



Anglia Ruskin
University

**Reading for a Degree : creating an
Anglia Ruskin Reading Strategy**

**Report of the University Library
Learning and Teaching Fellowship
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**Diana Garfield : Faculty Liaison Librarian, AIBS
Maurice Wakeham : Faculty Liaison Librarian, FHSC**

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Executive Summary

Anglia Ruskin University library is currently aware of concerns within our University over student reading. Our aim in this Learning and Teaching Fellowship project has been to explore these concerns and draw together good practice ideas for tackling them. The Reading Strategy created is derived from the thinking of academics, students, librarians and learning support staff. It is also placed in the context of a review of the current literature on reading, literacy and libraries.

Two key areas of concern with reading emerged during our research. Firstly, there is a concern with a lack of effective reading skills in students. This includes lacking confidence to go beyond reading lists, over-use of non-academic sources, difficulties with writing clearly, note-taking, referencing, skim-reading etc. Secondly, there is a concern with lack of critical reading skills. This involves an inability in some students to construct complex meaning from their reading.

The evidence collected during the research shows that academic staff use a variety of learning and teaching techniques and methods to assist students in developing these essential skills. They encourage students to read more widely, to engage with academic materials, and to improve their writing and reading skills. Academics encourage criticality in reading through suggesting criteria to assess texts and offering detailed exercises in class.

The role of reading lists in enabling effective student reading is also explored and good practice recommendations for creating lists are offered. Librarians are particularly aware of the difference that good reading lists can make to the student experience of learning.

Setting up Book Groups was an innovative experiment to see how such groups could be part of a strategy to encourage reading in our University. Participants in the groups have found the experience stimulating and we believe that it might be possible to run student Book Groups with the right support and inducements.

Finally, the research asked questions about how the University Library could further support and encourage effective reading at Anglia Ruskin. We received wide endorsement for the work we already do with students and were encouraged to expand this work where possible. Student respondents were more concerned with the learning environment of the libraries. Academics and librarians recognised the need for a close mutual working relationship to support effective reading. Learning support staff recognised the extent to which the library, like themselves, enables student reading in one-to-one support.

Introduction

What is a Reading Strategy and why do we need one at Anglia Ruskin?

Here in the University Library we are well placed to pick up concerns about student reading. These are some of the comments we hear from academic colleagues:

- Students stick rigidly to reading lists and don't go beyond
- Students use Google rather than academic sources
- Student writing shows that they are not reading
- Students sometimes don't know how to skim read, use abstracts, indexes, or reference correctly
- Students lack a critical approach to reading

In response to these concerns we felt that as a Library we ought to take a lead in addressing reading issues. (2008 is also the UK National Year of Reading). We knew too that colleagues throughout our University had good practice ideas for tackling these challenges. So with these thoughts in mind we embarked on a project, funded by a University Learning and Teaching Fellowship, to identify and draw together good practice into one overarching Strategy document that might act as a stimulus and a guide for encouraging more effective student reading at Anglia Ruskin.

We invited colleagues and students to meet with us and discuss reading issues. It is fair to say that we uncovered a passion for reading in our University. The topic was close to many of our colleagues' hearts. We are very grateful for all the enthusiasm and encouragement that we received as we listened to people's views. The evidence in this report shows the depth of commitment in our University to achieving academic excellence for all our students. We hope that our research will prove useful to colleagues and that ways will be found to carry it forward into practice.

Collecting the evidence

We want to create a Reading Strategy that is owned and inspired by the students and staff of our University; a set of best-practice ideas designed to encourage quality reading by everyone.

Our evidence was therefore collected in forums, focus groups, Book Groups and from questionnaires. To set it in context we carried out a literature review on reading, literacy and libraries, with particular regard to the HE sector. (See appendix 1)

Evidence from academic staff

In May and September 2007 we held Reading List forums with academic colleagues at Chelmsford and Cambridge. These were intended to identify good practice in creating reading lists but also raised many general reading issues. Following on from these and developing some of the issues raised, we held Motivating Student Reading forums with colleagues at Chelmsford, Cambridge and Fulbourn in November and December 2007, and January 2008.

Although these forums were well attended and generated enthusiastic discussion, we were aware that so far we had only collected the views of a fairly small number of people. We therefore sent out a questionnaire to the Faculties in January 2008 covering some key reading questions and received over 60 responses. (For questionnaire – see appendix 2)

Evidence from students

The University Library holds regular focus group sessions with students and we were able to devote one of these sessions at Chelmsford solely to reading issues. This group gave us some useful insights into student views.

Evidence from Learning Support staff

Learning Support staff play a key role in the encouragement of study skills in our University. We wanted to hear their views on how more effective reading can be enabled, particularly in those students who have a specific learning difficulty. A questionnaire therefore went to Learning Support staff who responded with detailed information on the services they provide.

Evidence from librarians

Library staff interact with students at enquiry points continually and play a major role in enabling reading. In order to collect the views of our colleagues in the University Library we sent them a questionnaire on reading issues and received an enthusiastic response.

Evidence from Book Groups

As part of the L&T Fellowship project we wanted to experiment with Book Groups on campus – reading and sharing ideas in a relaxed, non-judgemental setting. We took advice from Essex County Libraries on how to set up Book

Groups. They have a long and successful experience in this field and recommended that we start with library staff and then move out to include others. This worked well and we ran successful monthly groups from April to June 2008 at Chelmsford and Cambridge. Three novels were read and discussed at each site, and library staff were joined by a small number of academic colleagues. A brief questionnaire at the end of the experiment gathered participants' views on the exercise.

 Anglia Ruskin University
Cambridge & Chelmsford

Five books have been read



www.anglia.ac.uk

Two areas of concern

The evidence we collected from our enquiries points to two major areas of concern with student reading.

The first concern is with **skills for effective reading**. This is a broad area encompassing a variety of issues.

- Students stick rigidly to reading lists and don't go beyond – they often don't read widely enough and try to get by on minimal reading.
- Students use Google rather than academic sources – they don't always appreciate the importance of using academic resources to achieve HE standards.
- Student writing shows that they are not reading effectively – they may have difficulty taking notes, expressing ideas in their own words and referencing reading correctly.
- Students sometimes don't know how to skim read, use abstracts, indexes etc. – they have difficulty identifying relevant information within texts.

The second concern is with **skills for critical reading**.

- Students lack a critical approach to reading – they sometimes struggle to synthesise their reading into written work. They find it challenging to construct their own meaning from texts. They are afraid to challenge academic texts and advance their own arguments.

NB

In this report we deal with these two concerns by offering good practice ideas for tackling them in two separate sections. In real academic life however, the two areas are usually inter-linked and students may require assistance on several levels at the same time.

It is also worth noting that different disciplines have different reading concerns and challenges. No single strategy for encouraging reading will fit all students.

A Reading Strategy : Recommendations for good practice

- **Skills for effective reading**
- **Skills for critical reading**
- **The role of reading lists**
- **Possibilities for University Book Groups**
- **The role of the University Library**

Developing skills for effective reading – some ideas from academic staff

Encouraging students to read widely

- Recommend a range of texts including different styles for different people
- Try not to let students get over-focussed on the assignment too early in the module
- Use assessment as a driver for reading – give positive feedback where references show wide reading and point out that grade A students read widely and show better career progression
- Recommend reading at every opportunity with enthusiasm – be an enthusiastic reading role model and read everything you recommend
- Recommend a variety of reading media to get students started – magazines, websites, newspapers – and discuss reading in class
- Encourage students to follow their own special interests and learn through their own choice of reading
- Work closely with the library to ensure that access to reading sources is freely available – any obstacle appears to be an excuse not to read.

