OPEN SCIENCE SKILLING AND TRAINING INITIATIVES IN EUROPE

THE NETHERLANDS

Interview with Martine Pronk, Utrecht University Library, The Netherlands

Martine is Head of Academic Services at Utrecht University Library.

Website

Email: m.c.e.m.pronk@uu.nl

How did your Open Science skilling initiative begin?

We felt a sense of urgency to invest in the new role of the library. In 2014, core groups were formed. These groups of library-colleagues collected in-depth expertise on specific themes like open access, research data management, copyright, outreach and assessment, etc.

The core task of these groups was to follow developments and share knowledge with colleagues. They developed further into teams on specific services (OA services, RDM support, (reproducible) coding and software, copyright information point, services in the field of outreach and assessment and on Open Science in general).

Please describe the context and aims of the initiative.

It is not a very strictly organised programme but rather an ever-evolving set of activities. Every sub-team provides training for colleagues on specific topics: how to write a Data Management Plan (DMP), how to use Yoda or DataverseNL (our data repositories), what can our pool of data managers cater for, what are the benefits of ORCID, open workflows etc. External training is used, like Essentials4Data or programming courses. Utrecht University Library also recently joined The Carpentries for software skills.

How is the initiative managed and coordinated?

Every team proposes one or more training dates for their colleagues. No strict format is followed. When someone thinks there is an interesting topic that other should know about to inform researchers, lecturers and/or students, they plan a meeting. As head of the department, I make sure the workshops are spread around the year so that colleagues are not overloaded. Each colleague has a yearly individual assessment and development interview in which training on skills is part of the interview. For each employee a personal development plan is also made. The employee writes a proposal for this. The head approves the plan and provides the budget.

What organisational framework did you use?

Team members roles and responsibilities:

- Heads of departments: responsible for providing a skilled team that is well equipped for the job, including training and developing budget.
- Scientific information specialists: responsible for keeping themselves updated with the skills required for the job and follow developments in their field. They are responsible for knowledge exchange (in the broad sense) with their colleagues on a specific field of expertise. They specialize in OA, RDM, coding and software and/or Open Science.

Resources used for skilling/training participants:

- Our sector Academic Services has a budget for external training and knowledge exchange (e.g., attending seminars and conferences). Individually, each employee discusses with his/her supervisor skills which need to be trained or developed.

Who are your target audiences?

The above initiatives are targeted at library staff. Of course, we also skill our staff to provide services (workshops, training, advice) to researchers, postdocs, PhDs, lecturers and students.

Which skills are prioritised?

TOP PRIORITY	STRONG PRIORITY	NOT A PRIORITY	EXCLUDED
• Scholarly Publishing • FAIR Data	• Metrics & Rewards • Open Science Skills • (Reproducible) coding and soft-ware: programming skills and how to make your code and software reproducible	• Research infra-structures and EOSC	• Research Integrity • Citizen Science

Why did you prioritise some skills and exclude others?

Scholarly publishing and FAIR data are topics that top the agenda at Utrecht University. Metrics and Open Science skills are being developed and need more awareness. (Reproducible) coding and software is hot for researchers that are really looking for good information and training at the moment. Also, our data managers cannot do without programming skills. Research Infrastructures and EOSC is not a service of the library but we direct researchers with questions to the right specialists. Citizen Science and Research Integrity are not topics that the Library is responsible for at Utrecht University.

Please explain how participants are acquiring these skills.

By self-study, train-the-trainer (colleagues) approach, external workshops, training and masterclasses etc.

Which channels and learning types are used?

Face-to-face. Distant learning. Blended learning. Self-training activities. Group learning. Individual learning.

Which formats are used?

Interactive platforms, Massive Open Online (MOOC), slides, and peer-to-peer (developing trainings and workshops together with experienced researchers' mentorship: experienced colleagues train their colleagues on the job).

Which channels and formats have been most useful?

