Jane Secker, Gwyneth Price and Debbie Boden

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Information literacy beef bourguignon (also known as information skills stew or i-skills casserole): the higher education sector

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This is a favourite among those carefully composed, slowly cooked dishes....Such dishes do not, of course, have a rigid formula, each cook interpreting it according to her taste. Elizabeth David on Boeuf a la Bourguignonne (Norman, 1998; p. 122).

Laying the table

The concept of information literacy (IL) is probably more developed among the library profession in higher education (HE) than in other sectors. Arguably, the role of the librarian as a teacher is more firmly established and most academic libraries have had some form of training programme in place for at least a decade. In part this has been driven by technology and the availability of high-speed network connections and electronic resources. But it is also part of the wider recognition in higher education in particular, of the central role of the library (and the librarian) in learning support. This chapter largely draws on the experiences of the authors in the higher education sector in the UK, but the importance of information literacy is widely recognised in higher education throughout the world. In fact, until recently, in North America, Australasia and parts of Scandinavia the concept and importance of

information literacy was much more established than in the UK.

There have been several changes in HE over the last decade that arguably have led to an increased recognition for the need for information literacy and for library staff to become more actively engaged in teaching. The Follett Report (Joint Funding Council's Libraries Review Group, 1993), the eLib programe (JISC, 2006; Rusbridge, 1998) – notably EduLib (JISC, 1998), as well as continuing developments in new technology have been catalysts for change, not least the ubiquity of technology, from mobile phones to laptops, that permeates all aspects of society. In the UK today e-learning is a reality for many students, with almost all HE institutions now using a virtual learning environment (VLE) or engaging in some form of e-learning. Secker (2004) provides a detailed account of e-learning and its impact on the role of librarians. The enormous growth in electronic resources available in academic libraries has also hastened the need to provide an increasing variety of detailed library induction programmes and training classes. Students frequently need to grapple with multiple passwords and interfaces to access resources and use the multitude of library databases now available. These tools are often a sharp contrast to the habits of the 'Google generation' that use one simple search box and believe it finds everything. Information literacy is an important weapon to challenge those who fail to see the continuing relevance of libraries. The developments in Web 2.0 and social software are providing new tools and challenges for librarians to work alongside students.

In the UK, the 'widening participation' agenda and the enormous growth in the numbers of students entering higher education – from increasingly diverse backgrounds – has also led to a greater need for information literacy courses. Gone are the days when a typical undergraduate student comes fresh out of school at 18 and studies full time, living on the university campus. Students today can increasingly be mature, part-time and/or studying at a distance from the institution. They may have part-time jobs, children or other dependants and their motivations for entering higher education are increasingly diverse.

Universities themselves have also changed significantly, growing in terms of the number of institutions and the range of subjects they teach. In the UK the most notable distinction is between the older, traditional research-led institutions, and new post-1992 universities that focus more on teaching and tend to offer more diverse vocational subjects. HE typically provides teaching to students from Foundation level to postgraduate degrees, with a growing emphasis on the needs of Doctoral students and developments within continuing professional development

for the professions. A useful overview of the UK HE sector is provided by Brophy, in Levy and Roberts (2005). However, these differences mean that generalising about practice within the sector can be misleading. Moreover, conceptions of IL and of the role of librarians do differ. The HE sector in the UK and throughout the world is therefore extremely diverse, and it embraces a range of institutions of differing sizes, ages and with significantly diverse intakes of students. All this means that in one chapter we can really only scratch the surface and provide basic ideas about how to teach information literacy. Therefore, rather than assemble a meal, we have tried to give ideas of flavours and ingredients that work well together. Teaching in HE can be likened in many ways to preparing tapas. You may need numerous small dishes that can be served up in a variety of combinations that are adaptable and that cater for a huge variety of tastes and preferences. Dishes may stand alone, or be served up to form a whole meal. Dishes may be delivered in a formal classroom setting or virtually, via online support. Flexibility is often the key to success, but it is also important to tap into academic concerns and wherever possible collaborate with teaching staff.

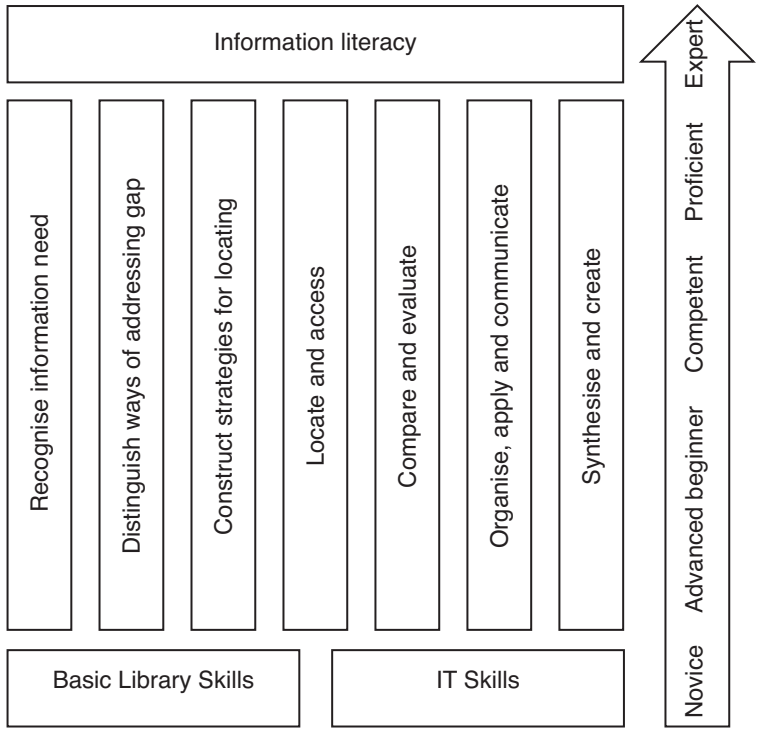
Whetting the appetite: appetisers and nibbles

