

Professional Skills Enhancement - Online journal placement: A review

Library and Information Services - A Brave New (Old) World

Library and information service professionals exist in a perpetual battle between past and future expectations. No longer the sole gatekeepers of knowledge reliant on good cataloguing skills, LIS professionals are community knowledge curators, technologically proficient-moral compasses for the communities they serve. With such an array of skills required to meet such a wide variety of expectations, the LIS skills toolbox has become as diverse as the patrons it serves.

Robert Gordon University aims to equip LIS alumni with just such expertise in its Information and Library Studies masters program. Each module provides students with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills required to develop a comprehensive skill set for today's LIS professional. The Professional Skills Enhancement module allows students to apply these skills in a practical setting, either through a placement in a working environment or a project based placement through the university itself.

I was assigned a placement on the university's online journal platform, Reflective Professional, an annual online open access journal aimed at information and library professionals. My role in this placement as student editor required the use and development of not only hard skills such as technical knowledge of the Online Journal System(OJS), but key to the role would be soft skills including interpersonal and collaborative working skills. Some of the duties I was tasked with included:

- Requesting and receiving submissions from contributors.
- Editing and formatting submissions.
- Using workflows to upload the edited submissions to the OJS.
- Collaborating and communicating with supervisors in online meetings.

Alongside the process of curating and developing what would become Reflective Professional's fourth edition, the PSE module offered the opportunity to enhance reflective skills which would become a vital tool in understanding how to develop and improve on my practical experiences during my placement. A Personal Development Plan (PDP) was also included as a pathway for future development of the skills acquired on placement. These will ensure a continuous learning mindset as I aspire to develop throughout my professional LIS career.

Using and becoming adept in OJS was an area of great practical skill development, which put into practice some of the theory from other modules on the MSc course while gaining new knowledge of the process. I was keen to understand more about the input and use of metadata in practice, having studied the theory during the Knowledge Organisation module. Alongside this, I saw the importance of structured workflows and how they aid in communicating work tasks within and across multiple departments. I feel the process was positive for everyone involved, however, to further develop these skills would require more practical use with larger volumes of content.

Copy editing was a further skill used on placement and with previous experience within journalism, it was a great opportunity to revisit and develop those hard skills in a new environment. During this process, I learned that I can recall previously developed skills, but that it is essential to update these tools with new technologies that become available. Managing the time spent on each document was also an important step, especially given the length and detail of each submission.

Having never experienced working with copyright law, I was keen to implement into practice what I had previously studied during the Digital Libraries module of the MSc course. Each submission required a non-exclusive licence to publish (LTP) agreement, allowing RGU the right to publish the work online in a way that allows other people to use it responsibly and also giving RGU the right to make changes to the file format in which the contribution is stored. Understanding this agreement and aiding contributors with any doubts regarding anonymity and data protection, developed the theory learnt from the course module.

By working alongside my supervisors and the contributors, I was able to develop and see first hand the importance of collaborative working skills. Specific skills that were developed in my role at Reflective Professional encompassing collaborative working include:

- Written communication.
- Verbal communication.
- Active listening.
- Feedback.
- Inclusivity.

Gaining practical work experience in a new profession can oftentimes be challenging and intimidating, especially when it is an area in which you have little previous experience. From my placement on Reflective Professional, I have learned the importance of overcoming this initial fear and understanding how to adapt the skills one already has into a new environment. Following on from this experience, I have committed to continuing my professional journey through further education and sector specific training. As laid out in my Personal Development Plan, I will continue to work with Reflective Professional until the fourth edition is completed and published, giving me more time to develop OJS skills and fine tuning other areas such as copy editing and interpersonal skills. The experience has also given me the confidence to consider continuing my studies in the form of a PhD, something that before, I would never have considered.

The placement opportunity offered by the Personal Skills Enhancement module of the Information and Library Studies MSc has aided in developing new sector specific skills, while reinforcing existing knowledge within a new working environment. I feel confident in my own abilities and have acquired a confidence and feeling that I now belong and can succeed within the LIS sector.

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