

Library Support for the Medics at Tallaght Hospital



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An Leabharlann: The Irish Library publishes articles on libraries, librarianship and related topics of interest to the library and information community on the island of Ireland. The Editorial Board invites original, unpublished articles for publication. Articles should be between **1,500** and **3,000** words. Occasionally, longer articles may be published.

Articles

- Manuscripts will be reviewed by the Editorial Board.
- Authors are asked to submit an informative abstract of not more than 200 words. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of statements and references in their articles.
- Images which visually support the article are welcomed. Authors should also submit a photograph of themselves. Original photographs and/or high-resolution scans (300 dpi) would be most helpful.

Format

- Manuscripts should be submitted by email attachment or on disc as Rich Text File (RTF). Text should be formatted in Times New Roman 12 pt., double-spaced, with margins of 2.54cm (i.e. standard A4 margins). Formatting of text (e.g. italics and bold) should be kept to a minimum.
- Authors should provide their name, organization, position and the title of the article at the top of the first page. If the article was presented at a conference, details of the sponsoring organization, the date and title of the conference should be given.

- Book reviews should include the full title, author or editor, publication details and price.
- Conference reports should include details such as the sponsoring organization, the date, place and title of the conference.

Style

- Microsoft Word and other word processing programs allow for a language to be selected. Please ensure that the language selected is either UK or Ireland English (i.e. NOT United States English).
- The Oxford Style Manual should be followed for acronyms, capitalization, captions, punctuation, quotations and tables.
- *An Leabharlann: The Irish Library* uses the Harvard system for references.

Editing

- *An Leabharlann: The Irish Library* reserves the right to make revisions and amendments.
- Substantive changes to articles will be discussed with the author. For consistency, all material submitted will be copy-edited.
- For additional information on style and referencing, please consult: Ritter, R.M. (Ed.). (2003) *The Oxford Style Manual*. Oxford: OUP

Copy Deadlines

- 31 July 2020 for October 2020 issue
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Editorial

Editorial, Vol 29 (1), March 2020

Librarians and libraries reflect on and respond to what is going on in society. Now we are confronted and surrounded by a pandemic which knows no boundaries. Libraries across Ireland and the world are closed but many e- services are still available to users.

The skillset of librarians has been very useful to state institutions in the management of the public health response to the pandemic. During his address to the nation on St. Patrick's Day, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar thanked the librarians providing support work in assisting the response to COVID-19. National HSE Librarian, Aoife Lawton and the HSE librarians around the country are involved in a number of immediate tasks. HSE Library and Knowledge Service staff have been redeployed to the HSE Helpline and contact tracing. Some public library staff have also been redeployed to HSE for contact tracing.

In addition, HSE librarians together with volunteers from the wider HSLG sector are working remotely providing evidence summaries, rapid reviews and COVID-19 searches to healthcare staff.

While the medical effects of the pandemic are the most critical, the effects in the community are much wider- economic, fiscal and social. All public library services provide remote access to their e-facilities. Recently, an initiative was launched between public libraries and Irish publishers which sees online Storytime available from local libraries: <https://www.librariesireland.ie/services/right-to-read/spring-into-storytime>

Public librarians are also involved in the development of the Community Response Fora around the country. Academic libraries are also providing remote access and helping with searches.

Corporate libraries are also providing access to economic, financial and legal information. No doubt many librarians have been providing background searches for the many developments which are taking place in the race to find a vaccine and to provide alternatives to costly ventilators.

In the space of weeks, the way in which we work has changed utterly. We have had to become more flexible in how we work and engage with people. While many of us were used to virtual meetings with teleconferencing, it is now the norm. Technology is how we keep in touch with families and friends.

Although Facetime, Skype, WhatsApp and Zoom are not new, they are now at the core of our daily communication and the new norm.

While the LAI/CILIP Joint Conference due to have been held last week was cancelled, there are still some CPD opportunities available as you will see in the News from the Stacks section. The articles in this current issue will provide you with more CPD opportunities.

The first article by Philip Cohen gives the background to IFLA WLIC 2020 coming to Dublin; he also notes the audience at which it is aimed and why you should attend.

Colm O'Connor and Aoife Doherty (RCSI) consider the topic of link rot in 10 Irish academic library websites.

There are two education-specific topics – one at either end of the education cycle. Intentional Early Literacy is described by Breda Connell who outlines the mechanics of establishing a Baby Book Club. The evidence-based programme on which it is based is also

outlined. Eva Hornung (CDETB) describes the evolution of PhDs in librarianship. In her article, based on a recent MA in Education, she explores the perceptions of having a doctorate and the role of the doctorate in the library. The impacts on the library service are described whilst recommendations for policy and practice are given.

Colleagues from Maynooth University Library describe Diversity and Intercultural Training which was held recently. The context for, and outline of, the training is provided. This case study could quite easily serve as a template for other libraries who might consider diversity training.

In all the news coverage I have seen where correspondents, journalists and doctors are interviewed from home or their office, I have been impressed by the importance of books in people's lives. Quite apart from seeing their range of interests, we get free interior design advice. That has to be a positive!

Together with the members of the Editorial Board, I hope that everyone stays well and enjoys virtual cups of coffee with friends and relations.

Marjory Sliney, Editor, editor@libraryassociation.ie

A L

An Leabharlann
29 – 1
March 2020





World Library and Information Congress 2020*

Dr Philip Cohen

Background

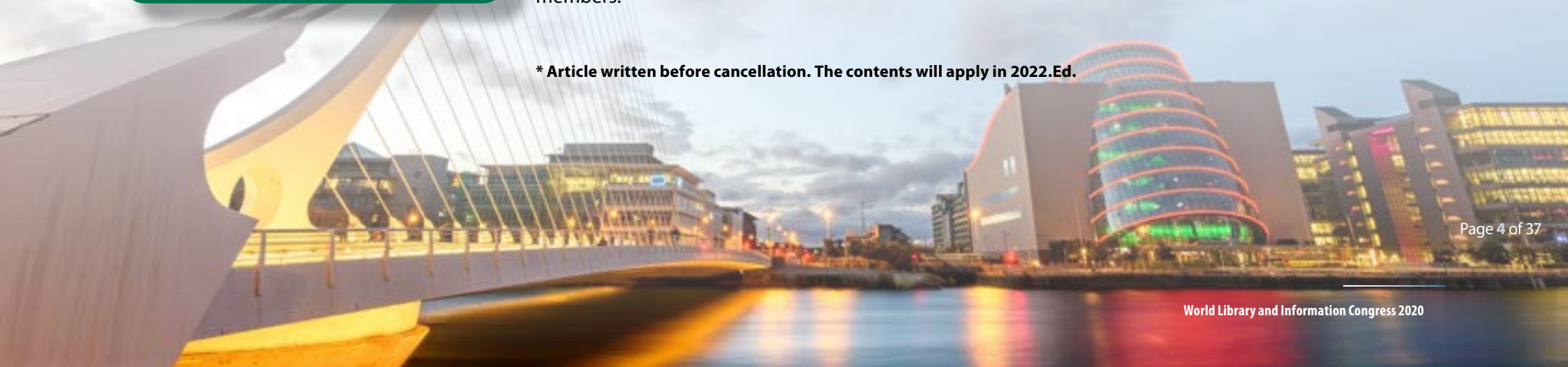
LAI is a long-standing member of *IFLA: International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions*, a global body representing the interests of libraries in more than 150 countries.

IFLA holds its annual conference, the *World Library and Information Congress (WLIC)*, in a different city each year. <https://www.ifla.org/about>

In 2018, IFLA invited European member associations to bid to host the WLIC for 2021. LAI submitted a bid for Dublin in June and this was shortlisted two months later. Requests for further information followed and there was a three-day site visit in March 2019 by representatives of IFLA and KIT Group, the professional conference organisers. In April, we learnt that our bid for 2021 was unsuccessful. At the same time, however, we were told that the 2020 WLIC had to be relocated away from Auckland and IFLA invited us to bid for this year instead. We did so and successfully won this competitive process. **Dublin is now the host city for the WLIC in 2020.** <https://2020.ifla.org/>

The Irish National Organising Committee and its seven Sub-Committees are working hard to ensure that WLIC 2020 will be a resounding success – for the benefit of Congress delegates, the LAI and all its members.

*** Article written before cancellation. The contents will apply in 2022.Ed.**



What

The IFLA WLIC is a week-long celebration of all the best that libraries can offer. The programme includes some 250 sessions of presentations, panel discussions and debates organised by IFLA's own Strategic Programmes, Divisions, Committees, Groups and Sections. In addition, there is an extensive exhibition of library-related goods, services and product demonstrations, a whole day of library tours and visits and multiple opportunities for networking with like-minded people from around the world. The Congress regularly attracts more than 3,000 delegates from more than 120 countries. We confidently expect that the appeal of Dublin, particularly amongst the large Irish diaspora, will mean many more than that number will attend this year.



