Report on Special Interest Group Information Literacy

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REPORT ON SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP
INFORMATION LITERACY

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Abstract
The IATUL Special Interest Group for Information Literacy (SIG IL) promotes collaboration and sharing of best practices among IATUL members in the area of information literacy. The SIG IL provides a platform to share IL-related experiences, documents and news for its members and others interested in the subject. Another main goal is to contribute to IATUL’s service portfolio to support other member libraries. The report will inform about the group’s organizational structure, its mission and members. It will also provide information about the group’s agenda and current projects.

Keywords: information literacy, special interest group, best practices, best practice sharing

Introduction

The IATUL Special Interest Group for Information Literacy (SIG IL) has been an important meeting place and facilitator for collaboration and sharing of best practice among IATUL members since the founding in 2012. Members continue to share IL practices and collaborate on different projects, all while constantly looking towards the future. 2018 saw several structural changes for SIG IL, with change in leadership and replacement of a number of members. It also saw the implementation of the webinar series initiated in 2017, which was a valuable experience.
Group structure and group organization

SIG IL consists of members from IATUL libraries across the globe, who have been taken on after an approval process. All members hold specific expertise in the IL field, a core quality required to be part of the working group. Current members represent Kenya, South Africa, United Kingdom, Germany, Norway and Australia. The group currently totals eight members, included Chair Dr. Simone Kibler of Technische Universität (TU) Braunschweig, Germany:

- Janine Lockhart: Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa
- Tina Hohmann: TU München, Germany
- David Thomas: Durban University of Technology, South Africa
- Mary Ngure: United States International University, Kenya
- Vicky Grant: University of Sheffield, United Kingdom
- Linn Kristensen: OsloMet - Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway
- Kathleen Smeaton: University of Queensland, Australia

The members of SIG IL meet online approximately every two months. The full online meeting schedule is set at the beginning of the year, when all members are invited to complete a Doodle poll with suggested dates. The meeting time throughout the year is then scheduled according to potential level of participation. This process adds to predictability for planning the annual working cycle. It is also important to note that as the group members reside in different time zones (it is currently up to nine hour time difference between the members) the meeting times are scheduled to be as practicable for everyone as possible.

Zoom is the technical platform used for online meetings (and webinars), whereas Sync and Share has taken over from Google Drive as the group’s cloud storage solution for meeting minutes and project activities.

The group members take turns being responsible for the meeting minutes, as organized by the Chair.

Past projects

The webinar series

The project was initiated in 2017 by then-Chair Caroline Leiss. The webinar series took place in 2018, under the umbrella “IL in an International Context”, and covered a wide range of IL-related topics, from teaching IL skills as a librarian to academic identity management. The target group was everyone who is interested in IL in an academic environment. As the webinar series might be of interest for more people than those who were able to attend in real time, all webinars were recorded. The recordings (five in all) were made available for everyone on the TU München repository mediaTUM (https://mediatum.ub.tum.de/).
Working with the webinar series, SIG IL members had to receive training in order to master the technical solutions. Furthermore, they had the opportunity to have a test run beforehand. Sharing IL-related presentations in a webinar context was a valuable experience, and seen as rewarding by the group members. The greatest challenge to the implementation was of technical nature, which will be taken into consideration for the launching of the next webinar series (in 2020).

Workshop "IL in the Workplace"

The above mentioned workshop took place from December 3 to 5 2018 in München and was organized by then-Chair Caroline Leiss. The aim was to bring together librarians and representatives from the business sector in order to offer the opportunity to develop a better understanding of the differences between information literacy as part of a university study programme, and information literacy in the workplace. The workshop programme contained both, working sessions and social activities in the evening. The workshop met with great interest and was a great success. Further information (video recordings and slides) can be found here: https://www.iatul.org/munich2018 (access: June 11, 2019).

