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DEVELOPING AN ONLINE TUTORIAL TO SUPPORT INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS PROVISION IN DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

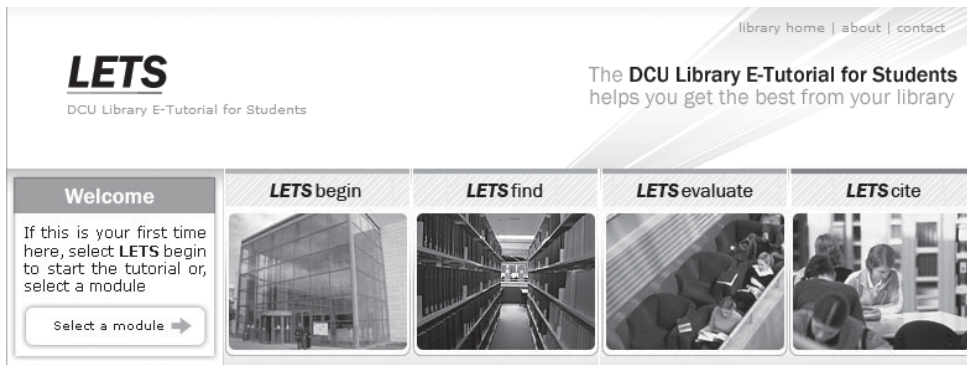


Fig. 1. Page of DCU Library E-Tutorial for Students

Source: LETS - DCU Library E-Tutorial System [online]. [Accessed: 2011-10-04]. Available at: <http://www.library.dcu.ie/lets>

This article is a description of the background and development of an online library tutorial called LETS. LETS is an acronym for Library Electronic Tutorial for Students. We give a snap shot of what motivated us to develop the tutorial and the pedagogical foundations for its development. We also aim to illustrate the funding, planning, and designing processes that went into establishing the tutorial. We discuss how the use of LETS has changed and developed over the years to the point of it becoming not only a support tool for Information Literacy provision but an effective conduit for enabling collaboration with academic staff in the development of student information literacy skills.

DCU offers over 80 programmes divided almost equally between undergraduate and postgraduate courses across four faculties: Business; Engineering and Computing; Humanities and Social Science; Science and Health.

There were 11,126 registered students at DCU in calendar year 2010/11. This figure includes full-time undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as students taking programmes with the National Distance Education Centre (based in DCU). The university has developed an impressive research profile creating a number of national centres of excellence that collaborate with universities and industry on a national and international level (<http://www4.dcu.ie/research/welcome.shtml>).

DCU Library moved to a state of the art, custom built facility in September 2000. The building and its position on campus reflects the importance the university places on knowledge and learning and the central role the library plays in supporting the university's teaching, learning, and research activities (Sheehan, 2000). The provision of information literacy skills training has been at the forefront of DCU Library policy for many years. As far back as 1994, the library's strategic plan committed to integrating information literacy into the formal curriculum. Embedding information literacy sessions into suitable programme modules and across all years of a degree programme ensures students receive training on the retrieval and ethical use of information in context and at point of need.

Why Develop an Online Tutorial?

There were a number of reasons why we decided to develop an online information literacy tutorial:

- To meet the needs of a growing and diverse student population;
- To facilitate different learning styles and maximize the use of technology;
- To offer flexibility in terms of online access to learning materials and resources;
- To support the face-to-face delivery of information literacy classes and workshops.

The Library was becoming aware of an increasingly diverse and changing student demographic. Many mature students were embarking on studies having been away from an academic environment for a number of years. They were often studying part-time and not in a position to attend classes in the library. Online support was crucial in meeting their needs. It was also timely that we were planning the tutorial in 2008 as results of the CIBER Report published earlier that year attested to the emergence of a new group of users - the "Google Generation" (British library and JISC, 2008) This changing student demographic brought with it a change in expectation on the part of our typical undergraduate student. While there was still very much a place for the traditional face to face classes and workshops, students wanted to learn in an online environment.

DCU already had an online student support presence. Students were able to access a student portal for support services while the institution's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) enabled lecturers to post course content and interact with students via online forums. The enhancement of online learning support for students in the context of independent learning was also a key component of the university's Learning Innovation Plan (DCU, 2005).

In the years prior to the development of an online tutorial, the subject librarian team was becoming increasingly aware of the increase in students numbers and the demand for library information literacy skills sessions. In the academic year 2005/06, 4,824 students were offered training; in 2006/2007 this figure rose to 5,970 while in 2007/2008 this number had reached 6,463. With student numbers continuing to rise and no corresponding increase in the number of library staff to satisfy that extra demand, an online tutorial was essential to provide an opportunity to teach information literacy skills to a large number of students. Finally, for all students, the tutorial would help consolidate learning gained during face to face training sessions.