Irish delegates at WLIC 2019 in Athens with Gerald Leitner, IFLA Secretary General



Full National Committee with Irish Ambassador to Greece Orla O'Hanrahan and Cultural Atachee Michelle Ryan



Marian Higgins, LAI President, inviting WLIC 2019 delegates to attend WLIC 2020 in Dublin

Where

The WLIC will occupy the entire Convention Centre Dublin, right in the heart of Dublin's Docklands - easy to get to and easy to get around. So many librarians in the city centre at the same time are also likely to make their presence felt and provide a great library-related buzz outside the Congress itself.

When

Sessions begin on Saturday 15th August and continue through to Thursday 20th August. Friday 21st August is the day for library visits and tours: visits to local libraries at a short distance from the Convention Centre plus full-day and half-day tours outside Dublin. Calls for Papers for many of the sessions close in March or April but calls for Lightning Talk submissions are expected later. There should really be something for everyone during a packed week of library-themed activities.

Who

Because there are so many different things happening throughout the week the WLIC has offerings for all library staff and students, either for the full week or for just one or two days. And there is a Newcomers' Session for anyone who has not attended the Congress before, so everyone is informed and at ease from the outset.

Why

WLIC 2020 is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to experience this global event in Ireland, an opportunity to experience in a single event the latest ideas in libraries and information services from around the world and to meet other enthusiastic people committed to providing the best to their users. Besides the obvious CPD and career-enhancing benefits, the Congress is fun and many delegates make friendships that last a lifetime.

How

<https://2020.ifla.org/congress-registration-information/registration-fees-and-payment-methods/> Registration fees vary, depending on when you register, for how long and whether or not you are a member of the LAI or another association affiliated to IFLA. Early Bird rates end on 15th May 2020. Full details are available at the link above.

Footnote

A monthly Newsletter and individual news items about the Congress appear regularly on the WLIC 2020 website. Tweets can be followed with the hashtag #wlic2020. Some sessions will be livestreamed during the Congress itself. So even if you cannot get to the Congress, you will be able to experience some of the excitement at one remove.

Dr Philip Cohen

Chair

Irish National Committee

IFLA WLIC 2020

<https://2020.ifla.org/>





404 NOT FOUND: a study of hyperlinks on Irish academic library websites

Colm O'Connor and Aoife Doherty

Abstract

Link rot refers to inaccessibility of resources on the World Wide Web due to decayed links. Using a link checking tool the authors examined links from ten Irish academic library websites using the LibGuides content management system. Four percent of links were affected by link rot, rendering them inaccessible. It is recommended that librarians be mindful of link rot when creating content and periodically check their webpages for broken links.

Keywords: *Link Rot, Academic Library websites, Ireland*

Introduction and Literature Review

This paper examines the incidence of link rot in ten Irish academic library websites at a given point in time. The term “link rot”, first coined by Jakob Nielsen (1998), refers to the inaccessibility of resources on the World Wide Web due to decayed links. Decayed links may be due to several causes including non-existent web pages, restructuring of a website’s URL (Uniform Resource Locator) or the omission of a redirect when moving a web page.

The instability of resources on the World Wide Web is a great source of frustration for web users, making finding the original source of information difficult or, in some instances, impossible. Notwithstanding the issue of permanency of web resources, web citations are prevalent in the scholarly literature owing to their ease of access and speed at which they can be made available online. Reference rot (that is link rot within references) in scholarly publications across a variety of disciplines has been the subject of study of many research papers. Notable findings include those of a large scale study conducted by Klein et al (2014) discovering that 20-70% of references in multiple science, technology and medicine (STM) journals are affected by link rot¹ and of Burnhill et al (2015) revealing that 20% of articles in the same field ‘contain at least one reference to a web resource that is rotten’.

Research carried out by Kaufmann and Campana (2019) found that 16% of links to resources chosen for the online delivery of a social studies curriculum suffered from link rot, calling into question the efficacy of online resources as a learning tool. White (2019) makes the point that this issue could easily apply to the many links to educational resources contained in library LibGuides, an argument supported by the results of our study.

Methodology

Ten Irish academic library websites were examined for link rot. All ten websites used Libguides software; LibGuides is a content management and information sharing system designed specifically for libraries. Each website

was assessed for link rot using the link checking tool ‘Dr. Link Check’. This tool is easy to use and requires no technical or programming knowledge. Inserting the URL of the library webpage being investigated into a search box returns a results list containing the total number of links checked, the number of broken links and their location.



Additional information given includes the type of errors found (eg.404 not found, Timeout, 403 forbidden etc.), a breakdown of link types (eg. <a href>, etc) and link scheme type (http:, https: etc.). To double-check the accuracy of the reported results 5% of the links identified as broken by Dr. Link Check were tested manually confirming the effectiveness of the tool. The entirety of some sites can be checked by inserting the URL of the LibGuides homepage into the link checking tool; others require the URL of each individual LibGuide to be entered.

Results

In total 47,308 hyperlinks were examined across ten websites. 1,954 of these links were broken, a total of 4.10%. The percentage of broken links on the websites examined ranged from 0.91% (23 broken links out of 2,541) to 9.8% (432 broken links out of 4,411). See table 1 for details.

The most common type of error found was the familiar ‘404 not found’ which

¹ The study looked at multiple journals.

comprised 47.6% of all errors. Others were 'Timeout' (19.1%), '5XX Server Error' (9.1%), '403 Forbidden' (8.6%) and 'Host Not Found' (6.5%). Less frequent were 'Connect Error' (2.3%), 'SSL Error' (1.5%), 'Invalid URL' (0.8%) and 'Send/Receive Error' (0.1%). The remainder was made up of other errors.

Discussion, Solutions & Recommendations

Our findings demonstrate that link rot is a significant issue for Irish academic library websites. Of the links examined, one in every 25 was inaccessible. If this problem is not addressed this number is likely to get worse; Milligan (2019) notes that the average lifespan of a webpage is thought to be between

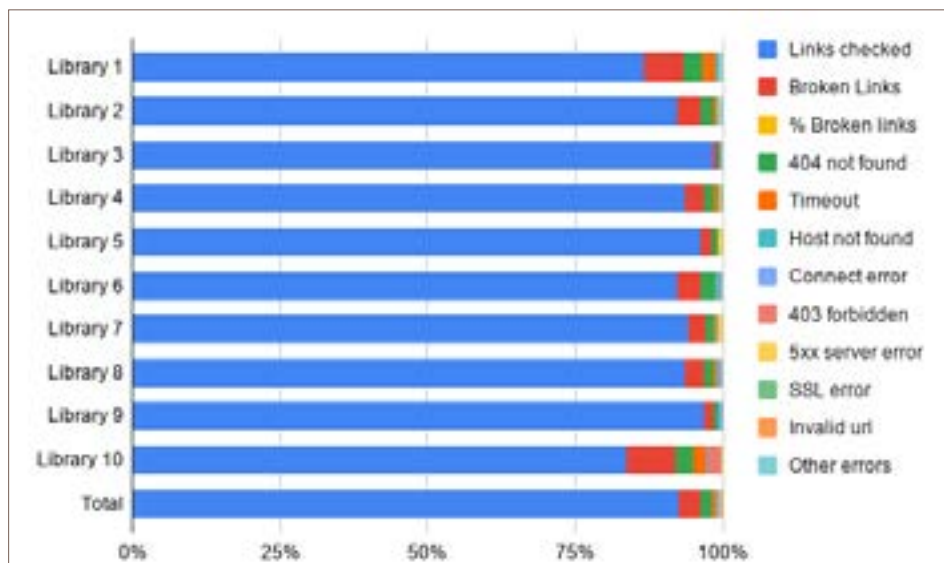
44-100 days. Several studies have shown that the incidence of link rot increases over time (Zeng et al 2019, Bansal & Parmar 2020, Zhou et al 2015). This study checked a relatively high number of links compared to previous studies examining link rot. According to Sanderson et al (2011) "sample size has often been very small- ...previously the number of URLs checked...was also limited by the manual nature of such checks". The authors overcame this problem by use of a link checking tool.

As aforementioned, this study recorded link rot at a given moment in time. While carrying out their own research into link rot, Tyler and McNeil (2003) found that a number of webpages recorded as 'dead' were discovered to be 'undead' upon revisiting the websites after a period of six weeks. Future studies may benefit from rechecking the original results to obtain a more exact picture of the issue.

