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## Two roads, a single destination: supporting the Information Literacy skills needs of advanced users at the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)

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## **Two Roads, a Single Destination: Supporting the Information Literacy Skills Needs of Advanced Users at the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)**

This paper describes how the Manchester Metropolitan University Library provides Information Literacy skills training and support for advanced users. Given today's time constrictions, the paper will focus on the training and support that is currently available. If you would like to know more about its development and theoretical underpinnings, please consult the bibliography appended to the written version of the paper; in particular, the report of the Big Blue project (Manchester Metropolitan University Library & Leeds University Library, 2002) and the journal article "Blended learning in action" (Donnelly, Jones, Matthews & Peters, 2006).

As most of you will be unfamiliar with MMU, it may be helpful to provide an estimate of the size of our advanced user population which we would define as comprising postgraduate students and academic staff. Based on 2005-2006 data (Higher Education Statistics Agency), MMU's postgraduate population comprises 740 postgraduate research students and 5,300 postgraduate students on taught degree programs. In both cases, the majority of these students are studying on a part-time basis. MMU has approximately 2,000 academic staff, one-third of whom are part-time. This makes our target audience just under 9,000 individuals. Given MMU's large undergraduate population – over 32,500 students – you will appreciate that our advanced users are in the minority, representing approximately 20% of our total audience. Nonetheless, the Library has firmly committed to supporting their information needs both in terms of resources and Information Skills training.

A two-pronged approach is taken to training MMU's advanced users with the responsibility shared by the Research Support Librarian and the

subject teams based throughout MMU's seven site libraries. The subject librarians, not surprisingly, take a discipline-focused approach: they run hands-on workshops where users explore the electronic journals and database services relevant to their discipline and practise basic search skills such as the development of a search statement and the use of Boolean operators. The Research Support Librarian addresses more generic and specialist needs – for example, training on advanced search skills such as cited reference searching and the use of resources such as PapersInvited.com (a subscription-based calls for papers service), ResearchResearch.com (a source of funding information) and Journal Citation Reports. In the course of time, some topics originally handled by the Research Support Librarian - for example, EndNote and electronic current awareness services - have been incorporated into the subject librarians' work, a trend that will most definitely continue.

## **Information Literacy training for MMU's postgraduate students**

### **1. Research Student Development Program**

From its inception in autumn 2002, the Research Support Librarian has participated in the University's Research Student Development Programme. The aim of the program is "to provide research students across the University with the skills to help complete the programme effectively and to provide general and employment related skills". Participation is compulsory, although students have the right to choose which workshops they will attend. Certificates of attendance are provided and, during an annual review process as well as upon submission of their thesis, students are required to indicate the short courses, workshops, conferences and seminars that they have attended (Manchester Metropolitan University. Research Enterprise and Development Unit, 2007). An attempt is made to offer each session once during the normal working week and once on a Saturday specifically for those part-time students who may work Monday through Friday.

This academic year, the Library's contributions are:

- **The Electronic Library: what's hiding on your desktop?**

This is an overview of MMU's electronic resources and library services which may seem basic for advanced users but many of our research students have not studied at MMU previously so are unaware of what we offer. Additionally, many have had no previous training in Information Literacy skills. At the start of the session, participants are asked to introduce themselves and to describe their research interests in a couple of sentences. This step is, of course, a fundamental part of the process of developing a search strategy, something which is covered later in the session. Additionally, the exercise helps to break the ice – remember that most of these students are from different faculties and will not have met before the session -- and allows the Research Support Librarian to make on-the-spot adjustments to the content so that it more accurately reflects the interests of the participants. At the end of the session, the students are provided with the name and contact details for their subject librarian and are encouraged to arrange a one-to-one meeting for subject specific help.

- **EndNote workshop**

The workshop provides 2 ½ to 3 hours of hands-on training on the main features of the bibliographic management software package. As participant numbers are restricted to 12 per workshop, sessions are generally over-subscribed so additional workshops are organised to meet the demand. Online tutorials are provided to reinforce the material covered in the workshops and to provide additional training. Links can be found on the MMU Library website at <http://www.library.mmu.ac.uk/eresource/endnote.html>.

