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**Librarian as Lecturer: How Information Literacy is Paving the Way for Librarians
to be Integrated into Student's Learning with Advantages for both the Student
and Your Career**

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Abstract

Information Literacy comprises a major part of a librarian's role and a vital part of student learning. One of the many Griffith University graduate attributes is for students to be information literate (Griffith University, 2004). As the law librarian at the Gold Coast Campus, I feel that my role is to be instrumental in driving forward this agenda.

During 2005, a major review of the undergraduate law curriculum was conducted by the Griffith Law School and the outcome of this process has allowed me to be part of the process to integrate information literacy and legal research skills into the undergraduate degree. This was a first for Griffith University Librarians and I have to say that we're excited about it.

The paper will look at the process undertaken to integrate information literacy and legal research skills into the curriculum and how I, as law librarian, have gone from teaching hour-long workshops in legal research to creating and delivering a complete subject on this topic.

I'll also be talking about my experience with the whole process along with the intricacies of balancing the role of both teacher and librarian. Interestingly, one role has caused a great impact upon the other so this will be discussed along with an honest approach of what did and what didn't work.

When I first started working as a librarian, the thought of standing before a group of students and showing them how to use a database or search the library catalogue was a very scary feeling. In fact, I can still recall my very first session, with five first year students. My knees shook the entire time, I forgot half of the demonstration searches I'd prepared and to make matters worse, I couldn't access one of the databases – major panic! That was only five years ago and I'm still unsure how things have changed so much that I now stand in front of 170 students and deliver sessions with no problems what so ever. Well, maybe there's a few nerves thrown in sometimes... but it just goes to show that practice and more practice pays off.

This paper is not a discussion on the concept of information literacy, or what makes an information literate student. It is designed to be a practical depiction of my own experiences. I've read literature on information literacy, heard and read how others have implemented information literacy principles and am aware of the CAUL Best Practice Characteristics for Developing Information Literacy in Australian Universities (Council of Australian University Librarians, 2004). I've used a certain amount of this information as a basis for the design and development of my own training materials. However, this is a practical account so I'm going to explain how I've gone from teaching hour-long workshops in legal research to creating and delivering a complete subject on the topic. It hasn't been without dramas or great learning experiences so I'd like to share as many of these with you as I can, as well as giving my opinion on just how this has helped me, and why information literacy is an essential skill for law students.

Let's start with the background on how I managed to become involved in lecturing for the law school. During 2004 and 2005 the Griffith Law School undertook a complete curriculum review of its undergraduate courses. The Griffith Law School was established in 1992 therefore the need for curricula review was evident as issues that barely featured in 1992 are now driving the legal agenda. Griffith Law School has evolved from a single campus law school with an intake of no more than 80 students to a multi-campus school with 650 undergraduate students, plus a continually evolving graduate program comprising about 200 students. With these major changes, it was no wonder that the curriculum needed review!

As a result of the review, the law school developed vertical and horizontal subjects. The horizontal subjects are those that comprise the formal program studied by law students, for example Law and the Modern State, Introduction to Public Law. Vertical subjects are those are interwoven through the degree with the skills being built on throughout the five-year degree, a scaffolding approach. There are nine vertical subjects comprising:

- Group work
- Ethics
- Legal theory
- Reading, researching and writing
- Analysis, problem solving
- Effective communication
- Reflective client-focussed approach
- Internationalisation
- Indigenous Issues

(See at end of paper Figure 1: Horizontal and vertical subjects in year 1)

As law librarian I assist in the provision of the vertical subject of reading, researching and writing. However, during the first semester of their degree, law students also undertake a new horizontal subject on Legal Research and this is where my role as lecturer comes into play. By teaching a subject in the first semester, of the first year of the degree, students are introduced to the basics of legal research at the beginning of their degree. The skills are then built on through the vertical subject until they reach the fifth year of their degree when they can undertake either a 10 or 20-credit point subject called Interdisciplinary Research Project.

When the law review committee recommended that research be an integral part of the law curriculum, it was a major step forward as legal research had comprised a minimal part of the degree before. In previous years, students received three 1-hour sessions on how to find legal information as part of a foundation course. At the end of these sessions, the students were given two pieces of assessment, each worth 5% of their grade, which involved them locating legislation and cases using the databases shown

in class. This was not an effective method of teaching legal research skills, as the sessions were rushed, due to having to slot them in amongst an already full course load for that subject. Therefore at the time the assignments were due, there would be an increased number of law students at the information desk, asking for assistance. By the time the students reached second and third year, they needed a lot of one-on-one help to locate journal articles and other materials to effectively answer their assignments. This was obviously not effective.

