

U21 Information Services Group Newsletter September 2005

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University of Melbourne

University of Melbourne develops a new interactive subject for the U21 Certificate in Global Issues

Contributed by David Hirst, Information and Education Services, Information Division, University of Melbourne

As part of the University of Melbourne's contribution to U21's global initiatives, the Information Division's Courseware Development team has been collaborating with academics to develop an interactive online subject, 'Asia, Pacific and the West in History', in the University's new U21 Certificate in Global Issues.

The development of the subject was a collaboratively designed curriculum project. Information Division staff supported academics through in-kind contribution of specialist skills. These range from media services, education design, and graphic design to programming. The result is innovative and exemplary curriculum projects aimed at transforming teaching and learning through the application of multimedia and educational technologies.

It builds on an earlier U21 initiative, the subject, 'Globalisation and Law'. The University of Melbourne and the University of British Columbia developed it in 2001 as a collaborative project and it remains on the curriculum.

Group learning and interactivity are highlights of 'Asia, Pacific and the West in History', which is delivered entirely online. The subject runs for nine weeks and uses logged chat rooms for discussions, large and small online group forums and activities that utilise email. Learning activities occur weekly and take various forms, such as an exercise in historical imagination role-play on life in old Shanghai. Historical materials from the region are featured.

The Universitas 21 Certificate in Global Issues is a shared multi-disciplinary undergraduate program developed by Melbourne in collaboration with U21 network members in Auckland, British Columbia, Hong Kong and Nottingham.

The Courseware Development team is currently beginning development of a new subject 'Economics and Globalisation', for the U21 Certificate in Global Issues.

For further information contact David Hirst at d.hirst@unimelb.edu.au

Client Relationship Managers at the University of Melbourne

As part of a comprehensive review and realignment of the University of Melbourne's Information Division (ID), five Client Relationship Managers (CRMs) started in July 2005 reporting to a new ID Manager of Marketing and Communications.

These new roles are primarily involved in creating and improving stakeholder relationships between the Information Division (ID) and Faculties and Departmental units (both Academic and Administrative). The roles have been created in the context of the devolved nature of the University's operations, services and projects making for a complex mix of reporting lines, governance and stakeholder accountability. The CRM roles have been created with a view to *'Advocate for clients and facilitate the services and activities of the ID'*, where clients are both external and internal to ID.

The CRMs will enable service delivery as opposed to delivering the services. The team will value add by marketing the role of the Information Division to the University, decreasing duplication of services, better aligning service delivery with the University's key business objectives, creating service improvements, improving the internal and external information flow, and help to develop and deliver what clients want.

Each of the five CRMs have been assigned to one internal client group (ID Program) and a number of external clients (Academic and Administrative). Where effective relationships already exist, the CRMs will not be involved, but where services are changing, or growing, or issues exist with provision of service, the CRMs will take a role.

An example of the way the CRMs work is their involvement in the development of an ID Services Catalogue, which will provide both a definition of services (for clients and providers alike) and provide a foundation for service standards and expectations using the ITIL service framework.

For further information, please contact James Beckford Saunders – Marketing and Communication Manager, Information Division at the University of Melbourne
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University of Nottingham

Improved on-line access among major developments

Roaming access, improved on-line services and the opening of the second largest High Performance Computing facility in Northern Europe are among the developments launched by Information Services at the University of Nottingham in the past six months.

Information Services has also continued to develop its strategic Connected Campus programme, started during 2004/05, to include a number of major new projects for 2005/06.

Roaming access provides staff and students with wireless networking around the University, providing wireless access for laptops to the Internet and University 'Network Zones'.

Information Services is also involved in a joint venture to provide other wireless hotspots at the University of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University and at bars and cafes in and around Nottingham City Centre.

On-line access

Additional subscriptions to on-line resources have improved access to research and learning materials. These include American e-book supplier ebrary's Academic Complete Collection, The Century of Science, KnowUK (ProQuest), the General Engineering References collection within the Knovel Service, Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) and the House of Commons 19th century Parliamentary Papers from Chadwyck-Healey.

Students also have more on-line facilities available to them including a new 'My Degree Result' service – which attracted 550 hits in just 30 minutes.

To infinity...and beyond

On 1 June, Professor John O'Reilly, Chief Executive of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) formally opened the new multi-million pound High Performance Computing facilities at a special ceremony. It is one of the largest academic HPC facilities in Northern Europe and is currently the ninth fastest machine in the UK. The facility naturally allows researchers to perform calculations many times faster than was previously possible.

The facility will also allow academics to run hundreds of analyses simultaneously, vastly increasing the speed and efficiency of world-class research carried out in Nottingham.

