Keating L. *See it, try it, show it: digital literacy development with a difference.*  
*ALISS Quarterly* 2014, 10(1), 26-29.

Copyright:  

Date deposited: 14 November 2014

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/)

[ePrints – Newcastle University ePrints](http://eprint.ncl.ac.uk)
See it, try it, show it: digital literacy development with a difference

Lucy Keating, Arts, Humanities and Education liaison librarian, Newcastle University.

In June this year, Newcastle University Library tried a new approach to staff development, with a multi-day programme: #seeittryitshowit. This digital literacy event aimed to encourage library staff to explore and discuss new tools and technologies in an informal and participatory way.

Traditionally, staff development in the Library has been delivered via various methods, including external training providers, internal sessions, and self-paced activities. Although there are occasional ‘all-staff’ update meetings, it was a new departure for us to run a staff development event across all library teams.

The impetus for #seeittryitshowit came from a number of directions. Firstly, the Library’s new Social Media Forum had been exchanging experiences of social media tools, and wanted to encourage more colleagues to join in. Secondly, a new wave of more creative professional events, such as the i2c2 conference\(^1\) had caught colleagues’ attention. Finally, Newcastle University had organised a new event, NU Go Digital\(^2\) in Autumn 2013, to promote digital literacy among all staff, which many library staff had enjoyed. Thus, there was general enthusiasm about the subject matter and format, so we just needed to deliver it...

**Organisation and planning**

We set up a small team of four in April 2014 to plan and organise the event for early June. The timescale was limited, but from the outset, we were eager to embrace the experimental ethos and not get too bothered if things were a little ‘rough round the edges’.

Our first priority was to put the programme together. We wanted to encourage experimentation and exploration with digital tools, and get colleagues sharing ideas and showcasing experiences. We were keen to involve people from other sections of the University, and received an enthusiastic response from teams involved in e-learning, IT support and social media, all of whom contributed popular sessions for us. Initially, it was more difficult enticing volunteers from the Library to co-ordinate sessions (understandably, given that this was a brand new venture), but as the weeks went by, we managed it, with only mild arm-twisting required! The schedule\(^3\) rapidly came together, encompassing topics ranging from Apps to Vine, via archives, MOOCs and much more.

Like all academic libraries, the main logistical hurdle we faced in organising an ‘all staff’ event is that we are a 24/7 operation, with colleagues on three sites and with different working hours. Thus, to try and incorporate flexibility into the programme, we scheduled it over different days and times to cater for people’s varying timetables, making some sessions bookable and others drop-in.

---

\(^1\) [http://i2c2conference.org/](http://i2c2conference.org/)

\(^2\) [http://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/nugodigital](http://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/nugodigital)

\(^3\) The schedule is available here: [http://libguides.ncl.ac.uk/seeittryitshowitbook](http://libguides.ncl.ac.uk/seeittryitshowitbook)
Really great to see and hear what other library staff are doing, and feel part of a wider team.

We created an event web site at http://libguides.ncl.ac.uk/seeittryitshowit using our libguides platform. This served several purposes: promotion; hosting the schedule and booking form; and acting as a repository for supporting resources and activities. To help us gauge demand, the booking form included an option to specify if someone wanted to attend an event but couldn’t because of scheduling.

Publicity
Organising publicity for the event was relatively straightforward, in that the target audience was easy to identify and more diligent than most at reading emails!

However, as this was a brand new venture, we also needed to make a concerted effort to explain the concept to colleagues. We also wanted to encourage as many people as possible to contribute, and debunk any idea that digital skills are ‘just for the IT team’.

We sent regular emails to colleagues, spoke to many individually, and produced flyers and posters. We also set up a PC and plasma screen dedicated to the event in the Library staff room.

Participation
#seeittryitshowit took place for two hours on each day from Monday 9th – Wednesday 11th June. We had over 70 bookings for the bookable slots, and another 30 or so people attended the drop-ins, which meant that well over half of colleagues took part (with more using the online activities), even though participation was entirely voluntary. The event web site received over 1,300 hits during the programme. Bookings came from colleagues in almost every section of the Library, and performing a wide range of roles.

