Book review


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Information literacy (IL) is critical for today’s workplace, so how do we redefine IL in a way that demonstrates its value and relevance both to organisations and to employee professional development?

This book is an edited collection of chapters written by a range of international information professionals. It explores the value of IL in the workplace, the role of IL in professional development in the workplace and beyond, and looks at ways to support workplace IL from higher education onwards.

The book contains a mixture of research and practical real-life examples examining how IL is ‘experienced’ by various different groups (such as students or employees) and looks at ways to support IL in an organisational context. It moves beyond seeing IL as a set of skills to be acquired and instead looks at how people engage with information and the variety of contexts in which they interact with information.

Chapters six and ten discuss ways to demonstrate the value of IL to organisations, especially how IL can be expressed in terminology relevant to the organisation. Goldstein and Whitworth discuss the DeVIL tool in chapter six. This tool was produced from a small-scale research project which correlated IL to indicators of value to organisations, and it can be used to demonstrate the value of IL to organisations. Further research of different organisations needs to take place; however, this chapter does demonstrate the benefit of situating IL within an organisational context.

In chapter ten, Cheuk acknowledges the hidden nature of IL in the workplace and the unspoken information role many employees have in an organisation. Of particular interest is her case study on creating an IL development programme by aligning IL to the strategic goals of the organisation. In the case study, she outlines not only what worked well but what obstacles had to be overcome. This case study is a great resource for anyone wanting to follow a similar route in their organisation.

In chapters three, five and seven, we find out about the role IL can play in professional development. In chapter three Forster outlines how IL can contribute to personal effectiveness and professional development and in chapter seven he describes IL as a requirement for a competent, effective and ethical professional. Sayyad Abdi reminds us in chapter five that professional development occurs not only in the workplace but also in virtual professional networks; he argues that this virtual space also needs to be considered when developing IL support.

In chapter four, Somerville and Bruce discuss how the ‘Informed Systems’ approach can enable a workplace to use information to learn and improve; this concept is explained in detail over the course of the chapter. Informed Systems were developed from a relational approach to IL in order to create an environment of collaborative knowledge creation and information exchange. This chapter benefits from the practical examples embedded within it.

Several chapters discuss ways to support students to enable them to become information literate in the workplace. In chapter two Forster describes the history of IL research in the workplace and provides a methodology for investigating ‘experience’ of IL. This is built on in chapter 11, which
looks at the Workplace Experience Framework as a means to develop an IL educational intervention, and also as a means to monitor an individual's IL development.

Alongside this we have chapter eight in which Lloyd examines DASIL, a conceptual model of IL teaching for scaffolding students' transition into the workplace. This is a theme echoed by Roberts in chapter nine as he explores how IL competences can be embedded into disciplinary teaching in higher education. All of these chapters give academic librarians involved in teaching IL some ambitious goals to aim for when developing their teaching practice.

This book offers a fresh perspective and suggests ways to reframe IL so that it is acknowledged throughout a workplace as relevant and valuable. It provides ideas for information professionals on how to develop their own and their colleagues' IL in a workplace context, as well as on how to support students in their transition to work.

I found this book a challenging but informative read, and one which includes a mixture of practical case studies and current research. This book is relevant to information professionals who support workplaces, to academic librarians who support student and staff IL, and also to those who are studying IL.