

OULDI-JISC Project

Narrative 14

Anna Hvass is a Learning and Teaching librarian who works with the Science and Health and Social Care faculties of her university. She has a very strong technical background and has worked in a number of HE institutions. Her job role involves her in working closely with new modules in production and in presentation to advise on how to integrate content and information skills into the curriculum and VLE environment.

Anna started in the role of Learning and Teaching librarian in 2009 but only began to work on her first undergraduate module at about the same time as the OULDI-JISC pilot began in the Library Services Unit in 2010. This was also the time that the faculties in which she worked were starting to develop modules that were predominantly online, rather than print based. As a consequence, Anna realises that what might be considered innovative or unusual working practices for others is just how she has always worked in her role:

"I think it was quite a surprise to me that one of the very first [undergraduate] modules I'd worked on was the first Science module to be completely online. I didn't know that until about a year in. I just assumed it was an everyday occurrence. It hadn't even crossed my mind that it was new and so we were very innovative working in that way [...] didn't have a clue!"

Anna attended the Learning and Teaching staff development workshops held in the Library where she was introduced to the OULDI project and tools, in particular she was attracted to the idea of using the Learning Outcomes view (based on Biggs' notion of Constructive Alignment) and the Information Literacy Levels Framework developed by Library Services to structure the conversations she was having with module teams about how they might embed Information Literacy outcomes, activities and assessment through modules. She feels that the Learning Outcomes view gave her a very useful structure to use with module teams, to help her introduce the levels framework and Library Information Literacy (LIL) activities:

"I think all these tools we have to work with now - the structure we have - really helps with the discussions we have with different module teams. So the Constructive Alignment idea, along with the IL activities that we have and we also have an information literacy framework that gives us a framework around the different levels of Information Literacy Skills there are, and the module team space...these all help us work with module teams when we are integrating Information Literacy"

"You can stand up and say "Look, this is what we're going to do because of this, this and this" and there's theory behind it"

"I keep coming back to this idea of structure, but it is very much about how you structure the learning and the teaching for the students. As well as how it helps you

structure the module in the first place. ...I think it's essential when you are looking at such a big piece of work to have that structure that goes across everything that you do".

When Anna started work on one particular Science module, the module team had already decided which information literacy skills they wanted students to have at the end of the module, and how they were going to assess these. Anna used the Learning Outcomes view (in table form) to help them work back to understand what the initial learning outcomes might be in relation to the IL Framework, and how they might create opportunities in for students to learn and develop these skills using activities from the Library's Information Literacy (LIL) activity bank. Anna feels strongly that the module team valued the proactive role she took in relation to embedding Information Literacy because she was able to take a task away from them and deal with it competently:

"I get the feeling that everyone is so busy with everything else, there is so much going on, and we've moved to a point now where module teams are much smaller sometimes – there are less people there to do this sort of work - and I think a few of my modules have latched onto me and gone "Yay! You can help with this, you can do this" For [the Science module] I wrote the wrap-around text that went along with the learning activities that we had embedded. So, not only did I provide the learning activities, I did the wrap-around text, working with the module chair that went with the module. And they were really happy to hand that over to me and say "right, that's off my list, I don't have to worry about it"."

Anna believes that taking a learning design approach (i.e. the use of representations and conceptual frameworks to support design dialogues and design thinking) has helped in building the confidence of module teams and other support professionals in her skills and knowledge, and getting their 'buy-in' about the importance of embedded information literacy:

"And I think a lot of the time, going into module teams and – not just sounding like you know what you're talking about because we know what we're talking about – but going in with theories, with learning design, with the activities we have already, with the IL framework that we have and say "Right, this is what I recommend, we should do this, this and this" [...]that's a big part of it".

"And of course we see [LTS and Curriculum managers] again and again on different modules that we work on so the more work we do, and the more we show what we can do, the bigger the trust is and we get involved that way."

When asked why she feels she was able to make such good use of the Learning Design methodology she focuses on the preparedness of the University, and the Library Services unit in particular:

"We have that knowledge base across the university – a huge knowledge base – of the tools that are out there and learning design is pretty much everywhere you turn these days. It's all over the university and it's talked about in different places"

"I think within the library, more and more we are gaining that knowledge. We go to lots of presentations on the VLE and the future of the VLE, and spend a lot of time on knowing what is coming next, knowing what we can and cannot do and what is the best way to do things. Before [library services] got involved in structured content at all we were thinking about 'where is the university going? Which direction should we go in?' At that kind of level."

Anna emphasises the need to be flexible in the way she works with different module teams, and responsive to their working patterns:

"Working with different teams can work differently so it's a case of going into each team and seeing how we might work together and the best way of getting things integrated"

"As long as we get the information literacy in that I need to get in - to make sure the students are going to be ok at the end of the day – then I'm quite happy to give as much or as little help as you need"

Some modules can be particularly challenging to work on, particularly where older print based modules are being revised for online VLE presentation and a modern student market:

"It's a struggle with remakes because of the content they have. They have 7 books that used to be in print and they convert them into structured content and that's your module, pretty much. And the idea that you would have interactive online activities kind of goes out the window because there's no space for them and it can be very hard – I've managed it with one of mine but it's going back again and again and saying "we need this space"'"

Anna has found that it is very important to give information to module teams at the right time, and that this is often earlier than might be expected, and may need to be repeated more than once:

"I think it's important to look at things as early as possible [in the design process] so once you have your learning outcomes looking at what assessment you want to have, and therefore looking at what skills you need to teach within that module. So the earlier you can have those conversations, the earlier you can build in the skills you want to include, and make sure your assessment matches exactly what you want the students to come out with at the end"

"And there is a case sometimes when you have to go through these things more than once. You can't just give a presentation at the beginning of two years and think that will be it. A lot of our stuff fits in at different points, so if you are going to talk about

the learning outcomes matching the teaching which matches the assessment, then that fits in at different points. We have assessment meetings so we have to come at it from a different point of view then[...] I tend to do several different presentations throughout the time I'm working with the module team to make sure that I'm always catching different things".

This narrative is one of a series of case studies published by the OULDI-JISC Project between 2011-2012. For further details visit the project website at: <http://ouldi.open.ac.uk/>