In the HE sector, engaging with senior managers and with academic staff is one of the most important things librarians can do. It is therefore essential to have a clear definition of information literacy both as a concept, but also as a set of standards that students can be measured against. Non-library staff may be unfamiliar with the term information literacy so having to hand a useful brief definition is essential. The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) have defined IL as: '…knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner' (CILIP, 2006). Most academic staff can relate to this concept, particular when one uses practical examples such as 'it's about finding quality sources' or 'learning how to reference properly'. There are many other definitions available from organisations such as the American Library Association (ALA), the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL), and as recently as 2005 JISC introduced the concept of 'i-skills' (JISC, 2005). Other publications include Christine Bruce's *Seven Faces of Information Literacy* (Bruce, 1997) and Michael Eisenberg and Robert Berkowitz *Big Six Skills* (Eisenberg and Berkowitz, 2007). However, the remit for those involved in the creation of the CILIP definition was to

produce a definition in simple language that could be adapted as required depending on the audience. The definition provides a good basis for HE and the ethical element immediately engages staff who are often increasingly concerned with plagiarism.

The aim of any IL course is to develop the IL skills of the users, and the CILIP definition provides us with a starting point, as this is what we want to achieve. Competencies however, are then required to measure what skills are needed to create the information-literate student or academic. In 1999, the Information Skills Task Force, on behalf of SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries), prepared a positioning paper on IL skills in the HE sector (SCONUL,1999). From this paper emerged the SCONUL Seven Pillars model (Figure 8.1; SCONUL, 2006). The Seven Pillars have become a standard that many within HE use when developing IL courses. CILIP have also developed a set of competencies that can be used in conjunction with the Seven Pillars.

Figure 8.1 The SCONUL Seven Pillars



A great deal of literature is available on the subject of IL. Bruce and Lampson's research, completed in 2001, noted that a search on the Internet using the keywords 'information literacy' 'retrieved between 5,700 and 9,500 items' (Bruce and Lampson, 2002). In January 2007 a Google phrase search retrieved 1,060,000 items! Judging from the number of UK conferences and seminars based on IL, we know it is a subject open to much debate within the country. Engaging academic staff with information literacy as a concept may mean introducing them to the published literature. It may also help if we as librarians are actively involved in the research community, through presenting at conferences and publishing articles. Therefore, underpinning any student information literacy programme in higher education should be a staff development programme that not only focuses on up-skilling academic and administrative staff, but ensures they recognise the importance of IL as a wider concept.

However, engaging academic staff and senior managers in our own institutions is only the first stage, as the importance of IL needs to be recognised by central government in the UK. In 1996, The Dearing Report recommended the introduction of Key Skills into post-16 education. If at this point one of the key skills being recommended had been IL, we may have seen a different scenario. As Sheila Corrall has remarked, 'the UK government is committed to electronic delivery of information but has yet to recognise the need for an information-literate population to make e-government a meaningful concept' (Buckley Owen, 2003). In the US, IL is being driven from the top down, yet in the UK it is very much being driven from the bottom up. Librarians in the UK, however, have not been resting on their laurels and research 'revealed many instances of good practice within institutions' (thebigblue, 2003). Organisations such as JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) and the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) are providing grants for research into IL and we are reaping the benefits with projects such as thebigblue, the GAELS project, JUBILLEE and Webber and Johnston's study into 'UK academics' conceptions of, and pedagogy for, information literacy'. All these projects had different agendas but they provide an valuable insight into the student and academics perception of IL, collaboration between faculty and the library, evolutionary differences in e learning between disciplines, assessment and current practice in IL training in HE. Recent initiatives include Eduserv sponsoring the development of the cross-sectoral IL website and providing funding for IL research projects.

