Does research-based practice work in supporting students?

Diane Bell
Research Librarian at City, University of London
diane.bell.2@city.ac.uk
Overview

- MA in Academic Practice research topic: Which factors may influence the digital literacy skills of research students?
- Research methodology and design.
- To what extent can frameworks and original research inform professional practice?
- Research findings and some practical outputs to support students.
Rationale

- Informal conversations with students on digital literacy highlighted different experiences and confidence levels in using digital technologies.

- Opportunity to examine theoretical frameworks and apply them to practice.

- Evidence based practice and experience as a researcher in supporting interdisciplinary students and staff (Pickton, 2013).
Research methodology & design

- Literature review to contextualise digital literacy.


- Survey of sample of 27 doctoral students at City (Dec 2015-Jan 2016). Qualitative interviews with 8 of the survey respondents.

- Dissertation synthesising the literature review, survey and interview data.
Literature review

“..the awareness, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital tools and facilities to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyze and synthesize digital resources ...” (Martin, 2006, p. 151).

Overview of digital skills and tools used by research students.

Factors which may influence researchers’ digital literacy skills (eg. discipline, age, digital skills and tools, social media engagement).
Jisc: Developing students' digital literacy
“We define digital literacies as the capabilities which fit someone for living, learning and working in a digital society (Jisc, 2015)”.
Social media, enabler or disrupter?

- Useful for current awareness, conference information, new research, networking (Lupton, 2014).

- Testing ideas and theories and obtaining feedback.

- Depends on confidence in engaging and communicating online.

- Lack of time and can be distracting.

- Some students conscious of their academic reputation.

- Can be perceived of lower academic quality (Acord & Harley, 2013).
Examples of social media tools usage (survey data)

- Slideshare
- Blogs
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- Instant messaging (eg WhatsApp, Messenger..)

Legend:
- Research
- Work
- Networking
- Teaching
- Other study
- Personal life
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Uses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>Current awareness, conferences, contacts, networking, international collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>Employability, careers, professional networking, creating an academic profile.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blogs (eg. The Thesis Whisperer, PhD Life)</td>
<td>Research blogs, documenting the PhD experience, recommendations of digital tools, some students authored their own blogs or websites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>Often used in personal life, social support networks, there is a research students’ Facebook site in the university.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academia.edu, ResearchGate</td>
<td>Academic networking sites, promoting published articles, building an online research presence.</td>
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Interviews

“PhD students, we have no time at all”.

“But there is a whole PhD community going on on Twitter. Where people connect and follow each other”

“Social media allows me to connect with people doing similar things in different universities”.

“More pressure, more pressure, the older generation they can forget about it, the early academics they're all on Twitter”

“I don’t really like social media. I am not out there in social media, not yet”.

“..unless you're writing a paper on social media, steer clear of it”

“I think conferences can be a good way of hearing about that (digital skills) and also a lot of the younger PhD students [...] they like Twitter.”
Some research findings

- Self teaching and peer learning very important.
- Lack of research training (e.g., research methods, data analysis).
- Factors such as ICT skills, information, data and media literacy seemed more influential than factors such as age and gender.
- Possible to an extent to use frameworks and research evidence.
- Social media technologies both enabling and disruptive.
Research impact guide

http://libguides.city.ac.uk/researchimpact
Research workshops
http://libcal.city.ac.uk/calendar/workshops/

Library Workshops - Upcoming Events

SASS & SMCSE Researchers: Finding Information for your research (Research Essentials)
Target audience: New research students and staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students who would like to refresh their skills. This session will cover accessing a variety of information sources for your r...

- Date: Friday, 10th March 2017
- Time: 11:00am - 12:00pm
- Location: Teaching Room level 3 Library, Northampton Square Library
- Categories: Researcher Workshops

SASS & SMCSE Researchers - Finding Information for your Research (Research Essentials)
Target audience: New research students and staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students who would like to refresh their skills. This session will cover accessing a variety of information sources for your r...

- Date: Tuesday, 14th March 2017
- Time: 11:00am - 12:00pm
- Location: Teaching Room level 3 Library, Northampton Square Library
- Categories: Researcher Workshops

SASS & SMCSE Researchers: Literature Searching Strategies (Research Essentials)
Target audience: New & existing research students & staff, Masters students or students who are doing dissertations. Content: This workshop covers strategic literature searching techniques and choo...

- Date: Friday, 31st March 2017
- Time: 2:00pm - 3:30pm
- Location: Teaching Room level 3 Library, Northampton Square Library
- Categories: Researcher Workshops

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Outcomes and future research

- Research based practice increases engagement.
- Attitudes to social media technologies vary.
- Different approaches such as appointments, workshops, use of technology such as Skype.
- Offer research impact and digital social media workshops. New online research guides eg. Research impact.
- Measure the use and impact of the above.
- Future research across universities?
Discussion questions

1. Are social media tools (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs) enabling or disruptive to research?

2. To what extent can frameworks (e.g., Jisc) assist in the design of training and support for students?

3. How to translate research-based findings into professional practice?
References


Thank you for participating
Any questions or discussion points?

Diane Bell  diane.bell.2@city.ac.uk  @dianelouisebell

- Research Library guide:
  http://libguides.city.ac.uk/researchers

- Research Impact guide:
  http://libguides.city.ac.uk/researchimpact

- Library workshop booking website:
  http://libcal.city.ac.uk/workshops