Présentation du projet MOSAIC au sein de l'Open University

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The Open University offers more than 200 courses, which are developed by around 3000 staff, and delivered by 8000 associate lecturers to around 200 000 students. It is the largest university in the United Kingdom in terms of its student numbers. 20% of all part time students in the UK are enrolled with the university, and it has an alumni population of 2 million. Information literacy at The Open University has developed alongside a new remit, in the late 1990s, which was to provide services to our distance learners, in addition to academic and research staff involved in the creation of courses. In 1996, 'user education' was the favoured term for the set of skills we now call information literacy. Activity at this time was limited to a few face-to-face training sessions for staff, and printed guides to resources for students taking certain courses. These guides quickly became out-of-date (particularly if they featured web addresses) due to the course production cycle at the OU where materials have to be produced well in advance of the students' course start dates. By 2000, once the Library's new remit had been established, face-to-face training sessions were running regularly and attracting around 1000 participants a year (academic and support staff, students and associate lecturers). Web-based materials were also being made available. By 2002, the Information Literacy Unit had been established as the focal point for this activity within the university. Its role and objectives relate to supporting the development of information literacy at The Open University, and this work is underpinned by a strategy (available from http://library.open.ac.uk/help/infolitunit.html)

In terms of educating our students, we know that information literacy skills work best when they are relevant, integrated into the curriculum and are worth something to the students e.g. assessed or credit-bearing. So far we have around 40 courses which have recommended (rather than compulsory) information literacy-related activities, and around a dozen courses where the information literacy component is integrated into the course materials, and therefore mandatory.

Provision to students is mainly achieved via the SAFARI (Skills in Accessing, Finding and Reviewing Information) information skills package, which is between 7 and 14 hours (depending on the student) of interactive, web-based material. Its use is either integrated into courses or it is used by students seeking to develop their information skills independently. MOSAIC (Making Sense Of Information in the Connected Age) was launched in 2002 and is based on the SAFARI materials. It

is a 12 week short course, which runs twice a year and attracts 10 points at level 1 which students can count towards their Open University degree. The course takes between 70 and 90 hours of study, and it was developed collaboratively by Library staff and academic colleagues. The skills and knowledge featured in the learning outcomes of the course are related to those described in many of the models of information literacy (UK, US and Australian standards).

Some of the challenges faced when developing MOSAIC include decisions around how much material to make available online or in print; how to assess information literacy; how to provide support; and how to make the materials comply with recent web accessibility legislation.

The course is delivered almost entirely online, although there are some supporting printed materials, for instance a course guide and a set of readings. The online activities are varied to help make the materials more engaging for the students; for example, there are 'drag and drop' activities, printable checklists, and activities which provide generic feedback. All of the material has been tested to ensure it complies with accessibility guidelines.

Support is provided by a team of study advisors using the OU's FirstClass conferencing system. This is a kind of online bulletin board widely used at the university as a forum for asynchronous communication between tutors and students. Each student on MOSAIC has a named study advisor, so that their support is more personalized. The study advisors are usually members of library staff, and becoming a study advisor has proved to be a useful development opportunity for those staff who do not usually support students in their daily role.

MOSAIC features formal assessment linked to the learning outcomes of the course. The assessment portfolio, which is in 5 stages, is iterative and based on the information searching process. Students are provided with a scenario, the information 'need', and their task is to carry out a literature search on the topic and produce an annotated bibliography, recording their progress as they go. The focus is very much on the process rather than the 'perfect' list of references. They are encouraged throughout to go back and change their search strategy if necessary and document their findings. As well as their result (pass or fail) students receive a skills profile, which details how well they have performed against the learning outcomes of the course. This was included to provide students with an outline of their skills which could be given to their employers to demonstrate their expertise.

One aspect of the recent increase in information literacy activity is a need for library staff to develop new skills. They are required to change their traditional roles to become educators and

sometimes sales-people, in order to work effectively with academic colleagues and promote information literacy as a concept.

Future plans for the Information Literacy Unit include redeveloping the MOSAIC package with SCONUL's (Society of College, National and University Libraries) Advisory Committee on Information Literacy to investigate whether a generic version could be run in other universities. We are also developing a diagnostic test for information skills, and plan to revise the SAFARI package so that it can be used as a series of learning objects in different courses. A new challenge will be how to help students develop their information literacy skills when we implement new systems such as federated search interfaces (e.g. Metalib, Encompass).

In conclusion, the Open University is engaged in a great deal of information literacy activity, but it is rare that we are able to find out whether our students are benefiting from our efforts. Students taking the MOSAIC course are surveyed at the end of each presentation, and we are encouraged by the findings. A great many of them report that they are able to use the skills they develop when studying MOSAIC in their work, their studies or their daily lives. They appreciate especially the opportunities that MOSAIC provides them with by introducing them to new skills and new methods of finding information. When asked about the newly developed skills one student remarked: "I am less apprehensive about tackling web searches, libraries and databases. I wish I'd had access to this when I was doing my first Degree".

For us, this indicates that our efforts are most definitely worthwhile.

Jo Parker, juin 2004