

GETTING FROM A TO B: A DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING LIBRARIANS

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ABSTRACT

Getting your foot in the door as a graduate librarian can be difficult, but what happens once you step over the threshold? When the University of Tasmania Library began offering entry-level positions for liaison librarian vacancies it soon became clear that this was only the beginning; with no clear orientation structure in place new librarians were largely left to fend for themselves. In 2007 the “Liaison Librarian A Developmental Framework” was implemented to provide new librarians with a detailed structure for skill and knowledge development. Defining a set of core capabilities and performance criteria the Framework provides a pathway for professional recognition and promotion from level A to B.

BODY OF PAPER

Introduction

When the structure and provision of liaison services underwent a reorganisation at the University of Tasmania (UTAS) in 2006 one of the new measures was the expansion of opportunities for graduate librarians through the creation of entry-level positions (level A). There was one problem however; at that time UTAS had no comprehensive orientation program for new librarians, and also lacked an in-house structure for articulation as the capacity and experience of these librarians grew. Over the course of 2006-2007 the Liaison Librarian A Developmental Framework (for the sake of clarity to be hereafter referred to as the Development Framework, or simply the Framework) was developed to meet this need in providing both guidance and support for development and articulation as new librarians moved from level A to level B.

Developed in close reference to theories of the learning organisation and workplace learning, the Framework served to provide a scaffolded learning experience in which learning was firmly situated within a professional context. Setting out the core capabilities and performance criteria required of the position, as well as learning activities and evidence types to adapt and follow, the Framework successfully facilitated the transition from level A to B in a supportive environment of guided learning. This paper

sets out to ground the Framework in its theoretical context and to provide an overview of how it worked when it was first put into action in early 2007.

Learning by the organisation, learning in the organisation

It has become accepted wisdom that the core business of any library or other information service is the facilitation of lifelong learning, but how often is this principle enacted within the workplaces of these organisations? The Liaison Librarian A Developmental Framework was developed as part of a wider shift in the UTAS Library as it sought to better orient itself as a learning organisation.

As a term, “learning organisation” has been in play since the late 1980s; as a concept it has a longer history, and is closely linked with the development of systems theory (Rowley, 1997). Senge, one of the early proponents of this field, defines the learning organisation as “continually expanding its capacity to create its future” (1990, p.14); Pedler, Burgoyne and Boydell expand upon this slightly to “an organisation that facilitates the learning of all its members and consciously transforms itself and its workers” (1997, p.3). Both these definitions are very broad; the actual practice of these concepts is far more complex. This is compounded by the fact that most theorists are reluctant to prescribe any set practices by which an organisation can become “learning”; the learning organisation is by its very nature highly contextual and any attempt to do so would undermine the principle itself (Pedler et al. 1997).

Pedler et al. do however set out eleven broad characteristics by which a learning organisation can be identified:

1. A Learning Approach to Strategy
2. Participative Policy Making
3. Informating
4. Formative Accounting and Control
5. Internal Exchange
6. Reward Flexibility
7. Enabling Structures
8. Boundary Workers as Environmental Scanners
9. Inter-company Learning
10. A Learning Climate
11. Self-development Opportunities for All

(1997, pp.15-17).

It is characteristic number seven, “Enabling Structures,” that is of greatest relevance in understanding the purpose of the Development Framework; this will be discussed in greater detail later.

Taking Pedler et al.’s definition, the learning organisation can be understood as the product of the synergy between the learning of individuals within an organisation, and the

learning of an organisation as a whole. Each element depends on the other, while simultaneously feeding into the other in multi-layered cycles of self-improvement. That being said, this paper is by necessity focussed on the development on individual capacity to learn within the workplace, and the role of the Development Framework in facilitating this at UTAS.

Begin at the beginning: The UTAS context

The University of Tasmania is the state's sole university. It currently serves a diverse cohort of approximately 13,000 fulltime equivalent students.

UTAS is comprised of three main campuses within Tasmania, in Hobart (Sandy Bay campus), Launceston (Newnham campus) and Burnie (Cradle Coast campus), as well as a number of distance locations. The UTAS Library services each of these locations through eight branch libraries, and an Information Resources Area at the Cradle Coast. While there is some campus specialisation in particular courses and disciplines, there is a significant degree of overlap across all three campuses, meaning that the collection and Library services are similarly distributed and replicated across the state. Included in this is the provision of services by the Library's liaison librarians (LLs), who operate in cross-campus faculty-based teams.

It is worthwhile at this point defining what *liaison librarian* means at UTAS; some institutions may use the term to describe a significantly different role, while others may use the term subject, or reference librarian to describe the duties undertaken by LLs at UTAS.

