FOLIOwing the Sun: how to provide budget continuing professional development (CPD) at a distance

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Abstract:

For over five years the School of Health and Related Research (ScHARR) at the University of Sheffield has provided low cost e-learning to health librarians in the UK under the National Library for Health (NLH) Librarian Development Programme. This innovative programme, entitled Facilitated Online Learning Interactive Opportunity (FOLIO), uses lowest common denominator technologies (email, wikis, podcasts, discussion lists) to deliver learning content in a wide range of educational formats. Following a successful experiment, whereby ScHARR subsidised the opening up of a course to international participants from across the globe, the FOLIO team entered into partnership with the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) to provide three e-learning courses per year under the banner of FOLIOz.

This presentation describes the development of the FOLIOz programme in seeking an optimal balance between generic learning materials and the needs of a new target audience. It rehearses considerations that librarians and others should review before designing and delivering e-learning courses. Most importantly, however, the presentation outlines methods by which any librarian or professional association can deliver e-learning without significant investment in technology or use of Virtual Learning Environment facilities. The presentation covers such essentials as the importance of the storyboarding process in designing the course, creation of course support materials via a wiki and practicalities of managing group communications and online broadcasts. By the end of the presentation participants will be able to identify opportunities to use such approaches in their own contribution to e-learning whereby the principal expenditure remains their time, effort and enthusiasm.
Introduction

For over a decade the School of Health and Related Research (ScHARR) at the University of Sheffield has acquired a fine reputation for delivery of face-to-face courses to health librarians, locally, nationally and internationally. Seizing the opportunity afforded by an institutional remit to develop research capacity, members of the Information Resources team decided at an early stage to concentrate their efforts not simply at end-users in the national health service but also, within a two-pronged strategy, at librarians who need equipping to meet the needs of their own users. Information professionals have an increasing role to play within continuing professional development, both as deliverers and developers of e-learning and as recipients.

“In the e-learning age, health information specialists need to acquire and implement new skills to deliver information in an interactive way”.

Health Librarians, working at the frontline delivering information support to health service staff, often find it difficult to get away from the workplace to attend training. Many health library units in the United Kingdom (UK), and indeed across the globe, typically operate with a staff of four or less. This makes it difficult to arrange appropriate staff cover and may prevent staff from leaving the workplace for extended periods without compromising service availability. Additional constraints may include staff shortages, limited budgets, travel time or other difficulties. Although e-learning may not suit the learning styles of all those wanting to pursue continuing professional development it does offer additional opportunities for those operating within the restrictions posed by day-to-day service delivery.

Background to the FOLIO Programme

In 2004 the National Library for Health (NLH) in England and Wales commissioned the School of Health and Related Research (ScHARR) to deliver the Facilitated Online Learning Interactive Programme (FOLIO) to UK National Health Service (NHS) Librarians (2, 3, 4). The FOLIO programme was originally conceived as three annual sets of six courses and now constitutes a programme of 18 courses aimed at meeting the continuing professional development needs of health librarians. FOLIO formed part of the NLH Staff Development Programme established to equip librarians for moving into new roles, focusing on the development of skills in health informatics and knowledge management especially related to digital libraries.

The inspiration for FOLIO courses stemmed from a desire to extend the management briefings produced by the National Library for Health to cover topics appropriate for librarians. It was quickly realised that unless such content was delivered within a context of continuing professional development there would be little incentive for health librarians to utilise the carefully-crafted packages of information on management topics. Following a pilot of three FOLIO courses, each lasting a month in Spring 2003, the FOLIO team
based at the University of Sheffield, undertook to deliver more extensive courses of an eight week duration.

The FOLIO Programme uses lowest common denominator technologies (email, wikis, podcasts, discussion lists) to deliver learning content in a wide range of educational formats. Typically, a FOLIO course lasts 6-8 weeks and all course material is delivered online. Topics for FOLIO, decided through discussions between ScHARR, the National Library for Health and other national stakeholders, target new and developing areas, providing skills and expertise within the overall context of continuing professional development. The initial design, authoring of materials and set-up of course resources is very labour-intensive and is typically performed within a very demanding timescale. However once the team has produced the first iteration of the course successive delivery becomes much more economical, aside from periodic fine-tuning and update.

