

CURRENT INTERESTS

New Barristers' Information Literacy Challenges as They Transition from Education to the Workplace

Abstract: The aim of this qualitative study is to explore new barristers' information literacy (IL) experiences during their transition from education to the workplace. New barristers are defined as individuals currently doing pupillage or who qualified as professionals in the last two years. Although the transition into work constitutes an important period in new barristers' legal careers during which they face many IL challenges, so far neither new barristers' perspectives on their IL experiences nor their transition experiences have been examined in detail. The study employed semi-structured interviews to explore the IL experiences of six new barristers.* This thesis finds that new barristers face a variety of IL challenges and thus have different transition experiences. For them, legal research has emotional implications. As professionals, they have IL needs and experiences that are dissimilar from the ones they developed during their education. This impacts on the content and delivery of IL training for new barristers. The study broadens our understanding of legal IL and new legal professionals' IL needs. It has implications for law librarians and legal educators as it throws the complexity of new barristers' workplace IL into relief. Finally, the study offers some recommendations for IL training.

Keywords: information literacy; legal profession; barristers

INTRODUCTION

"You don't learn very well how to do research before you start your job so it's a massive leap."

This quote is a response from a new barrister, defined in this article as anyone who is doing their pupillage or became fully-qualified (i.e. able to practise professionally as a junior barrister) in the last two years, when they were asked about their transition from education to professional work. The quote illustrates that new barristers face different information literacy (IL) challenges as they start work as well as implying that they have found some ways of mediating these issues. However, while the

transition to the workplace is both complex and emotionally demanding, so far barristers' IL has mainly been studied from law librarians' perspective. Barristers' views are solicited infrequently and if they are, studies focus on their use and access to legal information, their format or IL training preferences. Most importantly, there has been little examination of new barristers' experiences of transition from education to the workplace in terms of their IL competencies, despite the difference between studying and practising law.

This study set out to explore the self-reported information literacy challenges that new barristers face in terms of their research difficulties and the ways in which they mediate those issues. The study explored this problem through the following overarching research question:

How do new barristers experience the transition from education to the workplace in terms of their IL experiences?

*This article is based on a dissertation submitted by Anne Binsfeld in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's degree in Library and Information Science at UCL.

This question was divided into sub-questions, of which this article will address the following:

- 1) How do new barristers feel about research and in what ways is their current legal research different from the past?
- 2) What IL training have they received and do they feel that education has prepared them for the workplace?

The insights gained from exploring new barristers' IL are useful to law librarians working in education and those supporting new barristers in their workplaces. Better understanding of new barristers' information use and their experiences of the transition into work will enable librarians to better meet their users' needs, provide more effective training and align educational and workplace IL. The examination of new barristers' difficulties can also be of interest to legal education providers, to chambers employing new barristers and it could help improve courses such as the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC).

IL background and the legal profession

IL has traditionally been understood and studied from an education perspective. Many IL definitions are a variation of the seminal ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) 1989 definition, which condenses IL to "find, evaluate, use" (ACRL, 1989). In this study, the 2018 CILIP IL group's definition (CILIP, 2018) was used, as it does justice to the complexity of IL experiences, highlighting the importance of IL in educational and workplace settings, among others.

Information literacy incorporates a set of skills and abilities which everyone needs to undertake information-related tasks; for instance, how to discover, access, interpret, analyse, manage, create, communicate, store and share information. (CILIP, 2018, p.3)

As indicated by the above IL definition, all professionals need IL, however IL and its related competencies and attributes are particularly important in the legal profession. As Mark Forster has explained, 'to be an effective lawyer [...] is to deal each day with information. One must know when research evidence or other relevant legal, business, personal or other information is required, how to find it, how to critique it and how to integrate it into one's knowledge base' (Forster, 2017, p.7).

Education offers different routes to become a lawyer, either practising as a solicitor or as a barrister. All future barristers have to complete the BPTC, a 'vocational' (Bird, 2011, p.166) course intended to introduce students to professional practice, mediating the transition from university and the workplace. Barristers then have to complete twelve months of pupillage, during which 'pupils gain practical training' (Bar Standards Board, 2017). After having completed years of training, having made a large financial investment, and succeeded in an

extremely competitive environment, the transition into work is an important one for new barristers and they are keen to succeed as legal professionals. In this article, their IL challenges in terms of their research difficulties are examined as well as some ways new barristers mediate those issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review of the fields related to the research presented here was conducted. This provided a context for the findings and a basis for the data analysis process.

Legal education

Professional legal research relies on excellent research skills. As such, it is unsurprising that the connection between IL and legal education has been made. However, Abel (2015) agrees with McClure (2013) that legal education faces an identity crisis in many countries, since it is in conflict between the need to teach 'practical skills' (McClure, 2013, p.276), including the legal research skills that ensure students' employability, and academic legal scholarship. This issue has been identified in Britain too (Choolhun, 2011; Bell, 2005), and was examined further in the LETR (Legal Education and Training Review) report (2013) on the future of legal education. Since Knott, among others, has highlighted that students struggle to understand that information 'retrieval is not research' (2009, p.103), the LETR report features 'legal research, [...] digital literacy' (2013, p.275) and general IL competencies prominently. IL is specifically addressed in legal accreditation standards such as the QAA for law (2015), the Law Society and General Bar Council Joint Statement (2002) and even the new Barrister Professional Competences Statement (2016). However, on the BPTC there are currently no official requirements to teach research (Haines, 2010) and providers choose how to teach and assess, if at all, those abilities. Interestingly, as the BPTC is currently under review, the need to teach legal research as part of a core subject is being discussed again (Bar Standards Board, 2019).

