The Reading List Challenge:
Implementing the Loughborough Online Reading List System (LORLS)

Gary Brewerton
Middleware & Library Systems, Loughborough University

Marie O’ Neill
Head of Library Services, Dublin Business School
• What is a Reading List?
  – How they vary and what are the issues with them
• Developing a solution
  – What we did at Loughborough
• Sharing our solution
  – Can bring benefits to all
• Implementing at Dublin Business School
What is a Reading List?

• A list of resources (books, journals, AV material, websites, etc.) compiled by an academic to support students in their studies
  – Available in print, electronically or both
  – Typically organised alphabetically, chronologically, by subject or a combination of these
  – May include annotations from the academic (e.g. stating why a given resource should be read)
Can vary dramatically in length!

- Engineering: Average length 6, Maximum length 144
- Science: Average length 13, Maximum length 190
- Arts and Social Sciences: Average length 63, Maximum length 1,479

Data generated December 2013 at Loughborough University
Issues with Reading Lists

• Students struggle to locate resources on Reading Lists
• Academics aren’t aware of how (or even if) their Reading Lists are being used
• The Library can only provide access to resources it knows about
• The institution’s reputation may suffer if Reading Lists aren’t doing their job!
Loughborough University’s Learning & Teaching Committee were keen to address these issues.

- Library seen as central to providing a solution.
- In 1999 a web-based system was conceived to:
  - Allow academics to create and maintain online Reading Lists.
  - Alert Library staff to changes made to Reading Lists.
  - Enable students to browse and search for Reading Lists and link to related Library holdings.
Developing a solution

• 2000
  – Web-based system launched at Loughborough

• 2002
  – Finally gave it a name: **LORLS** (Loughborough Online Reading List System)
  – Made it available as open source after other institutions expressed interest in it

• 2007
  – Decided to re-develop the system

• 2010-14
  – Launch and ongoing development of latest versions
A brief view of LORLS
Student view of LORLS

- Browse or search for Reading Lists
- Standard citation format (Harvard UK)
- Library holdings displayed
- Book covers via GoogleBooks
- Can like/dislike items
Academic view of LORLS

• Input items manually, via ISBN/ISSN, from the web or by importing them
• Hide, edit, copy or delete items
• Sort and annotate Reading Lists as required
• See how the Reading List is being used
Library view of LORLS

- Items flagged if not held or with private notes attached
- Email Library staff with changes made to Reading Lists
- Various online reports available (e.g. show all the Reading Lists an item is on)
- Purchasing predictor to suggest items for acquisition (beta)
Sharing our solution

• We maintain a website about LORLS (http://blog.lboro.ac.uk/lorls) including:
  – Development diary
  – Online demo
  – Documentation
  – Download source code under a GPL

• Meeting the Reading List Challenge
  – Host annual event that brings together librarians, developers and suppliers to discuss the issues around Reading Lists (http://blog.lboro.ac.uk/mtrlc)
Benefits of open source

• There are many benefits to using open source (e.g. cost, flexibility, adherence to standards) but there are also benefits in providing open source
  – Prestige (especially for the developers’ institution)
  – Trip to Ireland to talk at Library seminar
  – Gain valuable insight from other users to inform future developments
• We were approached in September 2013 about DBS using LORLS
  – Great to work with another institution and our first one outside the UK
  – Opportunity to integrate LORLS with the Koha open source Library Management System
  – Received constructive and helpful feedback that will allow us to develop LORLS further
Example DBS feedback

- Since 2010 LORLS has shown Library holding
  - It shows total number of copies held, those on loan and the remainder listed as “On shelf”
  - But as DBS pointed out this could be misleading
    - Copies “On shelf” may be reserved and therefore not available to students
    - What about copies on order?
  - We agree! So we’ll be taking a good look at the display of Library holdings in the coming months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>On Loan</th>
<th>On Shelf</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long Loans</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Loans</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Loans</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Book / Reserve items via the Library catalogue
So that’s the software sorted

(Other systems such as Rebus:list, Talis Aspire and Telstar are available)
Now comes the hard part!

• Embedding into institutional workflows
  – Who uploads/maintains the Reading Lists?

• Advocacy
  – Use every opportunity you can
  – What works for one group may not work for another

• Training and support

• Keep monitoring progress with Reading Lists