**Box 1 - Indicative topics of FOLIO courses (2004 to date)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOLIO courses run to date comprise:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breaking out of the Box: Extending the health LIS professional role - skills and strategies' (BREAKOUT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Designing and delivering information skills training courses (INFOSKILLS)</td>
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<td>Designing, conducting and analysing surveys and questionnaires (ASQ)</td>
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<td>Evaluating information skills training courses (INFOSKILLS2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evidence Based Library and Information Practice: Delivering Services that Shine (EBLIP-Gloss)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The FOLIO customer care course (FRONTIER)</td>
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<td>Getting to grips with knowledge management (G2G)</td>
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<td>Information for social care (I4SC)</td>
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<td>Introduction to e-learning (E-FOLIO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making your case successfully (MACHIAVEL)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management Skills for the More Experienced (ExFiles)</td>
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<td>Managing change for health information professionals (MCHIP)</td>
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<td>Managing for service quality (MSQ)</td>
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<td>Maximising the impact of your service (MAXIM)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moving into Supervision: Supervisory skills for paraprofessionals and/or newly qualified professionals (MOVES)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning and conducting an information needs analysis (PACINA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting and Marketing Library and Information Services (PROMISE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding the business of clinical care (CLINICOS)</td>
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What is it like to undertake a FOLIO course? Allow us to provide a brief “taster”. You are four weeks into the FOLIO Course Making your case successfully (Machiavel). You have just received your daily email, distributed via the folio listserv discussion list. Today’s topic is Evaluating Your Advocacy and, after a brief discussion of the topic, you are asked to complete an exercise, based on the well-known “elevator test” and to place it in your portfolio:

**Scenario**
You are in the lift with your Chief Executive. What three justifications would you give her/him for the continued existence of your library or information service? Record your immediate answers to this question in your portfolio.

Rather than leave participants without feedback we then provide them with a rubric for rating, and then improving, their own responses. Typically they will focus on what their library has (in the way of resources) rather than on what they do (in the way of activities). Likely, if they do explain what they do, they will not provide a rationale, in terms of their organisation’s business objectives, for that activity. Finally they will need to couch their justifications in terms that appeal to the Chief Executive rather than to users in general. These pointed lessons help to convey the political acumen required when dealing with managers and decision-makers.

This blend of brief tasks allied to course objectives, light touches of humour, popular culture and reflective practice is replicated across the full range of eighteen courses. For the first few years courses were provided free of charge to any information worker supporting staff working within the UK NHS. Course participants have thus included staff from academic, charitable and professional libraries as well as those working in 500 plus NHS library units UK-wide. More recently the National Library for Health has commissioned re-runs of the more popular courses, established by training needs surveys, and earlier this year this commissioning role passed to a consortium of regional training representatives.

Each FOLIO team member takes it in turn to facilitate the courses. The facilitator sends out the approximately daily emails that outline instructions for that day’s task. The facilitator also deals with any queries that course participants have. The 2009 team comprises the authors of this paper, two of whom took over seamlessly from two original team members. Great effort is made to make the style and “feel” of each course consistent so that, to a large extent, the identity of the authorship of the course is “invisible”. FOLIO courses are delivered primarily by email, utilising two JISCmail distribution lists (FOLIO: [http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/FOLIO.html](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/FOLIO.html) and E-FOLIO [http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/EFOLIO.html](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/EFOLIO.html)). JISCmail not only facilitates easy enrolment of participants and distribution of messages but also maintains an archive of messages. This enables participants who miss one or more messages to catch up with course progress. Each course is supported by a dedicated wiki, with additional wikis being set up for debates or other participant interactions as required. Each wiki contains original course materials compiled by the FOLIO team (such as briefings, case studies etc.).
Each FOLIO course is supported by an ‘enquiries’ service, FAQ web pages providing general information about each course and a collective email for contacting the FOLIO Course Team (folio@sheffield.ac.uk). All enquiries are answered within 48 hours.