What can librarians do to combat this problem? Fortunately there are a number of ways to deal with the issue of link rot. These can be divided into prevention and cure.

Firstly prevention. When creating content for their websites librarians should be mindful of link rot. Where possible, librarians should link to content which has a persistent identifier such as a DOI rather than a URL. DOIs are primarily used for scholarly journal articles rather than web pages however and the fact there is a cost to register a DOI means that most content will never have one. Another solution is to use Perma.cc. This is a service supported by a wide range of organisations including university libraries which takes a snapshot of a URL's content and returns a permanent link (known as a permalink) which is then used in place of the original link. Tim Berners Lee, the founder of the World Wide web believed that 'it is the duty of a webmaster to allocate URLs which you will be able to stand by in 2 years, in 20 years, in 200 years. This needs thought, and organisation, and commitment' (Berners-Lee, 1998).

Website content creators should avoid linking directly to documents such as PDFs. As noted by Kille (2015) these tend to be less stable than normal web pages - 'landing pages are generally more stable than PDFs. Because the latter



Website	Links checked	Broken Links	% Broken links	404 not found	Timeout	Host not found	Connect error	403 forbidden	5xx server error	SSL error	Invalid uri	Send/receive error	Other errors
Library 1	5876	435	7.39%	213	154	11	10	8	6	6	2	1	20
Library 2	4075	175	4.29%	106	11	5	2	2	2	2	1	1	25
Library 3	2941	21	0.71%	11	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Library 4	4721	162	3.43%	89	22	11	1	5	11	2	1	1	11
Library 5	8912	118	1.32%	67	6	2	1	2	6	2	1	1	11
Library 6	2800	117	4.20%	75	6	11	3	2	6	1	1	1	11
Library 7	7976	269	3.37%	174	14	21	5	6	11	6	4	1	11
Library 8	1944	119	6.12%	66	27	11	2	11	2	1	1	1	14
Library 9	2512	41	1.63%	26	3	5	11	1	1	1	1	1	11
Library 10	4411	412	9.34%	197	117	12	6	11	11	11	1	1	11
Total	47308	3156	6.67%	1911	121	117	41	111	117	11	11	11	111



are documents, they tend to be renamed or move around on websites. They can also be updated, potentially invalidating the reason for your original link, yet this won't necessarily be indicated to you or your users.'

Looking at the cures, one method of ensuring links on websites are kept up-to-date is by using a link checking tool. There are a number of such tools available, examples include Sitechecker, Interrobot, and the one used in this study, Dr. Link Check, as well as numerous others. All offer different features and most have a free version which usually allow a certain number of broken links to be checked before a purchase is required. Many of these tools have an automatic link checker which can be scheduled to run periodically; the broken links found can then be updated by a librarian. It is recommended that libraries examine the different features available through the various link checking tools and choose the one best suited to their individual needs. Checking for, and correcting, link rot should be considered a natural extension of usual website maintenance.

It should be noted that while link checking tools will detect broken links, they will not identify web pages that have been affected by content drift. Content drift refers to the evolution of an identified resource over time into one that bears no resemblance to the content originally referenced (Klein 2014). Content drift needs to be checked for manually.

Many Irish libraries, including all of those considered in this study, use the LibGuides software to build and edit their website. LibGuides includes an inbuilt link checking tool which many librarians may believe is sufficient to discover all instances of link rot. However, it is important to be aware that this tool has a number of limitations. As Randtke and Burell (2012) noted: 'Links in bulleted lists will be checked...other links will not'. This means that any links inserted within a paragraph (these comprise the vast majority of links in the authors study) or links inserted within an image will not be checked.

Conclusion

This study has shown that link rot is a problem in Irish academic libraries. When creating content for webpages, librarians should be mindful of the issue and link to webpages which are likely to be more stable (such as those with a .gov domain), avoid linking to documents such as PDFs and use permanent links such as those created by perma.cc. Librarians should also routinely check their webpages for link rot using a link checking tool and should incorporate link checking into their standard website maintenance.

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Do we need a doctor in the library?

Perceptions of librarians and library managers in Ireland

Eva Hornung

Abstract

Higher Education in Ireland has seen a record number of students enrolled in doctoral programmes. Increasingly, library and information professionals hold doctorates, too. There is a presumption that having a PhD is a positive addition to the workplace, but does it really make a difference to the service librarians provide in their respective organisations? And what is the role of the doctorate in the library?

Keywords: *Librarian; Academic Qualification; Doctorate; Library Service*

Introduction

This article explores some of the findings of a recently completed Master in Education thesis into the perceptions of ten librarians with doctorates and ten library managers (most of whom were qualified librarians), who employed information professionals with PhDs. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Additionally, a focus group was held of four experienced librarians, who do not hold a doctorate themselves.

The findings revealed three different conceptions and four dimensions of variation (themes that are evident across the categories) for each cohort of interviewees, forming two so-called outcome spaces. The role of the doctorate was experienced as 'providing a better service', 'being an expert' and 'developing as a person'. Each perception had implications for service provision. The focus group data provided additional insight. Some points of discussion and recommendations for future research conclude the article.

Library and Information Studies (LIS) encompasses a vast body of knowledge which forms the foundation on which the library community relies in order to provide an effective and efficient service to its stakeholders. Furthermore, librarians themselves have a role to play in doctoral education, especially in university libraries. They are becoming more engaged in teaching research skills and in partnering academics in conducting studies. These activities in turn shape the perception of students and academics of the library and its services. Librarians who can offer this peer-level support help strengthen relationships (Warren, 2018) and therefore secure the survival of the library service into the future. Scholarship, including the dissemination and publication of research, is now part of the day job for many academic librarians (Hoffmann, Berg, & Koufogiannakis, 2017).

In recent years many librarians around the world¹ have engaged in advanced academic research by pursuing a doctorate (either a professional doctorate or a PhD in either LIS or another subject area), but there is hardly any debate in

the literature about how their additional qualifications impact on the services they provide. Anecdotal evidence suggests that librarians are aware of the potential advantages for themselves and their respective organisations, but to date no research has been published in Ireland.

The article outlines the theoretical framework, provides an overview of the data collection and analysis considerations, and presents some of the findings. Finally, some thoughts about the future of the PhD in Irish libraries will be shared.

Background to the study

PhDs in Librarianship have existed for nearly a century. The first was established at the University of Chicago in 1928 (Abrera, 1987). In the Republic of Ireland, University College Dublin offers the 'Doctor of Philosophy in Information and Communication Studies', which requires applicants to have a primary degree in any field of study and a Master's degree in information science, library science, communication studies, computer science or a related field (UCD School of Information and Communication Studies, 2018). It is not known, however, how many librarians hold any kind of doctorate in Ireland. According to the latest Census, 110 persons working in libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities in 2016 possessed a doctorate (Central Statistics Office, n.d.).

In the absence of any Irish research, the literature review looked at international studies. In North America, having a PhD enabled librarians to secure tenure as well as giving them status (Bechtel, 1985). This could lead to enhanced service provision, particularly in academic libraries, where librarians were seen as academic professionals. Not all, however, subscribed to this view. Ridley's (2018) study of 13 academic librarians asked whether the PhD should be the new terminal degree. Participants (some held a doctorate, some did not) rejected the idea of it being a requirement.

¹ I will use 'librarian' and 'information professional' synonymously, both denoting qualified staff.

Additionally, concerns have been raised about the potential replacement of academic librarians by PhD graduates from other disciplines. Herubel (2006) questioned whether these should be allowed to compete for professional posts without holding the required Master’s degree in LIS. In Canada, where academic librarians, who are ‘scholar-practitioners’, have gained faculty status in many academic libraries, the debate is now centring around the question whether or not the MLIS is adequate enough.

Theoretical framework and data collection

Two research questions developed from the literature review:

What are the perceptions of librarians and employers of the value of having a doctorate?

How does having a doctorate impact on library services?

Participants were recruited through calls posted on various Irish library email lists. Interviews took place between 6th December 2018 and 28th March 2019. The length of the semi-structured interviews varied, ranging from 20 minutes to over one hour, with an average length of 33 mins. The researcher followed two interview guides (one for each cohort), which had received ethical clearance from Trinity College Dublin and had been tested during a pilot interview. All data was transcribed. The sample revealed varied backgrounds, ages and experiences. None of the librarians held a doctorate in LIS. Their level of self-reported experiences as researchers varied substantially ranging from 5 years to 20 years. Some counted only their PhD work, while others reported additional research activities.

