**RIDLs / InformAll REPORT ON ACTIVITIES, JANUARY 2014 – FEBRUARY 2015**

**Background**

The Research Information and Digital Literacies Coalition (RIDLs) was set up in June 2012, with the aim of promoting the relevance of training and development in information skills, and enabling activities that encourage the development of this knowledge and skills. The rationale for the initiative was to provide an environment where all those with an interest in the furtherance of information knowledge in higher education could consider practical ideas for advancing the development of information-handling training for HE researchers. Information literacy has traditionally been closely associated with the academic library community, and a key aim of RIDLs has been to broaden the discussion to different professional interest groups beyond the world of librarianship.

From the outset, the intention was to define RIDLs not just as a forum, but as an agenda-setting body which would initiate activities, act as advocate and disseminate relevant information. It is on this basis that the initiative was initially framed as a one-year programme, managed by the Research Information Network. The aims of that were mostly attained, and a report outlining the achievements over the period 2012-2013, can be found at <http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/ridls-phase-1/> .

On the basis of this success, a programme for a second, one-year phase of activity was drawn up and submitted to HEFCE as a funding proposal during the autumn of 2013. This was articulated around four strands of activity, all of which built on what had been accomplished during the first phase:

* **Strand 1** – sustaining and expanding InformAll as a viable coalition; this notably involved reviewing the way that the initiative functions and formalising its membership and accountability structure.
* **Strand 2** – using the RIDLs criteria for describing, reviewing and evaluating information literacy training interventions to support the development of information and data literacy training resources.
* **Strand 3** – transferability of information and data literacy beyond HE; this investigated how information-related skills and know-how acquired in the context of HE might relate to the needs and expectations in realms beyond HE, particularly with regards to employment.
* **Strand 4** – international outreach; identifying further opportunities for collaborations beyond the UK.

The detailed programme, along with the full aims and objectives, can be found at <http://www.researchinfonet.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/RIDLs-2013-14-programme-proposal-website-version-FINAL-REVISED.pdf> .

Having considered the proposal, HEFCE agreed to support it in full, with a financial allocation of £49,500 + VAT over the period 1January to 31 December 2014; the programme was subsequently re-profiled, with the funding period extended to the end of February 2015. The budget reflected the detailed requirements for each of the four strands, to cover the cost of the facilitating and co-ordinating work to be undertaken by RIN, plus research project work, publicity, room hire and expenses for attending meetings.

**Conclusions**

The RIDLs programme, now renamed InformAll, has now reached the end of its second phase. HEFCE has previously received two progress reports, and this paper provides a final report covering the activities across the whole period against each of the four strands. This is set out in detail at **Annex A**.

This second phase of the programme has been broadly successful, although there are areas where developments have been slower than expected. The aims and objectives of InformAll have been clarified, its sense of purpose has consequently been refined, and it now presents itself as a more distinct and recognisable initiative, with a stronger identity. Its membership base has increased internationally and beyond the confines of higher education librarianship, and its scope has broadened as a result. It has expanded its agenda to examine the relevance of information literacy beyond its initial remit in the world of higher education research, notably by investigating the place of information skills and know-how for employers, and at the interface between education and employment. It is also starting to take an interest in the relationship between information literacy and the burgeoning policy agenda relating to digital skills / digital inclusion. A range of new contacts have been made as a result over the past year, and InformAll has succeeded in raising awareness of, and interest in, information literacy among organisations and individuals that had not hitherto recognised the issue. In doing so, it has helped to broker new relationships between groups of players, notably between librarians / information professionals and other players.

Concretely, over the year, InformAll has undertaken a research project and produced a report on its findings; it has also fostered a comprehensive, annotated bibliography to complement the report. It has successfully applied for further project funding. There have been five InformAll-led presentations at various conferences and workshops in the UK and beyond; InformAll has also organised one webinar and co-organised a workshop which is shortly to take place. InformAll has been the subject of six articles or blog pieces for a range of stakeholder organisations. It has an enhanced and much more comprehensive web presence, and now produces a regular monthly e-newsletter. All these initiatives, and others, are described in more detail at Annex A.

