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CHAPTER 5

MAXIMISING VALUE, ENHANCING LEARNING: BOUTIQUE TEACHING AND TRAINING *CHRIS POWIS*

INTRODUCTION: TEACHING IN LIBRARIES

Much has been written about the role of librarians as teachers and it is not the intention of this chapter to repeat those discussions and rehearse the same arguments. That part of the professional identity of a librarian is a teacher, trainer or, at least, a facilitator of learning is widely established. Although this is particularly manifested in subject librarians, who work alongside academic colleagues to integrate information skills or digital literacy within academic disciplines, it applies to librarians working in all sectors. It is, however, pertinent to examine what is meant by teaching and training in a library context before examining how the boutique model can be applied to this activity.

The image of teaching that most will identify with is that of a teacher standing in front of a room of learners. This is still certainly a common scenario for library and information professionals as it is relatively cost effective in terms of the numbers that can be taught and matches the expectations and experience of learners and of those arranging for the teaching. It is also a comforting model for librarians who can prepare for and deliver teaching within a framework that they understand and can usually control. Librarians, especially those in schools, colleges and universities, can therefore be found delivering lectures, workshops and seminars in much the same way as their academic colleagues. These methods are also the default mode of delivery used by librarians in all sectors for staff development.

But this is not the only way in which librarians can or should deliver their teaching or training and it is absolutely not the only, or indeed most common, way that learning will take place. Squires (1994: 14) defines learning as being an interaction with people, information, events and experiences 'including but not confined to teaching/training.' This definition is key to understanding the role of librarians in teaching and learning. Interactions with information happen all the time in libraries – opening a book, clicking on a web page or even reading a poster can be part of a learning experience. Learning can take place over an information

desk or through a conversation with a library user. Peer learning is ubiquitous in libraries as people with common interests share knowledge in formal or informal settings, often without the intervention of a librarian but within an environment designed and managed by library staff. Librarians are still working as teachers or trainers when designing online learning activities or even their departmental or service web pages. They are teaching or training when they write leaflets or guides, when they tour people around or create self-guided tours, workbooks or trails. The common factor in all of these activities is that they require the librarian to understand learning and their learners. This applies whether or not the people they work with would identify themselves as learners.

This is where the boutique model has a clear resonance to teaching and learning in libraries. At the heart of the model lies a desire to deliver services and experiences that meet individual customer, or here learner, expectations, needs and desires. Whatever the context of the learning, and whatever the delivery method, the learner must be at the heart of the learning experience. Designing the teaching, training and learning around the learner will mean a more satisfying and fulfilling experience for both learner and teacher/librarian, but it can also mean a loss, real or perceived, of control in the teacher–learner relationship. It will certainly mean a questioning of delivery methods and perhaps a shift in emphasis away from classroom delivery to more learning experiences where the focus of teaching and learning is not a formal classroom situation but rather interaction with carefully designed learning environments (physical and virtual) accessing support as needed.

This may require a radical shift in our understanding of what makes an effective learning opportunity. Sugata Mitra's 'Hole in the Wall' experiment in 'Minimally Invasive Education' is a great, and sobering, example for those librarians working on 'how to' guides, planning lectures or struggling to run voluntary workshops. It offers a completely different paradigm of how to create effective learning opportunities. In 1999 a computer was placed in a kiosk created within a wall in a slum at Delhi and children were allowed to use it freely. The 'Hole in the Wall' (HIW) experiment aimed at proving that young people could be taught by computers very easily without any formal training. The experiment has since been repeated in other parts of India and in other countries. This work demonstrated that groups of children, irrespective of who or where they are, can learn to use computers and the internet on their own using public computers in open spaces such as roads and playgrounds. Even more powerfully, the children not only worked out how to use it themselves but shared that knowledge without intervention from a teacher or trainer (Hole-in-the-Wall Education Ltd 2011).

The mass inductions and endlessly repeated largely generic information skills workshops that have characterised much of the further and higher education teaching landscape for librarians over the last 30 years are good examples of a 'fast food' style of delivery – the antithesis of boutique. The growth in student numbers

over the same period, and the concurrent success of librarians in convincing their academic colleagues of the importance of information skills, has meant that sheer economies of scale have driven many librarians to delivery methods that seem to compromise the personalised and highly tailored offerings of a boutique approach. However, a closer look at the characteristics of the components of the model shows a more nuanced and encouraging picture.

A LEARNER FOCUS

Customer or learner focus is central to the idea of the boutique library. This is achieved through understanding the learner needs and targeting the teaching and training, and the services that back up the teaching, to those needs. The method of delivery is not as important as the ethos of the service. Lectures and workshops can be learner focused if librarians take time to work with the students and other parties to make examples and case studies relevant. Strategies to enhance liaison with stakeholders will be covered in more detail later in the chapter, but it is important to stress that, however good a teaching session, however well prepared and delivered, however targeted and pertinent and however sound the learning materials are, it will all fail the learner-focused test if the services offered elsewhere in the library (virtual or actual) are not also designed with the learner in mind. These should include appropriate and accessible learning resources, well-designed websites, help pages and other guide material, well-trained staff on help points or staffing virtual services, and well-laid-out and intuitive environments. These will provide the tools for the learners to actually put into practice the skills learnt during the teaching and training.