At UTAS, the broad areas within which LLs work are:

- Collection Development (eg. recommending and prioritising resources, contributing to Library-wide collection development policy),
- Research Support (for postgraduates and staff eg. EndNote training, advanced research training, ERA support), and
- Teaching and Learning (namely undergraduate information literacy development).

Also included among the LLs' responsibilities are the provision of reference services and involvement in strategic planning.

Even with these parameters, actually pinning down what liaison means is no easy task. This is in large part due to the extensive relationship development – the “liaison” – that is inherent in supporting the specific needs of the different schools and faculties that each liaison librarian collaborates with.

Nevertheless, when the liaison structure at UTAS underwent a reorganisation in 2006 these key areas were situated within a stepped position framework, which articulates the primary responsibilities of and distinctions between each Information Services role, from

Library Officer through to Senior Manager (University of Tasmania, 2006). It is in this position framework that a “spiral curriculum” approach was first introduced, in which the expectation of and structure for learning and expertise development is built into each position (Dearden 2008, p.8). The Development Framework was initially extrapolated from this document to provide a supportive structure for learning and articulation between the newly designated entry-level position, Liaison Librarian A, and the experienced Liaison Librarian B level.

The Liaison Librarian A Developmental Framework in Practice

Rich learning can occur in a number of different contexts outside traditional educational institutions, and it is largely through workplace learning that transferrable professional knowledge and skills are developed and refined (Billett 2001, p.15). The key to successful workplace learning – like any other form of adult learning – is conscious engagement and institutional support (Rowley, 1997).

Pedler et al.’s seventh characteristic of the learning organisation, “Enabling Structures” (1997 p. 16), provides a conceptual model for facilitating workplace learning. Enabling structures are simply described as being any physical, cultural, procedural or structural feature of an organisation that provides opportunities for development both on an individual and organisational level (Pedler et al. 1997, pp.122-124). Of Pedler et al.’s discussion of enabling structures it is the concept of scaffolding that is particularly being applied here. As the analogy implies, scaffolded enabling structures act as temporary supports for the development of permanent skills; once these skills are stable and free-standing the temporary support can be removed (Pedler et al. 1997, pp.122-124). The Development Framework is one such support.

Having outlined the theoretical and organisational context surrounding the Development Framework it is now time to examine the Framework itself.

Implementing the Framework

The following is a segment from the Teaching and Learning section of the Framework; also included were sections for Collection Development, Research Support, Reference Services, and Professional Practice, reflecting the broad areas addressed in liaison services.

Capability	Performance Criteria (add additional criteria as required)	Learning Activities (add appropriate learning activities as required)	Types of Evidence (add types of evidence as appropriate)
Reviewing and improving information literacy programs and developing new programs to meet changing client needs	<p><i>LLA</i></p> <p>Investigates effectiveness of teaching practice through mechanisms such as peer, student and lecturer feedback</p> <p>Adapts approaches and recommends changes according to experience, participant feedback and in consultation with supervisor/mentor/peers</p>		<p>Eg. Teaching portfolio showing evidence of improvement and effectiveness</p>

	<i>LLB</i> Researches effectiveness of programs Implements changes according to theory and review of practice.		
Advising and consulting in curriculum development	<i>LLA</i> Discusses and recommends changes to curriculum to Team's Teaching and Learning leader and peers <i>LLB</i> Improves student learning and teaching through advice to and collaboration with academics Contributes to faculty and school-based teaching and learning initiatives and projects and the faculty teaching and learning committee Investigates and responds to needs for new programs and works with faculties and schools to plan and implement new programs	Participates in faculty teaching and learning committee meetings as observer.	

Fig. 1. Segment of Liaison Librarian A Developmental Framework (University of Tasmania, 2007)

The first level of the Framework, *Capability*, outlines the broad requirements of liaison librarians; the second, *Performance Criteria* delineates the levels of accountability and complexity within these capabilities at levels A and B. These were developed in lengthy consultation with a variety of stakeholders prior to implementation of the Framework, and further refined as the Framework was explored. It was agreed that it must function as a working document, in order to accommodate the evolving context of the liaison environment.

The *Learning Activities* column is in place to provide space for structured and non-structured activities to facilitate learning; you can see however that in the segment above, the column is virtually empty. The intention here was not to provide a prescriptive and rigid list of requirements, but again to allow for the necessary flexibility and open-ended learning required by the fluid nature of the liaison role. The same approach was taken in the *Types of Evidence* column, where suggestions for potential means of demonstrating developing knowledge, skills and capabilities can be made depending on the situational demands.

Working through the Framework

A copy of the Framework was placed on the Library's shared drive as a spreadsheet to assist in sharing information among the Framework's stakeholders (namely level A librarians and their supervisors). As skills and knowledge developed progress was charted against each capability.

