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When you need to debate, make sure it is well planned: developing communication strategies through online roleplay

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Abstract:
This paper describes a case study of Deakin University Library’s role in creating an online roleplaying assessment in a first year unit of Environmental Sustainability. They are tasked with judging the quality and reliability of information, by participating in an activity reflecting real communication challenges in the sustainability field. Librarians and academics created an original assessment, using a uniquely developed online debating platform. The outcomes included improved student success and improved critical thinking. Based on a comparison of 2016 and 2017 unit success rates, this assessment was a successful collaboration between librarians and academics.
Introduction

Over the course of three years, a liaison librarian and the Library’s learning and teaching librarian worked closely with a unit chair and teaching team to introduce engaging activities that focus on progressing the digital literacy skills of students in a unit of Environmental Sustainability. The authors, who were librarians involved in the initiative at the time, place digital literacy in a Deakin University context, as well as provide background information on how a trusting relationship was built with the unit chair.

Deakin University’s sustainability graduates could very likely pursue work for an organisation, company, corporation, or government body where their communication skills prove to be highly valued. The ability to communicate about all forms of science, particularly in an online space, is an in-demand skill (Benes 2017; Brownell et al. 2013; Sander 2017). As Stroupe (2014) points out, it is important to train science students to communicate science, and to identify this as a form of doing science. Sustainability graduates in particular have an onus on them of communicating their field of science to a general audience, who can be highly interested in their natural environment and the impacts on it, as well as considering vested stakeholders in a way that informs the facts and communicates the critical research happening in this field.

For sustainability students, improving skills in digital literacy means improving skills in evaluating information for quality and relevance in supporting scientific argument, and synthesising information and finding a way to communicate it to a particular audience. This improvement in skills is achieved by helping students learn about these elements like a practitioner. Communication skills are critical for all discipline graduates. This is why it is important that they also have digital literacy skills.

In 2015, the Library team worked with the unit chair of Environmental Sustainability on a new workshop activity. Following that success, the Library team worked with the unit chair in 2016 to create a brand new assessment piece, which asked students to create a communication strategy to address a difficult socio-economic issue. This assessment allowed any social media tool or online platform to be the basis for the simulated communication. This did not, however, provide the real-world space of immediate feedback, pushback, or reactions from stakeholders. The Library team recommended transitioning the assessment to an online roleplay platform called Perspectives to introduce this real-world space, and still give students a safe space in which to practice debating amongst themselves, as if they were representing real stakeholders.

The Perspectives Platform

The aim of the Perspectives platform is to provide a flexible infrastructure that allows for contextualised development of digital literacy skills. The Perspectives platform is structured technically as an online debating platform. The issue being debated can be customised for each unit. Unit coordinators do not have to work with librarians to achieve this – they can request access to the platform and build the content themselves – but technical support is recommended and provided by the Library for
all facets of setting up and administering the platform. Unit coordinators can use the platform to host a debating activity as a stand-alone tutorial activity, or include the debate as an element of an assessment task. A debate is contextually designed and includes a variety of stakeholders with alternative views, a description of each, and additional resources about the stakeholder to enable students to make a case in their stakeholder’s interests. Most units use the platform for group work, but it would also facilitate individual work. For example, there could be six stakeholders, with groups of four students representing each stakeholder and individually taking turns to contribute posts.

Students interact with the platform by composing posts as groups or individuals, as the task requires. Posts can include embedded media, and are then displayed in a feed that is similar to the social media micro-blog Twitter (2017). Students may comment on posts, in comments the length of an original Tweet (140 characters), or may ‘Like’ other comments. The social media familiarity of the platform is one of the reasons Perspectives is promoted as being the better tool to use rather than using the learning management system (LMS) for a similar debating-style activity. Partly this is technical – the LMS used at Deakin University would not be as feature-rich as Perspectives – as well as the look and feel being of lesser quality in the LMS. It is important for the Library to give students a learning experience that closely resembles a real-life scenario, as this aligns more intuitively with the digital literacy skills the Library works with. Interacting with strangers online using platforms such as Twitter and Facebook is something many people already do. Perspectives offers a similar experience, but rather than just posting opinions, students learn to craft an argument and draw on evidence to support it. This is explored in further detail in the Environmental Sustainability case study.