FOLIO courses include both practical and pedagogic exercises. Practical exercises focus on participants’ experience and how it relates to the course topic. For example, participants reflect on how the course topic applies to their local circumstances or develop an action plan for their own service. Typically such exercises simulate “real-life” circumstances and include problem-solving tasks that participants can relate to their own roles. Practical exercises are complemented by more pedagogic activities such as guided reading and briefings offering theoretical perspectives. Such varied learning materials increase the potential to accommodate a variety of learning style preferences among course participants.

To ensure content is enjoyable as well as educational, courses include informal exercises such as quizzes, votes and competitions. The ‘loneliness of the long distance learner’ is often reported during elearning courses. To enable social interaction, each student works collaboratively with three to six course participants as part of a “buddy group” system. Buddy group members collaborate via email. A FOLIO course begins with a buddy icebreaker to introduce buddies to one another. This is light-hearted with the facilitator leading by example to get the ball rolling. So for the Management Skills for the More Experienced (ExFiles) course the facilitator provided the following icebreaker:

"As this course is for the more experienced manager you will likely have encountered an "Employee from Hell". For today's exercise we would like you to think of someone on TV, radio, in a book or a famous person who would make an awful employee and to explain why.

Course delivery typically blends buddy and group interactions, case studies, briefings, guided readings, interactive PowerPoint presentations and stories. For example, the MACHIAVEL course required participants to demonstrate their skills in advocacy as they defended famous characters from history who face eviction from a descending balloon. Such light-hearted activity helps to engage and motivate course participants.

Participants on e-learning courses in general commonly cite lack of motivation and feelings of isolation as reasons for withdrawing. The FOLIO programme cannot simply rely on meaningful and relevant content. It must also support the social needs of participants. FOLIO facilitators adopt an informal tone to ‘humanise’ the invisible facilitator and create a closer student-teacher relationship. To further develop this relationship, facilitators often illustrate their messages with anecdotes and discussions reflecting their own struggles and successes in line with the topic. This enables participants to feel confident when asking for help or guidance. As students often respond to human aspects of communication, some courses include a podcast from well-known experts for the specific topic.
Courses are evaluated using an online JISCMAIL survey form which assesses satisfaction with the course, quality of course materials, usefulness of the buddy/group interaction, and quality of course facilitation. In addition, students are encouraged to make general comments about the course. Evaluation responses directly inform the development of future courses and reveal that most FOLIO course participants (typically at least 70%) find the e-learning courses enjoyable. A slightly higher percentage (between 70-75%) agrees that courses meet their stated objectives. Around 70% of participants state that they would enrol for further FOLIO courses in the future. Indeed, some participants have already completed two to five FOLIO courses. The course team recognizes, however, that e-learning is not everyone’s preferred learning style. For example, some participants value working with a team of virtual “buddies”, others view group activities as an unwelcome interruption to their own self-directed learning. Clearly the FOLIO team must continue to broaden the appeal of the e-learning mode of delivery to accommodate an ever more diffuse blend of preferred styles.

**FOLIOwning the Sun: from FOLIO to FOLIOz**

From the origins of the FOLIO Programme the team recognised the importance of reaching the largest possible number of potential international beneficiaries aside from simply meeting the interests of specific funding sources. The third of the pilot courses, on evidence based librarianship, was offered free to the international community and involved participants from all continents except South America. The considerable additional workload was picked up by ScHARR staff at no detriment to the original paid UK constituency. It has been extremely rewarding over the last seven years to be approached by international colleagues who had successfully negotiated the “raw” pilot version of the FOLIO method. On a further occasion, ScHARR subsidised an Evidence Based Library and Information Practice (EBLIP-Gloss) course to international participants from across the globe. On this second occasion, our philanthropic motives were unexpectedly rewarded by an approach from the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) inviting us to enter into partnership to pilot our e-learning courses to their members under a banner subsequently christened as “FOLIOz”. That this collaboration reached fruition was due in no small part to the efforts and vision of Ann Ritchie, an energetic ALIA leader and participant in the very first FOLIO pilot.

