OULDI-JISC Project

Narrative 13

Katharine Reedy is an Information Literacy Specialist working in the Information Literacy Unit in Library Services at her university. She specialises in information and digital literacy; however an important part of her role is running staff development sessions for Learning and Teaching librarians around learning and teaching related topics such as learning theory, assessment and learning design.

Katharine has worked at the university for more than 11 years and has seen significant changes in the librarian role over that time:

> *"I think the role [of learning and teaching librarians] has changed over the years, over the time that I have been with the library. I think the emphasis has definitely shifted. There was a training needs analysis which tried to identify skills gaps and one of the things that has changed is that librarians need to go and sell the library resources and the library contribution to module teams in a much more 'upfront' way and that's quite a culture shift. We do get people saying "It's not really what we do. I didn't sign up for that" but actually it is what we do now".*

She also noted that increasingly librarians are working as members of a multi-disciplinary module or qualification team and that this means that librarians need strong collaborative skills and confidence to work effectively with others in this way:

> *"It does seem to be the case [that there are more multi-disciplinary module teams]. You can see [...]that there are faculties working together [...] there are more examples of that. Where it's working well, you've got partnership with other people/contributors like the library, like LTS – you've got that working well. Each area is contributing what it can and working together to ensure that they produce a good piece of learning for the students".*

> *"And I think it's about being able to speak from a position of knowledge and confidence and authority. So you've got this set of principles, they are well grounded in theory and practice, and it's about being able to bring them in at the appropriate moment and say "Look, this is the way we could do it" and then they can see that it works and it spreads – you do get that ripple effect".*

As a consequence of these changes in role, Katharine has been very much involved in developing and facilitating workshops for librarians to develop new skills and approaches. She took the OULDI-JISC project as an opportunity to develop activities, tools and resources for librarians that utilised the learning design approach (i.e. representations, conceptual tools and opportunities for collaboration and design discourse) because she felt that they

offered *"fresh ideas for working with module teams and integrating skills, and changing people's thinking"*:

> *"The learning design workshops came at a really good time for us because we were wanting to do something more with the learning and teaching librarians around their role as educators. So, not just providers of resources - people providing information about what there is in the library - but actually how it can be used in teaching. So we set up a whole programme of workshops, including an introduction to learning theory, introduction to assessment (what is it, what do the different terms mean), something about writing learning outcomes, something about digital literacy, so it fitted really well into that broader programme, and I think part of its success can be attributed to the fact that the message kept getting reinforced. So people heard about constructive alignment in learning theory, then it was picked up in learning design as important, and then it came again in assessment and by that stage people we thinking "Ah, the penny has dropped – this is a good principle and I can use it and it fits into the work that I need to do with these module teams, to achieve our objectives"*

Katharine's particular interest throughout the pilot has been the evaluation of learning design tools and concepts for integrating Information Literacy skills and active, resource-based learning into modules. From her perspective she has seen good levels of uptake from a number of Learning and Teaching librarians, and has found that the most significant impact has been on changing thinking in relation to the design of learning and integration of skills:

> *"A lot of my role is around staff development – enabling the learning and teaching librarians to be equipped to work with module teams, particularly around skills integration (that is information and digital literacy skills) – and I think a number of the tools from the project are particularly useful[...]Some of those tools have been used to good effect and in terms of how the librarians work I think it's as much about changed thinking as about the tools - from where I'm standing at the moment that is the thing that's having the greatest impact".*

However, although she is quick to recognise the impact of the project at ground level, she is less confident that there has been a significant change at institutional level:

> *"At a high level, my impression is that maybe not all that much has changed as yet. I think that's to do with the nature of the University - change is quite slow to come sometimes[...] I think there are efforts to communicate the principles of learning design and the tools at a top level. I think that people at that level have a lot of initiatives coming at them so they have to prioritise and I don't know how much this is being prioritised [...] I think that something that is able to show that it is helping the OU to work efficiently and save money, and there's data about efficiency and so on, that will maybe be their first priority. And for module teams, people working*

> *more on the ground, I think the learning and teaching aspects are more important but not always"*

Katharine remains extremely positive about the impacts of the project on the practice of Learning and Teaching librarians and the work they are doing with module teams to integrate information literacy activities and stresses the importance of maintaining momentum:

> *"I think [the project] has been really useful and I think people have seen the relevance of it to library objectives – it does line up well with that and another benefit has been to help people understand the bigger picture and actually see where a module team is coming from [...] I'm hopeful that if we are influencing at top level and on the ground that those two will come together and we will get to the point where the course production process isn't just about the procedures but is about design thinking"*

> *"I don't think we can say, "We've had OULDI, we've done learning design. Let's move on", because I don't think that's the way it works. I think we have to keep revisiting it and reinforcing the principles. And that probably applies to the tools like Cloudworks and the other tools that are used. What I wouldn't want to see is it sinking without a trace, and I think we have moved far enough on that it won't but there is probably more that we can do to keep it alive once the project ends".*

Katharine is also involved in a Library initiative to develop a digital literacy curriculum and expects to use a learning design approach to embedding those principles too in the future.