Capability	Performance Criteria	Learning Activities	Types of Evidence	Discussion (Vanessa)
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	(add additional criteria as required)	(add appropriate learning activities as required)	(add types of evidence as appropriate)	
Reviewing and improving information literacy programs and developing new programs to meet changing client needs	<p><i>LLA</i></p> <p>Investigates effectiveness of teaching practice through mechanisms such as peer, student and lecturer feedback</p> <p>Adapts approaches and recommends changes according to experience, participant feedback and in consultation with supervisor/mentor/peers</p> <p><i>LLB</i></p> <p>Researches effectiveness of programs</p> <p>Implements changes according to theory and review of practice.</p>		<p>Eg. Teaching portfolio showing evidence of improvement and effectiveness</p>	<p>Log of all classes kept, including details of successful/unsuccessful strategies. Feedback and learning plans also provided (see Appendix)</p> <p>Continue to incorporate feedback and reflection in new and existing programs. Eg. verbal, visual, kinesthetic elements, greater emphasis on boolean.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Strive to apply the principles of effective teaching in the design and delivery of classes, as learned through my Grad Dip, and through subsequent reading and observation (see learning plans etc in Appendix).</p>
Advising and consulting in curriculum development	<p><i>LLA</i></p> <p>Discusses and recommends changes to curriculum to Team's Teaching and Learning leader and peers</p> <p><i>LLB</i></p> <p>Improves student learning and teaching through advice to and collaboration with academics</p> <p>Contributes to faculty and school-based teaching and learning initiatives and projects and the faculty teaching and learning committee</p> <p>Investigates and responds to needs for new programs and works with faculties and schools to plan and implement new programs</p>	<p>Participates in faculty teaching and learning committee meeting as observer</p>		<p>Engaged in co-development of embedded info lit in BMA101 with cross-campus Liaison team and unit coordinators.</p> <p>Pursued addition of law resources training in the Environmental Health program (CXA302). Collaboration with unit coordinator and law librarian resulted in inclusion of two in-class workshops. Ongoing.</p> <p>Involved in Online Info Lit Tutorial project. Upcoming: Business - generic attributes project. Riawunna Info Lit curriculum project.</p> <p>In developing embedding of law research skills in CXA302, further liaised with JS regarding unit content and assessment to embed similar workshops in progressive Accounting subjects (BFA141, 241 391).</p>

Fig. 2. Segment of Liaison Librarian A Developmental Framework (University of Tasmania, 2007), including descriptions of learning and evidence.

As evidence of learning in these complex areas of liaison the comments above seem rather inadequate. In fact, each capability was discussed and reviewed in regular meetings between the LL and their supervisor. In some cases documentary evidence was provided (eg. learning plans, written feedback and other records), while in others evidence was assessed in terms of conceptual understanding, or practical demonstration of proficiency in the different areas of capability. The evidence noted above is a skeleton record of these discussions. Billett (2001) particularly emphasizes the importance of guides, or mentors, in the success of workplace learning programs (p. 159); these regular discussions served as a platform for guided learning to occur.

In keeping with the Framework's status as a working document rather than a static guide, the comments seen above and below are only those appearing in the final version of the document; notes, questions and comments were added, amended and removed as capacities were earmarked for further learning, or signed off as achieved throughout the development process.

Signing off the document

Capability	Performance Criteria (add additional criteria as required)	Learning Activities (add appropriate learning activities as required)	Types of Evidence (add types of evidence as appropriate)	Discussion (Vanessa)	Comments (Wendy)
Reviewing and improving information literacy programs and developing new programs to meet changing client needs	LLA Investigates effectiveness of teaching practice through mechanisms such as peer, student and lecturer feedback		Eg. Teaching portfolio showing evidence of improvement and effectiveness	Log of all classes kept, including details of successful/unsuccessful strategies. Feedback and learning plans also provided (see Appendix)	Yes
	Adapts approaches and recommends changes according to experience, participant feedback and in consultation with supervisor/mentor/peers			Continue to incorporate feedback and reflection in new and existing programs. Eg. verbal, visual, kinesthetic elements, greater emphasis on boolean.	Emphasizes Vanessa's strengths in the area of Information Literacy
	LLB Researches effectiveness of programs			Ongoing.	
	Implements changes according to theory and review of practice.			Strive to apply the principles of effective teaching in the design and delivery of classes, as learned through my Grad Dip, and through subsequent reading and observation (see learning plans etc in Appendix).	Yes
Advising and consulting in curriculum development	LLA Discusses and recommends changes to curriculum to Team's Teaching and Learning leader and peers			Engaged in co-development og embedded info lit in BMA101 with cross-campus Liaison team and unit coordinators.	Good collaborative work.
	LLB Improves student learning and teaching through advice			Pursued addition of law resources training in the Environmental	Excellent example of both

