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A difference that matters: Disability activism, scholarship and community

Welcome to the June issue of the *Journal of Information Literacy*, which is going to press soon after the conclusion of the first in-person LILAC conference that has been held in two years. The conference was superbly organised and well-attended, as ever – it is clear that there is pent-up demand for professional development in our field. The standout moment of LILAC for me, though, wasn't the chance to see colleagues and catch up with people I had only met on Zoom (although I greatly enjoyed that, too...). Instead, it was the renewed focus on accessibility that I noted within so many presentations – Maria King talking about neurodivergent learners, Lynne Beveridge presenting on dyslexic learners and numerous papers and workshops quietly and carefully acknowledging different needs, whether this was presenting material in multiple formats or integrating a focus on the 'whole learner' into their work. While accessibility is obviously not new within our field, it felt like perhaps the last two years has helped to normalise the principles of Universal Design for Learning, or to at least to foreground an awareness about how we have not always made participation in information literacy (IL) teaching opportunities available to all.

Of course, there is a great deal still to do and this is not least related to the urgent need for more research in this under-studied area of interest (as you might expect the editor of *JIL* to say...). Library Juice Press have released a series of excellent titles related to disability and library work and a handful of papers have focused on thinking more about the 'how' of teaching or practical ways in which we can design more supportive IL instruction sessions. However, what is still missing is a critical interrogation of *what* we are teaching, particularly through an accessibility and disability lens, just as we have started to do with race and racism (e.g., Rapchak, 2019). I hinted at implied ableism in IL definitions and models in a recent blogpost I wrote for the Information Literacy Group (Hicks, 2021), but there are still so many more questions that remain to be asked, including how disability shapes what IL looks like and what a way of knowing (Lloyd, 2010) looks like for people managing 'impairment, chronic conditions, illness, madness, Deafness, neurodiversity (among other crip ways of being)' (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019). Research in this area must focus attention on the physical and social barriers that constrain the enactment of IL practices – but also the strategies, workarounds and unrecognised information activities that disabled people engage in if we are to develop truly accessible learning opportunities. We must also consider the most appropriate methods to honour and foreground these varied lived experiences.

Accessibility has also been on our mind at *JIL*, and more specifically how we improve access to content on our website and through our publications. While we recognise improvements in the design of IL instruction and the call for increased disability-focused research, we also acknowledge the importance of meeting disabled practitioner and researcher needs and the vital work that remains for us to do. Meg and I have consequently spent the last year interrogating our own infrastructures and practices from a disability perspective, guided by several conversations with Tom Peach, a *JIL* copyeditor. Following on from these discussions we have focused our attention on improving the reader experience, including by requiring the use of non-colour-based differentiation points (shading, hatching, pattern etc) for any data visualisation and hyperlinking titles in references to improve screen reader accessibility. Alongside these changes, we have added Word versions of papers alongside PDFs so readers can make any document alterations that are needed, including related to font, colour, and sizing. Lastly, we have thoroughly reviewed the language we use on our site for ableist

connotations. We hope these changes will make a difference to disabled people interested in IL research – as well as to contribute to ongoing EDI work that aims to improve recruitment and retention amongst disabled library staff.

And now onto this issue's articles and project reports!

We are pleased that Frankie Marsh's exploration of decolonised approaches to IL is launching the research article section of the first issue of 2022. One of the first papers to explore IL through a decolonial lens, Frankie's work also stands out for its emphasis on exploring the perspectives of academic researchers, who form a key but under-examined partner for IL instruction. Employing qualitative interviews, the paper concludes by offering far-reaching recommendations for how we can continue to 'unsettle' IL research and practice. This paper is copy-edited by Sae Matsuno.

The second paper is written by Jonathan Phillips and Andrew Whitworth and examines IL instruction within South Korean schools. Employing a practice architecture perspective, the paper explores how teaching within this context is enabled and constrained by the assessment needs of the Korean educational system. The central informational role that the textbook continues to play is also seen to shape the structure of educational activities within the classroom, including by refocusing attention on teacher-directed learning activities. This paper is copy-edited by Amber Edwards, one of our newest copyeditors.