Academic legal IL

Focused on learning and teaching, universities are generally at the centre of legal IL literature and academic law librarians are responsible for the provision of research skills training (Libraries Sub-Committee of the Society of Legal Scholars, 2010). This has led to the development of IL standards specifically for law students. Discussing the US law student IL standards (LSIL) (AALL, 2012), Kim-Prieto calls 'information literacy [...] an assessment rubric designed by ACRL' (2011, p.607). This draws attention to an overreliance on information skill performance evaluation and standardised testing in the US, which does not align with this study's holistic approach to IL.

Additionally, the LSIL standards are solely focused on educational settings and no attempt is made to align them with professional practice. Spearheaded by Choolhun (Choolhun et al., 2012), the 2012 British and Irish Law Librarian Association (BIALL, 2012) IL statement presents a more complete picture, highlighting the importance of continually developing research skills and keeping up-to-date. However, while it aims to be for 'all sectors' (Choolhun et al., 2012), the research skills mentioned are tailored to students rather than to legal workplaces.

As Bird examines, legal IL has become increasingly important (Bird, 2013) in legal education and to law librarians. Internationally (Kim-Prieto et al., 2014) and in the UK, the focus has been on law librarians' roles in teaching IL, often looking at training provisions (Wakefield, 2007; Andretta, 2001; Davies and Jackson, 2005; Pope, 2009; Mawson, 2010; Davies, 2017). Pope unintentionally points towards the tension between academic IL standards and professional IL behaviour, when she highlights that the focus at universities is on preparing students to undertake project work (Pope et al., 2010) like dissertations. However, particularly in the US, academic law librarians, like Poydras (2013) and Desai (2014), have started acknowledging their responsibility to prepare students 'to actually function in the legal profession' (Poydras, 2013, p.184). In Nigeria and South Africa there have also been growing concerns around 'the extent to which [legal IL is] effectively transferred to the workplace' (Stilwell et al., 2013 p.155), but these concerns have not yet been addressed in detail in the UK.

Information behaviour (IB) studies are often examined in conjunction with IL, offering models that can strengthen our understanding of IL. Project Information Literacy (PIL) focuses on recent graduates' IB as well as on their IL. It found that graduates rely on Google too much and use familiarity with sources as an evaluation criterion (Head, 2016). These findings are supported by many law librarians (Head, 2016; Batts, 2007; Hunter, 2013; Choolhun, 2009) and Bates (2013) also highlights that students are not able to adequately deal with (legal) information found online.

Two studies exploring law students' IB stand out. Batts compares student barristers' resources usage with that of future solicitors and finds that barristers 'look in more places for help' (Batts, 2007, p.287). In contrast, in his examination of BPTC students' research behaviour, Soanes identifies an 'atmosphere of ultra-competitiveness' (Soanes, 2010, p.163), finding that students experience high levels of anxiety when doing legal research. They have a 'generalist' (Soanes, 2010, p.158) rather than a needs-driven research approach and are reluctant to use primary sources they lack experience with. He also highlights that the 'transition away from [...] learner to [...] professional [...] is a little-investigated area' (Soanes, 2010, p.151), which is where the research presented here comes in.

Transfer and workplace IL

Although first identified in 1974 in relation to the growing importance of information in workplaces (Zurkowski, 1974), workplace IL is an understudied area (Forster, 2017; Lloyd, 2010). While some theoretical approaches to workplace IL exist, generic frameworks and models, which are often centred around educational contexts, are normally rejected.

Fundamentally, IL is about finding and making use of information in such a way to create new knowledge, or, put differently, to learn. Consequently, the connection between people's IL experiences and their learning in the workplace is an important one. Among other (Lloyd, 2010; Abram, 2013) workplace IL researchers, Crawford is specifically interesting in lifelong workplace learning. He rejects the myth of IL acquired 'by osmosis' (2013, p.96), highlighting that while employees learn through participation (2013, p.94), they still need instruction in IL to use IL as a learning tool. In contrast, Billett examines how workplaces function as vocational learning settings, highlighting that 'in a situated approach to learning, the authenticity of activity and circumstances assist the development of knowledge and its transfer' (Billett, 1995, p.21).

Although Fenwick, who studied transition periods, found that individuals' transition to working life is generally perceived as 'difficult and stressful' (2013, p.360), the transferability of academic knowledge to the workplace, and IL competencies in particular, has often been taken for granted in the past (Bird, 2011). This assumption is questioned today (Inskip, 2014). As such, Travis (2011) has studied the transferability of IL competencies and has sought to assess the effectiveness of academic IL training in terms of training students for the workplace. She found that new professionals seem to have forgotten the IL training they received as students, despite relying on the practices developed while at university. Her examination finds no connection between the 'skills learned in college with [those skills] actual use in the workplace' (Travis, 2011, p.20). Lloyd develops these points when she links transitions to a shift in learners' identity as student experts become novices in the workplace. During their transition from students to established professionals, new barristers have to gain 'situated understandings of' (Lloyd, 2017, p.110–1) their profession's workplace IL practices, implying that classroom-based models of IL are insufficient to prepare future lawyers for professional work and the transition's inherent identity shift.