- **Writing for publication**

Following a presentation by the Director of the Research, Enterprise and Development Unit who speaks from the perspective of an experienced researcher, author and journal editor, the Research Subject Librarian demonstrates electronic resources that will help participants identify suitable outlets for their research; for example, PapersInvited.com; the serials directory, Ulrichsweb; and Journal Citation Reports.

- **Cited Reference Searching workshop**

To be run for the first time in 2007/2008, this workshop will offer hands-on training on what usage statistics reveal to be an infrequently used feature of the Web of Science.

## **2. Faculty-based postgraduate training programmes**

Awareness of the value of discipline-based training has led some faculties to develop their own postgraduate training programmes aimed at students doing both research and taught degrees. An example is the Graduate School Training Programme organised by the Faculty of Science & Engineering. Topics of particular pertinence to science and engineering researchers are addressed; for example, health and safety in the laboratory setting and experimental design. The Library Services Manager responsible for the faculty and the Research Support Librarian co-run a workshop modelled on “The Electronic Library: What’s hiding on your desktop”. This offers a more discipline-based approach than that offered in the Research Student Development Programme but still includes additional resources for participants interested in finding funding and disseminating their research results.

## **3. InfoSkills training: level 4**

Information skills training for postgraduates is also provided as part of the library’s InfoSkills programme. InfoSkills training materials and guidance are co-ordinated by a central InfoSkills team to ensure a cohesive approach to training throughout MMU. The InfoSkills team was established in 2002 following MMU Library’s involvement in the Big Blue Project, which was jointly managed by MMU and the University of Leeds. The Big Blue looked at good practice of Information Literacy delivery in the UK and identified eight key skills needed for information literate students. As a result of this research, MMU’s InfoSkills programme was developed to teach students how to build these skills (Manchester Metropolitan University Library & Leeds University Library, 2002).

InfoSkills training materials have been designed for four levels of study, with the fourth level aimed at postgraduate students. At this level, training focuses on research and information skills needed for undertaking a thesis or dissertation. Content includes: how to define a research topic and construct a search; search tips and techniques; database searching; keeping up-to-date using current awareness services and search alerts; evaluating information; and brief information on referencing. Training is arranged and delivered at local sites by subject librarians who arrange InfoSkills classes in liaison with course tutors and who tailor generic materials around the needs of each student group. InfoSkills training can be delivered in a variety of formats: face-to-face in hands-on computer workshops, in lectures, or online via WebCT. Supporting materials include workbooks, help sheets, PowerPoint presentations, WebCT modules and online tutorials for specific databases.

The framework for level 4 is as follows:

<b>LEVEL 4</b>		
	<b>Learning outcomes</b>	<b>Training methods available</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Define topic and plan search</b>	
4.1.1	List different uses for information in dissertation writing	Presentation
4.1.2	Recognise that background reading is an important element of dissertation planning	Presentation
4.1.3	Identity main concepts of an area of interest	Presentation, mindmap activity
4.1.4	List keywords based on identified concepts	Presentation, mindmap activity
4.1.5	Be aware of a broad range of information sources relevant to subject area	Presentation
4.1.6	Plan a search strategy to find information for a dissertation	Presentation, mindmap activity
4.1.7	Begin a literature review	Presentation, mindmap activity, handout
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Get hold of information</b>	
4.2.1	Be aware of relevant holdings and collections in the Library for dissertation	Presentation, demonstration
4.2.2	Apply search techniques between a number of different databases	Presentation, demonstration, handout, activity
4.2.3	Use advanced search techniques including Boolean, save search, truncation, phrase searching	Presentation, demonstration, handout, activity
4.2.4	Use specialist collections e.g. British Library	Presentation, demonstration, handout
4.2.5	Be aware of access to other libraries/library collections e.g. ILLs, UK Libraries Plus, NOWAL	Presentation, demonstration, handout
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Evaluate Information</b>	
4.3.1	Use critical skills to assess a wide range of printed materials taking into account bias and other factors	Presentation, handout
4.3.2	Be aware of quality in relation to information found on the Internet	Presentation, demonstration, activity, handout
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Organise and use information</b>	
4.4.1	Be aware of current awareness services e.g. ZETOC	Presentation, demonstration, activity, handout
4.4.2	List advantages of using End Note and be aware of training opportunities	Presentation, handout
<b>4.5</b>	<b>Review the process</b>	
4.5.1	Return to search strategy to review effectiveness of actions	Presentation, mindmap activity

