Book Review


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The text discusses the progression of Information Literacy (IL) and the move towards a more connected world in which learners take on a more active role as developers and producers of content. The authors, Mackey and Jacobson, evidence the evolution of IL, in particular in relation to higher education, and consider the impact the internet has had on traditional methods of teaching and learning. Recent events have led to an acceleration regarding changes to education delivery and how students interact with information, making the text particularly relevant and applicable. The text introduces readers to the concept of metaliteracy and to the metaliteracy framework.

Mackey and Jacobson created the metaliteracy framework building on IL concepts and positioning it as a lifelong learning framework. The text provides insights on the process of combining metaliteracy with pedagogic principles and ideas, showing the positive potential implications of engaging learners in awareness of their own learning processes and how this enables their development as learners and producers.

The book is divided into six chapters covering four key areas and is organised with a clear and defined structure. Jako Olivier provides a concise and illuminating foreword which identifies the relevant application of the topic for the reader. The initial chapters look at how the authors’ metaliteracy framework sits alongside such relevant work on IL as the ACRL Framework and considers newer variations of Bloom’s Taxonomy. The opening chapters introduce the reader to these previous works and highlight how the authors have further built upon these foundational concepts to create the metaliteracy framework which integrates the ongoing growth of content creation and consumption in light of the ever-changing Web 2.0.

The flow of the text works well to introduce the reader to the concepts surrounding metaliteracy and then proceeds to provide evidence and a variety of examples of metaliteracy in action within Higher Education settings. The reader is supported in their understanding of how application of the metaliteracy framework and concepts could vary depending on the course. The activity section deserves particular appreciation — it provides various examples through which the framework could be applied, a useful scaffolding tool which not many texts offer.

The authors promote the use of metaliteracy as a possible alternative method of engaging students outside of traditional education settings. Chapter two opens with a discussion of multimodal learning and the methods through which it intersects with metaliteracy. The authors nicely navigate the complexity students face as learners in engaging with learning outside traditional formats and consider the support that would be required to introduce alternative methods of teaching and learning.

Chapter three shows the intersection of metaliteracy and open pedagogy, outlining how students are informally acting as creators of content but require more support in becoming aware of these skills in a more formalised education-based setting. The text balances the
discussion of the benefits of open pedagogy with the dangers of student-led creation and the need to have elements which can go awry to enable the process to succeed overall.

Chapter four analyses examples in Higher Education settings in which metaliteracy and open pedagogy have been combined. Student responses are used to evidence the benefits that can be achieved, with the indication that varying levels of integration can be used depending on the course and needs of the teacher and students. Teaching and learning are being ever increasingly impacted and indeed it may be that the recent introduction of more ‘hybrid’ teaching will lead to more teachers selecting these untraditional methods of information delivery and assessment.

The metaliteracy framework provides a useful structure for approaching teaching elements of IL such as the ethical use of information and digital citizenship. Chapter five provides access to activities, links to examples and assistance in the application of the metaliteracy framework through which engagement with academics can be supported.

Chapter 6 nicely rounds off with an examination of the impact of adopting a growth mindset as a learner and how the metaliteracy framework can support students in engaging with material and becoming more confident and capable learners and producers by adopting a positive attitude to failure. Whilst the text does identify potential difficulty in the initial process of engaging students this way, it ends on a positive note and provides supporting evidence of the benefits to students in approaching tasks or unknowns positively.

Overall, this text is a valuable contribution to the literature and conversation surrounding IL and metaliteracy. It offers a useful jumping off point for both teachers and librarians in exploring the application of metaliteracy in the classroom.