A New Partnership in Law at Sheffield: Collaboration in the Design of a New Module

Abstract: This article by Maria Mawson, Natasha Semmens and Mark Taylor, is based on a paper given at the 38th BIALL Annual Study Conference held in Sheffield in June 2007 and describes a new partnership between colleagues from the Library and the School of Law at the University of Sheffield, which has led to the development of an innovative new undergraduate foundation module in law. It begins by describing the situation which existed before the project. Next, two key changes which provided the impetus for the new collaboration are described. Finally, key elements of the new foundation module are discussed.

Keywords: academic libraries; legal research skills; training

The old model: library support for *Introduction to Law & Legal Systems*

Under the old curriculum, the foundation module, *Introduction to Law and Legal Systems*, was delivered in a traditional way using a rigid lecture and seminar format. Library support for the module included introductions to the library and electronic resources, and demonstrations of legal databases by the Academic Liaison Librarian for Law, sometimes working with trainers from the database providers. These were done as part of the module lecture programme, as smaller hands-on workshops were not feasible due to high student numbers (400+) and timetable constraints. Tours of the Law Library were provided by seminar tutors, but these tended to be disruptive for library users and of limited use to the students receiving them. Students were also expected to complete a workbook devised by the Academic Liaison Librarian. This provided a lot of information about library services and electronic resources, as well as practical exercises, but it was not assessed and, as a result, most students failed to see the value in completing it.

Despite the Library's close involvement in the module, the feeling was that students were not developing the information literacy skills they needed. Indeed, the module on the whole was perceived by both staff and students to be boring and fragmented and students were passive (rather than engaged) learners who only saw the relevance of the introductory modules after the fact. There was widespread recognition, amongst students, staff and the librarians, that the module was now in need of significant reform.

The New Partnership

At about this time in 2002-03, there was a change of Director and the service was restructured into operational groups, including the Academic Services Group, which came into being as internal and external surveys showed low levels of student satisfaction with library services and book availability. One of its first initiatives was the New Partnership Project, which aimed to improve student access to learning resources. This is reflected in the University Library's mission, which is to add value to the University's research and learning by providing access to knowledge resources, and by working in close partnership with academic staff and students. Several departments, including the Law School, were targeted initially in the New Partnership Project, but it is now a mainstream service available to all departments.

The New Partnership involves pro-active work with academic departments on all aspects of information resource provision. The key activities are the creation of online resource (reading) lists, digitisation of resources, information literacy and course pack production, all of which are described briefly below:

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Online resource (reading) lists

Sheffield University Library uses the Talis List reading list module to create online resource lists that incorporate direct links to electronic content, as well as information about print resources. The package is very flexible, and a list can be structured in a way that reflects the particular requirements of a module leader. Once a list has been created, a link to it can be made from the module WebCT course, giving students easy access to course reading.

Digitisation of resources

One of the biggest challenges for the Library is delivering key readings that are only available in print to large numbers of students on core modules, particularly if all the students are required to read the same thing in a short time frame. The CLA Trial Digitisation Licence, signed in August 2005, allows the Library to digitise book chapters or journal articles previously only available in print, and we are encouraging module leaders to use this service, if appropriate, when they are selecting reading for their courses. The digitised readings, or e-offprints, are usually held on a library server, and links included from relevant Star Resource Lists. Module leaders also have the option to link direct to e-offprints from WebCT.

Information literacy

A core element of the New Partnership is to support information literacy. The University Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy 2005-2010 includes as an aspiration for a Sheffield graduate "the core capabilities and skills of information literacy, interacting confidently with the nature and structure of information in their subject and handling information in a professional and ethical manner." A library project to develop a WebCT information skills resource began in 2003. Content for law students was a priority and a number of tutorials were created by the Academic Services Group working in collaboration with the law school. The information skills resource includes generic and subject specific materials, and all staff and students are given access to it. In fact, it is the only WebCT course that all members of the university have access to. The tutorials were created as reusable learning objects that can be integrated into WebCT courses for individual modules. This is the preferred option, so that information literacy is integrated into the curriculum.