The results of the law school review provided an effective remedy for this problem by introducing the introductory course in legal research with the new curricular role out. The review committee recommended that by the end of the course the students should:

- Understand the research process
- Be aware of issues of research ethics
- Understand what is meant by plagiarism and the importance of properly referencing research material; and
- Be competent in knowing what legal research resources are available, when, and how, to use basic information retrieval techniques appropriate to the research problem

(Griffith Law School, 2005, p.51)

To achieve these outcomes, the committee suggested the course should cover:

- Introduction to the law/government library
- The library databases, particularly the legal databases, and tailored training sessions on the Lexis Nexis databases
- Case Law workshops (Australian focus)
- Legislation workshops (Australian focus)
- The Library catalogue
- Legal and generic article searching
- An introduction to finding international legal material

(Griffith Law School, 2005, p.51)

They further stated that in teaching the course, the students would be required to undertake library exercises that would test their understanding. The course would also cover interdisciplinary research and the methods and frameworks that can be used to

successfully address research questions (Griffith Law School, 2005, p.52). As well as the core course in legal research, students would be required to use their legal research skills to answer assignment questions in a number of other core first year courses, allowing them to build on their skills throughout the year.

All the appropriate bodies agreed to the revised law curriculum and in October 2005 I, and the other law librarian, were approached by the Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) and asked to be part of the course, set to start in February 2006. Naturally we were excited to be part of such a major change, and the first of the faculty librarians at Griffith University to be so ingrained in the information literacy training of students in a specific discipline. This was a major breakthrough and a very positive endorsement by the law school of the importance of information literacy skills, and our ability to perform the task required. The next step in the process was formal discussions between my team leader and the Associate Dean, who was also the course convenor for the subject. We put together a service level agreement that detailed what services and responsibilities would be provided by the law librarians, and those that would be the responsibility of the law school. In hindsight, we completely undersold ourselves and had no idea about the demands teaching would place on us. Changes to the SLA will be made for next year.

With all the formalities agreed on, it was time to start putting the course together. The guidelines of what should be covered were set by the curriculum review, which made the task easier. All of the materials already existed in some format, all that was required was a little updating and re-working of the information to suit the sessions decided on. Deciding on a format for the course was relatively easy because the aim was to make the course as practical and useful for the students as possible. The final decision was to hold one lecture with all of the students and then a number of hands on workshops in computer labs. The law librarian and the course convenor jointly taught the first lecture to enable the students to become familiar with both people, even though the majority of their contact would be with the law librarian.

The workshop sessions were designed to be very practical, hands on sessions that would allow the students to first be shown where they could find specific types of information, and then give them a chance to practice and ask any questions. Each

workshop had a particular theme e.g. finding legislation. The first part of the workshop would involve a lecture style presentation of background information and then a show and follow where the students could find the information. For example, in the finding legislation workshop I would talk about the process of enacting legislation. Then I would use the appropriate database, such as ComLaw (www.comlaw.gov.au), and demonstrate, with the students following on their computers, how to locate an Act compilation. The last 15 minutes of the workshop was spend answering questions as the students worked through a set of exercises that enabled them to practice what had been taught in the class.

There has been much discussion about the importance of information literacy skills in the literature and how important hands-on training is. It is even more important for law students. In Australia, our legal system is based on the principle that laws are either set down by parliament or earlier decisions of judges in the courts are followed. Therefore those who practice the law need to know how to locate the law, and to understand its application so they can then apply it to their facts. Legal resources such as books, journals, and databases are as essential to a law student as a laboratory is to a chemistry student. Therefore legal research skills are a core component of the skills that a law student needs to attain. If a law student doesn't develop effective research skills early on in their degree, they will struggle for the remainder of it, and be severely disadvantaged when they enter the workplace. I like to think that this course has remedied this problem. Luckily, student feedback has been great. Students commented throughout the subject that they had found it beneficial by being able to apply the skills to locate information for other assignments. They particularly commented that the sessions on finding journal articles and developing search strategies had assisted them in completing assignments for their non-law subjects. After completing the subject students have said that they have found research so much easier in their second semester because they have been able to put in practice what they learnt. It's hearing those types of comments that make me feel pleased at the role I've played in their studies.