Table 1. Demographic information – librarians with PhDs

Variable		No.
Gender	Female	6
	Male	4
Age Bracket	30-40 years	3
	41-50 years	5
	51-60 years	2
Nationality	Irish	7
	Other EU	2
	Dual citizenship (Irish/other EU)	1
Type of Doctorate	PhD/DPhil in a History-related subject	6
	PhD in Computer-related subject	1
	PhD in a Literature subject	2
	PhD in a Science subject	1
(a further breakdown could identify individuals)		
Experience as Researcher	20 years	1
	11-19 years	2
	10 years	3
	6-7 years	1
	5 years	3
Experience as Librarian	30 years	1
	20 years	1
	10 – 14 years	3
	7 – 8 years	2
	3 years and less	3
Type of Library	Special/research**	4
	Academic (University)	3
	Academic (Institute of Technology)	2
	Public library*	2
* one librarian worked in two different libraries		
# no further breakdown as this could identify librarians		
Additional post-graduate degrees	Master in Library and Information Studies	4
	Higher Diploma in LIS	2
	Master in Information (and Library) Management	3
	Other Master degree	3
	Other Diploma degree	1
(some held more than one additional degree)		

The managers also showed substantial variation in their demographic makeup. They had experience of advanced research: two held PhDs (one in a field of Science and one in a Literature-related subject); one was doing a subject based one; three had thought about it in the past; and one had started a PhD in LIS, but did not finish it.

The focus group consisted of three female and one male participant. Their experiences as librarians ranged from seven to 28 years and their ages from the 40s to mid-50s. All worked in academic libraries, albeit with different foci – one at a university (offering up to level ten qualifications), one in an institute of technology (up to level ten), one in a private academic institution (up to level nine), and one in a membership organisation (up to level nine). Two of the four librarians had previous experience of undertaking a doctorate, but neither had finished it. All four held a Master’s degree in LIS and had additional degrees.

At the heart of this study was an exploration of participants’ collective conceptions of a phenomenon with an emphasis on variation of experience. Therefore, Phenomenography was chosen as the theoretical framework. The outcome of a Phenomenographic study is to understand the qualitatively different ways in which participants experienced a particular phenomenon, distilled into **‘categories of description’**. Themes that are common to all categories but are experienced in a diverging manner are **‘dimensions of variation’**.

The final so-called **‘outcome space’** consists of a description of the relations that categories have with each other and also to the dimensions of variations within each category. Tight (2016) claimed that Phenomenography had been the only research design to have been developed within Higher Education research.

Keith Trigwell, a well-established Phenomenographer, advised using between ten and fifteen interviewees as a minimum (Trigwell, 2000). The author interviewed ten librarians with doctorates and ten library managers (one additional written answer was received), and also conducted a focus group with four experienced information professionals who did not hold a PhD but were working or had previously worked with colleagues who did. Data collected from all three cohorts was analysed: the perceptions of librarians and employers were formed into two separate Phenomenographic outcome spaces; the conceptions of the focus group were interwoven, complementing and juxtaposing them.

Table 2. Demographic information -employers

Variable	includes 11th employer, who had submitted short written answers	How many employers
Gender	Female	8
	Male	3
Nationality	Irish	9
	Dual citizenship (Irish/other EU)	1
	Other	1
Experience as a Librarian	40 years	1
	30-39 years	3
	20-29 years	4
	10-19 years	2
	Less than 10 years	1
Experience as an Employer	Over 30 years	1
	20-29 years	3
	10-19 years	5
	Less than 10 years	2
Type of Library	Special/research*	3
	Academic (University)	1
	Academic (Institute of Technology)	3
	Academic (other)	1
	Public library	3
*no further breakdown		
Number of employees in library	Over 100 employees	2
	51 – 100 employees	2
	30 – 50 employees	3
	Less than 30 employees	4
How many with PhD in the library?	1 librarian*	5
	2 librarians	4
	4-6 librarians	2
(*one employer currently enrolled)		

Data analysis was aided by Framework Analysis (FA), a method developed by Jane Ritchie and Liz Spencer in the 1980s in order to study applied qualitative research questions within a limited time frame (Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000). FA consists of five steps: familiarisation, identification of thematic framework, indexing, charting, and mapping and interpretation².

Findings

The categories for the employers and librarians with PhDs were somewhat identical: ‘changing perceptions of the library’ (leading to better services), ‘being an expert’, and ‘growing as a person’.

Four succinct dimensions of variation were observed: ‘motivation’ (to do the PhD), ‘skills’ (developed through the PhD and applied in the workplace), ‘benefit’ (who benefits from the PhD?) and ‘personal attributes’ (personality and behavioural aspects). Each one was more to the forefront in some categories than in others.

The role of the doctorate in the library

Depending on the category, the place of the PhD was perceived as follows:

Librarians

1. A PhD helps with service improvement in the library: PhD helps me to provide a better service. Skills learned through the research can be applied across the organisation and beyond, which makes me a better librarian.
2. Having a PhD means becoming or being a subject expert: The PhD adds gravitas, and I am being taken seriously and not talked down by stakeholders. It has provided me with a depth of knowledge and clarity of thought.
3. The PhD is a form of professional development: It was not a career move; I did it purely out of interest and personal fulfilment.

Employers

1. A PhD helps changing perceptions of the library (and of the LIS profession) and its services: it helps with the standing of the profession and enhances its reputation, raises the profile of the library by adding value to the library and its services, sometimes opening up new roles and bringing in additional business.
2. Having a PhD means an employee has become a subject expert: they have experience of the research process - librarians and the library are partners in the educational process.
3. The PhD has led to personal growth of the employee: a love of research led to their sense of self having changed.

The focus group participants saw potential roles for PhD holders in libraries where a specific depth of knowledge was needed, but queried its usefulness in, e.g., a school library. A one-size-fits-all qualification was not a realistic scenario in the library world, according to their view. When the researcher gave them the hypothetical scenario of a government-led push to increase the number of librarians with doctorates, they warned about what they saw as a devaluation of the MLIS and other qualifications. Should that ever happen, they felt that there was a proper structure needed, which should be put in place by the

² An excellent step-by-step guide is provided by Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., McNaughton Nicolls, C., & Ormston, R. (Eds.). (2014). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. Second edition. Los Angeles et al.: Sage Publications Ltd.

government to counteract any such demotion. They could foresee the establishment of another grade of 'professional librarian'.

PhD impact on library services

Different perceptions therefore influenced the perceived impact on library services:

1. PhD as transformative tool for growing future library services by elevating librarians and the LIS profession;
2. The PhD confers academic skills on the individual and this feeds into educational processes within the organisation;
3. The PhD is a testament to personal achievement, which may be used for improving library services.

When asked about their current duties and visions for their respective libraries, the managers all exhibited a strong service orientation and a sense that the work needed to be aligned with the main organisation to help it achieve its goals. This manifested itself again when asked about their decisions to employ PhD holders or support doctoral studies:

- Employees were hired specifically to fill certain roles, where a doctorate was an advantage;
- Other PhD graduates got a job because of their skills and knowledge in the library field and they just happened to have a doctorate,
- Librarians had been working in the institution for a while and then decided to do a doctorate.

This breakdown tallies with librarians' experiences. Three had been working as information professionals before they started their doctorates. Three more had previous work experience and loved the library environment. Another three switched to librarianship after using libraries and archives during their studies, which they described as 'moving to the other side of the desk' (Int. 9) and 'I jumped over the counter' (Int. 3). And one interviewee saw the PhD as one more step to becoming a librarian:

I was offered it and I jumped at it, the reason being, essentially, was that it was [mentions subject area] and I was still on my road to being a librarian! So it wasn't going to be a waste in that." (04:30)
Int. 7, special/research

Discussion

How do the findings of this study tally with the wider literature? Below are some points of discussion.

Enhanced credibility with stakeholders

Gilman and Lindquist's (2010) survey of North American academic librarians with PhDs found that, in order of descending importance, the following advantages were mentioned: credibility with the teaching faculty, subject expertise, ability to relate to academic users and in-depth understanding of the research process. This corresponds with category 2 (librarian cohort) in the present study, which stressed the role of the PhD in embedding the librarian within the wider research community.

Improved library services

McCluskey Dean (2017) examined her own experience of doing a part-time professional doctorate in Information Science. She found that doing a literature review as a practising librarian was easy, but that she could now relate better to her research students struggling with technology. All categories in the librarian cohort accentuated the fact that the skills learned through the PhD had positive ramifications for the services in the library. Categories 2 and 3 (in the librarian cohort) in particular stressed transmission of knowledge between librarian and patrons.

