BACKGROUND TO THE PROGRAMME

The Research Support Ambassador programme was launched in 2015 as an annual opportunity for librarians to develop the knowledge needed to support their research community. Over the last five years the programme has evolved from an intensive in-person course into a fully open educational resource. This was done in direct response to feedback from participants who found it hard to make time to attend in-person sessions or make time to watch multiple webinars. Once they had fallen behind they found it hard to catch up, resulting in low retention and completion rates.

As the programme developed we were inundated with requests to share the materials more widely as other institutions began to educate their own library staff. In response, the Research Support Ambassador programme was relaunched as a fully open educational resource (OER) in 2019.

You can read more about the early years of the programme in the open access article Developing the 21st Century Academic Librarian: The Research Support Ambassador Programme from the New Review of Academic Librarianship.

CHALLENGES

One of the biggest challenges was how to ensure learners were engaged with the content. We worked hard to include a variety of accessible formats such as videos, interactive images and text so there was something for all.

We also wanted to make sure that the content was relevant to as wide an audience as possible. The best way to do this was to keep the materials generic but to offer activities which allowed learners to relate the topics to their own local circumstances. Not only did this aid learning but it also provided a starting point for local conversations.

TIPS FOR ADAPTING CONTENT

✓ Include a mixture of content - don't rely on writing out pages of text or recording multiple presentation videos. You will need to work harder to engage people online so think about how you can keep them interested.
✓ Build in peer review - encourage colleagues from both within and outside your institution to read through the content to check it makes sense and is not too focused on your internal approach.
✓ Remember that this is an iterative process - part of building an OER is committing to gathering feedback and continuing to refresh the content. No one expects it to be perfect upon release.

PROGRAMME UNITS

The OER features six units which build on each other but can also be taken independently as desired.

When adapting the programme to an OER we looked carefully at feedback collected over the past few years to ensure that we were including as many of the successful elements as possible. Learners particularly welcomed the chance to apply the concepts to their own circumstances so we made sure to include a range of activities. Several platforms were evaluated and the decision was made to use LibGuides as this fulfilled our criteria and was familiar to learners. Finally, we considered the best formats to use to present elements of the content - from videos and podcasts through to images and text.

FURTHER INFORMATION

You can find out more about the Research Support Ambassador programme at this link or you can watch our video trailer to get an overview of the programme. All programme content is available under a CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0 licence and can be reused or adapted for local needs within these terms.