Award winning Portal

The new Prospective Students' Portal has won a major national award for Excellence from the Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA). An extension of the main Portal, it provides applicants to the University with personal information about the progress of their application as well as other information they may need about the process.

At home...and abroad

The University has developed its first joint data and voice network at the new purpose-built Malaysian campus at Semenyih, 30 km from Kuala Lumpur. The campus opened in August and teaching begins this month (September).

The University also became the first, and only, foreign University to be awarded a licence to teach at both graduate and undergraduate levels at its new Ningbo Campus in China. The license was granted following an inspection visit by the Chinese Ministry of Education earlier this year.

Meanwhile, the University's new sixth campus, on a 16 acre site in Nottingham, has been named the King's Meadow Campus. Around 200 Information Services staff are relocating there from the main University Park Campus, which is about a 20 minute walk away, during the summer.

Future Developments

Information Services will be working with the Law School to pilot a service to deliver library books direct to academic staff offices.

The University is also an early adopter of the latest version of the WebCT virtual learning environment. Version 6 of the Campus Edition (CE6) of the software allows for expansion of e-learning provision in future.

And Information Services staff are working with colleagues across the University on plans to migrate from GroupWise, as its e-mail server, to Microsoft Exchange over the coming months.

University of Glasgow

A report on the "Developing an Institutional Repository" workshop at the University of Glasgow, June 27, 2005.

William J Nixon, Project Manager (Service Development) DAEDALUS

Institutional repositories, that is, "digital collections capturing and preserving the intellectual output of a single or multi-university community" [1] are in development across the world using a range of free and commercial software such as GNU EPrints and DSpace. At the

University of Glasgow, this work has been taken forward by the JISC funded, DAEDALUS [2] Project . In June 2005 the project ran a one day workshop [3] for thirty-five University librarians and computing staff to share the lessons and experiences in developing repository service at Glasgow.

The workshop provided the attendees with an overview of the issues and challenges which Universities face in setting up an institutional repository service. It also set the scene with an update on the open access movement and in particular the Scottish Open Access Declaration launched on 11th October 2004 [4]. This declaration has now been signed by all of the Scottish Universities.

In the afternoon the focus was on practical implementation. Two parallel sessions on Advocacy activities and Service Development provided the attendees with the opportunity to further engage with project staff, to ask more specific questions and to consider how to develop a repository at their own institution.

About DAEDALUS

DAEDALUS was a three year (2002-2005) JISC funded project as part of the Focus on Institutional Repositories (FAIR) Programme [5]. It established a number of different repositories services for research material at the University of Glasgow including the Glasgow ePrints Service [6] as well as a wide ranging advocacy campaign. The services developed by the project are now being taken forward by the University. DAEDALUS also provided the technical support for an open access e-Journal on e-Literacy, called JeLit [7] and a subject based repository for the ERPANET (digital preservation) project called ERPAePRINTS [8].

References

1. The Case for Institutional Repositories: A SPARC Position Paper <http://www.arl.org/sparc/IR/ir.html>
2. DAEDALUS, <http://www.gla.ac.uk/daedalus>
3. Workshop, <http://www.lib.gla.ac.uk/daedalus/workshop/>
4. Scottish Open Access Declaration, <http://scuri.ac.uk/WG/OATS/declaration.htm>
5. FAIR Programme, http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=programme_fair
6. Glasgow ePrints Service, <http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>
7. JeLit , <http://www.jelit.org>
8. ERPAePrints, <http://eprints.erpanet.org>

University of British Columbia

The Irving K. Barber Learning Centre at UBC: An Update for U21 – August 2005

Phase 1 of the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre is now open and includes new space for the Fine Arts and the Science and Engineering libraries, a new reading room, a climate controlled vault for rare materials and the Automated Storage and Retrieval System (ASRS). This summer, nearly 800,000 volumes were moved from the Main Library into the ASRS and the open stacks of the Learning Centre. The new building also includes a variety of individual and group study space as well as seminar rooms. The Ridington Reading Room features a glass sculpture by Vancouver artist John Nutter. The sculpture tells a story of discovery and exploration through 30 panels suspended from the ceiling.

This summer the Learning Centre published the *2005 Learning Centre Update and Summary Report of the Provincial Consultation Process*. This report describes key areas of interest identified in the consultation process including business development, education and professional development. In addition to the services already offered, such as on-demand webcasts of lectures and other special events, the eHelp Virtual Reference Service and various lifelong learning resources, the Learning Centre is planning new services and

community partnerships in response to the needs identified in the provincial consultation meetings.