Feedback
Informal feedback at the event was very positive, but we also wanted to get more in-depth feedback, as we saw the event as something of a test bed. We received 31 responses to our feedback survey, with highlights including:

- 90% of respondents gave #seeittryitshowit the top two overall ratings (the other 10% said they couldn’t rate it as they hadn’t attended). A selection of comments is included in the speech bubbles.
- 45% said they found the web site very useful, and 35% quite useful (the rest hadn’t visited it).
• **Two thirds** of respondents said they would have liked to have attended more sessions, but couldn’t due to time constraints.

We also asked respondents to highlight the sessions they found particularly useful or enjoyable, and this drew particular enthusiasm for workshops on MOOCs, the digital tools dropin and two Special Collections sessions.

**Positive points**

We feel the event was very well-received, achieving all its aims with varying degrees of success. The key plus points for us were as follows:

• Colleagues from many different roles and sections in the Library took part.
• It was cheap to deliver, with minimal printing and catering costs, and relatively straightforward to organise, despite the tight timescale.
• It achieved its key aim of helping to raise awareness of tools and technologies, with many people identifying specific tools they have discovered and/or will investigate further. Colleagues are also being encouraged to use the event’s resources to help with their annual Performance and Development Review.
• It enabled us to work with colleagues from other sections of the University, and build relationships which could bring many mutual benefits in the future.
• It has the potential to support many of the Library’s new strategic objectives, particularly relating to staff development, and the services and guidance we offer our customers.
• It has given us a good basis for a future event of this type. Almost all survey respondents said they would definitely attend in future, and many expressed interest in delivering a session and/or contributing online resources.

**Things to work on**

Unsurprisingly, as the event was quite experimental in nature, there were also aspects which we would need to work on for a future event.

• Library colleagues were generally more interested in attending than (co-) delivering a workshop. Therefore, we need to find better ways of encouraging people to share their good ideas and best practice, so that it becomes truly interactive. Nonetheless, it was pleasing to see that colleagues who definitely wouldn’t want to deliver a formal presentation, contributed enthusiastically in other ways, such as leading a drop-in slot, or developing online resources for the web site.
• We would like to create more of a ‘big event’ atmosphere with more planning time in the future, perhaps incorporating stalls, freebies, a social event, and a wow factor (a 3-D printer had dazzled attendees at the earlier University Go Digital event!). However, we would also
be anxious not to lose the informal ethos, as we felt the tight timescale did help spark creativity and spontaneity.

- Logistical issues will always be a challenge, but can be overcome. Feedback showed that many colleagues would have liked slots to have been repeated, and there was also some interest in remote delivery. Participation was on a voluntary basis, and thus often relied on goodwill in terms of covering duties, but we would want to plan this in a more strategic way in future.

**Next steps**

The Library’s senior management and staff development teams have given an enthusiastic go-ahead for a future event of this type, which we hope will be bigger and better and continue to nurture our culture of innovation and collaboration.

The concentrated impact of the three day programme worked well, with the mix of online and face-to-face activities creating a positive symbiotic relationship. However, we would like to investigate ways of embedding the online activities over a longer period, in similar fashion to the popular 23 Things training. We would also look at examples from elsewhere, such as Imperial College London’s Learning 2.0 (Day and Phillips, 2014) and Northampton University Library and Learning Services annual conference as well as online digital literacy resources such as those from the Jisc Design Studio.

For any other libraries considering such an event, we would definitely encourage you to do it, but don’t get too bogged down in the fine tuning. Embrace the ethos of social media and be prepared to experiment and make mistakes. Library staff may sometimes be characterised as precise perfectionists, so this is a chance to be a little less orderly!

**REFERENCE**


---

4 http://cpd23.blogspot.co.uk/
5 http://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/llsconferences/
6 http://jiscdesignstudio.pbworks.com/w/page/48863650/DL%20staff%20development%20materials