Preparing the chef: the need for staff development

IL has become a core part of many librarians' roles within the HE sector, although it seems there is reluctance by some within the sector to recognise this. Bruce and Lampson suggest a reticence by some professionals at having to break away from tradition and 'impose an evaluation opinion on sources' and also having to teach critical evaluation and analysis (Bruce and Lampson, 2002). Part of the reticence may come from a lack of confidence in teaching skills and pedagogic understanding. While Library Schools are beginning to recognise the importance of IL, there is little within their curriculum that prepares LIS students with both the practicalities and theory of teaching. New graduates often discover that they require a set of new skills starting with a basic understanding of IL and knowledge of pedagogy, including terminology such as learning objectives, learning styles, course design and assessment. They may also need to have the skill to manage group behaviour, to develop online courses using VLEs, to collaborate with academics, IT specialists and learning technologists. While changes is slow to filter through from library schools, this need is currently being met through continuing professional development events and through attendance at conferences such as the Librarians Information Literacy Annual Conference (LILAC).

The chef's repertoire

Whatever the chef's training and experience there are certain skills and understanding that will be essential for success. For the teaching (or training) librarian, these are likely to include and understanding of how learning takes place and an appropriate level of confidence in classroom management.

What is learning?

Learning is the process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve the development or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, awareness, values, ideas and feelings, or an increase in the capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more. (MLA, 2004)

Taking some time to think about learning is a useful experience for all

library staff and an enjoyable opportunity for staff training. The MLA's *Inspiring Learning for All* website (MLA, 2004) provides excellent material to support this. For staff engaged in teaching HE students, reflection on their own learning experiences can lead to a much greater understanding of how to support others.

Pedagogic knowledge is important when planning a course and having a good understanding of learning theories will make planning and developing your course mush easier. It also ensures that your dinner is of good quality and that you are not confusing techniques such as folding and whipping! No one is saying that only trained chefs can cook, similarly it is not necessary for most librarians to become a qualified teacher. Nevertheless, understanding some of the theories of learning will help even the most experienced librarian.

- If you are working with academics that are committed to their students, they will use an understanding of how students learn to enhance their teaching. If you want to be seen as a teacher, rather than a presenter, you will need to understand the language of teaching.
- If you feel uncomfortable with teaching large groups and feel that you are not getting through to the students, it may be that a better understanding of how they learn may help.
- Preparing a teaching session for a group of students who you have never met and know nothing about is rather like preparing a meal for a large group of strangers – if you don't know their tastes, fads and appetites, you may have to play very safe or risk leaving some of them to go hungry.

Learning theories

There is no shortage of material to read and an increasing number of excellent courses of varying lengths. There are some very specific issues for librarians so it is worth going on a specialist course if you can find one. *Teaching Information Skills* by Webb and Powis (2004) provides an excellent overview of learning theories, as does Philippa Levy's chapter in Levy and Roberts (2005). For a more challenging discussion of learning theory in an electronic environment, see Conole and Oliver (2007). Here is a basic overview of some learning theories: including Behaviourism, cognitivism, social learning theories and experimental learning.

Behaviourism

Pavlov was a proponent of behaviourism and his experiments with dogs to persuade them to salivate when a bell rang – even when food wasn't forthcoming – are well known. Behaviourist theories indicate that you can change behaviour without changing attitudes and beliefs; not at all what we're trying to achieve with information literacy but of course we may find that sanctions will persuade students to turn off their mobile phones even when all else fails!

Cognitivism

Cognitivist theorists include Piaget and Vygotsky, and their theories recognise that learners need to progress through a series of stages. There are few people who can create a three-course gourmet meal from a recipe book without any previous experience of cooking and equally few students who can search a bibliographic database without appropriate skills and understanding. Cognitivist theories suggest that development can only be extended through intervention and the provision of 'scaffolding', learning will be incremental, building on stages and moving to the 'zone of proximal development'. There is not much room here for the sudden leap of understanding, the appreciation of food and how flavours and textures work together that help a cook create a brilliant meal without formal training. Library skills teaching will benefit from a 'scaffolding' approach, an understanding of the stages a student will need to go through before becoming information competent.

Social learning theories

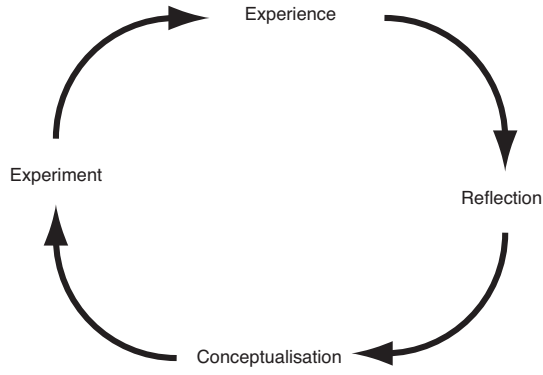
Social learning theories recognise the role of social issues, such as gender, peer group, class and race on learning, as well as environmental issues. If we can afford fine ingredients and the best tools for the job as well as a state of the art kitchen, it may be easier to turn out good meals. Students who come to Higher Education without experience of well-funded libraries may be at a disadvantage and of course peer group pressures may affect willingness to spend time in a library or a kitchen.