Perspectives is a custom-built platform and has not previously been described in any literature. It was built by Deakin University students hired by the Library, in consultation with the Deakin Incubator Group (Deakin University 2015), under supervision of the Library. The Library now works directly with unit chairs to customise the interface content and functionality to suit each learning context.

The platform is not embedded in the LMS. The person administering the unit activity (this could be a librarian, or unit teaching staff) imports student names and University email addresses into the platform. From within the platform, students are emailed an invite to login to their unit’s Perspectives site and they create their own password in that first login instance.

The back end of Perspectives allows for a number of useful functions. Students may be placed into groups of any size, and the system automatically ensures that students only see those discussions in which they are part. It also includes learning analytics related to the frequency and duration of student time spent on the platform, both individually and as a whole. Student posts can be exported in a batch, and educators can edit, delete or re-instate any post. They can also see a log of all posts, even those that have been edited or deleted by students. This allows unit chairs to investigate any evidence of collusion or sabotage should they arise (to date, this scenario has not occurred). With each iteration, student and teacher evaluations inform further improvements and extensions to the activity and platform, making it
now a robust and versatile design. The Library is actively seeking to move this onto an enterprise platform in the near future.

**Inclusive features**

- **Skills and knowledge:** Activities are built around carefully chosen contemporary, controversial and multifaceted issues that are discipline-specific. Evaluations show students immediately see the relevance of developing digital literacy and critical thinking skills to help spot spurious claims and construct a persuasive case of their own. They develop discipline knowledge without having to go through the routine of reading/listening and taking notes.

- **Flexibility:** Cloud-based and cross-campus students can interact readily in the platform, opening students to a wide range of perspectives and skills and increasing flexibility for students who find it difficult to come onto campus.

- **Team-oriented:** The platform is designed for group work, and as students work together as stakeholders (even if they submit an assessment individually in the end), they develop an inclusive and socially mediated knowledge.

- **Perspective-broadening:** Social anxieties are shared as the roleplay puts everyone in the position of playing someone else, and students are encouraged to explore beyond the provided basic content to enrich and personalise their position.

- **Peer-learning:** Text-based communication and an equal footing in the platform can increase students’ confidence as they learn with and from their peers. They can readily benchmark themselves, post constructive comments and pick up alternative approaches to the issue that could be vital to developing their own position.

- **Accessible and usable:** Students say the platform is intuitive, accessible, usable and stable, and they quickly understand the social media style of the communication tools. The Library is hoping to increase these features when it eventually migrates to a new version.

- **Options and choice:** Students appreciate the different format of assessment that the activity offers, introducing a social element, a possibility of group assessment, the opportunity to draft and revise after peer/teacher comments and the opportunity to evaluate a variety of media formats. Allowing students to communicate in simple text foregrounds their developing ideas rather than their ability to format and structure traditional reports and essays.

- **Novel and instructive:** Most students find taking on a different perspective novel – even fun – as well as instructive. They say they engage easily in the virtual world created by the simple scenario and their powerful roles as key decision makers needing to quickly understand, weigh and use competing evidence to build strong arguments.
Digital literacy at Deakin University

Building Perspectives was initiated by the Library to allow Library staff to offer customisable, highly relevant, and authentic online learning experiences. Perspectives enables engagement in meaningful discussions with unit chairs around integrating digital literacy assessment deeply into curriculum. It is a key part of the Deakin University Library’s strategy to enable students to develop sophistication in the consumption and production of information, via assessment that invites deep learning and engagement.