Lawyers' workplaces

Several studies illustrate lawyers' IB and their training needs at work. While Kuhlthau (2001) is not focused on legal workplace IL, she uses her 6-stages ISP (Information Search Process) model to study the information seeking behaviour of American early-career lawyers. Although her findings put uncertainty at the centre of legal

professionals' research processes, this is not experienced as anxiety or frustration by these lawyers. In contrast to the law students studied by Soanes (2010) who are stressed and anxious about legal research, Kuhlthau's participants highlight that for them complex research is 'fun' and 'exciting' (2001, p.31). In line with Fay, who examines new barristers' IB in Ireland, many law librarians are concerned with professional IL training and their related role (Fishleigh, 2013; Coles et al., 2010). Woellhaf (2017) and Gow (2013) examine training needs and provisions at their respective Inn libraries. Both articles provide a useful background to understanding how and where barristers access specialised legal information. Gow (2013) highlights the uncertainty many barristers feel around legal research and their perceived lack of IL training. In his large study, Mishkin (2017) examines how legal research training can be done most effectively, although he focuses entirely on law librarian perspectives, albeit from different settings. While he discusses provisions at educational, vocational and professional levels, neither he nor any of the above-mentioned studies address the question of transition or how law librarians and legal IL generally can help new professionals transition into the workplace.

METHODOLOGY

Since the study's focus was on new barristers' personal transition experiences and their views on their IL needs, a qualitative research design was employed, which allowed the researcher to ask 'how, and why as well as what' (Dey, 1993, p.31). As the research was focused on understanding participants' individual realities rather than 'an objective picture' of reality (Pickard, 2013, p.100), the researcher conducted nine semi-structured face-to-face interviews in locations across London, each between 30 and 45 minutes long, which allowed for immediate responses and speedy data collection (Wildemuth, 2008, p.87). Through purposive sampling, six new barristers were recruited (two pupils, four junior barristers). Their varying levels of experience and different practice areas meant diverse viewpoints were available for analysis. Interviews were also conducted with one BPTC student who was about to start pupillage and two law librarians each working in a different setting to gain an understanding of new barristers' IL from different perspectives.

The interviews were audio-recorded and manually transcribed. Descriptive and 'open coding' (Wildemuth, 2008, p.98) were employed on the information collected from the participants. Categories and codes emerged from the raw data, meaning data analysis was inductive. They were redesigned as new data was continually integrated into the analysis. The credibility of the qualitative research was assured through 'tactics to help ensure [participants'] honesty' (Shenton, 2004, p.66) such as highlighting the confidentiality of their answers and iterative questioning, which enabled the collection of high-quality data.

Ethics are crucial to qualitative research as human subjects are its focus. The research was approved by the UCL Department of Information Studies Ethics committee in April 2018. Each participant was provided with an information sheet which allowed them to fully understand what they were agreeing to, before signing the consent form. During qualitative interviewing, participants cannot remain anonymous which meant ensuring confidentiality was extremely important. Confidentiality was ensured by using descriptors (e.g. pupil 1 and 2, barrister 1 to 4 for junior tenants) instead of real names, as well as storing participants' details and audio-recordings securely.

This study had several limitations, including the small sample size which meant that participants did not evenly represent all areas of law or an equal number of pupils and junior tenants. Furthermore, bias creep was a challenge. As it is 'impossible to remove all subjectivity from' (Pickard, 2013, p.21) qualitative research, the researcher strove to be aware of their own biases, which was made easier by the fact that they did not know any of the interviewees beforehand. The research design also meant that the researcher had no preconceptions about the study's outcomes or answers, so interviews were approached with an open mind.

FINDINGS

This section presents the interview findings, comparing new barristers' ideas about IL to those of the librarians and student when useful. While the study found that new barristers struggle with research and professional practice challenges, this article focuses in-depth on their research difficulties.

Difference

Participants described a variety of approaches, tasks and motivations to their information use at work. Dependent on their area of law, their research tasks focus on answering contractual, tort, public law, and tax questions, for example barrister 4 was "appealing a case to the High Court, and there was [...] research into various cases to see if I could find more information to support my argument". Although overall pupils' and junior tenants' research questions are similar, sometimes, according to pupil 2 "your supervisor is asking you, because [...] it's a question they don't have the answer to and they don't have the time to research". Thus, for many interviewees being a useful pupil by helping others with their research is central to their ambition to be taken on as tenants after pupillage, whereas junior tenants mainly do research for themselves.

