Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to outline the evolution of academic and information literacy (AIL) teaching initiatives in a first-year core social work course at the University of Auckland. It traces the development of AIL teaching, support and assessment activities over a 10-year period as part of a collaborative project involving librarians, learning advisors and an academic staff member. The paper clearly outlines the challenges arising because of the rapidly evolving and complex information environment in which tertiary students find themselves, as well as the student-centred pedagogical approaches which can assist them in navigating this environment and developing resourcefulness and resilience in undertaking research.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The case study presented in this paper outlines the evolution over a 10-year period of AIL teaching and activities taken to specifically develop AIL integration for the first-year core course, Sociology for Human Services, for the degree of Bachelor of Social Work. At its core, this case study demonstrates the application of reflective practice on the part of library staff, academic staff and student learning advisors with a view to implementing AIL initiatives which not only addressed information needs for assignment completion at university but also took a holistic view of students’ lives, recognising the importance of AIL in their civic, social and work lives. Reflection involved challenging key assumptions about the teaching of AIL initiatives and what constituted success and failure; gaining a better understanding of new and developing information environments in which students currently operate; and identifying existing and emerging AIL frameworks which could best equip students to survive and flourish in these environments. The paper focuses on the drivers, challenges, successes and impact of implementing and adapting AIL activities as well as the learning design and pedagogical approaches implemented to scaffold and develop initiatives with the whole three-year degree structure in mind. Special reference is paid to the application of new and emerging AIL frameworks, including the Research Skills Development Framework (Willison and O'Regan, 2006) and the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015). The paper also outlines how mapping to graduate attributes, learning outcomes and core practitioner competencies can strengthen AIL and assessment activities.

**Findings** – Application of new and emerging frameworks of research and AIL can enhance both teaching and assessment activities in an undergraduate degree programme. This paper outlines a move away from
reliance on teaching of tools and resources to a focus on mastery of threshold concepts and deeper understandings of the importance of information and academic literacy capabilities in study, work and civic life. The approach outlined here fosters the development of informed learners who are resilient and resourceful and who can easily navigate within the complex information environment in which they find themselves. This case study further demonstrates that students appreciate and recognise the value (as well as the transferability) of these capabilities to other areas of their life both at the tertiary level and post academia. In a practice-based course such as this one, the application of key frameworks and an understanding of expected practitioner competencies and graduate attributes also help address a generally recognised research practice gap common in undergraduate practice-based courses. The paper further outlines the benefits of a collaborative approach to the integration of AIL. Such collaborative initiatives bring the fresh perspectives and deeper understanding; apart from this, they also serve as a springboard to work with other academic staff to develop AIL initiatives at different stages of a degree programme.

Research limitations/implications – This paper focuses on the development of AIL skills in one social work course at the University of Auckland. The information presented here may not be relevant for other disciplines or institutions.

Practical implications – This paper takes both a theoretical and practical approach. Challenges in the development of AIL initiatives are clearly contextualised within relevant pedagogical and AIL theories. Practical solutions for common challenges are clearly outlined. It is hoped that the problem _ solution approach outlined in this paper will benefit other information professionals and academic staff who are implementing AIL in the current tertiary environment.

Social implications – Students find themselves in an increasingly complex information environment. Traditional information literacy (IL) skills may no longer meet their needs in this rapidly evolving environment. This paper outlines how application of current research frameworks, practitioner attributes and a focus on mastery of core threshold concepts can build information resilience and resourcefulness and better equip them to access, evaluate and utilise information both for their study and work and life beyond academia.

Originality/value – Demonstrating clear trends in how IL initiatives have developed over the past 10 years, this paper provides practical examples of how new and emerging research and threshold concept frameworks can be applied to the integration of AIL initiatives in undergraduate degree programmes.