Deakin University’s Vice-Chancellor, Jane den Hollander, has highlighted the importance for Deakin “to be the best university at the digital frontier, [providing] education for the jobs of the future, [and] staying contemporary” (Deakin University 2017). The digital literacy framework, developed by the Library (Deakin University Library 2014) to align with the University’s ambitions, is used by liaison librarians when designing learning programs. The framework defines digital literacy as “being able to search and navigate, think critically and analyse, create and communicate information using a variety of digital media. It encompasses a broad range of critical skills to engage in the information driven world in which we live.” The inclusion of digital media has moved Deakin University librarians away from using the terminology ‘information literacy’. For Deakin University, information literacy is an element of digital literacy. Engaging with digital technology to assess, organise and share information efficiently and effectively sets this apart from traditional definitions of information literacy.

Librarians and unit coordinators use the framework to ensure activities are designed to progressively develop digital literacy for different year levels and unit learning outcome requirements. Every Deakin University unit includes digital literacy as a learning outcome. How this is interpreted by the unit coordinator varies. Liaison librarians meet with unit coordinators to discuss the range of skills, technologies and resources their students will use. Sometimes existing formative and summative activities lend themselves logically to the development of digital literacy in a unit. At other times, liaison librarians identify an opportunity to create an activity or support an assessment that will support knowledge and skill development in digital literacy. Liaison librarians’ skills at negotiating with unit coordinators can lead to involvement in a unit anywhere from a straightforward lecture/class presentation, to developing and/or facilitating an hour long tutorial activity, or contributing to the development of a new assessment task. This process is illustrated in the Environmental Sustainability case study in this paper.

Since its inception in 2014, the digital literacy framework has supported liaison librarians with transitioning traditional face-to-face training to an online environment, as well as providing a foundation with which to approach unit chairs to negotiate for new ways to embed digital literacy activities into their curriculum. Deakin University’s librarians play a critical role in promulgating the concept of digital literacy, to the degree that the Library is “recognised as an exemplar for developing students’ digital literacy skills, and support provided to academics in developing learning activities that evidence digital literacy” (Oughtred & Robertson 2016). Internal evaluation of units where the Library has developed learning activities has shown improved grades. Typically this involves creating learning activities and resources that are...
engaging enough that students want to complete them and “equip students to be sophisticated users of information in our digital world” (Oughtred & Robertson 2016).

This approach has slowly grown from minor amendments to traditional library skills classes, such as regularly updating content to ensure it meets current teaching needs, through to working closely with unit chairs to co-design assessment pieces based around elements of digital literacy. These elements include:

1. Searching and navigating
   a. Locating information using a variety of key digital literacy sources and demonstrating appropriate use of these resources in assessment tasks
   b. Identifying and locating fundamental information sources for the discipline
   c. Drawing on a range of sources at different times and for different needs

2. Thinking critically and analysing
   a. Critically evaluating the relevance and appropriateness of resources
   b. Extracting the main ideas and using these appropriately
   c. Adapting information in a legal and ethical manner for study purposes
   d. Transposing data or information gained into a form that is appropriate
   e. Organising data in a manner that is relevant to the course level and discipline

3. Creating and communicating
   a. Communicating information in an ethical and responsible manner
   b. Being aware of inclusive practice requirements
   c. Using a variety of different technologies when appropriate

Further details of these elements are available from Deakin University Library’s *Elements of digital literacy* (2015b). The Perspectives platform meets many of these elements. Students search for appropriate information while navigating often-questionable information; they need to think critically and analyse their approach to their argument for their stakeholder, and implement their communications via the platform. In a future outlook, cultivating students’ digital literacy could include some of the peripheral components of being a digital citizen, such as those outlined in Figure 1 (next page).
Perspectives is a versatile online role playing platform and activity designed to support students' interaction as they build an informed position on a controversial issue in their discipline. The platform and activities are readily customised for different disciplines and activity types, whether they are straightforward online debates or significant assessment tasks with extended role-playing and polished, referenced 'position paper' outcomes. Students build digital literacy, as well as critical thinking and perspective-taking skills, as they explore more serious research beneath the often over-hyped positions taken by various stakeholders. Final reflections help them articulate surprisingly deep learning outcomes.
Deakin University Library’s current digital literacy framework may evolve in the forthcoming years and the Library team wants to be at the forefront of keeping digital literacy activities updated and relevant to each intake of students. In immediate terms, this may mean altering the sustainability topic each time the unit is taught, to ensure students are engaged in a current topic that they can be emotionally invested in.