Highly tailored teaching does not need to be confined to one-to-one engagements with learners although these should be a part of any library's service offering. By using topics gleaned from the learners during demonstrations or a Q&A session, and by building in time during workshops for the learners to explore using their own examples, a generic teaching session on, for example, evaluating information can seem to be tailored to the individual's needs. In part this is an illusion, just as a boutique hotel does not really cater exclusively to the individual but offers a suite of things that match what that customer wants from a hotel experience. The tailored teaching session is essentially a generic class with some individualised inputs, but it will allow the user to take from it something memorable and personal to their learning needs.

Tailoring the teaching to an individual learner is also, inevitably, linked to understanding the context within which the learner is working. Librarians are often involved in the teaching of referencing, for example, and although it might be interesting to explore the nature of referencing by looking across different referencing systems it would make little sense to do so with learners

who are only concerned with 'getting it right' using the organisation's or subject's favoured system. Tailoring the teaching to individual learners is probably best achieved through integrating the information skills elements into their wider learning framework – for example, the course, module or subject being followed. Typically, in education this would mean teaching on timetabled slots rather than optional sessions, or team teaching alongside academic colleagues to present a seamless front between subject and information skills. True integration is difficult to achieve and can often be undone through careless branding of the sessions. A boutique experience needs to speak to the individual and the title, and particularly the learning outcomes of any teaching event need to appeal to a particular learning need or desire. A generic session (a drop-in or something titled 'Library Workshop' or similar) will only rarely do this.

INNOVATION IN TEACHING

The marketing efforts of boutique hotels emphasise uniqueness, usually through the quirky or themed decor and service. This is clearly more difficult to achieve when teaching information skills. However, to be properly boutique our teaching needs to offer something fresh to the learner. This means that it does not have to be unique per se but just fresh to their experience of learning and can often be achieved through delivering the unexpected or simply being the first to do something in your institution. This can vary between the completely unexpected, for example the use of music and audience participation during the Cephalonian induction method (Morgan and Davies 2004: 4–8), or may be as simple as a change in seating plan or the use of gaming techniques in an online teaching package. Try introducing competition into your sessions (at Northampton we have used a pub quiz format to teach referencing) or simply vary the 'usual' format of your teaching.

Much of our teaching follows a very safe format of introduction, demonstration, practical and conclusion. As a structure, it is reliable and effective, especially in a one-off teaching session, but it is also a format that learners will probably have experienced before in their education. Thinking about other structures for the session design can make your standard content seem novel and fresh. For example, instead of demonstrating good searching techniques and then letting the learners try them out, why not start with a practical first followed by an analysis of the results? This can start a personalised discussion about how to improve (and assess) the quality of your results. It will inject interest, create opportunities for debate and reflection, and seem different, with content unique to that specific class. It is, of course, based on the classical Socratic method!

Freshness can be injected into your teaching through early adoption of new techniques and/or tools within your organisation. These have included (in the 1990s) use of CD-ROMs and the web, and more recently may comprise Web 2.0

technology, handheld voting devices, integrating multimedia or whatever may be the latest teaching tools. Their use will seem different and innovative, even unique in context, to the user. This does require constant refreshing of your teaching, but remember that is a characteristic of good teachers anyway.

Libraries are often seen by their users as conservative places and in some ways this conservatism is a positive force. Defenders of libraries (for example, Flood 2008) will often cite the need for an oasis of quiet in a busy world as a reason for saving public libraries and there are powerful arguments for retaining core values of librarianship in the age of unfettered and unmediated information via an increasingly commercialised web. However, libraries are also often trendsetters in the application of technology and in understanding how to shape learning opportunities within their parent organisations. So they will usually have been among the first to develop a significant web presence, invest substantially in a huge array of digital resources, use Web 2.0 and multimedia for teaching, introduce social learning spaces and have innovative IT-rich teaching spaces (Northampton's T-Pod, Warwick's Teaching Grid, and so on), and this spirit of adventure and novelty in teaching is very much part of the boutique model.

THE ROLE OF THE SUBJECT LIBRARIAN

The role of the subject librarian is a crucial one in creating and delivering boutique teaching and learning in academic libraries. Most boutique hotels will offer a distinctly 'expert' experience. Staff will be especially knowledgeable about the local area or about the theme of the hotel. Translating this approach into information skills teaching and training requires a profound knowledge of the information landscape in particular subjects and the contexts in which the information will be used. It does not require a deep knowledge of the subject itself as that is the province of the academic, but it needs to go into more depth than a generic grasp of information skills. This is where subject librarians or academic liaison librarians should really make a difference – as long as they are competent and effective – for they should understand not only the structure of knowledge in the subjects they work with, but also have a nuanced understanding of what that means in application for their stakeholders. So, for example, a business librarian should know key information resources for that subject but also understand the comparative value placed on their use within the curriculum at that institution.