Keywords – Information literacy, Threshold concepts, Academic literacy, Social work, Curriculum integration, Practitioner competencies, Research practice gap

Paper type – Case study

Introduction

Around ten years ago Library staff at the University of Auckland decided to address problems with the organization and delivery of information literacy (IL) support for social work students. They began by focussing on IL initiatives for students in the first year (stage one) of their degree programme and over a ten year period have completely redeveloped these initiatives. Now teaching is contextualised and integrated into the degree programme and both academic and information literacy (AIL) competencies are taught, with emphasis placed on mastery of threshold competencies and development of transferable skills for lifelong learning. The development of two key frameworks, the ACRL framework (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015) and the Research Skills Development Framework (Willison and
O'Regan, 2006) have aided benchmarking and scaffolding of core AIL competencies across all levels of the degree programme. Additionally, changes to instructional techniques, in particular application of socioconstructivist and student-centred learning approaches, have fostered students to more confidently find, critically evaluate and use information in the context of their academic and professional lives, equipping them with the skills to be informed and resourceful learners rather than passive recipients of information (Allen, 2008).

About the course
Sociology for Human Services is an introductory Sociology course for up to 120 first-year social work students, and is offered in the first semester. Its position in the timetable means that this course is often students’ first experience of a university course. As such, the course fulfills an important role in the social work programme. In addition to introducing students to the foundations of sociological theory, the course foregrounds a range of fundamental academic competencies that students are expected to master while progressing through their degree. These include the ability to engage critically with ideas presented in scholarly writing; the ability to identify and access appropriate forms of scholarly literature on a range of given topics; and the ability to acknowledge appropriately - via referencing - their use of others’ ideas and works. Early iterations of the course attempted to incorporate some teaching about these competencies as they related to the various assessment tasks in the course (e.g., teaching about referencing conventions while preparing students to submit an essay assignment), but those teaching in the course struggled to integrate such activities into the core elements of the course; and feedback from students over several years indicated that they received similar forms of advice and direction (though not always perfectly consistent) in other first-semester courses as well.

Methodology
The case study presented in this article outlines the evolution over a ten-year period of AIL teaching and activities taken to specifically develop AIL integration for one first-year core course, Sociology for Human Services, for the degree of Bachelor of Social Work. At its core this case study demonstrates the application of reflective practice on the part of library staff, academic staff and student learning advisors, with a view to implementing AIL initiatives which not only addressed information needs for assignment completion at university but which also took a holistic view of students’ lives, recognizing the importance of academic and information literacy in their civic, social and work lives. Reflection involved: challenging key assumptions about the teaching of AIL initiatives and what constituted success and failure, gaining a better understanding of new and developing information environments in which students currently operate, and identifying existing and emerging AIL frameworks which could best equip students to survive and flourish in these environments.

The paper outlines the drivers, challenges, successes and impact in implementing and adapting these activities as well as the learning design and pedagogical approaches implemented to scaffold and develop initiatives with the whole three-year degree structure in mind. A precise timeframe for the evolution of this course is not provided. The case study outlines changes occurring over a ten-year period. The steps indicated did not necessarily proceed in a linear fashion with some overlapping or occurring concurrently. The emphasis is on outlining key drivers for change and the impact this had on the quality and effectiveness of AIL initiatives for this group of students.

Evolution of the integration
The process of integrating AIL into the social work program has evolved over a period of approximately ten years involving four key steps.
Step 1 - Streamlined

Academic staff in the Faculty of Education and Social Work had always recognised the value of information literacy competencies and have worked actively with Library staff to include information literacy components for their students. Historically, however, information literacy competencies were taught extra-curricularly as optional one off “add on” workshops at the start of semester. The workshops were not aligned specifically with courses or assessment through either content or timing. Workshops taught generic library skills based on specific systems and processes such as how to search the catalogue and databases. These largely cognitive behaviourist approaches recognised the importance of cognitive mastery of core information literacy skills or behaviours (Lau, 2006). The problem with cognitive and behaviourist approaches was that workshop content was not linked to specific assignments or disciplines and tended to focus on discrete skillsets or surface learning of specific library or information resources and services. Students had no relationship to the information environments in which they found themselves. Additionally information transfer was one directional and students were passive learners rather than actively engaged in learning (Kerr et al., 2010).

This approach meant that students often saw little benefit in attending library workshops, could not see the connection with their course of studies and could not actively apply the skills learned at their point of need. In addition, it was not uncommon for lecturers from different compulsory courses at the same programme level to request essentially the same information literacy workshop, meaning a first year student might be expected to attend the same session four times.