Planning for the second phase of Learning Centre is well underway with construction scheduled to begin later this fall. Phase 2 of the Learning Centre will include the Chapman Learning Commons, Rare Books and Special Collections, various academic units, the Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth and the Office of Learning Technology. In addition to a variety of innovative teaching spaces, phase 2 will also provide seminar rooms, small classrooms and a variety of flexible and open learning spaces.

For more information about the Learning Centre, including current updates, please visit www.ikebarberlearningcentre.ubc.ca.

University of Hong Kong

Following an extensive investigation into user-initiated, resource sharing ILL software, the University of Hong Kong as well as two other libraries in Hong Kong in 2004 conducted a nine month formal experiment using Innovative's INN-Reach software. Entitled HKALL (Hong Kong Academic Library Link), the purpose of the experiment was to discover any loan patterns among the 3 institutions, operational issues, costs, user types and user responses. Our findings included:

- a. Inter-library loans quadrupled among the 3 participating libraries, with 6,758 items requested and delivered.
- b. It is much cheaper to run than the traditional ILL system: Titles are 42 % cheaper to lend and 45% cheaper to borrow.
- c. HKALL provided a much faster service than the traditional ILL system: 95% of the requests of the pilot project were met within two working days, compared with only 9% of ILL requests.
- d. 80% of the users regarded the mode of service provided by the pilot test as an excellent or a very good source of obtaining materials not available from their host library. User comments included the following:
 - "Excellent on the whole."
 - "I would say this scheme has been excellently carried out. With this scheme, resources in the universities can be better utilized ..."
 - "HKALL simply makes life easier. Thank you ..."
 - "A convenient system for academic exchanges."
- e. 88% of the users proposed that the service should be expanded to include more libraries.

With the success of the nine month pilot of HKALL, the eight Hong Kong universities jointly applied for and received software and startup funding from the major higher education funding body in Hong Kong, the University Grants Committee (UGC).

Beginning this September, academic library users associated with Hong Kong's 8 universities will have access to a total collection size of almost 9 million volumes.

University of Birmingham

Library strategy

Information Services are currently developing a new library vision and are working with an Australian company, Movecorp, to create a facility plan for the Main Library. The strategy is to reduce the number of sites and create new Learning spaces where students can use networked PCs and their own laptops to access electronic resources.

Library survey

Information Services participated in the LibQual 2005 international library survey, as part of the SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries) consortium.

We received a total of 2,135 responses from staff and students across the University. The survey measured user's perceptions of library as place (physical environment), affect of service (customer service) and information control (resources and services). The results have provided feedback to enable improvements to services as highlighted by our users. A prize draw took place to win a laptop as the prize.

University to team up with international publishing group

University of Birmingham publications are moving on to a new home. An agreement has been reached with Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd, to purchase the back list and the work in progress of the University of Birmingham Press.

Continuum specialises in academic publishing, with their main area of focus including Theology, Biblical Studies, Linguistics and Literature. Birmingham titles will benefit from Continuum's place in the market, providing a wider forum and improved exposure for our academic authors. The University will retain the UBP imprint and the right to publish new titles which in future will be of specialist interest to the University or region. There is an option to co-publish new titles with Continuum.

The Press's breadth and range of subject matter is diverse. For example, *John Constables Skies* (by John Thornes, School of Geography and Environmental Science), is a study of the weather effects portrayed in Constables paintings, while the series *The New Germany in Context* series explores issues as diverse as German cinema since reunification, and the myth & reality of Buchenwald children.

Universitas21 project

In order to promote its involvement in Universitas 21 (U21), the University recently invited proposals for U21 fellowships: small-scale projects to foster collaboration and develop best practice within U21 universities. Ann-Marie Ashby (a.ashby@bham.ac.uk), Academic Liaison Team Manager was a lucky recipient of one of these, for her proposal to investigate information literacy and ICT skills developments in UK and Australian U21 universities.

Unfortunately, due to a family bereavement, Ann-Marie's trip has been postponed till early next year.

illuminating Faith Exhibition

Information Services, Special Collections department has showcased one of their collections in the Illuminating Faith Exhibition. The Mingana Collection which was recently entrusted to the University by the Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust, consists of around 3,000 Arabic (Islamic and Christian), Syriac, Turkish, Persian, Hebrew, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, Samaritan and other manuscripts dating from the 9th to the 19th centuries. The Collection was brought together through the generosity of Edward Cadbury and collected by Alphonse Mingana during three travels to the Middle East in the 1920s. The Illuminating Faith Exhibition was a collaboration between Information Services and the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

JISC Projects

Information Services is involved with a number of external in JISC-funded projects

Midees project

Management of Images in a Distributed Environment with Shared Services (MIDESS), led by the University of Leeds. The project runs from June 2005-May 2007.

