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Practice what you preach

Developing information literacy through professional reading groups

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No one will read it

- Why and how we created a reading group
- What we chose to read
- How it influenced our work and practice
- What we learned
- Why you might want to do this too

Opening doors that were previously closed

We needed an outlet

- To see what others were doing and be able to assess our own practice in regards to information literacy development
- To increase our engagement with research and our confidence in ourselves as researchers
- To provide a space away from the day to day for team members to become more research active.

Tomorrow there'll be more of us

It started with a discussion about journal clubs and professional practice...

Could a reading group help us to address our own fears/insecurities of our roles as practitioner/researchers?

Negotiate a time and place

The announcement of a new Education Strategy provided an ideal opportunity to experiment.

We pitched our suggestion to the team through a calendar invite, knowing no one date or place would suit everyone.

Our one rule: you needed to read the articles to attend.

Rally the guys

We chose:

- A date that worked for most of the team
- A facilitator
- Two articles (one “scholarly”, one not) on high-impact practices and assessment
- To create a blog to summarise the points discussed.

Not a moment, but the movement

- Gave a place for us to be honest about our own ways of approaching IL teaching
- We started to challenge our previous views/techniques
- It put us (back) in the position of what it is like to be a student
- Exposed us to good practice elsewhere, including means of assessing our own teaching and teaching materials

Who keeps your flame?

At the end of each meeting:

- We seek a volunteer (or two) to lead the next meeting
- We chose a broad theme to explore
- We select a date and place
- The volunteer circulates their chosen readings to the group

What comes next?

- Assessment and high-impact practices
- Librarians as researchers
- The authentic self and teaching practice
- Social networking
- Threshold concepts
- Academic Librarians and professional development
- Librarians who have left the profession
- Liaison
- Students supporting students

What we have learned

- People valued and made time for the group
- Exposed us to new ideas/ways of thinking & increased sharing of good practice
- Rotating facilitators who selected articles work best
- It won't be everyone's cup of tea (but that's okay)
- We've had to become more realistic about how this can lead on to things more practically
- We came together as a team

Hard-won wisdom we have earned

- We were (a little) overambitious
- The blog didn't work as expected
- You need at least one (preferably two) people to keep things moving
- You need backup articles or themes, at least for the first few meetings
- We're still slightly stuck in creating our own research, but our discussions have changed our approaches substantially

We aid and abet it

In summary,

- In the group allowed us to develop our own information literacy skills, as well as improve our own practice
- Even after 2 years, team members continue to be engaged with the group-- most members have selected the theme and led at least one group since we started
- It allowed gave people the time and space to reflect upon our current practice and that of others.

Thinking past tomorrow

Our experience shows that a reading group

- Enables greater engagement with the literature and new ideas
- Encourages empathy, both within the team and the communities we serve
- Can be expanded for use with students/other staff to build confidence and engagement
- Is low/no cost (other than staff time) but is a highly effective development opportunity

If you'd like to know more about our group or advice in setting up your own (including a list of our readings), we'd love to hear from you:

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