Case Study A: Breaking Barriers: CPD for the 21st Century Academic Librarian

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Professional Identity Group & Context

HECA (http://www.heca.ie/) is the Higher Education Colleges Association. Membership of the Association comprises private higher education colleges in Ireland. The HECA librarian Professional Development Framework (PDF) pilot group comprised:

- Dublin Business School: Marie O' Neill, Head Librarian; Jane Buggle, Deputy Librarian and Institutional Learner Supports Coordinator; David Hughes, Systems Librarian and Trevor Haugh Assistant Librarian-Reader Services.
- Griffith College: Robert McKenna, Librarian; Dimphne Ní Bhraonáin, Deputy Librarian
- National College of Ireland: Mary Buckley, Librarian
- Hibernia College: Audrey Geraghty, Librarian
- CCT College, Dublin: Justin Smyth, Librarian
- IBAT: Louise Tobin, Librarian

HECA Colleges offer programmes at all levels of the National Framework for Qualifications up to and including level 10 across a broad remit of academic programmes including business, arts, law, psychotherapy, counselling, computing, education and more.

The HECA Librarian group comprised library managers as well as librarians working in a variety of specialisms such as systems and reader services. It is also important to note that some librarians in the group had responsibilities that extended outside of their library role. Marie O' Neill and David Hughes lecture on the MSc in Information and Library Management at Dublin Business School; Robert McKenna lectures on the MA in Education and Training at Griffith College and Jane Buggle has responsibility for learner supports institutionally at Dublin Business School. Audrey Geraghty is Librarian at an online learning academic institution.

The National Forum outlines the attributes of the PDF as follows:

> The PD framework is flexible, inclusive and can be interpreted and adapted for: academic staff across disciplines; educational/learning technologists; educational/academic developers; research staff; library staff; support staff and students who teach others e.g., graduate teaching assistants and those who engage in peer assisted learning. (National Forum, 2016, p.1)

The premise behind the librarian PDF pilot therefore was to see how flexible the Framework is in relation to capturing the professional development activity of non-teaching staff that have educational components to their roles such as librarians.

Approach taken by professional identity group to support the implementation of the PDF

Main needs of the group

There were three main needs of this particular pilot group.

1. Training on the National Forum's Professional Development Framework
2. Training on using WordPress as an e-Portfolio and of the mapping and tracking of pilot members' PD activity to the PDF.
3. Training on reflective practice

The PDF pilot commenced with a training session that was delivered by Roisin Donnelly and Anne Mangan of the National Forum at Dublin Business School. Anne Mangan was expert mentor to the HECA librarian pilot group. The training session covered the National Forum's Professional Development Framework as outlined in the National Forum report: National Professional Development Framework for all Staff Who Teach in Higher Education, which was published in 2016. Roisin and Anne focused on the categories and domains of the PDF in particular.

Under the guidance of the Pilot's expert mentor Anne Mangan, the next training session was a brainstorming one on the educational role of librarians which was identified as being extensive. HECA librarians identified their educational roles to encompass inductions, the handling of student and faculty queries, the teaching of information and digital literacy, programmatic review and validation and more. Subsequent training sessions focused on using WordPress as an e-Portfolio and on reflective practice. A concluding session with all pilot group members reflected on the pilot; the experiences of pilot members as well as pilot outcomes.

Robert McKenna, Librarian Griffith College, training HECA Librarians on WordPress

Motivation of participants

The motivation of participants was high. The tradition of librarians networking amongst each other within the private higher education sector is a more recent phenomenon compared to the university sector. The opportunity to engage in the pilot strengthened the professional bonds amongst HECA Librarians. The pilot participants were also motivated by the opportunity to engage with National Forum personnel as well as personnel from across the higher education sector. The opportunity to capture and reflect upon PD activity in the context of the PDF was also highly motivating.

Support sessions

The support sessions were negotiated around training needs as participants progressed through the pilot. Initial training focused on the PDF itself and then on using WordPress as an e-Portfolio, then on reflective practice etc.

The pilot duration was six months. Training sessions averaged out at approximately one per month.

How/whether support changed over the duration of the pilot study

The support changed as participants progressed through the pilot. Initially participants needed support understanding the PDF (categories and domains etc.). Some participants struggled with setting up an e-Portfolio using WordPress and required additional technical support. The HECA Librarians became mentors to some faculty on other PDF pilot groups, offering training on the use of WordPress as an e-portfolio at the request of the pilot's expert mentor Anne Mangan.

HECA Librarians reflecting on the pilot process and outcomes. Session facilitated by Marie O' Neill, Pilot Coordinator

Preferred facilitation style

My preferred training style was to allow groups members with particular skill sets and knowledge bases to lead training sessions. Louise Tobin, formerly the Librarian at IBAT led WordPress training sessions. Robert McKenna, Librarian Griffith College gave training sessions on both WordPress and reflective practice. During the pilot Robert and Audrey, Librarian at Hibernia, attended a workshop given by Jenny Moon on reflective practice, which was organised by DIT Library. Audrey relayed back to the group an extremely helpful synopsis of this training session.

