Book Review


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This is one of the most exciting titles I have come across in the information literacy (IL) literature for some time. I feel privileged to be reviewing it. To start with, I was impressed with the contents pages, the biographies of both the authors and editors and the editorial advisory board. Hepworth and Walton have put together a great collection by inviting both distinguished and new authors, bringing together strong, fresh and diverse contributions to discuss up-to-date theoretical and practical IL approaches; a global account, maybe just missing the Scandinavians, spanning from higher education (HE), to workplace and the communities. It seems to me that our voice has finally matured. From the very wellwritten introduction, the attention to detail is evident, and when I came to some of the chapters - for example: Webber and Johnston, Wang, Julien et al, Bruce et al and Tavares et al - the reading experience for me as an IL enthusiast was humbling. I witnessed leaving the skills era behind to meet the deep thinking IL powerhouse of today, which is passionate and caring and which can make a difference to real people now.

This is a book useful to the researcher and the practitioner and one that will give academics and senior management in any organisation a respectful insight into what IL is about today. It is organised in four sections: the strategic view, delivering IL education, the link between university and work and beyond HE. Hepworth and Walton offer an introduction to the contributions and also a comparison of IL and information behaviour, concluding that the terms complement each other. Webber and Johnston, always impressive thinkers with their clarity, set the tone of the book by using the broader term “information culture” which encompasses all aspects of life. They offer an inspired educational framework which matters to people and links IL with lifelong learning. This is divided in four life stages and aims to develop the IL of people through life. Wang discusses extensively a model of integrated IL in the curriculum at different stages, including outcomes extremely relevant to HE. Lin and Wang look at media and IL literacy in Singapore and following the UNESCO direction of a combined framework supported by the government.

Chu, Rajagopal and Lee conducted a comparable longitudinal study to understand the IL progress of students by using the RISE model, which is useful to apply in further research as progression is a much discussed subject. One of their recommendations is standardising searching across providers; a message for publishers to take on board. Kinsky and Smith explore the role of the media in shaping knowledge by participatory learning and reflective thinking. The Hispanic community is given a voice through Maya and Miguel and we are given an example of how TV is a tool that shapes children’s understanding about culture and the world when participatory learning is involved. Ward and Duke discuss how a librarian collaborated with an academic to teach IL with elements of action research to distance learners who were special education teachers in Alaskan communities. Dokphrom explored the IL of undergraduate students in the Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University in Thailand, looking into the perceptions of IL among students, academics and librarians and suggesting collaboration between all involved. Lumande, Fidzani and Oluka talk about establishing partnerships in order to strengthen IL programmes in African universities and offering a model of how networking can support strategic goals.

Lawal et al offer a framework for IL in the practice of law, necessary to support the changing nature of the law environment. Collaboration is suggested to link what is being taught and what skills and knowledge are needed in the workplace. Julien et al discuss IL instruction in the business school context, where accreditation makes IL a requirement for a successful career. They found that IL needs to be incorporated in the curriculum and that all stakeholders need to be supported to understand the value of IL in order to engage, and that the librarians’ involvement in the institutions
relates directly to the level of success in integration. I found this chapter’s conclusions deep, strong and relevant to all of us in HE. Wema looked into IL for agriculturalists and health practitioners in Tanzania and recommended that IL in the work environment needs to relate to relevant problem solving and active participation.

Abram offers a rare chapter of IL in the workplace packed with experience and talks about transliteracies and the importance of connections between people. In the workplace, IL needs are linked to the goal and objectives and the mission of the institutions, governmental or corporate environments. Bruce et al talk of informed learning and transcending from information skills to information experiences. In a packed chapter, they discuss IL in the interpretive approach and in the community setting. Informed learning in communities involves the element of inclusion, highlighting the fact that people learn across contexts without marginalising information. Tavares et al, in the last chapter, talk about their research which is in many ways empowering for the participants. The chapter concerns IL and collaborative work and how critical awareness can help citizens. They found that collaboration is critical to transformation.

One cannot be fair in reviewing this IL journey around the world as each chapter deserved more space in this review. I feel as if I am just back from a conference refreshed and inspired having so much to take in. Lifelong learning, informed learning, collaboration and inclusion are themes I will take away from this book. This is a book to read again and to refer to in the future. Thank you everyone.