

# Journal of Information Literacy

ISSN 1750-5968

Volume 4 Issue 1

June 2010

**Andretta, S. 2010. Learner-centred information literacy initiatives in Higher Education. *Journal of Information Literacy*. 4(1), pp. 1-5.**

**<http://ojs.lboro.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JIL/article/view/ED-V4-I1-2010>**

**Copyright for the article content resides with the authors, and copyright for the publication layout resides with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Information Literacy Group. These Copyright holders have agreed that this article should be available on Open Access.**

“By 'open access' to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.”

Chan, L. et al 2002. *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> [Retrieved 22 January 2007].

**W**elcome to the first issue of JIL 2010 (Vol.4) which continues the information literacy (IL) debate presented in the 2009 volume of this journal. As we have seen, the collection of articles in the first issue of Volume 3 bridges the gap between theoretical and practical constructs of information literacy, thereby establishing a valid premise for the investigation of this phenomenon, and the primary purpose of JIL. On the other hand, the collection published in the second issue of Volume 3, describes the ‘multifaceted nature’ of information literacy, thereby acknowledging that the scope of this investigation is necessarily a wide-ranging one. The current issue, as the title of this editorial indicates, examines learner-centred information literacy initiatives within the HE context. The first three papers are concerned with information literacy education (ILE) associated with the development of problem-solving and research competences within specific discipline-based contexts, while the remaining two papers, from LILAC, reflect innovative ways of providing timely support to the learners by employing mobile and video technologies.



**Figure 1 Dromoland Castle hosting the LILAC’s Conference dinner and CSG Information Literacy Award, Limerick 2010.**

There are a number of implications that emerge as a result of adopting a learner-centred approach in information literacy. In the first instance, this means developing a conceptual information literacy model, and an example of this is presented in the article by Keen, Colvin and Sisson as the ‘Colvin-Keen Information Literacy model’, employed with undergraduate computing students at the University of Worcester. This model differs from existing frameworks, i.e. SCONUL, 1999; ACRL, 2000; and ANZIIL, (Bundy, 2004), because “*it includes a holistic view that embeds information literacy in the problem solving cycle, rather than trying to deconstruct all aspects of information literacy that an individual may use at different times. Secondly, the model emphasises the relevant cognitive skills exercised by students at each stage in the information cycle*”. A learner-centred approach also means redefining the working relationship between library and faculty staff. Keen et al. describe this collaboration not just as ‘necessary’ to support ‘academically challenged’ students, and deliver content made relevant by problem-based learning, but also as ‘desirable’. This is because their study shows that such collaboration is the most effective way of addressing the learning needs of the students. Whilst the article by Miner and Alexander is examined later, it is worth stressing here that these authors also promote collaboration as an opportunity for “*faculty and library staff to share their research knowledge and experience with undergraduate students*”. The initiatives presented by these two papers seem to suggest that a more equal and constructive collaboration is emerging because of its beneficial impact on library and faculty staff, and on the IL/research/learning experiences of the students. I have hinted at the need for this type of collaboration in a previous editorial where I argued 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’” (Andretta, 2009, p. 3), but it is encouraging to see concrete examples of this.

Like Keen et al., van Helvoort interprets information literacy as a more holistic process of 'information problem solving', and this is set within the context of Dutch academic institutions as long-standing promoters of a student-centred learning culture. The scoring rubric proposed by van Helvoort aims to assess the students' performance by establishing clear grading criteria for specific aspects of information literacy (or stages of the information problem solving process) to foster the integration of IL within 'discipline-based curricula'. Most importantly, the rubric ensures that the importance of being information literate is acknowledged by tutors and students alike. This paper also makes a convincing case against using traditional tests, as these lack the authenticity of simulating 'real world' situations, assessing what van Helvoort describes as "knowing what" (i.e. focused on the task) at the expenses of "knowing how" (i.e. focused on the conceptualisation of the task). The author also highlights a limitation of the scoring rubric that merits a mention here. To put it simply, van Helvoort associates the rubric with one of Bruce's *Seven Faces of Information Literacy* (1997), namely the Information Process Conception, arguing that the rubric can only assess task-related IL performance and is therefore necessarily focusing on short-term impact, whereas it would be desirable to expand the focus of assessment on what Bruce describes as the 'Knowledge Construction' (Bruce, 1997, p. 137) and 'Knowledge Extension' (Bruce, 1997, p. 143) conceptions to ascertain the long-term impact of IL where students solve information problems in new learning situations (i.e. they show the extent of retention and transfer of the IL practices learned).