**Learning objectives with Perspectives**

The Perspectives platform was designed to support assessment tasks that will help students develop their critical literacy (Giroux et al. 1996) by examining complex and persistent social issues relating to their discipline. Students engage in a structured dialogue surrounding the issue, in which they are tasked with building the strongest possible argument on their stakeholder’s behalf, while engaging with others. This encourages students to develop a broad understanding of the topic at hand, an effective communications strategy, and the ability to negotiate in an online, collaborative space. It also challenges students to consider prominent issues from a perspective that they do not necessarily personally hold.

The authentic learning experience offered by this platform supports it as a better form of assessment. In particular, the assessment design used in the Environmental Sustainability case study sought to engage students in the development of their “critical digital literacy” (Lohnes Watulak 2016; Sefton-Green et al. 2009). More specifically, activities were designed to enable the development of several interrelated key learning outcomes, which assessment tasks in other units may emphasise as required. These include:

- Critical literacy (Giroux et al. 1996), incorporating the ability to read critically and widely from a variety of perspectives, and understanding the social, economic, political and intellectual contexts in which information has been produced.
- Evaluation of the accuracy and reliability of information, and the evidence presented to justify an argument in line with the standards and conventions of the discipline. Effective evaluation studies go well beyond the development of a checklist (Cripps Clarke et al. 2016).
- Communication, in particular the ability to craft and deliver an agile and effective communications strategy for a variety of audiences, which engages with several stakeholders.

The Library team’s aim is to encourage students to develop these competencies in a deep-seated, transformative way. While the platform can allow students to develop a set of research skills, it does so in order to provide students with the opportunity to practice autonomous thinking. This requires students to regularly practise their inherent ability to question their own, and others’, assumptions, look to reframe problems from interdisciplinary perspectives, and to participate in meaningful social discourse.
Integrating *Perspectives* into the curriculum

In order to create an infrastructure and activity that supports potentially transformative learning experiences, it is essential for liaison librarians to develop learning activities that are integrated fully with students’ studies. This ensures that the core competencies and values inherent in the development of digital literacy are developed authentically, and within an immediately relevant frame of reference (Cavenett & Rawson 2013). This means moving beyond the traditional opportunities afforded to information literacy skill development in the form of one-shot classes and extra-curricular resource provision (Squibb & Mikkelsen 2016). This has been problematic for academic librarians, as educators often consider graduate learning attributes, such as digital or information literacies, to be essentially bolt-on, or supplementary, to curriculum (Barrie 2006). However, the strategy of providing unit chairs with a customisable, well-developed and supported online learning module, designed for the purpose of assessment and flexible enough to tackle any major social issue from interdisciplinary perspectives, is highly successful when integrated into a unit’s curriculum.

The success of *Perspectives* is assessed through surveys and focus groups with teaching staff at the conclusion of their unit’s teaching period. For the Library, success is defined as evidence of improved student performance, and improved critical thinking. The platform has been released for a year as of November 2017. In that year, over 1500 students have undertaken assessment using *Perspectives*, in disciplines as varied as commerce, environmental sustainability, policy development, education, health and social development, and communications.

*Perspectives* in Environmental Sustainability

Managing sustainability issues in contemporary society requires an understanding of the elements of modern communication, such as the use of social media as well as more traditional methods. The assessment developed for students of Environmental Sustainability not only asked students to examine the elements of successful communication, it provided them with the opportunity to plan and carry out their own communication plan around a current and controversial environmental issue. So this assessment becomes highly relevant for graduates who go on to work with communication and sustainability. One of the issues in mind when the Library designed this assessment was how sometimes people can rely on legitimate information and come to entirely different conclusions. Thus, another learning opportunity arises as students experience learning to navigate competing agendas while figuring out how to work together.

