Academic Librarians Group (ALG)

Minutes

Date	Thursday 25 May 2023	
Chair(s)	Tracy Breheny (Salford) Jenny Warren (Chester)	
Attendance	Linda Moses-Allison	University of Cumbria
	Sheila Murphy	Edge Hill University
	Ruth Patterson	York St. John University
	Liz Peet	Manchester Metropolitan University
	Jennifer Rowland	University of Bradford
	Anne Sherwin	University of Salford
	Gemma Smith	University of Manchester
	Louise Smith	UCLAN
	Louise Speakman	University of Lancaster
	Debbie Spencer	University of Chester
	Geoff Thomason	Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM
	Andrew Tomkins	Edgehill

1. Welcome

Introductions and welcome took place.

The group reviewed of the minutes from the November 2023 meeting. Minutes agreed as an accurate representation of the previous meeting.

2. Reports and Good News Stories

The Reports and Good News Stories document were circulated prior to the meeting and can be found here: https://sway.office.com/TAo91QXtqjfoNjVo?ref=Link

If anyone has any follow-up questions, colleagues can contact the representative for the institution directly (contact details provided on the document).

3. Academic Libraries North update

ALN Update report shared by TB on behalf of Nicky Freeman, ALN Development Manager.

#ALN23 Revolutionary thoughts: constructively disrupting the status quo in libraries for the new normal, 21st – 22nd July 2023
The programme for this year's conference has now been released and you can register for your place for either the online day or both the online and in-person days. There are some great papers, plus keynotes from Emily Drabinksi (21st) and Jen Bayjoo (22nd). You can find out all the info here: https://www.academiclibrariesnorth.ac.uk/academic-libraries-north-conference-2023

Thriving in your career 2
This event is specifically aimed at staff and students from a BAME background and follows the first event last June which was popular and from which we got lots of positive feedback. It is taking place on 9th June at the University of Leeds. You can book a place and find out more information about the event here: https://www.academiclibrariesnorth.ac.uk/thriving-your-career-pt-2-free-face-face-event-black-asian-minority-ethnic-colleagues

Staff Development
We are just in the process of collecting ideas from all the member libraries for the staff development programme for next year (starting around October time). The Staff Development Reps will have contacted all teams to gather ideas for topics you would like to see on there, or events you would like to host/contribute to. If not, or you have an idea but do not know who your rep is, please get in touch – nicky.freeman@sconul.ac.uk. We are meeting in June to start pulling the programme together.

Mentoring Scheme launch
After a successful first wave of our pilot Mentoring Scheme, we have now opened our second wave to new mentors and mentees. You can see more details on the ALN website - https://www.academiclibrariesnorth.ac.uk/mentoring. The scheme is aimed at all staff below senior leadership levels, no matter your role and responsibilities. A lot of our wave 1 mentors are staying on for wave 2 as they have enjoyed the process so much. We will be providing two half

day's training for mentors, on 5th and 12th July, and will host a mentee briefing later in July. The deadline for applications is Friday 23rd June.

EDI Innovation Fund
We approved six bids for the Innovation Fund in the first iteration of the scheme. All the projects are now underway (a couple of them are reporting back at the conference) and will be reporting in the next 3 months. You can see all the information about the projects on the ALN EDI webpage: https://www.academiclibrariesnorth.ac.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion. We are likely to be launching a second wave of the funding towards the end of the year if anyone is working on anything they think might qualify for some funding.

4. Academic Librarians Group Co-Chair

JW and TB announced that they are officially stepping down as Co-Chairs of the ALN Academic Librarians Group CoP after today's meeting.

JW and TB welcomed the new Co-Chairs of the ALN Academic Librarians Group CoP.

The new Co-Chairs going forward are:

- Louise Speakman (University of Lancaster)
  l.speakman@lancaster.ac.uk
- Louise Smith (UCLAN)
  lsmith53@uclan.ac.uk

5. Equality, diversity, and inclusivity

Members shared recent EDI-related resources, events, and experiences, and updated the group on EDI developments at their institutions. Comments, discussion and resource-sharing were added to the ALG EDI Padlet: https://uos.padlet.org/uis359_63107/equality-diversity-and-inclusivity-in-libraries-sebvbkq4p416v3ip

TB highlighted the next ALN EDI event:
Decolonising literature searching
10:30am – 12noon on Friday 30th June

Book your place here: https://www.academiclibrariesnorth.ac.uk/decolonising-literature-searching-hosted-online-lancaster-university

Key areas that arose during the EDI discussion included:

- The increasing use of AI and the problems that arise around bias. Discussed being aware of it and the need for further research and student support around it. It was noted that CALC are doing things around this, so it is an area of development to watch. All agreed this would be a good topic to focus on in the next ALN ALG meeting.

- The importance of including and consulting students in decolonising the collection work. The student voice is vital to this work. Discussed students as partners and the role of the Library Champion.

- Some institutions have developed materials to help academic colleagues diversify their creating lists. Current work in this area includes webpage guidance, liaison with academics at the point of creating reading lists and staff reading list training encouraging co-creation o reading lists with students.