Encouraging students to use academic sources

- Reading opens worlds and constitutes learning. Academic literature is like a big international conversation – be part of it!
- Emphasise that being at university is not just about doing the minimum amount of study to pass assessments. Students don't always appreciate that they should see themselves as independent learners.
- Enthuse about particular academics and present them in a light that drives curiosity.
- Encourage students to learn to read relevant literature and be able to apply to practice. Get them to ask themselves - "What does this mean to me?"

- Mention books in seminars, constantly refer to the library, show enthusiasm for reading.
- Refer to articles in your teaching and signpost them on WebCT.
- Discuss the expectation that academic reading is essential for HE level studies and that reliance on tutor input is not enough.

Encouraging improved student writing through more effective reading

- During induction we have a study session on how to read and make notes.
- A session in induction period with good clear handouts pays dividends, and can be referred to during the rest of the course.
- Review samples of students' notes and offer general feedback
- I always say that once you have read a short section you should make notes that would enable you to explain it to someone who hadn't read it.
- Give formative feedback on assignments – including where good use has been made of reading and where additional reading is needed.
- Reading, writing and learning are inextricably linked and you can't talk about one without the others.
- The more you read around a subject, the easier it becomes to write with any authority about it.

Developing skills for identifying relevant information within texts

- Reading is a series of activities rather than a single one. This means learning different strategies for reading rather than just using the same approach for everything. It also means recognising that reading material comes in different forms and we need to develop the right strategy for the material in question.
- Students need to learn strategies that can help them read more quickly and effectively: previewing (reviewing titles, section headings, to get a sense of the structure and content of a text);skimming and screening (using a quick survey of the text to get the main ideas, using abstracts) ; paraphrasing (putting ideas in your own words).
- I provide students with study skills sessions at the beginning of the course and organise a library induction.
- Take a selection of texts into class and ask students to chose one. After 5 minutes of skim reading ask them to identify the text's key message.
- Go through the essential textbook reading for the first couple of weeks and annotate it, break it down into small chunks and pose questions along the way.

Developing skills for critical reading – some ideas from academic staff

Why critical reading is important

- Students need to be able to read systematically and construct meaning from it – not just read and sort-of understand, but really understand at the level where they use it as a tool to develop their own framework of understanding.
- The reader is active in the reading process in the sense that his/her meaning is unique and depends on his values, attitudes and what s/he already knows.

Using criteria to critique

- Give students criteria to analyse their reading eg. What is the main argument? What evidence does the author use to support the argument? Is the evidence valid –up-to-date/relevant/biased? Do you agree with the author?

Skills for criticality

- In a tutorial give students a paragraph from a relevant article to read and ask them to analyse it in detail.
- Groups of students can be asked to research a topic and share their reading on a discussion board in the VLE. Students can be assessed on the quality and content of their discussion (one example awards up to 40% of the module mark). Academics can moderate the discussion to make sure everyone contributes.
- We unpick chapters in seminars, discuss content – what makes sense, what doesn't etc. How can particular issues become more relevant or be followed up? We debate, develop critical thinking skills and use patchwork texts (students are given 10 short pieces of work, such as summaries, contrasting two chapters, short reports, bibliography exercises etc.)
- Read key articles and write a short critique, then discuss the critique in class.
- Its important to be in control and in charge of your own reading by using indexes and learning to read critically.

Raise awareness of the need for critical reading

- Make students aware that evidence based analysis in their work will score highly.
- Tell students - be discriminating – be a sceptical reader.
- Be a critical reader, both positively and negatively.
- Enter into a debate with what you are reading. Decide what you want out of the book /article.

The role of Reading Lists

As librarians we wanted to explore the role of reading lists and gather good practice ideas. Understandings of reading list formats vary between disciplines. However, the following points were generally agreed between academics, students, librarians and learning support staff.

- How long should lists be?
 - For academic purposes it should be concise enough to be able to read a good amount of it, but it should have enough variety within the titles to appeal to people of different interests
- Close links to the module outcomes
 - Reading needs to be clearly linked to the assessment and module outcomes
- Key texts?
 - Highlight the key text
 - or**
 - At postgraduate level there should be as few key texts as possible to encourage wider reading.
- Up-to-date
 - Books that are up-to-date/latest edition
- Annotated
 - Include short summary about text and style – why its been included
 - Include **access instructions** – purchase (for key text), library location and number of copies, digital chapters on WebCT, links to articles and e-books in the Digital Library
- Accessible
 - Everything on the list should be accessible (see point above)
- Variety
 - Include a variety of media – books, journals, websites etc.
- Discuss with students
 - A reading list which the lecturer refers to during the course – rather than the students being left to “go away and read it”. Encouragement is required.
- Clarity
 - Harvard referencing
 - Clear layout, font, quality
 - Correct references
- Time
 - Give lists out in good time

Possibilities for University Book Groups

Our experiment with University Book Groups was an exciting part of our project. We wanted to find out whether such groups could thrive in our University and how they might enhance people's reading experience. 2 groups were set up – in Chelmsford and Cambridge – and 30 staff took part. Participants were surveyed on their experience.

What do book groups offer?

- They can be part of an overall strategy to encourage **reading**
- They can help develop relationships between staff and / or students across the institution
- They encourage engagement with, and the sharing of **ideas**
- They help foster concepts of discussion and debate

Views on the benefits of reading in a book group:

- Encourages people to read what they wouldn't normally read
- Makes you think deeper about the books read
- Makes you consider other's perspectives, on the plot, the book characters and the writing
- All enjoyed discussing the book
- All felt book groups made a positive contribution to their University life

Views on how book clubs can be expanded or encouraged:

- Read books at different sites and discuss online
- Base groups in Faculties
- Promote in Bulletin or ANET – days and times, mini-book reviews
- Talk to colleagues
- Have a choice of books or a vote on what to read next
- Groups with a particular interest e.g. non-fiction, fantasy

Getting students involved

Some saw problems:

- Only those that read a lot would take part
- Students may think it sounds too much like work
- Finding time might be a problem

But some students might get involved if

- it was like a supportive study reading group
- the Students Union was involved
- the meeting was in a social setting
- they are provided with the books or refreshments

The role of the University Library in supporting effective reading

We asked academics, students, librarians and learning support staff for their views on how the University library should support more effective reading in our University.

- Facilitate reading events, run Book Groups, include fiction, invite authors to speak
- Display new material and highlight new purchases to academic staff
- Provide support for students
 - Run more information skills sessions
 - Work with students on developing critical skills
 - Facilitate good research practices
 - Provide a user-friendly website
- Work closely with academics to ensure up-to-date resources and information
 - Clearly advertised subject specialists
- Accessibility of resources
 - Make sure reading list materials are available
 - Encourage use of e-books, e-journals, digitised chapters on WebCT
- Accessible buildings
 - Make libraries inviting
 - Ensure quiet areas for study
 - Offer 24 hour opening
 - Provide more pcs
 - Provide water coolers
 - Provide a clean, safe environment
- Give time to students
 - Friendly help at enquiry points
 - Extended loans for students with learning difficulties

Appendix 1

A Reading Strategy for a modern University: Reviewing the literature on reading, literacy and libraries, with particular regard to the HE sector

Diana Garfield, Faculty Liaison Librarian, AIBS

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Introduction

This literature review marks a stage in one University Library's campaign to develop a strategy in partnership with its parent institution to encourage and enable more and better reading amongst students. Anecdotal feedback from academic colleagues, support staff, and the experience of librarians at enquiry points convinced library staff that student reading skills need attention. At least two levels of skills support are identified – firstly, study skills support in how to approach academic reading, and secondly, support in skills of critiquing and synthesising reading. A University Learning and Teaching Fellowship award enabled senior library staff to embark on a project to develop a University Reading Strategy – a set of best-practice ideas and guidelines designed to encourage and support quality student reading. The literature review provides a starting point for the research.