After deciding on the need for major revision to IL content and how it was delivered, subject librarians approached academic staff and explained that rather than presenting IL workshops on demand they would prefer to identify core courses and deliver targeted teaching sessions focussing on discrete skills. With this in mind they mapped the Bachelor of Social Work and Bachelor of Human Services curriculum to identify core stage one courses which all students must complete and delivered key IL components only in these courses. This resulted in only two workshops being taught at first year level, one on searching the catalogue and one on searching databases. At this stage however students were still being provided with non-contextualised content with little alignment to their assignments and teaching still focussed only on mastery of particular resources and library systems. As workshops were not compulsory, more than half of students enrolled in the course chose not to attend and it was evident that students could still not always see their value.

Step 2. Assignment-based workshops

Having streamlined the number and type of IL workshops offered to students, subject librarians decided to provide assignment based workshops at the point of need, rather than generic sessions at the start of semester. While these workshops still focussed on searching particular library resources they used the students’ assignment and research questions as the starting point for research so that students could see the benefits of IL competency for their study and apply these practically to their assessments. These tutorials were either presented during designated tutorial times or offered as voluntary lunchtime sessions. Despite still being voluntary the alignment with the assignments dramatically increased attendance, with some of the sessions being so well attended that extra seats and laptops had to be brought in to accommodate numbers.

Students left the workshops confident in their ability to find resources specifically aligned to their assignments and assessments. Workshops also promoted the value of the librarian and library service as a whole. As a result the librarian had many more individuals and groups approaching her for consultations after the assignment based sessions.
Step 3. Integrated
The next logical step after providing contextualized assignment based workshops was to integrate IL into the Bachelor of Social Work programme. Integration is widely recognised internationally as the best practice approach for teaching at university level (e.g. Abbott and Peach, 2012). As Baker and Gladis (2017) indicate one off IL initiatives are not sustainable and mastery of core IL skills is best achieved through sustained and systematic integration into the curriculum. This approach allows firm grounding in foundational skills which can in turn be built on in subsequent stages of a degree program and firmly contextualizes AIL in the disciplinary context to which it relates (Wang, 2007). Given the wide support for curriculum integration reported in the literature, the University of Auckland decided to offer curriculum integration training for all new subject librarians (Moselen and Wang, 2014). This greatly aids their confidence in both approaching academic staff and implementing the necessary steps to integrate core IL content into courses.

Library staff were extremely lucky to have a lead lecturer who welcomed the opportunity to work with them. This facilitated the creation of integrated IL components in assessments. Workshops were offered as part of the regular course tutorials and librarians introduced a compulsory library tour component and an IL worksheet which students completed during the workshop and handed in with their assignments.

Step 4. Incorporates multi-literacies
In 2014 Student Learning Services merged with the Library to create the “Libraries and Learning Services” department (LLS). This provided collaborative opportunities for librarians, learning advisors and academics to integrate both information and academic literacy activities into the social work curriculum. A student learning advisor became part of the team working with the Social Work lecturer to introduce AIL (multiliteracy) initiatives into programmes in the Faculty.

Challenges and opportunities provided by new technologies and the burgeoning digital information landscape in which students found themselves also lent themselves well to a multiliteracy approach (Bruce, 2008). Students required not only information competencies, but also core study, thinking reading and writing skills which facilitated navigation of these new, and increasingly complex, technology driven information environments. Such multiliteracies provide essential future proofing supporting fulfilling employment and lifelong learning for academic, civil and social life. Students require not only capabilities and skills which allow navigation of online and technology driven environments but also evaluative skills, decision making and critical thinking skills which strengthen connections in their academic, civic, private and work life and allow them to live and work more effectively in a rapidly evolving and chaotic information environment (Siemens, 2014). Such an approach focusses not on a discrete set of skills but on fostering a spirit of enquiry, resilience and resourcefulness in order to overcome the challenges involved in navigating these complex information environments.

Socioconstructivist approach - student at the centre. A socioconstructivist approach was taken that encouraged students to engage actively with information to construct knowledge for specific uses and situations. This approach recognized that “learning is embedded in a social and cultural context” (Wang, 2007, p. 151) and that thinking, learning and development occurs most easily when contextualized in the social and cultural contexts as well as the social networks, in which students’ study, live and work. This meant that students needed to see the connection to what they were learning and how they could implement it to meet specific needs both at university and beyond. The socioconstructivist approach applied in this context encouraged social interaction and dialogue to extend and enhance knowledge construction (Wang, 2007). In active learning underpinned by a socioconstructivist approach, students work collaboratively, discussing problems with other students. With this approach, AL is not primarily about mastery of a discrete set of isolated skills but a way of gaining better understanding of the world in which students find themselves and how information relates to their experiences. Problem solving is inherent in this approach
and facilitates sense-making, deep learning and critical thinking, all of which solidify students’ learning (Arp and Woodard, 2002). A socioconstructivist pedagogy provides an authentic learning experience, contextualised within a disciplinary context and for a set purpose (Wang, 2007).