The 2017 activity

The 2017 case of the unit Environmental Sustainability is an exemplar of the principles underpinning the development of *Perspectives*. The specific learning objectives surrounding the *Perspectives* assessment task in this unit relate to both the *Perspectives* activity and the library’s historical engagement with the unit. They are expressed as the ability to:
• Indicate complexities involved in solving environmental sustainability problems and recognise different stakeholders involved and knowledge of their values; and
• Present a succinct and evidence-based strategy to address a contemporary environmental management issue.

The issue in question for 2017 was timber harvesting in Victorian state forests. The Perspectives activity and accompanying assessment task was co-designed by the unit coordinator and the Library team.

Students were instructed on understanding sustainability from a social, economic and environmental perspective; where priorities compete, and political lines are not clearly drawn. To ensure students’ “critical digital literacy” (Lohnes Watulak 2016) development occurs alongside disciplinary knowledge, the discussion was structured along these lines. Working in small groups and assuming their stakeholder roles, students presented three social media style posts per group covering the environmental, economic and social outcomes of timber harvesting, respectively. Stakeholders are selected for authenticity, to allow for multiple viewpoints and interdisciplinary approaches, and to ensure that there are no established allegiances between groups. Students represented:

• The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union: represent a large number of Victorian timber workers, and have close ties with the Victorian State government.
• The Victorian Association of Forest Industries: the peak body representing forestry industries in Victoria.
• The Australian Conservation Foundation: a “community [of] more than 400,000 people who speak out, show up and act for a world where forests, rivers, people and wildlife thrive” (2017).

After reading about their stakeholder and conducting any independent research, the stakeholder groups discussed the best approach to take when arguing for their perspective. In this case study, the stakeholder groups needed to post their communications at the end of the week, over a three-week period. Spacing out the posts allowed groups the opportunity to conduct further research and prepare their rebuttal. Groups were given the following instructions:

Post 1: Introduce the topic and present an argument from the point of view of the stakeholder based on Environmental Sustainability considerations. Consider what the other stakeholders will say and make their own point of view clear.

Post 2: Post from the point of view of their stakeholder based on Social and Economic Sustainability considerations. Address what has been said by other groups and any points that have been included within the debate that they believe their stakeholder would agree or disagree with. This post is about setting the record straight.
Post 3: Concludes the argument. Consider what has been said throughout the debate, put forward their group’s final position, and suggest how the issue should now move forward in the future.

Students considered how the other stakeholder groups would represent their stakeholder when forming their own arguments. When writing posts, students were to assume their audience are decision makers and their aim is to convince them of their stakeholder’s point of view.

The accompanying assessment piece asked students to write a report including the posts they made on behalf of their stakeholder and reflect on the complexities involved in communicating aspects of environmental sustainability issues. This activity and assessment reinforces numerous elements of digital literacy, including

- critically analysing information drawn from a range of sources;
- communicating information using technology;
- understanding the relevance of social media tools and using them appropriately for teamwork and collaboration;
- demonstrating the ability to produce subject-related knowledge using digital tools and resources; and
- demonstrating the capability to reflect and confidently create and share new knowledge.

At the conclusion of the activity and assessment, students undertake a reflective exercise that asks a series of short, targeted questions relating to key learning outcomes. Questions include asking students to reflect on the difficulty of taking on a position that may be different to their own; if undertaking the activity broadened their understanding or changed their minds; if it extended their understanding of social, economic and political conditions of the production and dissemination of information; and if it increased their ability to read and communicate critically and strategically. The reflective exercise helps the Library gauge how the activity met general graduate attributes. This is the opportunity for the Library to collect data about their activity because other unit statistics will include assessments the Library did not contribute to.

Library/academic relationship building

In 2015, before development of the Perspectives platform, the unit chair of Environmental Sustainability approached the discipline librarian to develop a digital literacy activity. This approach came after spending time with the academic, and building her trust. Based on positive interactions, she felt confident working with the liaison librarian and the Library on a more complex assessment.

