

# **ALISS** Quarterly

*Association of Librarians and Information professionals in the Social Sciences*

**Special issue: Supporting changing educational needs.**

## **Students and Technology**

Student perspectives, LSE; Student digital experience tracker  
Jisc.

## **Information Literacy**

Peer to Peer Part 2, Teeside University; Personalised support,  
London South Bank University; Skill Up! UWE Bristol.

## **Disability**

Changes to funded methodologies for disabled students;  
Higher education, libraries, teaching and learning bibliography.

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*Heather Dawson.*

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## Editorial

Welcome to the latest edition of ALISS Quarterly. It has been published by ALISS (Association of Librarians and Information Professionals in the Social Sciences).

This issue contains information on supporting the changing needs of learners in 2016. It includes a paper from the ALISS Half day Conference 'Getting them in and keeping them: Effective practice for Libraries and information Services' held in London on 21st April 2016:

Student Centred Support: Personalising Information Literacy at London South Bank University - by Alison Skoyles and Marian Brown which describes their approach in providing individual support to learners in a London university.

Other presentations from the event can be downloaded from the ALISS website: <https://alissnet.org.uk/about/getting-them-in-and-keeping-them/>

They include Eva Jirjahlke's great account of user experience research at the LSE Library. It contains background on the theory and practice of the UX approach as well as some details on its initial implementation in a Russell Group Library. Do follow the links from our website to be inspired!

Also available is Angela Carritt, Information Skills Coordinator, Bodleian Libraries account of the development of Library Assistant, an online induction site for new students at Oxford University. This has some good examples of adapting orientation to an online world.

However, the issue opens with some background on the changing use of digital technology by students. It includes some initial findings from a major Jisc funded student experience digital tracker. This is followed by some LSE based research which explored students' usage and knowledge of digital technology for their studies.

Also available are some other articles on innovations to support the information literacy needs of students. These include a peer to peer learning project at the University of the West of England and an online learning platform developed at Teeside University.

Finally the issue concludes with an update of the impact of changes in support for UK disabled students from Margaret McKay of Jisc and our disability bibliography of recent articles and reports which is now being posted monthly on the ALISS website: <http://librarychampionsfordisabilityaccess.blogspot.co.uk>

We hope you enjoy the issue.

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## Student digital experience tracker 2016: the findings

*Sarah Knight, senior co-design manager in the student experience, Jisc.*

### Introduction

The availability and use of technology in the education sector has evolved rapidly in the past decades. Classrooms at all levels are now equipped with technology to support and enhance students' learning experiences. However, if we are to efficiently exploit the technology to reach its full potential we need to understand the state of learners' current digital experiences.

Through working closely with its partners Jisc, the digital solutions and services provider for the UK higher education (HE), further education (FE) and skills sectors, found that no detailed national surveys are produced around the digital experience in education. To combat this and to provide institutions with insight into a learners' digital expectations, Jisc launched a pilot digital tracker tool. The commissioned study aimed to gather the quantifiable information needed by institutions to successfully plan their digital activities and investments for the future.

From February to April 2016 the digital solutions provider delivered two versions of the survey one for HE and one FE and skills. In total 24 institutions were chosen to deliver the study, 12 HE and 12 FE and skills. Almost 11,000 students completed the survey, this article describes its findings.

### Digital Usage, Access and Activities in Education

Students today have a variety of platforms to choose from when it comes to selecting a digital device to support their learning. When examining the results around the student's platform of choice the study found:

- For institutional devices students are most likely to use institutional desktops and printers to support their learning.
- For personal devices students are more likely to use laptops, smartphones and tablets than desktops to support their learning.
- 90% of HE students use personal laptops in comparison with only 66% of FE and skills students.
- 40% of FE and skills students use personal desktops in comparison with only 30% of HE students.
- FE and skills students are statistically more likely to use institutional devices of all kinds than HE students are.

Wi-Fi is an important issue to students, it provides them with the capability to connect their own devices to institutional networks as well as 24/7 access to institutional services. A student's access to the internet opens up a digital world of resources, facts and figures, and on top of that, it feeds the admission to online course materials, personal information and file storage. The study found many learners continue to face problems accessing

robust Wi-Fi networks, institutional hardware/software and digital services. With the level of importance students put on these digital assets this is likely to be key frustration for students and impact heavily on their overall digital experience.

When asked about what activities technology had been used for on their course, the tracker showed 90% of students found information online, 70% of students produced work in a digital format – creating presentations, web pages, info-graphics or animations – and 50% of students worked online with others. The data displays clearly how digital technology is now part of everyday life in education.

## **Guidance and Support**

Guidance and support is a key part of the learner's digital experience in education. Learners need to develop their digital capabilities to fully realise the benefits of using technology for their learning, and to develop the skills required to be employable in a digital workplace.

The student experience tracker found 44% of HE students and 33% of FE and skills students said they had not received enough guidance and support to help them develop digital skills relevant to their course. As the sophistication of technology grows within education, so does the requirement for increased support and guidance. As seen in other industries, often the support around products and services is what makes the difference to customers. In education it is no different, if a first class digital educational experience is to be delivered the guidance and support around new technology or digital capabilities needs to surpass expectations.

## **Overall Digital Experience**

Interestingly, 70% of students who responded believe when technology is used effectively by teaching staff it enhances their overall learning experience. These findings highlight the importance of practitioners not only having the digital skills to deliver learning and teaching but keeping these skills updated as new technology is introduced.

This is an increasingly important theme within education and skills. The introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework and the rising demand from employers for digitally-literate staff has put pressure on practitioners to deliver. At Jisc, we see the solution to meeting these targets spelling from a partnership between tutors and students to co-develop digital learning environments that fully utilise technology in educational settings.