	to and collaboration with academics			Health program (CXA302). Collaboration with unit coordinator and law librarian resulted in inclusion of two in-class workshops. Ongoing.	collaboration with Library colleagues and academics and embedding IL in the curriculum.
	Contributes to faculty and school-based teaching and learning initiatives and projects and the faculty teaching and learning committee	Participates in faculty teaching and learning committee meeting as observer		Involved in Online Info Lit Tutorial project. Upcoming: Business - generic attributes project. Riawunna Info Lit curriculum project.	Yes
	Investigates and responds to needs for new programs and works with faculties and schools to plan and implement new programs			In developing embedding of law research skills in CXA302, further liaised with JS regarding unit content and assessment to embed similar workshops in progressive Accounting subjects (BFA141, 241 391).	Ongoing, but excellent work already done.

Fig. 3. Segment of Liaison Librarian A Developmental Framework (University of Tasmania, 2007), including descriptions of learning and evidence, and supervisor comments.

Once learning and development in each capability was discussed, documented and signed off by the supervisor the completed Framework was sent the Library's Senior Managers meeting for final approval. This should, as the document was originally conceived, have been the end point in the process of articulation. UTAS's Human Resources (HR) department, on the other hand, had other ideas.

“To make God laugh you just tell Him your plans”

On paper the Framework is logical, elegant, and grounded in some lovely theory. As an enabling structure for individual learning the Framework served its purpose – and served well – in assisting in the development and articulation from level A to B. However we all know that few things ever run quite to plan.

As indicated above, the original intention was for the Framework process to replace the current lengthy procedure for reclassification. When it actually came time to notify HR of the successful completion of the Framework, and hence need for a level change to be documented, things became a little messy. Perhaps due to some crossed wires in the initial negotiations over the role of the Framework within the University's HR structure, the Library was informed that completion of the existing reclassification process was still required in order for any changes to be made. This process involved completion of a fifteen page position description questionnaire and follow-up interviews between HR officers, the LL seeking reclassification, and their supervisor. Fortunately, the Framework provided a strong foundation from which to draw in completing the review document, and was also included as an appendix, which HR accepted in lieu of further

interviews. On completion of this procedure the articulation from level A to B was complete, finalised a little over a year after commencing the entry-level position at UTAS.

Also impacting the implementation of the Framework was a period of staffing changes in significant management positions. The cross-campus model of liaison at UTAS means that liaison librarians at the Launceston Campus Library, where the Framework was undertaken, have two managers; the Branch Librarian, responsible for the Campus Library service, and the Information Services Coordinator (based in Hobart), responsible for the provision of liaison across the state. As fate would have it, in the early stages of the Framework's introduction *both* the current Branch Librarian and Information Services Librarian left UTAS (retiring and moving inter-state respectively) within a short space of time. This left something of a leadership vacuum as new candidates were sought and meant that the Framework was stalled for several months; with no supervisor with whom to discuss and progress the Framework the process becomes difficult.

The Future of the Framework

Nevertheless, the Framework process was a success, and the conscious adoption of a flexible approach helped accommodate the inevitable detours in the road to completion. The Framework facilitated richer and more rapid growth in liaison skills, and the scaffolded structure and comprehensive definition of core capabilities and performance criteria have positioned the Framework as an extremely valuable document across the organisation, not just for entry-level librarians,

While they do not undertake the formal guided learning process, the Framework has proven useful in assisting new librarians at level B become better oriented with the scope and responsibilities of liaison at UTAS. Similarly, experienced liaison librarians who have been at UTAS for a number of years have also found value in the document as a means of re-invigorating engagement with areas of liaison services that have slipped under the radar due to other demands. In a more direct translation of the document, the Framework has also been adapted for use in facilitating the learning and articulation of level A librarians in our Resources and Access department (also called Collection Management, or Technical Services elsewhere), where the process-oriented, rather than relationship-based, nature of the role will hopefully make the process of learning and evaluation even more straightforward.

Conclusion

The Liaison Librarian A Developmental Framework sought to give structure and formal recognition to on-the-job professional development. This fed into the wider agenda of developing the capacity of the UTAS Library as a learning organisation. Individuals were encouraged to identify areas where learning was needed and to pursue opportunities to address this within a system of formal recognition and organisational support. While we experienced some minor teething issues, the process was a success, resulting not only

in a more skilled and knowledgeable workforce, but ultimately in improving UTAS Library's organisational knowledge.

While seeking to ground the Framework in theory, this paper is not an in-depth examination of the learning organisation. It is about a specific example of the facilitation of individual capacity for learning; a key component of a learning organisation, but only one component, nonetheless. Just as there is no end point in organisational learning – a point at which an organisation becomes “learned” – so to the development process is ongoing. Though I have reached my destination in the voyage from level A to B I am not now “developed;” the journey has only just begun.

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