

Journal of Information Literacy

ISSN 1750-5968

Volume 1 Issue 1

January 2007

Book reviews

- Pope, A. (2007). "Clinch: Teaching Legal Research." *Journal of information literacy*, 1(1), 60-61.
- Wolf, M. (2007). "Dale et al.: Subject librarians: engaging with the learning and teaching environment." *Journal of information literacy*, 1(1), 61-62.
- Hough, H. (2007) "Walton and Pope: Information Literacy: recognising the need." *Journal of information literacy*, 1(1), 62-64.

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

Book reviews

Clinch, P. (2006). *Teaching legal research*. 2nd ed. Warwick: UK Centre for Legal Education. 135 pp. ISBN 1902730100 pbk. £8. Available free online at <http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/resources/tlr>

Reviewed by: Alison Pope, Senior Subject and Learning Support Librarian, Learning and Teaching Fellow, Staffordshire University, UK.

This is a new edition of the 1998 work *Teaching legal research* by Peter Clinch. It has been revised and updated to take account of major developments in the higher education legal arena. In his preface to the second edition Peter highlights the impact and importance of three of these developments, namely:

- the setting in 2000 of a subject benchmark for law teaching in the United Kingdom (UK) by the Quality Assurance Agency;
- the application of the concept of information literacy to legal research skills training;
- the increasing use of electronic learning and Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs).

The new edition includes two completely new chapters, one focusing on learning theory and legal research and the other on the development and use of virtual learning environments. Chapters which featured in the first edition have been re-worked and updated and now contain more detail. Another useful feature of the second edition is that updated versions of illustrations and examples which were published in appendices in the first edition are now integrated into the text in the second. The second edition also contains an expanded and updated bibliography as well as a detailed table of contents which was not present in the first.

The first chapter describes the place of legal research teaching within both the Bar Vocational Course and the Law Society Legal Practice Course. It also outlines the requirements for legal research teaching at the academic stage, delineating the subject benchmark statement for undergraduate law and featuring the Quality Assurance Agency's modal statement and learning outcomes. As such it is a succinct assimilation of much essential information which many librarians will need for quality assurance purposes and in designing their own legal research courses.

Within chapter one the authors' definition of legal research is expressed generically as:

- identifying and analysing a problem;
- finding appropriate information to solve the problem;
- presenting the results of the analysis and research in an appropriate and effective manner.

There is also a brief explanation of how the concept of information literacy marries well with this definition of legal research. This is linked to the five competency standards for information literate students determined by the US Association of College and Research Libraries in 2002. It is perhaps slightly disappointing that the link is only made to the American definition for information literacy and that no reference is made here to other information literacy standards or descriptors. Leaving aside the work done by Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy (ANZIIL), it would have been nice to see UK models for information literacy mentioned; the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) *Seven Pillars* model or, indeed, the iterative cycle of information literacy put forward by the Joint Information Systems Committee funded *Big Blue* project.

Chapter two, *Learning theory and legal research* is an excellent summary of the major theories of learning. It outlines the behaviourist theory, the social cognition theory and the experiential learning approach. In four sharply focused pages the main features of these theories are described and explained. This explanation will be most welcome to those who are qualified as librarians but without formal teaching qualifications. The expanded bibliography gives a splendid series of references to take this study further if so desired.

The third chapter concentrates upon curriculum development and sets this in the context of integrating information literacy within the course or module. Useful pointers on the embedding of information literacy principles within the curriculum are given. A checklist of legal research skills and of materials is described. The importance of teaching legal research skills in tandem with the development of students Information Technology skills is emphasised. Stress is placed upon the need to think about the phasing and timing of the course to ensure that the students are learning at the optimum point in their studies. The paramount need to

work in partnership with the School or department is highlighted and the differences between the preferred embedded model and the less satisfactory “bolt-on” alternative are discussed.

Chapter four focuses upon the planning of lessons and their structure and content. Five standard lesson structures are described and supported by examples. The use of workbooks is also discussed. Lesson materials and teaching aids are featured in Chapter five. Here there is much valuable practical advice obviously borne of the authors’ own considerable collective experience.

The development and use of Virtual Learning Environments is examined in chapter six. Every practical aspect of the design and use of a VLE is covered and there is a handy explanation of how VLEs might appeal to the different learner styles identified by Honey and Mumford. There is a useful section describing the advantages and disadvantages of using VLEs for teaching and training. Possible pitfalls such as copyright issues are mentioned. The amount of time needed to design and develop such material is stressed as is the need to work in a team and to tap into the work of others.

The need to be involved in the assessment of legal research skills is outlined in chapter seven. The integration of research skills into the assessment of other law subjects is rightly seen as important. If legal research is to be embedded within the curriculum, then it should follow that its assessment be done in the same way and that, ideally, librarians be involved in the process. Practical ideas are given on the setting of legal research assessments and coping with problems like plagiarism and collaboration.