## **What students want**

As part of the survey learners reported what they would like their providers to start, stop and continue doing with digital technologies in their learning experience. An outline of the key findings to this can be found below:

### **Start**

- Offer recorded lectures
- Make better use of VLEs: standardise use by staff, add presentations, teach students how to use it effectively, and improve access (e.g. mobile friendly)

- Improve online services: more online resources/ activities, assessment submissions
- Provide access to better / more computers and devices

### **Keep**

#### **HE:**

- Keep providing online 24/7 access to as much content as possible
- Keep providing 24/7 library access
- Keep providing as much material as possible (lecture notes, slides etc) on the VLE, and make it accessible any time any place
- Keep using technology, and embracing new technology services and resources

### **Stop**

#### **HE**

- Stop sending irrelevant emails
- Stop early morning lectures
- Stop “death by PowerPoint” and other boring lecture behaviours e.g. too long, unbroken

### **Conclusion**

More findings and conclusions will continue to emerge from this data, but what has been found shows we are on the right path. However, when looking at issues like the problems faced by learners in accessing robust Wi-Fi networks, institutional hardware/software and digital services – there is room for improvement from universities. The power of teachers to use technology to transform learning for all students is also an important finding to note. Now, practitioners need to consistently work on their own skills in order to support the development of their students’ skills and to deliver the very best possible learning experience for students.

The aim of this tracker was to build a national picture of learners’ digital expectations and experiences. What we have now is tangible evidence which institutions can use to not only benchmark their own provision but, use it to get under the skin of the issues which matter the most to learners. Understanding these findings, along with consistently delivering a digital learning experience that meets the requirements of today’s students will progress the UK quickly on its journey in becoming the most digitally advanced education nation in the world.

## Capturing the Students' Voice on the Future of Educational Technology

*Laurent Lioté, Research Assistant, London School of Economics – Learning Technology and Innovation; Helen Axe, Assistant Learning Technologist, London School of Economics – Learning Technology and Innovation.*

### Introduction

Between January and February 2016, the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) Learning Technology and Innovation (LTI) team started a project involving three days of interviewing across campus. We asked students questions designed to gather their insight into what teaching, learning and technology could look like at LSE in 2020. The three-minute interviews, whether filmed or just audio recorded, have helped us start a conversation from the grass roots up about the future of education and innovation at the school.

### Methodology

To gather the students' insights, we followed a 'grounded theory' framework, a method whereby "theories and arguments are discovered from the systematic collection and analysis of data" (Glaser and Strauss, 1968: 1). In other words, we started our research without a hypothesis to prove or disprove.

All the interviews we carried out were "semi-structured", meaning we had prepared some questions but allowed new ideas to be brought up during the interview (Bernard, 1988: 203). This meant we frequently followed-up on specific themes that arose during the interviews themselves.

The questions we devised were related to the role of technology in the students' lives, in their studies and in their future careers. To keep the interviews short, we only asked some of the questions we had prepared, usually one from each section. After the first round of interviews we added some new questions inspired by the first set of answers we obtained.

Once we collected enough data, we reviewed the information gathered and several recurring ideas became apparent. In line with our grounded theory framework we started "coding" these ideas, creating categories under which these recurrent ideas could be grouped (Jessop et al 2012: 106). Once all the data was coded, grouped and analysed it became possible to draw some conclusions about the role and possible use of technology at LSE in the next few years.

### Demographics

We started all the interviews by asking students the year of study and academic departments they were in. We also reviewed the footage to work out the gender and individual to group interview ratios. Out of the 69 interviews we carried out:

- 53 were filmed and 16 were audio recorded
- 54 were individual interviews and 15 were group interviews

- Overall 92 students were interviewed
- 58 interviewees were female and 34 were male
- All academic departments at LSE were represented

The interviewees' year of study can be broken down as follows:

- 1st year Undergraduate: 18
- 2nd year Undergraduate: 16
- 3rd year Undergraduate: 19
- General Course (Undergraduate exchange students): 6
- Post Graduate Taught: 30
- Post Graduate Research: 2
- Students' Union Education Officer: 1

## Findings

*"You only know what's possible if you've seen it in the first place.  
I don't really know what alternatives there are to PowerPoint."*

The quote above summarizes our overarching finding: most students do not know what and how technology can be used to enhance teaching and learning both now and in the future. This seems to corroborate Beetham and White's findings. Indeed, when asked about the current use of technology in their classes and lectures nearly 75% of students replied that either their teachers "do not use technology" or "just use PowerPoint". As the quote above suggests, given the lack of exposure to innovative (use of) technology, it is hard for students to imagine what the future might hold. As a result of this limited awareness, 31% of our interviewees expect the use of technology in the classroom (or lack thereof) to remain the same over the next 5 years. In other words, most students do not know what is possible and thus have very low expectations.

That being said, the few students who were exposed to innovative use of technology in their studies expected more of it in the future. Many of those students for instance thought that the provision of online courses would increase in the future.

*"For my Bachelors I actually had to take four online courses.  
It was pretty good, very convenient and popular."*

*"The format of the Masters here is pretty heavily self-taught so you know, I don't think it would make such a huge amount of difference doing it all online. I'm not saying there is no value in the teaching here but you do spend the majority of your time doing your own independent learning anyway."*

As suggested above, some students have already taken online courses or know friends who have. Overall respondents were quite positive about online courses either because they had a direct positive experience or because they were willing to try. As the second quote highlights, some students felt that LSE Masters involved quite a lot of self-study already hence shifting some courses online would not make much of a difference.