The MIDESS Project will explore the management of digitised content in an institutional and cross-institutional context through the development of a digital repository infrastructure. It will address how support can be provided for the use of digital content in a learning and research context, in an integrated manner. It will also explore how use and management of digital content can be joined up in a national context.

This links with an in house project which involves Part of Birmingham's involvement with MIDESS will be the creation of a digital repository that will enable images to be integrated in VLEs and enable the collaborative sharing of resources across institutions.

Further information is available from <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/midess.html>

Project StORe (Source-to-Output Repositories)

Project StORe, will address the area of interactions between *output* repositories of research publications and *source* repositories of primary research data. The project's partners are: The University of Edinburgh (lead institution on behalf of CURL); The University of Birmingham; The University of Manchester; Imperial College London; The University of Leeds, the University of Sheffield and the University of York ('White Rose' Partnership); University College London; The London School of Economics and Political Science; The UK Data Archive and UKOLN

For further information contact John McColl, Project Director, University of Edingburgh, Tel: 0131 651 3814. Email: john.maccoll@ED.AC.UK.

UK doctoral theses: the EThOS Project

All four UK members of U21 are participants in the EThOS Project (Electronic Theses Online Service). The EThOS Project aims to open up access to UK Doctoral theses by developing a one-stop service to find and access the digitised text.

The service will help to save the time and money of researchers who need access to theses, and will help promote the research work of UKHEIs and the careers of new researchers. Access for overseas researchers especially, will be a great deal easier and quicker. The workload of library staff involved with supplying theses to researchers will be reduced, by replacing much of the present labour-intensive supply process with a digital service.

The project will provide a service infrastructure, and a toolkit for universities containing advice on issues such as copyright and confidentiality, recommended approaches and example procedures. The toolkit is intended to support everyone involved in creating and submitting theses, including supervisors, administrative staff, library and computing staff and of course the student authors themselves. Advice, standards and methods will be in line with international developments in electronic theses and dissertations.

The project partners include several libraries and other institutions, amongst them the UK U21 members: University of Birmingham, University of Edinburgh, and University of Glasgow, and the SHERPA Project based at the University of Nottingham. The project is funded by JISC, CURL and all the partner institutions. For further details, please visit the project website at <http://www.ethos.ac.uk/>

ESpaces project

This JISC funded study provides an excellent opportunity to build on the work already being done within parts of the University, and came at an appropriate time to inform a major programme of learning accommodation projects.

This extensive study brought together information from nearly 100 post-compulsory educational institutions, mainly universities and colleges across the UK. With fifteen site visits, around 90 survey returns and further desk research the team were able to see examples of a wide range of innovative uses of learning technology, and in particular the ways in which learning spaces were being designed to accommodate those technologies.

The final report is now available from the University's Learning Development Unit (LDU) website [<http://www.ldu.bham.ac.uk/espaces/>], which includes reports on site visits, chapters on "Current Practice, Trends and Visions for the Future" and "Strategic Management" as well as a manager's checklist for learning accommodation projects.

TE3 project

The TE3 project started in September 2003 and is hosted at the Learning Development Unit funded by an award from the Government's Office of Science and Technology. The aim of the TE3 project is to provide funding to develop and enhanced enterprise education through the use of learning technologies in partner institutions. The partner institutions in the project include Aston University, The Open University, UCE, University of Warwick, Coventry University, Keele University and Staffordshire University.

Since it started in August 2003, TE3 has helped train over 4500 undergraduate students and 350 postgraduate students across the West Midlands; 500 academic and academic related staff are closely involved with the TE3, or have attended TE3 events. Resources have been developed for a wide range of topics including: practical introductions to enterprise, business planning, and health and safety; academic case studies of high technology businesses; and subject-specific support for enterprise in areas such as education, sports and exercise sciences, or for voluntary and community organisations. TE3 teaching and learning projects have also lead to added value outcomes of increased research output and interaction with business and the community.

Universitas 21 Global

- Universitas 21 Global Partners with ACCA to Offer MBA Scholarships and Study Grants - ACCA members and affiliates will benefit from Universitas 21 Global's flexible, high quality graduate education to enhance their professional knowledge and skill sets
- Universitas 21 Global playing a critical role in promoting eLearning - Premier Online Graduate School hosts second Networking Event for students in the Middle East
- Universitas 21 Global Launches Student Chapters in India
- 136 Satyam Computer Services Employees Enrol with Universitas 21 Global
- Universitas 21 Global partners The University of Nottingham to offer a Master of Science in Tourism and Travel Management program

Results of an initiative agreed at last year's IS Group meeting in Denver. Apologies that it has taken so long to disseminate the results....