One of the difficulties I've experienced is learning how to balance the normal demanding role of being a faculty librarian with the influx of work that lecturing created. While this course reduced the number of students that would turn up at the Information

Desk asking for law assistance to answer the very basic questions, it multiplied by 170 the number that turned up directly asking for me! At Griffith University the information services desk is the one point of contact for all library and information technology needs. I am the only person on the staff at the Gold Coast who answers legal research questions so as a result; I am called a lot for help. This has worked quite well in the past, as there wasn't an excessive amount of questions. Now that all first year students knew me, they would come and ask for me regardless of the question they had, and this impacted greatly on my productivity. At the other campus, the law librarian staffs a dedicated law desk for set hours each day so law students are used to going to the desk at certain times for assistance. Unfortunately that doesn't work at the Gold Coast due to space and staffing issues. Therefore, after teaching for six hours a week, dedicating four hours to law consultation (without the additional callouts to the desk), working my rostered nine hours on the information desk and spending a few extra hours each week in preparation of the classes or writing assessment, my normal duties suffered.

What I have learnt out of this has been that I can't be so accommodating to the demands of the students. Teaching this subject is not my primary duty but I need to balance my other tasks with the fact that without the students I would not have a job. Next year I plan to make myself available for set consultation hours although I will probably expand these from four to six hours and not answer questions relating to the course on an on-call basis as I did this year. It sets a precedent that I don't want to continue. As I also staff the desk an additional nine hours a week, I feel that this will be sufficient for students to approach me about queries relating to the legal research subject. I'm sure that implementing this approach will not be as easy as it is to say it, but I have learnt that I need to balance the demands on my time.

One of the biggest learning curves for me was the process of writing and moderating assessment. Students had to sit two online exams that involved them searching for the answers to the questions and entering their answers via the test set up in Blackboard, the learning management system used by Griffith University. As this was the first time that this type of exam had been conducted, the teaching team decided the students should sit it in exam conditions, giving them an hour to answer a set number of questions. With the law librarian or course convenor moderating it, this reduced the

opportunities for the students to collaborate or copy answers from their peers. The problem was that with so many students taking the subject (170 and 230 respectively at each campus), there was no possible way, taking into account available computer labs, database licences and staff availability that they could all sit the exam at once. Therefore the likelihood of some students passing on the questions and answers to students sitting later exams was an issue that needed to be dealt with. To prevent this, questions were randomised. The law librarians had to write enough questions so that there was a reduced risk of two students getting the same question, a huge undertaking when over 300 questions were written. A lot of my early questions were too wordy or not precise so I learnt how to frame a question to ensure that it could be understood and that the relevant pieces of information were identified from the facts given. Being precise reduced the risks of persuasive arguments when students interpreted the question differently. Moderating the exams was also a very different situation as in my role, I am used to giving assistance when a student asks how to locate something. There is limited information that you can give when a student asks a question in an exam. I very quickly learnt how to rephrase the question without giving anything away and how to be non-committal when a student was testing a theory out on me about what database to use, or what keywords would be appropriate.

By far the hardest role of all was dealing with the reactions to the assessment. There are some students who right from the start of their law degree are proof that law is definitely the field they should be in. They argue, won't accept no for an answer and believe that every answer they submit is correct, regardless of how many times they are shown that they are incorrect. I had a number of students like this in my classes and while they were easier to manage in a classroom situation, one-on-one consultations with them after the results of their exams were released was much harder. For me, this type of situation was very new. I admit that I like to ensure that the people I deal with are happy and understand the situation but teaching this course changed all that. I learnt how to be harder, by being able to say no and learnt how to not let a student sidetrack me and slip in a comment that then made me doubt myself and the hours I'd spent writing and proofing the questions. I found the first exam results release very stressful as I had a handful of students who would come to visit me over and over again, trying to scam extra marks for answers that were not correct. As part of the exam, some questions were of the multiple-choice type and I had a number

of ingenious students who tried to tell me that the “computer” had selected the wrong result. They of course “remembered” choosing the correct answer. Those ones were easier to deal with than others. As I’ve said, it was completely outside my experience. At the time, my stress levels were very high but by the time the second exam results were released and I was once again inundated with, funnily enough, arguments from the same students, I knew how to deal with them. To make the next round less stressful I prepared myself by asking the course convenor for advice. He was exceedingly helpful and reminded me that I could direct complaints to him should they refuse to accept what my reasoning.

