Saddling the octopus: critical success factors for the Information Literacy Program at the Australian National University

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This paper explores the critical success factors which have combined to create a program which has attracted nearly 26,000 staff and students to over 2300 workshops, seminars, lectures and demonstrations in the last two years. The basic success ingredients involve a strategic mix of substantial funding, effective marketing techniques, the nurturing of critical and occasionally unlikely partnerships and the support of key University policy making bodies. The most critical element, however, has been the talented and experienced human resources gathered together to determine how such a commonly misunderstood and widely interpreted concept as "information literacy" could be delivered equitably across the campus. The combination of these success factors has engendered a "can do" response to opportunities sought and offered during the last 2 years to build information literacy into the curriculum at the Australian National University. The program has been embraced enthusiastically by the academic community who have used the program resources extensively to embed information literacy into their coursework.

1 Introduction

In 1999, the Australian National University established an Information Policy Working Party with wide-ranging terms of reference covering all aspects of information management and use at the University. Among the goals expressed by the Working Party were a number related to information literacy, all based on the notion that computer skills and information skills are equally important in the changing world of information in which we operate.

> B2: Develop and maintain a quality learning environment for information and IT(Information Technology) literate staff
> C2: Develop and maintain a quality learning environment for information and IT literate students
> E2: Consolidate access to scholarly information through appropriate training and resource provision
> F2: Develop an information literate community within the University. (Australian National University 1999)

As a result of the Working Party's Report, a dedicated Information Literacy Program (ILP) was established in late 2000, with funding set aside to support the initiative. The new Program brought together:

- existing information literacy training programs traditionally offered only within the Library,
- expanded InfoPlace where student consultants provide advice on computer applications and equipment; and
- added new initiatives such as IT training for staff and students and tutor induction workshops.

The result has been an astonishing success. Within two years, we have created a new program that has attracted nearly 26,000 students, academic staff and general staff to over 2,300 workshops, seminars, lectures and demonstrations (Table (1)).

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Table 1: Information Literacy Program Participation, 2001-2		
	Number of Sessions	*Total Participants staff & students*
2002	1,386	16,415
2001	966	9,514
Total	2,352	25,929

The Program operates through eight nodes: four subject focussed areas of the University Library (Science, Asia/Pacific, Law and the Social Sciences and Humanities); the National Institute of the Arts (music and art); the Graduate Information Literacy Program; and two IT nodes (InfoPlace and the IT Group). Coordinating and managing these eight legs of our octopus has been a challenge.

This paper intends to explore some of the critical success factors which have encouraged a can-do approach, achieved results, recognition and approval and created a Program remarkable for its breadth and variety.

2 An open vision from above

The vision for information literacy expressed in the Information Policy Working Party Report was all encompassing. Information literacy was not defined, but there was a strong recognition that in an environment that depends increasingly on technology and the use of information in electronic formats, high levels of technical competence are required as a basis for information access and management. In relation to the needs of academic staff, the Report says:

> An existing problem in the University is the wide variation in information literacy across campus. There is little point investing in new technology and developing new course delivery methods if staff cannot effectively utilise the technologies. The rapid pace of change exacerbates this problem. The University must accompany investment in technologies with investment in its human capital. (Australian National University 1999)

IT competence was also seen as important for students and for the University's general staff involved in the conduct of the University's business. At the same time, more traditional information literacy competencies were recognised, and the work of staff in the University Library acknowledged.

Support from the senior management of the University has been ongoing since the commencement of the Program. A Steering Committee was established with representatives of the academic and student communities, University Administration and staff of the Division of Information. This Group has met on a regular basis since early 2001, making suggestions and approving budgets and proposed activities.

The Program's achievements have been recently recognised by the Vice-Chancellor who has requested that achievement in information literacy should be formally recognised for each student on their academic testamur. One of the goals for the Program in 2003 will be to define how achievement can be assessed and recognised, particularly for graduate students.