'Investigating the use and development of generic IT and research skills training resources within VLEs in U21 institutions'

Ann-Marie James and Alison Davies, University of Birmingham
September 2005

Introduction

A questionnaire was designed to investigate the use and development of generic IT and research skills training resources within VLEs in 18 U21 institutions. The questionnaires were sent to institutional contacts in the U21 Information Group between May and July.

For the purposes of the survey, 'generic IT and research skills training resources' included any reusable resources that were designed to support students and staff in their use of IT and information resources within a Virtual Learning Environment such as Blackboard or WebCT. These resources might include a library catalogue, bibliographic databases, eJournals, communication tools and so on.

Institutions were asked a number of questions, including information about their institution (e.g. how IT and research skills developments are funded), the type of VLE used, who is responsible for developing and supporting the resources, and any lessons that have been learnt in this development process and in using these resources.

12 questionnaires were returned (67%). Responses were received from the following U21 institutions:

- University of Birmingham (UK)
- University of Nottingham (UK)
- University of Glasgow (UK)
- University of Edinburgh (UK)
- Lund University (Sweden)
- University of Melbourne (Australia)
- University of Queensland (Australia)
- University of New South Wales (Australia)
- University of Auckland (New Zealand)
- University of Virginia (USA)
- McGill University (Canada)
- Universitas 21 Global

Section A: Budget – Amount spent on IT and research skills developments (in the last 2 years) and the source of funding

- 4 universities indicated that they spent more than £50k, 1 spent £41-50k, 1 spent £0-£10k.
- 6 did not answer this question, with 2 of these respondents indicating that the specific budget for this area wasn't known or couldn't be ascertained.

With regard to the source of funding, 2 respondents didn't answer. Of the 10 who did, 8 indicated that developments were funded from their operating budget, and of these 8 most indicated some source of other funding (7 institutional, 5 external, 5 via partnership with school, and 1 special funding).

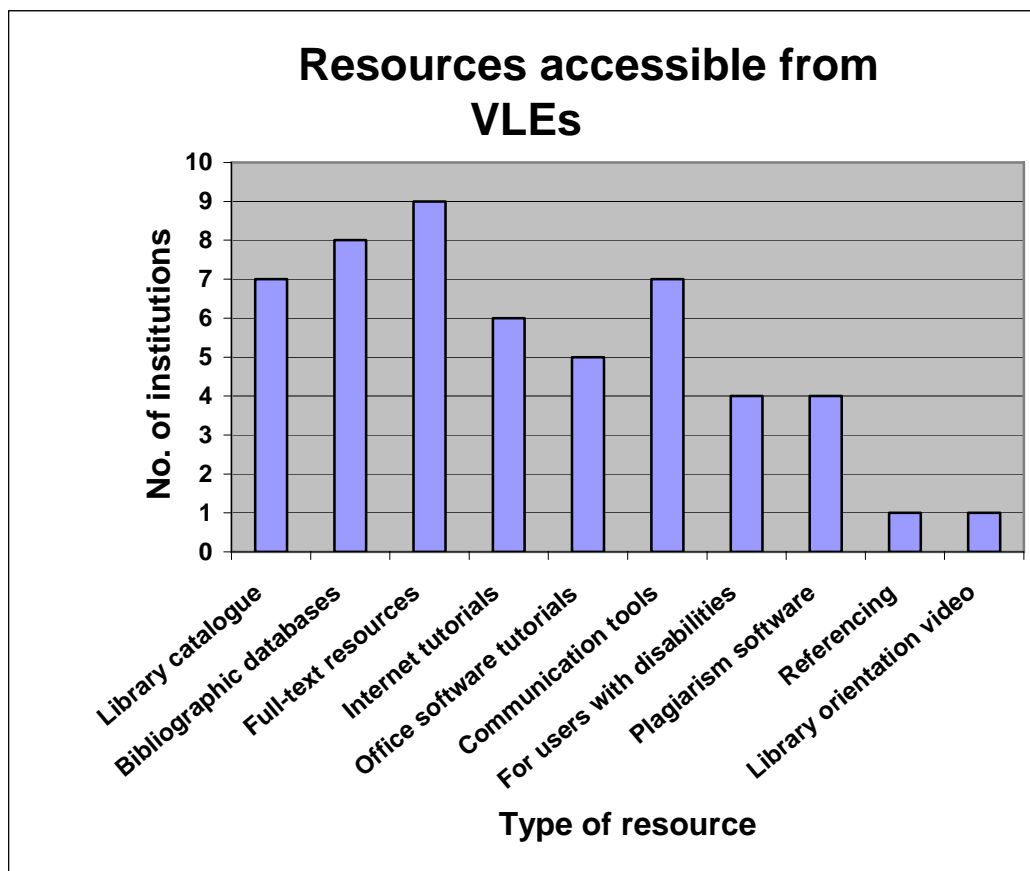
Section B:

1. Type of VLE

5 of the 12 institutions used more than one VLE. 6 used WebCT, 4 used blackboard and 7 used another VLE, which was either home-grown, open source, or commercially available.