UK national context

The wider context of the University Library L&T Fellowship to create a Reading Strategy is a national concern and concentration on adult skills and in particular literacy and reading skills. Universities find themselves in the front line of Government expectations for delivering skills improvements in the UK population.

Following the Leitch Review of Skills (HM Treasury, 2006) the UK Government has committed itself by 2020 to targets of 95% of adults with the basic skills of functional literacy and numeracy, and over 40% of adults with Level 4 or above qualifications. Alongside this HE institutions are to be encouraged through directed funding to engage more directly with employers in order to meet the skills needs of the nation.

The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (2007) sets out its Strategic Objectives from April 2008 onwards to

“Improve the skills of the population throughout their working lives to create a workforce capable of sustaining economic competitiveness, and enable individuals to thrive in the knowledge economy”

and to

“Strengthen the capacity, quality and reputation of Further and Higher Education systems and institutions to support national economic and social needs.”

Literacy is seen as a key skill in the building of a successful 21st century UK workforce. The National Literacy Trust, an independent charity that works to promote literacy and reading in the UK, has designated 2008 as the National Year of Reading. The aims of the year are to promote and encourage reading so that people appreciate its benefits both for pleasure and purpose.

The university and reading

Reading has traditionally been at the heart of academic study and university education. “Reading for a degree” expresses something about the autonomous nature of student learning at university. The knowledge and expertise represented by an academic award

implies an ability to make a discipline one's own through a personal engagement with the subject. This type of learning grows through reading and critical thinking.

The pressures of the knowledge economy, the UK's national skills agenda and the funding crises of the UK HE sector are combining to raise serious questions about traditional understandings of university education. In particular, the newer post-1992 universities, have to compete for students and research funding in an increasingly competitive environment. Are market forces changing the very essence of academic life?

Ronald Barnett of the Institute of Education, University London writes that in an age of supercomplexity and radical uncertainty

"University knowledge, understood as a pure, objective reading of the world, does have to be abandoned"

but

"... A new epistemology for the university awaits....an epistemology for living amid uncertainty".

This has 4 elements – firstly, universities should seek to produce new understandings of knowledge through creative work. Secondly, they should grow their capacity

"for critical interrogation of all claimants for knowledge".

Thirdly, universities need to work at enabling individuals to feel at ease in an uncertain world and lastly, students should be encouraged to bring their own critical insights to bear on the knowledge they are offered. In this way Barnett sees the university carving out a new role

"as a site of enlightenment, of critical scrutiny, of the open society, and of personal fulfilment." (Barnett, 2000)

Barnett represents perhaps an idealistic view of the possibilities of the new, skills driven university agenda. The uncertainty over the future role of academic research, and of the role of the university library within that, has been a driving force behind this research project and its focus on student reading habits. Can reading still maintain its profile within university education?

Amanda Cain, librarian at West Chester University, Pennsylvania writes of the demands that academic reading can make on the student.

"Reading demands silence and much time; it is intensely private and individualistic; and outwardly it appears non-productive. In an age when undergraduates are increasingly required to log on to electronic networked environments to have and, more important, report a learning experience, 'deep' reading may even be subversive." (Cain, 2002)

Supporting reading skills

Our research findings suggest that such "deep reading" may be a rare commodity amongst our students. Many find it difficult to make the transition from school study to university study. The autonomous nature of academic study with little structured guidance from lecturers about how to use self-directed study time poses problems for some new students. Railton and Watson (2005) suggest that there is a mismatch between tutor and student expectations.

"..we may know precisely what we mean when we advise students to 'go and read' , on the other hand such proclamations are in themselves practically useless to new students unless they are accompanied by further explication such as, what to read, how to read it, and what to do with it. These are precisely the kind of academic skills that students are unlikely to have had to utilize in previous modes of education and, contrary to what we seem to hope, do not inherently possess or 'naturally' develop."

They argue that the expectations of university study should be presented to students much more clearly with support offered to enable students to reach higher levels of critical engagement with their discipline. Beginning from their experience of seminar groups where students sought help from the tutor rather than contributed intellectually to a learning discussion, Railton and Watson (2005) experimented with small reading groups of students. The groups were student-led and reading material was supplied each week for them to work on together with instructions on critiquing the material. Discussion boards in the VLE also enabled students to exchange ideas between sessions and allowed tutors to oversee the progress of the discussion. Through this process the students became more independent learners – the combination of freedom and support provided a creative learning environment.

“.. if we continue to cite autonomy as the key marker of ‘graduateness’ – then it ought to follow that its significance is evident in our own practices. As a priority here, we would argue that autonomous learning should be explicitly conceived as a skill that can be acquired in the same way as other academic skills and that practices which encourage the development of this skill must be embedded within the learning, teaching and assessment strategy of our degree programmes.” (Railton and Watson, 2005)

Others agree that student study habits need to develop to cope with the new academic environment and that students need support from academic staff in order to achieve this development. Hartley (2002) summarises successful traditional approaches to helping students with reading skills. These include asking questions of a text and filling in guide sheets after reading an article with details about the article’s content and argument. Many students are able to develop a “strategic” reading style which enables them to use both deep and surface approaches to texts depending on the nature of the task ahead of them. Hartley also recommends paired and group reading exercises, and guided peer questioning on set texts. He also argues that electronic books can aid information retrieval through search facilities within a text, and flexible access to texts for distance learners. (Hartley, 2002)

The continuing increase in the number of international students in UK universities also highlights the importance of putting in place additional support for reading. Students with English as a second language who received strategic reading instruction had significantly higher marks in a study by Dreyer & Nel (2003).

Research on meta-cognition

Whilst there is an extensive body of research on metacognition and reading comprehension amongst school-aged children, there has been little research carried out on student awareness and use of reading strategies at academic level. A research project by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) at Oklahoma State University devised an inventory of 30 statements about reading which were administered to a sample of 443 students. The inventory was not designed so much to measure student comprehension capabilities but rather to act as a tool to help students increase their awareness of their own use of reading strategies. Statements range from “I have a purpose in mind when I read” to “I preview the text to see what it’s about before reading it” and “I try to guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases”. The benefits of use of the inventory are increased responsibility by students for their own learning and improved self-perceptions and motivation.

Another research project by Jackson (2005) at the University of Iowa examined the links between students’ component reading skills and their overall level of text comprehension and literacy. This in turn was related to their academic achievement. The 193 student subjects performed a variety of reading tests with uneven results across the research sample. Analysis of the results suggested that

“word decoding and text comprehension are very modestly related among university students. Furthermore, neither word decoding accuracy nor reading fluency is related to overall academic achievement.”

Jackson (2005) suggests that further research is needed on how students with poor component reading skills compensate for these deficiencies. Also that, for

“university students, domain and genre-specific reading knowledge and strategies may be the essence of comprehension.” (Jackson, 2005)

The online environment

The online environment is seen both as an opportunity for and a threat to academic reading. The present generation of 18-25 year old students has grown up in front of television, video games and computer monitors. How much has this affected their ability to engage with academic texts? Research suggests that active learning activities (kinaesthetic learning) can increase student achievement.

