

Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

Article

Access All Areas: Exploring the Use of Library and IT Facilities by University of Salford Pre-registration Diploma Nurses During Periods of Clinical Practice Placement

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Received: 01 December 2008 Accepted: 10 July 2009

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Abstract

Objective - To assess the scale of library and IT resource access issues reported anecdotally by nursing students on clinical placement. To map patterns of IT and library usage behaviour to inform future service plans for this population of students.

Methods - A multi-response self-completion questionnaire administered on a group basis to 78 pre-registration Diploma Nursing students.

Results - The survey group were heavy users of library and IT facilities while on placement (87% of respondents accessed library and IT facilities at least once per week). Survey respondents encountered barriers to accessing these resources, including lack of awareness of local facilities, lack of time to access facilities, supervisors' attitudes towards use of library and IT facilities by placement students, and feeling inadequately prepared for accessing and using resources at a distance from the university. Respondents relied heavily on facilities in the placement location and university facilities and responses suggest that use by location was strongly linked to resource format. Use of public library facilities to support study while on placement was revealed by the survey. Respondents' main source of help for library and IT issues was clinical mentors. The survey indicated that the experience of library and IT access varied greatly with location of placement venue. The study was limited in eliciting more detail about location-specific experiences and findings need to be explored further with respondents using focus group methodology.

Conclusions – Library and IT access problems encountered by the pre-registration nursing students included in this survey were not large scale. Although there is no evidence of behaviour to circumvent systemic problems, the study identified small but

significant barriers. Five recommendations addressing these barriers will require collaborative service planning between University of Salford and National Health Service (NHS) learning resource staff to implement. This collaboration needs to include service users and the practice mentors who support them on clinical placement.

Introduction and Background

Pre-registration nursing programmes in the United Kingdom (U.K.) are required by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) to have a balance of learning that is "50% practice and 50% theory, in all nursing programmes" (17). The NMC was established in 2001 by the government of the U.K. and has a statutory responsibility to ensure all nurses and midwives are competent to practice in the U.K. The NMC sets the standards for nurse education and, in its guidance to course planners, states: "The practice part of the programme should provide opportunities to experience 24-hour/7 day care" (17).

In their studies Ward and Moule (63) and Norton et al. (6) report students as frequently experiencing feelings of isolation while on placement and turning to information and communication technologies (ICT) (e.g. e-mail, virtual learning environments (VLE)) as a means of communication. These studies also present evidence of barriers to access that not only undermine the students' educational experience, but also have serious implications for student retention.

Middleton et al., in a study of pre-registration nursing students and teacher training students' access to learning resources, found that during periods of placement access can be far from equitable (25). This was particularly marked for health students working in community and Primary Care Trust (PCT) settings who often had no access to either a library or a computer terminal. Mailer (114) reports competition for access to networked computers with clinical staff as being a problem while Ward and Moule report access to computers as being "strictly hierarchical" (63).

Respondents in the majority of these studies rarely explicitly differentiate between library and IT activities. This reflects not only an acceptance of the convergence of modern library and IT services, but also the degree to which students have routinely assimilated technology-driven learning activities into their day-to-day studies. This assimilation poses problems for students who have no central library and IT facilities on site, as access to computers in the immediate area of work (generally a ward setting) is sometimes problematic for technical and organisational reasons. Marriott reports anecdotal evidence of computers on wards being "unavailable for studying and therefore cannot be considered to meet the needs of students" (262). Middleton et al. reported that placement students were viewed as "very low priority" (9) with respect to IT access while Norton et al. report "provision of library and IT services is still rigidly segregated along professional lines in many National Health Service (NHS) organisations" (8).

The Practice Placement Context

The University of Salford, U.K., has approximately 1500 pre-registration nursing students, approximately 1000 of whom study at Diploma level. The majority of these students are sent on placement in the Greater Manchester area to 15 National Health Service (NHS) Trust organisations covering acute and primary care settings. In addition to this there are non-NHS venues including prison health care facilities, hospices and day care units (University of Salford, School of Nursing) www.nursing.salford.ac.U.K./Cpp/index.php >.

