

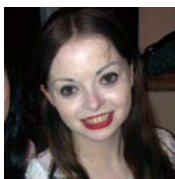
A Report on Rudaí 23 – an Irish 23 Things Course for Information Professionals

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Abstract

Rudaí 23 (meaning 23 Things in Irish), is an online, collaborative, professional development course based on *Learning 2.0: 23 Things*, an online discovery programme developed by Helene Blowers in 2006. Designed to facilitate the technological upskilling and professional development of Irish information professionals, Rudaí 23 was established and managed by a team of eleven information and education professionals. The Rudaí 23 team researched, designed, and implemented the course, delivering an engaging instructional learning programme which was utilised by information professionals across a variety of library sectors worldwide. This article provides a summary of the course, its goals, its development, implementation and achievements.





Introduction

Rudaí 23* is a collaborative project, designed to facilitate the technological upskilling and professional development of Irish information professionals. Established and managed by a team of eleven information and education professionals the course was based on the 'Learning 2.0: 23 Things' discovery programme developed by Helene Blowers in 2006. The multi-organisational Rudaí 23 team researched, designed, and implemented the course, delivering an engaging instructional course which was utilised by information professionals across a variety of sectors, library types and countries.



The success of Rudaí 23 can be seen in the high completion rates. Completion numbers for MOOCs have, in the majority of cases, been found to be less than 10% of those who enroll (Jordan, 2014). 235 people initially registered interest in Rudaí 23 in July 2015: 185 of those went on to enroll fully by registering a blog for the course and 123 of those wrote their first blog post. Of that 185, 79 have applied for completion certificates. This represents a 42% completion rate.



Through continuous engagement and support via online networks and web technologies, the Rudaí 23 team encouraged participants to be part of an active and supportive community and demonstrated the value of peer learning and online networking for professional development.



By completing Rudaí 23, participants were able to develop their skills and knowledge of web tools currently used in libraries worldwide. They were also encouraged to think about current issues within the information profession.



* which literally translates as 'Things 23'



Background

Treasurer of the Western Regional Section of the Library Association of Ireland (WRSLAI), Niamh O'Donovan, first recognised the need for a 23 Things course as a result of feedback from LAI members in the West of Ireland. It has been some years since a publicly accessible 23 Things programme has been

delivered and, with the continuous changes that occur in web technology and the constant need to retrain and upskill in such technologies, the Western Regional Section Committee felt that an Irish-led 23 Things course would be well received nationally.

The central goal of our Government's National Digital Strategy 'Doing More With Digital' (DCENR 2014) is to help more people to engage with the internet and utilise the resources available to them online. In *Opportunities for All: The public library as a catalyst for economic, social and cultural development* (DCENR 2013, p.95) the 23 Things programme is listed as a key resource for professional development for public library employees in Ireland.

Both of these documents demonstrate the need for widely available learning programmes like Rudaí 23 to help information professionals meet the new challenges and needs of library patrons as well as to access resources available online for professional development.

Planning for Rudaí 23 began at the WRSLAI Annual General Meeting in March 2015. The committee of the WRSLAI were the first project team members to be involved in the planning process, with Niamh O'Donovan as team leader. The final Rudaí 23 team was comprised of Caroline Rowan (St. Michael's Hospital, Dun Laoghaire), Christine Jordan (St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra), Emmet Keoghan (Marsh's Library, Dublin), Kris Meen (NUI Galway), Elizabeth Keane Kelly (Galway County Council), Mary Murray (Galway-Mayo IT), Michelle Breen (University of Limerick), Niamh O'Donovan (Galway County Council), Siobhan McGuinness (The Heritage Council), Stephanie Ronan (The Marine Institute) and Wayne Gibbons (Galway-Mayo IT).

Rudaí 23 was officially launched on 22 June 2015 at the annual WRSLAI Seminar in Galway. Registration for the course opened on 1 July 2015 and by the close of registration on 7 August 2015, 235 people had registered for the course. Of these, 185 participants commenced the course with 73 participants completing the course.

The course began on 7 July 2015 with the publication of the first module, which required participants to set up a blog which they would use throughout the course. Modules were posted at scheduled intervals with the twenty-third module going live on 12 October 2015. The course officially closed on 30 November 2015.

The Modules

The objectives of the course were: to demonstrate the usability of free web-based tools which could be used for the improvement of service delivery in libraries, to provide professional development for library staff, to advance advocacy and to increase the visibility of the library profession as a whole.