The tutorials on finding legal materials incorporate links to relevant materials freely available on the web, such as Hansard, and links to the library catalogue to show the location of print materials. They also include video clips showing how legal materials such as case citators are used. These clips were taken from videos available on Film & Sound Online, available to the UK HE community via EDINA. All the information skills tutorials include exercises and quizzes to allow users to test their understanding in a non-threatening way, as the results are not recorded or assessed.

Course Pack production

The Library also offers a printed course pack production service. All items included in course packs will have been copyright cleared, and the advantage for students is that they can purchase a bound set of key readings without having to locate items on the library shelves and queue to photocopy each one individually. This is a cost effective way of delivering key readings to students, and several law module leaders have used this option.

The Law School's New Curriculum: a new pedagogy

At about the same time as the New Partnership Project was taking place, the Law School embarked upon a major curriculum review process. In reviewing our approach to teaching and learning, we identified a need (and strong desire) to develop students who were engaged, enthusiastic, confident in their research abilities and able to/ inclined to justify opinions with law. In particular, we focussed on finding ways of meeting these aims in the context of modern higher education, facing the challenges of large (and growing) student numbers, gaps in essential skills-sets and consumer attitudes.

Understanding Law was conceived as the new 'flagship' foundation module in the new curriculum, introducing students to key legal concepts, principles and institutions and helping them to develop the skills of legal argument. The teaching team was tasked with the development of an innovative pedagogic approach in pursuit of these aims. We received significant pedagogic support from the Centre for Inquiry-based Learning in the Arts and Social Sciences (CILASS), a HEFCE funded Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at the University of Sheffield. CILASS has as its central aim to radically transform the learning experience for students over a five year period, promoting information literacy, inquiry-based learning and collaborative inquiry. Crucially for us, our work with CILASS gave us the tools we needed to address our key aims. In the following section we describe the content of the new module, illustrating the inquiry-based approaches adopted and explaining how the New Partnership helped us to develop and deliver them.

Working together to produce the new module: *Understanding Law*

There are four types of learning activity in *Understanding Law* which have distinct but closely related aims. We will briefly describe them here, highlighting in particular

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those innovations which have been specifically enhanced as a result of the collaboration between the library and the academic team.

Lectures and seminars

Whilst we have retained the 'traditional' seminar and lecture series in the module, we have given them a heavy contextual and analytical emphasis, thus removing the more 'nuts and bolts' foundation material from the class-based activities. The aim of the seminar series is to encourage students to understand the dynamic potential of law, and to recognise that this dynamic is susceptible to critique. We do this through a range of class-based activities, including mooting, independent research tasks and case critique. The lecture series is distinct in that it is designed to demonstrate how English law has developed, and continues to develop, over time. Lectures are delivered by some of the School's leading academics and by a group of external legal professionals. Each week an expert in a particular field of law considers how, and why, their 'area' of law has emerged as a distinctive discipline and reached the point it is at today.

Electronic Workbook and Student-Led Colloquia

The backbone of the module is the Electronic Workbook, based entirely in WebCT. Students complete a workbook each week which requires them to undertake a range of set readings, inquiry-based activities and collaborative tasks in a highly structured way. The workbook is designed to encourage students to conduct research for themselves and use that research to develop a legal argument or answer a problem. On average, students are expected to spend 10-12 hours a week doing the workbook activities. Having completed the workbook each week, students must submit a 'Learning Diary' electronically. Although the Learning Diary is not marked or graded, students cannot pass the module unless they have submitted all twelve learning diaries across the semester (we require evidence of a 'genuine attempt' for audit purposes.)