This move away from the more traditional linear approaches to engaging with information (“see information - get it”) meant that students were better served by being aided to become “informed learners” who could critically engage with information in a reflective, evaluative way (Bruce et al., 2012). To foster active learning by students librarians avoided demonstrating a particular resource with students following along. Instead students were encouraged to “have a go” and discuss with their peers what had or had not worked. This subtle shift in approach had a number of benefits. It demonstrated the reality of searching for information, allowed students to develop resilience and coping mechanisms in searching when things did not go as expected, and encouraged higher order critical thinking skills, including reflection, evaluation and decision making which would be required when students ventured into independent research (Bruce and Hughes, 2010). At the same time emphasis was placed on teaching transferable capabilities rather than focussing on a particular tool or resource.

In these more learner-centred approaches the instructor took on the role of a facilitator during workshops rather than a knowledge transmitter and students were actively engaged in their learning rather than passive recipients of information (Kerr et al., 2010).

**Step 5: Incorporates Threshold Concepts**

The emergence of two frameworks - the Research Skills Development framework (RSDF)\(^1\) (Willison and O'Regan, 2006) and the ACRL Framework\(^2\) (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015) provided the opportunity to apply a structured consistent review process to how AIL competencies should be delivered in both individual courses and curricular programmes as a whole. They remove the focus from skills based activities to threshold concepts. Threshold concepts are core ideas or processes within a particular discipline that define ways of knowing and/or practising (Townsend et al., 2011). They consist of crucial understanding or deep knowledge which once mastered allows users to see the world in a new way (Tucker et al., 2014). They are the moments which allow mastery of a particular essential idea or process which allows users to move forward in their learning (Cousin, 2006). In the AIL discipline threshold concepts consider deeper, more conceptual and philosophical aspects. They assist in answering “Why” questions such as “Why do I need to be able to think critically?” and “What’s the point of research?” For example “information has value” is a key threshold concept outlined by the ACRL framework (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015). Once students have mastered this concept it transforms their understanding of the multiple dimensions through which information has value. This could include (but is in no way restricted to): the value of using best evidence to impact best outcomes, the ability of information to influence others, and the value of information for problem solving in civic, social, educational and work life.

Threshold concepts are also by nature troublesome, as they may comprise difficult to grasp or non-intuitive processes or ideas that are recognised as disciplinary roadblocks. Through their sheer troublesome nature they reveal the true complexity of the information environment in which students find themselves (Hofer et al., 2013). An understanding of the complexity of navigating these information environments in turn reinforces to students the need to foster resilience and resourcefulness in order to address issues as they arise.

Additionally, threshold concepts additionally ground learning in meaningful contexts. They teach students the real challenge of navigating information environment for study, work and lifelong learning and equip them with the skills they need in order to effectively navigate these environments both for their immediate and future needs (Townsend et al., 2011). Threshold concepts are transformative, integrative, bounded, and once mastered are irreversible, i.e. cannot be unlearned.
Not only the ACRL Framework, indicated above, but also the RSDF framework introduce key AIL concepts and lend themselves well to viewing AIL competencies as skills for lifelong learning with application well beyond the specific grade bearing assessment tasks students need to complete at stage one. This is particularly appropriate for a practitioner based programme such as social work.

Librarians and the learning advisor involved in this project decided to initially map these frameworks to the existing stage one social work course with a view to achieving the following:

- **Benchmarking**: LLS staff wanted to check whether current IL initiatives were appropriate for this level (first-year students) as advocated by the RSDF and ACRL frameworks. At the same time they were keen to map what they were doing against graduate profiles and social work practitioner competencies to make sure that they were contributing to practice-ready graduates and teaching the students transferable research skills that they would find useful in their professional lives. They also wanted to ensure that what they were doing was appropriately aligned to learning outcomes for the course.

