new initiatives and gaining a better awareness of existing efforts.

Finally, it needs to be understood that careers services and student services in general vary greatly in structure and responsibilities, e.g. in some universities the Students Union runs the employability skills award. This means that librarians have to be cognisant of the situation in their respective institution in order to collaborate effectively.

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# 11. Appendix 1: skills awards

This is not an exhaustive list but includes institutions mentioned by Towlson and Rush (2013) and Stockton (2012). All web addresses are current at time of publication.

**University of Aberdeen**
*Award*: STAR (Students Taking Active Roles) Award
*Website*: abdn.ac.uk/careers/co-curriculum/staraward

**University of Bath**
*Award*: Bath Award
*Website*: bathstudent.com/bathaward
Contact: su-training@bath.ac.uk

**University of Birmingham**
*Award*: Personal Skills Award (PSA)
*Website*: intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/employability/psa/index.aspx
*Contact*: Sarah Jeffries-Watts, PSA Programme Manager [s.jeffries-watts@bham.ac.uk]

**University of Bristol**
*Award*: PLuS Award
*Website*: bristol.ac.uk/careers/plusaward
*Contact*: Jenny Smith, Bristol PLuS Award Coordinator [Jennifer.Smith@bristol.ac.uk]

**Durham University**
*Award*: Durham Award
*Website*: www.dur.ac.uk/careers/daward
*Contact*: Hannah Speight, Employability Development Manager, h.e.speight@durham.ac.uk.
(Maternity leave cover is: laura.forsyth @durham.ac.uk)

**University of Exeter**
*Award*: Exeter Award
*Website*: exeter.ac.uk/exeteraward
*Contact*: Jon Boyes, Curriculum and Work-Related Learning Officer [jb380@ex.ac.uk]

**University of Leicester**
*Award*: Leicester Award
*Website*: http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/careers-new/exp/la
Contact: Elizabeth Cornish, Award Project Officer [elc38@le.ac.uk]

**Loughborough University**
*Award*: Loughborough Employability Award
*Website*: lboro.ac.uk/service/careers/experience/employability/award
Contact: Yvonne Hamblin, Employability Development Manager [y.c.hamblin@lboro.ac.uk]

**Manchester Metropolitan University**
*Award*: MMU Futures Award
*Website*: mmu.ac.uk/students/futures/award.php
*Contact*: David Nelson, Careers & Employability Adviser [d.f.nelson@mmu.ac.uk]

**University of Nottingham**
*Award*: Nottingham Advantage Award
*Website*: nottingham.ac.uk/careers/students/advantageaward
*Contact*: Vicky Mann, Nottingham Advantage Award Manager
[vicky.mann@nottingham.ac.uk]

**University of Sheffield**
*Award*: Sheffield Graduate Award
*Website*: sheffield.ac.uk/thesheffieldgraduateaward

**University of Southampton**
*Award*: Graduate Passport
*Website*: southampton.ac.uk/careers/students/achievements/graduatepassport.html

**University of St Andrews**
*Award*: St Andrews Award
*Website*: st-andrews.ac.uk/award

**University of Warwick**
*Award*: Warwick Advantage and Global Advantage awards
*Website*: warwick.ac.uk/services/scs/skills/awards/advantage

**University of York**
*Award*: York Award
*Website*: york.ac.uk/students/work-volunteering-careers/skills/york-award

# 12. Appendix 2: abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AGCAS | Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services |
| AGR | Association of Graduate Recruiters |
| ANCIL | A new curriculum for information literacy |
| BIS | Department of Business, Innovation and Skills |
| CBI | Confederation of British Industry |
| HE | Higher Education |
| HEA | Higher Education Academy |
| HEAR | Higher Education Achievement Record |
| HESA | Higher Education Statistics Agency |
| IL | Information Literacy |
| LILAC | Librarians' Information Literacy Annual Conference |
| LLiDA | Learning Literacies in a Digital Age |
| NUS | National Union of Students |
| PwC | PricewaterhouseCoopers |
| SME | Small and medium enterprises |
| STEM | Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths |
| UWE | University of the West of England |

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