During placement, students are supported, supervised, and assessed on their skills and

performance by practice mentors who are NHS staff. These staff form an integral part of a pre-registration nursing student's teaching team and there are nearly 5000 registered practice mentors supporting pre-registration nursing students studying in the Greater Manchester area. Greater Manchester covers a geographical area of approximately 500 square miles and has a population of some 2.24 million (Office for National Statistics, 2001 census).

All staff within NHS Trusts have access to library and IT facilities provided by NHS Trust library services. These services, where possible, are located on the same physical site as the clinical facilities or at a geographically centralized site that may service several Trust locations. While on practice placement, preregistration nursing students are registered as NHS staff and therefore have full access to Trust library and IT services. The Trust libraries operate as a network of specialized health libraries at a local, regional and national level.

Information and Learning Services (ILS) at the University of Salford comprises IT and telephone services, Information Communication and Technology (ICT) training services, library services, and performance and compliance support to all staff and students. ILS has formed robust working partnerships with NHS library staff in Greater Manchester and the North-West region at both the operational and strategic levels via the Library and Information Health Network North West (LIHNN) and Health Care Libraries Unit (HCLU) <<u>www.lihnn.nhs.U.K.</u>>. The partnership includes meeting regularly to receive updates on service developments, to resolve any immediate operational issues and to identify areas of mutually beneficial service development. NHS Trust and University of Salford library staff also provide reciprocal training and university library staff are represented on standing NHS Trust library committees. At a strategic level, University of Salford staff are routinely invited to briefings

and consulted on regional and national NHS Trust library developments.

Library management system (LMS) borrowing statistics and electronic resource log-in data at Greater Manchester NHS Trust libraries reveal University of Salford nursing students to be heavy users of Trust library facilities and services.

The University of Salford has purchased key reading materials for some of the Trust libraries (termed the 'Books in Trust' initiative) in an attempt to ease some of the pressure on NHS Trust library print collections. The work and support of NHS Trust library staff is a major element in ILS's goal to provide responsive library and IT services to nursing students at the University of Salford.

Objectives of the Study

A small but significant volume of anecdotal evidence has been gathered from preregistration nursing students at the University of Salford regarding negative experiences with library and IT resources while on clinical placement.

For example, pre-registration nursing students often complain about the inaccessibility of the university's VLE from within NHS organisations or the lack of access to local library resources while on placement. There is often confusion regarding the existence of dual university and NHS electronic resource accounts and the differing access routes for electronic resources.

The study has two objectives:

- 1. To look for evidence of the issues highlighted above in order to assess their scale and explore underlying causes.
- 2. To map patterns of IT and library usage behaviour to inform future service planning for this population of students.

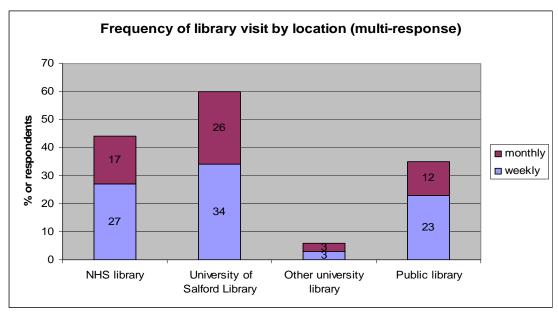


Fig. 1. Frequency of library visit by location by Diploma Nursing students on clinical placement

Methods

A self-completion questionnaire (Appendix 1) was administered to a convenience sample of pre-registration Diploma Nursing students who had recently returned from clinical practice placement (no later than one month prior to the administration of the survey). Permission from module leaders was gained to enter classrooms to present a brief description of the survey before offering students the opportunity to complete it. Completed surveys were collected and any questions regarding the survey were answered.

Six venues were visited over a period of two weeks during November and December 2006. This yielded 78 useable surveys (100% response), which represented approximately 7% of the pre-registration Diploma Nursing population at the University of Salford at that point in time (This percentage is based on approximate recruitment numbers of 1172 students).

This method allowed groups recently returning from placement with their experiences relatively fresh in their minds to be targeted and promoted a greater response rate. Ethical approval was not required to conduct this survey.

Results

Overview

The 78 respondents in this survey comprised 42 students from year 1, 33 students from year 2, and 4 students from year 3. The NHS organisations from which these students had returned were distributed across 20 sites in the Greater Manchester area. The majority of respondents (64%) were based in two organisations and 88% of respondents had Internet access at home.

