W elcome to the second issue of JIL 2010 (Vol 4) which provides a logical follow-up to the themes presented by the last three issues of this journal. By looking at the evidence to establish the need for, and the impact of, information literacy education (ILE), this issue offers ways of bridging the gap between the 'research' and the 'practice' within the field of information literacy (IL), the theme covered by the first issue of Volume 3, 2009. Moreover, by proposing diverse methods of assessing the impact of IL activities to improve citation and searching behaviours, facilitate knowledge creation, or foster motivational factors that affect the learners' level of engagement, this issue supports the claim proposed by the second issue of Volume 3 that information literacy is a multi-faceted phenomenon, requiring complex and wide ranging strategies to measure its impact. Finally, by offering concrete examples of learner-focused evaluative practices that underpin information literacy education, this issue complements the discussion on the learner-centred ILE covered by the first issue of Volume 4, 2010.

The debate on evidence-based evaluation presented by this collection of papers focuses on several aspects of this evaluative process that are part of the IL educator's current concern. The initial stage of evaluation involves the profiling of users, a strategy proposed by the first two papers, albeit in different contexts. Angello, for example, examines livestock researchers in Tanzania and explores their knowledge of electronic databases, and their ability to consult these resources to support their work. In other words, profiling here aims to identify the IL competences required to inform 'applied and 'real-world' research. This paper also argues that the problems of lack of searching competences and awareness of resources, experienced by these researchers, are compounded by the cost of subscribing to the appropriate databases that their research institutions incur.[1] It is not surprising that, in the face of these obstacles, livestock researchers tend to rely on search engines to find information. To redress the balance, those researchers who have attended IL sessions to enhance their online searching competences argue for greater access to subscription-based resources and training to be made 'institutional priorities'.

Brown and Gaxiola, on the other hand, examine profiling in terms of establishing the motivating factors that make students perform to the best of their abilities in an iSkills test conducted by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. This paper reflects the growing use by American universities of standardised tests, like iSkills,to review or market course provision. The authors argue that the low-stakes status of the iSkill test, with its "*little or no personal consequence for the test-taker*", does not motivate the students to perform well. In response to this problem, Brown and Gaxiola illustrate the strategies they have employed to foster the students' motivation, with the ultimate aims of achieving high completion rates for the test and high performance scores for the students (thus providing sound evidence to inform curricular changes and marketing strategies). One important feature of this study is the students' feedback on the reasons why they tried to perform to the best of their ability in the iSkills test. As expected, self-interest is a common motivating factor to do well, triggered by the benefits of identifying academic strengths and weaknesses through the test's results. By coincidence, I am reading a book by Heath and Heath (2008) which discusses the issues behind motivation and decision-making. Heath and Heath (2008, pp 188-191) claim that self-interest is a powerful way of making people care sufficiently to act. This is the case of the students who performed to the best of their abilities in the iSkills test, driven by the diagnostic benefits it could offer. What is surprising, is

---

[1] Far from being addressed, the problem of subscription costs is raising concerns in western academic institutions as well, given that over the next few years these costs are estimated to rise by 2.5% (Jump, 2010, pg. 20).

another common motivating factor which Brown and Gaxiola describe as the students' acknowledgement that good performance in the test reflects positively on the institution as a whole. Heath and Heath (2008, pg. 189) argue that motivation can also be generated by a sense of identity and of belonging to a specific group, so that individuals ask questions such as 'what's in it for my group?' rather than 'what's in it for me?'. This suggests that the students aimed for the best performance in the iSkills test because high scores project a positive image of the university-based community they belong to.

Following on from profiling is the need to identify the learners' information behaviour. This evaluation strategy is proposed by Gadd, Baldwin and Norris whose project, undertaken by the Centre for Education in the Built Environment at Loughborough University, focused on the citation behaviour of Civil Engineering undergraduate and postgraduate students to generate data that would ultimately help to improve "*the teaching of the literature review*". I found the recommendations presented in the concluding section of this paper useful as they address issues that are also relevant to my postgraduate Information Management students (e.g. accurate citation practices and critical appraisal of the literature). I suspect that the last bullet point is particularly relevant to all tutors who teach subject-specific research design, because it makes students aware that *'[..] the authority, currency and balanced composition of references cited is likely to lead to a better literature review and overall project*". Similarly to Gadd et al., Rosenblatt presents the findings drawn from citation analysis "*to measure the impact of a library instruction session on the types of items the students cite*". But she also measured this impact by exposing some students (i.e. the experimental group) to IL training and later compared the performance of these students against the performance of students who did not attend the training (i.e. the control group). As the title of this paper suggests, IL educators should not simply be concerned with 'can students find information?' but should also address questions such as 'what do students do with the information they find?'. Following the realisation that the students examined lacked the ability to synthesise and critically appraise the sources (as set by ACRL Information Literacy Standards 3 and 4), a rubric was introduced in the second stage of the research "*to categorise the papers based on evidence of the students' ability to synthesize the sources [..] and use them to suppor their arguments*". Personally, I think this study raises a very important question about the impact that reviewing the literature has on the students' research practices and ultimately how it affects their overall learning experience:"*If it cannot be assumed that students understand why certain types of sources are used or even why a learned person reads existing research, then how do we know that students are learning by conducting research and writing papers?*".

