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METRICS

Increasing the Impact: Building on the Library Impact Data Project

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INTRODUCTION

In 2010 Computing and Library Services at the University of Huddersfield published a paper discussing some interesting findings regarding non/low usage of library resources with respect to distinct customer groups (White & Stone, 2010). The project looked at three main indicators:

- Book loans using data from the Library Management System (also known as an Integrated Library System or ILS).
- Access to e-resources using click-throughs, e.g., EZProxy.
- Access to the library building using statistics from the gate entry system.

This initial investigation led to the two Jisc funded phases of the Library Impact Data Project (LIDP). The first phase used data from eight UK universities, with some 33,000 students, to support the hypothesis that there was a statistically significant link between library activity data (for book loans and e-resource usage) and student attainment. It is important to note that the relationship between the two variables is not a causal relationship and that other factors will also influence student attainment (Stone & Ramsden, 2013). This research coincided and concurred with research undertaken in Australia and the United States (Cox & Jantti, 2012; Oakleaf et al., 2013).

Phase 2 of the project built on the original results by digging deeper into the data, looking specifically at 2,000 full-time undergraduate students based at the main Huddersfield campus. The team investigated whether there was a relationship between library usage and potential causal factors in the data such as demographics and discipline and this dataset was examined at school and course level.

Although the effect sizes were small, analysis of the demographic data showed that there is a relationship between demographic factors and library usage, which supported research findings at Wollongong (Cox & Jantti, 2012). Of particular interest to Huddersfield was that Chinese students borrow fewer items than UK students and also use fewer e-resources (Stone & Collins, 2013).

When the data were analysed by discipline, the social science group was found to be the highest users of library resources, while the lowest users were students in computing and engineering and in the arts (Collins & Stone, 2014). Both phases of LIDP gave some key results regarding the relationship between library usage and student attainment, but these results are only an indicator, they do not explain the reasons for these differences in usage. A number of focus groups were held at the end of phase 2, but it was decided that further quantitative work was required at Huddersfield in order to understand the metrics highlighted in both phases of LIDP.

PHASE 3 OF LIDP

The third phase of LIDP (LIDP3), is an internal project at Huddersfield that commenced in 2014. LIDP3 will focus on making use of the data and insights generated from phases 1 and 2 to increase library usage among the groups identified as having the lowest use.

It is clear from the results from phases 1 and 2 that a 'one-size-fits-all', generic approach to information literacy is inadequate. Therefore, the Academic Services Team's in-depth knowledge of each subject and student cohort has been used to identify the most appropriate interventions for each group — this is a logical progression from the data-driven approach of the first two phases.

If targeted successfully it is anticipated that LIDP3 could lead to a rise in the use of library resources, which in turn could be a contributing factor to better student attainment and retention.

SCHOOL OF COMPUTING AND ENGINEERING

Data from the second phase of LIDP showed that the School of Computing and Engineering (SCE) as a whole were low users. Engineers use the library PCs more often and computing students download more PDFs. However, the behaviour of both groups are very similar (Collins, 2012).

In order to investigate the low usage of library resources by SCE users, a coordinated approach was taken to market library resources and services to the department. The decision was taken to prioritise engagement with staff over students. This was because academic staff were recognised in the earlier phases of LIDP as the gateway to student engagement with library resources. For example, a common theme identified in a focus group with SCE students in December 2012 was students' unwillingness to engage with resources their lecturers had not specifically directed them towards (Philip, 2012).

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An action plan for SCE was drafted in January 2015, including the following points:

- Offer library desktop visits to SCE academic staff
- Arrange staff development sessions on key library resources (e.g., IEEE Xplore)
- Produce new resources to promote the librarians and library resources to SCE
- Update information on library resources on the Virtual Learning Environment (also known as a learning management system or LMS).

Progress to date on the initiatives described within the action plan are discussed below. Although computing and engineering are treated as separate subjects, with a subject librarian having responsibility for each, a whole-school approach was taken for the purposes of the action plan, as the majority of the initiatives that were introduced were applicable to both subjects.

ENGAGING WITH STAFF

Inspired by a method developed at London South Bank University (Godwin, 2005) and its use at the University of Liverpool (Thompson, 2009), the librarians started offering desktop visits. These were intended to ensure that staff were fully aware of all resources and services the library provides. It was agreed that individual desktop visits would be more effective than scheduled group sessions for several reasons: academics were more likely to make time for an appointment where the librarian visited them rather than asking them to go elsewhere; personal visits allowed each to be tailored to what they specifically wanted to know; and the librarians could spend more time going into detail about areas of interest and answering specific questions.