“..students for the most part retain only about 10% of what they read, but they retain 20-30% of what they see. These figures may account for students’ strong preference for visual modes of information seeking.” (Weiler, 2005)

A National Literacy Trust survey on the importance of reader self-definition questioned young people from primary and secondary schools in the UK – 1143 who defined themselves as “readers” and 471 who defined themselves as “non-readers”. 60% of the “readers” read fiction books outside school whereas only 11% of the “non-readers” did so. However, the “non-readers” still read widely outside school – 66% read magazines, 52% read websites, 49% read blogs/networking websites and 43% read emails. Interestingly the survey also discovered that reading is often seen by young people in an unfavourable light. 43.5% of the “non-readers” saw readers as “geeky/a nerd” and 35.5% saw readers as “boring”. The term “reading” appears to be coloured by the types of materials it supposedly encompasses. (Clark and Osborne, 2007)

Other research agrees that young people’s ease with digital materials in playful and creative situations can offer opportunities for acquiring and developing reading skills. Narrative forms in particular, for example in computer games and virtual reality media, can increase engagement in reading. Young people

“consume and create meaning from a variety of popular media texts.” (Ross et al, 2006)

Rosenblatt (1978) wrote of the transaction that occurs between reader and text in the act of reading.

“Like a musical score, Rosenblatt wrote, the author creates a score to guide the reader (ie. the author intends meaning) and the reader does more than just obediently follow the score. The reader brings to the score his or her own experiences and draws from these to create a new work of art.” (Evans and Po, 2007)

Working from this theory Evans and Po examine students’ responses to literary digital texts in a study at Boston College, USA. Their findings offer some insights into the socio-physical aspects of reading as well as the technical aspects. They found that physical setting is important for reading –

“students said again and again that they just could not get comfortable reading on the computer. It was hard on their eyes, they got headaches, and they couldn’t curl up in a comfy chair or lie down in bed or take the computer into the bathtub.” (Evans and Po, 2007)

The experience of reading a text digitally is quite different to reading a physical one. The researchers also found that students were more easily distracted when reading online as they tended to have several windows open at once on the computer and check emails, use Messenger etc. intermittently whilst reading. (Levine, Waite & Boman, 2007)

Dealing with digital texts

Evans and Po's research required students to read hypertext novels, a digital format which requires the reader to choose and click on links to progress through the story. The subjects struggled with this finding it difficult to devise a framework for understanding the text in the traditional way. In a printed novel one is able to go back and revise one's provisional framework of understanding as new information becomes available. With a hypertext novel it is difficult to go back and re-read and revise one's understanding. Alongside this the students found that they had no sense of closure when they finished reading online. There was no sense of achievement, of having finished a book and placed it back on the shelf.

The researchers concluded that these students attempted to engage with digital texts in the same way that they engaged with physical texts and that this had been generally unsuccessful. The pedagogical implications are that teachers need to make students aware of different types of reading being suited to different types of texts. Students already have different stances towards reading Google, Messenger etc. and these need to be highlighted and examined. For students of literature in particular this provides an opportunity to explore more deeply the roles of readers and authors in the reading transaction in digital and physical texts.

Other research on the online academic reading process has examined in detail the way students read and highlight sections of digital text in order to improve comprehension and share understanding with other readers. Qayyum's (2006) research at the University of Toronto explored the interaction between readers and digital reading applications (such as Adobe) which facilitate marking up of texts, to draw out implications for system design. He found that underlining and highlighting are the pre-dominant forms of marking used in e-documents. Underlining is used to emphasise ideas and highlighting is used to indicate keywords. E-document readers are less likely to write annotations on the text than readers of physical texts. A variety of possibilities for orientation (ie horizontal or vertical) of annotations in an e-document needs to be developed. The research also noted that readers like to start reading with a clean copy of the document. However the online environment could offer layers of markings from different readers which could be shared between a group of readers as discussion on a text progresses.

UK Public Libraries and reading

An investigation into reading in the UK has to take account of the historical role of Public Libraries and their current position in national literacy campaigns. Historically Public Libraries were dedicated to education and the literary improvement of the general public and their stock reflected this in its seriousness and classical nature. However in the later years of the 20th century their main role changed to support popular culture more in the provision of pleasure reading materials and popular fiction. With the advent of the internet and electronic media usage statistics for Public Libraries have fallen substantially and funding crises in local government have meant that new ways of providing and encouraging reading have had to be found. An example is Essex County Libraries' new website: Ask Chris. Aimed at children and adults it offers an exciting portal into a mixture of library services including advice on what to read next, information on Reading Groups, a discussion board for book reviews and comments, and a link to the Public Library catalogue.

Reading fiction as a social activity in Reading Groups or Book Clubs has become very popular. Many people are finding belonging to a Reading Group a satisfying activity.

“ the sharing of different experiences and perspectives as each person reads the book in the context of her own life; the validation of reading – this is not just a selfish pleasure but a serious obligation – in the face of other people's demands on the reader's time; the exhilaration of debating new and challenging ideas in a comfortable, nonthreatening environment; the replication of the graduate seminar in a more relaxed setting; and the cachet of doing something seen to be ‘intelligent’.”
(Ross et al, 2006)

Academic libraries and reading

Academic libraries have faced similar challenges to Public Libraries from the internet, Google and the easy availability of online information. Although to some extent students are a “captive audience”, academic libraries too are facing a period of change, re-identifying themselves as centres for learning in the new HE environment.

There has been a rapid acceptance in academic libraries of the importance of electronic sources of information and an increasing respect for the academic credibility of such sources. Online journals have been around now for many years and e-books are beginning to make a significant impact on university library catalogues. The Google generation of students and researchers expect to find information quickly and easily via search engines and screens. Developing students' ability to read and critically evaluate the wealth of material available has become a key role of professional academic librarianship.

Library instruction or user education has changed dramatically over the last 10 years in order to maintain the relevance, accessibility and availability of library resources. Information skills training and the broader concept of information literacy learning have become an accepted part of the work of the academic librarian. Research by Barry (1997) concentrates on the range of skills that doctoral students will need in the new environment.

“Academic users in general are not aware of this quantum leap in the need for information skills and information skills training... These are not skills which can be acquired easily en masse or in a short space of time.” (Barry, 1997)

However, the emphasis on skills has changed in the last decade with more intuitive digital resources being developed. Now the focus is on empowering students to evaluate the information they have retrieved. Reading skills and critical thinking are beginning to take precedence over basic search skills.

“Evaluation and effective use of information in any form is impossible without the use of critical thinking..” (Weiler, 2004)

There is a need for librarians and their academic colleagues to recognise and support a process of student cognitive development which will enable them to make best use of library resources of all types.

“...cognitive ability is a developmental process and students must go through a series of steps over a period of time before they are able to seek information critically and reflectively.” (Weiler, 2004)

The innovations of Web 2.0 which allow end-users to create their own web presence in facilities such as Wikipedia, Facebook, YouTube and Second Life, have encouraged further proliferation of accessible information sources. Whilst such facilities may be democratising the web (at least in the wealthy countries of our planet) they pose threats to the building of reliable information and scholarly knowledge that have been at the heart of the creation of academic Digital Libraries in many universities. The skills of the librarian in filtering and selecting material are easily overlooked or bypassed.

