Implementing resource discovery techniques at the University of West London

Box of Broadcasts at the University of West London

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Case Study
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In partnership with Jisc

Background

The University of West London ([UWL](#)) has a student population of 12,000 FTE and is structured around eight Academic Schools: London School of Film, Media and Design; The Claude Littner Business School; School of Computing and Technology; London College of Hospitality and Tourism; Ealing Law School; London College of Music; College of Nursing, Midwifery and Healthcare; and the School of Psychology, Social Work and Human Sciences. As 'The Career University', UWL prides itself on linking education to employment, and aims to inspire students to become innovative professionals and to connect them to exciting and rewarding careers. With increased resource funding and the upcoming launch of a brand new library in the University's 'Heart' in September 2015, part of the £50 million Future Campus project, the Library is reaffirming itself at the centre of university life ([Wales, 2015](#)).

What is the problem/issues(s) your organisation is trying to solve?

For the Jisc Spotlight project, the Library decided to take Box of Broadcasts ([BoB](#)) as one of two collections to target. BoB is an off-air recording service with an archive of over 1 million television programmes, radio programmes, and films that have been aired on 60+ UK channels since 2007. Provided by the British Universities Film and Video Council (BUFVC), BoB is subscribed to by over 80 higher and further education institutions across the UK, with all users adding to the shared archive every time they schedule a recording.

UWL has had a subscription to BoB since 2011 and the database had a major upgrade in January 2014 that greatly improved its functionality. The Library had also made repeated efforts to publicise BoB, including featuring the database prominently in students inductions and using traditional promotional materials such as posters. However, despite enthusiasm from individuals, usage statistics, which are available from late 2013, suggest there is still room for improvement and that a different approach may be needed to ensure BoB is utilised by UWL's population.

Reflecting the nature of television and radio broadcasting, BoB is cross-disciplinary in content and is valued across the University's eight Schools. However it is expected that some Schools would find BoB fits more easily into their teaching, particularly for the London School of Film, Media and Design. Previously the Ealing School of Art, Design and Media, the School has BA and MA programmes in a range of subjects including media and communication, film production, broadcast journalism, radio production, graphic design, fashion & textiles, and photography. With an emphasis on the understanding and critical analysis of visual and audio culture and communication, analysing broadcasts is a key component in many modules. As part of the Jisc Spotlight project, we hoped to be able to target the School specifically to increase their use of BoB, as part of an overall strategy to improve their engagement with the Library due to recent low National Student Survey

library scores in their discipline areas. It is hoped that this would help build a stronger relationship between the department and the Library, encouraging greater communication that might lead to more informed collection development and information literacy provision for subjects that traditionally stray from set reading lists.

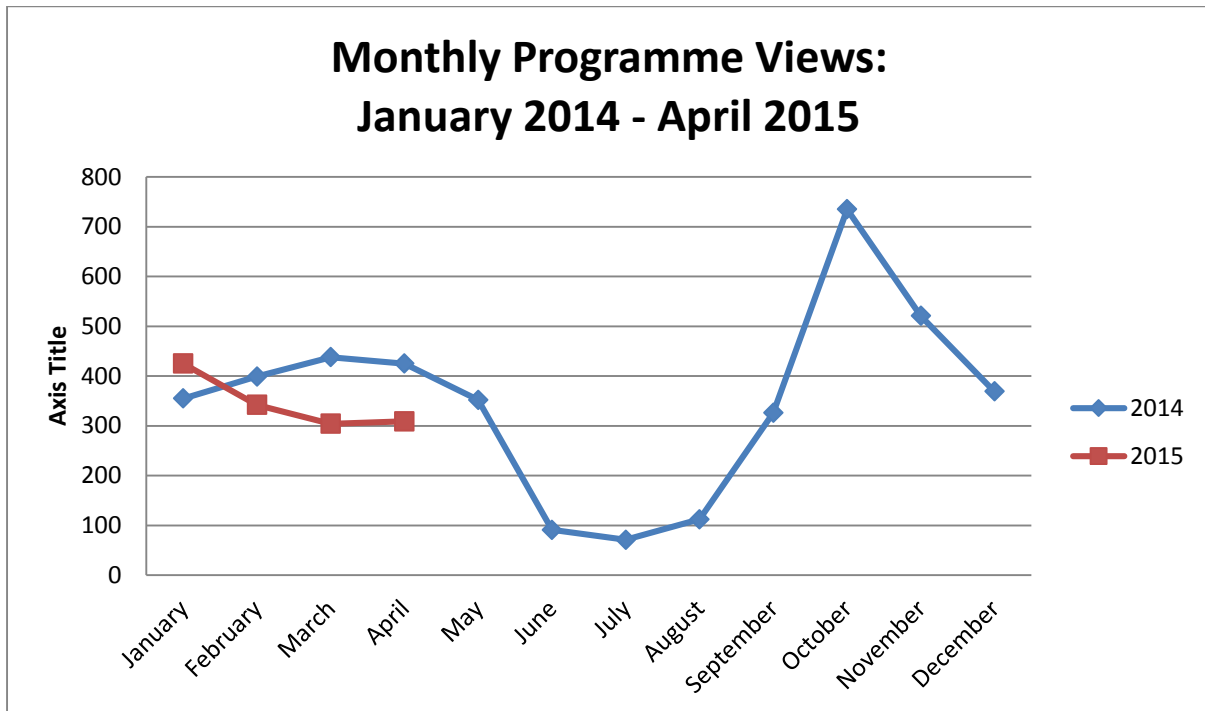**Monthly Programme Views: January 2014 - April 2015**