The value of evaluation is discussed in chapter eight. The process of becoming a reflective practitioner is at the core of many Higher Education teacher training courses so it is useful to see this essential teaching skill emphasised. The authors also consider the importance of gaining evaluation from students and from other teaching colleagues via peer observation.

My only criticism is with regard to the typeface. I found this small and feint but I suspect its selection may be due to an unavoidable series style. In every other respect this is a most welcome work; useful to both the newcomer to the field of legal research teaching and to the seasoned campaigner. It gives useful practical advice but, at the same time, raises thought provoking issues relating to both learning and teaching theories and to the application of the concept of information literacy.

Dale, P., Holland, M. and Matthews, M. (2006). *Subject librarians: engaging with the learning and teaching environment*. Aldershot: Ashgate. pp220. ISBN: 0754640957. £50.00.

Reviewed by: Martin Wolf, Social Sciences Librarian, University of Warwick, UK.

The editors of this volume state its aim is to provide:

“snapshots of the work and responsibilities of subject librarians and to encourage discussion and reflection on the way that the role is developing.” (p.xv)

Their intended audience includes practitioners, staff in other university support departments, and library and information students. Whilst this might help address a perceived gap in the literature, the “snapshot” approach, and the wide ranging audience, results in a book often frustratingly light on detail, neither practical enough to provide solid guidance for practitioners nor investigative enough to provoke genuine debate.

Split into four sections (including its conclusion), the book’s 13 chapters cover the role of subject librarians in higher education, outline how different constituencies are served and provide an international perspective on the role of the subject librarian.

Section one opens with a clearly structured overview of the literature on subject librarian roles, providing a brief history and identifying some interesting trends, such as a move from library convergence with computing departments to convergence with learner support services. The lack of any exploration of how subject librarians engage with the research support agenda is quite noticeable. The usual suspects affecting the work of subject librarians, such as technological innovation, disintermediation and Virtual Learning Environments are introduced: there is little detail, but the scene is set for what follows.

From hereon in, the section contains chapters examining different aspects of librarians’ work, with varying degrees of success. Some interesting issues are raised, such as highlighting the consumerist nature of the environment in which students now operate and the ways in which library services may need to adapt. Chapters on quality assurance procedures in Higher Education (HE) and ensuring equity of provision to

students undertaking courses in Further Education colleges linked to HE institutions provide detailed information about the factors involved. These chapters help the reader understand the challenges facing subject librarians and the contexts in which they work.

Unfortunately the standards of writing vary greatly, from nicely-paced and well-structured chapters to those with single paragraphs extending over more than a page and sometimes exhibiting a worrying lack of focus (indeed, titling a chapter “Professional engagement: the subject specialist in higher education” begs the question “what in the subject librarian’s work *couldn’t* be covered by that title?”). Others, such as the chapter on VLEs, will add little or nothing to the knowledge of practitioners, containing as it does “case studies” that cover only one paragraph each.

This lack of detail in case studies extends to some of the chapters in the second section, a more detailed look at how subject librarians can and do provide services to different constituencies. The chapter on providing services to undergraduates via a case study of Newcastle University paints a picture that will be familiar to most practitioners, but does not provide detailed answers to some of the issues it raises within its introduction (e.g. it does not address in depth how problems that arose in their information literacy programmes were tackled). The chapter’s near total focus on information literacy, to the exclusion of, for example, collection development, building layout and design, use of new communication technologies, etc., limits its usefulness.

Other chapters in this section provide more guidance for practitioners as well as those new to the profession. In particular, the chapters on supporting researchers and international students are well-written summaries of their topics. The chapter on researchers provides a brief but informative history of the Research Assessment Exercise and points to ways in which librarians can advocate for their greater involvement in graduate schools programmes (the focus specifically on PhD researchers is perhaps its main weakness). Meanwhile, the chapter on supporting international students acts as a thorough review of the relevant issues that can act as a good guide to those new to the responsibilities of dealing with international students.

The third section comprises a single chapter. After a brief literature review of international approaches to subject librarianship (which excludes the United States of America), the chapter provides a picture of the current state of subject librarianship at Southern African universities. While of interest in and of itself, its inclusion in a book otherwise dominated by the United Kingdom HE scene seems somewhat odd. Sadly it also provides another example of a chapter not truly delivering on its promise: whilst a comparison of the functionalist and subject specialist models of librarianship would be of interest, the functionalist model is not examined in enough detail to make for a worthwhile comparison.

On a general level, it must be noted that the book could have benefited from more stringent proofreading, with errors encountered throughout the book. Similarly, the reproduction of the two black and white illustrations is very poor (one would certainly hope for better from a book costing £50).