How We Developed the Tutorial

The tutorial was developed completely in-house using the information literacy expertise of the subject librarian team. However, we recognised that we would need additional technical support. The Library therefore applied for funding from the university's Learning Innovation Unit. The funding application required the library to demonstrate a link to the university's strategic goals in relation to the enhancement of learning. The Library's proposal to develop an online tutorial met two key objectives, namely increased access to online learning resources and increased support for new learners.

Following a rigorous review process, the application was successful and the library was awarded 3,150 Euros. A project plan was devised and the subject librarian team set about planning the structure and content of the tutorial. The literature relating to online tutorials was consulted. Best pedagogical practice confirmed what library staff knew, namely that, a standalone tutorial would not be ideal. For the tutorial to be a success, it would have to at least have the capability to be an „integrated” tool for learning (Hegarty, Quinlan and Lynch, 2004; Dewald, 1999, 2000). It was crucial that pedagogy would drive the design of the tutorial and not the other way around. Our aim was to stimulate reflection and interaction. Clear learning outcomes, activities and assessments were also to be included (Donnelly, 2005).

Research was also carried out into what constituted good web tutorial design. A number of international examples were explored. Where we could, we consulted library staff responsible for designing similar tutorials in other institutions to learn from their experience of what did and didn't work (Hegarty, Quinlan and Lynch, 2004).

The subject librarian team agreed on the overall structure and mapped out what content was to be included. Team members were assigned to write each module and writing guidelines were agreed in advance. Existing presentations and class materials were pooled and the best elements of each component were marked for inclusion. As mentioned previously, funding was sought to enable the library to employ consultants to provide graphic design, Flash animations and Advanced HTML skills to build the tutorial. Two DCU multi-media graduates were contracted to work with the team on the design and build. Their experience as students of DCU added real value to the process.

What the Tutorial Covers

LETS comprises four modules. Students can begin with module one, "LETS Begin" and work through to module four. Alternatively, they can simply select whichever module will help them at a particular point in time.

Module	Description	Learning Outcomes
1	2	3
LETS Begin	Aids students to effectively plan their research in order to find the best available sources of information for assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ get started on your assignment ▪ analyse your assignment title ▪ create effective search strategies ▪ identify and select appropriate sources of information
LETS Find	Focuses on the key tools available to students for finding books, journals, articles and other material which they require for assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understand the references on your reading lists, for example know if an item listed is a book or a journal article ▪ find books and other items held in the library using the library's catalogue ▪ find journals in print and electronic format using the library's A-Z of journals list ▪ find journal articles on any topic using library databases

1	2	3
LETS Evaluate	Provides tips on assessing search results and how to revise a search strategy to refine results even further. It also provides some useful guidelines on evaluating the sources of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review your search results and revise your search strategy if necessary ▪ evaluate the information you have gathered from a range of sources including the internet to ensure you avail of quality sources for your assignment
LETS Cite	Helps students to understand plagiarism and how to avoid it by learning the techniques of citing and referencing using the Harvard style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understand what plagiarism is and the importance of always acknowledging the work and ideas of others ▪ quote or paraphrase information in your assignment correctly by citing your sources using the Harvard style ▪ develop a reference list and/or bibliography of the sources used in your assignment using the Harvard style

Using LETS to Improve Students' Information Literacy Skills

LETS has primarily been used in two ways: as a stand-alone tutorial for students to work through at their own pace and as a valuable resource to support the face-to-face delivery of information literacy classes. As awareness of the resource grows, its potential grows. As academic staff began using the tutorial, they became aware of the work of the library in supporting the development of students' information literacy skills. They also realise the value of working with library staff to achieve their programme or module learning outcomes. The module NS110, a first year undergraduate nursing degree programme, is a case in point.

For a number of years library input comprised a face to face „lecture” style presentation to a class of 200+ students. The students were then asked to complete a written worksheet which would be reviewed as part of a class the following week. This worksheet took the form of a „treasure hunt” whereby students had to search the catalogue and the journals listing, then go to the library and find books and journals. This achieved the basic learning outcomes set for the library element. However, the worksheet was not marked so students were not motivated to complete it.

In 2009 the module learning outcomes were revised and included the following information literacy elements:

- Develop skills in the use of the library, accessing databases and indentifying the sources of information that contribute to nursing knowledge;
- Understand how to apply the conventions of academic writing including referencing skills, effective study skills and habits to promote life-long personal and professional development.