The Library’s aim was not only to design an activity that would achieve this goal, but also to train the teaching staff to deliver the content of the activity in workshops. This has been a standard approach for Deakin University librarians for a number of years. The higher priority, when negotiating involvement in delivering content to students, is to train tutors to deliver workshop/tutorial-based content, and to limit librarians’ delivery of content to 15-20 minutes during a seminar/lecture. In this unit and many others, liaison librarians attend a seminar/lecture, present the concepts in a standard
lecture style, then rely on trained tutors to deliver the activity during workshop/tutorial time. This works effectively for liaison librarians, because the students receive the activity content from a tutor who has an existing relationship with them, as opposed to having a lesser-known librarian come into a workshop/tutorial and try to engage the students in an activity. It works best with the familiar tutor driving the activity. The librarian is then seen as more of a guest speaker, attending the seminar/lecture prior to the workshop/tutorial to introduce the concepts that will be explored during the workshop/tutorial activity.

The 2015 activity

In designing the 2015 digital literacy activity, the Library team drew on earlier examples designed for another similarly structured unit. Students read about the variety of sources available, and learned how to make an informed judgment about which resources are most relevant for particular uses. The elements of digital literacy the team was aiming to meet include identifying and locating fundamental information sources for their discipline, and critically evaluating the relevance and appropriateness of the resources.

Prior to the workshop/tutorial activity, the teaching team came to the Library to be trained in the activity they were to deliver. They were taken through the activity as if they were student participants, and given a tutor ‘cheat sheet’ created by the Library team.

The 2016 activity

Following on from the digital literacy activity created in 2015, in 2016 the Library team built on this success by initiating a new assessment piece. This was designed to support students in creating a communication strategy for their field and, as before, develop students’ digital literacy skills. The elements that became a focus included communicating information in an ethical and responsible manner, and demonstrating analytical skills in selecting accurate and relevant digital sources to support a contention or argument.

Students researched the Carmichael Mine debate, represented a stakeholder group, and developed a communication strategy for that group. The Library team designed the stakeholder groups and provided examples of communications from them, such as media releases, social media posts, and news interviews. Stakeholders were Adani Group, Australian Conservation Foundation, Queensland State Government, and a farmer.

While many students are inclined to be against coal mining, this activity forced them to consider the very complex social, economic, environmental and political implications of a new mine. This consideration ensures that they have a nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the issue and they learn to negotiate using arguments supported by references, rather than sloganeer.
The 2016 assessment task and transition to *Perspectives*

For this assessment, students were instructed to prepare a communication strategy to a particular audience about the Carmichael Mine proposal. They needed to critically analyse which information they wanted to communicate and understand their audience. Students chose the format of the communication strategy. The Library team provided resources to students about a variety of formats, including online presentation tools, and guidelines about using social media tools in the classroom. Students presented their strategy during class time (*Perspectives* was still in its infancy). Marking criteria for this assessment included marks for providing appropriate evidence in their written report. Most of the marks available related to the student’s reflection of their learning as opposed to their skill in using social media.

The outcome of the 2016 assessment included teaching skills to students that they would need to use once they graduate and are working in this field, such as moderating themselves as professionals when interacting with real stakeholders in their industry, both online and in the real world. It prepared students for employment in a field where many may end up working for an organisation, company, corporation, or government body, where the ability to communicate about environmental issues to a wide variety of people is a critical skill (Benes 2017).

After the success of the 2016 assessment activity, the Library team proposed transferring this activity to the newly created *Perspectives* platform. This was an ideal activity to transition from face-to-face delivery to online. Not only for the convenience of an activity that could be more easily managed online, but because the online environment provided greater opportunity to push the students’ learning further – to make the assessment even better. For example, as highlighted in the Introduction, the 2016 assessment activity did not provide the real-world environment that would be encountered when engaging with the general public and stakeholders on a social media tool or online platform. By transitioning the assessment to an online roleplay platform, students have a learning experience that is close to the real-world environment. Students experience what would happen if they were to put their strategy into the real world, such as dealing with instant feedback from their peers, potential criticism, and possible ramifications.