2. Type of generic IT and research skills resources accessible via the VLE:

As the table below shows, 9 out of 12 institutions made full-text resources accessible via their VLE. Bibliographic databases, library catalogues and communication tools were also accessible via VLEs in most of the institutions that responded:



Respondents were also provided with the opportunity to make further comments about their use of the resources. Two key considerations arose from the data. Firstly, many respondents highlighted the range of ways in which these resources were made accessible to students. Within VLEs, one institution noted that a specific 'Library Resources' option was available, whilst others promoted inclusion of training materials at the course or module level. Many respondents also pointed out that generic IT and research skills training resources were accessible from outside of their VLE, and were available from library and university webpages. As one institution noted:

"there is no assumption / expectation that our VLE(s) should be the normal route to access generic training materials"

This response suggests that there is no single model for making these materials available: access routes reflect the variety of institutional setups, so that while some training materials are publicly accessible, other material is only available to staff and students who can access their institutional VLE.

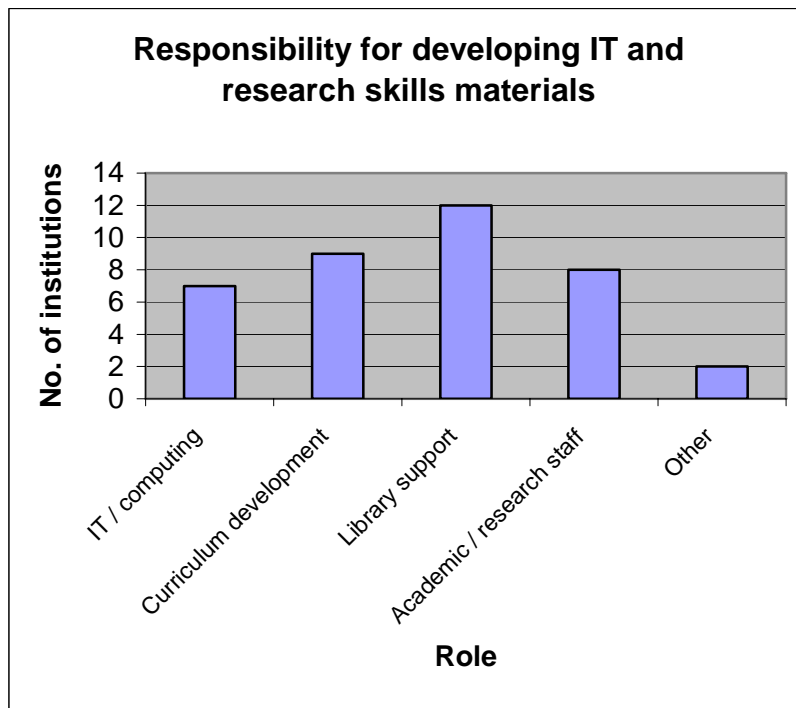
Secondly, respondents raised the issue of the value of generic versus subject specific skills materials, and the level at which integration should occur. As one institution noted:

“Some subject librarians have made a separate generic library course available in [the VLE]. They found it was better to integrate these resources into the course, as the generic resource was underutilised... It is important to collaborate with the academic staff in developing these resources.”

The value of generic training resources courses is a re-occurring theme throughout the survey and lies at the heart of the debate surrounding the real value of sharing learning materials. Many institutions have created general reusable materials, covering things like using their library catalogue, effective internet searching and interactive database guides. Although in principle these can be shared fairly easily, the question of their inherent utility remains: specifically how much adaptation to institutional and subject context do these materials usually require? Whilst more research is required in this area as a whole, this survey assumes that the sharing of general materials may make efficiency gains and is worthy of further exploration.

Q3. and 4. Who is responsible for developing (and supporting) IT and research skills resources?

Institutions were asked who was responsible for developing IT and research skills resources. Survey responses indicated that at most institutions, there were a range of staff responsible for developing IT and research skills materials, with individual models being determined by organisational structure. (see table below).



Respondents were provided with the opportunity to comment further on questions 3 and 4. These comments highlighted two approaches to developing and supporting IT and research skills resources:

1. Specialised staff

Some institutions have introduced teams of elearning / curriculum support staff, who's role is specifically to create and support material creation:

“Specialist support staff within Information Services Learning Team provide training, development expertise and technical support in the creation and utilisation of a wide range of electronic teaching materials. Support provided includes Blackboard and WebCT VLE training and course development, video production, through to creating and designing interactive web based multimedia learning objects, using tools such as Flash MX, Authorware MX and Dreamweaver.”