By contrast, Tyron, Frigo and O'Kelly focus on teaching staff perceptions of information literacy by eliciting their views of the Information Literacy Competences (ILCC) document, produced by the Libraries at Grand Valley State University (GVSU). The ILCC document outlines the core competencies that undergraduate and postgraduate students are expected to develop or enhance during the course of their studies. The authors collected data through focus group discussions which explored a number of issues, including: the need for information literacy, and by implication staff take on this; willingness of teaching staff to adopt information literacy in their teaching; and finally, the extent to which the language used in the document 'spoke' to teaching staff and fostered the dissemination of the document to all disciplines. By taking into account teaching staff's views and concerns about information literacy, the Libraries at GVSU have created a sound foundation for the next stage of this project with the aim of promoting greater synergy between the ILCC document and discipline-based assessment strategies. Ultimately, this paper shows the benefits that such a constructive dialogue between teaching and library staff can offer.

JIL readers may be wondering why a picture[2] of Caesar crossing the Rubicon over 2,000 years ago is relevant to the debate on evidence-based evaluation of information literacy education. The answer lies with the submission by Fielden and Foster. Through a play of words in the title of their paper 'Crossing the Rubicon: Evaluating the Information Literacy Instructor', Fielden and Foster suggest that using a rubric to assess the performance of the instructor marks a significant turning point, as rubrics are normally employed to evaluate students' performance. This case study, undertaken by the Library at San Francisco State University, starts with the premise that "*Successful information literacy instruction requires an effective teacher*". Fielden and Foster present a convincing case for using a rubric to identify the criteria to review the instructors'

Figure 1: Julius Caesar crossing the Rubicon

performance, as this makes the evaluation process transparent for both IL educators and reviewers. More to the point, they argue that the rubric has fostered greater reflection on, and awareness of, pedagogy by library staff and has encouraged the development of teaching strategies that suit the integration of the ILE programme in curricular activities. For me, the 'crossing of the Rubicon' analogy stresses a greater sense of finality associated with the review of IL instructors' performance. In other words, just as Caesar's decision to defy the Senate and march on Rome bearing arms marked a point of 'no return'[3], so is the decision to evaluate the performance of IL educators an inevitable step for librarians who are involved in ILE (at least in the US). At this point, it might be worth explaining why the role of 'IL instructor' is particularly important for library staff working in American institutions. This is because these librarians-instructors enjoy the same professional status as 'teaching faculty' (described as 'academics' in the UK). It follows that, to achieve tenure and promotion, librarians undergo the same level of performance evaluation as their faculty counterpart. This point reminds me of a comment I made in a previous editorial where I suggested that "[..] in the not so distant future librarians might be operating as 'educators' with 'information literacy expertise' on the par with teaching staff as educators with 'subject expertise'" (Vol. 3(1), 2009, pp. 3). It is gratifying to know that, in the United States, the role of educator is fully integrated in the professional remit of academic librarians.

This issue also presents the very first submission to JIL's 'Students' view of information literacy' section. Daniel Beck gives an account of the findings from his thesis 'Virtual Reference Services in UK and Irish Academic Libraries', completed as part of an MSc in Information Science at University College London. Beck's research highlights the adoption of 'synchronous and virtual' information services' in academic libraries, thanks to the availability of virtual reference tools such as chat software, co-browse and Second Life. The ability to provide IL tuition at the 'point of need' by enabling remote interaction between librarians and users, seems to be the main benefit associated with virtual reference tools. However, a high proportion of the UK HE libraries responding to his survey did not use virtual reference services, suggesting that whilst these tools may become the norm in the future practices of academic libraries, they are currently relatively untapped resources (at least in the UK and Ireland).

---

[2] Copyright free image, available at: http://bit.ly/iclhIr (Accessed 20 November 2010).

[3] Wikipedia gives a succint account of this historical event. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alea_iacta_est#cite_note-1 (Accessed 25 November 2010).

