

Information literacy at the Faculty of Humanities, Lund University: a project of collaboration

Passion, playfulness, persistence... According to the book *The collaborative imperative* by Dick Raspa and Dane Ward, passion, playfulness and persistence are keywords to a successful collaboration between library and faculty - even if one, with those words out of their context of academic co-operation, might think of something completely different...

For the next 20 minutes, I will focus on my persistence when it comes to a collaboration project involving my daily place of work, the library at the Centre for Languages and Literature, and the Faculty of Humanities at Lund University, Sweden. I start by giving you the background to the project. Then I describe it's aims and results up til now as well as some of my good but also less happy experiences from working with the project.

In december last year, departments and libraries at Lund University were invited to formulate joint projects in the area of information literacy and course curricula. The point of departure was the university's launching of the Bologna process, to be fully operating by July 1st, 2007. The rethinking and rewriting of course curricula according to the Bologna intentions, which will occupy all departments in the nearest future, was specifically considered as bringing prospects of interesting and rewarding collaborations between libraries and faculties.

Six projects, representing the majority of the faculties and their libraries, were granted, charing a little more than 600.000 Swedish crowns. They are all dealing with various aspects of formulating learning outcomes for information literacy in course curricula. In this context, it might be of interest to know, that all of the projects were initiated and, to most extent, formulated by the libraries.

I initiated one of those projects, entitled *Information literacy at the Faculty of Humanities, Lund University*. It has two aims; firstly, to strengthen the

implementation of information literacy in the curricula of the disciplines at the Faculty of Humanities at Lund, secondly, to form a model of inspiration to other faculties at Lund concerning the undertaking of similar tasks within the Bologna process.

The project sets out to formulate progressive learning outcomes for information literacy at bachelor, master and doctorate levels regarding two disciplines, Italian and Art History respectively. It also includes the design of an instructive programme for those disciplines within the area of information literacy.

The choice of Italian as one of the co-operating disciplines was rather evident, since I work as liaison librarian towards Romance languages. Thus, I knew the teachers and staff at the department and we had already been discussing some kind of future joint activity. In addition, I looked for a discipline from the non-language section of the faculty. As I attended a workshop for faculty teachers, focusing on problems and queries when formulating learning outcomes, I was given 20 minutes to talk about learning outcomes for information literacy. Here I mentioned my plans for a possible future collaboration project on information literacy and got immediate responses from the representative of the Art History discipline. So that settled it; thrilling with a teacher, who spontaneously gets herself engaged in such a, at that time, quite vague project...

Now, why did I get myself involved in such a project? The Centre for Languages and Literature with its library was inaugurated in August 2004. After a year and a half or so of experience of teaching information retrieval, I was distressed to find how hard it was to become actually involved with the single departments. During this time they have had great possibilities to strengthen their students' information literacy by way of various educational initiatives from the library. Those few disciplines that already from the beginning joined in have continued to do so, obviously happy with what they get. The others, however, have been hard to reach.

From the vast amount of studies dealing with library-faculty collaboration, I soon realized that my experiences were not unique, but instead rather common. I found the study by Christiansen, Stomblér & Thaxton, 'A report on librarian-faculty relations

from a sociological perspective', especially rewarding. The article, published in the *Journal of academic librarianship* in 2004, presents a sociological analysis of the relations between library and faculty. It identifies an 'assymetrical disconnection' existing between the two. The disconnection is assymetrical since each group experiences and defines it differently. What is more, both groups realize this disconnection, but only the librarians consider it problematic!

So, in what way are the groups disconnected? Even though both are part of the same academic milieu, they are generally separated by way of organization and status. Regarding organization, sometimes there is a physical division, the library is in one part of campus, the faculties in other. Furhter, there is a discrepancy when it comes to job hours; a librarian works a 40 hour week, a faculty member often has more flexible schedules. Together with divergent organizational subcultures, librarians being characterized by the sociologists as more sharing and collaborative than academics, as well as different organizational powers, being less strong for library than for faculty, these differences do not favour interactions.

Further, when it comes to status, the libraries are still seen as service-oriented, which in society in large generally is regarded as of lesser importance than the productive faculties. Finally, to all this we can add the gender dimension, librarianship for long being considered a woman's work, and thus with lesser status, pay and other benefits than faculty employment. In short, organisational differences and other obstacles do not favour collaborative undertakings.

The fact that I am an academic and university teacher from the beginning, and not an educated librarian, has given me experiences of both sides, and I found the analysis by Christiansen, Stombler & Thaxton most satisfying. The sociological perspective of the library-faculty relationship is an area well worth further extended studies.