**Outcomes**

At the end of 2016, the unit chair was very positive about the outcome of the assessment activity and anecdotally reported that students were a lot more engaged in the assessment than in the past. In regards to digital literacy, they were starting to look for the reason behind content and sources they found presented online, which is one of the first steps in determining whether information is fit for purpose. They learned to analyse digital sources more consistently, to support their contentions and arguments. Students also demonstrated collaboration and sharing of digital content, and they showed that they were capable of creating and sharing new knowledge.

The significant outcome of the assessment activity is that it strengthened transferable real-world skills for students. Communicating with specific stakeholders about sustainability issues, and finding evidence to support their claims, are critical skills for graduates entering the sustainability fields of work. An unexpected outcome
from working with this unit was that the tutors who were trained to facilitate the activity reported feeling more confident about their own ability to judge information accurately and advise students about information quality. The assessment activity is also relevant to librarians’ professional practice because it promotes some of the central values of librarianship: critically evaluating information; reading widely; looking at problems from interdisciplinary perspectives; considering the different lenses through which people understand the world; and negotiating to solve problems.

**Perspectives outcomes from other units**

Feedback from other units that have implemented *Perspectives* includes improved student success. In an Education unit, overall student success improved between Trimester 1 2017 and Trimester 1 2016. In this unit, the *Perspectives* activity was the main change to the curriculum so it is reasonable to attribute the change in large part to the activity. In focus groups conducted after two separate units used *Perspectives* in Trimester 1 2017, students said they were ‘much more confident’ in judging resource reliability afterwards, and some were already applying critical skills developed in *Perspectives* in other units. Themes from students and teachers were that *Perspectives* increased their ability to see important social issues from different perspectives, think critically, construct an argument and apply these skills in an authentic way.

**Reflection**

The unit chair was very positive about the design and implementation of the *Perspectives* assessment activity and intends to continue using it. The earlier 2015 workshop/tutorial activity is also still being used in the unit and is now delivered earlier in the teaching period, so that students can draw sooner on the skills they have learned. The next steps for this unit are to maintain the Library team’s connection and support by:

- Presenting the seminar/lecture to introduce judging accuracy and reliability of information
- Continuing to train new tutors to facilitate the workshop/tutorial activity
- Providing technical support to the teaching team to set up the *Perspectives* platform for each teaching period

In future, the Library team could look towards integrating a more refined definition of digital literacy. Deakin University is currently undergoing a re-definition of what digital literacy means for the University. Digital literacy is a graduate learning outcome (graduate attribute) at Deakin University, but how this is specifically defined for each course, major and unit can be confusing and contradictory. The Library uses its own framework as a guideline to maintain a focus, but ideally there would be a consistent approach from all Deakin University Faculties and service providers.
Conclusion

Implementing *Perspectives* in Environmental Sustainability resulted after two years of building a strong liaison relationship with the unit chair. Achieving the successful implementation of a collaborative assessment piece into the curriculum relied on mutual understanding and respect of the skills and knowledge that the liaison librarian brought to the discussion. Adding to this was the expectation that students will learn to use a new technology to communicate and collaborate. Harnessing a new technology provided a more realistic learning experience than the assessment previously offered. This was achieved by regular outreach to academics, promoting the services and skills of the liaison team, and spending time in the Schools and Faculties to get to know individual academics. The evolution of digital literacy training in this unit could serve as an exemplar for integrating library-led literacy skills training into a curriculum.

The library’s involvement in this unit is considered a success on numerous levels, particularly because the unit chair reported that students were a lot more engaged. Moreover, the unit chair was so happy with the Library team’s earlier involvement in designing workshop/tutorial activities that she returned to work with the Library again on a complex assessment. For the assessment activity itself, it is incredibly rewarding to know that students are engaged in learning about communication strategies and that they find the activity relevant to their studies. Knowing this inspires confidence among the library team that these students will transfer what they have learned in this unit and continue to apply the skills in other units of study, as well as in their future work endeavours.
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