As barrister 3 explained, new barristers' approach to research "depends on the nature of the task, whether you need to be fully comprehensive or whether you're satisfied that you covered the basics". Interviewees describe their professional research as goal-orientated and focused on necessity. For barrister 1 having a specific

agenda on their mind and being time-pressured means their research can be quite “superficial and [...] binary [...] identifying as quickly as possible is this the relevant book”. Unlike pupil 1 who “would read a little more [and] do the extra hour” when they do research for their own work, barrister 3 takes extra time if they do research for others because it “is much better than doing a piece of work and having misunderstood”. Thus, some found they were more diligent and comprehensive as students, whereas others are more granular and in-depth in their current professional research. Interviewees highlighted that the objective of professional research is completely different to that of academia, as now barrister 4 is “just applying the law as opposed to critiquing it”. Conversely, as professionals, they want to find the one right answer or get an overview of an area of law completely unknown to them, which they explained they did not have to do as students.

New barristers use a range of legal resources at different stages of their research. Although pupil 2 still uses academic textbooks as a starting point “out of habit”, generally new barristers have adopted professional sources (i.e. primary legal information, practitioners’ texts). Comparing their student and professional information use, for barrister 3 “a big difference is the kind of the information sources that you [...] use”. This idea was expressed by others too. Comparing past and present, interviewees highlighted the importance of cases, practitioners’ texts and, sometimes, articles for their professional research. Additionally, they all use Google, to clarify legal terminology or as a basic starting point. Both librarians address Google in their IL training and mostly new barristers are aware of its unreliability and biases. However, barrister 2 compared Google favourably to subscription databases, because “you don’t have to worry so much about syntax [and] it will fill in the blanks”. Furthermore, the Inn librarian highlighted that students and professionals “think they can find everything on Westlaw”, a view mirrored in new barristers’ answers. Some implied they use nothing but Westlaw and many clearly prefer it.

Many new barristers’ current research difficulties are related to or exacerbated by time-pressure. Court appearances are often urgent and being a junior member of their chambers, new barristers’ services are required when quick solutions are needed. While pupil 1 assumes they will spend more time on research as a junior tenant, this is refuted by the junior tenant interviewees. They explained they are under too much time-pressure for detailed research. For pupil 1, it can be “hard to know when it becomes counterproductive to carry on reading” and pupil 2 finds it difficult not knowing if there is an answer, namely “whether you’re searching in the haystack [...] or whether you’re in the completely wrong haystack on a different farm”.

As both librarians attest to a range of research competences in students and practising barristers, it is important to note that the difficulties described below

are experienced differently by everyone and occasionally not experienced at all. Some feel (very) confident, whether that is justified or not. Generally, interviewees struggle with identifying a starting point, as pupil 2 explained, “if it’s a new area of law, you just don’t know where to look”. Barrister 3 thinks “it’s certainly not straight-forward to be sure that you’ve covered everything”, an issue described by all. Barrister 1 “sometimes find[s] it challenging to check whether the law is up-to-date”, which is a difficulty many interviewees described having. In terms of databases, pupil 1 found databases problematic to use at first and barrister 3 identifies appropriate search terms with difficulty. It is mainly barrister 2 who explained their struggles around databases, finding databases challenging because they are all different and constantly changing.

Interviewees thought that research is an important and necessary part of being a barrister, no matter what practice area they specialise in. For new practitioners, research is “something that you’re proud of to be good at and a bit insecure about if you’re not” (pupil 1). Most feel confident that they have the necessary, basic skills, despite their difficulties. For barrister 1, research “appeals to the sort of nerd in me”. Generally, new barristers enjoy research, finding it “satisfying” (barrister 3) and pupil 2 “like[s] sinking [their] teeth into a difficult problem”. However, they all describe how quickly that enjoyment disappears when they are under time-pressure and/or do not know where to start. Pupil 1 found the transition from university to pupillage stressful, because “it’s a massive leap”. Others found it difficult but were more prepared for the differences between the two settings. Additionally, the student’s impression that chambers “expect everyone to be good at research” is confirmed by the law librarians interviewed. Thus, new barristers’ engagement with research is coloured by emotional aspects, including the pressure to succeed, as well as uncertainty around difficult tasks and satisfaction when they find the right answer.

Mediation strategies

New barristers engage in a variety of strategies to deal with their research difficulties as new professionals. It became apparent that new barristers mediate the transition from past to current research by engaging in information activities that develop their research competencies.

Training provides one way of mediating the difference, but is often met with mixed reactions. Some interviewees found their academic training prepared them for professional legal research, for instance barrister 1 feels “by the time I started work I knew where the main things relevant to my area were and [...] who to ask”.

However, most new barristers explained that either they had little academic training, or the training they received was of limited use. Many feel like barrister 3 that they were “never specifically taught these skills” or

they explained they had “no real formal training” (pupil 2). Most interviewees described library inductions and one-off introductions to specific databases, often led by representatives of those databases. While barrister 1 explained that they found the optional lecture held by the librarian during their Graduate Diploma in Law “quite useful”, explaining “that [it] saved me a lot of trouble since”, all interviewees highlighted the lack of research training during their BPTC. Moreover, pupil 1 felt that the training at the beginning of their law undergraduate degree went too quickly for them and barrister 2 said their research module required less effort so was taken less seriously. Some found that academic training had not prepared them for the transition to professional research, and pupil 1 described “if someone had just said, oh you need to be able to do this, [...] I would have been more inclined to learn these skills beforehand”.