At the same time, the lecturer also began to refer students to the LETS Cite module. In 2010, following a major revision of the LETS Cite module and the library's citing and referencing guide, the librarian for nursing ran a pilot with NS110 which involved introducing an online plagiarism and citing and referencing quiz which would form 15% of the assessment marks for the module.

Classmarker software was used to develop the quiz. It is user friendly, flexible, and includes an easy to use marking system. The quiz was a huge success with both students and staff. It was easy for the lecturer because the library managed the quiz and easy for the library as the software looked after the marking. Students liked it because we included essential feedback as they worked through the quiz. From a pedagogical perspective this use of instant, or timely, feedback is considered to greatly aid student learning (Brown 2004).

Examples of student feedback on the quiz:

"...brilliant way of applying the rules which are so boring."

"...best thing about it was the instant feedback, really understood the rules at the end even if I did get a lousy mark."

The module's lecturer used all the LETS modules as preparatory work for her own lectures. Students were asked to complete the appropriate module as „homework” prior to the lecture taking place. The lecture was then formulated around the content of the LETS module. The lecturer commented that she used the “muddiest point” (Angelo and Cross 1993, p. 154) exercise with students to identify areas in the LETS module that they had difficulty with. She would then focus on these aspects in the next lecture. This way the LETS module was used as an online resource to augment class work.

I find that the integration of ... [LETS]... into the actual module content enhances the students' use of the library resources and hopefully will facilitate continued use of ... [them]... for the whole programme not just for that module.

Promoting and Future Proofing LETS

New developments in NS110 include expanding the current plagiarism quiz to include a range of questions on research skills. We also plan to include a generic introductory level quiz as a means to introduce students to the format of the quiz software as this was an issue that was raised by them. The lecturer intends to increase the percentage allocated to the new plagiarism and research quiz to 50% of the overall marks for the module.

There has also been interest from module co-ordinators of two other programmes within the School of Nursing to incorporate LETS, the citing and referencing guide and the plagiarism quiz. In the School of Communications, a first year module - „Critical Thinking and Independent Learning Skills” - has also integrated LETS into its learning activities. The students must complete elements of the tutorial prior to attending lectures and are assigned marks for completing an associated quiz.

We are keenly aware of the need to promote LETS on an ongoing basis. To date, this has included:

- Highlighting LETS at all library face-to-face classes and workshops. In many cases, the actual content will be used or students will be required to work through elements in their own time;
- Linking directly to LETS from the Library website and the university's VLE;
- Disseminating LETS bookmarks and flyers;
- Delivering a presentation on the LETS project at the university's annual Teaching and Learning day;
- Presenting a poster at relevant university conferences including the Irish Universities Quality Board annual seminar (Dunne and Callaghan 2009).

LETS is promoted by academic staff directly to their students. It is also promoted by staff in the university's Student Support and Development Office.

Now that LETS has facilitated the further embedding of information literacy skills into programmes, we need to look at ways of capitalising on this success. Promoting the use of LETS with its associated quizzes and allocating part of a module's marks to it, is key to its uptake by academics. Last year, we created a series of videos for the LETScite module with staff and students discussing plagiarism and how it can be avoided. These were created by Multimedia graduates and are proving popular with staff and students alike. This year, we developed another quiz on basic library skills such as using the library catalogue and the A-Z of Journals list. The LETS-find and part of the LETSbegin module have also recently been updated. We used Articulate and Camtasia software to help us develop discreet lear-

ning objects that both academic and library staff can use within modules as part of their own presentations or hosted on the VLE.

On reflection, the design and implementation of this tutorial has provided an excellent opportunity for team building and skills development. We will continue to both improve and upgrade LETS thus enhancing the learning experience for our students.

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Siobhán Dunne, Amanda Halpin

***Rozwój szkoleń on-line w celu wspierania umiejętności
w zakresie information literacy na przykładzie Dublin City University***

Streszczenie

Uniwersytet Dubliński (Dublin City University) oferuje studentom pierwszego i drugiego stopnia ponad 80 programów zdalnych. Artykuł opisuje początki i rozwój szkoleń online LETS (Library Electronic Tutorial for Students), motywacje, które skłoniły twórców do realizacji tego typu szkolenia oraz jego podstawy pedagogiczne. Praca ilustruje aspekt finansowy oraz proces planowania szkolenia. Omawia wprowadzane na przestrzeni lat zmiany do momentu, kiedy LETS stał się nie tylko pomocnym szkoleniem w dziedzinie *information literacy*, lecz także efektywnym łącznikiem umożliwiającym współpracę z pracownikami naukowymi w celu rozwoju umiejętności czytelnich studentów.