title: Continuing Education/Professional Development for Information Literacy Teachers at the Helsinki University Library

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Background

The University of Helsinki is the largest university in Finland. It has eleven faculties. There are 35,000 degree students and 8,100 staff. The number of degrees taken each year is an average 5,000, of which about 500 are doctorates. The university functions on four campuses: City Centre Campus (arts, theology, law, behavioral sciences, and social sciences), Kumpula Campus (Science), Meilahti Campus (medicine), and Viikki Campus (biology, veterinary medicine, agriculture and forestry, and pharmacy).

At the Helsinki University Library, we have had an organizational change in the beginning of the year 2010: now we have one library functioning on four campuses, and a large unit for centralized services. On every campus library, we have one coordinator for information literacy (IL) teaching and user education (UE). In the centralized services, we have one IL coordinator responsible for those issues which are common for all campuses. These coordinators meet regularly in a working group to discuss subjects and decide common guidelines, and other common issues.

We want to share our knowledge and best practices within the big group of UE and IL teachers from all campus libraries because IL teaching has become more demanding and the need for the UE and IL teaching is increasing on the campuses.

The study circle/journal club

At the beginning of 2009, we established a study circle/journal club for the UE & IL issues (1). For each meeting, we have a theme based on a couple of articles or other material which we discuss and evaluate how we could apply it in our work. In 2009, we met five times. We have also established an open access wiki for sharing articles and other material, discussion notes, and further comments.

Themes of the study circle

In this section, I want to give a glance what subjects we have discussed, and what effects these discussions have had. The themes we have presented and discussed in the study circle vary from individual competence to organizational best practice, including e.g. progressive inquiry, evaluating teaching, and sharing teaching material.
For our first gathering, we chose the subject 'progressive inquiry'. In EAHIL2008 Minna Lakkala had an interesting continuing education course in the subject (2). Because we IL teachers are involved in the student's learning process, it's very important for us to understand it better. In Minna Lakkala's article, we found an interesting reference (3), from which I want to share the following ideas (in quotations):

- "How to develop citizens who not only possess up-to-date knowledge but are able to participate in the creation of new knowledge as a normal part of their lives."
- "Knowledge building provides an alternative that more directly addresses the need to educate people for a world in which knowledge creation and innovation are pervasive. Knowledge building may be defined as the production and continual improvement of ideas of value to a community, through means that increase the likelihood that what the community accomplishes will be greater than the sum of individual contributions and part of broader cultural efforts."
- "Educational approaches of all kinds are subject to what is called the "Matthew effect": The rich get richer. The more you know the more you can learn."

We also try to keep up with new things in information world, so in our next meeting we discussed about the new information environment (4). These articles produced some questions, like:

- What is "a new information environment": does it exist, and if yes, what does it content?
- Does the new information environment show up in our training sessions? How could it show up?
- Does the content of our training change? How?

The study circle gives also an opportunity to read interesting literature, and we chose the 'Handbook for Information Literacy Teaching' for reading (5). Because of its relevancy for our work, there was enough contents for two meetings. In the first one we chose four sections of it: 3: Lesson Planning, 4: Lesson Formats, 5: Teaching Technologies, and 6: Lesson Deliver. In the end of the section 6 we found a nuclear idea for the role as a facilitator: to encourage, to motivate and to support the learner!

In the next meeting we continued with sections 7: Assessment and 8: Evaluating your Teaching. We could conclude that peer evaluation could be a possible way for us to evaluate each other's teaching sessions.

Sharing teaching material is always an actual subject, and we discussed about it based on the article (6). It would be very helpful and useful to access teaching material of the other IL teachers. Very seldom it can be reused without changes – at least some subject changes and not to mention minor cosmetic changes. It would be very practical and useful when starting a new course, if you could check what has been done before. In Meilahti Campus Library Terkko (prev. National Library of Health Sciences) we have a 'material bank' since 2005. It is very easy to use it via web browser, so the material is available wherever the presentation or teaching session is held. In the medical faculty of the University of Helsinki, we have developed a Digital Course Library, where teachers store and deliver their teaching material. One of its advantages is the transparency, teachers can see what subjects their colleagues teach and point out in their lectures and teaching sessions.

Especially now for our new library, a common material bank could bring equality and evenness in the teaching. And not to forget the support new and inexperienced teachers need, and veterans, too, when they start a new course.