“Librarians are the Jedi knights of the modern age, committed to reading, interpretation and thinking in a world of ignorance, managerialism and tabloidisation. Like the Jedi, librarians have also been under threat from an evil empire – in this case , capitalism, as schools and universities reduce the budgets for books and staff. The justification for this downsizing is that Google is as good as a catalogue and the web is almost a library.” (Brabazon, 2007)

Widening participation in HE

The UK Government's agenda for widening participation in HE has led to an increase in the number of young adults at university. Many of these students are the first in their families to embark on study at HE level. Their previous experience of libraries is often limited and an academic library can seem a daunting prospect. “Library anxiety”, a term coined by Mellon in 1986, remains a significant obstacle for some students as they progress through their studies. Those students who have low reading ability and text comprehension skills are likely to suffer most from library anxiety. However, a study by Jiao and Onwuegbuzie (2003) which confirmed this correlation also found that skilled readers suffered from high levels of anxiety, caused by “affective barriers” (feelings of inadequacy while performing or attempting to

perform library tasks) and lack of “comfort with the library” (how safe, secure, welcoming and non-threatening the library feels).

Attempts by universities to make their libraries less threatening and more welcoming to students have led to the development of informal study zones within libraries, (learning zones) where students can work in groups, use computers or laptops and eat and drink (activities traditionally frowned on in university libraries). The Saltire Centre, at Glasgow Caledonian University has been an outstanding example of this new learning environment.

JISC, the national UK body which supports education and research by promoting innovation in new technologies and by the central support of ICT services, has produced a publication on designing learning spaces.

“The publication takes the reader on a ‘walk through’ an educational institution, exploring the relationship between learning technologies and innovative examples of physical space design at each stage of the journey. Discussion of the key points is illustrated by ten case studies from further and higher education, and floor plans from AMA Alexi Marmot Associates, architects and space planners, which provide up-to-date guidelines on the integration of technologies into teaching and learning accommodation.” (JISC, 2006)

Books and reading lists

Yet in spite of the immense growth in digital resources and online learning the book remains a key element in academic library services. Student surveys still highlight frustration with numbers of key texts available on the shelves. “Printed library materials I need for my work” showed in the author’s University Library LibQual survey 2007 as being the area where users felt the library service least met their expectations.

Academic libraries continue, due to increasing numbers of students and limited funding, to struggle to provide sufficient copies of key texts as well as background reading. Research projects at Cardiff University (Wall and Williams, 1999) and University of Wales, Bangor (Sherwood and Lovecy, 1997) give details of experiments with short loan collections and variable loan periods in attempts to ease the pressure on key texts that appear on reading lists. Both projects report limited success in producing increased user satisfaction. The University of the West of England Library tackles the difficulty through trying to manage student expectations by changing the approach of academic staff to resource provision. UWE librarians have in consultation with academic staff devised “reading strategies” which lay down guidelines for academic staff on how recommended reading should be promoted. These include recommending electronic books and journals more regularly, getting chapters of books and articles digitised where the CLA licence permits and presenting them in the VLE, asking students to purchase key texts, and placing key texts in the library’s Short Loan collection. (Chelin et al, 2005) The critical element in getting such strategies to work effectively is constant open communication between library and academic staff. A further research project by Briddon (2005) which provided all required reading to a cohort of students either electronically or through copyright cleared photocopies, reports that levels of student satisfaction with the library service rose as did the students’ awareness of the importance of library resources. However, the project required librarian and module leader to liaise closely. Briddon suggests that the true test of new reading strategies is the impact they have on student learning and increased understanding of their subject. Looking at assignment results would

“provide a much more objective study into the impact of the new reading list approach.” (Briddon, 2005)

Reading lists continue to be both a key component and a source of frustration in the relationship between librarians and their academic colleagues. Martin and Stokes surveyed academic staff to find out what reading lists are for- “What are the pedagogical and philosophical rationales that underpin them?” Tutors responded that they saw reading lists ideally having a role in

“moving students from dependent to autonomous learners by offering support and guidance.” (Martin and Stokes, 2006)

There was some fear amongst academics of supplying students with too much material and thus spoon-feeding them. Students were also asked about their experience of reading lists. They demonstrated “instrumentalism” in their use of lists, focussing on reading key texts which would contribute to producing the assignment in question. Students also reported the emotional experience of attempting to access reading list material and of sometimes being unable to access items. The researchers conclude that annotated reading lists could be useful to students giving them not only the bibliographic details but also instructions on how to access and a brief resume of the content. (Martin and Stokes, 2006)

Textbooks

Many academic staff, particularly in vocational disciplines, continue to recommend key textbooks to students as background readers for their courses. A Publishers Association (2005) survey of over 700 students in various disciplines found that 91% of the students surveyed thought that textbooks were “very important” or “somewhat important” to their learning and understanding of the subject. The survey also found that generally students considered textbooks to be very expensive although they can give value for money, particularly if the book is integrated into the module and the whole book is relevant. A case study on the use of Economics textbooks by Richardson (2004) argues that in this discipline there is

“a peculiar obsession among the lecturing staff with the selection, place and importance of the textbook. At the beginning of lectures the assembled students would be asked, ‘Have you done the reading?’ The textbook was positioned as central in preparing for and reviewing topics covered in the lectures. In this cultural and disciplinary context, the textbook took on a level of importance and assumed an authority similar to that exercised by devotional texts in the course of religious observance.” (Richardson, 2004)

The researcher notes that levels of plagiarism amongst students on such courses are high and suggests that this is in part due to the fact that they are given this

“fixed canon of content knowledge “

but are then expected to reproduce it in their own words. He concludes:

“The evidence from this study would suggest that while introductory textbooks are designed to induct students into various disciplines and their academic literary practices, they may create considerable learning problems for students. There is no reason to believe that this is peculiar to Economics.” (Richardson, 2004)

Conclusions

The evidence found in this review of the literature concerning reading, literacy and libraries, in particular in the HE sector, shows a changing environment with new challenges arising and joining traditional challenges, rather than replacing them. Reading is still at the heart of university education but the content, style, media and setting for it are in flux. The evidence suggests that many students who come to university are unprepared for the autonomous nature of academic study. Whereas in the past “deep” reading was expected and assumed, now it must be nurtured, encouraged and enabled. It appears though that new technologies and learning environments can help rather than hinder this process. Reading lists can be seen as part of the scaffolding academics put in place in the process of moving students towards being autonomous learners. The literature suggests that high expectations of student achievement, and creativity and innovation on the part of academic, library and support staff, can continue to inspire student learning through reading and excellence in university education.

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Appendix 2

Questionnaire to academics

Creating a Strategy for Reading

University Library Learning and Teaching Fellowship 2007-8

This project is aimed at finding ways to enhance student learning through reading.

We have already held discussion groups with students and staff about how to improve reading lists and encourage reading.

These groups have been very useful but the numbers of people involved relatively small. The object of this brief questionnaire is to try to obtain responses from a wider audience.

Please click on reply then fill in the **Answer** box in as much detail as you can and then return it to the sender by 15th February 2008.*

Question	Answer
From a student's point of view what do you think makes a good reading list?	
How do you encourage students to 'read around' your subject?	
What support do you give to students in HOW to read, make notes or structure their work?	
What are the key messages about reading that you would want students in your discipline to take away with them?	
What role should the University Library play in encouraging reading?	

Would you be interested in joining a book group regularly reading and discussing works of fiction? Yes / No

Appendix 3

The detailed evidence

A Reading Strategy for Anglia Ruskin University

“A set of best-practice ideas and guidelines designed to encourage and support quality reading within our University”

The following ideas have been gathered from academic staff, students, librarians and support staff in focus groups and questionnaires.