Subject librarians for the school collaborated to create a template email to be sent to academics advertising the desktop visits. They each then took the time to personalise it to each academic they were contacting, to improve the chances that people would pay attention to the email (Potter, 2014). The level of personalisation varied: for some just the name or course area was changed (particularly where there were large numbers of academics to contact), but in other cases, e.g., if an academic was known to have a particular teaching or research interest, greater personalisation was used such as highlighting specific resources for their research area.

Staff were asked to sign up for desktop visits using a short online form, which gave some examples of topics the librarians could cover. Items such as raising their research profile, copyright, using social media, and using subject-specific resources were included, to attract their attention. The form also allowed space for the staff to suggest any other topics they would like to discuss. The librarians used these forms as a template for the visit.

The desktop visits had limited take-up within SCE. Four responses were received from 90 + Engineering academics, two of which were expressing interest for a visit later in the year when they were less busy, and the other two requesting visits at that time. Of the two desktop visits completed, both responded positively to the librarian's visit, and discussed a wide range of topics, covering more than just the topics that had been ticked on the booking form.

Only one response was received from 40 + Computing academics, and when the academic was contacted it transpired that they had used the online form to ask a general question rather than request a visit. The query did result in a useful face-to-face meeting but no "official" desktop visit was actually made.

The librarians plan to promote the desktop visits again at the start of June 2015, and anticipate higher take-up during the quieter summer period.

To further engage staff with library resources, training was organised for one of the core databases for the school: IEEE Xplore. Two sessions were advertised to academics and researchers: 'Using IEEE Xplore' and 'Getting published with IEEE Xplore'. There were 30 spaces in each session and both were over-subscribed. Requests were also made for the 'Publishing with IEEE' session to be repeated later in the year. There were attendees from both departments but most were from engineering (see Table 1).

ENGAGING WITH STUDENTS

For the past two years the librarians had run optional information literacy workshops within each term's Guidance Week (a mid-term break in scheduled teaching to allow students to catch up with assignments and revision, referred to in some schools as Reading Week). As part of the efforts to increase library outreach, established practices were built upon which involved overhauling the presentation materials and increasing the publicity given to these sessions for spring 2015. Unfortunately, despite an improved marketing strategy and some enthusiasm from academic staff, these workshops were poorly attended. At the time of writing, the librarians are liaising with academic staff from SCE about how to increase participation in these workshops, possibly by making them compulsory or introducing an incentive to attend.

After Guidance Week in spring 2015, the librarians revised their section within the SCE area of the University's Virtual Learning Environment, UniLearn. Changes included adding all presentations and other materials from the session, removing some outdated support materials, and providing detailed information about the subject librarians and what support they could offer, including a photo to help the students recognise who they should ask for help. A short video explaining how the subject librarians can help students was made using free animation programme PowToon (the video can be viewed at https://youtu.be/wAzK-q9WDF4).

During International Week the subject librarians were asked, by one of the Student Guidance and Support Officers for SCE, to deliver another information literacy session specifically for international students. However, this was also optional and poorly attended. For all the optional sessions run in 2014–15, the attendees were overwhelmingly from the Engineering department, with little engagement from Computing.

In order to create a physical library presence in SCE the subject librarians have attended a number of events held by the Student Support and Guidance Officers within SCE. These included a 'games and mince pies' break before Christmas 2014, and a celebration for the International Day of Happiness in March 2015. Although the sessions did not have an academic focus the subject librarians felt it was important to be on hand to answer any serendipitous queries regarding the library and using resources. These events have had varying success in terms of numbers attending. However, because computing and engineering students are far less likely to visit the library than students from other schools (Collins & Stone, 2014), it is felt to be hugely important to keep bringing the library to SCE, to be continually seen in the department and to increase familiarity with the librarians and library services.

After the outcomes of phase 1 of LIDP in 2011 a number of internal projects were initiated. One such project was the Roving Librarian project (Sharman, 2014). On regular occasions the subject librarians have set up a 'roving' stand in the entrance of the School of Computing and Engineering, offering library support and advice to students, staff and researchers. On the day of the IEEE training sessions, a representative from IEEE also attended and was able to support those with queries about IEEE Xplore. Staff and researchers were emailed when the roving session started and this was effective as a number of staff did bring their

Table 1
Percentage of staff from each discipline attending IEEE training sessions.

	Computing	Engineering
Using IEEE Xplore	23%	77%
Publishing with IEEE	43%	57%

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