Now, with all this in mind, I thought about a way of how to diminish the disconnection between library and faculty at my own faculty section, in order to facilitate co-operations regarding our students' information literacy education. If we, the librarians, could meet teachers and other faculty members in various fora in our common organization, it would be more obvious for the faculty that the library is, and

should be, involved also in these matters. Actually, I can't think of any areas of university activity, or at least very few, that do not affect the library in one way or another. If this could become clearer to the faculty, it would, I thought, also favour further collaborative activities.

Thus, at this time a project came in handy in order to test these ideas on a smaller scale.

So, how did the project work out and what are the results so far? As an attempt to get engaged on an organizational level, and in order to learn more about course curricula, I tried a proactive approach. Earlier this year, I contacted the chairman of the so called 'course curriculum group', working on faculty level. I told her about my project and inquired if I could join the group, a strategically important forum in these days of Bologna processing. The group consists of both teachers and student representatives and is mainly occupied with the rewriting of the faculty's syllabi at bachelor level in accordance with the new directives. All new syllabi will reach this group for approval, regarding form as well as context. My inquiry came up for discussion in the group and was positively treated.

Up til now, the group has formulated a course curriculum guide to be used by the humanistic departments when writing learning outcomes, among other things. In this exemplar, on my suggestion information literacy was included as one of four learning outcomes to be specifically emphasized. Further, the group has decided to suggest the departments to include an additional text along with the course syllabus, a text that more in detail describes the various learning outcomes of that specific course. A draft is to be produced, as a help and inspiration, to which I will contribute with certain model formulations for information literacy as learning outcomes.

The group's commission will continue, and escalate, I would say, in the autumn, when we will go through more than 300 newly written syllabi. Despite the great effort it will take to look through all these documents, it will give me a good possibility to check as well as get a complete overview of all the faculty's syllabi regarding their information literacy contents.

At the last meeting, my presence in the group was somewhat questioned. One of the members suggested that a representative of the faculty's student counsellors ought to be included in the group. However, the chairman decided to say no, referring to the size of the actual group. The inquiring member hinted, that only because I asked to join first, this did not make my presence in the group undisputable. This comment was, of course, rather disappointing. Certainly, the group would no doubt benefit from including a student councillor. But I do hope, that also this teacher can see what I, as a library representative, have contributed to this so far and to what I will contribute in the group's future work.

Regarding the more specific learning outcomes of information literacy for Italian and Art History, I thought in the beginning of the project that they would differ quite a lot. Being disciplines from two different sections of the faculty, their different source materials, methods, theories and such would influence the writings of the learning outcomes. However, now having seen some other course syllabi from the faculty, I understand that I must be satisfied if a rather generally kept writing regarding information literacy can be included. For the moment, the courses at bachelor level have just recently been decided on. Thus, I have yet not been able to write these learning outcomes.

When it comes to formulating information literacy programs for Italian and Art History, my work has resulted in proposals, sent to the departments for further discussions later this month. The proposals are founded on my own experiences of teaching information retrieval and on the present scholarly debate regarding these matters. I have also interviewed representatives of the two disciplines to get an idea of how they understand the information literacy concept and its content. The proposals are complemented by a kind of matrix, in order to show teachers how information literacy might be included in the ordinary course programme and to give them an overview of the various parts of the information literacy concept.

As often stated by librarians in studies on information literacy instruction, it is of importance that the teaching comes right in time and is integrated into the ordinary curriculum. However, during the discussions with the teachers of my case study

disciplines, it has become evident that they rather tend to experience information literacy as something separate from the rest of the course. So for me, the crucial thing when planning the programmes for Italian and Art History has been to incorporate information literacy into the curriculum, in order to stress that the study as such benefits from having the information literacy integrated.

The proposals are based on a three-step program, progressive according to content as well as depth. As to the specific content, what to be taught on what level comes quite natural, I think, if information literacy is included in the course as such.

Now, roughly, the content of my proposals are as follows: At the beginning of their study, students will get an introduction to the physical as well as to the virtual library, in order to be able to find their course literature, physically in the library and electronically in the library catalogue, as well as to use all the other facilities at the library, such as computer rooms, language labs and so forth.

Studying humanities often means that you come in contact with several disciplines. For example, if you have an interest in Art History you might choose to study archaeology and ethnology as well. Are you interested in Romance languages you might take both Italian and French together with Comparative literature. Thus, a humanity student will with all probability come across such library introductions as I refer to above, several times during his or her education. This might be experienced as frustrating. In order to avoid too much repetition, even though repetition is the mother of all learning, as already the old Romans taught us, I have suggested some kind of test to be available for the students. This test could be made in order to get some proof that they already might have received the acquired knowledge for that introductory level. The result from this test would of course be known to the teacher and to the librarian in charge of the library instruction.