- **Improvements to AIL initiatives**: On the basis of these findings, LLS staff intended to make improvements to existing AIL initiatives (including two workshops and the compulsory worksheet) and discuss with the lead lecturer for this course (course director) whether RSDF might contribute to revision and improvement of both the AIL initiatives and also the students’ assignments.

- **Creation of potential generic AIL activities for stage-one courses**: As many AIL competencies for first-year students are generic and transferable across many programmes, LLS staff hoped the mapping exercise would help with the design some effective generic AIL activities librarians could use in other programmes.

**Results: Challenges and Solutions**

Application of both ACRL and the RSDF frameworks and the mapping to learning outcomes, graduate capabilities and practitioner competencies proved to be extremely useful for this stage one social work course. It revealed that on the whole AIL activities and workshops were appropriate for these stage one students. However a number of key issues were identified that prompted revision of assessment tasks, AIL workshops and the compulsory AIL worksheets handed in by students with their assignments. Key issues and challenges are outlines below.

**Challenge 1: Big picture needed**

The mapping exercise clearly indicated that students required more emphasis on the “Big Picture” or threshold concepts around information and research rather than on skills development e.g., not just how to do “stuff” such as find resources for assignments but also:

- What is information and how is it created? (Information has value, Information creation as a process)(Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015).

**Solution.** Workshop content was adapted to remove the skills based section on finding readings in Library Search (the library catalogue). Instead library staff encouraged students to think about what information is, how it is created and its value, particularly when it is applied to real life situations (See also challenge 2 below).

A compulsory IL worksheet (designed by the librarians) was changed to incorporate a section where students were required to reflect on and provide written answers to the questions as to the value of information for social workers.
Challenge 2: More emphasis on the Research – Practice connection required.

Previously, library staff identified that even third-year students regard research as an adjunct skill (Fouché and Bartley, 2016). The mapping exercise reinforced the importance of emphasising the research/practice connection within the social work curriculum to prevent this research - practice gap (Herie and Martin, 2002).

By including the ACRL framework, graduate profile and social work practitioner competencies into the mapping exercise, the team identified that students could be encouraged to start thinking about the connection between research and practice from the very beginning of their degree (Bingham et al., 2016). This had not previously been considered in AIL initiatives for the course which were focussed primarily on searching for information.

Learning outcomes for the course very much underpinned the idea of forging a strong research - practice connection as they were concerned with the translation of theory into action and positive outcomes for social work clients and populations in society. A key learning outcome for the course was the ability to: “Interpret sociological theory and research and apply this knowledge to the analysis of issues relevant to the human services.” Similarly the ACRL framework reinforced the importance of students recognising that “information has value” particularly when applied to specific situations and contexts (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015). The university’s graduate profile also emphasised the importance of students being able to: “recognise when information is needed and a capacity to locate, evaluate and use this information effectively” (The University of Auckland, 2016). Similarly social workers’ competence standards included the “competence to understand and articulate social work theories, indigenous practice knowledge, other relevant theories, and social work practice methods and models (Social Workers Registration Board, 2017).

Solution. Librarians encouraged students in workshops to discuss the value of research/information to practice, e.g. encouraging them to discuss the following:
- When might they need to use research?
- What happens if they don’t?

Students were presented with a real life social work practice scenario where research was essential. They were asked to imagine that they had started their first job post-graduation and as a result of an ‘inflammatory’ news item on child poverty that had been broadcast the previous night, their manager had asked them to prepare a detailed report.

They were asked to discuss why information was important in this situation, what sort of information would be useful and where they thought they might find it. Introducing these concepts assisted early stage development of research mindedness which it was felt would greatly benefit students as they progressed through other levels of the degree programme. Librarians also verbalised key linkages between information and the learning outcomes of the course, the university of Auckland graduate profiles and practitioner competencies. As a result students realised the importance and value of information not just at undergraduate level but for their career post-graduation and specifically how it related to practice.

Challenge 3: Emphasis on capabilities/concepts not tools and resources

Although moves had been made to provide active learning opportunities contextualized to students’ assessments, work still needed to be done on building capabilities and creating critically informed learners equipped to undertake research confidently and competently. This meant a move away from a focus on ‘show and tell’ of specific tools and resources to problem based learning which allowed for critical thinking and reflection, as well as resilience when things did not go as planned.