*“[LSE] still has a system of one-to-many where there is one practitioner and many students and where the feedback loop is very minimal. I think technology could change that to a many-to-many system where students can interact and collaborate with each other and with their teacher”.*

A few of our respondents also stated that, in the future, technology could also be used to make teaching and learning more interactive and collaborative. An interviewee for instance took a course where students wrote and commented on each other’s blog articles. The teacher also commented on the posts to spark a discussion between all the members of the course. Echoing the quote above, the student who took this course thought blog posts made the course more interactive and collaborative and hoped to see more of this approach in the future.

*“I expect exams to take place on computers as it would be more representative of what you are going to do later on in life and I think LSE strives to replicate reality in their exams.”*

Finally, as the quote above suggests, a couple of students mentioned that taking exams on computers would be good preparation for their careers. Indeed, they explained that in the workplace most tasks, including report writing, required the use of computers. Taking exams on computer rather than handwriting them would thus replicate the reality of the workplace.

### **What’s Next**

As we have established, given the lack of exposure to innovative uses of technology, it is hard for students to imagine what the future might hold. With regard to educational technology, most students do not know what is possible and hence have very low expectations. It would thus be advisable to continue showcasing and promoting innovative (uses of) technology to raise students’ expectations. Following the students’ comments in the findings, it could be interesting to continue:

- Looking into successful implementation of online courses
- Promoting the use of technology to make courses more interactive and collaborative
- Promoting creative online exercises and assessment

If this research project is to be taken further, it would be worth extending the respondent sample to include prospective students and alumni. It would be interesting to find out from prospective students:

- How technology is currently used in their school?
- How do they expect technology to be used at university?
- What role do they think technology will play in their career?

It would also be worth asking alumni:

- What role does technology play in their career?
- And if they think the way they use technology at work is similar to the way they used it at university?

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## **Student-centred support: Personalising information literacy at London South Bank University**

*Marian Brown and Alison Skoyles, London South Bank University.*

### **LSBU and its students**

London South Bank University has a diverse student body. Over half of our students are over 25 years old, and many of them have not been to university in a number of years. A lot of our students come from overseas, and LSBU is their first experience of a UK university. We also have students from more traditional academic backgrounds, as well as students juggling their university work with a family, work and other life commitments. This range of needs, confidences and competencies has led to the evolution of a more personalised and individual approach to the way we offer our information skills training.

### **ALD**

The Academic Liaison Department (ALD) in Library and Learning Resources (LLR) is made up of four Senior Information Advisers (SIAs) and four full-time and one part-time Information Skills Advisers (ISAs), each supporting one or more of the university's seven Schools. The team is based on our main campus in Southwark, but one of the ISAs attached to the School of Health and Social Care (HSC) works two days a week at our Havering Campus, which is a HSC only site.

The ISAs' role was set up to provide student-centred support. We carry out inductions, particularly in September and October, but also whenever a lecturer has a new intake throughout the year. Bespoke workshops are embedded into the curriculum and tailored to individual courses, including searching subject-specific databases, focussing on the students' projects. There are also more generic workshops that any student can sign up covering referencing and referencing software, evaluating information, literature searching and copyright. We run drop in assignment and referencing surgeries, and offer 1:1 appointments, which are very important for our students. We also staff library helpdesks, and the queries raised there inform our training.

### **Surgeries**

We used to run Skills Days – where we opened our library training room 9am to 7pm, and staff from ALD would be on hand to help students with any referencing or literature searching queries they had. These have evolved into Assignment and Referencing surgeries.

Assignment surgeries take place three or four times a semester, for two or three hours at a time, and we mix up the times so they are put on in the morning, afternoon and evening. These are staffed by ALD, IT, and Skills for Learning, who help students with academic writing and maths. Students are sometimes not sure what support they need, so we have a greeter on the door, helping them sign in and pointing them to the right service.

We found there was a need for more referencing support, so in 2015 we added separate referencing surgeries to the timetable. These are two hours long and are held at

various times throughout the day. These are only staffed by ISAs. At LSBU we have four referencing styles: APA, Numeric, OSCOLA, and LSBU Harvard. Harvard is the most widely used, but we have to be familiar with all four styles. We found that most students come with specific examples they want to reference, but a few want a basic introduction to referencing.

We tried to arrange these surgeries to coincide with hand-in dates for assignments, but it sometimes proved difficult getting hold of these dates. There were also challenges, particularly in the first semester, in scheduling the surgeries at a time when all the ISAs were available.

These surgeries are very well received by students. We send out feedback forms to everyone who attended, and there have been no negative comments.

### **1:1s**

1:1s are promoted at every workshop and drop-in, and students are often referred to 1:1s as a result of visiting our helpdesks where they can pick up contact cards for their relevant ISA. Students can contact us through school-based email accounts. Students usually come to us for referencing help and literature searching and typical 1:1s last from half an hour to an hour, depending on that student's need. There are a couple of HSC courses in Malaysia and Singapore, and we are planning on using the Canvas platform to offer 1:1s to these students via an interface similar to Skype.

We take 1:1 appointments all year round, but we tend to get the most from third years around the time of their dissertation or final project. Third year adult and children nurses on both sites have a lecture about literature searching, followed by hands-on database sessions in January, and most of them then visit their ISA for a follow-up 1:1 on their specific question shortly afterwards. At Havering, the ISA found that she was answering the same queries at the many 1:1s she was taking. As she could not be there all week to support the students, and they seemed to need a reminder and reassurance more than anything, she created a helpsheet they could work through to access the relevant databases. This helpsheet could be handed out to those students she was unable to see for 1:1s.