This can be challenging for library and information professionals as it means that resource solutions cannot always be purchased 'off-the-peg' to be used until they wear out but need to be selected carefully, customised as appropriate, and reviewed on a regular basis. It means that those involved in working with stakeholders within an organisation need to be proactive in identifying ways of supporting the curriculum and focusing on bringing value into their interactions with learners and faculty.

It is also important that subject librarians, and the rest of the library staff, have autonomy over their teaching. They will need to be able to tailor their delivery methods and content to the needs of each group or even to the level of the individual, to maximise its effectiveness. Centralised and generic approaches can be appealing to managers, ensuring standardisation and achieving value for money through economies of scale. It also increases management control and ensures conformance to standards. Yet from a pedagogic perspective this level of control is deeply suspect since it fails to appreciate the complexity of disciplines, differences in information behaviour, and diversity within organisations. A distributed model of provision means that teaching can be targeted and learner focused as it will draw on what is known about those individuals, subjects and groups.

A high degree of autonomy in the design and delivery of teaching and training will also allow the teachers to react quickly and appropriately to changing circumstances. Teaching is prey to many variables (Squires 1994: 57) and teachers must be able to respond to those variables. Group and individual dynamics, social and organisational settings, and the physical environment may all affect the teaching session and/or the learning. A generic teaching session delivered by librarians who are perhaps divorced from the learner context will be difficult to amend, moderate or refocus properly if the teacher does not have the autonomy to change content and delivery. This requires an understanding of pedagogy and good presentational skills, but it will also work much more effectively if it is combined with the good subject librarian's knowledge of learner and context.

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Most boutique services will place great emphasis on the setting or environment. Hotels will be located in converted historic houses or use decor and space to create a very different environment to the uniformity of the generic chains. They will often stress their convenience for local attractions. Boutique teaching and training should take the same consideration over the environment. As a starting point it is important to consider carefully the design and layout of the learning spaces. Attractive and well-laid-out spaces enhance the quality of learning opportunities. The accommodation you use will shape expectations – whether it seems like a valued and cared-for space, for example, if it is designed to look cutting edge (in the type of furniture used or colours) – and it will shape what you can do in terms of the kind of technology available and the flexibility in layout.

Information skills teaching will usually be done in specialist library training rooms, often an IT laboratory. These are convenient and usually controlled by the library rather than central timetabling or another part of the organisation. This makes for a safe environment in which to teach: one that is controllable and near to other resources. However, it is often not particularly convenient for the learner

who may have to make a special trip into the library for that teaching session alone. When planning a boutique teaching experience the teacher should see to match the environment to both the appropriate delivery model and to the location. Many academic libraries already take the teaching to the student by teaching in their usual classrooms or labs rather than in the library. Integration of online information skills teaching into virtual learning environments (VLEs) (also called learning management systems) means that the teaching goes to the learner rather than expecting the learner to come to the teaching. This reinforces integration with the learning context and gives more opportunity to personalise the experience.

ADDING VALUE, ENHANCING LEARNING

A boutique experience should provide added value to what may be perceived to be a standard service. In a hotel this could be a pillow menu for the beds or a bespoke breakfast in your room rather than a preset buffet. For boutique teaching and training in a library this contribution is more about enhancing the overall learning experience for the institution in a seamless and integrated way. Librarians could already argue that this is achieved through embedded information skills teaching, but it needs to be underpinned by more fundamental customisation. It is unlikely that a student would fail a course if he or she did not have a library session, as reading the books on the reading list (or the key extracts scanned into the VLE, perhaps) and attending the lectures would probably be enough to pass. However, information skills teaching must enhance student learning opportunities, complementing and extending other curriculum opportunities so that learners will develop more effective learning and research habits, locating, reading, evaluating and referencing more and better sources and in other terms adding value to their overall experience of that course.

Added value should also be a theme within the teaching session itself. Personalising the teaching so that the learner can work on his or her own problems within a framework of general information skills will mean that they take more from the session than they would perhaps expect. Pedagogically, by using meaningful problems, the learning is always likely to be more effective. Following up a session with advice on a Twitter feed, Facebook site or blog linked to a specific problem or assessment extends the teaching conversation, creating a golden thread of learning opportunities, and offers support and development without a requirement to attend a follow-up event.

THE TEACHING TEAM

Boutique teaching and training clearly does happen in libraries already. Conveniently located, learner-focused, subject-specific teaching offering added value to the learners is probably the norm across the education sector. However,

it often happens in isolation from other key stakeholders and this integration with the wider learning environment is something that librarians need to address if they are to fully engage with the model. Any teaching and training delivery requires the support of a team of people to be truly effective. Some may only be involved in the planning stage, others only if things go wrong, but our working relationships with them are critical to the success of the teaching.