Following discussions with the Health Libraries Australia Executive, an initial course selected by ALIA was Designing and Delivering Information Skills Training Courses (InfoSkills). The pilot ran from March to May 2007 and was exceedingly popular with 50 participants enrolling and 26 on a waiting list. Following on from the pilot, ScHARR was commissioned to deliver three further courses. e-FOLIO (September-October 2007), InfoSkills (re-run October-November 2007) and Clinicos (February-March 2008). For 2008 three further courses were commissioned: Knowledge Management (April-June 2008), Evaluating Information Skills Training (August-September 2008) and Project Management (October-November...

**Meeting the Requirements of a new target audience**

Although the team had every confidence that the generic methods of the FOLIO model would be successful across a variety of setting we appreciated that running these courses for the ALIA audience would require certain substantive changes. In particular two key differences identified between the FOLIO and FOLIOz audiences needed to be addressed in our course provision:

- **Tailoring the material to the Australian audience**: whereas UK FOLIO courses are delivered specifically to health library and information staff, the ALIA audience for the FOLIOz courses includes participants across all disciplines and from both public and private sectors, including government, commercial, health and education organisations to name a few. This diversity highlights the need to make the context of the course, including any examples and case studies, as generic as possible to ensure that every participant could apply the learning to their own role. To assist us in doing this, ALIA identified two members to act as “critical readers”, to peer-review course materials and suggest Australian examples and resources wherever possible. In addition, as part of our own quality assurance procedures materials were carefully checked for currency as two years had passed since the UK version. New resources needed to be included, examples updated, and broken links mended or removed.

- **Time difference**: The time difference between the UK and Australia (7-9 hours) is a major constraint in the day-to-day running of the course. Implications included:
  - **Timing of course emails** – rather then sending emails at 9am as for the UK course, FOLIOz emails are sent at 4pm the previous day so that participants have the email waiting for them when the arrived at work the next day.
  - **Queries** – typically responses to queries are longer than for the UK version of the course. The FOLIO team typically do not see an enquirer’s email as it is sent and usually are unable to respond until the following day. Email has became even more the mode of choice given that telephone calls are not practical due to the time difference.

Interestingly, although we had been concerned by the time difference, participants were actually impressed by how quickly they received a response. All emails were replied to within 24 hours. Two participants commented positively on this in the evaluation form:
“I appreciated the very prompt manner in which Diana [the course facilitator] replied to my emails. Very well done especially considering the time differences.”

“All responses by email from the Staff, were very quick and helpful.”

How transferable are FOLIO methods?

At the initial planning stage of each course the FOLIO team produce a “storyboard” and timetable. We have found it useful to use Powerpoint for the storyboarding process as each slide can represent a day’s interactions, can be annotated via the speaker’s notes facility and can be moved around easily using the Slide Viewer. A range of different teaching methods and assessments are utilised yielding considerable variety for each FOLIO course. Effort is made at this planning stage to balance the workload throughout the course.

Recently members of the FOLIO team undertook a systematic review of work-based e-learning for the United Kingdom Higher Education Academy (5). One deliverable is a framework for enhancing the experience of e-learning participants which provides a useful backdrop when considering transferable elements.

1. Learner control – student demand for flexibility is even greater than commonly envisaged. Students want complete control over their pace of working and to be able to adapt their learning to local and personal circumstances. To meet such demand the FOLIO Programme has evolved from a fairly rigid six-week course with little room for manoeuvre to a much more flexible ten-week format (eight week learning and two week “catch up”). Furthermore we now offer a self-directed path as an alternative to the default of a buddy group offering social support. Email messages and associated tasks are distributed more sparingly across an eight week core with “catch up days” and reading weeks providing the semblance of a more leisurely pace to the course. By removing task dependencies (where participants rely on completion of a task by fellow participants before progressing to a subsequent task), participants are more able to adapt to their personal circumstances including annual leave, conference attendance and unanticipated sickness absence. The flexibility of the FOLIO format is illustrated by provision of a two week “catch-up” period giving participants an opportunity to complete outstanding exercises and to finalise their portfolio. This helps to ease participants’ anxieties should they miss tasks due to working part-time, work commitments, annual leave, etc. For extenuating circumstances, participants may request a further four-week extension to submit their portfolios. At all times the FOLIO team tries to accommodate reasonable requests for flexibility, portraying themselves as fellow travellers not toll-keepers.