2. Team approach

Other institutions have opted for a cross-divisional approach, drawing on the skills sets of a range of staff:

“The skills required to develop e-learning materials are varied and difficult to find within a single person. Consequently a team based approach founded upon effective communication and good project management are essential elements to a successful development. This would normally involve a subject matter expert, learning technologist, programmer and graphic artist (with video technician as required)”

8 of the 12 institutions noted that academics were involved in the development of IT and research skills materials, reflecting comments in other sections on the need to collaborate with faculty members, to ensure a joined-up approach to the development of these materials. Moreover, as academics have regular access to students, and influence upon their information-seeking behaviour, working with them effectively may be the key to student use and overall value of these resources.

All 12 respondents answered that support for these materials rested with the library. Of these, 8 noted that Learning and curriculum development staff also had responsibility for support, 7 cited IT and computing staff, and 4 noted a role for academic and research staff.

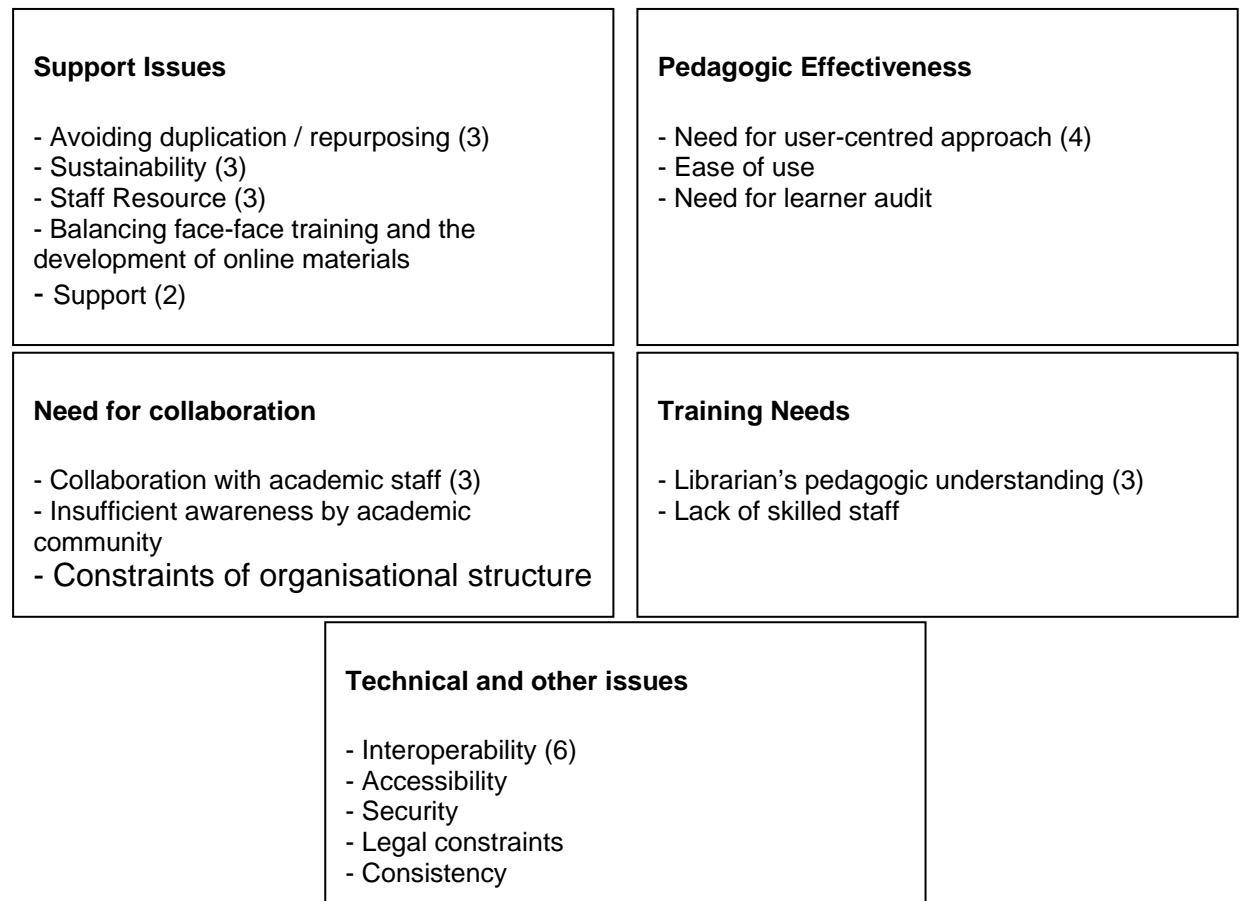
5. Promotion of generic IT and research skills training resources