Working method

We had five meetings in 2009, a meeting in every two months, excluding summer months. It is good to have them regularly. We have established a wiki, where we write about every session. It makes it possible to come back just to check or deepen the ideas around the subjects. It also facilitates for new members to join and know about what we are doing. It is an open access wiki, and it allows commenting.

In the wiki, we have also added information about interesting seminars the members have participated.

Survey

I made a survey for my colleagues about the study circle by using a web form. I emailed the questionnaire to 35 colleagues, who emailed it to their local colleagues who are involved in information literacy teaching and user education. Totally it was sent to 44 persons, and 20 of them filled in the form. I got very useful information, which I share here with you.

Results of the survey

Totally 44 questionnaires - 20 answers

Participants	Campus
20 involved in IL teaching	**3** Meilahti (medicine)
12 involved also in marketing, participants administration, and statistics of the teaching sessions	**4** Viikki (vet.med., agric., biol, pharm)
	1 Kumpula (math, stat, physics, chemistry)
	10 Central (hum, theol., polit., jurid., behav.)
	1 Centralized services
Proportion of IL teaching in own work	**Experience in IL teaching**
9 main task	**12** more than 5 years
8 regular task	**7** 1-5 years
4 occasional task	**1** less than 1 year
	0 not yet

Table I: Background of the participants (the bolded figure tells how many answers)
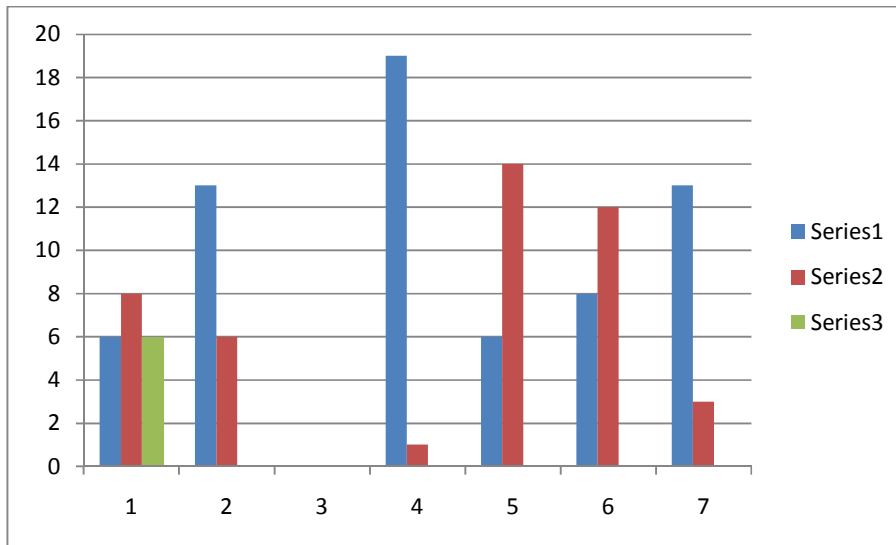
Table II: Answers about the study circle in columns.

1) How many times participated: 4-6 times **6** 1-3 times **8** not yet **6**	2) Would you have liked to participate more often yes **13** no **6**	4) Have other people from your library participated? yes **19** no **1**
5) Have you presented an article or a subject? yes **6** no **14**	6) Have you suggested a subject? yes **8** no **12**	7) Has the IL-journal club/study circle been as you expected yes **13** no **3**

Table III: : Questions and their answers about the study circle in figures.

Free comments:

If you had wanted to participate what prevented?

- too busy (4 answers)
- other tasks (4)
- sometimes the subject hasn't been interesting enough (1)
- too tired (1)

What kind of meaning the study circle has for your work?