Figure 1: Monthly programme views: January 2014-April 2015

Since late 2013, when BoB statistics became available, 940 UWL staff and students have registered. This is less than 8% of UWL's population, and this figure includes inactive users, including those who may have since left the University and therefore lost access. In addition to the BUFVC membership fee, UWL pays an annual subscription fee for BoB, of £5350 (plus VAT) for 2015, a flat figure charged to all institutions regardless of size. With a population of 12,000 FTE, this should equate to 44p per user, but with only 940 registered users the figure is instead at £5.69. In 2014, there were 4195 programmes watched and 324 programmes recorded from UWL users, giving a cost per view/listen of £1.27 for each broadcast. These figures suggest a need to increase usage to allow for better value for money.

Figure 1 shows total monthly programme views between January 2014 and April 2015, before the project commenced. The pattern of usage follows a familiar trend of increased term-time usage and lowest use over the summer break, which could be in part caused by the number of graduating students leaving the University in June before new students arrive in September. Despite this drop in student population, the summer statistics remain

unexpected in that they suggest that BoB usage is largely tied to academic teaching; something that would be anticipated for a traditional academic journal database, but curious considering that BoB could feasibly be used for purely entertainment reasons by students if they so wish.

How did the training components help?

The extensive Jisc Spotlight training programme covered a range of topics over several days of workshops and webinars. From these sessions, it became apparent that there were three themes that were worth further investigation in relation to BoB.

Increasing Visibility & Discoverability

This theme was overarching the entire programme, however it was particularly challenging when focusing on a subscription service such as BoB; improved indexing on Google through improved metadata was not an option, nor was adding images or items from the database to prominent websites such as Wikipedia to improve their reach. BoB itself has useful search functions, with searches indexing not only programme titles, channels, and descriptions but also the transcripts themselves (where transcripts are available for the programme) allowing users to search by their general topic to find programmes they may not have known about before searching. What became apparent was the importance of increasing visibility and discoverability on our own website, social media, and VLE, aimed at internal users to direct users straight to the database as a collection as a whole.

User Behaviour

Another reoccurring theme was the user behaviour behind how students and teachers discover resources, with workshops reviewing studies such as Jisc's *The Digital Information Seeker* ([Silipigni and Dickey 2010](#)).

Jisc's InfoKit *Evaluating digital services: a Visitors and Residents approach* considers the different user modes: visitors or residents. When in visitor mode, users are decisive in their behaviour, for example 'discovering a particular piece of information online, completing the task and then going offline or moving on to another task' ([Jisc, 2014](#)). When in Resident mode, users are more social and seek to connect with others. This mode is evident in social media content generation, such as sharing and commenting. Resident mode is linked to information seeking behaviour that relies on peer and professional recommendations, as residents will use resources shared by people they follow.

The challenge then is how we can use this knowledge to increase use and discoverability of BoB. Improving the experience of users in 'visitor mode' is very much linked to facilitating the quick discovery and retrieval of resources, something we identified as a problematic from outside the database.

BoB's database is well designed in consideration of social resident behaviour, as users are able to generate their 'own' content through cutting clips from broadcasts, which are in turn added to the shared archive for use by others. Users are also able to curate their own publically viewable playlists. Both clips and playlists are easily shareable via URL and the playlist search function. Users can also comment on programmes, although this function seems to be underutilised with few comments found on broadcasts. With this functionality in mind, we have the opportunity to really promote this to UWL's 'resident' users.