Although all interviewees were aware that their Inns offer training, only barrister 2 had participated in various sessions, finding them “very, very helpful”, since they showed them how to navigate legal databases. Participants occasionally felt they do not need further training, as barrister 3 explains “if [...] I couldn't remember where the search connectors [...] are, I know where within Westlaw [...] I can find out rather than doing any more training”. Most new barristers would like to attend more training sessions but find that “they were always at times when I actually [...] had work to do” (barrister 1), meaning their workload does not allow them to leave work at 6 o'clock when those sessions are held.

Instead of formal training, new barristers find self-led practice a more useful strategy to mediate the transition from education to work. As pupil 1 explained, “if you are proactive you can fix that gap”. Other participants also described how important their independent development of research competencies, outside of formal training, has been. They highlighted that it is not traditional training that helped them mediate the transition, but persistent practice. The phrase “trial and error” was used by pupil 1 and 2 and barrister 4, to describe the development of their research competencies and digital skills. While barrister 3 “think[s] [at university] they taught the bare bones and then you practise”, barrister 4 finding self-led practise “far more useful” than formal training. The librarians corroborate that most barristers have a similar approach to barrister 4 who said, “mostly you developed the skills you needed through necessity”. Moreover, some interviewees feel through practice they are getting better at research, particularly improving on knowing where to start. Barrister 1 thinks it is the “practice of knowing and remembering the places where you've found things before” that allows them to be quicker now. Thus, new barristers explained how they are becoming more efficient researchers through self-led practice and experience. Investing the appropriate amount of time and resources into a task is crucial to professional legal research behaviour, an ability that develops with “experience about what you can and can't use” (pupil 2).

Barrister 3 explained that the right level of comprehensiveness, in relation to the task at hand, “becomes a natural feeling” and being confident in conclusions is easier with more experience.

DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings are analysed through a discussion of prominent themes such as research practices and IL training, connecting the data gathered in the interviews with the literature review.

Research practices

Findings from this study demonstrate that at work, new barristers face a variety of information tasks, for which they use different approaches, depending on the requirements and their practice areas. As Soanes (2010) highlights, they want to be efficient and effective researchers, aware of the time and money pressures put on them by their clients and chambers. Most new barristers are also aware that they research differently now than as students, highlighting differences such as their approach, strategies and sources usage. This is interesting because on the surface legal information sources are mostly identical for lawyers and law students. However, in practice interviewees thought there was minimal encouragement to use primary legal sources at university, and once in the workplace, they need to time to orient themselves to and establish which are the appropriate sources, such as cases and practitioners' texts.

Previous literature has demonstrated how new graduates use Google and that they are reluctant to use sources they are unfamiliar with (Choolhun, 2009; Bates, 2013; Head, 2016). However, this study's findings only partially confirm these ideas. Instead, new barristers indicate that they only use Google as a starting point and are unwilling to spend much time on it. While librarians criticise new barristers' over-reliance on a handful of sources, this habit appears to be encouraged by pupil supervisors as it is, for the most part, sufficient. As such, new barristers quickly learn that all they need to do and have time to do is what is necessary to answer their questions. New barristers' focus on applying the law, rather than engaging intellectually with it as they did as students, means professional legal research does not have the same aim as academic research. As a result, their IL experiences at university and at work are often different.

The specific research difficulties new barristers have, such as ensuring comprehensiveness, relevancy, currency and finding a starting point do not stem from an unwillingness or inability to adapt to new research practices. It is their lack of experience which makes research particularly difficult for them, despite their willingness to adjust to the standards expected of them. However, new barristers are hopeful that as they gain experience, their difficulties will lessen. A comparison between pupils' and junior tenants' feelings around research highlights how

even within a short period, new barristers' confidence in and thus enjoyment of research increases, doing justice to Kuhlthau (2001) who found that more experienced legal professionals see difficult research as interesting and satisfying, despite their uncertainty.

Training and practice

As the IL competencies new barristers developed at university is dissimilar to those they need in the workplace, it is worth analysing the IL training they have received. New barristers start work with a variety of training backgrounds, and no two individuals have received the same amount or type of IL training. Moreover, the BPTC, designed to prepare for work, does not officially include research training (Haines, 2010), a fact criticised by students, new barristers and law librarians alike. This issue harks back to the apparent crisis in legal education discussed in the literature review, for instance by Coe and Dagilyte (2014) who highlight that legal education needs to focus on hard and soft skills.

Most new barristers do not find the academic IL training they had useful. Some find it difficult to recall it in detail and/or insisted they did not have much training, an issue highlighted in the literature review (Travis, 2011). Although the effectiveness of IL training is often discussed in the literature (Fishleigh, 2013; Woellhaf, 2017; Gow, 2013; Mishkin, 2017), this study found that the provision of useful IL training is complicated by issues such as the differences between practice areas and the varying skills levels of students and new barristers. Furthermore, if new barristers feel they do not need training or cannot participate because of work duties, the effectiveness of the training provided by the Inns is a secondary concern.

