Collaborative IL – learning with users

Kaisa Puttonen & Erja Huovila

Users´ information behavior has changed rapidly. Unfortunately teaching of IL has not changed at the same pace. As librarians we are challenged to step outside our comfort zones and begin to learn from our users. A new learning model is a two-way street which benefits both sides. The following describes collaborative teaching in Laurea University of Applied Sciences. The examples include collaboration in classrooms, on the net and with working life.

Collaborative lectures

In Laurea Kerava Unit we offered a course 'International trends in tourism' in the autumn of 2010 for tourism students. About 20 students signed up. The subject lecturer together with the information specialist planned two shared three hour sessions. The aims of subject and IL were integrated in this part of the training. As a basis we used the IL –core analysis, which was defined 2009 by the AMKIT consortium's pedagogical working group.

The table 1 below indicates how the focus and contents from these lectures.

Media diary and case studies

The information specialist began with an orientation to the theme, a presentation on the significance of information about future trends for business. The students had been given an assignment in advance to prepare a short presentation on their ideas on the future, which they now shared with the class.

A lecture on future studies with enlivening examples from the net was followed by a more practical exercise. Next the students had a hands-on-workshop on finding articles about the future of tourism. After the workshop the lecturer emphasized the importance of following weak signals systematically when looking into the future.

The students were also asked to choose one idea to follow when thinking about future tourism. One course assignment was to choose websites of interest related to predicting the future of tourism, follow them and keep a media diary during the entire course.

Sharing and evaluation of search results

A month lapsed between the first and second shared lessons. The students had just visited the Statistics

TOURISM	IL (core: information need)
Orientation to future theme	Defining information need
Introducing concepts related to future studies	Understanding need of new information
Finding vocabulary to the theme	Searching with new concepts
Linking the above to tourism	Varying search questions with basic techniques

Table 1. The aims of the first lesson in relation to study field and IL teaching

TOURISM	IL (core: information seeking)
Extending the knowledge of scholarly information providers	Varying search techniques according to advanced options available
Deepening the understanding of social media	Interpreting websites
Practicing critical thinking and evaluation	Evaluating results critically, attention also on usefulness and accessibility

Table 2. The aims of the second lesson in relation to study field and IL teaching

of Finland, where the importance of statistics and scientific knowledge in examining trends came up. The aims of the second lesson were:

As an orientation, the students reflected on the visit in a group discussion. The lesson continued with a recap on future studies. Then the students were instructed to search for providers of scientific/scholarly information about future trends: organizations, researchers, educational institutions etc.

When sharing the search results, each student suggested a website. The student had to give reasons for his/her choice while focusing on the trustworthiness and quality of the information provider.

During the last part of the session, the lecturer talked about taking advantage of social media when recognizing weak signals and about the advantages of crowd wisdom. Also the Laurea Innovation Platform was introduced. Returning to the topic of predicting and statistics, the information specialist introduced Google Insight.

Collaboration on the net

In January 2011, adult students began their online studies for a bachelors degree in Laurea Kerava Unit. Only three contact days were held during the spring. The course outlines, materials and exercises were on a learning platform and weekly contact lessons were held through Adobe Connect (AC).

The ultimate aim was to ensure that the students gained basic skills to study with the new tools and to work with MS Office. It was of ex-

treme importance to design the course as a coherent entity where the aims of learning technical skills and IL were integrated in a meaningful way and supported by online lessons. One solution was giving assignments that supported both aims. For example, the students were asked to write a 3-4 page essay on working in projects. Another example of an assignment supporting the aims of both the subject and IL teaching was creating a PowerPoint presentation.

The lecturer and information specialist held four online sessions together. The students had microphones, but lecturer and information specialist had cameras too.

If the students wanted to ask something they could either use the microphone or the online chat. During one shared lesson the students had cameras and they worked in groups discussing the pros and cons of social media in working life. All sessions were videotaped and saved on the learning platform.

R&D project on IL for nursing

A project on developing electronic nursing documentation began in spring 2010. The participants were Laurea UAS and HUS (Hospital District of Helsinki and Uusimaa), Lohja Hospital Area. Ten units with 40 nurses and 1-2 students/ ward were involved.

In this case the lecturers and information specialist were involved in development work and their target was to guide students and nurses in recognizing new, relevant scientific information and help them identify and acknowledge evidence based knowledge.

The students wrote their thesis in this authentic working-life project. The aim was to include evidence based knowledge in developing nursing. The plan included two shared workshops with lecturer and information specialist.

Before classroom sessions participants were given an initial preparatory task. The assignment was to search for information on the new nursing documentation, care of patients in the wards they were assigned to, and to think of concepts, terms, synonyms, and search words.

Identifying evidence based knowledge

Participants in the second workshop were students and nurses. The information specialist prepared for this workshop by doing a survey of the nurses' use of theoretical knowledge, including the used databases. The results formed the basis of the second workshop.

In the second workshop the nurses, students, information specialist and lecturer worked together. The nurses and students chose the topic according to the ward they are working in or assigned to. The central idea was to find evidence based knowledge exactly for the needs of a specific ward.

When working together in this way, many viewpoints came to the floor: the lecturer is an expert of subject, the nurses have the knowledge in practice, students can share how to learn efficiently and the information specialist masters databases and searches. The assignment in this workshop for the students and nurses was to find evidence based knowledge and share it in the hospital units.

Learning is a two-way street

In the discussed three cases, shared lessons gave added value for all involved. From the information specialist's point of view, the students understood that the use of information is not an isolated island but tightly bound with studies and future working life. The information specialist was also acknowledged as an expert, not as someone dealing only with books.

The students used information sources extensively in their assignments. New ideas for teaching arouse during planning, and the lessons were livelier. In addition, new tools were adopted as means of communication. But above all, teaching together is fun. 📖

Information on authors:

Kaisa Puttonen (M.A., M.Soc.Sc.),
Information SpecialistLaurea University of
Applied Sciences, Laurea Library Kerava
e-mail: kaisa.puttonen@laurea.fi

Erja Huovila (M.A.) , Head of Laurea Library
Laurea University of Applied Sciences Library
e-mail: erja.huovila@laurea.fi