New directions of user education in an academic library - challenges and future perspectives

Leonard Petro, lpetro@lib.unideb.hu

Kenezy Life Sciences Library, University of Debrecen, Debrecen, Hungary

Abstract
The development of user education at the Kenezy Life Sciences Library at the University of Debrecen has been following the well known stages described in the literature of library informatics, however the adaption of new training methods and processes take place with a 10 year delay. Our library courses in the past 20 years have undergone changes both in structure and content. The new library training program, developed by 2013, at one hand meets the requirements of the changes in ITC technologies, and higher educational system in the last decade. On the other hand, it prepares the basis of reassessment of the library’s role in the university educational system.

Key words: information literacy; e-learning system; role of library.

Historical overview
Beginnings: 1994-2006
The beginnings of user education at the Kenezy Library goes back to 1994 marking the first year to acquaint Hungarian and international first year medical student with the rules and regulations, basic services and information resources of the library. During the next decade the course material changed significantly, since the focus shifted from local CD-ROM databases to online resources. The structure of trainings remained the same: courses were taught by several teachers from different fields and experiences of library informatics.

Restructuring: 2006-2012
By 2006 the structure of the trainings needed a significant reorganization, since the number of students increased and the existing set-up could not be managed effectively any longer. Instead of one instructor teaching one specific topic to all groups, teachers were assigned to follow through the course material with a designated group of students. The training materials were developed by the Education Group (EG) established for this training program. New knowledge sources appeared in the library’s operations, which consequently got involved in the education of library informatics. With expanding numbers of information resources the library, a demand had risen to adapt more general skills in managing databases and information archives. The teaching general information managements skills had received emphasis in the course materials. This thematic change was also supported by the fact that besides medical students, other faculties got involved in library information education. These courses had to be supplemented by new courses with more attention on research methods and thesis writing techniques. The first theses writing
course, organized in 2010, justified the necessity to organize supplementary thematic courses. In this period, we started to experiment with e-learning systems, like Moodle, primarily to ease the testing of the increasing numbers (around 800) of participating students.

**Present situation: 2013**
Currently the Library organizes several courses structured in thematic hierarchy:

- Basic library informatics course for 1st year students includes information on services and regulations of the integrated university library, library resources, usage of the library collections, etc.

- Thesis writing course for 3rd and 4th year student includes information on structure and content of a thesis, referencing and citing methods. This course helps student to improve critical thinking, analysing, writing skills.

- Course on research methods, scholarly communication for MA, MSc and PhD students.

The basic values of information and digital literacy are employed and highlighted in all levels of library’s educational system. The courses are supplemented by e-learning elements which basically provide the theoretical basis for utilizing information resources practiced in the classrooms. The e-learning content is edited and regularly updated by the members of the EG.

**Future plans**
The Kenezy Life Sciences Library has developed a strategic plan to reorganize library informatics education which is planned to be implemented in several stages during the next 5-6 years. The steps of restructuring are based on an encompassing view of the place and purpose of these courses in the university’s core material.

1. Development of online courses available to all university students.
2. Including library science and information literacy more intensively into other non-library courses.
3. Collecting and managing all e-learning courses used at the university and create an information platform to provide e-learning course materials and related literature to students and teachers.

**Conclusion**
The role of the University Library as an educator has to follow the changing trends in global scholarly communication and higher education programs, in order to effectively meet the demands of not only the growing international student community but also the university administration.

**REFERENCES**