## **Information Literacy training for MMU's academic staff**

Academic staff are quick to acknowledge the Information Skills training needs of their students. Our experience, however, is that academic staff are less willing to recognise their own Information Skills training needs and, even when some acknowledgement is made, are reluctant to participate in skills training. We suspect that many factors contribute to this behaviour: pride, embarrassment, lack of time, changing commitments, a heavy workload. It is a difficult problem to overcome and one that requires considerable tact and concentrated effort on our part.

The provision of EndNote training for academic staff was an unexpected breakthrough. Following the purchase of a University-wide licence in 2001, EndNote training was identified by academic staff as a priority. The Research Support Librarian offered to organise and run EndNote workshops for academic staff on a trial basis. What happened next is described in an article published in the *New Review of Academic Librarianship* in 2005 (Harrison, Summerton & Peters, 2005). Suffice it to say that MMU now has more than a dozen library staff with sufficient knowledge of EndNote to run workshops using a standard template that can be adjusted to meet specific subject needs. The provision of EndNote training for academic staff has brought several unexpected benefits, including the recognition by academic staff of the quality of the training offered by library staff and of its relevance to them.

Consequently the library received invitations to participate in a number of university initiatives aimed at developing the pedagogical and research skills of MMU's academic staff. These have included:

### **1. Online Research Methods Resource for Learning and Teaching**

Launched in 2003 and updated annually, this web-based resource is the result of a British Council-funded joint project managed by the Manchester Metropolitan University and the Indira Gandhi National Open University. The intention was to help academic staff at both institutions to undertake research projects in the field of education and relating to their role as teachers and trainers. The tone is deliberately informal to help overcome any anxieties that users may have about conducting research in a discipline which may be outside their area of expertise. MMU's Research Support Librarian

contributed the module entitled “How do I find out what other people have done?” which provides a basic introduction to relevant resources and services -- both subscription-based and free. A link to the resource is provided on the Learning & Teaching Unit’s website (Manchester Metropolitan University. Learning & Teaching Unit & Indira Gandhi National Open University, 2007).

## **2. Faculty Events**

With the positive effect of training such as EndNote and due to the enthusiastic and proactive nature of subject librarians, the library is gradually reaching a larger number of academic staff with its InfoSkills training. Every available opportunity is used to promote InfoSkills including attendance at course committees, participation in in-house training events and just being in the right place at the right time. One example is the recently developed training package for academic staff in the MMU Business School. The opportunity arose as an unexpected side-effect of the library’s involvement in Adult Learners Week, a University wide event which included library-led sessions on the availability and use of multimedia resources. Academic staff attending the session at the Business School asked the library to run a general InfoSkills and library updating session aimed at staff. In response, subject librarians devised sessions called ‘Know your Business’ based on materials created previously by the Research Support Librarian and on Level Manchester Metropolitan University 4 InfoSkills. These were advertised on the Business School staff e-mail list and the take-up was excellent. Wireless laptops are used to allow hands-on practical activities throughout the session. Their success has led to the Dean of the Business School encouraging all his staff to attend future sessions. The library also plans to create video podcasts (vodcasts) of the sessions to reach an even wider audience.

## **3. Continuing Professional Development Programme (CPD)**

Like many other institutions, MMU is eager to attract, develop and retain productive members of staff. One method for achieving this is the provision of a programme of training courses which participants can attend either for interest’s sake or, if they choose, to contribute towards additional



qualifications; notably a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practise or an MA in Academic Practise. The latter require registration, preparation of formally assessed work and may have implications for salary increases. As part of this programme the library runs a session which explains the role it plays in supporting their teaching and learning activities. This not only covers research skills they will need for the course -- such as skills to use educational databases and exploit other academic resources -- but it also covers library provision for their students and for their own teaching. This includes understanding how to order books, communications with the library and details of the InfoSkills content taught to their students. The sessions are run jointly by the InfoSkills team, the Research Support Librarian and the subject librarian with responsibility for the Academic Practise course.