### **Moodle**

In 2014 LSBU started using Moodle as the Virtual Learning Environment. ALD and the Digital Skills Training Team (who carry out our IT training) created seven sites on Moodle designed to support students' training needs.

The sites are accessible via a link on the Moodle homepage, and include sites for referencing including interactive lessons and quizzes, finding library resources with online videos and tutorials, digital skills training, and research support. These are designed for self-directed learning, but we also use the lessons we have created in workshops. The aim is to get every LSBU student enrolled on the top site, and this has become part of our inductions.

### **Pre-enrolment workshops**

Last summer we ran our first pre-enrolment workshops. These were aimed at students who had accepted an offer from LSBU but had not yet enrolled.

ALD and Digital Skills created twelve workshops that covered Microsoft applications, understanding reading lists, introductions to the library, referencing, evaluating information, the VLE and databases. The workshops were much appreciated by the students who attended, as a lot of them had been out of education for a few years or had come from overseas, and felt they needed to be brought up to speed on the academic practices used at LSBU. We are running the programme again this summer, but we have refined it so that there are fewer workshops per day so we can include coffee breaks. We have also structured the day so that the workshops build on each other and there is a logical pedagogical structure, but each workshop can also be attended as a standalone.

### **The future**

We have worked with other departments in the university, and we hope to we hope to collaborate with our Disability and Dyslexia Support service to make all of our content available in different formats so that it is accessible to as many learning styles as possible.

LSBU has just introduced the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) for all full-time undergraduates. This report will be presented to each graduate alongside their academic achievements, and will detail the extra-curricular activities they have participated in. We saw this as a great opportunity to “badge” our information and digital skills workshops so that they would be formally recorded and recognised on the HEAR, and we have started to create workshops with this in mind.

We are always looking for ways to reach more of our diverse student population, and future projects include making as much as possible of what we offer in the library and in person available online, whilst still retaining personal contact.

## Skill Up! Supporting Academic Success at UWE Bristol

Stephen E. Hunt, Beth Lethaby and Ludovik Sébire, University of the West Of England, Bristol.

### Introduction

In September 2015 the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) Library Services launched *Skill up!*, a new online learning platform to support Academic Success. This was a timely response to increasingly complex demands for more online materials to deliver information and academic literacy skills. Interactive workbooks, created using Jamroom (<https://www.jamroom.net/>) software, provided an integrated solution to meet this challenge. In this article we shall outline how the implementation of this open-source software fulfilled our requirements for a content management system that was easy for librarians to learn, and flexible enough to produce high-quality bespoke and accessible materials for the benefit of our students and staff. Our rapidly developing platform was shortlisted for the Credo Digital Award for Information Literacy in March 2016.

### The UWE Bristol context

The technology enhanced learning resources we provide must be adaptable for a diverse higher education environment. UWE Bristol is a post-1992 university with just over 27,000 students across four faculties. There are practice-oriented and academic courses from foundational to post-doctoral level and a variety of modes of programme delivery at both UK and international partner institutions. Students on all of these courses need and expect to access authoritative and current academic support materials using multiple devices, wherever and whenever they are studying. In meeting these needs Library Services contributes to UWE Bristol's strategic priorities to deliver 'outstanding learning' and 'ready and able graduates'.

### Flexible and accessible platform

The Academic Skills online learning platform is agile enough to meet the multiplicity of needs required by this digital environment. The software is open source so is affordable and can be readily adapted and developed by the Library's Web Developer. It is compatible with all modern browsers and mobile devices and adheres to W3C and accessibility standards. The interactive workbooks enable us to generate customised learning pathways to match the needs of particular student programmes.

### Practical implementation

The Academic Literacy Forum, made up of librarians, academic staff and other University-wide stakeholders, sets out the over-arching framework for academic support at UWE Bristol and is sponsored by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic).

*"The development of the academic skills platform with the new style workbooks has, over the past year, provided high quality, 'tangible' outputs that have enabled the Library to consolidate its role as a strategic lead for academic literacy within the institution."* (Jackie Chelin, Deputy Director, UWE Bristol Library)

Within this strategic context the Library's Technology Enhanced Learning Operations Group (TELOG) is responsible for the practical implementation of learning resources on

the *Skill Up!* platform. Our success in rolling out new materials speedily has been due to the software's flexibility and the team's collaborative approach to design. Content and elements of webpage structure can be readily repurposed through 'cloning' and then customised to suit a particular project. New features are added in response to team requirements, for example interactive quiz questions, picture galleries and embedded Twitter feeds. In this way the platform's functionality continues to evolve according to emerging needs.

Library staff have been able to create workbooks with an attractive and accessible interface without the need to possess high order coding skills. The workbooks can accommodate individual creative impulses while at the same time providing a collective bank of ideas and content to draw upon. The ease of navigation and interactive elements help to ensure that the workbooks are pedagogically sound. The comprehensive content and its appealing format have already reduced teaching pressure from library induction sessions, freeing up time for more specialist face-to-face support when required.

*"Web Developer Steve Cole, who implemented the project, was pleased by the way that the software architecture 'removed perceived barriers to web publishing' and enabled knowledge sharing, thus generating 'a very real sense of ownership of the project' among workbook authors."*

## **Technology and people**

The simplicity of the platform has decreased perceived barriers in creating online content, empowering more people to get involved and encouraging greater collaboration within the Library team and with academic staff. By witnessing both the output quality and the fast delivery process of the workbooks, library subject teams have started to become more open to using technologies in their teaching practices. New technologies are often viewed as fads or passing trends, inviting scepticism about their pedagogic value. They may be advocated as 'must haves' by champions while others may think it is forced upon them. The new platform, on its own, has not changed this view. Indeed technology is just a tool, and our Academic Skills platform only a toolbox full of workbooks. Their pedagogic merit is directly linked to the learning context in which they are used, and the discussions that surround their creation. The most successful workbooks involve strong collaboration between Librarians and academic staff in the planning, creation and beyond. Thus, the new platform, through its flexibility and ease of access, has helped to change colleagues' perceptions on how technology can support learning.

