

# Information literacy training as a part of university degree programs: the case of the University of Tampere

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*Information literacy (IL) training has gained more visibility in Finnish higher education institutions during last decade. The Finnish university libraries had a joint project during 2004-2006 to enhance the role of IL in higher education. In the 2000s several university libraries have strongly developed their own IL-training programs. Due to the Bologna process and its standards for academic degrees, IL training has become compulsory for some disciplines. This article describes the latest developments of IL-training in relation to the educational reform in the higher education institutes which took place in 2010-2012. As an outcome of the reform IL training has been integrated into all new degree programs at the University of Tampere.*

## Educational reform

The University of Tampere carried out an educational reform during 2010-2012. At the same time, the organizational structure of the University was changed. The former faculties and departments were rearranged into a model of topic specific schools, but the educational reform also meant a shift from subject-based education to degree programs. For students, this integration of disciplines offers better means to adjust to a changing labour market in the future<sup>1</sup>. (The Strategy, 2009)

Within the new structures also new pedagogical solutions, like problem-based learning and inquiry learning, will support the broad-based degree programs. Also, students will be guided towards applying their critical skills in the search and assess-

ment of information and knowledge and in their use and construction of their acquired knowledge. (The Strategy, 2009)

The implementation of the University's education reform or strategy was overseen by *The Education Council of the University* appointed by the Rector. The Council had an important role in making guidelines in planning the education reform.

## IL skills valued

In Tampere University Library, IL training has been offered to students since the 1970s, as a user education at the time. In some faculties IL has become compulsory since 2005 due to the Bologna process and its standards for the academic degrees. In addition, library has been continuously active in further development of the IL training programs, in using new educational technology and taking care of pedagogical competence of the teaching staff (Iivonen, Tevaniemi and Toivonen, 2007). IL training has become even more important with increase in electronic resources.

The feedback and user surveys indicate that, students value IL. According to the survey of Univer-

<sup>1</sup> Government Decree on University Degrees 794/2004 Section 3

*Provision of education leading to lower and higher university degrees*

1. Education leading to lower and higher university degrees may be based on subjects or in the form of degree programmes. Education leading to a higher university degree built on a lower university degree or education of a corresponding level may also be arranged as a degree programme to which there is a separate selection.

sity of Tampere (2002-2008) the most developed skill students have gained is their own theoretical knowledge. However, the information literacy skills took the second place within three training areas and the third place within the six training areas. The survey consisted of a total of 14 useful working knowledge and skill areas. (Valmistu-neiden..., 2009)

### **A three-stage model for IL**

The Library recognized a need for the IL training reform to match up with the ongoing educational reform. Accordingly, the Library formed an internal *Library Working Group of IL Education*, which consisted of chief librarian, two heads of departments and three information specialists to develop IL training.

At the first meeting there was a discussion about the goals of the IL training and integration of IL training into the degree programs. Also, it was found out that the current IL training was organized differently in the various fields of disciplines: level and quality of IL-education varied by the faculty and also by the subject.

*The Library Working Group* agreed about the objectives for IL training and recommended that IL training should include a three-stage model for new degree programs. The model was based on a national recommendation (Figure 1) of the university libraries in the IL-teaching (Recommendation, 2004). However, this model was customized to fit to the needs of the new the organizational structure and new degree programs at the University of Tampere.

### **Marketing of IL at the University**

The University Education Reform Project organized a series of seminars (*Strategic tick*-seminars) for the university staff in order to inform them about the reform. One of the seminars was organized together with the Education Reform Project and the Library Working Group under the title "Information literacy skills for scientific electronic resources". The university staff involved in the planning of

the new degree programmes attended the seminar.

The seminar clarified the content of information literacy and focused on how IL training could be incorporated into all new degree programs. The program of the seminar included presentations by information specialists of the Library, the presentation by a student and a presentation by a university teacher. Group discussions on different topics followed the lectures.

Since the new schools had their own working groups to renew their curriculum for the new degree programs, information specialists also visited the schools to discuss and negotiate about the IL training in new degree programmes and provisioned e-materials for trainings.

### **Integration of IL training into studies**

The University Education Council outlined that the IL training should be given at the beginning of university studies and also later on. The IL training should be integrated into studies in a connection of seminars both in the Bachelor's and Master's studies. This would ensure an equal level of information retrieval skills for students.

The degree program consists of a Bachelor's pro-

gram (180 credits) and Master's studies (120 credits). The Education Council defined IL training as part of joint general studies of degree programs. This part of the degree consists of general study skills (25 credits) and science skills (10 credits). The general skills (25 credits) include language and communication studies, the planning of studies, IL skills, IT skills and orientation Studies.

IL training was included in degree programmes as the following three-stage model:

Degree program: First Year Students

- 7-10 hours of IL training

Bachelor's program

- 2 hours of IL training in a connection with an integrated Bachelor's seminar, by request the seminar teacher

Master's studies

- 2 hours of advanced stage IL training by request of the seminar teacher

In a new curriculum for 2012-2015, information literacy training has been integrated into all new degree programs beginning the autumn of 2012. The Library's long-term efforts and especially two-year campaign to highlight the importance of IL training produced good results. Library also received additional funding for the IL- education.

Additional pedagogical training for trainers was also necessary. University of Tampere has provided university pedagogy education for teachers already for years. So far, more than ten information specialists from the Library have attended these courses (10 credits).

## Extending IL to international and post graduate students

It is also important that Library is active in the future and indicates that an integrated IL training was the right one. At the moment, the Library is considering how to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of IL education. There is also a need for the practices or models to recognize previously approved IL qualifications e.g. by using an electronic informa-

tion literacy test (Juntunen 2008; Toivonen, 2007).

The future holds many challenges for IL training due to the development of technologies and pedagogical methods. Furthermore, it seems like IL training will extend to cover the post graduate students and international master programme students. Accordingly, there are obvious needs to adjust the Finnish IL model to the requirements of the new student groups (Helminen, Luukkanen and Sallama, 2012).

Every new generation of students is likely to have more expertise and IT skills. These challenges require the staff to keep up their IT skills as well as their pedagogical and research skills. In addition, IL training for international students requires good language skills and the ability to work in a multicultural setting. 

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