Why do employers take on doctorate holders? Managers in both public and private non-academic organisations taking part in a survey by Haapakorpi (2017) mentioned foremost the enhancement of the professional credibility of the

organisation, to strengthen the research and development activities as well as increased collaboration with universities through personal networks of the researcher. Categories 1 and 2 (employer cohort) in the present study confirmed similar reasons.

From the librarians' perspective, being invited onto research committees (category 1) and being co-authors on papers with academics (as happened in category 2) allowed them to establish new services. This mirrored some of the findings from a survey by Hoffmann, Berg and Koufogiannakis (2017), who listed factors that correlated with enabling librarians to become successful researchers in their respective libraries: individual attributes, peers and community as well as institutional structures and support. There was an overwhelming desire to have a supportive institutional environment for research.

Few graduates with PhDs in LIS

Whether or not someone is undertaking a doctorate still seems to be a personal choice. Scholarships in LIS, though increasingly available, are not sufficient to sustain a student, which means that most would have to work at least part-time. Interestingly, none of the librarians nor any of the employers interviewed held a PhD in LIS. Those who started a PhD in LIS would be part of a very select group, with numbers in Ireland still very low.

Even in larger populations, having a PhD as a librarian is quite unusual. In

2018, a census was conducted by the Canadian Association of Professional Librarians (CAPAL) among its member institutions. Out of a sample group of 1827, they received 920 completed responses, which means that half of the targeted librarians had responded. 52 of these held a PhD with nine in LIS (Canadian Association of Professional Librarians, 2019). The CAPAL figures showed how few LIS professionals possess a doctorate.

LIS PhDs in the workplace

This begs the question of how we will proceed as a profession, if we have so few doctorates in our field and none, with a few exceptions, working as professional librarians. Are we educating our few doctoral LIS students in Ireland to work in academia only? As the evidence from this study shows they are not moving into the profession. The author argues that library work and LIS academia should be better intertwined with research informing practice and everyday library issues being examined in a scholarly way.

It could be argued that the viability of LIS as an academic subject depends on its relevancy to the profession as it is happening in other occupations. No doubt, this will be part of a wider, ongoing debate, the continued self-examination happening in LIS. The findings point to one fundamental predicament, which goes to the core of this project: *the value and status of the doctorate in LIS itself*. Librarians with other subject PhDs are, evidently, successful and competent, but this issue seems to be at the heart of the debate between LIS (practical) skills versus PhD (academic) skills.

Recommendations for policy and practice

The hope is that there will always be a place for the LIS PhD – both in academia and in the library workplace. A number of librarians and managers suggested more screening at Master student level to find potential PhD candidates in order to spot talent early. Additionally, as one librarian had suggested, people already working in libraries and who have published a substantial body of literature might be interested in other types of doctorates, e.g. PhD by Publication.

The LAI could nourish a culture of research by hosting informal gatherings that allow for debate and exchange of ideas. This could be arranged easily at low cost, ideally in conjunction with the library schools, especially with UCD.

Several library employers expressed an interest in pursuing a doctorate as a result of their interview. Talking about the research other people were doing seemed to (re)ignite a spark.

Another suggestion that came up during a few interviews was running a workshop for students and practising librarians, where PhD holders could outline the different steps involved in gaining a doctorate – a mentoring programme was also mentioned. The researcher has plans to build on this goodwill within the LAI community in the near future.

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Promoting a Culture of Equality: Diversity Training at Maynooth University Library

Helen Fallon, Laura Connaughton and Edel Cosgrave

Abstract

This article explores the delivery, in 2020, of a one-day diversity and intercultural training programme for all library staff at Maynooth University (MU). The aim of the programme was to give library staff the opportunity to think about and talk about the impact of a more diverse student and staff population and to explore how the Library can help create a rich intercultural environment.

Keywords: *Diversity and Intercultural training, university library staff, Ireland*

Introduction

Participation in Irish Higher Education is changing. The number of international students coming to Ireland increased by 45% between 2013 and 2017, with the number of residence permits issued increasing from 9,300 to 13,500 over the period. These students were primarily from the United States, China, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Canada (Groarke, 2019). There has been a concerted effort to attract international students to Ireland, due in part to the substantial fees paid by these students.

In addition to international students, many people have moved to Ireland to work, and/or to seek asylum. As well as an increase in migrant-students, there is also greater diversity in terms of Irish ethnicity which has contributed to a growing number of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) students in Irish Higher Education. Figures from 2017/2018 indicate that while 85.8% of students identified as Irish, the remaining 14.2% identified as other ethnicities as illustrated in the chart below.

Ethnic Group of Respondents, 2017/2018

	Universities	Institutes of Technology	All Institutions
Irish	85.8%	83.2%	84.9%
Irish Traveller	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Any Other White Background	6.9%	8.7%	7.5%
African	1.7%	3.1%	2.2%
Any Other Black Background	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Chinese	1.3%	0.5%	1.0%
Any Other Asian Background	2.2%	2.3%	2.2%
Other	1.7%	1.9%	1.8%

Higher Education Authority (2018), p. 24

There are 12,900 students from 95 countries attending Maynooth University (MU). International enrolments increased from 540 (5.6% of total enrolments) in 2010/11 to 1,100 (9.1% of total enrolments) in 2016/2017. 28% of fulltime undergraduate students are mature students, have a disability, or are from a socio-economic disadvantaged background. (MU Strategic Plan 2018-2022).

There are 55 library staff. 48 (87%) are of Irish ethnicity. The remaining 7 (13%) are of U.K, U.S, Dutch and Nepalese ethnicity.

In this more diverse environment, cultural competency for library staff is vital. Cultural competency is defined as “a developmental process that evolves over an extended period and refers to an ability to understand the needs of diverse populations and to interact effectively with people from different cultures.” (Mestre 2010)

The *Diversity Standards: Cultural Competency for Academic Libraries* produced by the US Association of College and Research Libraries Racial and Ethnic Diversity Committee (ACRL, 2012) identify key areas for the development of cultural competency. This includes self-awareness, cross-cultural knowledge, development of services, library collections and organisational and workforce diversity. The Committee recommended integrating cultural competency and diversity training into the LIS curriculum. Without cultural competency training in libraries the following problems have been evidenced: inadequate service to diverse populations; lack of cultural and language awareness and sensitivity; inability to understand how culture affects library use; and lack of respect for different perspectives. (Mestre, 2010, p, 480).

The IFLA/UNESCO Multicultural Library Manifesto advises an integrated approach to service, rather than “separate” or “additional” services for any group. They recommend the Library Strategic plan should state the objectives, priorities and services related to cultural diversity, and that services should be developed in consultation with relevant user groups (IFLA/UNESCO, 2018). The manifesto highlights the need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in diversity for library staff and state that the staff should reflect the community the Library serves, in terms of diversity.

The UK Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals has produced an Equalities and Diversity Action Plan (CILIP, 2017). The plan identifies actions in five key areas including CILIP as an organisation, diversity and CILIP membership, diversity and the library profession, celebrating diversity and diverse and inclusive library and information services.

Equality is enshrined in Irish legislation. *The Equal Status Act 2000*¹ prohibits discrimination under nine grounds including race. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019* notes subgroups that require particular support, including ethnic minorities. The plan recognises the need “to ensure that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland’s population” (HEA, 2015, p. 6).

Diversity and inclusion has been a cornerstone of Irish libraries and there is a small body of literature written in the Irish context. Parkinson (2011) explores concepts such as assimilation, multiculturalism and integration in the context of the role of Irish public libraries. Mannion and Thornley (2011) carried out an investigation of the challenges Chinese students in Irish third level libraries experience. Their recommendations include the need to acknowledge the cultural traits of Chinese students and all international students, and how these affect the use of the Library. They also recommend that library staff receive training on best practice in providing services to international students. O’Connor and Kerrigan (2013) and Stokes and Molloy (2019) provide useful insights into library staff exchanges/visits to Chinese libraries.

Background/Context

Goal 5 of the Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2018-2022² has the following objective:

To create an environment that promotes equality, diversity, inclusion and inter-culturalism (MU Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022, p. 45)

The Library Strategic Plan 2020-2023 (currently at draft stage) has Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Inter-culturalism as one of its six strategic areas.

The training programme described in this article, is part of a process of

increasing awareness and skills and encouraging an ongoing dialogue on inclusion. Other elements of training in this area were a number of one-hour sessions in what is known as our “Library Outside In” series. This included:

- a briefing from the MU Access Office, on a range of initiatives to bring more students into the University via a variety of targeted access programmes with schools in disadvantaged areas, prisons, traveller groups and other underrepresented groups in our society
- a briefing by the Equality Officer on the Athena Swan Programme which aims to bring more women into senior positions in higher education
- a briefing by the new MU Vice-President on her role within the University.

