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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].

Walsh, J. 2011. *Information literacy instruction: selecting an effective model*. Oxford: Chandos. 201pp. ISBN. 978-1-84334-627-2 £47.50. Pbk.

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John Walsh is a librarian based at the Cochise College Libraries in Douglas, Arizona. In this book he sets out to provide practical guidance to librarians and others delivering information literacy (IL) teaching on how to choose the best method for their purposes. His audience is US higher education (HE) librarians, and some of the terminology is different to that used elsewhere; fortunately the author makes sure to define terms used and explain any acronyms or jargon.

The book is clearly structured and deals with: methods of instruction; objectives of instruction and how to measure success; participant populations and learning environments; choosing a method of instruction according to desired purpose; and the future of information literacy instruction (ILI).

The author starts by tracing the origins of modern-day ILI in US academic libraries, from Dewey in the late 19th century through to the 1980s, when the American Library Association (ALA) coined the definition of IL used in this book: the skills to find, evaluate and use information effectively. The author outlines some of the methods used, with advantages and disadvantages of each. He covers: traditional lecture-based instruction; active learning instruction (including cooperative, collaborative learning and problem-based learning); computer-assisted instruction; learner-centred instruction; and self-directed, independent learning. He provides helpful examples of what these might look like in practice. I would agree with his assertion that most one-off lecture-based instruction is an exercise in marketing rather than student learning. This does not strike me as necessarily a bad thing provided it is clear that this is probably the best that can be achieved.

In the chapter on objectives, Walsh rightly states that when choosing a teaching method, you should first define how success will be measured. He lists some different ways this can be approached, depending on what outcomes are sought: behavioural, cognitive or affective (or presumably a mixture of these). There is useful discussion of self-efficacy and library anxiety, both of which can make a real difference to the ability of students to become confident and fluent in their interactions with information sources. Effective assessment of ILI is one way a library can demonstrate its value to those who hold the purse strings. The comprehensive listing of standardised knowledge tests for IL is a helpful reference point.

The diversity of participants, library environments and learning environments forms the subject of the third chapter. Knowing your audience is key; this may involve a consideration of age, gender, disability or ethnic background, amongst other factors. The author brings to our attention the issues and principles of teaching IL to learners from non-traditional backgrounds and for whom baseline skills cannot be assumed. He refers to andragogy theory as a key principle when working with adult learners. Library environments are categorised as academic, public or special and learning environments are defined as face-to-face (FTF) or electronic. There is a useful overview of electronic methods of skills delivery and what they do, although more consideration of the importance of learning design in an online environment would have been welcome. Also, whilst sympathetic to the obvious advantages of FTF instruction, I did wonder if the benefits of online teaching are underplayed here. For some of us, distance learning is not just “the way of the future”, but an integral part of the present. I also looked in vain for some mention of mobile learning.

The chapter on ‘Effective ILI methods’ brings together the information in previous chapters and suggests how to reach a decision on the best methods for achieving the desired effect in different

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situations. The traditional lecture is compared to the other methods outlined in the first chapter. Walsh concludes that "If the goal is to create an information literate society through instruction by librarians, the most effective method in any library environment is multiple session FTF active learning instruction that employs all types of supplemental instruction" (p.145). As well as the benefits of variety, the key point here (implicitly stated) may be that reinforcing concepts in an iterative manner allows new knowledge to be embedded into a learner's existing mental framework.

The final chapter looks to the future and introduces the concept of multi-literacy instruction (MLI), also known as transliteracy. Librarians recognise the considerable challenges posed by the plethora of information available to users via the internet; the answer is to teach students how to evaluate what they find for its accuracy. Some evaluation criteria are listed, however, the author suggests these guidelines need to be extended to encourage students to be more reflective, critical and skeptical. He proposes a new model of IL which can adapt to changing technology and times, or as it is increasingly being referred to, digital literacy.

Throughout the book, numerous practical examples are provided to illustrate the points being made. A nice touch at the end of each chapter is the section headed 'Take-home message' to summarise the key points.

The author mentions learning theory and practice, but skirts around the evidence that embedding IL skills into the curriculum may result in a deeper and more satisfying learning experience for students. I was left with the impression that ILI in the author's context is very much based in the library and forms an adjunct to academic subject teaching. This book therefore feels quite library-centric to those focused on trying to move IL out of its academic library confines into the wider world of digital literacy, employability and lifelong learning. I would question the assumption that "The best approach is to do it [ILI] in a classroom, with librarians presenting the instruction" (p.147).

Nevertheless, *Information literacy instruction* sets out in a clear and readable way some different approaches to IL teaching and points to a way forward. A librarian starting out in a traditional academic library setting, in which library-based FTF teaching is the predominant mode of delivery, should find some helpful advice here.