Data and information management training – a collaborative approach

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University of Oxford

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A live issue (1)...

- "Digital media literacy continues its rise in importance as a key skill in every discipline and profession. The challenge is due to the fact that despite the widespread agreement on its importance, training in digital literacy skills and techniques is rare in any discipline, and especially rare in teacher education programmes."

The Horizon Report 2010 – **New Media Consortium and EDUCAUSE learning initiative**
www.nmc.org/pdf/2010-Horizon-Report.pdf

A live issue (2)…

- "About half of the respondents have been usefully trained in, for instance, finding and using subject-based bibliographical and journal resources, and finding research resources beyond their own institution. Far fewer respondents, however, have received any training in using more advanced technology-based research resources and tools such as e-research methods, finding and using online datasets or working in virtual research environments."

Interim conclusions from survey in BL/JISC *Researchers of Tomorrow* study, October 2009 – from a sample of 6,500 doctoral students

http://explorationforchange.net/attachments/054_Summary%20Report%20Final.pdf

A live issue (3)...

- RIN currently running case studies in the information behaviour of humanities researchers.

- Project still only half-way through, but some interesting points emerging, e.g.:
  - Humanities researchers less likely than scientists to us bespoke digital resources – perhaps because they are less confident/skilled in areas such as designing software?
  - Research practices are changing fast in the humanities, and support/training is in demand – but researchers would prefer this from their peers rather than from information specialists

Back in 2002…

- Roberts report said that postdoctoral researchers should have proper access to appropriate training opportunities in order to help them develop their career paths.

- Roberts highlighted the importance of IT training…

- … but did not specifically address research information.

RIN commissioned
Mind the Skills Gap

- To review the extent, quality and impact of training in research information methodologies and tools provided for academic researchers by HEIs and other agencies, with particular reference to implementation of the Roberts Report's recommendation on career path development for postdoctoral researchers.
- Founded on the view from librarians and information professionals that researchers often lack relevant skills and understanding.

Mind the skills gap:
Information-handling training
for researchers

A report commissioned by the
Research Information Network

July 2008

www.rin.ac.uk

Mind the Skills Gap conclusions

A lot of good work going on especially in HEI libraries – but rather *ad hoc*, so need for:

- strategic coordination and collaboration between organizations with an interest in training provision;
- matching training to researchers' needs;
- improving the quality and delivery of training provision within institutions.

www.rin.ac.uk/training-research-info

Strategic coordination

- Promotion of joint formulation, planning, delivery and evaluation of training programmes between the various organizations that have an interest in information-handling training.
  - Importance of input from RCUK and Vitae about ways to secure appropriate coverage of information skills and competencies in programmes for researchers.
  - Broad common training agenda across the different organizations, based on a better shared understanding and interpretation of training needs.
- Development of a strategic approach to training provision across HEIs.
  - Engagement between HEI libraries and Vitae regional hubs.

Matching training to needs

- Matching of information-seeking skills/competencies to the identification and formulation of researcher attributes.

- Involvement of academic staff in the formulation of training programmes and methodologies.

- Fostering / improving relationships between researchers and trainers.

- Engaging with research supervisors

Improving the quality and delivery of training provision

- Securing appropriate coverage of information skills and competencies in training/development programmes for researchers, with particular reference to:
  - the relationship and balance between generic and subject-specific skills/competencies;
  - the acquisition of transferable skills.
- Identifying the most appropriate approaches for trainers.
  - Relative strengths of different approaches and techniques (e.g. individual/group)
- Dependent on coherent information training strategies and programmes within HEIs – need for engagement by senior institutional managers.

So how can all this be made to happen?

- Joined-up approach is obviously crucial.
- Opportunity provided by formulation of RDF.
  - Joint response, led by RIN, to RDF consultation in November 2009
- End 2009: working group bringing together key players: Vitae, CILIP, SCONUL, RLUK, British Library, JISC, DCC, UKCGE, HEA... and RIN itself

The RDF: a useful step forward...

- Awaiting publication of RDF in the next couple of weeks...

- ...but the consultation draft, last November, already acknowledged the importance information and data handling skills

- These are present across different career stages in several specific RDF descriptors : information seeking; information management; research methods; dissemination; media; etc

- We would like to see an information thread running through other parts of the Framework: information is relevant to much researcher behaviour and practice

…and an opportunity to put research info on the skills map

- The RDF should provide a tool that will help to highlight the vital place of information and data handling in the skills agenda…

- … and that will remind researchers of what should be obvious, but is nevertheless frequently overlooked

- Relationship with SCONUL's seven pillars of information literacy

Charting good practice (1)

- Working group is setting out instances of good practice in information-handling training
- At present, all the examples relate to library-based provision
- Examples cover such areas as:
  - search and discovery
  - citation and reference management
  - literature reviews
  - awareness of library services
  - …but little or no reference yet to data management training
- Mostly geared to graduate students, but also postocs and also later career stage researchers

Charting good practice (2)

- Intention is to set out such good practice as a resource:
  - Mapping against RDF and SCONUL's seven pillars, thus reinforcing the link between these two tools and the reality of practice
  - The examples could thus provide 'lenses' for examining how RDF can be used in different practical settings – Vitae is keen on this approach
  - Inclusion in Vitae's database of practice
  - Inclusion in JORUM as a learning/teaching resource
- Examples could also served to demonstrate ways in which libraries are making an impact
  - This could prove important in financially-straightened times

Charting good practice (3)

- Good practice examples could also help demonstrate ways in which libraries are making an impact
  - This could prove important in financially-straightened times
- But good practice isn't limited to libraries…
- … and also relates to data management training, about which we have little information at present
- So additional examples are particularly welcome – cataloguing good practice is a dynamic exercise

Data management training

- Current JISC call for proposals to promote discipline-focused research data management skills
  - about 5 or 6 projects to be funded; not known at this stage how many (if any) will be in the humanities
  - aim is to "design and pilot the delivery of course materials that HEIs can use to improve the skills and abilities of academics, academic support staff and postgraduate researchers"
- RIN, DCC and JISC working with others to define a support project for this initiative
  - to help apply relevant elements of the RDF to disciplinary settings
  - to chart and compare practice between disciplines, and formulate a synthesis
  - to develop guidance material

An evolving agenda

- RIN is keen to engage with all those who have an interest in promoting research information skills

- Workshop at Vitae's Researcher Development Conference in September to present what is being done and generate a dialogue

- Open to suggestions about how to take forward the agenda

- Keen to draw from experiences presented at today's workshop

- Additional organisations welcome on the working group

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