Progress towards the development of greater awareness of information literacy is nevertheless slow, particularly as InformAll increasingly probes beyond the comfort zone of higher education librarianship. There have been some successes in generating interest in these issues, and leads are being pursued; but it is also true that, in many instances, our interlocutors have not wished to engage, or have not seen how information literacy relates to their respective agendas. We know from the experiences of other initiatives, in the UK and globally, that it can be difficult and time-consuming for information literacy to be recognised as a policy issue; InformAll is experiencing this sometimes slow momentum – but it spite of this, it is clear that progress has been made, and that there is a case for building on what has been achieved to date.

HEFCE has indicated that it will not be providing further funding for the initiative. InformAll is thus actively looking at other funding options. The successful grant application described at Annex A under strand 3 demonstrates that the initiative has the potential to secure revenue for research and policy services. A single grant of this sort is insufficient to guarantee a longer-term future, but it is hoped that further funding opportunities will arise. At the very least, the support that HEFCE has provided since mid-2012 has provided InformAll with a solid and increasingly recognised basis for developing a continuing programme of work, and a capacity to influence.

*Stéphane Goldstein*

*17 March 2015*

**Annex A: RIDLs / InformAll activities and achievements**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Activities** | **Resource / reference** |
| ***Strand 1 – sustaining and expanding RIDLs as a viable coalition*** | |
| ***Organisation and membership*** | |
| As planned, the **steering group has met four times** since the beginning of 2014 (January 2014, April 2014, October 2014 and February 2015). Over the period, it has overseen a refinement of the scope and working methods of the initiative. | Minutes of steering group meetings at <http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/informall-steering-group/> |
| Mid-2014 saw the formulation of **revised aims and objectives**, which emphasise the initiative’s evolving nature as a pool of expertise, and by extension, a resource for its members. The new document also reflects the broadening scope of the initiative, which is no longer focused particularly on *research* information, but more broadly on information know-how in different settings – this is important notably in the light of activities (strand 3, below) focused on employment and employability. | Revised aims and objectives document at <http://www.researchinfonet.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Informall-aims-objectives-2014-revision-v02.pdf> |
| In the light of the refined aims and objectives, the initiative **changed its name from RIDLs (where the ‘R’ stood for ‘research’) to InformAll**, which better suggests the notion of information know-how for all – and also conveys the idea of the alliance that InformAll reflects. | -- |
| A statement on the **benefits of joining InformAll** was drawn up, to spell out more clearly the initiative’s value proposition and clearer sense of purpose. An attractive pdf version of the statement has been compiled, and glossy copies of this have been printed. These have been distributed at events such as the European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL), in October 2014, and also through the networks of InformAll contacts. | Statement on ‘why you should join InformAll’ at <http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/why-you-should-join-informall/>  Pdf version of the statement, for downloading and printing, available at <http://www.researchinfonet.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/InformAll-value-statement-alternative-Oct-2014-FINAL.pdf> |
| In the autumn, on a trial basis, arrangements were put in place to allow **paid-for membership of InformAll**, for a modest annual fee; membership rates are £20 for individuals (£10 reduced rate for students and unwaged) and £90 for organisations. The premise was that the act of becoming a member, as opposed to being part of a loose network, could convey a greater sense of belonging to a venture. The application form is attached to the ‘why you should join InformAll’ statement. As things stand, membership levels are low, and it remains to be seen whether the idea of a paid-for membership is viable for an initiative of this sort. However, the number of individuals and organisations on the InformAll mailing list, in the UK and beyond, has been increasing steadily, and now stands at over 60. | Membership application form at <http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/why-you-should-join-informall/> |
| To allow for more nimble decision-making, the **steering group has been slimmed down** to nine people, with representation from as many interest groups as possible. The wider membership will remain involved on a more *ad hoc* basis, and through discrete activities reflecting members’ interests and priorities. | Membership of steering group at <http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/informall-steering-group/> |
| ***Dissemination and outreach*** | |
| To help reinforce its identity, a **distinct web presence** was developed for InformAll within the RIN website, with its own design and separate logo; this also features on the pdf flyer mentioned above. The option of a completely separate website was discounted, for the time being at least, for reasons of cost. | Web pages accessible through their own domain name, [www.informall.org.uk](http://www.informall.org.uk) |
