Information and Library Studies on a Virtual Campus

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The RGU Virtual Campus
http://campus.rgu.com

- **Established in 1999**
- **Courses include e-business, nursing, publishing**
- **By December 2000, over 2,200 users**
- **HTML superstructure**
- **Teaching materials in PDF and PowerPoint**
- **Supported by e-mail and telephone tutorials, electronic discussion forums and community groups, etc**

PGDip/MSc ILS by Distance Learning

- **PGDip/MSc ILS course launched September 2000**

- **PGDip element consists of 8 modules, undertaken over a minimum period of 2 years**

- **Further year required for MSc dissertation**

- **Modules split into 'Topics'**

- **Subject content identical to that taught to campus-based students**

- **Course approved by LA and IIS**

ILS Course: Evaluation Methodology

Conducted in Week 5 of the course

- **Students**

  E-mail questionnaire

  29 out of 31 completed (93.5%)

- **Staff**

  Paper-based, self-completion questionnaire

  3 out of 6 completed

Survey of ILS Distance Learning Students

- Of the 29 respondents, 27 were female
- 27 were in work, 26 of them in libraries or information services

Reasons for joining course

- Importance of gaining a professionally recognised qualification
- Improve career prospects
- Expand knowledge and understanding of chosen work environment

Reasons for joining a *distance learning* course

- To avoid a career break / year out of work

Survey of ILS Distance Learning Students

- **More than half (16 of 29) felt that they were coping well; the rest expressed some reservations**

- ***Potential* problems identified:-**

   - isolation
   - lack of interaction with teaching staff

- **Course structure and format was praised**

- **Some felt they could get more involved in activities and discussions**

Survey of ILS Distance Learning Students

- **Some felt overawed or daunted by input of others in discussion forums**

- **Course is demanding of time and effort, *but* offers a flexible approach**

- **Access to resources is a major issue**

- **Additional support required - evening telephone tutorials**

Survey of Teaching Staff

- **Most positive experience: level and standard of communication and interaction with students**
- **Most negative experience: time-consuming e-mail replies**
- **Navigation around Virtual Campus straightforward**
- **Most useful features included: discussion groups; Campus Profile; Campus Induction Module**
- **Suggested improvements: access to readings in electronic form**
- **Some plans to change teaching materials and teaching styles for future modules and cohorts**