Another great virtue has been to boost colleagues' confidence in using technologies. As only standard, professional IT skills are required, TELOG members have felt more empowered, being able to focus their mind on what they are really good at: teaching information and academic literacy. Finally, from a service perspective, these workbooks have helped to shift and complement our teaching commitments from face-to-face towards a more blended and embedded approach. Our regular programme of staff development activities have enabled our team to build upon their existing expertise in this emerging area of learning and teaching. Creating and thinking about workbooks has become a *modus operandi* for the Library.

## How the workbooks have been received

Evaluating the workbooks is at the forefront of our thinking yet it is a challenge for us all. To do so, we collect usage and behavioural statistics that help us with our quantitative analysis. Further work is needed, however, to establish clearer data collection and analysis. Furthermore, quantitative data gives us only part of the picture. Therefore, we have been collecting qualitative data with mixed results, using focus groups with students and staff, surveys targeted to specific cohorts of students as well as informal channels such as e-mails and/or face-to-face conversations. Overall, feedback has been positive, from both staff and students' perspectives.

*"I've found adjusting to university style writing and research quite challenging so this is exactly the sort of thing I need!" (Year 1 student)*

*Watch feedback from a Civil Engineering lecturer who embedded one of the workbooks in his module: <https://vimeo.com/153364762>*

This successful outcome derives from working closely alongside lecturers to develop appropriate workbook materials. The designers' collaborative approach ensures that the content suits the academic needs of both staff and students.

Feedback, whether positive or negative, helps us to reflect on the quality and the purpose of the content we deliver, identifying ways of improving our products year on year.

## Future developments

The Academic Skills platform is in a constant state of transformation and evolution, based on ideas from all our stakeholders, technological updates and our web developer's can-do attitude. Short-term developments include developing an assignment planner: a time-management and academic tool. The planner will be launched in September. By responding to our Art students' needs, we have developed a Visual Culture workbook that uses different ways of displaying information. The visually appealing nature of this workbook's navigational interface is likely to be replicated in future workbooks. Its ease of use has also made it attractive for non-library partners wishing to develop content to support students, such as an *Essential Information for Exams* guide, produced by the Central Exams and Timetabling Team. Finally, the Academic Skills platform represents a sustainable solution to support at a distance our numerous partners around the globe.

## Conclusion

It's around a year since we started to develop the workbooks' platform so timely to reflect on their success. We believe this is due to two major factors. First, their user-friendly attributes, for both creators and end-users. Second, the balance of bespoke elements within a standardised framework that is consistent in appearance and functionality, lending coherence within and across workbooks. Formerly our provision of online academic support was something of a Swiss cheese. We undertook a variety of approaches requiring challenging skills and, consequently, while we produced some excellent learning units, there were gaps in our offer as we tried to keep up with demand. Now we are confident that we have a flexible academic skills platform that is more like

a Swiss army knife. It is an adaptable toolkit, evolving so that it is able to incorporate and embed emerging IT developments such as Storify and infographics for the foreseeable future. In the year ahead we hope and believe the academic skills platform is a model that we can share and proliferate, within other departments at UWE Bristol and beyond in the wider educational sector.

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## Peer to Peer Part 2: A follow up study of students' information literacy development using a student researcher

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This article reports selected findings relating to information literacy from a “student as researcher” project carried out by Library & Information Services at Teesside University. The project’s aim was to investigate how students’ academic skills had developed in the context of tackling a challenging assignment, using longitudinal data. The context within which we conducted the research was a modern University, based in Middlesbrough, with a strong track record with students from non-traditional backgrounds. Many of our students are local and first generation in H.E.

The peer-to-peer interviews were conducted by a student researcher; with ten participants in 2013; subsequently four of the original participants were re-interviewed in 2015.

The interview transcripts contained a significant amount of data relating to student information seeking behaviours. The article uses the ANCIL strands (Secker and Coonan, 2011) as a framework.

The participants involved in both the initial and subsequent interviews were:

- P1 – psychology student – at end of 1st year and 3rd year UG
- P4 – animation student - at end of 1st year and 3rd year UG
- P5 – criminology student – at end of 2nd year and on MSc
- P7 – forensic science student – at end of 2nd year and repeated final year

For the purposes of this article we selected specific ANCIL strands where responses provided the richest data. The real strength of this methodology is that it contains the authentic student voice so we have included direct quotes from the transcripts.

### Becoming an independent learner

This strand “is informed by the idea that change occurs throughout the learning process as a natural, unavoidable and sometimes challenging aspect of learning.” (Secker & Coonan, 2011)

The repeat interviews provided evidence of how all of the participants had developed, and were able to reflect upon how scaffolded support had given them a positive advantage:

*“Some people didn’t actually turn up to them [library sessions] and when it actually came round to writing essays, they would be ‘where did you get that from...’” [P1, 2013]*

*“In first year we had a library session where they talked us through everything. It still took me about 3 months to fully get my head around it. But you could probably tell who didn’t turn up because they didn’t have a clue. Even in second year they were only just realising you could search for journal articles and libguides and stuff”. [P1, 2015]*

As information professionals it was gratifying to hear students speak about the impact of our information skills sessions, but also the centrality of information literacy in their learning.