The modules covered technical topics such as infographics, blogging, online networks, augmented reality and communicating through photographs as well as professional development modules covering topics such as joining professional associations and attending conferences. A full list of the modules can be viewed in the Appendix.

Each technical module presented two or three free web-based tools and gave examples of the tools' use in a library context, followed by a choice of tasks for participants to complete. Participants were then asked to write a reflective blog post about their own experience and views on the tasks.

In the theoretical modules participants were presented with current issues in the information profession or opportunities for professional development and encouraged to discuss their views and experiences on the topics.

In module 2, participants were asked to write their first blog post called 'Why I became a Librarian'. The result of this activity was 123 blog posts from a hugely diverse group of information professionals who had each followed

different paths but who all shared the same passions and values about libraries and were experiencing similar challenges in their work. This was the beginning of the Rudaí 23 community.

In module 15, "Advocacy for Libraries", participants were asked to review a series of advocacy campaigns and reflect on their own views on advocacy. This module was accompanied by a Twitter chat on the theme of advocacy for libraries, to which active tweeters and library advocates, in addition to the course participants, were invited to contribute.

Three of the Rudaí 23 modules were called 'Reflective Practice' and had no specific topic, but were instead intended to allow participants time to reflect on their experience of the course as a whole. Participants were encouraged to read and comment on each other's blog posts as well as reflect on any issues they might have been experiencing and to identify areas for improvement in their own writing.

The final open reflective practice module introduced the Gibbs Model of Reflection (1988) and gave recommendations on how to improve on reflections in future blog posts. There was significant evidence that this model was taken on board by participants, as their final few blog posts showed great engagement with the six stages of reflection in Gibbs' model.

Developing and Managing Rudaí 23

Managing a project of this scale on a voluntary basis was challenging. In keeping with the objectives of the course, the Rudaí 23 team used free web technology and online collaboration tools to develop and deliver the course. Google Groups provided an opportunity for effective engagement and discussion between the team members throughout the creation and operation of the course. This was vital as the geographical spread of team members throughout Ireland meant that it was not possible to schedule face-to-face meetings.

All aspects of the project were developed collaboratively. The workflows for the content were devised in such a way as to give every opportunity for

volunteers to contribute comments or suggestions regarding the content of the course throughout its development. The diversity of information professionals – academic, public, special and health librarians as well as third-level educators – meant that there was a broad range of expertise and experience upon which to build the course and its content.

In addition, the team sought advice from previous 23 Things course (2011) administrators in the University of Cambridge Library, building on their experience to formulate the timeline and course content to ensure that the participants would derive the maximum benefit from the course.

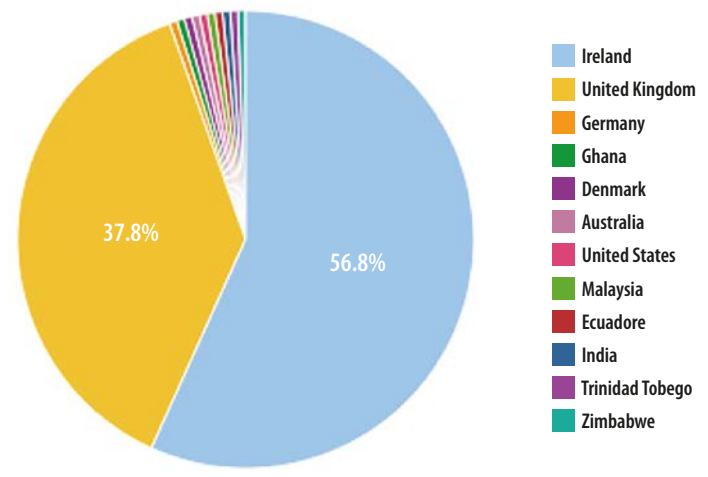
Spreading the Word

Publicising the course began via social media in May 2015 and an overwhelmingly positive response was received. Previous Irish 23 Things offerings have been organisation-specific, so there was a huge amount of interest in Rudai 23, in Ireland and the UK as well as further afield.

The Library Association of Ireland was very supportive of the project and agreed to provide CPD certification to anyone who completed the course within the designated timeframe. This certification was one of the key deliverables of the project plan and gave the course additional value for participants.