At the next level, when students are meeting their first needs of individual information retrieval, when writing a paper, for example, their search ability is developed through further practising. At this stage, students are also introduced to subject specific databases and reference works. Scientific writing and its various parts, such as source criticism and the subject specific reference systems, are also dealt with.

According to my experiences, 'information organisation' is an area, that students are less aware of. They do not know much about the differences between a library catalogue and a subject database and they are not aware of the fact that you might get very different results from searching Yahoo instead of Google. This is an important part of the information literacy, and crucial knowledge in a life long learning perspective. It must be touched upon at least at this level.

At the third level, a more refined search process is introduced when the student are to write a more extensive thesis. Scientific publication, open access, institutional repositories etc. are also introduced as well as the ethical part of scientific writing, such as plagiarism and the reason for and function of bibliographies. I use to ask the students why they have to make bibliographies. Because, they usually answer. They have very seldom reflected on why this is such an important part of their own writing. Since bibliographical writings do not seem to be among the top five candidates of what the students like to put an effort in, it might help to tell them that if they are careless about their bibliographies, they violate the copyright law, in Sweden considered a serious crime, which might result in a 6 month jail sentence! This statement usually wakes up those students that are asleep...

To my opinion, the wider perspective of the information literacy concept, its social, political and economic contents, must be touched upon. Nowadays I always refer to *The Alexandria proclamation on information literacy and life long learning*. And I use to refer to the project with INASP, International network for the availability of scientific publications, and ELIN@, referring to Electronic Library Information Navigator, developed in Lund, which deals with the installation of a special solution for countries with low bandwidth, in Uganda, Rwanda and Pakistan. This mentioning tends to lead to interesting discussions on democracy, Bill Gates and the role of developed countries when it comes to the 'information society' concept.

Today, various examples of assessments, such as electronic self tests and search logs, are referred to in studies regarding information literacy. I also refer to some of these in the proposal to my case study disciplines. However, the most significant point for me has been to make clear to the teachers that information literacy, as well as other

kinds of skills, must be examined. At this stage, however, it is of less importance in what way and with what method.

Now, to all of you the design that I have recalled is not at all controversial or highly imaginative. However, I think that we librarians sometimes forget that information literacy still today are not reflected on by the university teacher in general. All the studies dealing with information literacy instruction are written by and for librarians – their content never reaches the teachers! Thus, according to my experience, much of the content included in my program is very obvious for us, but really not so for the teachers. This proposal will represent great novelties for them and their disciplines.

Regarding the advanced level - the master - many minor Humanistic disciplines at Lund University, such as Modern Greek or Musicology, cannot support a master degree by themselves, but will be part of a joint master's programme on faculty level. At the Centre for Languages and Literature, for example, there will be two options, a 'Master's degree in Language science' or a 'Master's degree in Literature'. Thus, if you are interested in English linguistics, you will take a 'Master's degree in Language science, specializing in English'. If you are focused on early Renaissance Italian, you'll take a 'Master's degree in Literature, specializing in Italian'.

The Faculty of Humanities at Lund has up to now been forced, for technical reasons, to concentrate on the Bachelor level regarding the Bologna adaptations. The planning of the programmes for the higher levels has not been settled yet. Thus, it has been difficult to give any detailed suggestions when it comes to the training of information literacy at post-Bachelor level. However, I have had the opportunity to be somewhat involved in the initial planning of the language science master's degree. The plan is to offer a joint first semester, largely focusing on theory and method. Here the library will be involved when it comes to information literacy segments. In addition, in a present preliminary document, the library is also specifically referred to as a tutorial resource for the students and their work with the master thesis.

For the doctorate level, there will with certainty also be joint faculty courses regarding theory and method, for example. At the Centre for Languages and Literature, the library, i.e., myself and another librarian colleague with a doctor's degree, is

represented in the group, planning the future doctoral programmes. Thus, we will have great possibilities to influence the programmes when it comes to information literacy.

Summing up, even though my original project plan has been somewhat temporarily modified and delayed, since the work at the departments has been slower than I thought when I first formulated the content of the project in December last year, my experiences from what I briefly have described has made me reflect on many things.

Regarding information literacy, I have become very convinced that the library must make itself heard in all those fora, in which courses are planned, described and decided on. This is of immense importance, in order to be able to influence at the right level, before all the decisions are taken. This is one way to get faculty understand that the library counts in all various kinds of areas at the university and that it has a lot to contribute to.

However, in order to achieve as much as possible in the area of information literacy, we need to co-operate with the faculties. And for the moment, I think we at the libraries must take the initiatives for these collaborative activities. Apart from the three p:s - passion, playfulness and persistence – required for a successful co-operation, Raspa and Ward also add another two, i.e., project and promotion. I hope that my project and my promotion of it has made the faculty aware of the positive effects of having the library as collaborative partner.