3 Dedicated funding

Innovation and change require special funding. This principle underlay the provision of funding for the new Program from the University's Information Technology Strategic Management Plan and from the Vice-Chancellor's Plan for Growth. This new funding supplemented recurrent funding already committed by the University Library and the (then) IT

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Services to provide a total amount of $2,986,465 over three and a half years. Of this amount, $1,520,491 was new funding and $1,465,974 was to fund the salaries of permanent staff associated with existing information literacy activities. The new funding enabled us to undertake a number of initiatives and special projects which would otherwise have been impossible. In particular, we were able to devote funds to:

- Marketing and promotion activities
- Developing an inhouse information literacy training module, InFlite, based on the model of PILOT in use at the Queensland University of Technology
- Underwriting the cost of a special programs for tutors in the Faculties of Arts, Asian Studies and Science
- Undertaking an ongoing program of staff development
- Purchase of online interactive training modules to teach computer applications such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access
- Expansion of InfoPlace, a facility where students can obtain help with basic applications and equipment to digitise pictures, videos, tapes and so on
- Employment of casual trainers to provide one-to-one assistance to academic staff and other activities

At the end of 2003, the special funding will come to an end. This will present a significant challenge to the management of the Program, as we seek to find supplementary funds from other sources, charge for services or develop a case for ongoing funding support. Some opportunities for income generation or for cost sharing have already arisen. In January 2003, for example, we joined with the University's Academic Skills and Learning Centre (ASLC) to present a course to new overseas students funded through AusAid for which we had tendered late in 2002. The University's National Centre for Development Studies pays a contribution towards special program we provide for them. In 2002 the ILP, Faculty of Arts and ASLC co-facilitated a year long special tutors program which was funded through a special project of the Information Literacy Program,. The Faculty of Arts were so impressed with the outcomes of the Tutors' Program that they have offered to pay one half of the costs of the Program in 2003.

4 Administrative change as a catalyst

Information literacy training had, before the creation of the Information Literacy Program, been a library-based activity. A number of enthusiastic staff had been active, notably in the areas of Science and Law, and had established good relations with academic staff and participated in the provision of information literacy as part of the curriculum. In Law, for example, Library staff were (and continue to be) paid by the Faculty to teach. These activities did not, however, constitute a formal and cohesive program by the Library.

With the creation of the Information Literacy Program, there was a marked change in the way information literacy training would be managed and administered. Formal responsibility for the management of the Program was given to the University's IT Services. A Program Manager was appointed within IT Services and a Library Coordinator also appointed to work with her. Five new staff joined the team, some in IT Services and some in the Library, but all dedicated to information literacy, rather than having this as one of a mix of responsibilities. A new administrative approach provided the impetus to create a completely new set of activities for implementation. Established programs were continued and have expanded substantially, encouraged by the recognition they are now getting and the higher profile of information literacy as a concept across campus.

5 Dedicated staff

Our newly employed staff came together with a much larger group of library staff who had long experience with information literacy. Together they constituted a talented, experienced and enthusiastic group. The backgrounds of the

staff are varied: librarianship, information technology, education and from private IT industry. This diversity has contributed different points of view and different approaches which have in themselves proved beneficial to the Program as a whole.

The need to develop further the *teaching* skills as distinct from *training* skills, of all staff, involved in the Program was recognised early on. In the first 18 months of the Program we concentrated on staff development in the form of training, seminars and visits from other universities. Train the Trainer training was provided for forty-five staff and was hugely successful due primarily to the efforts of our trainer, Caron Egle from the Canberra Institute of Technology. During 2002 a number of staff were seeking further education with a focus on pedagogy, so we arranged for the University's Centre for Educational Development and Academic Method (CEDAM) to present a course specially designed for our needs. This course, Teaching @ University for Information Literacy Professionals was conducted during semester 2. Successful completion of it has been used to provide advanced standing in the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education, in which a number of staff have enrolled in 2003.

As well as training, we have organised visits from key people associated with information literacy from other Australian universities: Judith Peacock, Information Literacy Coordinator in the Division of Information and Academic Services at the Queensland University of Technology and Susan Bray, Head of Learning Resources, at the University of Melbourne visited together early in 2002. They shared their experiences with us and we hope that they took home something of interest for themselves. In November 2002, Dr Christine Bruce visited to meet with academic staff of the University as well as staff of the Information Literacy Program. Dr Bruce is Associate Director, Information Systems Management Research Centre, and Senior Lecturer, School of Information Systems, at the Queensland University of Technology.

6 Partnerships

The development of partnerships has been an important part of the success of the Information Literacy Program. In part, this recognises that information literacy skills are wide ranging and are taught in many different settings. Some of our more notable partnerships have included:

- Intensive Faculty based IL training programs. One early initiative of the Program was the provision of training for academic and general staff in select areas in the use of IT and information resources. This type of training has now been offered to the Faculties of Economics and Commerce, Asian Studies, Arts, and Law, and the National Institute of the Arts. Further faculties and centres will be included in 2003. For the different types of training offered, the timetable for delivery and the venues were determined by the academic areas concerned. Popular courses have included EndNote, Word, DreamWeaver and Electronic Plagiarism. Up to 34 small group sessions were run for each faculty. Personal satisfaction with the ILP has encouraged many academics to refer their students to the generic IT training offered by the ILP as well as incorporating information literacy principles into their own coursework.