The development of the Electronic Workbook was directly influenced and facilitated by the innovations under the New Partnership. Firstly, one of the major strengths of the workbook is that we have been able to directly embed the library's Information Skills tutorials into it. Moreover, we have tried to model the workbook exercises on those used in the Information Skills tutorials, using the prompts and feedback tools as examples of good practice. Secondly, the library has arranged for teams from Westlaw and Lexis Nexis Butterworths to come into the School and provide training sessions. We have integrated these into the workbook syllabus, prompting students to sign up to small group sessions in WebCT. In the first year, the take-up was relatively low but the feedback from students who attended the sessions was exceptionally good. We are hopeful that this message will filter through to new cohorts as the new curriculum gets established. Thirdly, we have digitised twelve key book chapters which have been delivered to the students on a CD-ROM, together with other information relating to generic study skills and approaches to learning. We decided to produce the CD-ROM rather than a regular course pack for two reasons. Firstly, the production of an electronic product seemed more consistent with the rest of the module, which was hosted and administered entirely in an online learning environment. Secondly, and more importantly, we hoped to be able to find a way of allowing the students to copy their workbook/learning diary entries to the CD-ROM and then keep it for future reference. However, we have yet to find a way of achieving this aim and continue to explore ways of doing so.

One of the main things we learned in the first year of delivering the module is that a heavy emphasis on enquiry-based learning must be supported with opportunities for 'feedback'. The electronic workbook is supported by a series of 'student-led Colloquia' in which students from other year groups act as tutors, encouraging students to participate in peer-review of the workbook activities. We have found this works particularly well for supporting the development of research skills and essay writing skills. In addition, we provide an electronic discussion forum within WebCT which has proven to be extremely successful. Students are able to post questions and ideas on the board, or participate in one of the 'chatroom' sessions which were supervised by the academic team and the liaison librarian. From our perspective, this has been a particularly useful tool because it gives us direct and detailed access to student views, allowing us to accurately gauge their progress and experiences and identify/manage service related problems.

Conclusion

Although we have only provided a short summary of our project here, we hope that we have managed to convey the many advantages of the new partnership approach here at Sheffield, for both staff and students. Importantly, we continue to develop our partnership as we collaborate to make improvements to the module and we are excited to see our ideas and experiences having an impact on other modules both in the School of Law and in departments across the university.

Biographies

Maria Mawson, Academic Liaison Librarian for Law, University of Sheffield, has degrees in history and librarianship from the University of Sheffield. She has been in her current post for six years, and previously worked in FE Colleges and public libraries. Maria joined BIALL in 2000, and was an elected member of BIALL Council 2004-2006.

Drs Natasha Semmens and Mark Taylor are both lecturers in the School of Law at the University of Sheffield. Both have first degrees in law, postgraduate degrees in their specialist areas (Dr Semmens in Socio-Legal Studies/Criminology and Dr Taylor in Biotechnology, Law and Ethics) and PhDs from the University of Sheffield. They have led the Law School's first phase CILASS project and co-ordinated the introduction of Understanding Law to the curriculum in 2006. As part of the project they have engaged in pedagogical research and have disseminated their work through various in-house seminars and, more widely, through publication.

Collection Development for Knowledge Management

Abstract: This paper was presented by Penny Bailey at the 38th BIALL Annual Study Conference held in Sheffield in June 2007 and covers the challenges involved in introducing a knowledge management strategy to a law firm. It suggests methods to be adopted in trying to implement such a service including identification with the firm's business objectives; persuasive communication; identification of the benefits accruing and strategies for collecting knowledge.
Keywords: knowledge management; law firms

Introduction - the challenges

Collection development for knowledge management (KM) or internal information can be a challenge when users in the organisation don't necessarily appreciate the benefits. A recent survey of global law firms found that:

> "Just 61% of firms have a formal knowledge management strategy which suggested that knowledge management may not be adequately aligned with the firm's business objectives. Also, 75% of respondents report they develop a project plan before implementing a knowledge management initiative, though only 62% of respondents develop a business case to go with it, suggesting that many firms may not be adequately engaging management and the

partnership in understanding how the knowledge management initiative will bring value to the firm."[1]

In fact a quick straw poll of the audience in Sheffield revealed that very few in the audience felt that their organisation had a KM strategy in place, that there was generally a feeling that they should "do" KM, but that initiatives rarely got off the ground.

Secondly, organisations either don't have dedicated KM staff and, even where they do, they are not positioned to work effectively across the organisation, with access to top management and decision making committees and the knowledge of what initiatives the firm is undertaking. Astoundingly, more than half of the firms in the survey do not have a knowledge management committee.

The global survey quoted above found that the reward structures for contributing to KM were often absent and

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