When planning for teaching the teacher should identify all those needed to make it succeed and establish a teaching team. This is meant in a loose sense as the collaborators may not need to meet as such, or even interact with anyone other than the teacher, but an understanding of the different roles and expectations of those involved is important. If it is part of a wider learning programme then the other teachers or trainers should be included to help in the formulation of the learning outcomes and, critically, in providing and understanding learner needs and expectations. Without the latter it will be difficult to provide a boutique, learner-focused experience.

IT or media support is probably required for most information skills teaching, from the initial setting up and configuration of the equipment and for troubleshooting. This relationship will not be required every time, but if the IT or media people do not see themselves as having a stake in the teaching then it could mean delay and confusion for the teacher and learner when things do go wrong.

Learners, too, should be viewed as part of the teaching team, for their input to the teacher–learner relationship is crucial to its success. The best teaching cannot be one way and the learner too must see that he or she has a stake in it. Effective teaching and learning can only happen through mutual consent. Learning is not a simple transaction involving one person telling another something. The learner needs to process that learning and place it into his or her own context. This requires active engagement rather than passive reception in order to turn information into knowledge.

At the heart of all of these relationships lies mutual respect. The academics or other teachers need to acknowledge the professionalism of the librarians in their teaching role. The IT and media technicians need to appreciate the librarian's knowledge of technical applications and especially of how learners interact with computers. Learners need to value the knowledge and authority of librarians in a teaching context. Librarians need to take heed of all of their partners and to work on their relationships with them.

We are a collaborative profession and we can usually be relied upon to treat people with respect and courtesy. However, take a moment to think about your relationship with academics or teachers, with IT and media technicians or with learners. Specifically think of one or two adjectives that describe each of those groups

(as groups and not individuals). When this exercise has been run with librarians, words like *arrogant*, *patronising* and *dismissive* are used to describe academics and technicians. *Rude*, *disinterested* and *ignorant* are applied to learners. Positive words are also used, but they tend to be easily outnumbered by the negative. Now think also what words would be used if the position was reversed. *Authoritarian*, *obstructive*, *know-it-all* alongside *caring* and *helpful*, perhaps?

Clearly this is a trite exercise, but it uncovers an uncomfortable truth. It is easy to look for someone to blame when things do not go as well as planned. 'If only they would/had ...' is an easy way to explain away anything from latecomers to failing equipment, from badly suited teaching rooms to firewall problems. It is easy because it is probably true. You may have planned your teaching meticulously, have created elegant and effective online materials, and have worked on innovative and engaging practical exercises only to see them fail due to circumstances outside your control. Events will, of course, sometimes conspire to inconvenience or interfere with the success of your teaching. However, in most cases working with colleagues in the wider teaching team will be able to neutralise or at least mitigate their effects.

Working closely with academic colleagues will help with the marketing of your teaching so that it is attended by learners who know already what the learning outcomes are and how it fits into their wider learning. Group dynamics and individuals who may disrupt or enhance the learning can be identified beforehand. Working with IT and media colleagues, especially on creating and maintaining mutually respectful personal relationships, will be fruitful in ensuring that the technical element of your teaching will run smoothly. Working on your relationships with timetabling or estates departments may help you to secure favourable and appropriate accommodation for your teaching. Treating learners as a vital part of the learning experience, rather than as vessels to be filled with information skills, will enhance the learning experience for them and for you.

The underlying assumptions and stereotypes that are uncovered by the word association exercise mentioned above will not in themselves undermine relationships between the key constituents of the teaching team. But they are indicative of a reluctance to engage fully with the idea of professional colleagues and learners being co-producers of the teaching and learning experience. They are part of the baggage that we all carry based on personal and organisational experience, but they need to be shed if we are to progress with developing reliably learner-focused and effective teaching.

CASE STUDY: FORMING A TEACHING TEAM: CREATING ALIGNED INTERACTIVE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE OPPORTUNITIES (CAIERO) AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON

Librarians and other professional support are usually left out of the planning for university courses. They may be sent a reading list or be invited to a validation event, but the real planning and design of the course will already have taken place by then. At the University of Northampton subject librarians were nominally part of course planning through a requirement for consultation as part of the pre-validation planning, but this was often little more than a tick-box exercise. At module level there was even less consultation, with the sending through of a reading list often the first notification that a new module had been created. The CAIERO planning methodology developed by the School of Health has changed this by bringing academics, learning technologists, librarians and others together for intensive two-day planning workshops to develop new online courses or modules. The first day concentrates on learning and teaching with aims and outcomes developed and questioned and a module/course plan developed. Day two concentrates on resources and finishes with independent colleagues providing feedback. Work then continues outside the CAIERO meetings until the team is convened for a final evaluation before formal validation.

The process involves a range of academic and professional staff plus students working as equals within a teaching team. Participants start with the learning outcomes for the course and then map delivery, resources and support onto them to create a holistic and rounded learning experience that uses, but is not driven by, learning technology. Learning objects are planned, and work on them begun, over the course of the workshop, but existing educational resources are also sourced and the input of the librarians is usually key at this point, not only advising on where to locate such material but also on its potential use and exploitation. Library staff are expected to contribute fully to discussions of pedagogy and the use of learning technology as well as inputting on their 'specialism'. They are full members of the development team.