#### **4. MA in Academic Practise: Retrieving and Managing Research Information Unit**

Those of you familiar with taxonomies of thinking skills and other measures of competency standards will realise that MMU's efforts to meet the Information Literacy skills of advanced users – students and staff alike – tend to the low end of the scale. We have concentrated on helping our users to develop competency in the first four skills identified by the UK-based the Society of College, National and University Libraries or SCONUL:

- Recognise a need for information
- Distinguish ways of addressing the information gap
- Construct strategies for locating information
- Locate and access information (SCONUL, 2003)

The invitation to develop an assessed library unit for the new MA in Academic Practice programme provided the rare and very welcome opportunity to elevate Information Literacy training beyond mechanical skills to a more thoughtful process embedded in a wider academic context. Following formal approval by the Academic Board of the Faculty of Humanities, Law and Social Sciences for our proposed “Retrieving and Managing Research Information” unit, much of the past summer was spent in developing the unit's four modules:

- Power Searching: put yourself in the driver's seat
- Cite Right with EndNote

- Open and Shut? traditional versus open models of scholarly publication
- Into the Future: from ETOCs to the Blogosphere

The modules borrow and build on content from existing training packages but also introduce new concepts such as blogs as sources of information and the Open Access debate. The approach is more scholarly: each module includes a short literature review and a suggestion for further reading to provide a theoretical background and to place the content within a broader context. Through the medium of assessed coursework, an attempt has been made to develop the higher thinking skills and to involve the participants in processes such as evaluating, analysis and synthesis.

Disappointingly, registration numbers were too low to justify running the unit this autumn. However, the Programme Leader of the MA in Academic Programme remains very positive about the unit and its future. She has asked us to offer it again as an option in the summer of 2008 when the pressures of the academic year will be fewer and registration may be higher. We are concerned that the prospect of assessed coursework in Information Literacy skills may act as a deterrent to academics but this remains to be seen. In the meantime, the content will be adapted and recycled for other purposes: for example, to support the new Professional Doctorate programme to be launched in January 2008 and for library staff training. Additionally, our continuing participation in the MA Programme Team affords us valuable opportunities for ongoing communication with a number of academics who have a genuine interest in Information Literacy.

### **Additional Services for Postgraduate Students and Academic Staff**

Formal training is not the MMU Library's only method for supporting the Information Literacy skills needs of advanced users. We also offer the following services:

- **One-to-one sessions with subject librarians**

This is offered to any member of academic staff whether they are new or just need a refresher. There is a checklist form available on the library website (see appendix 1) which academics can download and send to their relevant subject librarian. They can then check any items

that they are interested in knowing more about. This includes physical and electronic resources, reading lists, keeping up-to-date, research resources and information on library sessions for students.

- **Researchers' Weekly Bulletin**

The Researchers' Weekly Bulletin is an e-mail format newsletter prepared by the Research Support Librarian and distributed to nearly 400 academics, research students and members of library staff each Friday morning in term-time. Its readership is actually much larger as many academics and Research Institute Directors forward relevant content to their colleagues and research students. In the 7 years since it began publication, the Bulletin has proved a highly popular means of keeping its readers up-to-date of developments relating to electronic resources and services, including Information Literacy training opportunities within MMU and further afield. Feedback from readers is positive and the Bulletin has been cited as an example of good practise in a recent book on the changing role of subject librarians (Holland, 2006). A one-year archive is maintained on the MMU Library website: <http://www.library.mmu.ac.uk/rwb/index.html>

## **Library Staff**

In the discussion of the Information Literacy needs of advanced users, let us not forget a third and very important group whose needs are sometimes overlooked: our own library staff. The prospect of providing training to academic staff and to postgraduate students can be a daunting prospect, particularly for junior members of the library team. Even veteran subject specialists may be unfamiliar with the specialist resources and services demanded by advanced users and so feel ill-prepared to engage in training and support. At MMU the need to train library staff in the use of the "extras" so important to advanced users and to boost their confidence levels has been acknowledged. Last year the Research Support Librarian ran a staff training workshop called "Resources for Researchers" which required participants to identify and discuss the unique needs of the advanced user and gave them hands-on experience using the specialist resources mentioned throughout this paper. Now that resources such as PapersInvited.com and techniques such as cited reference searching are options in the one-to-one sessions, there may be

a need for further staff training, something that we will begin to address as soon as specific needs are identified.