Experiential learning

Kolb's well-known theory (Figure 8.2) focuses on experience as the key to learning. A serious cook will focus on tastes and flavours and think how to recreate and improve on them in their own kitchen. The

experience of cooking and eating leads to experimentation, tasting and refining of the recipe. Similarly there is a connection between a desire to learn and the development of information literacy; we are fortunate that twenty-first century students have access to the tools so they can refine and practice search techniques rather than depending on the intervention of a librarian.

Figure 8.2 **Kolb's theory of learning**



Constructivism

Constructivism recognises that learning is not a passive activity; it is affected by a whole mix of issues, including environment, experience and personality. This means that a teaching session that works with one group of students may not work with another for all sorts of reasons that we may or may not be able to influence. Just as the freshness of ingredients, the size of an egg or the oven temperature may affect the outcome when using a standard recipe, the success of the meal will also be affected by the individual tastes, appetite or mood of those eating. As teachers we have to focus on strategies for dealing with the variety of outcomes and doing our best to enhance the learning experience

Situated learning and communities of practice

The work of Lave and Wenger is heavily influential in HE and emphasises the need for participants to feel part of a learning community or a community of practice, to feel at home within their academic field and accepted by their peers. Just as when we cook, we feel flattered if a friend compliments our cooking but we would only feel really confident

of our abilities if invited to work with a well-known chef; acceptance into their community of practice is a most important driver for any ambitious postgraduate or doctoral student.

Learning styles

It is important to recognise that people learn in different ways and have preferences about how they learn. In addition, provision of learning materials in a variety of formats will help disabled students feel active members of the class. For more on learning styles and research into learning style analyses, see Chapter 7.

Classroom management

Teaching large groups of undergraduates with preconceived ideas about libraries is not always easy, so it is best to prepare yourself in two ways:

1. Be clear about what you consider to be inappropriate behaviour and be prepared to deal with it. If you don't know what is considered rudeness in the context in which you work it is best to talk to colleagues both in and outside the library.
2. Pre-empt difficult behaviour by making sessions as interactive and enjoyable as possible. Information literacy is not a dull topic!

Top Tips when teaching

We all have different styles of teaching but here are a few tips that may help you:

- Make sure you can see a clock easily. If there isn't a wall clock, take off your watch and keep that visible so you know what the time is.
- Hand out a register for everyone to sign. As some students' handwriting can be illegible it is even better if you can get the names beforehand and print out a register so that they can put their signature next to their name! The register means you can easily keep a record of the number of people who have attended.
- Before you begin the session, introduce yourself (and anyone else who is helping with the session), and name the course and the department and/or year you are teaching. This ensures you have the right group of students.

Top Tip continued

- Do make eye contact and smile.
- Ask everyone to ensure that their mobile phones are either turned off or on 'silent'.
- Ask everyone to refrain from using their computers during the presentation: a good phrase is 'it can be offputting for everyone to hear a keyboard tapping away in the background'. And you can mention how irritating you find it! Do not be afraid to ask someone to stop 'tapping' if they 'forget' that you have asked them not to.
- You can ask people to turn off their monitors. This takes away the temptation for people to tap on their keyboards!
- Ask everyone to stop talking during the presentation, but emphasise that talking during hands-on sessions is fine – it often helps people learn.
- Briefly explain the structure of the session, so that the students will know what to expect when.
- If you have 'break-out' sessions, tell the students how long they have for the task/discussion/etc.
- When you have finished the session, allow 5 minutes before it is timetabled to end for the evaluation sheets to be handed out and completed.

Adapted from: *iLIP – Internal Information Literacy Programme* (Imperial College London, 2005).

The event: from canapés and snacks to a four course banquet

Information literacy 'events' in higher education, like cooking, can take a wide variety of forms, for example your institution may recognise the value of 'library training' or it may be seen as a one-off activity that takes place as part of induction. The start of the year and the intake of new students is a key time to run training events that may be part of a regular cycle of generic training offered by the library or may be specific induction events following requests from academic staff. If induction activities or short sessions are all you are currently being offered by staff then view these as IL snacks or canapés, which hopefully will show off your abilities in the kitchen and lead to commissions for four course banquets in the

future! Increasingly, IL is seen as a key skill and some institutions have taken a strategic approach to ensuring their students are information literate by running specific programmes of training, which may be generic or tailored to specific subjects. In other institutions the value of IL may be less widely recognised and it may involve being opportunistic as staff request one-off sessions at specific times of year, e.g. the start of the dissertation 'season' often leads to a request for one-off sessions on literature searching or citing and referencing. Before you start planning your 'event' or menu, flexibility is really the key – and being explicit about what topics you can cover and how long it will realistically take. Staying with the menu approach, McConnell Library at Radford University in the States offers an 'a la carte' menu of IL training that academic staff are invited to pick and choose from. Staff can see at a glance the range of topics on offer and the length of time a typical session will take (for more information see *http://lib.radford.edu/Instruction/menu.asp*).