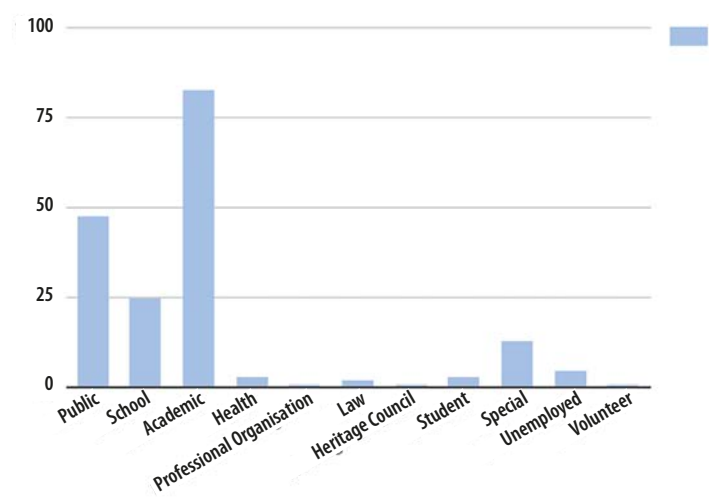
Figure 1, below, illustrates the geographical spread of the 185 participants who actually commenced the course. 105 participants were from Ireland and 70 participants were from the United Kingdom with the remainder geographically located as per the legend in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Geographic distribution of participants



The academic library sector represented the largest portion of participants on the course, followed by public libraries, school libraries and special libraries. Figure 2, below, shows the range of sectors represented by the participants.

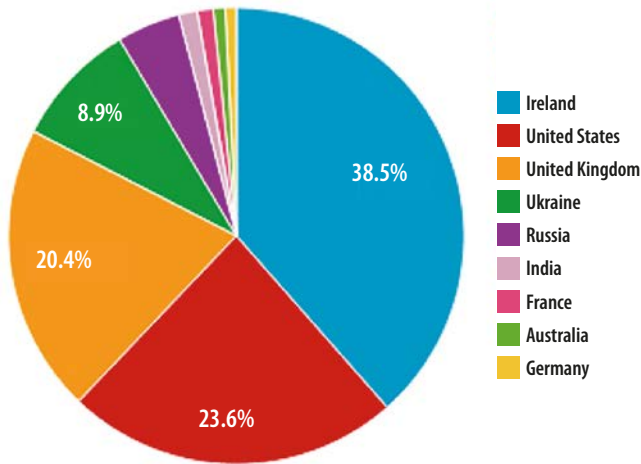
Figure 2: Sectors represented by the participants



The project also generated a lot of interested from information professionals who are advocates of the 23 Things movement, such as Jan Holmqvist and Michael Stephens, as well as individuals who chose to follow the course without participating in the activities.

Figure 3, below, shows the geographical spread of readership of the Rudaí 23 blog, which received over 29,000 page views in the first six months.

Figure 3: Geographical distribution of blog readership



Motivating and communicating with participants.

Interaction between the Rudaí 23 team and course participants was recognised as an essential component in ensuring that participants would complete the course. A number of Rudaí 23 team members moderated participant blogs by reading and commenting on posts and encouraging participants. This individual moderation also provided participants with an available and responsive point of contact.

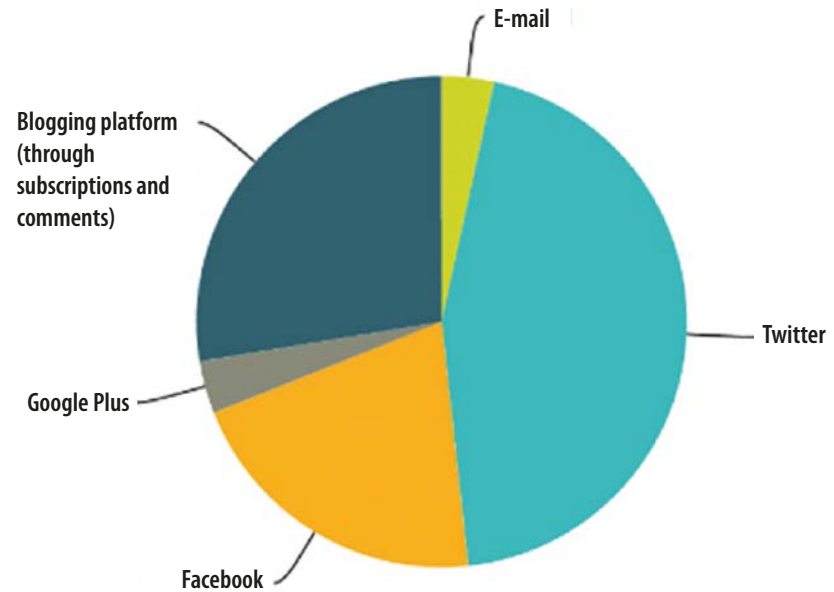
Other team members moderated the Facebook group, the Twitter account, LinkedIn Group and Google+ Community, ensuring that participants had a variety of communication channels via which they could engage with each