The issue concludes with no fewer than six book reviews. These are grouped here under three general headings: IL in academia; IL in different types of information landscapes and environments; and the ethical side of IL which is manifested as copyright practice in an e-learning setting. Bell provides a detailed, and at the same time critical, review of the book by Mackey and Jacobson (2010) *Collaborative information literacy assessments: strategies for evaluating teaching and learning*. Amongst the benefits that this book offers are the numerous case studies illustrating a variety of collaborative practices between library and teaching staff to develop assessment strategies that measure the impact of ILE. There is one case study, however, where Bell questions the interpretation of the term 'collaboration' as this seems to entail a more traditional stand-alone IL training session that is added on to an already-established curriculum. Perry reviews *Teaching information literacy: 50 standards-based exercises for college students* (2010), by Burkhardt, MacDonald and Rathemacher, and argues that this publication targets IL educators by providing very practical activities that address aspects of the ACRL's IL Standards. At the same time, these authors promote IL as a 'skill for life' and thus extend its application beyond higher education and into lifelong learning. The third review under the heading of IL in academia is by Bradford, who examines Healey and Jenkins' book on *Developing undergraduate research and inquiry* (2009). In this case, IL is not included in the title, although Bradford emphasises that the research and enquiry-based approaches to learning promoted by this book establish the link with IL as both approaches encourage students to evolve from passive consumers to active producers of information.

The review by Walker of Lloyd's book on *Information literacy landscapes: information literacy in education, workplace and everyday contexts* (2010) marks a shift from the academic focus of the previous publications reviewed to the promotion of IL as "a complex concept that takes into account skills as well as socio-political contexts". This book complements the views presented by Whitworth (2009) in a previous volume of JIL , as both Lloyd and Whitworth propose that IL is a socially-constructed phenomenon and one that should be examined holistically (i.e. not just in terms of information skills). On the other hand, the book by Welsh and Wright, entitled *Information Literacy in the Digital Age: an evidence based approach* (2010) offers a range of definitions about IL (e.g. based on computer, media, and network literacies). Secker's review of this publication highlights some positive aspects, such as the inclusion of practical exercises and research papers on IL. However, Secker expresses an overall disappointment with this book because, in her view, the authors make an unconvincing case of the evidence-based approach, and the general lack of signposting made her feel unclear of the overall direction of this book. The final review by Earl examines Secker's book on *Copyright and e-learning: a guide for practitioners* (2010) which comes under the ethical practices associated with IL. The book is well received by Earl who describes it as "fluent, well-paced, accessible and user-friendly" and stresses that its greatest strength is that it provides a good introduction to copyright for those readers who are not familiar with it. Moreover, Earl commends the inclusion throughout the book of links to relevant e-resources and to Web 2.0 facilities in particular.

In conclusion, the evaluation of ILE supported by tangible evidence is the key theme of this issue, although evidence-based practices presented by the papers vary considerably depending on whether the focus is on the impact of ILE on the learners, or whether it examines the effectiveness of IL educators. Strategies that promote evidence-based practice are also found in some of the books reviewed. These include case studies detailing collaborative initiatives in the assessment of IL (Mackey and Jacobson), practical IL exercises based on the ACRL Standards (Burkhardt, MacDonald and Rathemacher), or examples of research and enquiry-based learning to foster the learners' transformation from information consumers to information producers (Healey and Jenkins). As I contemplate the debate presented by this issue I am reminded of the Evidence-Based

Information Literacy conference (EBIL) held this November.[4] Whilst this conference looked at EBIL from the perspective of health librarians, I suspect that the issues considered at this event are relevant to IL educators operating in other sectors. These issues can be summarised as follows. To begin with, there is a need to arrive at a definition of evidence-based practice. In my view, Booth's description of evidence-based practice is a good starting point: "[..] the need to address the practical problems of day-to-day decision-making by reference to the research evidence" (Booth, 2006, pg. 34). In addition, research evidence, i.e. based on existing empirical studies, does not take into account what I would call 'practice evidence', i.e. the practice that is based on first-hand evaluation of the IL 'intervention' (be it facilitation or teaching). Finally, I would argue that, for an IL educator, practice evidence is as important as research evidence, and the collection of papers in this issue go some way in promoting the use of both research and practice evidence to measure the impact of ILE.

References

Booth, A. (2006), 'Where is the harm in EBLIP? Current perspectives, future developments', *Journal of the European Association for Health Information Libraries* 2:3, August 2006, 34-41. [Online]. Available at: http://www.eahil.net/newsletter/journal_2006_vol2_n3.pdf (Accessed 25 November 2010).

Heath, C. and Heath, D. (2008) *Made to stick*. London: Arrow books

Jump, P. We're not paying that much! *THES*, 25 Nov-1 Dec, 2010, No 1,975, pg.20.

Whitworth, A. 2009. Teaching in the relational frame: the Media and Information Literacy course at Manchester. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 3(2), pp. 25-38. *http://ojs.lboro.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JIL/article/view/PRA-V3-I2-2009-2* (Accessed 25 November 2010).

---

[4] The EBIL conference was hosted by London Metropolitan University and sponsored by the Information Literacy Group to foster the debate on evidence-based practice between IL facilitators operating in NHS, university-related libraries and independent health libraries. Further details of this event are available at: http://www.ilit.org/file/ebilconference.htm (Accessed 25 November 2010).