2. Applicability: It is especially important in a work-based learning context to provide a realistic context for learning. This can be achieved by identifying a work-based mentor, using guest speakers, employing
problem-based scenarios or referring to real case studies. Bringing together theory and practice helps participants to make important connections. Furthermore it adds value to the course by emphasising that participants can use what has been learnt. The team tries to construct realistic scenarios, including suitably-anonymised elements from real-life situations. Participants are encouraged to access local staff as resources. For example in the Understanding the Business of Clinical Care course participants were encouraged to identify a local clinician and to explore their information needs. Similarly for the Breaking Out of the Box course participants identified a potential organisational role for which they might equip themselves and were asked to interview the current occupant of that post. We believe that our librarian colleagues will similarly find it useful to look for opportunities to emphasise the applicability of what is being taught.

3. **Attractiveness:** Attractive course materials and hosting Virtual Learning Environment consistently figure as an important supporting feature. Students actively resent superficial attempts to simply deliver textual materials via a virtual classroom. Although dependence on low-technology methods of delivery means that, appearance cannot be a paramount consideration our experience affirms that any effort to make materials more attractive is welcomed by participants. Making the course less dependent on textual formats stimulates a more interesting and varied choice of format for the same types of content. For example, framing content within a Powerpoint presentation, drawing on televisual themes and formats (e.g. a chat show, The Apprentice etcetera), can make essentially the same content more visually stimulating. Librarians delivering e-learning should consider a similar range of approaches, including such alternatives as interviews or podcast lectures, to provide an audio alternative to written materials.

4. **Usability** – considerable frustration occurs where technology or lack of clarity of instructions impede effective use of a hard-won learning opportunity. Even low-tech technologies with a low level of difficulty can prove challenging for the occasional or novice user. While mastering IT skills is a useful accomplishment and a valuable competency from an e-learning course, an e-learning provider should seek to remove all impediments to smooth completion of the course. Those experiencing technical difficulties should not be made to feel uncomfortable. Alternative formats may be provided or the moderator may step in to facilitate completion of a technical requirement. Written instructions should be clear and well signposted. An early innovation for the FOLIO team was to summarise lengthy email messages with a “WHAT YOU NEED TO DO” itemisation of what is required. “Signposting” on a portfolio template where an exercise needs to be completed and inserted helps the participant to stay familiar with course deadlines and deliverables. Clearly it is essential to identify critical readers to review task instructions before release of materials.

5. **Offline Working** - The increasing availability of electronic formats of course materials does not preclude a demand for more portable formats. Much workplace-based learning is opportunistic and is facilitated by ready-availability of course materials. This includes
enabling users to have equal access from home and work-based learning contexts. For example participants may enrol under both private and work-based email addresses to facilitate evening working or to mitigate the effects of part-time working or home-based annual leave. Frequently participants on our electronic courses print materials as hard copy and store them in a course folder. Future possibilities for offline learning may include provision of a USB stick containing course materials or mp3 lecture files for use on portable mp3 players.

6. **Asynchronous Engagement** – a major feature of FOLIO courses is asynchronous “any time” learning. It is clearly not feasible to require work-based participants to engage in a large number of synchronous interactions. Indeed for many such a requirement is contrary to the very features that made e-learning attractive in the first place. For example, the FOLIO team discovered that guest lectures repeated once in the morning and once in the afternoon were not suitably flexible for some participants. Podcasts have had to be provided as a matter of routine. Although, in theory, drop-in chat or telephone sessions may provide additional access and support for learner tasks uptake of these by work-based learners may be poor when compared with the facility to ask questions by email at a time convenient to the learner. As with the previous sub-theme, course providers need to balance awareness of the future potential of new media with a detailed knowledge of the circumstances of course participants and what they require. It is important that any course provider has a clear picture of where their course wants to be in the future. Above all the allure of new technologies should not be at the expense of pragmatic real-life learning. It is much more important to get the overall learning dynamic right and then to look at how best to translate this into delivery within an appropriate e-learning format.