Furthermore, the majority of respondents (66%) considered access to library and IT facilities while on clinical placement to be an important issue and 87% accessed library and IT facilities at least once/week while on placement.

Location preference

Figure 1 shows the majority of respondents preferred to use the University of Salford's library facilities (60%) or NHS Trust facilities (44%).

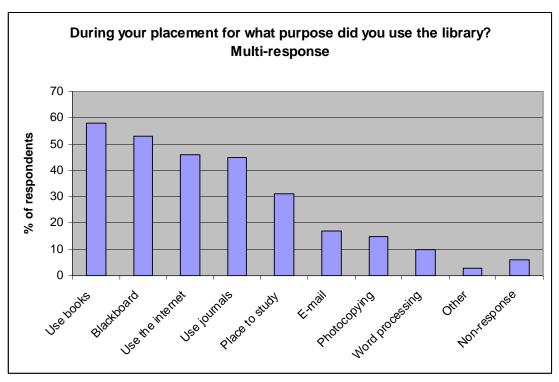


Fig. 2. Reasons for a library visit by Diploma Nursing students on clinical placement in the NHS

A noteworthy minority (35%) also made use of public library facilities, however a similar number (33%) of respondents used *both* University of Salford and NHS library and IT facilities at least once/month while on placement.

Further examination of the data showed that the location preferences in Figure 1 exhibited no trends associated with placement location or year of study.

Reasons for library visits while on placement

Figure 2 shows that the most frequent reasons for visiting a library/IT facility during placement were: to 'use books' 58%, 'access Blackboard' (the University of Salford's VLE) 53%; 'Use the Internet' and 'use journals' were roughly comparable at 46% and 45% respectively. It is noteworthy that almost a third (31%) of respondents still viewed libraries as a place to study.

Use by Location

Analysis of the responses to the questions related to use of library and IT resources by location revealed a distinction between location and resource type. NHS Trust facilities were clearly identified with providing access to print books (37% of respondents used NHS facilities for this reason) and print journals (19% of respondents) but less so with provision of ebooks (3% of respondents) and e-journals (4% of respondents). Use of the same resources in a University of Salford location revealed less drop-off in the numbers using electronic equivalents: 54% of respondents used print books while 26% used e-books; 37% used print journals compared with 35% who used ejournals.

Usage of the university's VLE was predominantly from home (54% of respondents) or from within the university (35% of respondents). Use of academic databases such as CINAHL was mainly from

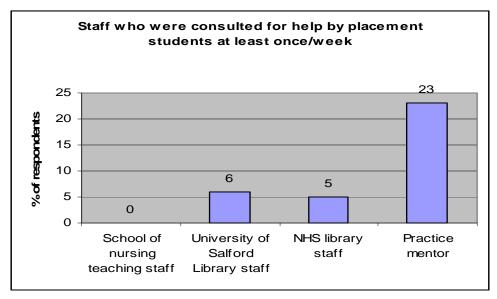


Fig. 3. Staff consulted for help by Diploma Nursing students at least once/week

home (49% of respondents) or from within the university (42% of respondents).

Problems Accessing Library and IT Facilities

While on placement 33% of respondents (26 people) reported experiencing problems accessing library resources (See Appendix 1, Q.11). Further analysis of the data showed that these respondents were not linked to a particular Trust location or Trust type (i.e. Primary Care or Acute). Neither were problems linked to year of study (12 first year students, 13 second year students, and 1 third year student).

Some respondents (n=15) elaborated on these issues. These responses fell into 7 pre-defined categories (Appendix 1, Q12):

- Unable to access e-books/e-journals because Athens passwords did not work (4 comments)
- 2. No free time/not given time to access library and IT facilities (3 comments)
- 3. No library at placement (3 comments)
- 4. No Internet access available at placement venue (3 comments)
- No study space/study space too noisy (2 comments)
- 6. Could not access e-mail (1 comment)

7. Access to recommended texts (1 comment)

Training and Help with Library and IT Resources While on Placement

Respondents were asked if they believed they had *received appropriate* training on how to access library resources from off-campus before going on placement. This elicited a mixed response (50% yes 50% no). Further analysis provided no evidence to suggest this split was linked to specific placement locations or respondents' year of study.

