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## Article

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Chan, L. et al 2002. *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> [Retrieved 22 January 2007].

# Sharing and reuse of information literacy resources across higher education libraries in the United Kingdom: a student's view.

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Sharing and reuse of educational resources has been posited as one way to improve both efficiency and quality in UK higher education (HE) (Online Learning Taskforce 2011), and a number of institutions have experimented with reusable resources for information literacy (IL) development since the rise of 'the learning object' a decade ago. Examples include: the Virtual Training Suite (Dawson 2001); INFORMS (Brook et al. 2003); Newcastle University's Information Literacy Toolkit (Bent and Brettell 2006); LIFE at Birkbeck College (Lynwood and Flanders 2006); BRUM at the University of Birmingham (Graham and James 2007); Cardiff University's Information Literacy Resource Bank (Jackson and Mogg 2007); SMILE (Wrathall 2009); DELILA (Anderson 2011); and ALLE (Greaves 2011). However, even though an understanding of sharing and reuse behaviour is arguably key to ensuring maximum value can be derived from these resources, the literature review that I conducted in early 2011 revealed a notable lack of research into actual reuse beyond single institutions or projects. I therefore proposed a dissertation which would aim to address the gap via a sector-wide survey, and make recommendations as to how reuse might be better supported. The target audience for the outcomes would be all stakeholders from IL practitioners, to managers, institutions, professional groups and funding agencies.

An online self-completion questionnaire was developed in Smart-Survey and circulated via one direct email to each relevant library (identified via the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) members list (SCONUL 2007)). However, as appropriate contact details could not be obtained for a handful of libraries, a further email was also sent to the LIS-INFO-LITERACY Jiscmail list (Appleyard 2011), the UK mailing list for IL practitioners, in an attempt to reach any that had been missed. The survey ran from 6th - 21st December 2011, and the data was then exported for analysis in Excel.

57 responses were received from 53 institutions, and 53 responses from 51 institutions were usable, giving a response rate of approximately 25-32%. Of the usable responses, 40 were from libraries in England, 9 from libraries in Scotland, and 4 from libraries in Wales, and most (42, 79%) reported that their institutions offer a mixture of online/distance and campus-based taught courses. While this spread appears reasonably representative, given the number of institutions in the respective areas of the UK (Higher Education Funding Council for England 2011, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales 2012, Scottish Funding Council 2012) and current trends in HE, it is unclear how well the results will represent the situation in Northern Ireland and/or libraries serving online/distance-only or campus-based-only institutions. Around half of responses were from libraries that are the only library in their institution, and around half were from institutions with more than one library, but levels of coordination and centralisation of IL support across services vary greatly and a wide range of service models were reported.

The majority of respondents completed all applicable questions and gave detailed answers. However some responses included slight inconsistencies and/or unclear answers and interpretations of some questions evidently varied. Therefore, while some remedial action could be taken in the analysis, further research to validate the findings and explore the issues in depth would be valuable. Fortunately, by the time I was preparing the dissertation for submission, I was able to cross-reference my findings with those of two other recent surveys with similar interests; the late 2011 survey by the Support Centre for Open Resources in Education (SCORE) which

aimed to "... get a national perspective on institutional engagement in Open Educational Resources through their librarians." and "... identify library staff engagement with OER, their understanding of licensing and OEP, and their experience in using and finding OER." (De Beer 2012, p1), and Graham and Secker's early 2012 survey which was circulated to "...librarians and information professionals to explore their knowledge of and practice around the sharing of information literacy teaching materials as open educational resources (OER)." (Graham and Secker 2012).

In line with Graham and Secker's (2012) discovery that most of their respondents seek existing material before creating their own, my survey found that most libraries do use some IL material from sources outside their own institutions. However, according to my respondents' estimates, externally-produced material usually only constitutes a very small proportion of the IL material that libraries are providing to their users (often less than 20%).

In order to find out the reasons for the reported levels of reuse, my survey also included questions around factors affecting choice of resources, the extent to which externally-produced material is used, and how it is used. Overall, the responses suggested that main reasons for the low level of reuse across the sector are the perceived need for local relevance and specificity, and the fact that copyright and technological issues, and lack of awareness, are currently hampering discovery and the all-important adaptation of material. Interestingly, a further question asking respondents whether their library had made any IL material available for reuse by other institutions revealed that perceptions of what constitutes 'available for reuse' vary widely and, in some cases, this appears to include material without clear copyright information or a licence that obviously supports reuse. Together with the results of both Graham and Secker's (2012) and SCORE's (De Beer 2012) surveys, these findings strongly suggest that improving librarians' understanding of intellectual property rights (IPR) and technical considerations, on both the supply and demand sides of the community, would be valuable.

Of course, there are also things that could be done to improve the systems available for sharing resources; for example, improving metadata and Web 2.0 functionality in Jorum, a key repository designed to support sharing of educational resources across UK institutions, so that librarians can search with the specificity they desire (see Resources). However, I concluded from my respondents' comments that estimating the cost/benefit of further large-scale investment in systems would be a complex and time-consuming task in itself, and such investments would have little impact if many resources are still not easily adaptable due to copyright and technological issues. There is much that the community could do to help itself exploit the resources that are already available and support more sharing and reuse in the future. For example, librarians teaching similar skills to similar students could form 'task groups' to share the burden of finding and evaluating resources for specific purposes; and there are already channels such as the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) Information Literacy Group, and the IL-OER Jiscmail list, that could facilitate this (see Resources). Meanwhile, with some support, libraries could license resources more clearly, and release them in formats that are easier for others to edit. However individual libraries will need to conduct their own audits of current practice, staffing resource, and tools, to evaluate the real value of increasing reuse and/or sharing in their particular circumstances, as it will not be cost-free.

## Resources

Smart-Survey free online survey software & questionnaire tool is available at: <http://www.smart-survey.co.uk/>

Jorum repository for educational resources: [www.jorum.ac.uk](http://www.jorum.ac.uk)

CILIP CSG Information Literacy Group: about us [Online]. Available at: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/special-interest-groups/community-services/subgroups/information-literacy/about/pages/default.aspx> [Accessed: 28 September 2012].

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