To further appeal to this peer-to-peer promotion and resource recommendation, it is also important to create 'champions' for the resources, particularly among the academic staff who are in a position to recommend BoB to students and pick out and share the most relevant broadcasts for their students in lectures or via the VLE. Students may be more responsive to recommendations they perceive to be directly relevant to their studies and success in future assignments. As well as hoping to encourage academic 'champions' to make informal recommendations in conversation with students, it is also feasible to measure the success of this method by monitoring for increased use of BoB broadcasts in reading lists and Blackboard module areas.

Tailored promotion & instructions

The importance of packaging the content of the database into a resource tailored for particular audience became apparent over the course of the programme. Some other institutions have created 'teacher packs' that married the content of their special collection to a certain curriculum, theme, or study level to appeal to lecturers or teachers. For example the National Maritime Museum created a pack called 'Inventors: Key Stage 3' which collects together an image bank of museum items with specially created video introductions, worksheets and fact files (National Maritime Museum, 2015). This is particularly valuable for wide-ranging collections that contain items relevant to several disciplines or with distinct and discrete areas of strength. With its unconventional audio-visual and cross-disciplinary content, BoB may benefit from this approach.

What did you implement to address the issue(s)
To launch the project, on 29th May 2015 we published a post for the University's InformED blog, run by the Institute for Teaching, Innovation and Learning and Technology Enhanced Learning (INSTIL) focusing on teaching, learning and assessment in higher education (Jamieson, 2015). Aimed at UWL academics, the post promoted BoB as a resource for teaching and introduced the Jisc project. During the project period we began planning and implementing a series of methods inspired by the training.

Playlists

We decided to use BoB's playlist function to create sample playlists related to the subjects in each School. This was to serve several purposes: firstly to illuminate a small selection of subject-specific broadcasts for students. As BoB is cross disciplinary, it is not easy for students to instantly comprehend how it might be directly relevant to their studies, outside of entertainment purposes. Playlists create bite-size, subject-specific insights into the archive that highlight individual items – rather than the collection as a whole.

Secondly, the sample playlists serve to promote the playlist function itself, as a personalised and social element of BoB for 'resident' users. Self-created and shared playlists are used across range of popular web audio-visual services, including Spotify and Youtube, and should therefore be a familiar format for students and staff.

Lastly, the playlists can serve as 'teacher packs' aimed at academics, highlighting relevant programmes for their subject area, but also, perhaps more importantly, inspiring academics to create similar playlists themselves, informed by their expert subject knowledge, that they can share with their course and module groups.

During the project, we asked all Academic Support Librarians to create example playlists which would be ready to be used for promotional outputs and for demonstrations to students and academics.

Summon

Considering that BoB is a subscription service provided by the BUFVC, improvements to discoverability were limited, despite the BUFVC's continued and enthusiastic assistance during the project. Unfortunately BoB does not have an API (application program interface), which would normally be used to share content between software applications. Consequently it is not indexed by Summon, UWL's discovery service provided by ProQuest, and therefore visibility of BoB is low without targeted promotion and strong presence on the Library website.

We had hoped that BoB would eventually be indexed by Summon, but when BUFVC were contacted it became apparent that there is no imminent plan to create an API and therefore this would be impossible for the foreseeable future. Instead we need to direct students to the database as a whole, even when they were looking for individual items.

We created a manual database link, referred to by Summon as a 'Best Bet', which appears at the top of search results when using certain keywords:

Searching for film, television or radio programmes? Try Box of Broadcasts
Box of Broadcasts (BoB) is an archive of over a million programmes broadcast in the UK since 2007

We decided to have this link appear when users searched for: Box of Broadcasts, television, radio, documentary, programmes, film, and further television channel and genre keywords and synonyms. These search terms are primarily targeted at LSFDM students, although general enough to function for any students looking for television and radio. We hope to be able to use Google Analytics to find out how many users have click through to BoB using this prompt.

Social Media Campaign

Inspired by the training, we decided to use the Library's existing social media outlets to marketing Bob. UWL Library has a Twitter account with 915 followers, and a Facebook page with 363 likes, giving us a ready audience. Followers are primarily UWL staff & students, as well as other UWL departmental Twitter accounts (and the usual bots and companies), so messages needed to appeal to a wide audience but clarify that the database was available to UWL students and staff based in the UK.