The paper by Miner and Alexander offers another example of learner-centred information literacy practices using LibGuides to target undergraduate students attending courses in Political Science and International Affairs at North Georgia College & State University, USA. The main purpose of the LibGuides is to help students become 'research-savvy' by offering quality links to a wide range of sources. These guides also aim to assuage the anxiety which students experience particularly when the topics are 'unfamiliar' or 'intimidating'. Miner and Alexander present the number of hits for each of the LibGuides as an indication of success, although they do acknowledge that a more in-depth evaluation of these resources is needed to assess their full impact on the students' research practices (which the authors equate with the students' development as information literate learners).

For Walsh the learner-centred approach takes the form of 'blurring the boundaries' between the physical reality and the electronic world in order to offer provision at the right time and the right place. In this initiative is hosted by the University of Huddersfield, the library is taking advantage of mobile technology and QR codes to "*deliver information skills materials directly to our users at the point of need, linked by QR codes on printed materials and on appropriate locations in the physical library*". Personally, I was taken by Walsh's use of technology to augment the 'reality of the library services' where delivery is customised by need and physical context. The strategy of information provision 'at the point of need' is also the view presented by Gravett whose project of creating a virtual tutorial for Health and Social care students at the University of Surrey is an example of how "*Using video can maximise the impact of e-learning tools, helping online tutorials to deliver information in a more personal and immediate way*". However, Walsh and Gravett warn us that initiatives involving mobile and video technologies raise some challenges of their own about the level of commitment and resources required to create mobile-friendly or multimedia resources. These challenges are compounded by the reluctance by the users/learners to adopt these innovative practices, even if they

offer potentially easier access to information.

As this issue is published after LILAC it has become a tradition to include an account by the student(s) sponsored to attend this event in the Conference corner of JIL. This year the contribution is by Jo Alcock, a distance learning student at Aberystwyth University, who presents a humorous but also insightful piece on the main themes of LILAC, and on the way “social media” was used before, during, and after the conference to maximise networking and communication amongst the participants. I particularly liked the Tag cloud of tweets from LILAC 2010 that Jo used, because for me this image really captures the feeling (and the sound) of a 1,000 conversations all happening at the same time. It reminds me of the IFLA Conference in 2007 and the moment I first entered the International Convention Centre in Durban, South Africa, where IFLA was being held, and was enveloped by a hubbub of activities and conversations. At the time I compared this to “a rumbling volcano bubbling with ideas and expectations” (Andretta and Swanson, 2008, p. 1), and judging from Jo’s account such a description might also apply to LILAC.

In the Projects section, Jane Secker offers a brief account of the visit that she, together with Debbi Boden, made on behalf of CSG-Information Literacy Group (ILG) in September 2009. Far from being a holiday, this was an official trip aimed at forging contacts between the ILG and a number of libraries in New Jersey, US, in order to exchange views about information literacy education. What is intriguing about Jane’s findings are the different perceptions that emerged during the visit to Monmouth University library, when she observed that “*in terms of getting information literacy widely recognised and embedded in the curriculum surprisingly our American colleagues felt we were perhaps further ahead than they were [..]*”. Some JIL readers on this side of the ‘pond’ might share Jane’s surprise at this view, given that information literacy in the USA has reached one of the highest forms of political recognition when October 2009 was proclaimed the National Information Literacy Awareness Month (The White House, 2009). By contrast, while in the UK the importance of IL has been acknowledged in a number of sectors, its recognition at a national level is something that has yet to be achieved.