If the editors’ main goal was to provide a title that filled a gap in the literature on subject librarianship, then the publication of this book satisfies that goal. However, whether the resultant volume is detailed enough to encourage debate or inform actions is open to question.

Walton, G. & Pope, A. (eds.) (2006). *Information Literacy: recognising the need*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing. 63 pp. ISBN 184334243X pbk. £20.00

Reviewed by: Hannah Hough, Head of Academic Services: St Martin’s College, Lancaster, Carlisle, Ambleside, UK.

This short publication provides a comprehensive and reflective overview of the *Information Literacy: recognising the need* conference held on 17th May 2006 at Staffordshire University. Edited by the conference organisers it combines the full conference proceedings with additional papers and prose to provide the reader with a well-rounded review of current research in the field of information literacy.

Papers are taken from a wide range of contexts, drawing upon practitioner research and academic theory. The theme of independent lifelong learning and educational theory runs throughout the publication, comparing and contrasting the work of key information literacy experts. A wide range of topics are included, each responding to the conference title in a different way.

A helpful introduction to the publication sets out the initial purpose of the conference, highlighting key contributors and setting the scene for the papers that follow. Six articles then lead the reader through a range of different concepts; challenging and questioning possible preconceptions and reflecting upon the future of information literacy.

The first paper by Susie Andretta discusses the importance of integrating information literacy with “learning-how-to-learn”, and discusses the pedagogical implications that this may have upon academic staff and information professionals. Andretta challenges the traditional transmittal model of teaching and discusses the constraints that it places upon independent learning, a key element of successful information internalisation. Andretta uses the example of a Higher Education Orientation module from London Metropolitan University to illustrate the potential of allowing students to find their own pathway through information literacy education, reflecting on student reactions to this alternative pedagogical approach and considering the political impact this style of learning can have upon pre-defined roles and remits within an Higher Education (HE) institution.

The next paper by Bent et al. presents a case study of an information literacy toolkit that has not only provided a bank of interactive learning activities for skills integration into the curriculum but that has led to an increased involvement from the academic community in training provision. The authors discuss the use of an Information Literacy Forum, an unexpected spin-off from the toolkit project, to investigate academic attitudes to information literacy and their perceived priorities for the pedagogical development of the toolkit resources. The impact of this forum is discussed, highlighting the importance of communication between information professionals and academic staff and the significance of these links is demonstrated through examples of extensive staff involvement in the development of student skills.

An article by Jones et al. discusses the use of interactive white boards to increase student motivation and involvement within traditional information literacy sessions. The paper describes the applications of this technology within training sessions at Manchester Metropolitan University and focuses upon the uptake and attitudes of library staff to the changes in teaching style. The successes of interactive information literacy training are highlighted and implications for staff training and support are outlined.

Peter Godwin offers a potentially controversial viewpoint on the future of information literacy support in his paper, discussing the value of freely available online information resources and the importance of embracing new search methods within the information community. Godwin challenges the traditional focus of information retrieval and argues that modern technologies and information resources will have a significant impact on the future of information literacy. A thought-provoking transformation of the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) *Seven Pillars* model of information literacy concludes the paper and leaves the reader with many questions to reflect upon.

The paper by Brauer continues the strike on preconceived concepts of information literacy, dissecting the very basis of search queries and questioning whether automated information retrieval has gone too far. Brauer argues that the reductive language used when searching online tools is simply an abstract representation of an information need and removes the context and true meaning initially intended by the researcher. Brauer acknowledges the value of source evaluation for the contextualisation of retrieved information but stresses the difference between evaluation of facts and the comprehension of information for knowledge and true appreciation of a subject.

The next paper by Webber and Johnston outlines findings from a research project at the University of Sheffield and draws upon Australian practice to develop a set of characteristics proposed for the development of the “Information Literate University” (ILU). The authors describe the ILU as a learning organisation that supports all aspects of personal information literacy by continuously transforming itself to avoid the creation of information silos and to allow the integration of information literacy into all institutional activities. The paper looks closely at the attitudes of academic staff to the integration of information literacy within the curriculum and research agenda and considers how far we have progressed towards the development of ILUs in the UK.

The final reflection by Mark Hepworth draws out the main themes of the conference and places the range of articles within the national context. Hepworth not only reiterates the key concepts of the event for the reader but also offers an additional viewpoint on many of the topics raised. The article concludes with a handful of questions for the reader that set out the next range of issues that information professionals must begin to face if we are to evolve successfully with the educational world around us.

This publication provides an interesting snapshot of current perceptions of information literacy in the UK, continuously encouraging the reader to contemplate why these must change. The wide range of topics covered in the conference papers offer something for everyone; however, this also makes the target audience of the publication a little unclear with the complexity and assumed knowledge of information literacy differing between papers. On the whole this publication is an exciting adventure into the future of information literacy, drawing upon the expertise of key researchers in the field and offering a preview of where the journey may lead us.