The result has been highly integrated modules working with specifically designed or sourced resources from the start. Librarians are not surprised by new courses or modules and are able to better support students as they learn. The professional input of all partners is recognised and valued and that mutual respect continues into the actual delivery of the teaching, creating a true teaching team and enhancing the learning experience for the learners.

KNOWING YOUR LEARNERS

Making assumptions about the participants in the learning and teaching experience is not limited to judgments on their personal or professional personalities. It is also dangerous to jump to conclusions about what your learners need and want from information skills teaching. All teaching, but perhaps especially boutique teaching, needs to meet the learners' needs. If assumptions are made about those needs without an audit of some sort then there is a real danger that the level and content will be wrong for those learners. There can be a tendency, often based on bitter experience, to underestimate the level of information skills among your learners. This may lead to a lowering of expectations on your part and consequently pitching your teaching at a very low level. This is a dangerous pitfall. To use a simple example: just because new students may not know the proper terms for 'borrowing' (rather than 'renting' a book) may not be an indicator that they have no desire to engage with its content. They may in fact have an earnest desire to learn, but lack the specialist vocabulary required in their new educational environment. But be careful, for sometimes the opposite is also true in that it can be easy to assume that your learners know more than they do, especially if you have taught them previously. You need to be realistic in your assessment of what learners have taken away from any session. A helpful starting point is to assume that your learners will have taken away one or two key points but that the details and fancy bits of your session may not be remembered. After all, most learners are pragmatists and will remember what will make a difference to their work, rather than the model or best approach. Real-life searching and research is a messy and haphazard process outside the information skills session. An added complication can be working with very diverse groups containing both the experienced and novice in the same set. Unless handled carefully by the teacher, this mixture of abilities can leave both groups dissatisfied as one does not learn anything new, while the other does not have an opportunity to learn the basics.

Lazy preconceptions about learners are common, especially in higher education. Assumptions that nurses are computer-phobic or historians are only interested in paper sources can subtly influence teaching styles and content. Mature learners are often seen as needing more help with IT than younger learners. Planning for the teaching of international students may be influenced by national or ethnic stereotypes that have no basis in fact. These prejudices are profoundly unhelpful and will undermine your teaching.

Auditing the learners is therefore critical to the success of your teaching, and this should apply to individual learners as well as to groups. The logistics of teaching, especially in the sort of service teaching for others in which librarians typically engage, often mean that discovering more about your learners is difficult. Librarians rarely have the opportunity to form the longer-term teaching relationships that can provide the intelligence needed, but this should not mean that an audit of learners

is ignored. Without properly understanding the learners, the boutique approach cannot fully succeed.

Use the experience of colleagues, academics or teachers as well as fellow librarians to identify the level and experience of the group as well as any potential problems with them as a group or with individuals within it. This is not always possible, though, as the learners may be new to your institution or others unwilling to pass judgments on them in an information skills context. If this is the case then the teacher will be forced back on their own resources.

Self assessments undertaken pre-teaching or early on in a session are useful but should not be relied upon to uncover the full extent of an individual's information literacy. Learners will often under- or overestimate their abilities and may also confuse what is meant by information skills or information literacy. Many conflate information skills with the technical ability to manipulate software packages so that understanding how to use Google or a bibliographic database is seen as being highly information literate whereas the key skills of evaluation and manipulation of information are ignored. For pre-teaching assessments to work, the language used needs to be unambiguous and specific. Simple testing at an early point in the teaching is a better gauge of level, but it is probably best done subtly rather than explicitly. Setting the group or individual a task such as finding information on a relevant topic in a particular database and then reporting back to the group under the auspices of evaluating the database will provide a quick assessment of skill levels.

Finding out what the learners are hoping to get from the teaching can also be achieved easily by asking them. Set out your aims and learning outcomes explicitly at the start and ask for comments. Always act on the comments, though, as continuing with redundant or irrelevant outcomes will only disillusion and disengage learners from your teaching. An even simpler strategy is to talk to learners as they arrive for the teaching. This is particularly effective in understanding the subject needs of learners (and you can gauge their technical knowledge too), but it does require the teacher to be flexible in the examples that they then use. Those new to teaching will often prefer to have prearranged examples of information search strategies, but these rarely match the lived experience of the learners and should be avoided if the teaching is to be targeted at the real needs of specific learners. The success of the boutique model relies on meeting the real and perceived needs of the learners, auditing these needs and engaging in an active teaching dialogue with them.