When students required help with library resources during periods of practice placement their most frequent source of information was the practice mentor (Figure 3).

Issues raised by students

The final question of the survey provided an opportunity for respondents to "list one change you would like to make regarding access to the library resources while on placement". The majority (60%) of respondents offered at least one response each.

Three themes or main areas of concern were highlighted:

- 1. Have time allocated to use the library and access the resources (11 comments)
- 2. Have computer/internet access on placement (9 comments)
- 3. Have library facilities/study areas when on placement (6 comments)

A further 8 comments provided other suggestions for library/resource changes which included:

- "A larger e-book selection."
- "A helpline to access, for example a telephone number (sic)."
- "Make the location of library clearer."
- "Difficult to access
 Internet/Blackboard useful to
 immediately support learning on
 placement. Shown the library maybe
 on induction."
- "Making it easier to access hospital library."
- "To enter into Internet on my own."
- "Be given NHS login prior to placement to use pc's on placement."
- "Ease of use of passwords off campus."

Discussion

In a recent study of the needs of health and social care placement students, Callaghan et al. identified trends in students' behaviour that enabled them to "circumvent the difficulties they encountered with resource access and use" (258). The main findings from this sample of students reveal that there are some small scale issues with IT and library resource access directly attributable to being in a placement situation. However these issues appear reasonably small scale with only 33% (28 people) saying that they had encountered a problem while on placement. There is no evidence to suggest trends in behaviour are associated with systemic difficulties.

One of the themes that repeatedly arose was a lack of time or not being given time by practice mentors to access library and IT resources. This needs to be viewed in light of

the result that of the 34% who asked for help with library and IT issues on a weekly basis, 23% asked their practice mentor.

Resources need to be put in place by the university to support practice mentors in this area of their work. Clinical mentors have a role to play in supporting students with Library and IT activities, however studies suggest that the mentors themselves require support to do this effectively. King and Mackenzie point to the role of clinical mentors in raising students' awareness of Library and IT facilities, but Trust librarians interviewed as part of the study report "that clinical mentors did not always seem to have information about trust library resources" (19).

An unpublished survey by the University of Salford suggests that there is demand by this population for support from NHS and University of Salford Library and IT staff. Howard (2006) in a survey of 277 clinical mentors in Greater Manchester found that 56% would find training in the use of university resources useful and 57% would find training in equivalent NHS resources useful. Almost a third (30%) of respondents to Howard's survey said that they frequently advised students on finding learning resources. It would also be appropriate to include in any such intervention, elements to raise practice mentors awareness of the pervasiveness of electronic resources in nursing education.

Conversely a relatively low frequency of use of either Salford or NHS Library staff is clearly highlighted and perhaps reveals ineffective publicity of contact mechanisms for help with library and IT issues. This is highlighted in comments such as "(I would like) A helpline to access, for example a telephone number" from respondents, when asked what library and IT service improvements they would like to see.

Recommendations

Many of the NHS Trust librarians in Greater Manchester have begun to build strong

working relationships with practice mentors, providing training and advice on services. University of Salford Library and IT Services need to work with NHS library staff to utilize their existing relationships and expand contacts in order to establish a presence in the day-to-day working lives of this community of associate educators.

Recommendation 1: University of Salford and NHS library and IT staff to develop a strategy to raise the awareness Library and IT resources targeted at the practice mentor community.

A small number of students suggested that one change they would like to make (in response to Q 16) would be to "have computer/internet access on placement" (9 comments). Analysis showed that these students were based at relatively small locations away from large hospital centres and had no central IT or library facilities. These sites comprised PCT facilities such as day hospitals and community drop-in centres linked to specific mental health conditions. It is important that these students be made aware of their nearest accessible centre (NHS, University of Salford, other university library).

Recommendation 2: University of Salford library staff should develop a marketing campaign to run in the weeks leading up to periods of placement aimed at nursing students giving details of NHS Trust Library locations and alternative library and IT access rights.

This would benefit all Health and Social Care students going out on placement and would act to support and reinforce recommendation 3 (see below).

