

Delivering information and digital literacy teaching at the University of Bristol

The **University of Bristol Library Service** delivers its information literacy teaching through a variety of approaches, including face-to-face workshops, online tutorials and blended learning. This document spotlights some examples.

Collaborative teaching

Running a combined information literacy/study skills seminar to first year English Literature and Community Engagement students

Simon Gamble (Head of Study Skills); Damien McManus (Subject Librarian)

The issue

Some students who enrol on the English Literature and Community Engagement (ELCE) programme find locating and working with information for their study especially taxing. This can be attributable to a lengthy absence from education and perceived lack of skills in using a large academic library. Students enrolled on the degree will typically have jobs and/or other responsibilities which mean that they are unable to come to the Library during core hours. It was decided that a joint information literacy and study skills session was needed to meet the requirements of this cohort.

What we did

We met with Helen Thomas-Hughes (Senior Teaching Associate in Community Engagement) and Dr Tim Worth (Study Skills Coordinator) to agree the outline of a three-hour session for first year ELCE students. The session was split equally between a Library induction and study skills seminar, though Simon and Damien were in the room for its duration.

What happened

This informal, relaxed session focused on enabling students to discover relevant resources using Library Search, and to evaluate those findings. The emphasis was on student participation, through working individually or in pairs, and wider group discussion. Having identified useful resources on Library Search and located the physical items in the Library, students were then asked to use one of the found resources to make notes and write a short paragraph using the information from it. This allowed them to practice resource discovery, note taking, paraphrasing and referencing skills. The exercise opened a debate around use of academic resources to create an argument and find a stance. The conversation moved back and forth between information literacy skills, writing skills and academic value. The clear advantage of this co-taught approach was that the linking and application of all these skills was more evident to the learners as a result.



Teaching how to use primary sources

Delivering a library research skills lecture at the point of need

Lucy Langley-Palmer (Subject Librarian for Film & TV, Music and Theatre)

The issue

Second year Theatre students had an assignment coming up that required them to use historical primary sources with an emphasis on performance. The plethora of resources we have access to through the Library can make it difficult to know where to begin, and this historical approach was new to the students.

What we did

The Subject Librarian for Theatre met with the unit director to discuss the students' upcoming assignment and their needs. Together they selected the resources that would be most appropriate to explore with the students, to help them prepare for their assignments.

What happened

The Subject Librarian delivered a face-to-face lecture as a guest lecturer in one of the unit's regular lecture slots, covering the chosen resources and associated research skills. This embedded approach and the fact that the lecture was strongly aligned to the upcoming assignment meant that the students were very engaged and found it timely and relevant. The Subject Librarian also offered an optional session on referencing and 1:1 follow up sessions for more in-depth help on specific resources, and the take up was high. Students commented that they felt much more confident after these sessions, and they would know where to seek more help from the Library if they needed it in the future.

Helping humanities students develop basic library and research skills

Tim Riley (Subject Librarian for History, History of Art, Classics & Ancient History)

The issue

Most humanities students receive an introductory session with their Subject Librarian early in the first year of their course. However, not all students are able to attend these sessions, and those that do can't always recall what they learned when they need to apply it practically later on. In addition, the nature of these short single sessions means that it's not possible to cover everything that students may need to know.

What we did

We created a small suite of short online tutorials introducing students to basic library skills such as locating print materials, and more advanced skills like finding primary source material via online databases and archives. These were framed around learning outcomes based on key library and research skills and common difficulties which students report when using library resources.

What happened

We created outline tutorials which were tailored by Subject Librarians to suit individual disciplines. These were embedded in departmental areas on Blackboard so that students could access them whenever they needed to. Students can work through the tutorials at their own pace, either in sequence as a complete introduction to using the Library, or on an individual one-off basis to focus on specific library-related skills as the need arises. The tutorials were promoted in Library introductory sessions and again at key points in the academic year.

The tutorials have proved a valuable resource to signpost individuals or groups of students to for self-directed learning and helping them to overcome barriers to using the Library effectively.

Embedded classroom teaching

Embedding information literacy skills development in the Management BSc programme

Sarah Brain (Subject Librarian for Economics, Finance and Management)

The issue

A new unit was introduced into the BSc Management programme, the aim of which was to encourage students' academic skills development. Given that this is a skills-led unit, there was an opportunity for the library to become embedded in the delivery of some of the learning outcomes.

What we did

The unit director and subject librarian worked together to ensure that the overall planning for the unit included a strong information literacy skills development element. This was important for students as it enabled them to complete their final assignment, which was a literature review informed by the systematic review method. Students were timetabled with five 2-hour tutorials every two weeks during the unit, and the library session took place during the second tutorial.

What happened

The tutorial was co-taught with an academic member of staff. Students had been required to carry out a search for literature in preparation. They discussed the process in small groups and fed back during the first part of the tutorial. As part of the feedback, both the academic and librarian were able to provide responses to questions and issues. The librarian then showed students how to access the Management databases and effective search techniques. The remainder of the workshop was dedicated to students putting into practice these skills. Comments from students in a subsequent survey indicated that they valued the opportunity to develop higher level searching skills in a tutorial setting.

Building Library training into the curriculum to support evidence-based health care

Emma Place (Subject Librarian for Dentistry and Veterinary Science)

The issue

The Bristol Vet and Dental Schools run courses accredited by professional bodies, which now require that graduates leave with skills in evidence-based health care. Library training has been formally built into the curricula for these schools, with the Subject Librarian working closely with academic staff to develop learning objectives, teaching sessions and assessments to help students to develop the skills that they need.

What we did

A new theme in "Evidence-based dentistry" is being built in to the new Dental Surgery (BDS) curriculum, which includes Library training in years 1 to 4 of the course, culminating in an assessment where students write an evidence summary. Similarly, in the latest Veterinary Science (BVSc) curriculum, a new vertical theme in "Evidence-based veterinary medicine" has been developed across 4 years of the course. We also teach these skills on postgraduate courses.

A collaborative approach is being used, where academics lead the courses, and the Subject Librarian delivers training in literature searching to tie in with specific assignments. Early in the course students learn how to run simple searches on Library search tools but this builds over the years to advanced searching of bibliographic databases, reference management and reporting a search strategy using recognised standards.

What happened

The Bristol Vet School has led a project to develop an online tutorial on Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine ([EBVM Learning](#)), with input from Library staff, which is being used internationally to train students. More than 20 of our students have gone on to publish evidence summaries in professional journals. The Dental School has seen the first cohort of students write their evidence summaries, and will include Library training in other years of the course as the new curriculum is developed. Having Library training formally embedded in the curriculum has seen great benefits in terms of student engagement in the timetabled sessions and in being able to evaluate, via exam questions and assignments, whether students are acquiring the information literacy that they need.