Most respondents used all of the ways that were suggested to them in the questionnaire to promote generic and IT and research skills training resources:

- University website 11
- Induction days 11
- Departmental webpages 8
- Promotional material 7
- Student lectures 7
- Course handbooks 6

6. Technical, support and pedagogic issues

This open-ended question generated a wide range of issues from respondents, which have been categorised and briefly summarised below (numbers in brackets signify the number of comments):



7. Evaluation of the development of generic IT and research skills resources

Institutions provided a range of responses to this question.

The importance of ongoing evaluation was mentioned by most respondents, including the gathering of both qualitative and quantitative data

1. Quantitative data was collected via:
 - Analysis of helpdesk enquiries / collation of FAQs
 - Usage statistics.
2. Qualitative data was collected by:
 - Focus groups
 - Student feedback forms on each online course
 - General surveys
 - Benchmarking against other universities
 - Usability testing
 - Requirement analyses such as diagnostic tests / audits.

Specific evaluation projects were also mentioned. For example, one institution noted that they had run a project examining the utility of subject guides, another had compared online

and face-to-face teaching of information literacy¹, and a third examined information literacy in relation to their 1st year undergraduates².

8. Lessons learnt

This section provided important insights into the lessons that institutions felt that they had learnt from the development and use of their resources.

Authenticity of material

Two institutions suggested that developers can engage students better by creating authentic materials, based on the actual information needs of students. Such tutorials might take more time and resource to create and maintain, but ultimately may be far more effective in capturing students' attention and helping them to develop information skills.

"Tutorials for bibliographic databases are more engaging when they are problem oriented, rather than "walk-throughs" They can be time-consuming to keep up-to-date because of regular changes to database providers' search interfaces."

Other key issues that were raised include:

- **Pedagogic training of developers** – so that developers understand the basic principles of teaching and learning and for example, create materials that appeal to a range of learning styles, and ensure opportunities for active learning through formative assessment etc
- **Communication (with stakeholders)** – in order to maximise usage
- **Collaboration with other institutions** – especially but not necessarily with institutions with the same VLE. A concern about 'hidden' resources within VLEs was articulated:

"The library and information professionals have a tradition of openly sharing support materials between institutions. This is possible when these resources are web-accessible, but not possible when access is through a VLE. This will result in more "reinventing the wheel" which is not a good use of limited time"

- **University mandating use of learning and teaching resources** - one institution mentioned this as being beneficial. No detail was given, but this sounds interesting.

9. Willing to share any learning objects?

Most respondents expressed a willingness to share learning objects, with a few provisos (intellectual property rights and copyright clearance, would be on a case by case basis).

¹ Salisbury, F. and Ellis, J, (2003) 'Online and face-to-face: evaluating methods for teaching information skills to undergraduate arts students' *Library Review* 52 (5) 2003 p209-217

² Mittermeyer, D. and Quiron, D. (2003) 'Information Literacy: Study of Incoming First-Year Undergraduates in Quebec. [Accessed at http://www.crepug.qc.ca/article.php3?id_article=471 on 6 September 2005]

The need for appropriate mechanisms was noted, particularly in light of existing local, subject-specific, national (such as JORUM in the UK) and other repositories, with responses generally echoing that of one institution:

“The challenges seem to be more about how a sharing of resources is implemented rather than willingness to participate.”

Procedural issues, therefore, appear to be the key to progressing resource sharing amongst U21 institutions.

Preliminary Conclusions

U21 institutions have developed a rich pool of generic IT and research training resources that are used within VLEs, and further material that is web-based which could be used within VLEs.

There is a general consensus that the sharing of these resources is a worthy concept: institutions appear to have developed similar materials that could be profitably shared to avoid duplication, save time, and enable further enhancements. The key short-term consideration raised was the need for robust procedures and mechanisms for facilitating the sharing of resources.

In the longer-term, there are several areas which might warrant further discussion and examination. These could include exploring the value of a team-based to content creation, investigating the mandating of learning and teaching materials, looking at interaction with local and national repositories, and working together to develop quality problem-based subject materials.

On this basis, this report proposes:

- The U21 Information Group explore the development of an online forum / community of practice to take this forward
- Examples of best practice and case studies from each institution be made available to the group as a whole
- The investigation of a mechanism and the establishment of procedures to facilitate genuine resource-sharing

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Alison Davies a.davies.1@bham.ac.uk

University of Birmingham, September 2005