- It's interesting to discuss IL teaching issues without hurry. To read articles and literature and discuss about them.
- to get ideas and support to my own work
- to meet colleagues from other campuses, to get new ideas for training sessions
- it has a meaning, especially if you teach a lot, and pedagogy is a big part of your work; networking and collegial support

- concrete effect (e.g. to get something more or a change in how you teach or organize your teaching) is difficult to see, but surely some effect it has had. To meet other IL teachers has a strengthening effect on one's work.
- to meet and learn to know other IL teachers, to change thoughts and experiences
- difficult to say because I have not participated, but as a concept surely good. Gives an opportunity to free discussion with colleagues which develops one's own working methods
- it's good that all with an interest have an opportunity to discuss IL issues, and also see how same kind of things concern all of us in all campus libraries, and IL teaching is developed to the same purpose.
- to share challenges
- the issues discussed in the study circle deepens the knowledge and understanding for the work in IL teaching. It's a very smart way to educate ourselves together. This adds interest and professionalism in our work.
- direct consequences cannot be named but the discussions with other IL teachers have been useful; I have participated just couple of times.
- Maybe I have been so deeply and for so long involved in this subject, so I do not find that the study circle would affect my work, other than being just another "duty". To meet and discuss with other IL teachers is always pleasant, but usefulness in own work cannot yet be found.
- This is an interesting way to learn the IL colleagues working in the other campuses. The discussions based on the articles give ideas to own work. And I've also got information about interesting IL literature. The discussions based on the articles have also shown how dissimilar challenges , situations, and information resources there are in different disciplines. This has strengthened the conception that even if the co operation between campuses is very important and useful, it's also important to specialize in campuses: it's essential to know the needs of the customers, so that the training is based on the needs of them and their discipline.

What do you wish from the study circle?

- more often; maybe a regular time – e.g. a late afternoon. Maybe a red thread throughout a semester, which means also more work and organizing resources.
- more concrete and practical (2 answers)
- that interesting themes and subjects can still be found, and the study circle will be organized even in the future
- maybe presentations by other libraries or organizations. Also presentations by visitors from the faculty, and e-learning experts.
- interested in network development and the research in information retrieval, not so much in pedagogical issues. Not interested in discussions based on the gut feeling, but on proper research and scientific articles.
- I wish for a relevant (for me) study circle, which may be impossible to put into practice. I'm interested in theories and models in information retrieval and teaching, experiments done in other libraries; what these could bring to own development work;

to discuss some issues more detailed and in long span. This would contribute to own learning. Now the study circle is directed more to beginners (which is very reasonable), so this kind of approach might not be attractive enough and it might make participants to yawn. The problem might be that the answers to the questions asked by newcomers and beginners already I have found long time ago, and it wouldn't be easy to discuss them without giving direct answers.

Developing ideas for continuing education and professional development of IL teachers:

- yes, education is needed
- Even if the tendency is to promote e-learning at the expense of face-to-face learning, it would be helpful to develop the performer and speaker abilities and techniques
- regularity
- It would be good to have a regular training in software programs and other techniques used in information retrieval and management. And also how they could be applied in our own trainings.
- study circle is a very good way for learning and common development. For myself I like more study circles where the members are more permanent and the ideas can be developed further (I've experience of that kind of study circle).
- more courses like "Training the trainer" (3 days-course). It was a compact package of basic elements in teaching. You also meet other colleagues there. Some kind of follow-up to it?
- Could information of coming events be spread to whole HULib staff? (HULib= Helsinki University Library)

Conclusion

We have found the study circle/journal club an easy, 'handy' way for professional development. It gives an opportunity to read interesting literature, and the discussions based on the articles hopefully have a cognitive effect in our minds, and deepens our knowledge in the subjects. Of course, it can be regarded as a time consuming duty, but because it works on voluntary basis it should not be like that. We recommend our colleagues in EAHIL to start their study circles, and we are looking forward to changing ideas and experience!

(1) Haglund L, Herron D. Implementing EBLIP to stimulate professional development. Journal of EAHIL 2008;4(3). Available online: http://www.eahil.net/journal/journal_2008_vol4_n3.pdf Accessed 05 2010

(2) Lakkala M. Progressive Inquiry Learning. 2008; Available at: https://wiki.helsinki.fi/display/CEC2008EAHIL/Home#Home-Lakkala. Accessed 05, 2010.

(3) Scardamalia M, Bereiter C. Knowledge Building. Available at: http://ikit.org/fulltext/2003_knowledge_building.pdf. Accessed 5/27/2010, 2010.

(4) Loertscher D. what works with the Google generation? Teacher Librarian 2008 04;35(4):42-42.

(5) Gaunt J, Morgan N, Somers R, Soper R, Swain E. Handbook for Information Literacy Teaching. Cardiff: Cardiff University. Available at: http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/insrv/educationandtraining/infolit/hilt Accessed 05, 2010

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