Solution. Rather than advocating and demonstrating particular resources library staff encouraged students to think critically about the sort of information they might require and then to consider how to
locate and evaluate these. Librarians provided opportunities for students to explore relevant academic resources and provided suggestions for evaluating these, but essential decision making about what to use and why was left up to students. This was a move away from a traditional “sage on the stage” approach and effectively contributed to building students’ research resilience and confidence in their research and critical thinking skills.

Students similarly had to reflect in their assessments why they had chosen a particular resource for their assessment and its value in this context.

**Challenge 4: Lack of authentic contextualised examples**

To reinforce the above elements, librarians needed to include authentic practice learning examples and resources.

Social work practitioner competencies do not specifically mention the value of research and information, although the code of ethics for the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) does (ANZASW, 2013): however, the competencies do have a strong focus on the importance of ethical and cultural approaches, advocacy and social change, e.g.

- “Competence to work respectfully and inclusively with diversity and difference in practice
- Competence to promote the principles of human rights and social and economic justice
- Competence to engage in practice which promotes social change
- Competence to promote empowerment of people and communities to enable positive change
- Competence to practice within legal and ethical boundaries of the social work profession” (Social Workers Registration Board, 2017).

In previous years librarians had introduced students to resources that were useful for illustrating key IL skills (e.g., evaluating online resources) but which were not necessarily the sorts of websites social workers would be exposed to in practice. The mapping exercise highlighted the potential for introducing students to more of the resources that would be useful in practice and which would assist in developing professional competencies, e.g. websites with a cultural ethical/social justice focus.

**Solution.** Resources to which students were exposed were of direct relevance to social work practice and comprised a variety of formats, ranging from general websites to government reports and scholarly material.

They encompassed elements of cultural diversity, ethical practice, social justice and interventional strategies which could be applied in practice and which were associated to the core practitioner requirements outlined in professional competency documentation (Social Workers Registration Board, 2017). While not directly related to the assignment, examples used to demonstrate key issues were chosen as they provided subtle exposure to resources with a social justice, ethical or cultural component.

**Challenge 5. Assessment Revision required**

While analysing the overall learning outcomes for the course it was noticed that learning outcomes were missing from individual assignments. The student learning advisor also gave some valuable insights on student perspectives of one of the course assessments from her interactions with students in this course. The assessment required them to identify key themes from a prescribed article. As novice researchers (Level One of the RSDF framework)(Willison and O'Regan, 2006) students were a little intimidated by some of the terminology used, e.g. “critically review...” to describe assessment requirements.

**Solution.** The course director added learning objectives for each assessment and reworded the assessments to make them less daunting for the students. Rather than asking students to conduct a ‘critical
review’ he asked them to look for the ‘big ideas.’ Anecdotally, the Student Learning advisor indicated that this resulted in fewer requests for help in interpreting the first assignment than in previous years.

Challenge 6. Balancing academic and information literacy assessment needs with scaffolding academic and information literacy building blocks

It was important to provide AIL instruction that related to assessment tasks and aided students in completing their assignments. At the same time it was essential that AIL instruction introduced research skills and threshold concepts appropriate for these stage one students while being cognizant of the intention to expand on this scaffolding at higher levels of the degree programme. Two workshops were offered during course tutorial time before the mapping exercise and library staff had attempted to align these directly to the two assessment tasks. However one of the workshops had a rather tenuous connection to the assessment which was a critical reading exercise. This actually required a lot less AIL instruction, in part because the lecturer had already provided instruction in critical analysis of text during lecture time.

Solution. The lecturer agreed that the specific assessment related content of the first workshop could be removed and instead the session could be used to introduce core base level AIL literacies deemed important for students at this stage of research. The ACRL, and more particularly the RSDF framework was used to create activities suitable for students as beginning researchers. This included providing a straightforward research question for investigation rather than asking students to create their own and providing brief criteria by which students could evaluate the quality of information they found. Although not specifically related to the assignment this provided the benefits of a session that acted as a springboard to introduce scaffolded AIL competencies across other levels of the degree programme.

