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Book Review

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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].

Healy, M. and Jenkins, A. 2009. *Developing undergraduate research and enquiry*. York: The Higher Education Academy. 152pp. ISBN. 9781905788996

Available online at:

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/resources/publications/DevelopingUndergraduate_Final.pdf

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At the heart of this work by Healey and Jenkins is the contention that all undergraduate students should experience learning through and about research and inquiry, in order to become “autonomous producers of work, rather than passive consumers of knowledge”. As a librarian, it is always rewarding working with students engaged in inquiry-based learning. Information literacy has more resonance when students are engaged on their own quests for information and knowledge. Too often, the tyranny of the book list means that the library is defined by lack of core texts rather than as a portal to knowledge enhancement. This work suggests an invigorating alternative, through enriching the curriculum by inclusion of inquiry-based learning through research. The work is intended for an audience interested in fostering a more dynamic link between teaching and research within the curriculum and targets academic staff, course leaders, departmental heads, institutional and national higher education policy makers.

The first section outlines the argument for the inclusion of undergraduate research and inquiry-based learning within the curriculum with much reference to existing literature in the field. Close attention is paid to examining the roots of undergraduate research practice in the United States. One of the strengths of this publication is the sheer number of stimulating case studies that are included describing many ways in which research and inquiry have become integral to undergraduate academic practice within institutions across the world. Examples of student engagement in undergraduate research and inquiry are given for induction; for progression within academic study; by discipline (particularly within the STEM subjects: science, technology, engineering and mathematics); within departments, course teams and institutions. Traditionally within the UK, emphasis on undergraduate research has typically resided in the final-year dissertation accompanied often by short modules of research skills. Healey and Jenkins consider that this experience could be further enriched if some element of research dissemination is also included so that the process more closely mirrors that of knowledge creation within the disciplines. Outcomes from research-based learning are varied and include: articles; journals; websites; products; reports; conference posters; and presentations to business and community leaders.

Much dynamism and creativity is evident within the programmes captured within this work that seem to offer a more meaningful experience of higher education for many. It becomes clear from this new framework of undergraduate provision that to graduate without any understanding of the process of research within a particular discipline would be to do students a great disservice. In this argument, it is critical that undergraduate students become part of the research community learning in ways that mirror the methods which academic staff utilise when researching and learning within their own disciplines.

In the second half of the publication, pragmatic consideration is given to the development of an undergraduate research-based curriculum within disciplines, departments and institutions. Strategies for engagement at every level of the institution are given. However, despite excellent examples of inquiry-based learning in action, the picture of engagement that comes across is one of fragmentation. Currently, it appears to be a model that is driven by some enthusiasts, in some disciplines, at some institutions. One questions whether the incentive to imaginatively innovate within the UK is high enough when the burden to publish for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) is so heavy. This, coupled with new pressures arising from the recent Government Spending Review, could mean that the capacity to innovate and drive through curriculum change remains low. Also although it appears that some students do well within a research-based framework, more traditionally-focused students may not. It would have been interesting to have had more examination of learner preference for this model.

It is interesting in the US that research-intensive universities have been driven to innovate and design high-quality undergraduate research programmes in order to ensure that they can guarantee a highly-scholarly, learner-centered experience from day one. Perhaps following the Browne Review, such drivers could well start to reshape undergraduate provision within the UK to include more aspects of research-based learning.