| From October, InformAll has been sending **a new monthly e-newsletter**, produced in a nicely readable format, to keep members and other interested parties up-to-date of developments and encourage participation. This regular means of communication replaces the more occasional (and less visually striking) email updates. | October newsletter: <http://eepurl.com/4bPi9>  November newsletter: <http://eepurl.com/7nLUX>  December newsletter: <http://eepurl.com/-AWnv>  January newsletter: <http://eepurl.com/bcsGh5>  February / March newsletter: <http://eepurl.com/bgUq01> |
| **General articles on InformAll** have been published in the following journals (as non-scholarly items):   * Journal of Information Literacy (JIL – December 2014); * SCONUL Focus; * ALISS Quarterly (Association of Librarian and Information Professionals in the Social Sciences – January 2015). | JIL article: <http://ojs.lboro.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JIL/article/view/PRJ-V8-I2-2014-3/2060>  SCONUL Focus and ALISS Quarterly articles are behind paywalls (photocopies available on request). |
| In February 2015, InformAllorganised a **webinar** on the subject of ‘Radical Information Literacy’, in association with the University of Manchester. This was an attempt at a virtual meeting / discussion format that had not been tried before. Around sixty people from a dozen countries registered their interest, of which about half took part on the day. | Background information and recording of the webinar available at <http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/informall-webinars/> |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strand 2 – using the RIDLs criteria to support the development of information and data literacy training resources*** | |
| At the suggestion of the SCONUL User Experience and Success Strategy Group, a **summarised version of the criteria** has been produced, intended to be more accessible than the full document. This summary text is being recommended by European Commissioned-funded FOSTER project to describe training resources on open science training deposited to the portal that it is currently developing. | Summarised version (along with full version) at <http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/ridls-criteria/> |
| It is expected that the criteria will be turned into **an online, interactive resource**. At present, they take the form of a flat MS Word document; feedback received through such channels as the ARLG conference (see below) suggests that creating a more dynamic tool could help to encourage use and take-up. Advice is being received from colleagues at the University of Manchester, and options are currently being considered; these will be tested at a focus group on the fringes of LILAC2015, in early April. We are fairly confident that the resource will be developed at little or no cost, but this will not happen until after the end of the HEFCE funding period.  There is a further option of using the online resource as a means of collating examples of training practice, as recorded by the practitioners who will have used the criteria. This is a more ambitious undertaking, which will be considered following the focus group discussion. | -- |
| In November 2014, the **CILIP Information Literacy Group formally endorsed the criteria**. This should enhance the credibility of the resource, particularly within the library world. | Endorsement at <http://www.informationliteracy.org.uk/2014/11/information-literacy-group-endorses-informall-criteria/> |
| **Presentations** on the criteria have taken place at two events:   * CILIP Academic and Research Libraries Group (ARLG) conference, June 2014 * Midlands NHS Regional Trainers Forum, October 2014; this provided a useful opportunity to share experiences in the Health Service sector – an area where InformAll has had little engagement to date | ARLG conference presentation: <http://www.slideshare.net/ciliparlg/a-common-sense-approach-to-describing-reviewing-and-evaluating-informal-training>  Midlands NHS event: <http://emltf.pbworks.com/w/file/86855713/InformAll%20criteria.pptx> |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strand 3 – transferability of information and data literacy beyond academia*** | |
| During the first half of 2014, InformAll undertook a **study on the relevance of information literacy as a transferable attribute** for individuals as they move from higher education to professional employment. This explored and analysed views and perceptions from a selection of players at the interface between higher education and employment, notably careers services, professional and accreditation bodies, employers and representative or specialist bodies relating to employment and skills, such as the UK Commission on Employment and Skills, the CBI and the TUC. The report from the study is intended as a contribution to the debate on information know-how and skills in the workplace, and highlights the extent to which information literacy is recognised implicitly by many of the players – but also shows that many graduates display worrying shortcomings in their capacity to deploy information-related know-how to non-academic settings. | Report from the study made available in September 2014: <http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/transferable-skills/transferable-il/> |
| The above report is complemented by an **annotated bibliography** from Professor Dorothy Williams and colleagues at Robert Gordon University Aberdeen, prepared on behalf of InformAll and Robert Gordon. This points to a significant corpus of academic work in the area of information literacy and employment, and addresses a set of related questions: (i) how should information literacy be described within workplace settings; (ii) what are the priority/key information skills and abilities related to the effective use of information in the workplace; and (iii) whether there is any evidence of the value and/or impact of information literacy in the workplace. | Annotated bibliography at <http://www.researchinfonet.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Workplace-IL-annotated-bibliography.pdf> |