Most frontline staff undertook autism awareness training in 2019, and the Library piloted an online disability training course for the University in 2013 (Mellon, Cullen & Fallon, 2013).

The Programme

The one-day programme was delivered in two cohorts with approximately 25 staff attending on each day. The programme was designed by the Department of Adult and Community Education at Maynooth University, in consultation with the Library. It grew out of an Erasmus funded project *Integrating Diversity in Higher Education* <http://he4u2.eucen.eu/>. Via this project, the Department of Adult and Community Education partnered with universities in Germany, Portugal, Greece, Finland, Austria and Belgium. Research was carried out in each university to establish the experiences and insights of mostly migrant, but also ethnic minority, students. One of the outputs of the project was the development of a generic CPD programme, which can be adapted for different contexts. Another output was the development of guidelines outlined in *Creating Intercultural Learning Environments: Guidelines for Staff within Higher Education Institutions* (HE4u2, 2017).

The guidelines and programme have been endorsed by the MU Faculty of Social Sciences Teaching and Learning sub-committee. The programme was piloted in 2019, with a mixed staff group that included two library staff and feedback was positive.

1 Government of Ireland, Equal Status Act 2000 <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/html> (accessed 9 March 2020)

2 Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2018-2022 https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/Maynooth_University_Strategic_Plan_2018-22_0.pdf (accessed 9 March 2020)

Pre-Workshop

Before the workshop participants received the following information, via e-mail, on the course.

As a group, participants will have an opportunity to:

- Explore their own cultural and ethnic identity.
- Consider the implications of working in intercultural settings.
- Learn about theories of interculturalism.
- Understand the origins and impacts of racism.
- Reflect on their own way values, beliefs and theories of intercultural work and of diversity.
- Consider ways in which they might create conditions for supporting and celebrating diversity

The workshops will be highly participative and experiential. Handouts and resource materials for developing ideas that might inform people's practice will be provided.

The Workshop

The workshop ran from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with one hour for lunch. There were three facilitators. One is a full-time lecturer in the Department of Adult and Community Education in MU. Two are part-time lecturers in Adult and Community Education and are of Nigerian ethnicity.

Morning Session

The first exercise involved staff introducing themselves and saying something about their name. Group work followed with lively discussion and flip chart presentations. Topics discussed included: cross-cultural conversations, definitions of culture (surface versus deep culture), the concept of white privilege, the difference between race and ethnicity, the language of diversity, how to have conversations around race and ethnic diversity without feeling awkward and how to deal with difficult intercultural encounters in situations where there may be a danger of being perceived as being racist. The issue of how to encourage more diversity among library staff without using quotas was also discussed. Questions which arose in the discussions across the two days included: What are the unconscious biases BAME people experience in Ireland today? How are they manifested? Is asking someone to slow down or repeat what they have said potentially offensive if they are from a different culture? How do you ask someone about their background without being interrogative or making assumptions? How does the Library address the challenge of getting participants to integrate and mix more during information literacy session?

Concerns were expressed about losing our own cultural identity and the view expressed that people who come from "elsewhere" should conform to our societal norms.

Afternoon

The participants had the opportunity to read and consider *Creating Intercultural Learning Environments: Guidelines for Staff within Higher Education Institutions*. This was followed by group work on how the Library can incorporate diversity into what we do. Suggestions included signage in languages beyond Irish and English, a more diverse library website and social media presence, revisiting our collection policies to ensure our books and archives reflects a variety of cultures, and aligning our outreach events with different cultural events. While we celebrate Africa Day, it was felt that this could be broadened to include Chinese New Year, Thanksgiving and other significant events from different traditions. The need to consider diversity in our teaching and training was also identified. The suggestion was made that names and examples in PowerPoint presentation should reflect our diverse users and our orientation programme for new students should be inclusive and representative of different ethnic backgrounds. Similarly artwork throughout the building should be representative of different cultures. Culturally significant collections could be highlighted and might be used to encourage more diverse audiences at library events that are open to the public. On-going staff training in cultural diversity was also identified as a need and the suggestion that the Library have a diversity committee was made by one group.

Evaluations

An evaluation form, used by the course presenters, was distributed at the close of each day. There were 44 responses in total and feedback was very positive.

Participants rated the following statements on a “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” scale.

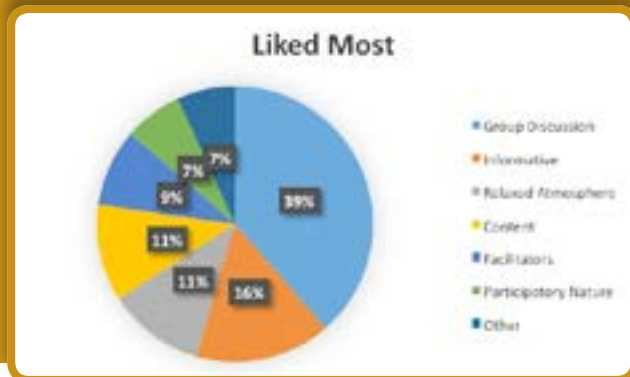
1. Facilitators presented materials in a clear and organised manner
2. Opportunities to reflect on and discuss the material covered, if appropriate
3. The manner of teaching and facilitation
4. Your contribution to the learning of the group



This was followed by open questions:

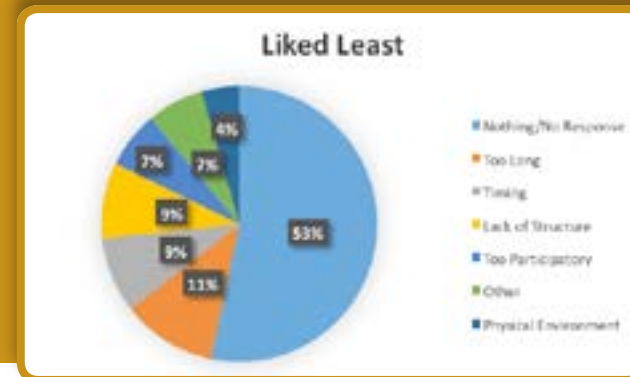
What did you like most about this session?

Almost all respondents provided a response to this question (44 of 45). A significant number (39%) identified the opportunity for group discussions as the aspect most liked. Several found the session informative and some mentioned learning in relation to the use of language in particular. It was also felt that the relaxed and informal atmosphere provided helped to facilitate participation and open discussion.



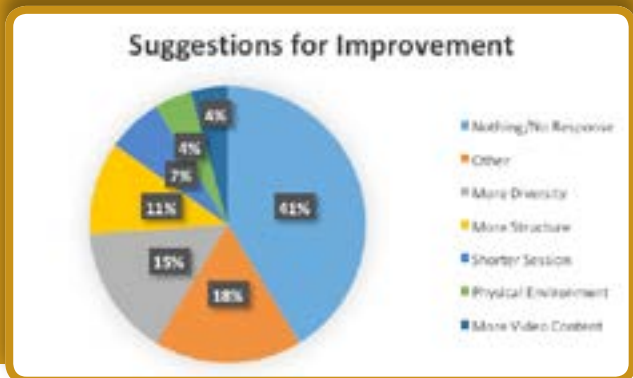
What did you like least about this session?

Some participants (11%) felt that the workshop was too long. Others felt that some topics were rushed while too much time was given to others. Some remarked (9%) that while discussion was interesting, they felt it lacked focus and direction at times.



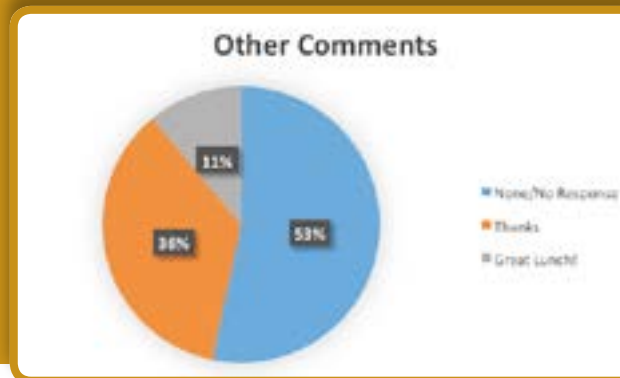
How could this workshop be improved?

Some respondents (15%) suggested that it might be useful to have representation and hear from other minority groups on campus, such as travellers, people with disabilities and Asian students. Some (11%) felt that the session could be more structured and focused.



Any Other Comments?

A large number of participants took the opportunity to express their thanks for the workshop and several mentioned the lovely ethnic lunch!



Discussion

Running a training staff for all library staff presents challenges. An obvious challenge is the need for services to continue, which means that not all staff can in fact attend. Less obvious is the challenge of providing one training programme to quite a diverse group. Frequently, individuals or groups in the Library attend specific training which relates to their role, for example most frontline staff attended autism awareness training in 2019.