Training

Half the respondents believed that the training they had received prior to placement did not appropriately equip them with the skills to effectively access resources off-campus. The main issues related to access ("Unable to access e-books/e-journals because Athens passwords did

not work", "Have computer/Internet access on placement") and may in part be as a result of inadequate training, rather than for any technical or organisational reasons. University of Salford training for this group focuses exclusively on University of Salford resources. Also the timing of this training in relation to periods of clinical practice can be ad-hoc and frequently results in large periods of time elapsing between students receiving training and going on clinical placement.

Although NHS library and IT staff provide introductory library and IT training as part of clinical placement induction days, the survey strongly suggests that NHS electronic resources (e.g. e-books, e-journals) are underused by this group of students. A partnership approach between NHS and University of Salford library staff to ensure mutually complementary content and suitably timed sessions is required to address these issues.

Recommendation 3: Greater Manchester and University of Salford Library and IT staff should plan collaborative library and IT training sessions tailored for students starting clinical practice placements.

It is interesting to note that a significant minority (35%) of respondents used public libraries to access resources. The most common reason given by respondents for using public libraries was to access books. Of all respondents who borrowed books while on placement, 16% borrowed from a public library. This is an area that requires further exploration. For example, borrowing statistics by this population and data on the type and quality of queries they generate would enable University and NHS library and IT services to offer the appropriate support and develop working relationships across sectors.

Recommendation 4: Use of public library facilities by placement students should to be investigated further with a view to developing cross-sector working relationships.

Limitations

One of the weaknesses of the convenience sampling used in this study was that time constraints rendered BSc groups inaccessible to the author. This somewhat reduced the scope of what was originally planned as a survey representative of the entire preregistration population (i.e Diploma and BSc). The sample in this study is approximately 5% of the entire pre-registration population and represents a relatively small proportion of the Diploma population at approximately 7%.

Further, ready access to the pre-registration Diploma population also resulted in a sample population dominated by first year and second year students. Third year Diploma Nursing students spend up to 14 weeks on practice placement (the longest period in their academic career) and data from these students would arguably have revealed library and IT issues specifically associated with large periods of time away from University facilities.

Gathering in-depth detail about individual issues was also difficult via a survey. Descriptions of problems were limited to one or two sentences due to the format of the questionnaire and details as to why students were using specific resources were difficult to capture. Further it was often difficult to establish the cause of a problem. For example the comment "e-books & e-journals - couldn't access" made by a second year student based at a large acute trust well served by central library and IT facilities, could be attributed to inadequate training, technical problems or organisational issues.

It is therefore recommended that rich data from focus groups needs to be gathered from this student population to enable a more indepth exploration of individual access issues in order to better establish causality.

> Recommendation 5: Focus group methodology should be deployed with this population of students to enable more in

depth data to be gathered to further inform recommendations 1 to 4.

Black and Bury discuss the potential of working collaboratively to provide a "considerably enhanced service" (45) if stakeholders are fully involved in planning and ownership of any projects. All of the recommendations made by this survey require greater stakeholder collaboration. The University of Salford and the Greater Manchester NHS trust librarians should use their strong working alliance to address the issues outlined by this study.

Conclusions

This study set out to assess the scale of library and IT resource access issues reported anecdotally by nursing students on clinical placement. It was found that library and IT access problems encountered by the preregistration nursing students included in this survey were not large scale and there is no evidence of behaviour to circumvent systemic problems. However, the study has identified small but significant barriers related to: being given time to access resources; feeling inadequately trained to deal with electronic resource usage off-campus; and being unaware of how to ask for help while offcampus. There is no evidence to suggest that these problems are associated with specific placement locations or respondents' year of study.

Having no access to library or IT facilities was raised as an issue with students located at NHS sites distant from central library and IT facilities.

Furthermore, the study sought to map patterns of IT and library usage behaviour to inform future service planning for this population of students. The study demonstrated that this population of students prefer to use library and IT facilities in University of Salford and NHS locations. A small but significant minority use public library facilities for the purposes of study during periods of clinical placement. They

prefer to use University of Salford electronic library resources in preference to NHS equivalents. There is a large proportion of home Internet access and there is significant use of the University's VLE and electronic databases from home.