Participants' experience of the process

The participants were highly motivated about the pilot. Librarians are prolific in relation to their professional development activity so the group welcomed the opportunity to record and reflect upon this PD activity in a consistent and transparent manner.

Online media/tools used to support the group

WordPress was adopted as the online tool for creating e-Portfolios. Robert McKenna, Librarian Griffith College also created a YouTube video on how to use WordPress in this manner, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDv4kWd7u6U

Key enablers to the approach

The support of the National Forum (the online platform, expert mentor etc.) was extremely helpful. The group dynamic of the HECA Librarian group was pivotal. Group members played to their strengths. Some participants were good at project management; others were strong technically; others had strong knowledge bases on reflective practice, e-portfolios etc; others were strong in relation to strategic ideas about what to do after the pilot ended. The pilot's expert mentor and coordinator created an environment in which each participant could play to their strengths.

Key challenges to the approach

Challenges around the approach involved logistics and time. Some HECA Librarians are solo librarians within their institutions. This presented challenges in terms of attendance at training sessions. The HECA librarians worked together to facilitate all members of the group and succeeded in this regard.

Suggestions for others embarking on supporting and/or undertaking the PDF

Avail of support from higher education personnel that have completed a PDF pilot. The HECA Librarians are currently liaising with DIT, DKIT and other libraries as they embark on a pilot of the PDF to share knowledge about their pilot experiences. Additionally the report the National Professional Development Framework for all Staff Who Teach in Higher Education (2016) which outlines the attributes of the Framework is a superb document from which to draw key information and guidance.

Perceived impact of PDF

The PDF process allowed HECA Librarians to capture, highlight and reflect upon their PD activity in a consistent, transparent and meaningful manner. Additional benefits were the networking opportunities that the pilot presented for HECA Librarians within their own professional group and within the wider higher education sector. HECA Librarians also felt that their participation within the pilot raised the visibility of the library service and of their roles as librarians within their respective institutions. Another benefit of the pilot was HECA Librarians' engagement with reflective practice in a more robust and systematic manner using the DIEP approach.

Plans for continuing to support staff with the PDF

Mary Buckley, Librarian National College of Ireland proposed that the HECA Librarians set up a communal e-portfolio using WordPress to record the PD activity of all library staff members within private college libraries going forward. At DBS, the Library will be running classes for all College personnel on how to use WordPress as an e-Portfolio and to map PD activity to the National Forum's PD Framework.

Portfolios from the HECA Librarian Pilot with some screenshots of interfaces and entries

Dimphne Ní Bhraonáin, Deputy Librarian, Griffith College: https://dimphneblog.wordpress.com/

Am I finished?

The project has ended and I am reflecting, again! It has been slightly daunting, challenging, rewarding and interesting, though not all at the same time!

Top 10 things I have learned:

1. We all approach teaching, learning and reflecting differently and that is totally fine.
2. There is no right and wrong here, only a chance to develop and grow.
3. Librarians are an excellent peer group to work with (Thank you all, you know who you are).
4. Making time for CPD is tricky but worthwhile.
5. Reflection is a useful exercise but it is not for everyone.
6. Technology is a great enabler.
7. Start CPD considering the self.
8. Start with the student, when teaching.
9. Do not be afraid.
10. Invest in yourself!

Audrey Geraghty, Librarian, Hibernia College https://hclibpd.wordpress.com/

HECA CONFERENCE 2017- DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS: THE URGENT AGENDA OF HE PLACES

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HECA | Higher Education Colleges Association

Conference 2017

Demographic Trends: The Urgent Agenda of HE Access   **Keynote Speaker: Peter Cassells**

Griffith College Dublin Thursday 27th April 2017

The 2017 HECA Conference was held in Griffith College on 27th April 2017. Peter Cassells set the scene for the day with an introduction to the key findings of his report, Investing in National Ambition: A Strategy for Funding Higher Education (Report of the Expert Group for Future Funding for Higher Education). There is widespread agreement that the numbers of students attending third level will surge over the next ten years. Dr Dermot Douglas speculated that the numbers attending HECA Colleges will rise from 15,000 to 29,000 in the coming decade. This presents great opportunities and also significant challenges. Dr Padraig Walsh, CEO of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) gave a fairly low level introduction to the operations of the QQI. He did, however, highlight the upcoming Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill which intends to put the QQI into a more central role to monitor and oversee standards across the sector.

Jane Buggle, Deputy Librarian, DBS https://hecapdjbuggle.wordpress.com/

Other HECA Librarian e-Portfolios

David Hughes, Systems Librarian, Dublin Business School
https://pdfpilot.wordpress.com/

Trevor Haugh, Assistant Librarian, Reader Services
https://heacpd.wordpress.com/blog/

Mary Buckley, Librarian, National College of Ireland
https://marybuckleyie.wordpress.com/

Justin Smyth, Librarian, CCT College, Dublin
https://hecapdjds.wordpress.com/

Louise Tobin, Former Librarian, IBAT
https://hecacpdltobin.wordpress.com/

Marie O' Neill, Librarian, Dublin Business School
https://hecapdmon.wordpress.com/about/

Robert McKenna, Librarian, Griffith College
https://hecapd1.wordpress.com/

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