Current projects

Admission questionnaire and guideline for self-presentation

The group management of IATUL SIG IL changed in October 2018. Caroline Leiß (Universitätsbibliothek, TU München, Germany), who successfully managed the IATUL SIG IL for several years, handed over this task to Simone Kibler (Universitätsbibliothek, TU Braunschweig, Germany). This made it possible to look at the group and its structure from a new perspective. Although the group leader was already a member of the working group before, basic information about the group members, like the expertise of the individual group members, their relationship to IL, the structure of their institution of origin, and other information were not visible for her. In the course of processing admission applications it also became clear that there was no fixed process structure for this. For these reasons, these two topics were linked together and were processed as the first low-threshold group project. The aim was to develop an admission questionnaire for interested parties in order to obtain a condensed overview of institutional structures and expertise of potential members, and to be able to make competent and well-founded decisions about their admission or rejection. In addition, a guideline was developed that gives new group members the opportunity to give their expertise and institutional framework conditions to the group in a structured form as part of a self-presentation and thus make these visible. The self-presentation is subsequently made available to all group members,
so that an overview of all group members is possible quickly even in the event of a change in group management.

Paper presentations

During the first online meetings under new leadership it came out that many of the group members are regularly represented with interesting topics at national and international conferences and give lectures there. This knowledge has not yet been made available to other group members. The idea of regularly multiplying existing conference presentations into the group met with great interest from all group members. Therefore, the group management is currently planning short presentations of group members in the regular online meetings. It turned out that these presentations are excellent discussion impulses that promote knowledge sharing among group members and provide discussion material. This approach is intended to remain an integral part of the online meetings, as long as contributions can be made.

Presentation of group to the public

In order to make the IATUL SIG IL more generally known, work is being done to systematically and consistently present the group's work at national and international conferences in the future. On the one hand, this can be done through presentations that focus specifically on the work and projects of the group. On the other hand, the presentation of speakers at conferences will in future always be combined with a reference to membership in the IATUL SIG IL. In this way, it should be ensured that the perception of the IATUL SIG IL in the library community is positively promoted and that the know-how presented there is used more as a resource than before.

Outlook

In addition to the above mentioned projects, which are already being implemented, there are further ideas for future work of the IATUL SIG IL. These will be presented in the following.

Second tier group

Again and again there are inquiries from persons who would like to become members of the IATUL SIG IL, but whose expertise is not sufficient to participate in the core working group. In the future, it would be desirable to make an offer available to these persons that allows them to participate in the expertise of permanent IATUL SIG IL members without having to contribute anything to the work areas of the group. Initial ideas include the extension of social media work and communication, a regular newsletter, or special online events for second tier group-members.
Webinar with guest speakers

The webinar series which was held in 2018 and initiated by Caroline Leiß was a rewarding and interesting project. Although the technical side turned out to be challenging, it was a great opportunity to share knowledge and IL expertise with people all around the world. For these reasons, the webinar series should be continued. Since the webinar project turned out to be challenging in the first round, it was postponed until now in order to realize smaller and lower-threshold projects. In the next round, the speakers should not only be limited to IATUL SIG IL, but include guest speakers from other IATUL SIGs. In this way, the positive external perception of IATUL as an institution is to be strengthened.

Networking of group leaders

When initiating projects that go beyond the existing group structure of the IATUL SIG IL, it is noticeable that there is no networking between the group managements. This would be desirable not only in order to carry out group-wide projects together, but also to exchange best practices in managing an IATUL SIG. Only in this way can the role as group leader be reflected and work with the group and on projects continuously improved. There are therefore considerations to bring the IATUL SIG leaders into contact with each other and to ensure a regular exchange. This could, for example, take place two or three times a year online or personally as a working group meeting within the framework of the IATUL conferences.

Conclusion

The IATUL SIG IL is a group that is currently forming under new management and with new members. On the one hand, this is the great challenge to get the group running with initially low-threshold projects. On the other hand, this offers the opportunity to create new processes and structures, to tackle further projects and to bring new momentum to the group. The group members have great potential and enormous expertise. However, this can be made even more visible and, above all, multiplied in the future. The present discussion provides approaches for this.