- Tutorial workshops and lecture presentations. The creation of the Information Literacy Program coincided with an increasing recognition in academic areas of the need for IT-competent staff and students. At the same time, there was a rapid increase in the amount of information coming available in electronic form and the need for both staff and students to be aware of and know how to use it. Student reliance on the Internet was a concern, so academic staff were keen to ensure that students were more knowledgeable about the riches of the Internet and the pitfalls to be encountered there. All these factors meant that academic areas were receptive to the work of the Information Literacy Program, while ILP staff were sensitive to the place of information literacy skills in the academic curriculum. In some areas there was already a strong recognition of the value of information literacy training and library staff were actively involved in teaching and curriculum design.

- Graduate School. From early on, the University's Graduate School recognised the potential for information literacy training to be directed to meeting the needs of post-graduate research students. In association with the Library, they sought and obtained special funding from the University to establish a Graduate Information

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Literacy Program with dedicated staffing and a distinct set of course offerings. Course offerings include Managing the Thesis Production Process, E-Publishing of Theses and Research Papers, The Literature Review (taught in association with the Academic Skills and Learning Centre), Producing Theses in Word 2000, LaTeX, EndNote, BibTeX, Search Strategies and Topic Analysis, Selecting and Searching Subject Databases, Web Searching and Citation Searching. Over 1,120 graduate students attended 162 courses in 2002. Of the students attending, 73% were PhD students. The Graduate School is keen to offer a certificate of achievement in information literacy and implementation of this is a priority activity for 2003. Graduate students are able to enrol in any other courses offered by the Information Literacy Program.

- Centre for Educational Development and Academic Method (CEDAM). CEDAM "plays a major role in formulating strategic directions for educational agendas in the University. It also coordinates a program of professional development for academic staff and provides a range of services for both quality assurance and quality enhancement of teaching and learning." (Australian National University Centre for Educational Development and Academic Method) CEDAM has a particular interest in curriculum development and has been recently involved in the iLearning project which is designed to ensure that all undergraduate students are introduced to inquiry learning and "experience the rich learning environment and resources of the Faculties, IAS, ITA and national institutions from their first year." CEDAM shares with the Information Literacy Program an interest in ensuring that students have skills in finding and managing information, to the extent that one of our foremost information literacy practitioners has now moved to CEDAM.

- Academic Skills and Learning Centre (ASLC). ASLC provides services directly to students to assist them with a range of academic skills such as essay writing, note taking, how to do research, preparing for exams and working with supervisors. Our paths cross frequently, so we work cooperatively wherever possible. One recent example of cooperation was the "Introduction to Honours" seminar conducted by the Faculty of Arts, Information Literacy Program and ASLC. This one day seminar, attended by 85 students about to enter fourth year honours, provided a full day of activities. These covered such topics as:
    - Time, Project and Information Management
    - Topic Design and Supervision
    - Ethics Committee Guidelines and Procedures
    - Accessing Information for Social Scientists (or other subject groups)
    - Managing Long Documents
    - Identifying Appropriate Software.
- University Human Resources Division. Part of the Information Policy Working Party Report dealt with the need for University staff as a whole to take advantage of the information rich environment in which they work. The HR Division has responded to the need for an information literate staff by establishing guidelines relating information literacy competencies to the writing of duty statements and selection criteria for new appointments. It is recognised that some of the skills in this area are related to being able to use a computer, but many are more broadly based and involve the ability to access, critically evaluate and manipulate or use information from a variety of sources. At the same time, the HR Division has been active in encouraging University staff to attend the varied training courses made available through the ILP.

  In 2002, the HR Division conducted an assessment of information and IT skills required by staff. New staff were asked to complete an online survey and the information gained from this was validated by interviews with supervisors. The results confirmed the variety of skills required and are worth quoting at length:

  "We found that staff need to make efficient use of computer applications and be able to effectively find and assess information. This means that they need skills to:

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- Understand the basics of a desktop computer and be able to access and follow ANU policies and procedures related to information technology services
- Create and use word-processed documents
- Create and use tables and spreadsheets
- Extract, import and present data
- Use electronic mail
- Use the Internet as a source of information

In some cases, staff also needed skills to be able to:

- Undertake desktop publishing
- Web author and publish
- Use University systems such as ESP, Maximo and Entire Connection (for example)
- Use statistical packages and databases (including Library databases)
- Conduct advanced searches on the web, and
- Use bibliographical tools

Additionally, some staff needed skills more focussed on using information (rather than using IT). Those skills included:

- Development of effective information search strategies
- Ability to located and retrieve information from appropriate resources
- Ability to analyse and critically evaluate information
- Skills to organise, synthesise, use and apply information; and
- A demonstrated capacity to maintain awareness of broad information and information technology issues."