Further work needs to be carried out with this body of students using focus group methods to elicit more detail about the barriers highlighted by this survey. Reasons for use of public library facilities also needs to be explored to enable University and NHS staff to offer appropriate support to public libraries and facilitate collaboration.

Acknowledgements

Mike Raynor was Liaison Librarian, Information and Library Services, University of Salford, Salford, U.K. until August 2009.

This article was first presented as a paper at the 5th International Evidence Based Library and Information Practice (EBLIP5) Conference, Stockholm, Sweden, July 2009.

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Appendix 1

A survey of library use by nursing students whilst on practice placement

locations? Please tick all that apply

Sec	tion A: About y	<u>rou</u>			
1.	What programme of study are you currently following at the University of Salford? Please indicate:				
	Diploma		BSc \square		
2.	What is your cu Please indicate:		ıdy?		
	1 st	2nd		3rd □	
3.	At which Trust	/Hospital/site w	as your last pl	acement?	
			•••••		
4.	Whilst on place YES □	ement do you us NO	ually have Int	ernet access?	
5.	Do you have In YES □	iternet access at	home?		
Sec	tion B: About y	our library usa	<u>ge</u>		
6. I	6. How important do you think access to library resources is whilst on placement? Important □ Useful but not essential□ Unimportant □				
7.	Whilst on placement did you have access to an NHS library facility? YES □ NO □ DON'T KNOW □				
8.	During your pl Place to study	acement for wha	at purpose did Use the inter	•	rary? Please tick all that apply. Use books□
	Use journals		Word proces	ssing	E-mail □
	Blackboard		Photocopyin	g 🗆	Other
				Please spe	ecify
9.	Whilst on place	ement on averag	e how often d	id you use the	e library facilities in the following

	Once per week	Once per month	Less than once
			per month
NHS library			
University of			
Salford library			
Other university			
library			
Public library			

Section C: About your use of library resources whilst on placement

10. During your placement and for your studies, from which locations did you use the following library resources? Please tick all that apply

	NHS library	University of	Other	Public	Home
		Salford	University	library	
		library	library		
Books					
Electronic					
books					
Journals					
Electronic					
journals					
Databases					
e.g. CINAHL					
Study space			_		
Blackboard					

11. Whilst on placement did you experier	nce any problems accessing library resources?
Yes □ No □	
Please go to Q12 Please go to Q13	
12. If you answered "yes" to Q11 please b	oriefly indicate the nature of the difficulty at each location
Books	Electronic
books	
Journals	Electronic
journals	
Databases	Study
space	
=	Other
University of Salford library	
Books	Electronic
books	
Journals	Electronic
journals	
Databases	Study
space	
•	Other

16

Other university li	=			
-				
*				
		,		
Blackboard		Other		
•••••				
Public library				
_		Electronic		
•				
,				
space				
Blackboard		Other		
••••				
Home				
		Electronic		
,				
		<i>y</i>		
		Other		
_	etting help and train	_		
	-	el you received appro	priate training on ho	w to access library
resources from off campus?				
Please indicate:				
Yes	s 🗆	No \square		
14. Whilst on placement on average how often did you consult each of the following for help with				
using library resources? Please tick all that apply				
don's notary resour	rees. Trease tren air tr	iat appry		
	School of Nursing	University of	NHS library staff	Practice mentor
	teaching staff	Salford library	TVIIO IIDIUI y SWIII	Tructice memor
	teaching stair	staff		
One per week				
Once per month				
Never				
1 10 101				

15. Did the help and advice you received enable you to resolve your problem? Please indicate by circling the appropriate response(s) in the table below:

School of Nursing teaching staff	Yes	No	Don't know
University of Salford library staff	Yes	No	Don't know
NHS library staff	Yes	No	Don't know
Practice mentor	Yes	No	Don't know

16.	Finally reflecting on your placement please list ONE change you would like to make regarding access to library resources whilst on clinical placement				
	Many thanks for your help with completing this survey				
	If you would like a response to any of the information you have given on this survey please provide contact details below				
	Name:				
	Preferred means of contact:				
	Alternatively if you have a query about any of the issues raised on this survey please contact Mike Raynor, Liaison Officer, School of Nursing:				
	E-mail: m.j.raynor@salford.ac.U.K.				

Tel: 0161 295 2445