### **Mapping and evaluating the information landscape**

This strand “focuses on developing awareness and understanding of the range of source types available and how to evaluate them for reliability, authority and their appropriateness for the student’s specific purpose.” (Secker & Coonan, 2011)

The quotes below demonstrate how, with library input, the participant has progressed to using quality resources:

*“Could also go to the Library and get books on different areas and also anatomy books, which was really helpful. Or we could use the internet - Google, Wikipedia, all those great reliable (irony) resources. Just mostly books we used.” [P4, 2013]*

*“This year we have been banned using pretty much Google and Wikipedia, so we have to find it on proper websites, which I honestly thought was going to be really hard. But since we had so many lectures by the people at the library, we were able to understand it nearly instantly and where to go, how to do it and everything is very ordered on the websites so we know exactly what to do, which is really helpful.” [P4, 2015]*

While this participant initially had some awareness of the pitfalls of resources from the open web, we also see how effective academic staff and librarian partnerships can be in developing students’ information literacy.

### **Resource discovery in your discipline**

“Strand 5 is intended to familiarise students with specialist resources of various types and content in their discipline” (Secker & Coonan, 2011)

The data revealed that participants were aware of the complexity of the information landscape and how multiple tools were needed to derive the information required, often using Google Scholar as a scoping tool. Unsurprisingly Google Scholar was the tool of choice of the participants because of Google’s familiar interface, and reliability.

*“I found it easier to get a starting point on Google Scholar because it was more general and then from that I would look at the reference lists and find them in the library search engines... PsycINFO” [P1, 2015]*

Whilst our participants spoke about their improved efficiency at sourcing relevant information, and the need to balance time demands, we question whether comprehensiveness is being sacrificed because of the need to negotiate complex information networks.

The majority of our information literacy teaching is frontloaded for first years, showing simple techniques to get started. However, further skills development is essential and if we can guide students more effectively, outcomes can be improved.

## Ethical Dimension of Information

“Strands 7, 8 and 9 deal with the high-order cognitive and intellectual functions of information handling” (Secker and Coonan, 2011). Correct attribution and avoiding plagiarism were elements that concerned our students, as there is the fear that losing marks could mean the difference between grades. One of the participants spoke with pride about mastering the skills:

*“One of the skills is doing your references right. Because if you don’t do that, right you get a bad grade. Anything else would be flagged as plagiarism, if you don’t reference or quote properly, so it’s definitely a big skill that I’ve learned and that’s actually one of my favourite things I’ve learned as it’s really fun” [P4, 2015]*

The participant who had progressed onto a Masters did show a clear development in their skills of selecting appropriate sources to include in their assignments and the need to demonstrate original thinking:

*“I never, never like to pack it with too many references. I like a lot of references in, but I like my own voice to come through.” [P5, 2015]*

## Synthesis and Knowledge Creation

What was most striking about the comments that students made about the research process was that they had progressed from feeling intimidated and lacking in confidence about it, to active enjoyment. They now saw how it underpins all of their academic work and is the cornerstone of their assessed work, whether text based or creative.

*“This year has been very research heavy and I’ve spent more time researching than actually doing work. Because...as soon as you find one (piece of) research and start writing your essay, you’ll realise you’ll find more, and more, and more, so you actually ended up researching throughout the whole project. And there’s no time where you don’t research, which is great because you build on your knowledge. [P4, 2015]*

## Conclusion

In the context of the rapidly changing H.E. environment, the key message of this research is the value of working collaboratively with all stakeholders. We simply would not have been able to collect such detailed and honest qualitative feedback without our student researcher. He established a bond and repartee with the participants which made them feel relaxed and confident in their answers. Such partnerships enable us to meet student needs more effectively.

## References

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Secker, J. and Coonan, E. (2011) *A new curriculum for information literacy*. Arcadia Project, Cambridge University Library. Available at: [http://ccfil.pbworks.com/f/ANCIL\\_final.pdf](http://ccfil.pbworks.com/f/ANCIL_final.pdf) (Accessed 23 May 2016)

## Changes to funding methodologies for disabled learners: pitfall or pearl?

Margaret McKay. Subject specialist (accessibility and inclusion) Scotland; Jisc.

Changes to Disabled Students Allowance<sup>1</sup> presents both opportunities and challenges for information services professionals. Staff need to think differently about their service provision, and consider different ways of supporting learners as they prepare for the impact of the changes which come into effect in September 2016<sup>2</sup>. Most noteworthy is the substantial reduction in funding for non-medical help which was previously available to assist students with practical aspects of their engagement around the campus, supporting learning and importantly providing practical support within the library.

The assumption made in reducing this funding is that organisations have had several years since the Equalities Act 2010 was introduced to embed these principles of inclusivity into the fabric of their service provision, and therefore funding to provide bolt on support is unnecessary.

### Paradigm shift

These funding changes will require a big shift in the way services are provided. Policies and practices will need to adapt so services can be more inclusive.

### A journey towards greater inclusion

Where are you along this journey, and how have you anticipated the needs of prospective users into the planning and delivery of your services? Is this happening institutionally or are there pockets of good practice taking place? If it is the latter how can you work towards a more embedded and uniform approach?

### What can you do?

#### Remove barriers

Historically support for students with barriers to learning was seen as being the responsibility of specific stakeholders, typically disability services. Often solutions were created by retro-fixing barriers that students experienced, and responding when issues occurred. This often meant that the learner had to experience a difficulty in the first instance, to report this, then wait for the institution to find a ladder which will help them navigate and overcome this difficulty. These funding changes now contest this retrospective way of working, and challenge institutions to mainstream the way they provide support for students with disabilities, with responsibility for doing



"Short Ladder - Big Wall" (CC BY 2.0) by oatsy40

Figure 1 Ladder or wall?