Findings and Impact

Mapping the course to the RSDF and ACRL frameworks, graduate attributes and core social work practitioner competencies significantly changed the content of both the workshops and the assignments. Workshops were completely revised to include activities that encouraged students to experience and reflect on the importance of developing information and research skills for study and practice. The assessments were also adapted both for clarity and to encourage mastery of key AIL ‘threshold concepts.’

Establishing good relationships with Faculty staff is essential if AIL integration is to be successful. Librarians and the learning advisor involved in this case had the full support of both the Bachelor of Social Work course coordinator and Head of School who were open to new ideas, involved librarians in school meetings and kept librarians abreast of specific AIL issues that students were facing. At the same time subject librarians worked hard to be responsive to students’ AIL needs both in workshop sessions and during consultations outside the regular workshop times. They initiated interventions to address key problems, e.g. online resources on referencing and paraphrasing, and scheduled drop in sessions where students could talk about their specific AIL needs. Key problems experienced by the students that were not specifically related to AIL were also fed back to the lecturer.

It was noted that a change in terminology in the initial assignment question resulted in fewer students consulting the student learning advisor for assistance in interpreting the assessment than in previous years. Also although a causative effect cannot be directly confirmed, none of the students failed this assessment which had not been the case in previous years.

Notwithstanding that response rates on student evaluations tend to be very low, responses in the most recent student evaluation of the course specifically targeting AIL initiatives suggest that students value the learning they gain in the AIL component. The student evaluation was conducted in the final two weeks of the teaching semester, and 39 of 65 students took part, producing a response rate of 60 per cent. The AIL section of the evaluation comprised five items:
- I found the IL tasks helpful to my learning;
- The IL tutorials helped to improve my assignments;
- The IL tasks were relevant and well integrated into the course;
- I have used the knowledge from the IL tasks in my other courses this semester; and
- The IL tasks have helped me to be more confident about finding, evaluating, using and acknowledging scholarly sources in my assignments.

The distribution of negative, neutral and positive responses was reasonably consistent across all five questions. Negative responses ranged between 5 and 11 percent of respondents; neutral responses ranged between 24 and 33 percent; and positive responses ranged between 60 and 70 percent across all questions. Two-thirds of respondents found the AIL tasks helpful to their learning (Figure 1), and 70 percent agreed that the information literacy tasks helped them to be more confident about “finding, evaluating, using and acknowledging scholarly sources in their assignments” (Figure 2) and that the tasks were “relevant and well integrated into the course” (Figure 3).

These positive responses seem to be borne out in practice. With the introduction of the special tutorial sessions and the integration of AIL competencies into the assessment, students receive both teaching and feedback on their need to demonstrate engagement with appropriate scholarly sources and the ability to cite them. They are required to append a statement to their assignments describing how they found each source and how they assessed it to be appropriate for use in the assignment. The teaching staff have demonstrated in these practical ways that IL is taken seriously, and student essays have shown consistent improvement in responding to those signals.

Figure 1: I found the Information Literacy tasks helpful to my learning
Figure 2: The Information Literacy tasks have helped me to be more confident about finding, evaluating, using and acknowledging scholarly sources in my assignments

Figure 3: The Information Literacy tasks were relevant and well integrated into the course

Concluding remarks: Reflection and future plans

This case study demonstrates that the RSDF and the ACRL frameworks can be used effectively to benchmark existing AIL activities that are already integrated in a single course and can highlight gaps or areas for improvement.

LLS staff in this study also found that the mapping exercise can be used to initiate conversation and collaboration with course directors for planning and improving AIL and assessments.

It is hoped that the mapping exercise and subsequent revision of assignment and AIL activities can be extended to examine courses at other levels of the social work degree programme and also to develop AIL initiatives in other degree programmes currently taught at the Faculty of Education and Social Work,
with a view to creating both generic, scaffolded initiatives and more tailored approaches throughout the degree programme.

At the time this article goes to print Libraries and Learning Services have merged with the University of Auckland Career Development and Employment Services. This provides new opportunities to further support the transition from student to practitioner through AIL initiatives which further foster competencies beyond tertiary study.

Notes
1. For further reading on the Research Skills Development Framework the authors recommend the University of Adelaide’s Research Skill Development for Curriculum and Design. Available at: https://www.adelaide.edu.au/rsd/framework/
2. For further reading on the ACRL Framework the authors recommend the ACRL Word Press site for the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. Available at: ahttp://acrl.ala.org/framework/

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