Section 1 – Academic staff views on reading

1a. Ideas for encouraging students to “read around” the subject; to read widely and deeply

A range of materials

- Encourage students to look at a range of texts.
- Different texts suit different students – advise students to choose a text that they understand to start off with.
- Point out books covering similar ground but written in different styles – no need to read them all!
- Encourage early ‘wide’ reading – only start detailed discussion of assignments with the group part way through the module.

Assessment and achievement as drivers

- Give positive feedback where reference lists show a broad range of reading.
- Students need to see there is a genuine value in extra reading – few are willing to read just for its own sake but only where there is a clear link to assessment grades.
- Discuss the expectation that this is essential for HE level studies and that reliance on tutor input is not enough, particularly when it comes to the assessment.
- By designing flexible assignments, with only brief specification, that will necessitate further reading.
- Reward breadth and depth of reading by higher marks in assessments.
- The grade A students are those that read around the subject – that is always a useful recommendation.
- Students who read widely and accumulate reading skills normally do better once they graduate and in further career progression.
- Include the reading material in the learning objectives and assessments.
- Make sure that students know that to do well in their critical essays, a good fluency with the most current debates pertaining to the subject is necessary.

Recommend materials at every opportunity (with enthusiasm)

- Provide a list of sources at each lecture.
- Mention books in seminars, constantly refer to the library, show enthusiasm for reading.
- Refer to articles in my teaching and signpost/provide on Web/CT.
- Identify and give students relevant articles to read.
- Suggest reading at the end of each session, and have discussion on that reading at the beginning of the next session.
- Recommend books that I have read and liked and know will be helpful to meeting their learning outcomes.
- Enthuse about particular academics or present them in a light that drives curiosity.
- Try to be an enthusiastic role model – for example, I bring examples of books that I have read/am reading along to the lectures and seminars and pass them round.

- Making sure that I have read everything that I recommend to students, have a good reason for recommending the item, so being in a position to say why I think it is worthwhile reading the article or book.
- By starting exercises in class and asking them to finish at home, indicating potential bibliography.

Recommend a variety of reading media

- Encourage students to look at popular media - eg. selected newspapers, magazines and websites – to get them reading.
- Students are encouraged to do an “online tour” around some suggested websites and are then asked to discuss them in class.

Reading driven by student choice and learning

- Look at the bibliography of the book they are currently reading.
- Discuss reading strategies with other students.
- By picking up on students’ special interests and by trying to inject enthusiasm and a tip-of-the-iceberg attitude into class discussion
- By giving essay topics that involve a personal choice and expecting them to read about their choice.
- Get students to lead discussions on what they have read.
- Encourage small study groups where several students can buy/obtain one or two different texts each, and share learning points.
- Get the students to identify questions of interest to investigate about the subject rather than telling them information.

1b. Ideas for encouraging students to read critically

Why critical reading is important

- Students need to be able to read systematically and construct meaning from it – not just read and sort-of understand, but really understand at the level where they use it as a tool to develop their own framework of understanding.
- The reader is active in the reading process in the sense that his/her meaning is unique and depends on his values, attitudes and what s/he already knows.

Using criteria to critique

- Give students criteria to analyse their reading eg. What is the main argument? What evidence does the author use to support the argument? Is the evidence valid –up-to-date/relevant/biased? Do you agree with the author?

Skills for criticality

- In a tutorial give students a paragraph from a relevant article to read and ask them to analyse it in detail.
- Groups of students can be asked to research a topic and share their reading on a discussion board in the VLE. Students can be assessed on the quality and content of their discussion (one example awards up to 40% of the module mark). Academics can moderate the discussion to make sure everyone contributes.
- We unpick chapters in seminars, discuss content – what makes sense, what doesn’t etc. How can particular issues become more relevant or be followed up? We debate, develop critical thinking skills and use patchwork texts (students are given 10 short pieces of work, such as summaries, contrasting two chapters, short reports, bibliography exercises etc.)
- Read key articles and write a short critique, then discuss the critique in class.
- Its important to be in control and in charge of your own reading by using indexes and learning to read critically.

Raise awareness of the need for critical reading

- Make students aware that evidence based analysis in their work will score highly.
- Tell students - be discriminating – be a sceptical reader.
- Be a critical reader, both positively and negatively.

- Enter into a debate with what you are reading. Decide what you want out of the book /article.

1c. Ideas for enhancing reading and study skills

Strategies for effective reading

- Reading is a series of activities rather than a single one. This means learning different strategies for reading rather than just using the same approach for everything. It also means recognising that reading material comes in different forms and we need to develop the right strategy for the material in question.
- Students need to learn strategies that can help them read more quickly and effectively : previewing (reviewing titles, section headings , to get a sense of the structure and content of a text); skimming and screening (using a quick survey of the text to get the main ideas, using abstracts); paraphrasing (putting ideas in your own words).
- I encourage them to use different styles of reading : skimming to get the gist, wrestling with dense passages!
- Different levels of reading (skim, in depth etc.), how to use contents list, abstracts and appendices.
- I always say that once you have read a short section you should make notes that would enable you to explain it to someone who hadn't read it.
- Students are always recommended to read selectively and to make use of contents pages and indices in books as a guide to whether the item is likely to contain material that is being sought.
- This area is neglected, but I do NOT think a 'one size fits all' solution is possible. Different subjects require a different approach, so I believe this should be addressed by personal tutors (supported by library/university resources and materials) during PDP sessions.
- Give students WebCT based materials covering part of the subject area, with indication where (in the reading lists and books) other materials can be found.

Supporting quality reading through formative feedback and class discussion

- Take a selection of texts into class and ask students to choose one. After 5 minutes of skim reading ask them to identify the text's key message.
- Students are asked to bring a book into a lecture and talk about a chapter.
- Detailed in-class discussion of set texts, in 'small steps' week by week.
- Go through the essential textbook reading for the first couple of weeks and annotate it, break it down into small chunks and pose questions along the way.
- I discuss with students the importance of ensuring that what they read, they retain. We discuss ways of doing this.
- Give formative feedback on assignments – including where good use has been made of reading and where additional reading is needed.
- Informal tutorial support for those students identified as struggling in this area.
- Regular formative assessment feedback.
- Tutorial discussion on papers issues to students or sources from their reading lists.
- Review samples of student notes and offer general feedback.

Need for induction processes

- Study skills are embedded in Welcome Week and in Level 1 modules, and we do practical exercises in taking notes.
- During induction we have a study session on how to read and make notes.
- The first year "Learning and Knowledge Construction" module does cover some study skills and aspects of information literacy.
- Introductory sessions on different reading processes for different material/information e.g. scanning, skimming etc.
- A session in induction period with good clear handouts pays dividends, and can be referred to during rest of the course.

“What are the key messages about reading that you would want students to take away with them?”

Interest, enjoyment, enrichment

- That it's challenging, enjoyable and essential to degree study, and if they want to do well they should expect to read as much as possible.
- That it can be interesting.
- It's fun and interesting.
- They need to be aware that reading is vital not only in providing access to the curriculum but in enriching life.
- That it should inform and inspire them! Both as students and in their working lives.
- Enjoy your reading – think laterally about what you use: novels, (auto)biographies, newspapers etc. may provide rich material.
- That reading is interesting and enjoyable, expands your knowledge and understanding, and allows you to contribute to the subject debate.