1 <http://tiny.cc/DSA-Changes>

2 These changes apply to English domiciled (students from Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales are not currently affected by these changes).

so being firmly placed at everyone's door.

### **Reach a wider audience**

According to the British Dyslexia Association<sup>3</sup> 10% of the population experience dyslexia, 4% severely so, suggesting that learners with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia will be one of the largest cohorts of students benefitting from a more integrated way of delivering inclusive services. The added value is that if these inclusive approaches are embedded, they will have positive benefits for the significant number of other learners who either do not choose to disclose a barrier to learning or who learn differently. Supporting 10% of our learners in a more embedded way can by default create more positive learning experiences for more library users who will benefit from additional support in developing their study and productivity skills.

### **Exploit unintended benefits**

Taking advantage of what is already available offers immediate gains for everyone. Many library services actively promote - and provide training for - commercial software they have procured. Tools that might have been previously classified as 'assistive technology' and used by a smaller number of learners, are now being viewed as mainstream support tools by both learners and staff. Transforming the way that institutions 'market' such tools creates a positive spin, presenting the benefits of text to speech, writing support tools, mind mapping as resources to support all learners.

### **Make the most of what is free**

Working with IT/network staff to maximise the use of free assets can raise awareness of the growing number of features that can be used to support learning.

- Do you know about built in ease of access features and how they might benefit learners? Are roaming profiles enabled to allow learners to access these features when they login?
- What about making the most of other useful features hidden in our computers? For example the speak feature in Microsoft Office and the read out loud feature in Adobe Reader offer built in text to speech.
- Do you provide access to browser plugins that offer enhanced productivity? There are a growing number of readability tools to help learners access and capture their reading and research<sup>4</sup>.

### **Alternative formats**

Libraries may need to provide text books in alternative formats<sup>5</sup> for disabled users. There are a range of ways of doing this.

Jisc have produced guidance on obtaining alternative formats , describing prospective workflows and information on how to action.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about>

<sup>4</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/jiscread> and <http://tinyurl.com/jiscwrite>

<sup>5</sup> <http://tiny.cc/JjiscAltFormat>

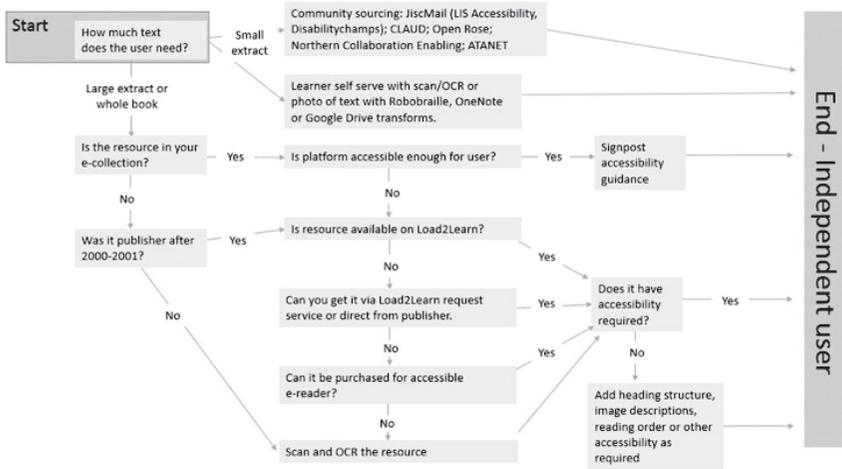


Figure 2 Alt format workflow

Note that the Load2Learn service is now rebranded as the *RNIB UK education collection*. The current HE collection is growing steadily and HEI’s can upload their existing alternative texts into the service.

**Think before you buy**

Procuring inaccessible platforms can present barriers for learners. The absence of some kind of audit/evaluation before purchasing library systems and other platforms often leads to difficulties for users down the line, not to mention the expense of having to incur additional costs to make information accessible.

Ebooks are a perfect example. When you are working with suppliers, do they provide documentation of how they have evaluated their resources to ensure that they are accessible? Have they supplied information about any know areas of inaccessibility within their system? Have you asked them?

**Be in the know**

Knowing if the platform you are about to purchase is going to be accessible is important, and can have significant implication for your prospective learners who use screen reading software, who navigate by using the keyboard, who need to magnify and reflow the text or who are accessing the content using the accessibility features on their mobile device. Jisc has a useful ebook checklist identifying 8 things to look out for before you commit to purchasing or licensing an ebook platform<sup>6</sup>.

**Get involved**

The Lis-Accessibility group have joined forces with other groups including The National Consortia for monographs ebooks Sub Group and the North West Academic Libraries to carry out accessibility evaluations of the ebook platforms that group member use across the country. The goal is to create a crowdsourced league table of accessible platforms

<sup>6</sup> [http://tiny.cc/ebook\\_access](http://tiny.cc/ebook_access)

with the aim of helping inform procurement and platform improvement. In addition this will assist publishers by providing them with a framework from which to evaluate the accessibility of their platforms, offering them guidance on how to market their inclusive features to prospective customers.

Look out for the launch of this audit process on the [lis-accessibility@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:lis-accessibility@jiscmail.ac.uk) due to take place over summer 2016 and get involved in this evaluation process.

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Jisc. 2014. Enhancing staff support for learners with disabilities. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/jiscroles>. [Accessed 29 June 2016].

## Higher education, libraries, teaching and learning bibliography

Heather Dawson.

### Identity and stigma

Atkins, Liz.

Dis(en)abled: legitimating discriminatory practice in the name of Inclusion?

British Journal of Special Education.