Training is also found to be unhelpful because it does not allow for practice, a crucial aspect of learning and an idea that was continuously underlined by the new barristers interviewed. As most training is done in one-off sessions, there is no time to go beyond showing students what to do and the practice element is missing. Consequently, new barristers are often proudly self-reliant and feel they taught themselves the necessary research competencies through trial and error. New professionals see their independence as a hallmark of their barrister identity and realise it is expected of them to develop an instinct around research, without much outside help. Finally, in contrast to many IL definitions (i. e. the BIALL (2012) IL statement) and new barristers' awareness of their lack of experience, most do not feel they need to continue developing their research competencies. Once they have reached a necessary level, they expect to be able to forget about further development and focus on professional practices instead.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has found that new barristers experience various emotions in relation to their research

tasks, ranging from anxiety to enjoyment. Maintaining a high research standard is central to their professional identity and crucial to their career ambitions. Workplace hierarchy, research difficulties and workload mean new barristers are under a lot of pressure and they learn to address research tasks as efficiently and effectively as possible. Necessity is new barristers' guiding principle, which encourages narrow use of information sources. Although some struggle with issues such as ensuring comprehensiveness, relevancy, currency and identifying a starting point for their research, these difficulties are not universal and no generalisations are possible. Their current professional approach to legal research differs drastically from their academic research habits. Thus, new barristers' IL needs and competencies are dissimilar to those of law students. As students, they were focused on engaging intellectually with the law rather than finding specific answers or understanding an area of law they are unfamiliar with.

Interviewees came from a range of backgrounds and have received different amounts and types of IL training. Generally, they have participated in one-off sessions at university, which focused on specific legal databases, and most have not taken part in professional training such as the sessions offered by their Inn of Court. The difference between past and current research needs and competencies means new barristers feel their academic IL training was not particularly useful. For professional IL challenges, they found practice more important than formal training, highlighting that their difficulties are often centred around their lack of experience. Although they feel training has not prepared them for work, they do not necessarily expect it to do so, as they are acutely aware of the limitations of training and the importance of practice in terms of developing professional competencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

One of the major implications of this work is that IL training needs to involve more than showing how legal research is done and focus on authentic practice, which can be enabled through situated learning for example, shown to be highly effective for IL training (Donaldson et al., 2015). This means learning in a situation similar to the one in which newly constructed knowledge will be applied. Although authentic professional participation is difficult to reproduce in educational contexts, one way of encouraging situated learning could be through redeveloping research assignments to reflect professional practice.

Since new barristers appear to find self-led practice more useful than training, Inn librarians could offer new barristers the opportunity to work through real professional research questions in their own time. Perhaps set by well-known barristers, new barristers' answers could then be checked by the barristers who set the tasks and

new barristers could have the option of discussing their difficulties with a librarian who can offer individual training as a result. Furthermore, academic legal IL training needs to focus on lawyers' transition from student to professional as well as equipping students with the competencies to excel at university. As law degree providers are keen to maintain and ensure the relevance of the degrees on offer, they focus on the transition period specifically when students are at the vocational stage of their education by rethinking (IL) modules and assignments. Finally, academic and special law libraries could collaborate to host events which scaffold new barristers' transition. This connection between academia and the workplace, facilitated by librarians, could ensure new barristers always have a personal contact to ask questions and are supported throughout their complex research challenges.

This study highlighted several avenues for future research, including how other legal professionals' transition experiences are shaped by IL, for instance comparing new barristers' IL to that of new solicitors. Additionally, law librarians could study in detail how training can encourage authentic practices. Finally, further research needs to focus on designing a more holistic definition of

legal IL which accommodates both academic and professional IL experiences.

By exploring how new barristers experience the transition from education to the workplace in terms of their IL challenges, in particular the research difficulties they encounter as they start their professional career, we have broadened our understanding of the complexity of new legal professionals' IL experiences and needs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my very great appreciation to my former dissertation supervisor at UCL, Alison Hicks, for her encouragement, invaluable feedback and thought-provoking suggestions while I wrote my dissertation and ever since. Her continuous support meant I very much enjoyed researching workplace information literacy. I would also like to thank Holger Aman, a law librarian, who gave me the necessary push in the right direction in terms of dissertation topic. Finally, I would like to thank everyone who participated as interviewees. This study would not have been possible without the right participants and I appreciate them sharing their experiences with me.