While the writing of the assessment took a large amount of time - I logged over 60 hours writing and proofing exam questions - I found that being responsible for setting and moderating the assessment was an important part of the course. It increased my role and profile with students and academics as being more than just the person who talked the students through the content. While some of my peers have queried the amount of time and effort spent doing this part of the course, I feel that it is integral that not only are the librarians involved in delivering the content but in assessing the learning also. If we aren’t able to see just how effective our delivery is through testing students learning, then there is no way to determine whether we are getting through to the student. After looking at the results and what questions were answered effectively and ineffectively I feel that the delivery of the content was good, but there is more that can be done to improve it. It was interesting, noting that there were certain areas that the majority of students didn’t grasp. In the course next year, I’ll be able to focus on these areas more, and hopefully devote less time to the areas that they all did understand.

I have gained a lot from being involved in this course and I feel that the benefits have far out-weighed the amount of time and other stresses associated with it. In terms of my own personal and professional development, I have developed skills in lecturing to large amounts of students, improved my ability to deliver hands-on training sessions, and increased my own confidence in my ability to do this and in the depth of my legal knowledge. I have learnt how to use a large number of features within a learning management system such as Blackboard, which has resulted in further professional development as I have since presented training sessions on using this software to

academics. As I've already said I've developed skills in writing and framing assessment questions, and have developed the ability to deal with students who can be argumentative. The advantage of learning these types of new skills has a flow on effect and I look forward to taking it further.

One of the added benefits is that being involved in this has raised my profile amongst the other faculty librarians and within the law school itself. Being the youngest and least experienced faculty librarian meant that I often felt that I didn't have as much knowledge or practical experience as others and that my ideas and suggests were overlooked based on that lack of experience. The fact that I have been instrumental in implementing and driving forward what many of these librarians have been talking about for the past few years has meant a new level of respect for my abilities. The course has been so successful that it is being used as a benchmark by the Faculty Librarians to show other schools what can be done and how valuable information literacy skills are for students. While the recognition of peers has been great, perhaps the best part for me is that it has improved relationships with those in the law school. Prior to this, many lecturers saw me as the person to contact if they wanted a book ordered. While I have no doubt that my skills were recognised and valued, it wasn't on a professional level equal to theirs. Since teaching this course, they have accepted me as an adjunct member of the school, discussing and inviting my comment on much more than collection development issues. I have been invited to school morning teas, events and meetings that I wasn't invited to previously which has been great for improving relations but also allowing me to stay more informed about issues that are impacting on the academic staff. By being aware of the pressure and outside influences of their jobs, I can try to tailor solutions that will reduce the time they spend researching and ineffectively using legal resources.

The experience of teaching this subject in legal research has been rewarding, and one of the best professional experiences I've had. I'm looking forward to semester one next year when I'll get to do it all again. I am already working on updates and changes to make the content and course structure even more beneficial for the students. While it hasn't been without it's stressful times – just ask some of my workmates! – it has been worth the blood, sweat and tears. I strongly recommend to anyone who has this type of opportunity to jump onboard, give it 120% and make the most of the opportunity.



Librarian as Lecturer

The benefits far outweigh any negatives. Not only will it be a great learning experience but it will be satisfying – that moment when the light bulb goes on and the student understands, being stopped in the middle of campus by a student who wants say hi, being approached at the information desk by a student who says “thank god you’re here!” or getting that heartfelt thank you. It’s those little ways that make it all worthwhile.



Librarian as Lecturer

References:

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Figure 1: Horizontal and vertical subjects in year 1

Course	Group Work	Ethics	Legal Theory	Generic and Legal Skills				Internationalisation	Indigenous Issues
				Reading, Research & Writing	Analysis Problem Solving	Effective Communication	Reflective Client focussed approach		
LAMS		Representation, lawyer-client conflict of interest	Intro to key institutions & concepts	Reading cases, statutes, etc	Application of legal principles 1a	Interviewing and advising 1	Client focus in interviews	International law as a source of law	Intro to indigenous jurisprudence
CCO1	Level 1: intro to group work	Choices in representation, current client conflict of interest		Reading cases, statutes, etc	Fact gathering 1 (also problem solving)	Legal argument and advocacy 1 (also Drafting)	Client focus in fact gathering		
Legal Research				Research process, resources, ethics, plagiarism, Reading cases, statutes, etc				Introduction to international legal materials	
CCO2				Reading cases		Negotiation 1, Legal Drafting 1b	Best interests of client in negotiations		Indigenous material on fiduciary relations
Intro to legal theory		Duties to courts and to law, deliberation of choice	Intro to legal theory and interdisciplinary	Reading & researching legal theory; interdisciplinary legal research; methodical approach to research assignments					Indigenous approach to critical race theory
Legal Writing				Intro to legal writing, plagiarism			Time and workplace management		

Source: Griffith Law School, (2005), pp79-80