Mar2016, Vol. 43 Issue 1, p6-21. 16p. DOI: 10.1111/1467-8578.12123.

Abstract: "This article explores tensions between the policies and practice of inclusion and the lived experiences of disabled young people in education. Drawing on the narratives of two young men who participated in a small pilot study, it utilises theoretical concepts related to disability, structure and agency, and power and control, as it explores the ways in which inclusion can create subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) forms of exclusion "

Jarkestig Berggren, Ulrika; Rowan, Diana; Bergback, Ewa; Blomberg, Barbro

Disabled students' experiences of higher education in Sweden, the Czech Republic, and the United States – a comparative institutional analysis

Disability & society VOL 31; NUMB 3 (2016) pp.339-356

Abstract : "Students with disabilities face obstacles in their encounters with higher education. The aim of this study is to investigate how the institutional context shapes students' experiences of unequal opportunities in higher education. In comparing disabled students' experiences from universities in Sweden, the Czech Republic, and the United States"

Gabel, Susan L.; Miskovic, Maja

Discourse and the containment of disability in higher education:an institutional analysis

Disability & society VOL 29; NUMB 7 (2014) pp.1145-1158

Abstract: We use a social model of disability to examine disability discourse at a regional university in the mid-western United States. Using an institutional unit of analysis and several different information sources (e.g. interviews, federal regulations, syllabus texts, surveys), we illustrate the ways in which disability-as-difference is governed by an architecture of containment at the university

Vlachou, Anastasia; Papananou, Ioanna

Disabled students' narratives about their schooling experiences

Disability & society VOL 30; NUMB 1 (2015) pp.73-86

Abstract: An ongoing interest in disabled learners' voices has been reflected in a number of studies that explore students' experiences of schooling, as part of the quest to understand how inclusive education can be achieved. These studies, however, have been conducted mainly in industrially developed countries, while very few studies exist from

industrially developing countries such as Greece in which disabled people's voices are under-represented not only in political processes but in research as well. The aim of this study was to investigate disabled students' educational experience, their social interactions with peers and teachers,

### **Design, disability and play: the animal politics of education**

Jaarsma, Ada S.

Gender and education VOL 28; NUMB 2 (2016) pp.195-212

Abstract: 'This article draws out the materialist import of the turn towards universal design in learning. Bringing Brian Massumi's recent work on play together with disability studies, it identifies design as integral to the embodied dynamics of classrooms. Contrasting neo-Darwinist presumptions with materialist insights by thinkers like Tim Ingold, the chapter makes the case for pedagogical methods that exemplify play. On Massumi's terms, play is instinctual, proffering a resource for undermining the despair of normalising scripts. If learning involves play, then there is lived abstraction at the heart of becoming. And if teaching involves design work, teachers become more responsible for their own pedagogical stylings. Taking up Margaret Price's work on disability, the article explores flexibility as an ethos that ideally suffuses all instruction. Design work can create playful classroom territories, but it can also reinforce the despair of exclusionary spaces. The article makes the case for flexibility as an existentially transformative dynamic.

Government won't reach its employment target for disabled people until 2030

TUC analysis . The second paper includes data on unemployment rates and wage levels amongst the disabled.

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/disability-issues/government-won%E2%80%99t-reach-its-employment-target-disabled-people-until>

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Disability%20and%20employment.pdf>

### **Policy**

Lewthwaite, Sarah

Government cuts to Disabled Students' Allowances must be resisted

Disability & society VOL 29; NUMB 7 (2014) pp.1159-1163

Abstract: Cuts to essential grant funding for disabled students in England will put disabled students' studies at risk. Proposed cuts to Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) in 2015 will redefine disability and damage the validity of equality indicators. As a result, the needs of many disabled students may be systematically overlooked, leading to unequal outcomes for students, academia and wider society.

Mutanga, Oliver; Walker, Melanie

Towards a Disability-inclusive Higher Education Policy through the Capabilities Approach

Journal of human development and capabilities VOL 16; NUMB 4 (2015) pp.501-517

Abstract: Evidence from international literature shows that despite interventions and policies, students with disabilities face persistent challenges in higher education. The

capabilities approach can take us forward in addressing these challenges. Based on South Africa.

### **Assistive technology/ accessibility**

Five Top Tips to Make Your Website More Accessible

Abilitynet blog Post

<https://www.abilitynet.org.uk/news-blogs/five-top-tips-make-your-website-more-accessible>

Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) 19th May

Official website with history, events, background materials.

<http://www.globalaccessibilityawarenessday.org/>

open letter to the Government from Robin Christopherson, Head of Digital Inclusion at AbilityNet

<https://www.abilitynet.org.uk/news-blogs/open-letter-government-please-ensure-websites-and-apps-comply-legal-accessibility#sthash.BvgvysIV.dpuf>

Making News Websites Accessible to All

Advice for journalists from Nleman reports

<http://niemanreports.org/articles/making-news-websites-accessible-to-all/>

Access and barriers to online education for people with disabilities

National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, Curtin University.

This paper reports on a study conducted in 2014 and 2015 that explored the accessibility of eLearning for students with disabilities studying fully online in Australia.

<https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/publications/access-and-barriers-to-online-education-for-people-with-disabilities/>

### **Employability**

Peer support for employment: a practice review – Disability Rights UK

Peer support for employment: a practice review - executive summary

Peer support for employment: a review of the evidence – Work Foundation

Peer to peer support or mentoring is an effective way of boosting disabled people's employment prospects, and should have a stronger role in government work programmes - two studies published by Disability Rights UK (DRUK) and The Work Foundation suggest.

<http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2016/may/peer-support-could-boost-work-prospects-disabled-people>

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