Preparation

The success of any recipe depends very much on the preparation, be it a small simple dish or a complex gourmet meal. If you have prepared properly you will feel confident about the quality of your dish and its final presentation. Part of your preparation includes how you market your programme to the academic departments. It can sometimes difficult to know whether to try market IL as a concept before you develop your programme or whether you should have the programme completed and ready to demonstrate before you try and market it. The most practical way is to have a plan of your programme and one developed unit to show to academic staff. Try developing the unit that they will recognise as the most useful to them. For example, a unit on plagiarism or referencing is usually a good one to demonstrate.

Liaison with academic departments

Liaison with academic departments is a very important part of your preparation. There are many different scenarios; here are some examples:

1. You have been asked to create a course by the academic department – liaison is therefore much easier. You need however to try to ensure the following:

- enough time in the student timetable, preferably staggered and timetabled so you are teaching students at a time of need;
- that the course is linked to an academic module and has subject relevance – teaching students how to find appropriate resources when they have just received their first assignment helps put what you are teaching in context;
- that the sessions are compulsory and, if possible, credit-bearing;
- that you have proper evaluation and feedback mechanisms so you can demonstrate the worth of what you are doing and how it makes a difference.

2. You already have timetabled sessions but they are in a lecture format and you want to develop a more active learning approach and use PCs for hands-on sessions. You will need to:

- approach the department early before they start timetabling for the next year as you will be asking for more timetabled hours – the increase may be considerable if you have large numbers and only have access to small PC labs;
- plan your campaign – you must think through carefully what you are going to say and explain to the department how changing the way you teach will benefit the students and them;
- use library-friendly academics to help put your case forward, ask them to drop into conversation with appropriate colleagues that you are creating a new and exciting interactive programme that will really benefit the students;
- try to approach the person in the department who has overall responsibility for the degree programme;
- take along example of what you intend to do and stress the benefits for each section of the programme;
- ensure you have proper evaluation and feedback mechanisms so you can demonstrate the worth of what you are doing and how it makes a difference.

3. You have no timetabled sessions:

- Don't aim too high to start with. A pilot of your programme is usually the best way forward. This way you are not setting yourself up to fail and a pilot allows you to iron out problems before you try launching the programme to the other departments.

- Remember that academics are often not unsympathetic to what you are trying to achieve, but timetabling is often tight so you have to make a really good case as to why they should find time.
- Plan your campaign. Sound out a few friendly academics, sell the benefits of the programme. Gain their support and if possible find some one to agree to pilot your new programme. Then approach the person in the department who has overall responsibility of for the degree programme.
- If you are planning to develop an online programme find examples that you can demonstrate or take along your one created unit; explain the benefits to them and their students. If you are in a new university, it may be useful to talk about retention; in an old university, plagiarism may be a more appropriate topic.
- Ensure you have proper evaluation and feedback mechanisms so you can demonstrate the worth of what you are doing and how it makes a difference.

Planning your meal

If you are planning a special meal and have total control over all aspects of the venue, date and time, menu and guests and the costs, you can start from scratch and create the perfect event; the same might be true of planning a learning event. In theory you should plan in the 'right' order and experts suggest that this is the order in which it should be completed:

1. specify aims and learning outcomes;
2. plan how to check that learning outcomes have been attained, i.e. assessment;
3. plan the learning activities;
4. plan the inputs, e.g. presentation, handouts, activities – ingredients and store cupboard;
5. sequence and timetable the session;
6. decide on the appropriate learning environment or delivery method;
7. plan how to get feedback.

In practice there will be certain aspects of the situation over which you have little or no control:

- the course tutor may have preconceived ideas of the content;
- the date and time may already be fixed;
- you have to use whatever rooms are available, or there may be an expectation that you will use the VLE;
- the group size is predetermined;
- the staff available may have only limited teaching expertise.

Much of this may be negotiable, but your planning will have to be pragmatic and may often be more like brainstorming and lateral thinking; mind-mapping tools can be helpful for planning an event as well as in your teaching. However you go about it, it really is worthwhile to produce a lesson plan (Appendix 8.1) as it particularly helps to avoid the lazy cooks method of adding whatever comes to hand. Nevertheless, any plan should be flexible enough to allow for questions and student involvement.

Planning a banquet

If you are planning a major teaching event or a series of sessions, you would do well to use project planning techniques to avoid disaster:

- if your menu requires cross team working or input from other departments, make sure everyone is kept informed during the planning stage;
- confirm who will be head chef;
- prepare a project initiation document (PID), and ensure everyone agrees to the menu and the time scales involved;
- hold regular meetings to ensure there are no problems;
- use the traffic light system:
  green – everything is on track;
  amber – some of the ingredients are near their sell by date;
  red – the ingredients are mouldy and the shops are shut!

Top Tip

> If you are not used to managing projects, check out the staff development programme at your institution; they may have courses that can help you. Useful hints on project management can be found at *http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_PPM.htm*

The learning environment

You would normally start planning for your guests by creating your menu and gathering your ingredients; however, it may be sensible to consider how you are going to deliver and present your meal first; whether you intend to offer silver service (face-to-face) or self-service (online). Although you may not have any choice over delivery as you may not have access to a VLE or webpages, if you do this needs to be considered before you start planning your menu. This is simply because planning your menu will depend on the type of delivery you choose.