References

- Abel, R. (2015) "'You never want a serious crisis to go to waste.'" Reflections on the Reform of Legal Education in the US, UK, and Australia', *International Journal of the Legal Profession*, 22(1), pp. 1–23.
- Abram, S. (2013) 'Workplace Information Literacy: It's Different' in Hepworth, M. and Walton, G. (eds) *Developing People's Information Capabilities: Fostering Information Literacy In Educational, Workplace and Community Contexts*. Bingley: Emerald, pp. 205–220.
- American Association of Law Libraries, 'AALL Legal Research Competencies and Standards for Law Student Information Literacy' (AALL, July 2012) <<https://www.aallnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Law-Student-Info-Literacy-and-Research-Standards-July-2012.pdf>> accessed 15 January 2019.
- Andretta, S. (2001) 'Legal Information Literacy: A Pilot Study', *New Library World*, 102(7/8), pp. 255–64.
- Association of College and Research Libraries, 'Presidential Committee on Information Literacy - Final Report.' (*American Libraries Association*, 1989) <<http://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/whitepapers/presidential>> accessed 15 January 2019.
- Bar Standards Board, 'Pupillage' (*Bar Standards Board*, 2017) <<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister/current-requirements/pupillage/>> accessed 15 January 2019.
- Bar Standards Board, 'Professional Statement for Barristers Incorporating the Threshold Standard and Competences' (*Bar Standards Board*, September 2016) <https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/media/1787559/bsb_professional_statement_and_competences_2016.pdf> accessed 15 January 2019.
- Bar Standards Board, 'Future Bar Training' (*Bar Standards Board*, 2019) <<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister/future-requirements/>> accessed 15 January 2019.
- Bates, D. (2013) 'Are 'Digital Natives' Equipped to Conquer the Legal Landscape?', *Legal Information Management*, 13(3), pp. 172–8.
- Batts, S. (2007) 'Resources Loved, Resources Shunned: LPC and BVC Students at the Inns of Court School of Law and their Library Use', *Legal Information Management*, 7(4), pp. 284–9.
- Bell, J. (2005) 'Legal Education' in Tushnet, M. and Cane, P. (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Legal Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Billett, S. (1995) 'Workplace Learning: Its Potential and Limitations', *Education & Training*, 37 (5), pp. 20–7.
- Bird, R. (2011) 'Legal Information Literacy' in Danner, R. and Winterton, J. (eds) *The IALL International Handbook of Legal Information Management*. Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 115–30.
- Bird, R. (2013) 'Trends in Legal Education and the Legal Profession: Comparative Perspectives', *Legal Information Management*, 13 (3), pp. 162–71.
- British and Irish Association of Law Librarians, 'BIALL Legal Information Literacy Statement' (BIALL, 2012) <<https://biall.org.uk/careers/biall-legal-information-literacy-statement/>> accessed 15 January 2019.

- Choolhun, N. (2009) 'Google: To Use, or Not to Use. What is the Question?', *Legal Information Management*, 9(3), pp. 168–72.
- Choolhun, N. 'Do Lawyers Need to be Scholars?' (BIALL, 2011) <<https://bially.org.uk/do-lawyers-need-to-be-scholars/>> accessed 15 January 2019.
- Choolhun, N. and Bird, R. (2012) 'British and Irish Association of Law Librarians (BIALL) Legal Information Literacy Statement', *Journal of Information Literacy*, 6(2), pp. 132–4.
- Coles, A. and Rickeard, S. (2010) 'Creating a Library Induction Programme for Trainees', *Legal Information Management*, 10(2), pp. 144–7.
- Coonan, E. et al. 'CILIP Definition of Information Literacy 2018.' (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals Information Literacy Group, April 2018) <<https://archive.cilip.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/2018-04/ildefinitioncilip2018.pdf>> accessed 15 January 2018.
- Crawford, J. (2013) 'The Challenge of the Work Environment' in Crawford, J. and Irving, C. (eds) *Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning: Policy Issues, the Workplace, Health and Public Libraries*. Oxford: Chandos, pp. 89–120.
- Dagilyte, E. and Coe, P. (2014) 'Professionalism in Higher Education: Important not only for Lawyers', *The Law Teacher*, 48(1), pp. 33–50.
- Davies, J. and Jackson, C. (2005) 'Information Literacy in the Law Curriculum: Experiences from Cardiff', *The Law Teacher*, 39(2), pp. 150–60.
- Davies, L. (2017) 'Law PORT: An Online Training Initiative to Improve the Legal Information Skills of Postgraduate Researchers', *Legal Information Management*, 17(3), pp. 162–70.
- Desai, SP. (2014) 'Law School Firms and Incubators and the Role of the Academic Law Library', *Legal Reference Services Quarterly*, 33(1), pp. 69–98.
- Dey, I. (1993) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A User-Friendly Guide for Social Scientists*. London: Routledge.
- Donaldson, A. and Ferris, G. (2015) 'Collaborating and Co-operating to Make the Connection: How Law Librarians and Academics Can Work Together to Develop Communities of Legal Practice', *Legal Information Management*, 15(4), pp. 224–33.
- Fenwick, T. (2013) 'Understanding Transitions in Professional Practice and Learning', *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 25(6), pp. 352–67.
- Fishleigh, J. (2013) 'Turning Theory into Practice: Fee Earner Training Using the BIALL Legal Research 5 Stage Model', *Legal Information Management*, 13(2), pp. 124–6.
- Forster, M. (2017) 'New Concepts, New Perspectives?' in Forster, M. (ed) *Information Literacy in the Workplace*. London: Facet, pp. 1–9.
- Gow, E. (2013) 'Exploring User Training Needs at Middle Temple Law Library', *Legal Information Management*, 13(2), pp. 80–93.
- Haines, M. (2010) 'Legal Research Training: Moving the Bar', *Legal Information Management*, 10(2), pp. 86–9.
- Head, A. 'Staying Smart: How Today's Graduates Continue to Learn Once They Complete College.' (The University of Washington Information School, 2016) <http://www.projectinfolit.org/uploads/2/7/5/4/27541717/staying_smart_pil_1_5_2016b_fullreport.pdf> accessed 15 January 2019.
- Hunter, I. (2013) 'Information Literacy and the Google Generation: Teaching Research Skills to Sixth-Formers', *Legal Information Management*, 13(2), pp. 107–11.
- Inskip, C. 'Information Literacy is for Life, not just for a Good Degree: A Literature Review' (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, 2014) <<http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1448073/>> accessed 15 January 2019.
- Kim-Prieto, D. (2011) 'The Road Not Yet Taken: How Law Student Information Literacy Standards Address Identified Issues in Legal Research Education and Training', *Law Library Journal*, 103(4), pp. 605–30.
- Kim-Prieto, D. and Kahvecioglu, M. (2014) 'Three Faces of Information Literacy in Legal Studies: Research Instruction and Law Student Information Literacy Standards in the American Common Law, British Common Law, and Turkish Civilian Legal Traditions', *International Journal of Legal Information*, 42(2), pp. 293–302.
- Knott, C. (2009) 'On Teaching Advanced Legal Research', *Legal Reference Services Quarterly*, 28(1–2), pp. 101–31.
- Kuhlthau, C. and Tama, S. (2001) 'Information Search Process of Lawyers: A Call for 'Just for Me' Information Services', *Journal of Documentation*, 57(1), pp. 25–43.
- Law Society & General Council of the Bar, 'Joint statement on the academic stage of training.' (Law Society & General Council of the Bar, 2002) <<https://www.sra.org.uk/students/academic-stage-joint-statement-bsb-law-society.page>> accessed 15 January 2019.
- Legal Education and Training Review, 'Setting Standards the Future of Legal Services Education and Training Regulation in England and Wales.' (June 2013) <<http://www.lettr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/LETR-Report.pdf>> accessed 15 January 2019.
- Library Sub-Committee of the Society of Legal Scholars. (2010) 'A Library for the Modern Law School: A Statement of Standards for University Law Library Provision in the UK – 2009 revision prepared by the Libraries Sub-Committee of the Society of Legal Scholars', *Legal Studies*, 30 (3), pp. 442–93.
- Lloyd, A. (2010) *Information Literacy Landscapes: Information Literacy in Education, Workplace and Everyday Contexts*. Oxford: Chandos.
- Lloyd, A. (2017) 'Learning Within for Beyond: Exploring a Workplace Information Literacy Design' in Forster, M. (ed) *Information Literacy in the Workplace*. London: Facet, pp. 97–112.