FLEXIBLE APPROACHES TO TEACHING

Flexibility in response to the audit means the teacher must do more than simply avoid prepared examples. The boutique approach requires that the teacher is

capable of changing a teaching session if the learners are not responding or if it is clear that learner needs are not being met. All teachers should have the capability to add or remove learning outcomes from their teaching without compromising the overall aim. This is easier online where routes can be built into the learning experience depending on success at previous exercises or a learner-led self-assessment of needs. In a teaching session this requires planning rather than the rigid adherence to plans. Planning should take into account the possibility that the learners will be more or less experienced, knowledgeable or skilled and have strategies to cope with these possibilities. Plans, on the other hand, will inevitably be derailed by external circumstances.

Flexibility in planning should be reflected in flexibility in the nature of the teaching intervention. Librarians are often wary of imposing their knowledge and understanding of how learners interact with information onto accepted teaching patterns. This can lead to others using the library skills session as a crèche, hoping that they will be entertained, amused and informed for an hour but not engaging themselves with the learning outcomes beyond a vague wish that the learners should find out about the databases/e-books/journals/referencing, and so on. This will often mean that the main part of the learning experience feels disconnected from information skills. It also usually means that the librarian will be given a single session of an hour as this is either the usual length of the teaching session or often all that can be spared from the wider course or programme.

However, the orthodoxy of the single, or at best couple, of information skills sessions should be challenged. Online learning does give opportunities for self-paced learning that can take place where and when the learner needs it, but it is in the classroom where the orthodox model should be challenged most. It may be that a traditional one-hour session fulfils what is needed, especially when built around a particular piece of work that needs a particular skill set. However, it may be that smaller-scale but more targeted teaching interventions will be more effective in integrating information skills into the wider learning landscape (Lumsden, McBryde Wilding and Rose 2010). The adoption of this more scaffolded approach to teaching means that support is given at more appropriate points for the learners. Ten minutes at the start of a number of lectures over the course of the learning or the insertion of an online learning object into a VLE may well have a greater effect than a whole hour of information skills if that hour is badly timed for the learners.

Negotiating skills are crucial to the success of this model. Most academics or teachers will want to maintain the normal structure, of course, and prefer to use one of the existing timetabled slots for information skills. This aids planning and means that the learners remain comfortable. It also, on first glance, demonstrates the importance of information skills and superficially embeds it into the mainstream of the learning. However, adopting a model that uses shorter slots within existing lectures or workshops takes time from the subject of the day unless

it is carefully planned and seamlessly delivered. Academics or teachers can deliver the information skills element themselves, usually with support from librarians in the form of materials, but an intervention from the librarian is equally valid. Negotiating that slot within a session requires tact, imagination and the ability to work with academics and teachers in their sphere. An understanding of the content and language of pedagogy is essential if the librarian is to convince others of their case. To provide a more concrete example of a very short intervention, giving a very short talk to students as they start to research their first essay can be extremely powerful. Just using an essay title as a springboard for a search on Google compared to the library catalogue and electronic journals services can demonstrate the power of keywords and get a whole group to evaluate and contrast the variety of sources and their relevance, quality and currency. This simple intervention, modelling an effective search, will spur easier discovery and critical evaluation. It is also important to remember that *finding* is not the same as understanding, so demonstrating how to find relevant material is not spoonfeeding your learners.

The politics of teaching should not be underestimated here. It may be organisationally difficult to convince management or academics that what are now often called professional services staff can operate explicitly as teachers. Librarians should not compromise on their input to the learning process, though. Part of the professional identity of a librarian is as a teacher and as teachers they should contribute to the wider pedagogical debate in their organisation and outside it. Political skills are certainly part of the subject librarian's everyday toolkit, but they may be reticent to use them in this context. Hence the continuation of one-hour teaching sessions at the start of the academic year that add little to the learner experience short of a usually interesting and enjoyable time on the web.

There is clearly a problem of scale in most academic institutions. It would be naive not to recognise that if the majority of students are to be seen in a year then the default of the one-hour session is possibly the only way, given the numbers of students. There is little flexibility possible in already-crowded timetables. However, the mass processing of learners is the antithesis of the boutique, personalised model advocated in this book. By using online learning objects, shorter interventions within existing teaching, and appropriate and cost-effective follow-up activities (see below) it is possible to target the learners more effectively and achieve a more personalised learning experience.

It is perhaps worth exploring the notion of integration a little more. True integration of information skills within a wider learning experience requires the information skills element to be seamless and implicit in the rest of the learning. It cannot be said to be *fully* integrated if it sits as a separate element, however well taught and however responsive to learner needs. A complete boutique experience requires something different from the norm, but the elements of it should not seem different

from the rest of the boutique experience. So the information skills elements of a course should seem to be a natural part of the whole rather than something bolted on. To achieve this objective, the librarian may need to cede some control to teaching partners and either allow them to deliver the information skills objectives themselves or to team teach. This may feel uncomfortable at first, but achieving the learning outcomes should be the goal, not maintaining personal power in the teaching relationship.

