Editorial

Andretta, S. 2009. Bridging the gap between theory, research and practice of information literacy. *Journal of Information Literacy.* 3(1), pp. 1-4.
http://ojs.lboro.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JIL/article/view/ED-V3-I1-2009

Welcome to the Summer issue of JIL 2009. This is a rather special issue for a number of reasons. First, the journal's structure has been revised to reflect the multifaceted nature of information literacy and enable the examination of the diverse perspectives of this phenomenon. Secondly, for the first time JIL is hosting a collection of articles that is entirely drawn from the papers presented at the LILAC conference, held at Cardiff University from 30th March to 1st April 2009. And thirdly, on a more personal note, this issue of JIL witnesses my debut as its editor.

The discussion of the articles contained in this issue needs to be preceded by some elaboration on the restructuring of the journal. The original structure of JIL distinguished between articles on research and articles from practice. After some discussion, the editorial board decided that such a division fostered the view of 'research' and 'practice' as separate entities, rather than as two complementary and interrelated elements of information literacy, a view that JIL is keen to promote. This marks an important conceptual shift in the way the journal aims to further the debate about information literacy, which inspired the restructuring of JIL and the title of this editorial. The current structure comprises a number of sections and these are summarised here in the order of appearance in the journal.

The main section contains the peer-reviewed articles covering theoretical deliberations on, or practical applications of information literacy, or a combination of the two.   The only requirement is the adherence to the publishing standards of JIL, namely a critical and reflective exposition, supported by appropriate evidence from the literature and/or practice. At this point it is necessary to draw some examples from the articles to reiterate the claim that these theoretical and practical elements are really two sides of the same 'information literacy coin'. Patterson, for example, combines the outcome of an effective review of the literature highlighting the need to foster information literacy in research students with the employment of Evidence Based Librarianship and Information Practice to bridge the gap in the information literacy provision for this group of learners. Borg and Stretton, on the other hand, employ an 'Information Behaviour Typology' as the strategy geared towards the promotion of active learning in information literacy provision. This framework is based on eight animal typologies corresponding to eight information seeking behaviours which encourage the students to reflect on their approach to searching in order to develop their information literacy competences. Scutt and Verlander use the Learning Theory approach to counteract the dreariness of lectures to large groups of students by encouraging active learning through the use of innovative interactive strategies, such as the use of props, the Cephalonian Method or the Personal Response Systems. Bent and Stockdale favour a combination of pedagogical approaches fostering the training of a specific set of information skills at one end of the information literacy provision spectrum, while at the other end information literacy is seen as underpinning the development of a personalised learning process, described in terms of education that feeds into the lifelong learning of the students, or 'learning for life' as the authors call it. Whittaker and Dunham present an experimental investigation into the use of Web 2.0 tools to aid the curricular integration of information literacy 'at the point of need', in other words promoting a 'just in time' strategy as opposed to the traditional 'just in case' approach. And finally Cousins and Perris portray the Medicine Information Literacy Group (MILG) as a successful model devised by medical librarians at Imperial College to establish a coordinated approach to the provision and integration of information literacy that ensures consistency in the quality of its delivery by diverse staff and across multiple campuses. The activities of MILG are kept in check by regular review and evaluation strategies which are based on a triangulated approach of gathering feedback from students, teaching and library staff, thus demonstrating that reflective practice is just as valid as research underpinned by theoretical considerations.

Going back to the restructuring of JIL, the conference corner section provides the opportunity to disseminate accounts of any information literacy focused event in the UK, or internationally. As this

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issue is dedicated to LILAC 2009, the article in this section is written by Coxall et al, the seven students from HE and FE who were sponsored by the Information Literacy Group to attend LILAC. This paper complements the collection of articles published in this issue by giving an overview of this conference. The perspectives of these students reflect diverse interests in information literacy that span the educational spectrum from school to post-graduate provision and focus on the challenges afforded by Web 2.0 technologies and by the needs of synchronising national and international information literacy policies to satisfy the requirements of a global knowledge-based economy. Given the proliferation of information literacy-based events we expect this section to be well subscribed in future issues.

The information literacy projects section aims to disseminate details of funded research to inform the information literacy communities and keep them abreast of global developments. The article by Craig and Westwood presents an overview of the Information Literacy Process Model undertaken by the NHS Education for Scotland's Knowledge Service Group, demonstrating a growing convergence in the UK health care sector between information literacy and evidence-based practice with the ultimate aim of improving patient care. With the increased concerns about the information illiteracy of the Google generation (Lorenzo and Dzubian, 2006; CIBER, 2008; Ofcom, 2009) we expect future submissions to cover a wide range of funded projects addressing diverse educational settings. The section on the Students' view of information literacy offers a space for students from post-graduate course in LIS and other cognate disciplines, such as education or media, to publish the findings from their research covering theoretical or applied aspects of information literacy. We suspect that the timing of this issue is responsible for the absence of an article for this section as post-graduate students (at least in the UK) submit their research project at the end of the summer. However, we hope that from the next issue this section will attract regular submissions as it provides a unique opportunity for emerging professionals to get established within the information literacy community by disseminating the findings of their investigations. The reviews of relevant literature are no longer limited to the reviewing of books, but covers the evaluation of any information literacy related resource spanning all media. Whilst the current issue contains book reviews we hope that in future this section will feature reviews of resources that go beyond the printed format.