- Mawson, M. (2010) "What do you mean, Look it up in the library? Isn't it on the internet?", *Legal Information Management*, 10 (2), pp. 94–7.
- McClure, D. (2013) 'Joining the Conversation: Law Library Research Assistant Programs and Current Criticisms of Legal Education', *Legal Reference Services Quarterly*, 32(4), pp. 274–93.
- Mishkin, S. (2017) 'How Can Law Librarians Most Effectively Provide Legal Research Training?', *Legal Information Management*, 17 (1), pp. 34–68.
- Pickard, A. (2013) *Research Methods in Information*. London: Facet.
- Pope, A. (2009) 'Integrating Legal Research Skills into the Curriculum and into Life', *Legal Information Management*, 9(4), pp. 246–9.
- Pope, A., Puttick, K. and Walton, G. (2010) 'The Enquiring Minds Project at Staffordshire University: Integrating Information Literacy into the Curriculum and Assessment', *Legal Information Management*, 10(2), pp. 104–8.
- Poydras, PE. (2013) 'Developing Legal Information Literate Law Students: "That Dog Will Hunt"', *Legal Reference Services Quarterly*, 32(3), pp. 183–201.
- Quality Assurance Agency, 'Subject Benchmark Statement UK Law' (July 2015) <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/subject-benchmark-statements/sbs-law-15.pdf?sfvrsn=ff99f781_8> accessed 15 January 2019.
- Shenton, A. (2004) 'Strategies for Ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research Projects', *Education for Information*, 22(2), pp. 63–75.
- Soanes, M. (2010) 'The Legal Questing Beast: Vocational Students' Research Strategies, Motivations and Emotions', *The Law Teacher*, 44(2), pp. 149–68.
- Stilwell, C. et al., 'Perspectives on Legal Education and the Role of Information Literacy in Improving Qualitative Legal Practice' in Hepworth, M. and Walton, G. (eds) *Developing People's Information Capabilities: Fostering Information Literacy in Educational, Workplace and Community Contexts*. Bingley: Emerald, pp. 151–66.
- Travis, T. (2011) 'From the Classroom to the Boardroom: The Impact of Information Literacy Instruction on Workplace Research Skills', *Education Libraries*, 34(2), pp. 19–31.
- Wakefield, N. (2007) 'Bridging the Gap: The Information Skills Training Partnership at Manchester Metropolitan University', *Legal Information Management*, 7(1), pp. 63–70.
- Wildemuth, B. (2008) 'Interviews and Focus Groups' in Manuel, K. and Beck, S. (eds) *Practical Research Methods for Librarians and Information Professionals*. New York: Neal-Schuman, pp. 79–107.
- Woellhaf, A. (2017) 'Legal Research Training at Middle Temple Library', *Legal Information Management*, 17(3), pp. 155–62.
- Zurkowski, PG. (1974) *The Information Service Environment: Relationships and Priorities*. Washington, DC: National Commission on Libraries and Information Science.

Biography

Anne Binsfeld is an assistant librarian at the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn. She has an MA in Library and Information Studies from UCL and has previously worked in research libraries. Before becoming a librarian, she studied English literature and worked as an English teacher in a secondary school in Luxembourg.