FEEDBACK FROM YOUR LEARNERS

Personalised teaching needs the teacher to gather and act on feedback in a timely manner. This does not necessarily mean handing out feedback sheets at the end of a session because although they may have a place in developing your teaching for others they will not benefit the teaching that has just occurred. Use simple methods like Race's (1999) 'Stop, Start, Continue' where simple qualitative data can be collected via post-it notes during the session, and act on the feedback given under those headings. Use the body language of your learners to check whether the whole group is looking bored, demotivated or engaged and enthusiastic, and amend your teaching accordingly. Responding quickly to learner feedback allows the teacher to match the teaching to learner needs and to recognise when they are or when they are not achieving this. By continuing to deliver teaching when it is patently not meeting these needs, or waiting until after it is too late to do anything about it, could mean that the rest of the boutique model fails as learners disengage with the library as a legitimate and useful part of their learning experience.

LEARNING SPACES

Boutique library spaces are covered elsewhere in this book, but for boutique teaching and training to work it needs appropriate teaching and learning spaces. Some of the elements of a boutique space will clearly apply to a teaching space: it should be close to the learner; it should cater for the user or learner; it should be intimate and/or niche. In addition, there can be an emotional attachment of the teaching space to the idea of learning.

Locating the 'library' teaching space close to the learners can be interpreted in two ways. It could be argued that by having a teaching room or computer lab within the library space the learners will understand the connection between what the librarian is teaching them and the resources that they will need to use. The library is also somewhere that all, or at least most, learners will visit at some point, so it makes sense to locate teaching rooms there. This is a powerful argument and lies behind much of the information or learning commons developments in educational institutions. It consolidates the idea of the library as being the core

building for learning by also placing teaching there and reinforces the importance of information skills to the wider learning experience.

However, it could also be interpreted as creating a separation between the usual learning and teaching experience, which typically takes place in a classroom in a teaching block, and information skills. It could be argued that taking the information skills teaching closer to the learners means forgoing library teaching spaces and delivering information skills in teaching rooms and labs in teaching blocks. Whichever the librarian decides on will depend on organisational opportunity, appropriateness of resource and the nature of the teaching rooms available.

That the teaching rooms should cater for the learners is perhaps obvious. If a particular piece of software is necessary for the teaching, if a particular layout of furniture or a configuration of computers is required, then the teaching rooms should provide it. Librarians may have influence on these things or they may have to work with preset design and configuration, but they should at least teach to the spaces that they have in place. Attempting to deliver teaching that requires a particular set of resources in spaces that do not contain them or are equipped with furniture and resources that are not flexible enough to facilitate the activities that are planned for, will inevitably lead to a less-than-satisfactory outcome. Flexible planning and an audit of the facilities and resources will overcome environmental issues but may also require the librarian to change their learning outcomes or methods very quickly during the teaching.

Intimate or niche teaching spaces will allow librarians to personalise their teaching in ways that the anonymous lecture theatre or computer lab cannot. Think about using spaces that are designed for other purposes as possible venues for information skills teaching. School lessons taken outside are often happy memories many years after they took place, and the same effect could be applied to information skills through the use of different spaces. Use more intimate spaces within the library itself rather than the training room, or take laptops outside the library. Think innovatively about space and use the technology available, for example portable smartboards, projectors, tablets, smartphones, and so on, to create teaching spaces out of other areas.

Although many online learning environments offer uniform experiences, often deliberately to combat possible confusion as learners move between modules, there is still usually scope for learners to customise screens, add RSS feeds or other Web 2.0 applications, and otherwise personalise the experience. This should be encouraged to enhance a feeling of ownership of the learning by the learner. Learning objects should be designed to allow customisation, including physical objects such as handouts. Allowing space to make notes on these is simple to achieve and changes the nature of the object from a passive to a dynamic learning tool. Most teachers do this already but do not necessarily include the same facility

in an online version, which they often convert to a pdf thus making it difficult to change. There can be a fear that learners will amend and change the text thus making it less useful, but by allowing them to delete or add text to make it more meaningful to them teachers are encouraging the creation of knowledge rather than the simple receipt of information.

The personalisation of a learning environment should not necessarily be confined to resources. Allow learners to have some input into the design of the teaching room by using flexible furniture and equipment. Using laptops instead of fixed PCs does risk reliability as wireless access is usually more fragile, but it does make group work much easier. Let groups form around the resources that they need to use rather than bringing the resources to a group, and offer choices of furniture configuration if the room allows. This does mean a loss of control but will repay through a greater learner involvement.

Libraries can have a real emotional resonance for a learner. Bourdieu and St Martin (1994) discovered learners in Lille University library who hoped that simply being in the building would encourage learning. This is a powerful platform to build upon, but the conversion of this sense that libraries equal learning will need to be translated into a similar feeling that librarians are involved in teaching. The two feelings are not automatically linked and it is for the librarian/teacher to make the connection. Although classrooms will usually equate with teaching, this can mean a passive feeling that teaching is something done to the learner. Using the library, a place of learning, innovatively may give the librarian a useful emotional basis for their teaching.