If you have the ability to provide online delivery, you need to consider the following before deciding whether it is the most appropriate delivery mechanism.

- Benefits of online programmes:
  - they can be accessed anytime, any place where there is Internet access (this is particularly beneficial for distance learners, students who are on placement or part-time students);
  - they act as a reference tool and learning resource for all students;
  - students can learn at their own pace at a point of need;
  - they are helpful for students whose first language is not English;
  - they may be helpful for disabled students;
  - they can provide useful management information.
- Disadvantages of online programmes:
  - they do not match everyone's learning style;
  - students need appropriate IT skills;
  - students need access to the Internet and a PC off campus;
  - materials need to be in a format that will speedily load with a dial-up connection;
  - access can cost students money if they are using a dial-up connection;
  - they increase printing costs.
- Other things to think about:
  - Will your materials be generic or subject specific?
  - How can you ensure the programme will be sustainable?
  - Who manages the programme?
  - Who ensures the programme is kept up to date (this includes content and the physical up loading of content in your online programme)?
  - What are your quality assurance procedures?
  - Do you have a strategic plan for the future of IL development?
  - Are you taking a web-focused or a blended learning approach?

Ingredients and store cupboard

Before preparing for your meal, it is always wise to check what you have in your store cupboard as this will affect your menu. If you have little or no budget your store cupboard may be all you have to work with, but if you have a budget it will inform on the ingredients you need to buy. There are two main ingredients that you should always try to have when cooking; the goodwill of your senior management team and a good understanding of the staff and academic programmes you are supporting. Without these, your soufflé may sink! Try to ensure that the benefits to your users are clear and understood by the academics and the senior management of the library. More importantly, make sure that what you are doing supports the library strategic plan.

The quality of ingredients that you use is important, but sometimes you can't afford to buy organic or you just don't have time to go shopping and you have to use what is in the cupboard. Try to remember to keep your store cupboard well stocked, and throw away any items that have passed their sell by date. Obvious ingredients may for example include:

- teaching materials (evaluation forms, presentations, lesson plans etc) and courses already written;
- software available e.g. online assessment software such as Question Mark Perception or the Informs tutorials;
- library catalogue documentation and help guides;
- databases and e-journal documentation and help guides;
- equipment including: laptop, projector, extension cable, extended network cable, memory sticks, acetates, writable CDs.

Sometimes you may not always know what is in the cupboard, as things may have been put there by other chefs. You may have to look hard to find these things as they may not be obvious, for example:

- If you are planning an online course will it be on the institutional website or does the institution have a VLE?
- If you intend to use the institutional website, does it have a content management system?
- Is there an institutional Web Master who will be able to help you develop your ideas?
- If you intend to use a VLE, does the institution have more than one?

- Find out who else is using a VLE for teaching; have they purchased specialist software?
- Would the software be suitable for your needs, and if so does it have a site license? (Don't fall into the trap of using technology for the sake of it!)
- Do you have appropriate pedagogic knowledge – which of the library staff are trained teachers?
- What support is available from your teaching and learning department/s?

Top Tip

> Create a resource check list (Table 8.1). This is a really helpful way of creating a quick overview of your resources and of ones you will need to acquire.

Table 8.1 **Example of part of a resource list for a project to develop an online IL course**

Resource check list								
Resource	**Yes**	**No**	**Action**	**Location**	**Internal**	**External**	**Cost (£)**	**Notes**
VLE	Y			Store cupboard	Y		0	University VLE
Library staff who have used VLE before		Y	University in house training	University teaching and learning staff	Y		0	
Pedagogic knowledge – course design		Y	External training course	London		yes	280 plus travel	
Content	Y	Y		Store cupboard and library staff	Y		0	Some content available but new content will require writing
Staff with Power Point knowledge	Y			Library	Y		0	

Methods

Learning activities

There are many approaches and combinations you can choose from when delivering your meal. Blended learning approaches are often popular with students (Boden and Holloway, 2004; 35). Blended

learning allows you to use a combination of delivery methods in both formal and informal settings. Table 8.2 shows just a few things you can combine when using the blended learning approach.

Table 8.2 **The blended approach**

Face-to-face demonstration	Online learning units using VLE or a web-based course
Face-to-face lecture	Workshops
Hands-on with worksheets	Different media – video, DVD, personal response systems etc.
Hands-on with online tutorials	Communication using e-mail, chat, blogs, online discussions, mobile technologies
Wikis	Drop-in and timetabled surgeries

Assessment

> 'The proof of the pudding is in the eating.' (Fourteenth century English proverb)

Assessment is an essential part of any course. You know what the learning outcomes, aims and objectives you have for the students, but how do you know they have reached the level of learning they require? Different types of assessment may include:

- Formative assessment is an informal way of a student or tutor assessing learning. This type of assessment is not marked, but may subsequently be submitted for summative assessment.
- Summative assessment is a formal type of assessment that a student submits for marking, a typical example in an IL programme would be a quiz (online or paper). This type of assessment allows you to quickly assess if a student is having problems and in need of further instruction.
- questionnaire allows you to see the level of understanding a student has at the beginning of a course. The post-course questionnaire demonstrates the level of learning achieved by the end of the course.
- Personal response systems (PRS) – allow you to ask students questions in a more interactive and fun way. Answers are recorded and can be analysed immediately. These can be used anonymously either in group work or individually, or individuals allocated a specific handset so their work can be monitored.