- Being aware of neurodiversity and the importance of considering neurodiverse students in any planning and development of library services and support.

- A number of policies and statements are being revisited and updated. Those mentioned included diversity statements and recruitment policy, with a view to make them more inclusive.

- Some institutions are looking at cataloguing and ways of improving problematic metadata and collection descriptions.

Lots of institutions represented at the meeting were working on a wide range of EDI-related developments and we agreed to revisit some of the projects listed on the Padlet at the next meeting to see how they have moved on.

Further details of discussions noted above can be found on the EDI Padlet.

6. Reflections on post-lockdown libraries and services

Many institutions reported that it has only been this academic year (2022-23) that they have seen footfall start to rise back to pre-Covid levels. Some institutions reported that they have yet to achieve this. Many institutions noted that attendance at library-run events and workshops is still lower that pre-Covid numbers. Where footfall was noted as still be lower than pre-Covid, it was also discussed that this change could be a result of a natural process and a shift in the ways students learn and study, not just as a result of Covid and lockdowns. Was this going to happen anyway, and has Covid accelerate the process?

It was noted that the types of student queries have changed since Covid, too. Students appear to search for information differently, require different kinds of information, and require support with different skills (perhaps due to changes in assessments?).

It was also noted that many of the students who are in the library and attending library-run events and workshops seem to be new students. A couple of institutions reported working on a range of library-led projects to try to establish why students are not coming into the library, and to explore how we can get students back in. Institutions report that this is being done in several ways:

- Focus groups
- On-the-spot questions to students on campus.
- Social media campaigns.
- Questionnaires and surveys, with prize incentives for completion.

It was noted that for anyone interested in UX, Alison Sharman's ALN 'UX in one-hour' sessions are particularly good, and well worth looking out for. There is also a ALN User Experience CoP currently up and running: https://www.academiclibrariesnorth.ac.uk/user-experience-cop.

Discussed how we need to learn how they want to use the library space and services now, and why that is different to before. We also need to explore how Covid has had an impact on their study habits and explore how we can support them.

It was also noted that libraries traditionally do not shout about the services and resources enough, and that we need to think more widely about how we can the messages out in ways that students engage with.

Discussed changes to services and support post-Covid. This highlighted the mixed approaches at different institutions, all with mixed success. Some of the areas we touched upon include:

- **1:1 support**

  Of those reporting back, most offer both online and face-to-face, with the user being able to specify which mode they would like. Others have moved to online as the main offer, with face-to-face as an exception. Very few have moved back to face-to-face only, with online as an exception. Many report that students like to have a choice, and most are finding, at least for now, that students tend to opt for the online mode more often, although again that varied from institution to institution.

- **Workshops/library sessions**

  Of those reporting back, most offer both online and face-to-face, with the user being able to specify which mode they would like. It ranged from a 50/50 (50% online, 50% face-to-face) split, to a 70/30 (70% online, 30% face-to-face) split.

It was noted that attendance at workshops and library-led sessions, for both online and face-to-face, is down, and this was reflected across the board. Some institutions noted that there has been a bigger fall in attendance for face-to-face workshops/sessions, compared to their online counterparts. There appeared to be an increase in non-attendance for workshops/sessions and 1:1s, also. It was noted that academic colleagues are also struggling with attendance, and many report that lecture and seminar attendance has also been low, so this is a much wider concern, and not just limited to libraries.

It was generally agreed that being able to utilise things like MS Teams and moving some support online has improved library services and increased the support we can offer. It has also meant the library support and services we offer are now more inclusive ad more widely accessible.

An increase in behavioural issues was noted by many institutions. There was a general feeling that Covid could be a factor here. Discussed that the types of behavioural issues many were experiencing in their libraries were slightly different to pre-Covid issues. There seemed to be a particular issue around socialisation. Some institutions reported working with the Students' Union and their School departments more closely on this issue and trying to see if there is anything we can do to improve this. One institution is working with the Psychology Department and students to see if they can identify reasons for this and explore how it can be tackled.

Discussed adequate staff spaces. A shortage of suitable space to deliver the required services and support seemed to be an issue across the board. Problems identified included:

- A lack of suitable spaces to offer face-to-face 1:1s and workshops.

- A lack of suitable spaces and equipment to offer online 1:1s and workshops, if having to deliver from on campus.
- Issues around having to utilise student spaces due to lack of adequate staff spaces.
- Issues with lack of suitable shared staff spaces, at the same time as an increase in the demand for staff to have more of an on-campus presence.

Identified the need for work to be done around identifying what spaces and resources we need to be able to deliver strong and robust library services and support, and to be able to support our students with what they needy, when they need it.

7. Any other business

Possible ideas for a future agenda items/discussion points:
- AI and its use in libraries.
- AI and the EDI risks it could pose.
- Librarians working with other support services (Study Skills, Careers Departments, the Student Union, etc.).

8. Date of next meeting

November 2023 (TBC).

9. Summary and close

TB and JW would like to thank the group for all the valuable input, discussions, and contributions you have all provided to help make this CoP a success. We have thoroughly enjoyed being ALG Co-Chairs and have loved the experience, and we look forward to continuing being part of the group going forward.