Working with actual cases, and learning on the job, being part of the RDM Q&A team, by seeing questions and try to formulate an answer, discussing it with an experienced colleague was far more efficient than all the workshops we did.

Is there formal recognition?

Only if the external institute that provides a training gives a certificate.

What impact do you expect from this initiative?

The impact is already apparent. We started with mostly one colleague having with a specific skill. We now have teams of people who are able to provide our services to researchers, lecturers and students.

What have you learnt so far?

Developments go quickly. We get new colleagues very often. Everyone has different skills and needs different levels of expertise. It is impossible to be experienced in everything, and to organise a very planned and linear training programme. The organic way we have now is maybe not ideal but it is the most flexible and suits most colleagues.

What's next on your skilling/training calendar?

We are pretty much up to speed at the Academic services sector (app. 36 fte) but we are lagging behind with the rest of the organisation. We need to invest in colleagues in other teams to train the Open Science skills that suit their roles and functions.

Was there a budget?

Yes, we have a budget for training and development, including Open Science skills. The budget devoted to Open Science was approved by the University Board.

What did these programs actually cost?

Most of the training is provided by our own colleagues so the cost comes in the hours which they spend.

Which challenges have you encountered?

The time available. There is so much new stuff that we could keep people busy full time but it always has to be done next to the usual tasks. This means you cannot do everything at once or not as much as you would want. Progression sometimes seems slow.

Another challenge is that Open Science is basically an encompassing issue for the various services of the library. It's not only about open access publishing or FAIR RDM: you have to make everybody aware about Open Science issues in the library, in spite of the very heterogeneous levels of awareness, knowledge and skilling concerning Open Science.

What would you tell others looking to do a similar program?

We were very lucky that we could recruit new people with new skills (replacement due to retirement and extra budget for Open Science). This really helped to get momentum and speed up the process. If you have the chance, please think big!

Further Comments

The services that we have at Utrecht are centered on open access, research data. We need to apply Open Science on all our services (ILS, collections, etc.). Everything we do in the library is linked to Open Science.

People who are the most experienced sharing their knowledge with others is implied in the Open Science program through workshops and trainings. Training can be more difficult when it comes to certain subjects (RDM). Peer-to-peer training is a rather efficient method, it can be compared with mentoring. The approach of the workshops is pragmatic: each colleague has a different level of knowledge, a "how to" approach and an individual approach are necessary. But the trainings in the Netherlands are rather basic, whereas the researchers have to deepen their Open Science skills. The training needs to fit the knowledge the colleagues already have, and has to be of a high level in order to meet the researchers' demands (in terms of GPDR, for example). In our department, we have recruited a certain number of new colleagues in order to get these new skills.

The head of the Utrecht Library is fully aware of the changing role of the libraries and of what is at stake financially speaking when it comes to developing and providing new services about Open Science. The University board approved the various initiatives about Open Science, but the library wasn't seen at first as a working partner when it comes to Open Science, but only as a literature provider. But the situation has changed.

Open Science has a place within the Faculty. The Library has expertise, but not all the expertise concerning Open Science.

Precisions on peer-to-peer learning: the ways people learn and are trained are very diverse. There is a new way of training: we develop workshops and trainings in cooperation with expert researchers, for example, cafés about R and reproducibility with researchers that are experts on these topics and can cooperate with researchers who are interested in this software or topic. It's not about how to program, but how to make things easier in the research.

Because Open Science changes so quickly — and because it's very difficult to keep up the pace of change — it is very important to secure the skills within the University. Before, the departure of an expert jeopardised the expertise about Open Science within the university, and we tried to change that, and are still working on how to secure knowledge about Open Science in Utrecht University, because there is a strong need of knowledge and training in Open Science within the academic community.

In general, everyone is very enthusiastic, interested and very willing to learn. Sometimes, it is a little bit scary and overwhelming. People are very happy to share their knowledge with their colleagues. Certain trainings are mandatory, and people are happy about that, even if it takes time to explain to others that these trainings are necessary.

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