other and the Rudaí 23 team.

The course participants were encouraged to join all of the online networks to which they were introduced. This allowed them to experience firsthand the benefits of being part of an online professional network - something many of them had never done before. Twitter proved to be the most popular medium for participants to connect with other participants. The Rudaí 23 team received a lot of support via Twitter from other LAI sections and groups and information professionals who are prolific Twitter users. This further helped demonstrate to the participants the active, vibrant network of information professionals which exists on networks such as Twitter as well as providing encouragement and validation for the hard work of the Rudaí 23 team.

Figure 4, below, illustrates the popularity of the networking tools used by participants to communicate with each other.

Figure 4: Popularity of networking tools among participants



Feedback

Once the course completion deadline had passed, a user feedback form was distributed to the participants. The aim of the feedback was to establish typical profiles for the participants and to identify strengths/weaknesses in the design and delivery of the course. As an extension has been granted to some participants on request, data collection continues, but the key points emerging from the feedback process are as follows:

- The profile of the average participant can be summarised as a motivated person, with professional goals and a clear desire to learn new technology to enhance their personal and professional lives. They are focused on engaging with learning communities built around micro-blogging, and have identified clear aspects of the Rudaí 23 course that they definitely will and will not use in the future.
- The three most favoured modules were Video/Screencasting, Blogging and Augmented Reality.
- Presentations, Infographics and Communicating through Photographs are the three modules most likely to be used by participants in their workplace.
- Twitter was the most used method for participants to communicate with each other about the course.
- 100% of participants viewed the open reflective practice blog posts as worthwhile, and 89% agreed that three was the correct number of them to include.
- 66% of participants intend to use the Rudaí 23 certificate for CPD purposes.
- The moderation process was very well received, although some comments provide points to consider if the course is to run in the future.
- When asked for general feedback, the predominant theme that emerged was how well received the course was by participants, and how they are currently able to use the skills they have learned and developed through the course in their workplace.

Conclusion

The course proved an unanticipated success, reaching not only a national, but an international participant audience, as well as a global readership. There have been numerous queries as to whether Rudaí 23 would continue to be available after the completion date or if it would be run again in the future. This further confirms the demand for courses of this nature.

The Rudaí 23 teams have agreed that the course will remain accessible online for the foreseeable future for anyone who wishes to complete the course without official certification. An updated version of the course may be run in the future when technology and trends have changed. Meanwhile, the global library community is invited to make use of what is now an excellent, standing professional development resource at <http://rudai23.blogspot.ie/>. A full list of the modules, plus links to all the participant's blogs is available on the Rudaí 23 blog for further reading.

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- WRS LAI (2015) *Rudaí 23 Official Webpage* [online] Available at <http://rudai23.blogspot.ie> Accessed 21st December 2015
- 23 Things (2011) *Official Webpage* [online] Available at <http://cpd23.blogspot.ie/> (Accessed 21st December 2015)

Appendix – Rudai 23 modules

Thing 1:	Blogging
Thing 2:	Write your first blog post
Thing 3:	Your professional brand
Thing 4:	Google
Thing 5:	Online Networks
Thing 6:	Reflective Practice
Thing 7:	Podcasts
Thing 8:	Curator Tools
Thing 9:	Video
Thing 10:	Live Streaming
Thing 11:	Reflective Practice
Thing 12:	Attending Conferences
Thing 13:	Professional Organisations
Thing 14:	Augmented Reality
Thing 15:	Advocacy for Libraries
Thing 16:	Collaboration Tools
Thing 17:	Reflective Practice
Thing 18:	Communication through Photographs
Thing 19:	The Legal Side of Things
Thing 20:	Presentations
Thing 21:	Creating Infographics
Thing 22:	Mobile Things
Thing 23:	Making it all work together