7. **Learner Interaction** – Many learners report a tension between the desirability of a shared learning experience with colleagues and the pressure to deliver a portfolio of tasks by a prescribed deadline. Indeed the team has had to modify its own expectations from the default that group-supported learning is an essential ingredient of work-based learning to acknowledgement that, at least for some, provided that a commensurate degree of experience and reflection can still be achieved, self-directed learning is a preferential alternative. Ultimately the decision should be based on learner preferences and the challenge faced by those developing e-learning is to design satisfactorily equivalent tasks for those who want to learn with others and those who learn best alone. This is not to say that self-directed learners need be entirely separated from group learning approaches. FOLIO courses use wikis (collaborative web sites for group discussion and debate where participants can add or modify their own content), sometimes placing a formal requirement to post for or against a particular issue. Even for those who consent to the group-supported route – typically 80-90% of participants – the FOLIO team has had to minimize the number of tasks of a “me too” format (instead requiring each member of a buddy group to contribute a unique perspective or task to a group exercise).
8. **Peer Support** – Providers of e-learning need to provide participants with an opportunity to support one another. Once enrolled, participants (typically 50 librarians per course) are assigned to “buddy groups” of 2-3 members. The buddy group system provides participants with peer support throughout the course. Buddy group tasks are also set to allow facilitation of group work. Interaction with buddies is an important criterion taken into account when marking completed FOLIO portfolios. An alternative self-directed route has recently been included to allow participants to work on their own if they prefer. It is not clear whether peer support should be conceived as a parallel but separate process from formal support (as with the students-only example) or whether formal and peer support should be interwoven (as in instances where staff and students meet in a shared café). The FOLIO team has recently faced requests to set up student-only discussion facilities. Some degree of socialization is optimal – evidence from blended learning courses seems to confirm that peer support increases once participants have met face-to-face. Librarians involved in supporting or delivering future e-learning programmes may find it useful to explore the facility of social networking sites in providing for aspects of socialization.

9. **Moderated Learning** – Appropriate moderation and facilitation is a difficult balancing act to achieve. Students want to feel that the facilitator is available and interested in the activities that they have been asked to achieve. At the same time evidence suggests that the participation (if not presence) of a facilitator can inhibit student participation. This equates to silence experienced in a face-to-face setting when a roving facilitator joins a particular small group. While it is helpful from an administrative viewpoint to monitor the progress of each group this is at the expense of deference by participants to the facilitator in their midst. FOLIO buddy groups no longer have a course facilitator having become entirely self-facilitated. This provides useful experience for the volunteer peer facilitator as well as ensuring a less-inhibited context for communication. The FOLIO team can check on progress by requiring that volunteer facilitators post an update to the course tutor, to a wiki or discussion group. Advanced facilitation skills are a priority for all librarians wishing to develop their own skills in delivering e-learning.

10. **Formal Support** is key to the student experience. Participants appreciate a prompt response, availability of support (especially outside normal working hours) and clarification of instructions. The FOLIO team uses a formal query answering protocol, target response times and templates for response to frequently asked questions. Our shared email (folio@sheffield.ac.uk) is essential so that all four teaching staff (plus administrative support) receive all email queries and, equally importantly, are aware of when and how a query has been answered. Such knowledge sharing within the team, in terms of standardised and consistent responses and collective knowledge and precedent established over time, is invaluable. Course providers will find it helpful to consider issues around access to formal support – it is rarely feasible to provide a true 24/7 learning environment. Librarians
involved in delivering or supporting e-learning will find it helpful to develop query answering protocols and a library of stock responses for frequently asked questions.