The attendees have different work and life experiences. There is a large variety of library roles represented in the group. Some participants are involved in information literacy training. These people have experience of different teaching and training methods, although few would have significant knowledge or experience of the work of Brazilian adult educator Paulo Freire. This methodology places emphasis and value on the experience, knowledge and learning needs of the group, as articulated by the individual members of the group, through discussion. The programme was built around that framework, which relies heavily on group work. Some felt stimulated and engaged by group work, while others found this challenging and possibly confusing and/or boring/repetitive.

Suggestions for further improving the programme, from the authors of this paper, include developing the information on the pre-course flier and emphasising the need to read this before the course. Between the first and second offering of the programme, the flier was recirculated. One of the facilitators briefly explained the methodology to the group on the second day, following feedback from the first day, and this worked well. We would also suggest twenty as the maximum number for the one-day programme. This was in fact the number initially suggested by the presenters.

While the afternoon discussion on diversity and the Library yielded a lot of useful information, it would have been useful to integrate the objectives relating to diversity in the Library Strategic Plan 2020-2023, more into the discussion. However, this document, while drafted, had not been ratified by University Executive at that time.

Overall feedback was very positive with comments such as:

It opened my mind

I liked the relaxed informality and honesty of discussion and presentation

Opportunity to participate and discuss topics was great/ Loved the participatory nature. I'm usually loathe to contribute but was comfortable to do so today due to the way it was run.

Learning from each other/interactivity made people engage more and develop more dialogue

**Use of phrases/language very helpful/made me think about how I use language
Gave us food for thought about hidden barriers**

Conclusion

Creating a racially diverse, inclusive library environment represents a challenge. It involves having conversations, which can be difficult or uncomfortable, about race and culture. It also involves looking critically at our practice and policies. We need to identify what works and what needs to change and base decisions on evidence and analysis. Both robust data and student narratives have been identified as key to progress (UUK, NUS, 2019). There is no one model for success and initiatives need to be context specific and recognise nuances of different groups. Enhancing knowledge and skills of staff, alongside improving institutional processes is vital to the process.

While this case study is MU Library specific, the model could be considered by other groups including CONUL Training and Development, the LAI Continuing Professional Development (CPD) group and other library related bodies. Diversity and inclusiveness is intrinsic to the spirit of libraries. Training such as this provides an opportunity to be part of a meaningful conversation around the challenges and opportunities our changing society offers.

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Singing, talking, reading, writing and playing: Intentional Early Literacy at Laois County Libraries

Breda Connell

ABSTRACT

The younger a child is introduced to books, the more likely that he/she will be literate. This article discusses Early Literacy and considers the evidence-based programme developed by two US library associations. The research, rationale and the mechanics of organising Early Literacy sessions is described.

Keywords: *Early Literacy, Public Libraries, Ireland*





Introduction

The Baby Book Club at Mountmellick Library began on 2nd May 2017. An early literacy initiative aimed at 0-3 year olds and their carers, it is modelled on an evidence-based programme which was developed in the US jointly by the Public Library Association (PLA) and the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC). This programme, *Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR)* (Every Child Ready to Read, 2020), was chosen for a number of reasons: its impact had been measured over a three year period by child development experts; it is designed to be adapted to individual settings and needs: its focus lies on encouraging and empowering parents to develop early literacy (EL) strategies from the very beginning of their child's life and it offers a simple and fun way for adults to engage with EL.

Background

In public libraries across the country, outreach and event programming have become central to the running of branch libraries. This reaching out with activities and events to draw the public inwards, towards their local library, enables us as library staff to gauge the needs of the communities that we serve. Over the years I had been timetabling plenty of events which were suitable for families, some of which were literacy related and many which would fall under the broader 'Educational' heading. I had programmed Storytime sessions for both preschool and school age children, during which the very smallest family members either sat happily and listened or slumbered while their brothers and sisters delighted in the stories on offer. Toddler siblings often became bored with these sessions, pitched as they were for the older ones. Babies could sleep through an entire visit while their adults either got books to read for themselves or helped older siblings with their selections. Toddlers and babies, I felt, were overall a little short-changed. There was nothing 'intentional' being offered regarding literacy events to this 0 – 3 age group. The 3+ age group is very well catered for in terms of literacy and learning, particularly in libraries and the majority of children now access free preschool hours at age 3 and 4.



I started to look into what I could do for these tiny members. I read about EL initiatives that had been implemented elsewhere. The comprehensive *Fingal County Libraries Early Years Literacy Strategy*¹ was my starting point. It highlights the importance of educating the significant adults in children's lives around the topic of EL. It outlines the advantages of collaborating with community agencies in reaching the goals it sets and it provides case studies for EL programming that is taking place in Fingal branch libraries. I found plenty of examples from libraries around the country that were programming literacy focused events for the birth to 5 age group. This is underpinned at a national level through the National Public Library Strategy *Our Public Libraries 2022*² with Reading and Literacy being one of its three core strategic aims. This is put into action in libraries around the country through the *Right to Read Campaign*³ (programme).

From my research on early child development I discovered that I would need to encourage phonological and print awareness, print motivation, narrative

1 Fingal County Council (2013)

2 Our Public Libraries 2022(2018)

3 Right to Read Campaign (2015)

skills, letter knowledge and vocabulary building which are the foundational skills that are needed to enhance reading readiness.

But how can parents develop the skills to do this with a new-born baby? And what did they need to change for that baby at the 3 month stage, or the 6 month stage? Was it really possible to turn babies on to books from birth? How would it be possible to cater for all of the babies who would, hopefully, come to an EL session, when they would all be at different stages of development? My list of questions was growing as I delved into the subject of EL. Then I discovered some articles discussing ECRR and its use in the US public libraries and it seemed to have a lot of the answers that I needed.

What is different about ECRR?

Every Child Ready to Read was developed as a parent education initiative with the underlying assumption that EL begins at birth and that the primary adults in an infant's life are best placed to create a literacy rich environment for their child. The practices underlying EL are broken down to singing, talking, reading, writing and playing. By engaging with these practices each day with their baby, parents can create a literacy rich environment, thus introducing all



of the foundational skills including print awareness, letter knowledge and vocabulary. Each of the five activities promotes the EL skills – everything a child knows about reading and writing before he or she can read or write.

The programme, which is in place in around 4000 public libraries across the US, was launched in 2004 by the PLA and the ALSC. It was evaluated over a three year period from 2013 – 16 by a team of researchers led by Professor Susan B. Neuman, an early childhood education and literacy development expert from New York University. The result of the study, which was published in 2017 (American Library Association, 2017), led to the development of the second phase of ECRR which was simpler than the first and highlight the five practices? as being central to this EL approach. The report also highlights the importance of play in EL particularly when that play is intentionally underpinned with a literacy element.

The appeal of the ECRR programme from the outset was its simplicity. The message was clear – talking, singing, reading, playing and writing with babies and toddlers every day from the very beginning will create a literacy rich environment for them and will enhance their reading readiness so that when they begin primary school they will have the pre-literacy skills that will

underpin their learning and increase the likelihood of them learning to read and write with ease. Above all though, the focus here was on the adults. ECRR is an adult education programme which empowers them to create that very environment that will encourage reading readiness. The bonus by-product is that it is a fun session for the babies and toddlers too.

Adapting ECRR into BBC

By taking all of the above into account I set about using the ECCR framework to fit an EL offering in an Irish public library.

I wanted to avoid isolated or ad-hoc sessions as I thought that this approach would not provide the routine and repetition needed to encourage and foster an EL environment. But I felt that monthly sessions were not enough for what I was aiming to do with this project. I settled on timetabling the sessions once a fortnight, Tuesdays from 10.30 – 11.30am. And so, Baby Book Club (BBC) was born. After a few months another staff member came on board with the project and we were able to offer the session on a weekly basis. It was at this stage that it really got bedded in as part of our weekly services and it went from strength to strength.



BBC was set up in such a way that each session followed a set format but from week to week the contents of each section of the session were varied. So, the session is structured on the five practices and the facilitator models each practice for the adults during the hour long session. The structure of the session is as follows:



Pre-session – 9.30am

The room is prepared – furniture in the room is removed. Rhymes and songs are selected and the laminated words are put up around the walls so that all of the adults can see them and will be able to join in. Mats are put out on the ground as well as some large cushions or bean bags. A selection of books is placed around the room. The facilitator will make a selection of titles to read at the reading time. The sensory box is prepared along with simple, age appropriate colouring sheets and colours.