- Critical analysis sheet – a critical analysis sheet can be used if a student has completed an assignment for the academic department. Students are asked to consider the search strategy they used for their assignment. They are then expected to draw on the skills and concepts they have developed during the course to demonstrate that they have understood the process of gathering and evaluating information (see Appendix 8.2).

Regardless of whether learning will actually be formally assessed your planning should involve thinking about whether and how assessment could be usefully measured. The ultimate assessment is of course the student's successful completion of the their university studies.

Dealing with disasters

Teaching disasters do happen; it is inevitable. There are however things you can do to help ensure that you minimise the chances of disasters. Lessons plans and teaching programmes should not be set in stone; you have to be flexible. For example, imagine the following scenario: you arrive to teach a postgraduate masters class assuming they will have a basic knowledge of IL. You then discover, after talking to them, that the majority are international students and have no IL skills at all. You have a choice: you can plough on regardless, or you can change your plan and adapt the session appropriately. If you stay with the planned session you will probably confuse them and put them off asking you for help in the future. The sensible thing is to adapt your session. This is not always easy to do, especially if you do not have a lot of teaching experience, but don't be afraid to take five minutes out to scribble down a new timetable for your session. Online courses are particularly useful in this situation as they allow for adaptation and change. For instance:

- you can give some units to the students as homework and then ask them to complete a quiz, based on these units at the following session;
- assessment – self-test can be changed to quizzes and vice versa;
- units within VLEs can be hidden so that students can not see them before you use them for teaching.

If you are not using an online course then have a memory stick or a CD with all your presentations and worksheets on it. This way, if you have

the above scenario you can quickly swap to a presentation intended for first year undergraduates that would be more appropriate for the situation. You can also ask for new worksheets to be printed off and photocopied. Remember to talk to your academic contact and inform them of the situation, they may be able to give you additional time to help the students. Always be prepared for things to change; be adaptable and flexible!

If you are planning a hands-on session with databases, remember that at the beginning of term every other university is doing the same. This can lead to problems with students accessing the databases. Always have online tutorials/worksheets for several databases; this way you can switch if required. It is better to have them doing something rather than nothing!

Top Tips: avoiding disaster

Planning ahead is the best way to minimise potential disasters. Here are some useful tips:

- Make sure you know your teaching material, and have had a chance to rehearse your session. This will help you with timings, and should highlight any problems before the session – much better than finding them during it!
- If two or more people are running the session, it is very helpful to do a run-through, as again this helps with timings, and you can ensure each person knows which section they are responsible for. Arrange who will do the preliminary announcements and introduction, and any summing up.
- Save your presentation(s) to a memory stick and CD.
- If you haven't used the room you'll be teaching in before, arrange a visit so you can check the layout and find out what extras you may need to take.
- Check that the equipment works and that you have the correct cables and other connections.
- If you are using a PC room that normally has student access, print out notices for the doors of the room where you are teaching, and have blu-tack/sellotape with which to stick up notices. This will help prevent unwanted disturbances from people wandering in to use the computers.

Top Tip continued

- Have a list of the library and, where possible, local IT contacts, including phone numbers.
- If you are using an online programme and it requires a student login, make sure you have generic passwords, as there will always be at least one student who can't log in!
- If using Athens passwords, take a list of training passwords as there will always be someone who doesn't have theirs with them.
- If you are using printed worksheets or handouts, ensure you have enough for the class.
- Evaluation is important, so ensure that you have enough feedback sheets for the class.
- If you are using a VLE with hidden units, make sure you have 'activated' all parts of your course that you will need for teaching. Any quizzes you use will also need to be set according to the dates you want it to be available to students.
- If the worst comes to the worst and nothing works, don't be afraid to cut your losses and stop the session.

Adapted from: *iLIP – Internal Information Literacy Programme* (Imperial College London, 2005).

Coffee and petit fours

The success of your meal can usually be judged by the time you reach the coffee and petit fours. If people are relaxed and smiling it usually means they are content and happy. Similarly, if your students are interacting with you, asking you questions, it usually means they have found your session interesting and useful. Evaluation however, is essential. You must evaluate how successful your IL programme or session has been for your students. It is very important that you look at your own performance as a teacher, and at the tools you are using to teach with. You should always question and learn from every session, as this allows you to develop your own teaching and the tools you use. You may wish to find out different types of information depending on type of student you are teaching, so you may have a selection of different evaluation sheets. When designing your evaluation sheets always start with thinking about what you really want to know, then design the questions around this.