| InformAll is anxious to use these two pieces of work as a basis for raising awareness of information literacy in employment settings. InformAll and CILIP are therefore organising a **roundtable event**, in March 2015, with individuals representing the sort of sectors covered by the InformAll study, to (i) explore the relevance of information competencies and skills in the workplace; (ii) allow employers and other stakeholders with an interest in employment, professional development and lifelong learning to consider the relevance of such competencies and skills to their policies, strategies and practice; and (iii) raise awareness of the important role library and information professionals play in this area. The event will inform the production of useful resources, such as practical guidance for employers and careers advisers. | This is an invitation-only event, so there has not been any significant publicity and no advance material to link to. The meeting will take place on 19 March 2015, after the drafting of this note, but we are happy to make any outputs available to HEFCE in due course. |
| InformAll, in association with the University of Manchester, has successfully bid for funding for a **project to help determine the value of information literacy for employers**. This work will aim to develop a methodology that will allow for the identification of quantitative and qualitative data that demonstrate the benefits of developing information literacy in workplace settings and assess the return on investment of such initiatives. The project is funded by the CILIP Information Literacy Group, and runs from March to June 2015. | Information about the project at <http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/transferable-skills/il-value/> |
| In November 2014, InformAll, jointly with CILIP, drew up a **response to the report from the UK Digital Skills Taskforce**, ‘Digital Skills for Tomorrow’s World’. The response emphasised the often overlooked relationship between digital skills and information literacy, and provided an opportunity to engage with the Taskforce, which is an important player in the policy debate on digital skills and digital inclusion. Other contacts in this area have also been made since early 2015, for instance with Go ON UK and with the Shadow Business Secretary, Chuka Umunna MP. The relevance of digital literacy to InformAll’s agenda merits further exploration, and could be a strong focus of future InformAll activity, bringing us into contact with a new range of stakeholders, and allowing for the fostering of new relationships. | Response at <http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/transferable-skills/digital-skills-tomorrows-world/> |
| **Guest blog pieces** describing InformAll’s evolving body of work in information literacy and employment, for the websites of the following:   * National Council for Universities and Business (NCUB), January 2014 * CILIP, September 2014 * NCUB, October 2014 | NCUB blogs at <http://www.ncub.co.uk/blog/information-do-we-really-know-how-to-handle-it.html> and <http://www.ncub.co.uk/blog/information-workplace.html>  CILIP blog at <http://www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/blog/do-employers-want-information-literacy-skills> |
| **Presentations** (past and prospective)relating to strand 3 are as follows:   * Poster at the Librarians Information Literacy Conference (April 2014) * Panel presentation at the European Conference on Information Literacy (October 2014), in front of an international audience of around 200 people. * Acceptance of a proposal for a symposium to take place at the next LILAC, in April 2015 | LILAC poster at <http://www.slideshare.net/infolit_group/goldstein-walton-poster>  ECIL presentation at <http://www.slideshare.net/rincic2014/2014-1022-inform-all-panel-at-ecil-v02?qid=e50c3450-a18b-47f3-a434-c0833a15deec&v=qf1&b=&from_search=3> |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strand 4 – international outreach*** | |
| In October 2014, InformAll took an active part in the **European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL)**, which is arguably the main international information literacy forum. There were two InformAll presentations at the event:   * The panel session outlined above, under strand 3 * A joint presentation with the European Network on Information Literacy (EnIL), on the relationship between information literacy and European policy-making in open access and open data.   InformAll also organised an informal evening event at the conference, which was an opportunity to discuss areas of concern with a range of international delegates. | Joint presentation with EnIL at <http://www.slideshare.net/rincic2014/ecil2014-slides04?qid=c604df96-b6af-4bc7-9e86-c12ddbdd7a61&v=default&b=&from_search=1> |
| **International networking** has been taking place, both at ECIL and through ongoing contacts. InformALL has been exploring whether it could usefully contribute to the growth of international initiatives such as the UNESCO-sponsored Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy, and EnIL. In both cases, enquiries are underway about the possibility of exploiting InformAll’s networking and community-building experience to provide a basis for providing a UK arm for such initiatives, or playing a part in their international development. Contacts have also been made with the UK Commission for UNESCO, with a view to generating interest among UNESCO stakeholders in the UK. | -- |