
A week in the life



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My role is to run evaluation and pilot projects that could enhance the library's services and it involves collaboration with many other staff within the library and across the university, as well as keeping up to date with the latest library developments. There is one other service innovation officer at Warwick, Alejandro Chiner Arias, and the research and innovation unit where we work is managed by John Dale, who also heads up the systems team and the 'learning grid' at the University of Warwick library as a part-time role alongside his role as head of eLab, Warwick's own e-learning technology development team.

MONDAY

First thing in the morning I have a meeting with Rachel Edwards, manager of the Learning Grid, to discuss plans for the e-Learning Showcase day that will be held there in June. We meet in University House because that is where the learning grid is and where Rachel's desk is, and because it's on my way from the car park to the library. Also, the café there does the best hot chocolate on campus so it's a good way to start the day. I arrive at Rachel's desk with hot chocolate and croissant, to discover that she's polishing off a coffee and Danish ... so we decamp back to the café for our meeting.

The e-Learning Showcase day promises to be a big event. Our steering group for this event comprises the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, and representatives from our teaching quality unit, e-learning advisers, our centre for academic practice and development advisers and the library. Rachel and I have sent print and e-mail invitations to academic staff who have been using innovative teaching practices to contribute to the day, which is to be held in the learning grid.

Rachel and I discuss how many responses we've had to the e-Learning Showcase day invitations and what people seem to be willing to contribute

in the way of demonstrations, presentations, posters, etc. We consider whether people who are unable to attend on the day might be willing to contribute some video footage that can be playing in one of the areas of the learning grid, in the same way that we plan to feature podcasts.

Liaison for planning the event has so far involved our communications office, the e-learning development team, a printing firm, hospitality and our Unitemps temping agency. We are finalising draft contributions from each of the main services involved for a brochure to accompany the event itself, detailing the role that each of our services play in supporting electronic teaching and learning activities, with a particular focus on the electronic.

I spend most of the rest of the day planning for tomorrow's scanning practice event. This event seems to have been sorely needed as I proposed it last autumn and got lots of positive feedback on the idea. I've had lots of advice from Lizzie Gadd at Loughborough who manages the jiscmail list lis-copyseek on the programme and feel glad to have secured so many good speakers. There has obviously been a lot of prior planning but there is always more to do, especially tweaking my own presentation.

I receive one or two last-minute apologies so the delegate list needs altering and the name badges taking out. The final version of the delegate list and programme are printed and copies are made. I run through my checklist: signs to point to our room, welcome signs, water jug and cups for speakers, vital phone numbers, taxi-booking sheet, and so on.

TUESDAY

This is a busy day and I come in early to make sure that everything is in order for our scanning practice event. I manage an early morning cup of tea before Alejandro and I go across to the mathematics building where our event is to be held. One or two people got there super early, so I regret my cup of tea! Still, we set up the reception desk and the refreshments arrive quickly afterwards. Albert the porter is great and sets out some chairs for people to sit on in the foyer where the refreshments are served.

As the delegates arrive and Alejandro hands out their badges and programmes, I check the room out. I have a brief panic when I can't turn the projector on, but audio-visual services come out

very quickly and sort it in no time. The speakers' slides are all up there ready and I manage to greet them as they arrive. I take the first two speakers up to the room to settle in then start rounding the others up.

At the end of the day I reflect on how well it went overall. There are one or two lessons I have learnt for next time, such as that the air conditioning in the maths building is very noisy and when it kicked in it distracted from the speaker. Also, I should have announced where the food was being served before we broke for lunch, although people did find it anyway! I have made lots of contacts and learnt loads about what others are doing with their scanning, which was the whole point of the day, so I go home feeling tired but pleased.

WEDNESDAY

I use the research and innovation unit (RIU) blog to record information about the new scanning service that the British Library spoke about at the scanning practice event yesterday. Our blog began as a way of trying to tell people in the library what a research and innovation unit does in a library, and it has become more widely read – we have readers from all around the world, according to Google analytics. Occasionally we get comments from students or other staff at Warwick, and occasionally from other library professionals. Keeping the blog up to date is a useful way of recording our thoughts on innovative technologies and developments, so we can refer back to websites we've found interesting in the past if we get a new project on a topic we've blogged about in the past.

I go for lunch with the careers service information team whom I worked with on a secondment in 2006 to cover their manager's maternity leave. I really enjoyed that secondment and it's nice to keep in touch. I was very pleased to recruit the careers' service's second graduate trainee, Emma, whilst I was working there, so I am happy to see how she's getting on.

The careers service is based in the same building as many of the university administration departments at Warwick, including finance, student records, the international office, etc., so I made lots of useful contacts whilst working over in that building. Working for the careers service gave me a different perspective on the university whilst also remaining within the information profession.

I spend the afternoon investigating OpenURL matters relating to our tool, Build-a-Link. I came up with the idea for a tool to create links to journal articles when you type in the reference details. My manager, John Dale, is also the manager of eLab, part of our IT services department here at Warwick, and he put me together with one of his eLab team to co-ordinate the creation of Build-a-Link. It was originally designed to look up the base url of a provider and append metadata elements to the url to make the OpenURL link. However, this caused us problems when a provider merged with another, so the urls created by Build-a-Link no longer worked when the domain name ceased to be used. Instead we're going to generate links that go to our OpenURL resolver, WebBridge, so the links created by Build-a-Link will last much longer.

THURSDAY

A telephone call comes in from an academic wanting an article to be scanned urgently for tomorrow. I go through our seven checks to work out whether the article can be scanned or not, find it on the shelves, scan it, record it, add the copyright notice and put it on the library's website with restricted permissions, before e-mailing the tutor with the url. It's lucky for that tutor that he called on a day when I had the time to do all that! Two more requests come in by e-mail but they can wait until tomorrow when Alejandro returns, and we can further refine the procedure we have for processing extracts.

I take some time to check out the Mindjet MindManager software that is mind-mapping software available to Warwick staff. I create a basic mind map of copyright to get me started, adding links to web pages, documents and mailing lists. I have a feeling that this map is going to grow rather fast, but I like the fact that I can structure all my links in a visible way.

FRIDAY

Alejandro and I use the RIU forum to discuss the process for scanning extracts: this way manager John Dale can track the conversation, as he is based on another campus for most of the week. Also, we can refer to the forum at a later date to check what we said, and so can other members of staff.

As I promised that I would publish a web page for the PowerPoint slides from the scanning practice event before the end of the week, I chase

one speaker and load it all up before e-mailing all the delegates to inform them of the url. I also look up one or two other websites to link to from mine, relevant to people's enquiries on the day. I've had so many nice e-mails about the event that I forward them on to the library managers: I enjoyed organising the event, so it's good that they should know it was a success.

At the end of the day I frantically print out maps and gather paperwork in preparation for LILAC (Librarians' Information Literacy Annual Conference) on Monday. Train tickets, hotel reservation, event details, laptop, out of office auto mail, voicemail: CHECK! Ready for a weekend off ...