Reading linked to writing and learning

- Reading is informative but also critically and imaginatively stimulating; reading is key to developing as a writer.
- Good writers are almost always good readers.
- It enriches your mental perspectives.
- Finding disagreements and from that reaching your own conclusions is challenging but very rewarding.
- The more you read, the more you question the text.
- The more you read around a subject the easier it becomes to write with any authority about it.
- No thorough and reflective reading: little intellectual pleasure and no degree.
- Share your learning with others.
- Read with reference to the learning objectives set for the module.
- Read, think, remember.
- Reading, writing and learning are inextricably linked and you can't talk about one without the others.

Reading for a degree- academic necessity

- That it is the cornerstone of what we do here!
- Reading opens worlds and constitutes learning (it's no accident that students used to 'read' a subject, rather than 'study' or 'take' it). Academic literature is like a big international conversation ; be part of it.
- The importance of reading and using academic journals articles to support their arguments.
- It is an essential part of academic study.
- You are reading for a degree- not being taught one.
- Reading is only part of the equation – it is interpreting what is read that is the major issue.
- That being at university is not just about doing the minimum amount of study to pass assessments. They don't always appreciate that they should see themselves as independent learners.

Enhancing practice and professionalism

- The importance and value of knowledge to develop competence and confidence.
- To ensure they are kept professionally up to date.
- Learn to read relevant literature and be able to apply to practice. Ask yourself – “What does this mean to me?”
- The rewards of reading – with knowledge comes confidence.
- Students will be better professionals and will grow personally and professionally.
- That it is fun, enriches your knowledge base and can therefore improve your practice.
- In visual and product design reading is often overlooked in favour of other skills. The main skill that is missing is how to connect and transform theoretical ideas into visual representations.

Do it your way!

- Have the right environment for reading and choose the right time of day for you.
- Surprise me – give me one reference that I haven't given you!
- Look outside the box – don't be frightened of going outside your subject.

Section 2 – On Reading Lists

2a. Reading lists – what academics think...

Short or long?

- Fairly short lists but annotated with directions to give immediate relevance.
- Too long a list is likely to be a problem – I think there might be a feeling that “the list looks overwhelming – and I can’t possibly read it all – so I won’t read any”!
- Short lists – focussed reading and short books!
- A short list that doesn’t overwhelm students.
- It’s a balance between a very short list, which tempts students just to look at one book, and a list which is so long that it stops being a reading list at all and becomes just a summary of all the books on the topic that the lecturer happens to have heard of.
- For academic purposes it should be concise enough to be able to read a good amount of it, but it should have enough variety within the titles to appeal to people with different interests.
- Precise; directive.

Closely linked to module topics

- Books listed under the week’s seminar with short guidelines.
- Clear, detailed, related to modules and clinical practical work.
- Reading needs to be clearly linked to the assessment /module outcomes.
- Directly relevant to their assignments.

Key texts

- Highlight the key texts.
- One that identifies the key “must reads” to get an overview and then suggests themed further reading to flesh out that overview.
- A list that differentiates between highly recommended, which should be very closely connected to the materials covered in class and /or the assignments, and other more general support material.
- Identification of key texts. Online and text based resources.
- Some lecturers have a resistance to recommending key texts because it makes the students over-reliant on particular books.
- At postgraduate level there should be as few key texts as possible to encourage wider reading.

Up-to-date

- Recent scholarship; focussed material.
- Up-to-date.
- Up-to-date, focussed and includes more than text books.
- Books that are up-to-date/latest version

Annotated lists

- Give guidance as to priorities and which to read when.
- Lists that point to particular articles and chapters and not just whole books.
- A well-sign-posted list – indicates which texts are essential, and why and also indicates the particular reason why any additional reading is on the list (if it’s optional then why is it there?)

Accessible and available

- Available in the university library.
- Easily obtainable.
- Texts that are readily accessible and varied according to reading levels.
- Items students can easily access.
- Every item either in the library or easy to access on the www.
- Include some references from general texts that students are likely to have purchased for the whole course.

Variety/ different levels

- A variety of books, articles and journals.
- Varied and accessible
- Includes books at different levels of ability.
- Books at the right academic level
- A range of materials/sources including websites.

Discuss the list

- Is discussed face to face so students can be recommended texts and recommend those on the list and others, to the group.
- A reading list which the lecturer refers to during the course – rather than the students being left to “go away and read it”. Encouragement is required!

Harvard style

- Lists should set an example in terms of Anglia Ruskin Harvard style.
- Relevant, succinct and meets Harvard referencing style.

2b. Reading lists – what students think...

Starting point

- The module guide and reading lists are a good starting point but there are a limited number of books in the library and they go very quickly.
- I start with a reading list and then Google.

Reading lists as a guide

- I find reading lists helpful as they are a good guideline to follow.
- I see the reading list as a pointer of what is expected in an assignment.
- The recommended books gave me a good overview of the subject but I feel more core texts should be in the library.

Annotated lists

- It would be useful if the catalogue number of the book was on the list.
- An annotated reading list would be more useful than just a list of books.
- An abstract of the book/more details/more structure and how to find items should be included.

Wider reading – not on the list

- I have no time to read other material as I need to use my time to read what is important to get a pass.
- I recognise that wider reading will broaden my knowledge.
- I look for newer books.
- I find material by searching the library catalogue.
- I use the library catalogue by searching for my subject area and identifying where to find the books. I think it would be helpful to put more signage of areas in words.

Reading and assessment – numbers of references required

- A huge amount of referencing and research is a criteria (for good marks).
- A wide range of references is important.
- My lecturer recommended that there should be at least 10 references for 3000 words.
- There should be a grid indicating how many references should be included per thousand words.

2c. Reading lists – what librarians think...

Up-to-date

- Up-to-date books (not what the lecturer used when they were a student!)

Accessible and available

- Material available in the library in sufficient quantities.

Annotated lists

- Annotated to indicate basic, introductory texts, core reading ; in-depth or specialist material.
- Indicate what is essential and what is background reading.
- Indicate subject content
- Indicate why the source has been recommended.
- Give suggestions for further reading.
- Annotated to indicate basic, introductory texts, core reading ; in-depth or specialist material.

Style and clarity

- Correct references – no spelling errors in titles or authors names.
- Readable text – good font size and clarity of layout.
- Use a consistent referencing style eg. Harvard

Short and relevant

- Should be relevant texts.
- Not too many items listed.

2d. Reading lists – what Learning Support think...

Allow students time

- Give out lists in good time

Ensure clear layout

- Use a good-sized sans-serif font
- Don't give poor quality photocopies
- Use coloured paper
- Ensure sufficient spacing
- Provide electronically

Annotated lists

- Advise on core texts and background reading
- Give additional reading at the end of lectures
- Advise students that indicative reading is necessary and compulsory
- Highlight key texts
- Give reasons for including titles on lists – short summary of content
- Include all types of resources – books, journals, websites, DVDs etc.