THE ROLE OF THE CENTRE

Boutique teaching requires significant levels of autonomy for the librarian/teachers. They need to be able to plan, deliver and assess based on the needs of their learners rather than the requirements of a centralised authority. This autonomy allows the teacher to match their content very closely to the needs of the learners and to have the flexibility to respond quickly to changing circumstances: environmental, personal and organisational. Although the idea of being able to take an 'off-the-shelf' solution to any aspect of teaching is an attractive prospect, it cannot ever deliver the personalised learning experience of the boutique model.

However, there is still a need for some central input for the teaching to occur. Content and delivery may be controlled by the teacher, but without a robust infrastructure the factors outside those areas will collapse into chaos. The IT and environmental infrastructure, staffing structures and their management, training and development all operate better under central control and if managed well will unobtrusively allow the librarian/teachers to be free to teach.

Teachers should be able to control their teaching and learning environment. The physical environment of the classroom, library teaching room or IT suite should be flexible enough for them to change and control the room. They should be able to request and get appropriate levels of access and support for the IT they need. However, it is only through central control that teaching rooms can be maintained, equipped and managed. Few teachers would want to be involved in the equipping of their teaching rooms beyond the desire to be involved in decisions regarding the type of facilities. Management of those facilities should reside centrally, as should timetabling and maintenance and support.

Staffing structures should reflect the need to work in teaching teams. These teams should include the necessary administrative support and be flexible enough for team teaching, peer review and reflection to take place. Too much local authority can result in teaching silos whereas a flexible but interconnected staff structure can deliver plentiful opportunity for the sharing of good practice, support mechanisms for new and inexperienced staff, and support when the political agenda requires it. The management system should encourage innovation and tolerate failure if it is used to develop future strategies. The freedom to take risks and to follow the learner rather than precedent or peers needs to be supported by sympathetic and flexible managers. Fear of the consequences of failure will stifle the boutique model as it is always safer to deliver a standardised version. Pretested examples, shared slides and generic learning outcomes will all work in that they will sustain a workshop or lecture. However, they will not enable personalisation of learning that turns the mechanistic understanding of which databases are useful or the basic rules of the Harvard referencing system into an understanding of the information landscape in a particular subject or why referencing is required at all.

Training and development for teaching is also best delivered centrally. Courses leading to qualification such as the postgraduate diplomas or certificates in teaching in higher education run in virtually all UK universities clearly need central coordination and management to meet quality standards. But there is also much merit in other centrally coordinated staff development that brings together teachers from across the organisation to learn and to discuss pedagogy. Learning and teaching away days, conferences or 'show and tell' events will all benefit from central organisation that can encourage sharing across disciplines and include library papers alongside academic input.

AFTER THE SESSION

The teaching session should not be the end of the relationship with the learners. Librarians will often see the learners again informally as they use the services and resources, but there should be other, more structured opportunities to work with

them. This will reinforce key elements of personalised learning, especially the highly tailored and learner-focused nature of the boutique model.

Extending the relationship beyond the teaching session can begin with the provision of materials to reinforce the learning and to encourage learners to develop their own understanding of information skills. Handouts, online links to further resources, exercises, games and examples to reinforce learning should all be considered at the planning stage. Away from the directed learning offered by these resources should be a framework of support including phone or online (virtual librarian) help and the availability of tutorial or other one-to-one support. This is labour intensive to deliver but means that learners can access support at the point of their need, and is particularly useful when the timing of library teaching is dictated by outside circumstance. One-to-one follow-up opportunities for learners is also helpful to those doing personal research such as a dissertation, as learners can often fail to see immediately how to apply the generic information skills covered in a teaching session to their own research topic. A tutorial or drop-in can personalise the learning in a way that a workshop or lecture cannot hope to achieve.

The teaching team is important in following up the teaching. Robust IT support is needed to facilitate the use of information resources. Academics and library colleagues will need to understand what you have covered with learners so that they too can support them. Learners should be encouraged to offer peer support with access to materials and knowledge of the resources available. Those relationships forged to deliver teaching sessions are just as important in the delivery of follow-up support.

CONCLUSION

The boutique model can be applied to teaching and training. Librarians already strive to offer teaching in information skills that is learner focused, relevant and tailored to their needs. Many operate with a degree of autonomy and are able to utilise the latest technology to create exciting, accessible and innovative teaching. They work closely with colleagues, inside and outside the library, to create real teaching teams. Most of all they care about the learners, and it is this that lies at the heart of the boutique model. The desire to deliver something that meets the needs of individual learners, and that values them as individuals, is what drives the model, and librarians have long seen this as a core professional value. In that they are well placed to implement boutique learning experiences.

TOP TIPS

- Do not judge people based on previous unfortunate experiences and do not make assumptions about other professions or your users: treat people as you would wish to be treated by them.
- Take time to audit your learners: minutes spent finding out about their real information needs will repay you tenfold.
- Be flexible: in planning, delivery, the teaching environment and in offering follow-up to your teaching.
- Innovate: this does not mean that you need to shock, but do think about doing things differently as this will shake learners out of their preconceived ideas about librarians.
- Work together: boutique teaching cannot work without support and a solid infrastructure.

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