Our aim was to increase awareness and subsequent use of the database and we created a social media schedule to allow us to strategically plan our output. Using the advice from the training events, we were careful to include a range of messages: promoting the collection as a whole, promoting subject-specific playlists, and promoting individual items/programmes. We were careful to include promotion of individual functions (clips, playlists etc) and to link to tutorials and further information to provide instruction to users.
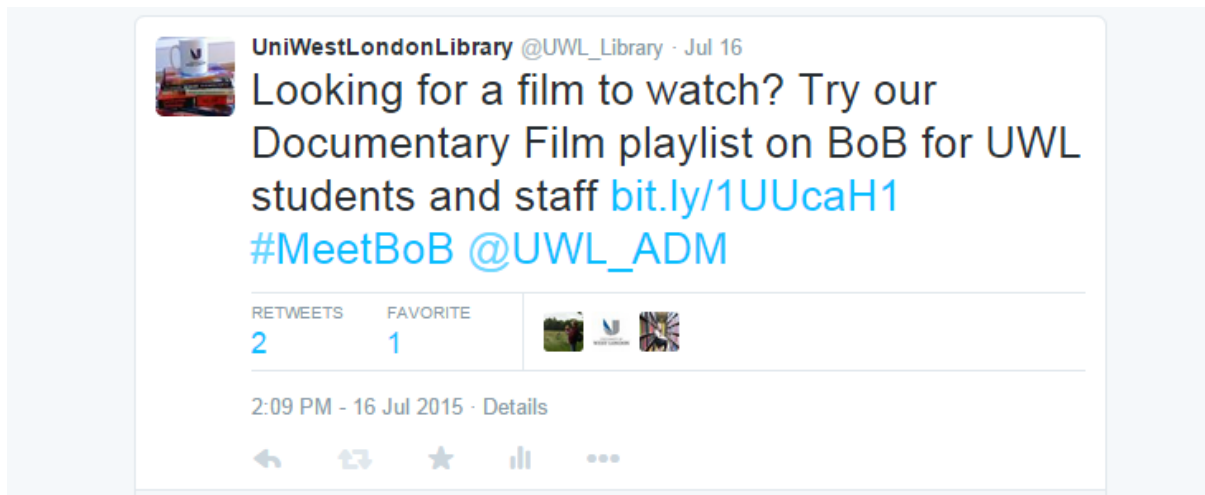

Figure 2: Sample Tweet from Social Media Campaign

The links included in the Twitter and Facebook messages we created using Bitly.com in order to allow us to monitor the number of clicks on each, to judge the messages that were most popular with users. We were also careful to match subject-specific messages to the

relevant academic school social media accounts, so that we could encourage them to share with their own followers.

We piloted the schedule, with an output of 1 or 2 messages per day, over a period of a week between 14th to 20th July (collected on Storify). We were cautious not to detract from the on-going campaign to promote the new Library that is due to open in September 2015, so decided to run the schedule in full after the countdown to opening and first few weeks were over.

Print Promotional Materials

In order to promote BoB to academics and to highlight its main features, we decided to create a booklet promoting BoB as a teaching resource. The content included basics of searching, but also social elements such as clip and playlist creation and sharing and embedding into Blackboard. We are currently working with the University's marketing department to create visually appealing booklets, reflecting the visual content of the database. We have an opportunity to deliver these straight to academics as part of a larger campaign to promote the new Library opening in September 2015, and we hope that the focus on design and content will make them attractive and substantial enough to be kept by academics for future reference.

To further increase engagement with the London School of Film, Design and Media, we are also hoping to give students from the School, particularly Graphic Design students, the opportunity to design a postcard (or similar) targeted at students.

Webpage Hub

The Library has an existing 'feature database' webpage that embeds a BUFVC tutorial and the key features BoB. This Jisc Spotlight project provided an opportunity to review this page and include some of the new resources and promotional material created. This will include links to the playlists created by Librarians. We also intend to review whether we need to create video tutorials in addition to those created by the BUFVC. Print promotional material will link to this page as an online hub for resources.

Figure 3: Current webpage for Box of Broadcast on UWL Library Website (July 2015)

VLE Presence

We're currently working with the University's Institute for Teaching, Innovation and Learning and Technology Enhanced Learning to increase BoB's presence on Blackboard and promote its function as a learning and teaching tool. This will help align BoB with other video-based tools such as Panopto, the University's lecture and screen capture software, and Lynda.com, a database of video tutorials on business, software, technology and creative skills.

Increased & Improved Training

In addition to these methods, we are also hoping to increase and improve training for Library staff, academics, and students using resources created and gathered through the project. BoB will be featured at future Library events for both academic staff and students. With the new playlists ready for every School, Librarians will be able to quickly retrieve a playlist of subject-specific content to allow academics and students to immediately see BoB's relevance to their own study and teaching.