The third paper comes from Beverly Dann, Anne Drabble and Janet Martin and provides a quantitative dive into transition from school to university, particularly related to reading and comprehension. Examining a large cohort of students at an Australian regional university, this research posits that a high number of undergraduates profess to dislike reading. These conclusions lead the authors to reflect on the success of traditional IL instruction – or the purpose of teaching learners how to find texts if they are not planning to read them. This paper is copy-edited by Batul Asaraji, one of our other new copyeditors.

Paper number four, written by Max Sommer, John Hampton, Angela Kohnen and Albert Ritzhaupt, also adopts a quantitative approach to examine the impact of Open Educational Resources (OER) within IL instruction. Studying the value of different instructional design features for learner engagement and success, this paper notes little change in achievement when different iterations of the tutorial are tested. However, these findings will be useful for anyone looking to create digital resources while also highlighting questions about the sustainability of IL instructional materials. This paper was copy-edited by Kirsten McCormick.

The final paper of the regular issue is by Clarence Maybee, Susan Gasson, Christine Bruce, and Mary Somerville and explores IL within collaborative higher education research contexts. Drawing upon Bruce's seven faces of research model, this paper outlines the conceptual development of a framework that presents how research is experienced by researchers. The authors conclude by offering suggestions for how this framework facilitates the adoption of shared perspectives within research collaborations. This paper is copy-edited by Tom Peach.

We also welcome two project reports; the first, by Monica Eberechukwu Eze and Doris Emetarom Aduba provides useful insight into the state of IL education within library schools in Nigeria, while the report from Anthony Tardiff goes beyond the CRAAP test to detail an alternative way to assess credibility within library instruction. These reports are copy-edited by Harriet David and Tom Peach, respectively.

Rounding off the issue are reviews of books related to metaliteracy and research data management, and conference reports from LILAC.

The current issue of *JIL* also integrates a Special Issue related to IL and COVID-19 and the immense challenges that the pandemic and its related lockdowns have brought to information literacy research and practice. In retrospect, we were probably a bit quick off the mark with this special issue given that 18 months on from the CfP, the pandemic is still ongoing, and repercussions are still being felt. For these reasons, it is probably not surprising that all the accepted papers focus on the implications of the first lockdown and the shift to emergency teaching for IL instruction rather than ongoing challenges. However, together, these papers mark the start of our collective professional reflection on events of the last few years and changes to educational models, public library offers and more. We are also grateful to all authors for the work they have put into kickstarting these analytical processes, especially at a time of ongoing professional and personal uncertainty.

A research article that looks at the impact of the pandemic on preparation for undergraduate studies starts the Special Issue. Written by Heather Dalal and colleagues, the paper specifically focuses on the impact that 'transactional distance' or the severe interruptions to physical visits and interactions with a librarian had upon student engagement with research. The paper concludes with reflections on the implications for the future, which will be helpful for anyone planning their institution's next steps. The article was copyedited by Harriet David.

We are then pleased to include a slew of project reports in the special issue, all touching on various aspects of pandemic challenges- and opportunities. Starting us off is an interesting paper by Sarah Wolfenden, looking at the implementation and reception of coaching techniques into her pandemic teaching. Next up is a paper by Laurence Morris and Lindsey McDermott, who analyse usage statistics as well as feedback to report on findings from the decision to introduce a flipped classroom teaching approach into their tuition models. We then have a paper looking at Mexican librarian responses to COVID-19, and particularly online provision of IL materials, written by Eugenia de los Angeles Ortega-Martínez, César Saavedra-Alamillas, and colleagues. Lastly, Gillian Siddall reports on changes made to instruction for health students at a time when the typical academic year structure was thrown on its head. These papers were copyedited by Harriet David, Sae Matsuno and Amber Edwards respectively.

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