

# Journal of Information Literacy

ISSN 1750-5968

Volume 6 Issue 1

June 2012

## Book Review

Koutsomichali, D. 2012. Book Review of Flaspohler, M. R. (2012). *Engaging First-Year Students in Meaningful Library Research: A practical guide for teaching faculty*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing. *Journal of information literacy*, Vol 6(1), <http://dx.doi.org/10.11645/6.1.1707>

**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].

**Flaspohler, Molly, R. 2012. *Engaging First-Year Students in Meaningful Library Research: A practical guide for teaching faculty*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing. pp.180. ISBN. 978-1-84334-640-1 £47.50. Pbk.**

**Dina Koutsomichali, Assistant Information Adviser, University of Brighton.  
Email: [D.Koutsomichali@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:D.Koutsomichali@brighton.ac.uk)**

*Engaging First-Year Students in Meaningful Library Research* is aimed primarily at newly-qualified academics involved in teaching information literacy (IL) to first-year students, but also to librarians involved in the same process. The prevailing theme of the book is the need for collaboration between librarians and academics in order to enable first-year students to become competent researchers. According to the author, “the text has two overarching goals: to discuss the necessity and value of incorporating information literacy competencies into first-year courses; and also to provide a variety of practical, targeted strategies for doing so” (p 8).

The book is divided into three chapters. The first chapter introduces the reader to the generation of modern-day students which the writer refers to as ‘the Millennials’, and to their generational characteristics in relation to information seeking and research. Chapter two then focuses on IL and why Millennial students need it. Finally, chapter three looks at why collaborations between academics and librarians are necessary when integrating IL outcomes into first-year courses.

Chapter one provides a very thorough review of the literature on the characteristics of ‘the Millennials’, who are technologically savvy but unaware of efficient research practices despite the fact that they have easier access to more information and resources than ever before. It also provides a definition of what IL is using a description from the American Association of College and Research Libraries’ (ACRL) standards for Higher Education, and a rationale as to why training in IL is needed. Finally, it discusses the urgency for collaboration between academics and librarians and demonstrates how librarians and academics can collaborate. It is unfortunate at this stage that only the American definition of IL is presented. This narrows the scope of the book and so misses the opportunity to explore and discuss work carried out in other countries, for example those in Australia and New Zealand by the Australian and New Zealand Institute of Information Literacy (ANZIL) and in the UK by the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL).

Chapter two puts IL in the context of the first year at university. It continues the discussion of contemporary first-year students’ research abilities and the need for incorporating IL outcomes into their courses. It would perhaps have been better to have included this discussion in the previous chapter as this has already been touched upon there. It also presents ideas for a process-centred approach to library research training, highlighting the importance of using a model like Kuhlthau’s Information Search Process (ISP) model as a way to engage students in library work. It concludes by putting forward ideas for consideration by academics and librarians about how course content and IL training can co-exist.

Chapter three is devoted to pedagogical approaches and strategies to be considered when trying to incorporate IL into a first-year course. It reviews constructivist learning theory and Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Outcomes, and highlights the importance of using an Information Literacy Taxonomy (ILT) framework, such as the one used at the author’s library, for improving library research competencies. It also provides guidelines and advice for effective assignment design and the importance of using student-based active learning strategies such as cognitive apprenticeships, problem-based learning, etc. The chapter concludes by highlighting the fact that collaboration between librarians and academic staff needs to continue beyond the first year in order for IL to become a lifelong skill.

The text has a very strong American focus throughout and also includes a large amount of references to students who come to the library without an understanding of the recursive nature of

the research process, or the depth and breadth of their research topics. Although these paint an entertaining portrayal of the situation faced in academic libraries, it would perhaps have been helpful to provide more examples of detailed case studies regarding how such students may be helped.

This book puts forward a well-researched argument for the need for greater collaboration between faculty and academic librarians for the benefit of first-year students, and makes a strong case for using a process-oriented constructivist approach to IL training. It also provides practical advice on how to do this. However, including definitions and reviewing work carried out in this field beyond the US would have made it more interesting and relevant to those in other countries. Overall though, despite these quibbles, this is a welcome addition to the existing literature on the theme of collaboration between academics and librarians.