**Links to work done in the Quality Enhancement Audit Report (Q.E.A.Report.)
September 2007 by the Academic Standards, Quality and Regulations Committee**
<http://web.anglia.ac.uk/anet/academic/qad/qea.phtml>

One of the purposes of the Quality Enhancement Audit was to evaluate a sample of Anglia Ruskin Module Guides and “commend strengths and identify examples of good practice and promote these across Anglia Ruskin University and its partner institutions.”
(Q.E.A.Report ,p.4)

The Audit Panel noted that –

“In a worryingly large number of module guides, the references to texts to support the module were minimal, with very few references to web based resources. Not all module guides use the (recommended) Harvard referencing system for lists of recommended reading. At best, this represents a missed opportunity to provide for students a good example of how a bibliography should be constructed.....At worst, poor referencing does not allow students easily to find recommended texts. (Q.E.A.Report,4.4, p.6)
“in most cases , the relationship between the recommended reading material and the scheme of work was not identified. (Q.E.A.Report.,4.5, p.6)

Recommendation 6.6 (p. 9) of the Report notes –

“Add the following to the minimum requirements for the content of a module guide :

- The relationship between the scheme of work and the recommended reading material
- Authors should always use Harvard referencing for lists of recommended reading “

Examples of Good Practice –

- “7.1 Full integration of the module guide into the teaching and learning experience of students. For example, utilising the week by week guide to support learning by including reading, materials, activities and tasks etc for each of the taught sessions.
- 7.7 Annotation of the bibliography for the module, highlighting the key areas covered by each recommended text. Such an approach is know as ‘environment scanning’.”
(Q.E.A Report, p.10)

Section 3 - What role should the University Library play in encouraging reading?

3a. What academics think..

Facilitate reading events

- Organise reading events.
- Focussed days on a topic – eg. marketing , finance
- Encourage literature discussion groups – today’s students seem to prefer learning communities.
- Holding reading sessions in collaboration with Student Services.
- Running student Book Groups.
- Displays of books linked to modules/anniversaries/exhibitions.
- Offer discipline specific journal clubs for postgraduates.
- At UCL, distinguished authors used to speak at Waterstones across the road – perhaps we can do a deal with Heffers?
- Regular open sessions on ‘top tips’ for academic reading, writing, referencing on all campuses.
- Have reading groups around specialist areas of practice.
- Include more fiction and ‘free time’ reading.

Display new material/ inform users

- Display new books.
- Send out lists of new books by email.
- Highlight to staff new purchases.

Provide support for students

- A librarian could come and talk to seminars about books.
- Continue as you are with librarians running sessions for students.
- Work with students on discriminating between information sources.
- Facilitate good research practices and provide help with research when needed.
- Sessions on literature searching for groups and individuals.
- By holding workshops for students
- A full role at induction and throughout students' studies at the university.
- Sessions for students run by subject librarians.
- Regular slots for students to improve their skills in searching for articles etc.
- Offer support on information searches.
- Maintain good relationships with students ie. approachability, patience.
- I have to keep reminding myself that things are only easy for those who can do them and I think this also applies to reading and finding reading materials. Would it be possible to have a student mentoring system or, like bookshops, have a recommendation system?
- Students need to be better at using databases effectively.

Work closely with academics

- Work more closely with academics.
- Work with us to ensure that students are always kept fully up-to-date with innovations and new access points.
- Academics working with academic library tutors seems to me to be an essential part of the toolkit.
- Clearly advertised subject specialists – you're worth your weight in gold!
- Work with tutors to ensure up-to-date material.
- Be able to purchase books at very short notice.
- To provide resources that can be used by academic staff to train their students to read more.

Accessible materials

- Make sure books are available and readily accessible.
- By ensuring reading lists are supported by enough books.
- Ensure enough copies of texts are available.
- Ensure access to reading sources is freely available – any obstacle appears to be an excuse not to read.

Accessible buildings

- I think the new entrance (at Chelmsford) makes the library a much more welcoming prospect!
- Offer 24 hour opening.
- Provide quiet areas for reading.

Just carry on doing what you're doing!

- I think the library already does a great job – just keep it up!
- Do what you do now – brilliant initiative!

3b. What students think...

A better environment for study

- The library needs to be inviting.
- The library needs quiet areas for me to concentrate.
- We need designated areas for group work so other students are not distracted.
- Students need larger study rooms with pcs in them.
- Longer opening hours – especially towards the end of semester.
- Water coolers in the library.
- More pcs.
- Computer screens and keyboards should be kept clean.

3c. What librarians think...

Accessible materials

- Provide the sources and give advice about how to find quality material.
- Make sure core materials are available.
- Provide a wide range of subject material.
- Check reading lists.
- Provide a user friendly website.

Work closely with academics

- Liaise with Faculty staff to ensure that reading lists are up-to-date and match stock in the library.
- Collaborate closely with academic staff.
- Encourage lecturers to update lists.

Publicise materials

- Publicise new titles.
- Publicise a list of “hot books” in the library this week.
- Have weekly/monthly subject displays.

Provide support for students

- Provide training on things like speed reading, scanning and memory techniques.
- Help people with searching.
- Embed information skills training into more modules.
- Run sessions at lunchtime like ‘53 tips on how to read all that stuff lecturers tell you to read’.

3d. What Learning Support think...

Allow time

- Extended loan periods
- Time at help desks

Make the library user-friendly

- IT kit makes library less daunting
- Learning zones give students confidence
- Offer one-2-ones with subject librarians
- Offer support on Dewey and using the catalogue
- Recommend electronic resources
- Offer training sessions and regular tours

Section 4 – Feedback from Learning Support Staff

From the point of view of students with a specific learning difficulty –

What are the main reading challenges for this group?

Typical challenges

- Retention problems and poor short term memory
- Difficulty in following text – may lose place
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words
- Difficulty with comprehension and therefore summarising
- Difficulty pronouncing words when reading aloud
- Difficulty translating worded problems into numerical tasks
- Need more time to read material

- Struggle with poor quality handouts
- Lack of confidence in reading because of past history
- Tendency to head straight for websites which are easier to read
- Lack of understanding in how the Digital Library works
- Fear of feeling lost and being unable to locate texts
- Easily distracted by noise in the library
- Difficulty understanding Dewey
- Intimidated by libraries

Possible solutions

- Encourage different reading strategies for different purposes – eg. Skimming, scanning and careful reading
- Encourage an active, focused, purposeful and questioning approach to reading
- Make an outline plan for an assignment before you start reading
- Use a checklist of questions to encourage critical analysis
- Make notes/mindmaps in your own words rather than copying out extracts
- Summarise material read in your own words

- Clear handouts in large font on coloured paper
- Encouragement by academic staff to use library and attend library training sessions
- Formative assessment to check reading is being done
- Encourage students to ask for help in library
- Encourage students to seek Learning Support help

Section 5 – Feedback from Book Group participants

Two groups have been established
Thirty people have signed up altogether
The members have been surveyed on their experience.

Views on the benefits of reading in a book group:

- Encourages people to read what they wouldn't normally read
- Makes you think deeper about the books read
- Makes you consider other's perspectives, on the plot, the book characters and the writing
- All enjoyed discussing the book
- All felt book groups made a positive contribution to their University life

Views on how book clubs can be expanded or encouraged:

- Read books at different sites and discuss online
- Base groups in Faculties
- Promote in Bulletin or ANET – days and times, mini-book reviews
- Talk to colleagues
- Have a choice of books or a vote on what to read next
- Groups with a particular interest e.g. non-fiction, fantasy

Could students be encouraged to take part?

Some saw problems:

- Only those that read a lot would take part
- Students may think it sounds too much like work
- Finding time might be a problem

But some students might get involved if

- it was like a supportive study reading group
- the Students Union was involved
- the meeting was in a social setting
- they are provided with the books or refreshments

What do book groups offer?

- They can be part of an overall strategy to encourage *reading*
- They can help develop relationships between staff and / or students across the institution
- They encourage engagement with, and the sharing of *ideas*
- They help foster concepts of discussion and debate

Diana Garfield & Maurice Wakeham July 2008