This issue includes four book reviews. Johnson reviews *New technologies, new pedagogies: Mobile learning in higher education*, a collection of chapters edited by Herrington et al. (2009), which in his view provides a ‘rich source’ of experiences in m-learning, embedded in ‘sound educational theory’. The second book, *Digital information: order or anarchy?* (2010), edited by Woodward and Estelle, is well received by Godwin because it raises some thought provoking issues about the digital challenges seen from a number of perspectives (i.e. the library, the journal publisher and e-books publisher to name a few). It is because of these numerous ‘takes’, Godwin argues, that the book will appeal to a wide range of audiences. The remaining two books generate equally positive reviews by Emerton and Thompson because of their focus on the development of an IL strategy that is based on a sound pedagogical rationale. For example, Emerton’s review of *Information literacy education: a process approach. Professionalising the pedagogical role of academic libraries* (2009) notes that the authors, Torras and Sætre, practise a process-oriented IL education as an effective alternative to a source-oriented library induction and as a way of expanding the librarian’s role to that of research students’ supervisor. Thompson in his review of *Teaching Information Literacy for inquiry-based learning* (2009) reports that Hepworth and Walton identify ‘four faces’ of learning

(consisting of sensory, cognitive, constructivist and social constructivist approaches) and explore practical IL 'interventions' strategies that address such pedagogical diversity.

As in the previous volume of JIL, a shared theme runs through the papers and reviews in the current issue, which as we have seen focuses on learner-centred information literacy education (i.e. facilitating the IL practices of the learners) and provision (i.e. enhancing access to and quality of the information required by the learners). In terms of education, there is a tendency to view IL as a holistic process that is problem-solving and content-relevant (Colvin et al.); that goes beyond searching and retrieval to encourage information-problem solving practices (van Helvoort); and that helps the students to become research-savvy (Miner and Alexander). Needless to say, the books by Torras and Sætre (2009) and Hepworth and Walton (2009) complement the student-centred approach to IL presented by these papers. In terms of provision, innovative practices are employed through the application of mobile (Walsh) and video (Gravett) technologies that make information accessible when and where it is needed by the learners. Here, the issues examined in the two collections, edited by Herrington et al. (2009) and by Woodward and Estelle (2010), complement the challenges of production and maintenance raised by the two LILAC articles.

On a personal note this issue marks the first anniversary of my editorship of JIL and, at the risk of sounding trite, I would like to conclude this editorial by expressing my appreciation of JIL's operational and editorial teams as well as the journal's reviewers, for their efforts in ensuring that the papers published by this journal adhere to its publishing standards by offering "*a critical and reflective exposition, supported by appropriate evidence from the literature and/or practice*" (Andretta, 2009, p. 1). I would also like to thank the authors who have contributed (and will contribute) to the journal. Their diverse and innovative 'takes' on information literacy give JIL its unique character and make this journal an appropriate forum for the exploration of information literacy amongst its diverse communities and in all its guises.

## References

ACRL. 2000. *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* [Online]. Chicago: Association of College & Research Libraries. Available at: <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency.cfm> [Accessed: 9 June 2010].

Andretta, S. 2009. Bridging the gap between theory, research and practice of information literacy. *Journal of Information Literacy*. 3(1), pp. 1-4. Available at: <http://ojs.lboro.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JIL/article/view/ED-V3-I1-2009> [Accessed: 9 June 2010].

Andretta, S. and Daly Swanson, B. First-Timers View of IFLA and Information Literacy in Durban, *IFLA Newsletter*, January 2008, 6(1), pp. 1-2. Available at: <http://archive.ifla.org/VII/s42/news/IL-Newsletter200801.pdf> [Accessed: 9 June 2010].

Bundy, A. (ed.) 2004. *Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework principles, standards and practice* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [Online]. Adelaide: Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy. Available at: <http://www.caul.edu.au/info-literacy/InfoLiteracyFramework.pdf> [Accessed: 9 June 2010].

Bruce, C. 1997. *The Seven Faces of Information Literacy*, Auslib Press, Adelaide.

SCONUL. 1999. *Information skills in higher education* [Online]. Available at: [http://www.sconul.ac.uk/groups/information\\_literacy/papers/Seven\\_pillars2.pdf](http://www.sconul.ac.uk/groups/information_literacy/papers/Seven_pillars2.pdf) [Accessed: 9 June 2010].

The White House. *National Information Literacy Awareness Month*, October 2009. Available at: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/presidential-proclamation-national-information-literacy-awareness-month/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/presidential-proclamation-national-information-literacy-awareness-month/) [Accessed: 23 February 2010].