10.30am

Adults and babies arrive and get settled in the Baby Book Club room.

10.40am

The facilitator greets everyone. From her sitting position on the floor she goes around the room and writes children and adults names on stickers. Sometimes a brave toddler will assist by taking the sticker to the appropriate person – this is a great ice breaker if there are new people present and it is a nice way to acknowledge everyone.

10.45am SINGING

The session starts every week with 'The Hello Song' the facilitator sings this with actions and the group will join in. This is followed by a very brief introduction about the benefits of reading, talking, singing, writing and playing with baby. This information is on a poster on the wall along with all of the lyrics and words for the rhymes and songs.

Followed by a selection of action songs, rhymes and finger plays. Popular ones include *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*, *Incy Wincey Spider* and *The Wheels on The Bus*.

Each rhyme, song or finger play is said or sung twice. This repetition allows the babies and toddlers time to assimilate the sounds. *(Most of the ones we use are very short. Don't apply this rule if you are using 'The Wheels on the Bus' or similar songs which can have infinite verses.)*

10.55am READING

The facilitator will have brought some books – possibly themed – to read on the floor with the babies and toddlers. This is interspersed with lots of talking – about the book etc. Sometimes toddlers will give the facilitator a book to read to everyone. Some little ones will snuggle down to read with their own adult. Some others will dip in and out. Giant lift the flap books are very popular here. There is a selection of books for 0—3 and 0-6 month old babies which are specifically designed to be appealing to them and these are given to the babies or the adults with the babies to use.

11.10am WRITING

Small colouring pages with large print pictures – usually related to the reading theme if there is one - are placed on the floor. There are tubs of large chunky crayons to colour with. Children who want to can take part. We encourage even the smallest babies to take part here with assistance if necessary from their adult.

11.25am PLAYING

The sensory box is brought out and babies can play freely for a while. All of the children really enjoy this part. The items in the box are very soft small toys or household items that are safe for babies and toddlers to feel and play with and, of course, to put into their mouths!

11.30am

The session closes with a quick tidy -up of toys, colouring and books followed by *The Goodbye Song* and a High Five with everyone. Babies and adults leave.

11.35am

The clean-up proper begins!

We understand that the babies sleep really well afterwards! We're not sure about their adults....

TIPS FOR LIBRARY STAFF

- ✿ The key message that adults should leave with is that the five practices to create a literacy rich environment at home are: Singing, Talking, Reading, Writing and Playing.
- ✿ Building an early years book collection is crucial to the success of an early literacy
- ✿ Tactile books for babies, books with pictures of babies, books with mirrors
- ✿ Board books for toddlers, lift the flap books, lift the fabric flap books
- ✿ Books with no words and books with very simple stories
- ✿ Keep this collection out of general circulation
- ✿ Once the collection grows you can circulate the books amongst BBC members
- ✿ Try to secure some separate funding for BBC titles
- ✿ You don't need to be a good singer to deliver this session. The songs and rhymes are really simple and usually everyone knows them and joins in.
- ✿ Try to keep the session as toy free as possible particularly noisy toys – anything with batteries – as they are distracting and difficult to compete with when you are singing, rhyming and reading
- ✿ Adapt the sessions to suit your audience if it is all babies in attendance then this will dictate your book selection on that day and you may do more singing and rhyming than reading.
- ✿ Keep each section of the session short as toddlers in particular get bored quickly – a mixture of 6 or 7 songs, rhymes and finger plays.
- ✿ Interlocking camping mats provide a good surface as they are soft yet sturdy and they are easy to clean.
- ✿ Supervision is needed throughout and each child is the responsibility of the adult in charge.

Conclusion

Baby Book Club is very well attended each week. There are always little ones graduating at the end of the summer as they start their new journey with pre-school and there are new babies joining all the time. It now plays a big part in the library programming and has put EL provision high on the agenda in the branch. The success of the programme has resulted in two other branches in the Laois Library service, Portlaoise and Abbeyleix, setting up their own BBC sessions, strengthening EL provision across the county.

It has also been a springboard for new ideas and practices that we use in engaging families and enhancing early literacy programming. A Sensory Play morning for 0 – 3s now runs once a month and this has been a very popular development. The template can be modified and used to suit different library settings or as outreach to other venues depending on resources and physical space available.

I was extremely lucky that my colleague who came on board with the Baby Book Club was a trained Montessori teacher who had run her own childcare service for many years prior to her work in the library service. Her expertise and creativity were instrumental to the success of the programme.

The success of Baby Book Club has led to a more intentional approach to using early literacy provision to strategically engage with parents and carers of very young children. Although the target audience is always the parent, it is an added bonus that this is an hour of literacy fun and stimulation for the babies and toddlers.

One of the key benefits with developing an EL project like this is that it facilitates that important relationship-building between libraries and families that is so crucial in making the library a key part of young lives. It also develops a culture of reading in the

community. And it adds a very social element to the library. Strong friendships have been formed at BBC which underlines the role of the library in the community as facilitators of social cohesion.

There are lots of opportunities for library services to engage in early literacy work. This adaptable programme affords libraries the opportunities to utilise their influence as key partners in the community to build networks to promote EL for everyone. There is scope for libraries to take their EL offerings a step farther by building relationships with other community agencies working in the areas of early education and child development.

Acknowledgement

During the first summer that we were up and running with the BBC I read about the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) at the National College of Ireland and the EL and early numeracy projects, amongst others, that they research, develop and deliver in the Dublin Docklands area. We made contact with them and visited to look at their programmes. They were able to critique the structure that we were using and suggest changes that they had found to work in their EL work and we incorporated these into BBC.

I would like to extend my thanks to Dr Josephine Bleach and her team at the ELI for their time, help and suggestions.

Breda Connell, BA, PgDipILS

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Resources

- www.jbrary.com: A fantastic resource and the best starting point, for anyone interested in using rhymes, songs and finger plays in their early literacy programming. The YouTube channel demonstrates how to put the songs etc. into action.
- <http://www.earlylit.net/>: Author Saroj Ghoting's website provides information on early literacy research and resources.
- <https://www.zerotothree.org/>: Child Development and Early Literacy resource

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Coronavirus COVID-19

Important Messages

From LAI

<https://www.libraryassociation.ie/a-message-to-lai-membership/>

From HSLG

While addressed to HSLG members perhaps it could be of interest to the wider LAI community:

MLA statement of support: <https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=1122&&blogaid=2884&source=5>

MLA's COVID-19 resource page: <https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=1712>

ARSL Statement: <https://arsl.info/arsl-statement-on-library-closures/>

ALA Statement: <http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2020/03/ala-executive-board-recommends-closing-libraries-public>

CHLA/ABSC Statement: https://chla-absc.ca/news_manager.php?page=20536

ALIA Health Libraries Australia: <https://www.alia.org.au/australian-libraries-responding-covid-19>

People

Johanna Archbold, Institute Librarian(Acting), Athlone Institute of Technology

Jane Burns, Assistant Registrar, Athlone Institute of Technology

Susan Reilly, Associate Librarian, University College Dublin

Library developments

Re-opening of Coolock Library

Coolock Library re-opened on 2nd January 2020. Details here:

<https://booksirelandmagazine.com/coolock-library-re-opens/>

International News

Copyright: The latest from EBLIDA is available here:

<http://www.eblida.org/activities/copyright-reform2.html>

EBLIDA Newsletter

<https://mailchi.mp/d94e78317df2/eblida-newsletter-3037058?e=cf0fcc37d0>

Public Libraries

The IFLA /UNESCO Public Library Manifesto was 25 years old last year. The IFLA Public Libraries Section intends to review the Manifesto and identify areas which can be updated. For a Press Release including a survey, please see here: <https://www.ifla.org/node/92968>. **Comments by 31st May 2020.**

President Michael D Higgins donated some 700 books from his personal collection to Dublin City Libraries recently. Details are available here: <http://www.dublincity.ie/story/president-higgins-donates-book-collection-dublin-city-libraries>

Conferences

QQML 2020, 26-30 May. This is now a virtual conference:

<http://qqml.org/event/qqml-2020/>

CONUL: This conference has been postponed until November. Details here:

<http://conference.conul.ie/conul-conference-2020-postponed/>

CONFERENCES cancelled

LIBER

LILAC

IFLA/WLIC 2020, 15-21 August:

<https://2020.ifla.org/?cn-reloaded=1>

CPD

While many CPD courses and seminars may be cancelled, you can find webinars on line. Sites worth checking are

<https://mailchi.mp/6d7f84dba77b/alia-weekly-volume-8-issue-13-1-april#whatson>

<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/magazine/issues/march-april-2020/>

<https://www.uksg.org/news/2020Events>