## Final Thoughts

We hope that this paper has offered some insights into the “two roads” used by the MMU Library to support Information Literacy training for advanced users: the generic route taken by the Research Support Librarian and the discipline-based route of the subject teams. Increasingly the two roads meet and converge as subject librarians and the Research Support Librarian actively communicate and co-operate to deliver more high-level training.

There have been several successes as well as a few disappointments along the way and naturally there is always room for improvement. For example, one area for future exploration is the evaluation of our long-term impact on the information-seeking behaviour of our users. Our journey is certainly not finished – but so far, it’s been a good experience and one that has allowed the library to develop a solid reputation within MMU as a provider of high quality Information Literacy skills training.

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## Appendix 1

# What can we do for you?



Library staff are offering one to one sessions for MMU staff and researchers to help you survive in a world of information overload. Whether you've just joined MMU and need to know what services and resources are available, or you're an existing member of staff and need to update your knowledge, we're here to help, so why not take the opportunity to find out more about what we offer:

- Quick and easy ways to keep up to date in your subject area
- Help to find journal articles, conference papers and more quickly and easily from home
- Making your reading list available online with key book chapters and journal articles digitised for you
- Getting your work published on e-space, MMU's Institutional Repository
- Answering that question which has been bugging you since you started?

We're happy to visit you in your office at a convenient time.

Please tick the options you are interested in finding out more about:

<b>Physical Resources</b>	Tick
Tour of the Library & Resources	
ERA licence: recording TV programmes to add to stock	
<b>Electronic resources</b>	Tick
What's available on the Library Website	
Help in finding journal and newspaper articles on specific subjects please list subject area	
Searching e-books	
Finding reliable subject information on the internet, eg using Intute, Google Scholar etc	
Accessing resources from home	
Journal Citation Reports (helpsheet <a href="http://www.library.mmu.ac.uk/pdfhelpsheet/jnlcit.pdf">http://www.library.mmu.ac.uk/pdfhelpsheet/jnlcit.pdf</a> )	
Cited Reference Searching through Web of Knowledge (helpsheet <a href="http://www.library.mmu.ac.uk/pdfhelpsheet/ast_citation.pdf">http://www.library.mmu.ac.uk/pdfhelpsheet/ast_citation.pdf</a> )	
<b>Reading lists</b>	Tick
Making my reading list available online	
Finding new printed and e-books in my subject area, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Library Catalogue, COPAC etc</li> </ul>	
Making electronic copies of book chapters and journal articles for student use	
Ordering books & journals for the Library	
<b>Keeping yourself up to date</b>	Tick
E-mail alerts of journal contents pages	
Favourite journals are (optional):	
E-mail alerts of journal articles containing specific keywords Keywords (optional)	
Sources of calls for papers (PapersInvited.com)	

Library notification via e-mail	
Renewing your books online	
Suggestions and comments	
<b>Research</b>	Tick
Researchers Weekly Bulletin	
Endnote – to create bibliographies easily and automatically	
e-space – MMU's Institutional Repository	
Obtaining ISBNs and other services	
Sources of funding (ResearchResearch.com/Research Fortnight Online)	
Sconul Access scheme to borrow from other academic libraries	
<b>What we can do for your students</b>	Tick
Induction: face to face & online	
InfoSkills: face to face training sessions & new developments in WebCT & webcasts	
Library input into existing WebCT departmental courses	
Webcite (citation guide)	
Access to other libraries	
Enquiry desk support	
<b>Other areas of interest – please specify</b>	Tick

<b>Contact details:</b>
Name:
Department:
Room No:
E-mail address:

Dates when you are available (optional):

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To arrange a suitable time, please return this form to your subject librarian, a list of contacts can be found at <http://www.library.mmu.ac.uk/keyinfo/contacts/index.html> through the Library Website.



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