Journal of Information Literacy

Book Review

Lloyd, A. (2010). Information literacy landscapes: information literacy in education, workplace and everyday contexts. Oxford: Chandos. xvi, 192pp. ISBN: 9781843335077. £45.00. Pbk.

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Like many researchers, one of my concerns about information literacy theory is its seemingly stubborn reluctance to free itself from a skills based paradigm and develop into a mature and complex concept that better reflects socio-cultural realities. It is these concerns that Lloyd aims to address in her book.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The contents provide the reader with a clear path as Lloyd systematically examines different landscapes of information literacy, finally expanding on her own views in chapters seven and eight. Each chapter is clearly set out and begins with a brief introduction and ends with a conclusion. The first chapter provides the reader with a clear view of Lloyd's intention to develop her notion of information literacy as a complex concept that takes into account skills as well as socio-political contexts.

Chapter two provides the reader with a comprehensive conceptual orientation of the book. The chapter starts by briefly examining the concepts of information and literacy, then goes on to discuss practice theory in greater detail. Following from this Lloyd tries to 'join the dots' as she sets to contextualise information literacy and practice. This chapter provides some initial theoretical grounding, and also helps to set the direction for the following chapters.

Chapter three is a discussion of information literacy that would be familiar to many practitioners and is centred upon the traditional academic skills-based approach. Lloyd provides an overview and context for what can be argued has been the prevailing focus of information literacy research. The chapter concludes with a useful discussion of how information literacy theory has often been viewed as objective and internal to the seeker. This, Lloyd suggests, has been directly influenced by the way in which information literacy theory has developed and has been generally practiced.

The fourth chapter examines information literacy in the workplace. Lloyd notes that, in comparison with the academic sector, there has been comparatively little research into examining information literacy in the workplace. She argues that the traditional skills based approach to information literacy has, on the whole, been applied to the workplace, and that this is something that needs to be examined, as the workplace is in fact a complex and messy landscape. The chapter concludes by providing characteristics which Lloyd suggests will help define workplace information literacy.

Chapter five examines the public role of information literacy. Lloyd emphasises that information literacy is an important element of an active, responsible citizenry, empowering individuals, and that it is also an essential component of lifelong learning. Indeed, she has a subsection specifically examining health information (an area I personally would have liked to have been given greater emphasis). Lloyd recognises that information professionals have taken a lead role as advocates in recent years and that information literacy awareness for the general public has fallen to public librarians. The problem, she argues, is that there has been comparatively little research in this area. Despite public librarians being in a position to

facilitate and promote information literacy, they face a number of practical challenges, chief among them being a lack of developed theory and research as well as a reliance on a library centric skills-based model of information literacy.

Chapter six develops Lloyd's ideas that information literacy should be viewed not simply as a skills based concept. The chapter uses the concept of 'landscapes' as an analogy to describe different information literacy contexts. According to Lloyd, information literacy should be viewed as shaped by a socially constructed 'landscape' which an individual inhabits, and not just as a generic set of skills. An information landscape is one that is shaped not only by context but also by various forms of discourse, social structures and practice. Lloyd argues that people develop the ability to read the landscapes within which they operate. In line with the constructivist paradigm, Lloyd argues that individuals hone their information literacy skills to operate or read that specific landscape more successfully.

Chapter seven is Lloyd's proposed architectural plan for developing an enriched and mature information literacy theory. She aims to help the reader reflect on and think about information literacy holistically and, importantly, as a socio-cultural practice. Chapter eight provides a short, but extremely useful, summary of Lloyd's view, as she frames information literacy in the context of a complex-socio cultural practice.

The book is well written, contains a wealth of references, and the chapters are clearly sign-posted. The book is useful for students, practitioners and researchers and makes a thought provoking and important contribution to the field and debate. I would recommend this book to anyone wanting to develop a serious understanding of the wider issues surrounding information literacy.