Always hand out an evaluation sheets at the end of the course and, if possible, hold focus groups with students – particularly if you are using an online course, as you can discuss design, navigation etc. in the discussion too. An example of an evaluation sheet can be found in Appendix 8.3 at the end of this chapter.

Cake and champagne

The importance of sharing your experiences of teaching IL cannot be overstated, and those of us lucky enough to work in teams should talk with colleagues on a regular basis and share good practice. The best way to learn is from each other and peer observation can provide a variety of helpful ideas and boost our confidence. An ideal way to manage peer observation and take away some of the stress of feeling watched is to team teach. For many of us it is the size of groups that limits what we feel we can comfortably achieve, so working in twos will benefit both the students and ourselves. Whenever possible, ask academic tutors to work with you, and don't be afraid to ask them to comment on particular aspects of your teaching. It is important to remember that one very possible reason why academics shy away from working with librarians is that they have very little confidence in their own information literacy.

Top Tip

> When you are teaching, keep a reflective journal. Fill it in after every teaching session and refer back to it when planning any future teaching sessions.

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to look in some detail at IL in the higher education sector. If you are new to teaching in higher education, then we hope the chapter will help you get started. Don't forget, if you have colleagues who are more experienced then ask for their advice and use their knowledge to help you. Keep in touch with what is happening in IL in HE by joining an e-mail discussion list, such as lis-infoliteracy at JISCmail, or set up a Google Alert. If you are an experienced teacher, we hope this chapter has given you some new ideas or ways of improving what you do. It is essential to keep on evaluating your teaching and

looking for new and innovative approaches to take into the classroom. Whether you are creating a picnic or a banquet you need to plan carefully. By planning your meal, knowing who your guests are, the types of ingredients required, and selecting an appropriate methodology, you can help to ensure that you have a successful meal that everyone will enjoy. By doing this you will also feel confident about what you are serving and you will enjoy the meal too!

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Appendix 8.1

Example lesson plan

Session Leader:

Session title: Invisible Library

Date:	Time:	Length of session:	No of students

Learning outcomes:

Students will develop:

- £ familiarisation with the different types of information the library provides and how to access them;
- £ an ability to create a search strategy and apply Boolean logic, wildcards, truncation etc;
- £ familiarisation with chosen database.

How will you know the learning outcomes have been reached by the students:
Self tests students will complete in OLIVIA Units 2 and 4.
The hands-on online tutorial session will uncover any problems students may be having; help can be given at a point of need.
Online evaluation form to be completed before end of session.

Assessment:
Formative assessment – self tests

Additional notes:
Homework – ask them to work through the Metalib Informs tutorial

Activity	Student or lecturer	Content	Timing
Presentation	Lecturer	Information resources, search techniques	15 minutes
Demonstration	Lecturer	Demo of WoK (or relevant database) Do basic search show results, how to print/save, SFX button, etc	10 minutes
Hands-on	Student	Look through OLIVIA online Units 2 and 4. Complete self-tests Work through database online tutorial in OLIVIA Unit 4	30 minutes

Appendix 8.2

Critical evaluation assessment form

Name: _____

Course: _____

What is your project topic? _____

- Is the information you have retrieved relevant to your assignment and does it answer the whole question?
- What keywords have you used for your search?
- Which synonyms and alternative spellings have you identified for each of your key terms?
- Have you remained focused on your keywords throughout your search or did you get distracted and go off at a tangent?

Is the information up to date?

- How many references have you retrieved?
- What is the publication date range of the items used and how did you decide this is appropriate?
- Did you use the publication date limit appropriately, if available?

Are you confident your information was produced by a reputable source?

- Which resources have you used and why are they appropriate for your search?
- How have you assessed that the information has come from a reputable source?
- Is any of your information peer reviewed? If yes, give an example.
- Have you used information from the Internet and if so how have you assessed the quality of the information?

How do you know that the information is of an appropriate academic level?

Appendix 8.3

UG Evaluation Sheet

Your name (Optional): ……..……
Your Course: ……
Date:……..……
Location:……..……
.
Session Name:……(you add in)……
Tutor(s) Name:…… (you add in)……

Key
5 – Excellent, 4 – Very good 3 – Good, 2 – Adequate , 1 – Not very good

- Did you find this session useful?

5 4 3 2 1

- What have you learnt from this session?

……

- Where do you think you could apply what you have learnt today to the rest of your course?

……

- How useful did you find this online course when learning about Information Literacy?

……

- Which units did you find most useful?

……

- How useful did you find the:

Online Tutorials	5 4 3 2 1
Self-Tests	5 4 3 2 1

Quizzes 5 4 3 2 1
Critical Analysis Sheets 5 4 3 2 1

- Were there any topics not included that you would have liked to have seen covered?

.....

- Please rate the quality of your tutor

  Tutor 5 4 3 2 1

- How do you fine rate the quality of the venue?

5 4 3 2 1

- Do you have any comments/suggestions that would help us improve the programme?

.....