7 Focus

As mentioned above in Section 5, new staff joined the Program early in 2002. Their duties did not overlap with those of existing staff but instead involved new activities and responsibilities associated with the teaching of IT skills, creation of a program for Graduate Students and overall coordination. Allowing staff to be able to focus on information literacy alone meant that an intensive program of new activities could be put into place quickly, giving the Program visibility and making an impact across a number of areas. This could not have been achieved by adding to the tasks of already busy staff or taking away from existing programs.

Creation of an Information Literacy Program provided a focus, a name and a legitimacy to a group of activities which had previously been fragmented. This allowed a concentration of marketing effort, which in turn provided a visibility to the Program which could now be seen as a single entity or one stop shop. Marketing took a variety of forms: presentations to groups of all kinds from University senior management to undergraduate students, the creation of a web page (http://ilp.anu.edu.au), the publication on a quarterly basis of a small, brilliantly coloured brochure containing course information, the use of special folders for presentation purposes and an equally brightly coloured pencil with our URL printed on the side which has become our signature give away .

8 Freedom to interpret

The IPWP Report referred to above was non-prescriptive about the form of Program activities. More prescriptive was the implementation plan "Achieving Information Literacy" which followed it and which set out an implementation strategy in broad terms (Australian National University Human Resources Division 2002).

Within the guidelines provided there has been considerable scope for initiative. As a result there has been considerable experimentation, with some successes which have now become regular features of the Program and the occasional failures which have been instructive. Many of our successes have been outlined above. Two failures are mentioned

here, one because similar initiatives have been successful elsewhere and the other because its failure came as a surprise.

InFlite is the ANU's online interactive information literacy tutorial. It was developed in late 2000 and was customised from PILOT developed and made available to us by the Queensland University of Technology. Academic staff did not take it up for use in their courses even though they liked the approach because it was generic, they would have preferred something subject specific. Students failed to use it because there was no incentive or compulsion to do so. Parts of it have been useful in some classroom situations, especially the section on Boolean logic, but not sufficient to warrant the cost of development. Our other failure was an IT training program held in the halls and residences IT Labs on campus. . These ongoing sessions were taught in conjunction with IT-skilled residents and were intended to be close at hand for participating students. We did not foresee, however, that often newly arrived learners did not wish to reveal their IT weaknesses in front of fellow residents. By contrast, InfoPlace, which operates in a less personal environment and which is staffed by students for students, has been hugely successful.

9 Street cred

"Street cred" is that magical quality which opens doors, brings smiles to faces and allows people to believe in you. Early successes such as attracting large numbers of students to non-compulsory training from the beginning of the Program and successfully staging a tutors induction program for over 100 people with 5 days preparation, provided the Information Literacy Program with visibility and a reputation which spread rapidly and which has continued to grow. Our ability to develop such credibility was a function of all the other critical success factors discussed above.

One example of our street cred can be seen in the success of our Tutors' Program. This was first developed early in 2001 for the Faculty of Arts which was keen to provide tutors with additional skills. Tutors are in the teaching front line, and play a significant role in supporting students as they make the transition from school to university. The Faculty of Arts was particularly concerned to cut its attrition rate. The Faculty, the Information Literacy Program and the Academic Skills and Learning Centre together put together a program, to be funded by the ILP, which was designed to help tutors feel more comfortable in their role and to ensure that information literacy principles underlay the tutors' practices. The Program was initially designed to provide two seminars to first year tutors. By the end of the year, a total of five programs had been presented to tutors as well to first-year course convenors who proved keen to get in on the act. In 2003, the program will be repeated. The Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Asian Studies have joined together to create a program which can cater for the diverse needs of their Language and Non-language tutors. A second program with different content tailored especially for the Faculty of Science has been developed for the beginning of the 2003 academic year.

10 Conclusion

In the two years since it began in its present form, the Information Literacy Program has become an important teaching and learning resource across all faculties and the Graduate School. This degree of acceptance by both staff and students of the University community indicates that the Information Literacy Program has become a valued and respected support service. The critical success factors identified above have together provided the ingredients for the Program's achievements. It would be difficult to isolate any one factor as more important than the others, as they have proved interdependent in creating a single entity, in enabling us to saddle our octopus.

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Footnotes

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