11. **Assessment** – A variety of types of assessment, both formative and summative, is essential to evaluate participant achievement and, equally importantly, to keep learners interested and motivated. FOLIO courses are not formally accredited. Participants’ achievements are recognised by a certificate awarded upon successful completion and submission of a portfolio at the conclusion of each course. Portfolios are graded against specific explicit criteria and written feedback provided. The grading system is: distinction, honours pass, standard pass or fail. All participants receive a certificate and feedback on their portfolio. As an example, on the ExFiles course 12 distinctions, 29 honours passes and 1 standard pass were awarded. Course participants complete evaluation forms and feedback is used to develop future courses. A portfolio-based approach is particularly suited to multiple forms of assessment.

The Way Forward for You, the Audience

As deliverers and developers of e-learning we as librarians need to be aware of the need to be more and more flexible in what we deliver and how we deliver it. We would not want to swap the limitations of face-to-face delivery with an unduly inflexible approach that, for example, requires that participants must engage in synchronous groupwork. We need to think carefully about deadlines for completion and assessment and justify these in terms of user benefit, not simply administrative convenience. We should at all times seek to contextualise learning in terms of realistic scenarios or, preferably real-life problems. Support should be prompt and easily accessible and provide participants with the opportunity to check that they have understood concepts and instructions. A single one-stop shop for problems or enquiries is essential.

We are currently adding an archive of previous FOLIO courses to [http://cpdfolio.pbwiki.com/](http://cpdfolio.pbwiki.com/). Materials for eleven out of the eighteen courses are already freely available to the international librarian community free-of-charge. The FOLIO programme demonstrates a successful model for delivering continuing professional development for the health library community. Its low-cost, low-technology approach makes it suitable for adoption by other communities. We would strongly encourage conference participants to check out our materials and exercises and seek both to adapt them and to improve them.

The Way Forward for the FOLIO Team

As is clear from the above the FOLIO/FOLIOZ Programmes represent an ongoing Action Learning approach to improvement of course materials and delivery. The rapid pace of delivery yields a unique opportunity to implement a change as soon as a need is identified. Among such changes are introduction of the self-directed learning route, the provision of a “reading week”, and participant-led demands for more opportunity to
discuss the course with other participants. For the Clinicos and Knowledge Management Course a discussion area was set up on Google Groups for the participants.

FOLIOz demonstrates the potential for UK librarians to successfully provide e-learning courses to participants in Australia. The FOLIO/FOLIOz model could be adapted to other English-speaking countries. Recently Dutch health librarians have undertaken a blended learning course, FOLIAGE, offering both e-learning and delivery of more traditional face to face workshops. Currently an approach is on our desks from another neighbouring European country.

Even though e-learning courses place much store on their facility to be flexible and customisable it is clear that participant demand increasingly requires that course providers go even further in accommodating flexible work and study patterns. For this reason the FOLIO team is considering offering shorter one to two week submodules selected from a predesignated timetable. Such submodules would enable participants to pick and mix either within a broader suite of sub-modules or across courses. Award of a certificate of achievement might require completion of a defined number of weeks – a completely customisable experience – having successfully found ourselves “FOLIO-wing the Sun” our next step looks likely to be to “go with the “F_3L_Ow”!

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Acknowledgements:

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the National Library for Health, particularly Alison Turner, Anne Brice, Muir Gray and Anne Weist, for the initial FOLIO Programme and the support and ongoing collaboration of ALIA, particularly through the offices of Ann Ritchie, in running the successful FOLIOz programme.
About the Speaker:

Andrew Booth currently heads a team that is the largest contributor to health librarian continuing professional development in the United Kingdom. Based at the School of Health and Related Research (ScHARR) at the University of Sheffield he holds an academic position as Reader in Evidence Based Information Practice. Andrew’s principal activities relate to systematic review methods, all aspects of evidence based practice and, specifically, evidence based library and information practice (EBLIP). Andrew is widely published and currently sits on the Boards of four health research or health information journals.