Sharing research and practice: the University of Northampton experience

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Sharing research and practice: the University of Northampton experience

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LIR HEA.net User Group for Libraries Annual Seminar
Publishing, Partnership and Innovation: the imperatives for the 21st Century Library
Liberty Hall, Dublin
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Outline

• Context – LIS research at the University of Northampton
• Why do research?
• Research in LLS
• Sharing the findings
• The LLS conference
• Making an impact
The University of Northampton

• About The University of Northampton:
  – Achieved university status 2005
  – Committed to delivering “outstanding life changing opportunities in education, underpinned by a culture of entrepreneurship, purposeful research and social enterprise recognised around the world for its originality and impact” [1]

• Some facts and figures:
  – University: approx 14,000 students; 2,000 staff
  – 6 Schools: Arts; Business; Education; Health; Science and Technology; Social Sciences
  – Library and Learning Services: 75 staff (55 FTE) in six teams

[1] Raising the Bar Strategic Plan 2010-2015
Why do research?

• Research is positively encouraged in LLS because:
  – it informs service development
  – it demonstrates our engagement with the research ambitions of the university (and we do what they do)

• But we also do it because:
  – it provides interest, challenge and variety, increases job satisfaction, and supports professional development
  – it provides evidence of service value, facilitates engagement with users, supports decision-making, solves problems, and wins us recognition (internally and externally)
Research in LLS

- Reading lists as pedagogical tools
- Transitions in Higher Education
- Students’ use of learning spaces
- Developing the VLE
- Use of video to enhance learning and teaching
- Repositories and digital preservation
- Supporting international students
- Reading groups for community engagement
- Researchers’ data management practice
- Users’ experience of e-books
- Boutique teaching and training
- Visual literacies
- Mobile learning
- Mobile learning
Sharing the findings – which audience?

• Need (or want) to reach several audiences:
  – Internally – departmental colleagues; service users (students, academic staff, professional services); senior managers (budget holders!)
  – Externally – professional colleagues; funders; policy makers; local community

• The intended audience(s) and the purpose in targeting them should underpin any dissemination decisions

• Who, why, what, where, when, how?
Sharing our research externally

- LLS staff encouraged to write articles and submit conference proposals
- Start simply:
  - Present at local events or with a colleague at bigger conferences
  - Gain experience of writing through book reviews, short articles in practitioner press, conference posters etc.
- Build confidence and reputation gradually

LLS research and professional activity 2010-2012

- Articles and book reviews
- Books and book chapters
- Conference presentations (international)
- Conference presentations (national)
- Posters
- Reports
Sharing our research internally

• Opportunities for internal dissemination:
  – Departmental, School and University meetings
  – LLS events and seminars
  – Internal newsletters, emails, social media
  – Academic liaison

• But not reaching all our internal audiences as well as we wished

• So we decided to organise our own LLS conference...
LLS Conference – June 2012

• Purpose:
  – To share research findings with LLS colleagues
  – To promote ‘librarian as researcher’ to academic colleagues
  – To showcase the work of the department to professional colleagues
  – To celebrate our research successes

• Supported by professionally designed publicity materials and a conference blog
LLS Conference – on the day

- Introductions from the Vice Chancellor (on video), Head of Library and Learning Services (LLS) and external speaker

- Four **types of presentation**: research papers (6), work in progress (2), posters (12) and ‘minute madness’ (12)

- Banners and posters emphasised range of LLS research outputs and professional contributions

- Presenters (26 in total) represented all parts of LLS

- Event supported by a large team of LLS volunteers
LLS Conference - impact

- Attended by 36 LLS staff, 27 academic and support staff from UoN and 23 librarians from across the UK (Yorkshire, Kent, Dublin ...) – many more than the 30 originally hoped for!

- Hugely successful:
  - Feedback overwhelmingly positive from all audiences
  - Tremendous ‘buzz’ on the day translated into huge amount of pride among LLS staff and enthusiasm for new research activity
  - Large number of hits on conference blog
  - Invitation for conference blog to archived in UKWA
  - Received a CILIP PPRG Silver award for marketing
LLS research - impact

• ‘Scaffolded’ approach to teaching information skills – widespread interest from other universities; approach adopted elsewhere at UoN

• Reading lists – huge interest at LLS conference; VC became involved; subsequently informed implementation and use of new reading lists software (Aspire)

• Learning spaces – informed refurbishment of library; library staff now recognised as knowledgeable in this area; prompted further research activity in collaboration with academic colleagues

• Transition out – raised awareness of the risks and benefits of using social media as students complete their studies and look for employment
LLS research - impact

- Research data – results underpinned institutional research data policy and subsequent RDM activity; Northampton selected to be one of the DCC’s ‘institutional engagements’

- Mobile apps – Learning Technology Team developing strong reputation in field; colleague left soon after the conference for an exciting new job with Blackboard 😞

- User experience of E-books – findings fed back to supplier for subsequent enhancement of product

- Delivery of maths tutorials online – this funded project demonstrated to funder and university that this method of delivery was not popular with students so not worth pursuing
Questions?

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