What was the outcome?

**Monthly Programme Views:
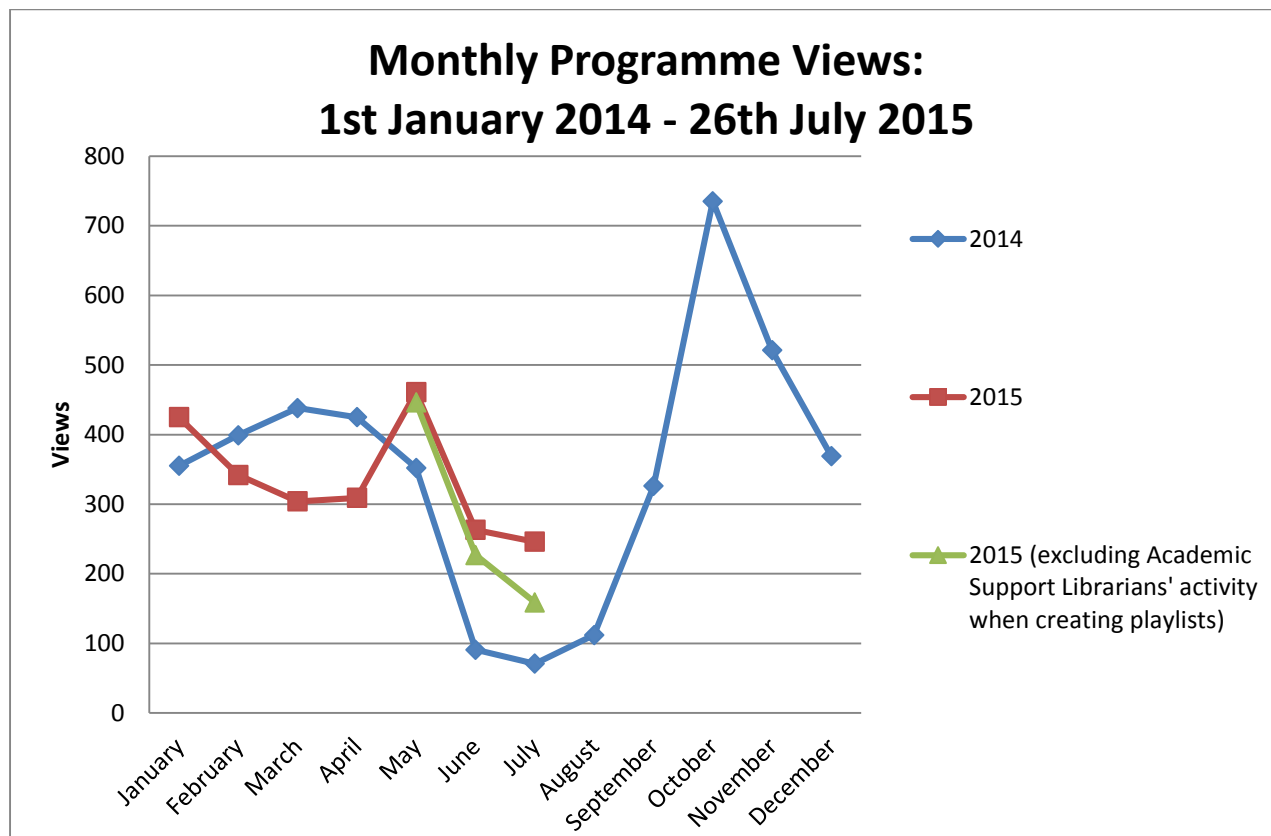1st January 2014 - 26th July 2015**

Figure 4: Monthly programme views: 1st January 2014-26th July 2015

The outcomes of the project will only be fully measurable over the next year once strategies have been successfully implemented and to allow time for term-time promotion and training. BoB statistics are updated every two weeks, and are two weeks in arrears, so information is only available up until 26th July 2015. Initial statistics (see Figure 4), however, do suggest an increase in use from May-July between 2014 and 2015; during activity which included the InformED blog post published on 29th May 2015, the Summon link added on 25th June, and the Twitter/Facebook campaign which ran from 14th to 20th July. In addition to BoB Usage statistics, we intend to use Google Analytics to review traffic from the updated BoB webpage on the Library website, and review Bitly.com statistics to analyse traffic directed from Twitter and Facebook messages. Hopefully usage will continue to grow during the next year, when the project will be reviewed again, and we will be able to gain some insight into the most successful methods to raising visibility and discoverability of Box of Broadcasts.

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