The papers published in this issue are from librarians operating within the academic environment. Amongst the scenarios that are depicted by these articles, perhaps the most striking, that will undoubtedly resonate with librarians who are responsible for information literacy education, is the one presented by Verlander and Scutt: "*My students need to know how to use the library. There are 80 in the group; you can have an hour with them*". This quote conjures up an image of the unequal relationship that still exists between librarians and teaching staff and the consequent lack of awareness by the latter about what 'using the library' entails. It is therefore in response to this type of situation that the papers presented in this issue should be viewed as they all offer ways of counteracting the 'stand alone, one hour library induction at the beginning of the academic year never to see the students again afterwards' approach that will be of interest to JIL readers who are involved in information literacy provision from a range of educational sectors. Two key strategies are presented by these papers to address this predicament, these are the establishment of collaboration between library and teaching staff, and the integration of information literacy in the curriculum. To achieve the former librarians have learned to speak the language of pedagogy in order to make information literacy more acceptable to teaching staff. The examples from the papers I have discussed earlier in relation to bridging the gap between theory, research and practice are a case in point. Collaboration with teaching staff may take different forms and operate at different levels of provision. For example, Borg and Stretton worked with the Faculty of Organisation and Management at Sheffield Hallam University to develop a new information literacy initiative targeting the needs of first year undergraduate Business and Management students. This paper also raises an interesting development reflected in a new 'alliance' between staff from the library and staff from the Learning Centre department where the latter actively participated to the development and delivery of information literacy provision. Scott and Verlander also comment on the positive impact of collaborating with the staff from the Centre for Learning and Teaching at Liverpool Hope who provided practical advice on innovative teaching methods such as the

Communicube. They also stress the importance of using 'cost effective' resources which is a crucial consideration in the current economic climate. Whittaker and Dunham emphasise the use of Web 2.0 technology with the aim of encouraging first year medical students at Leicester University to engage with the complexity of ethics within the medical and legal contexts. And finally, the paper by Bent and Stockdale, offer an example of a 'golden thread' approach that spans the full programme of the BSc Environmental Science at Newcastle University. Here information literacy provision relies on the full collaboration between teaching and library staff and on the integration of information literacy throughout the degree based on the information literacy strategy for environmental science.

Information literacy integration also requires that the activities employed are relevant to the students who are at the receiving end of information literacy provision. To some extent, all of the papers refer to this point, although the accounts by Patterson, and Cousins and Perris give specific examples of how to make information literacy relevant to the student population. As referred to earlier Patterson employed the Evidence Based Librarianship and Information Practice model to identify and address the needs of students attending research degrees at the University College Dublin. Patterson employed three different data gathering strategies that enabled her to gather data on the students' perception of their information literacy competences through a diagnostic survey, establish whether the information literacy requirements of these students varied according to discipline and/or their ethnographic profiles through observation, and evaluate the impact of the information literacy programme through a focus group consisting of students who had attended the information literacy sessions. Patterson's recommended strategies for information literacy provision are still a long way from the Norwegian model of information literacy facilitation proposed by Torras (2008) where the librarian supervises PhD students alongside the subject specialists. However, the findings presented in Patterson's paper will certainly be of interest to academic librarians who run information literacy programmes for research students. The MILG model, presented by Cousin and Perris, emerged from the need to establish a support network inspired by Wenger's idea of a 'community of practice'. This model promotes a number of shared initiatives, such as resource champions, training the trainers events and diagnostic as well as summative evaluation strategies feeding into the development of future information literacy provision. In other words, this paper offers a good example of "collective learning" (Wenger, 1999: 263) that enables MILG to successfully keep ahead of technological developments and the information literacy requirements of students and staff at Imperial College.

To conclude, this collection of articles reiterates the theme proposed by this editorial of bridging the gap between theory, research and practice as the authors present sound theoretical or evaluative justifications to validate their current information literacy provision. The strength of these papers rests on the reflective attitudes adopted by their authors who provide concrete and, most importantly, honest accounts of the impact that their information literacy practice has on the learners, including not only things that work but also things that do not work and need reviewing. Reading these articles I get a sense of déjà vu as I recall the paper by Stubbings and Franklin (2006) which outlined similar 'challenges' of integrating information literacy within the curricula and of finding teaching staff willing to collaborate. Three years on, and the debate on information literacy, at least in HE, seems to have moved to a new stage where the 'challenges' are now perceived as 'opportunities' for the advocacy of information literacy initiatives. If so much has been achieved in such a short time I can't help thinking that perhaps in the not so distant future librarians might be operating as 'educators' with 'information literacy expertise' on the par with teaching staff as educators with 'subject expertise'.

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