Conference Corner

Trends on information literacy discussed at LILAC 2011

Eleni Zazani , Learning Support Adviser, Birkbeck College, University of London.
Email: e.zazani@bbk.ac.uk

LILAC focused this year on the following themes: information literacy in the future; creativity in information literacy; new to teaching; and supporting excellence in the research community. What follows is a personal account of issues, or 'trends', that I came across at the conference during discussions with other delegates or while attending talks.

1. **The digital divide, technological advances and our digital transformation in an information-rich world** was, in my view, the driver of this year's LILAC, with mobile technologies and web 2.0 applications taking centre stage on the IL agenda.
Andrew Walsh, in his presentation about "Martini information literacy: How does "anytime, anyplace, anywhere" access to information change what Information Literacy means?", pointed out that users of internet-capable mobile devices do not usually search on the open web, but prefer to use 'apps' instead for quick and fast information. He proposed that more research needs to be done into mobile Information Literacy so that new relational models will reflect how people find and use information on the move (Walsh 2011) . It is clear that our digital transformation is not only defined by the evolving mobile computing but also by a digitally-rich information environment available at our fingertips, via the Internet.

   As Professor David Nicholas said in his keynote speech, we are all part of a multitasking generation which is characterised by continuous skittering and flicking through pages on the web. An example of this multitasking can be found in the significant increase in the tweets produced this year by delegates during the conference. According to TwapperKeeper (http://summarizr.labs.eduserv.org.uk/), 2787 tweets were archived by 03 May 2011 in comparison to 1416 logged during an equally lively LILAC last year.

2. **Employability skills and graduate attributes** was another issue discussed. It was acknowledged that employability skills are at the top of the IL agenda and many speakers stressed that IL is a key attribute for the 21st century citizen and a key competency to lifelong learning.

   Andy Jackson brought to our attention specific standards and reports closely linked with a graduate's employability, professionalism and what is referred to as a **"21st century Graduate".** One of those reports was the Horizon Report (Johnson, Smith et al. 2011) which identifies six trends in educational technology, namely: electronic books; mobile computing; augmented reality; game-based learning; gestured-based computing; and learning analytics. Librarians involved in delivering Information Literacy sessions will be facing the challenge of "aligning these new technologies with the pursuit of graduate skills" (Jackson 2011).

3. **Terminology**. It seems that information literacy is not a popular term, simply because for many fellow librarians it is associated with 'literacy' as the basic "ability to read and write". Two keynote speakers, Jesus Lau and Dave Nicholas, openly stated that they were not in favour of the term and the latter advised that the word "literacy" is dropped.

4. **Addressing IL gaps across sectors**. While I don't know whether there was a stronger presence of school librarians this year or not, I did notice that a more constructive dialogue took place between academic and school librarians. School librarians, on the one hand, stressed the need for a focus on IL coverage in the PGCE curriculum for people prepared to teach in Primary and Secondary levels, while academic librarians, on the other hand, stressed the need to introduce students to IL before they enter higher education (HE).

Panel-led discussion on IL Standards

5. **Are IL standards constructive and useful tools or not?** This year's LILAC provided a fertile ground for discussions on whether IL models and frameworks are useful tools and whether we should employ them in our IL practice. In my view, the consensus was that standards need to be seen as tools and as such they provide a common language among practitioners, initiate discussions, and describe what Information Literacy is, as long as they are fully contextualised in people's experiences and realities. The support for these standards is shown by the fact that, during this year's LILAC, the revised model of SCONUL's Seven Pillars was launched, and at least two international presenters showed their models for embedding IL in an academic context (New Zealand and Singapore) (Wang 2011; Chia 2011). However, as Whitworth stressed during this debate, the purpose of these standards is to respond to change and practice, rather than to follow them rigidly and turn them into a "tick-the-boxes approach" (Whitworth 2011).

6. **IL and other "literacies".** Judging from the views expressed at this conference, LILAC participants felt that, as the information landscape becomes more and more complex, we [as educators] need to embrace other "literacies", such as digital, visual, media literacies, etc, if we wish to develop information literate citizens.

7. **IL and globalisation or Educating the global citizens.** In my opinion, what will be discussed more in the future is how IL practice fits within the global educational context. Laurie Kutner and Alison Armstrong shared their experience from the HE landscape in the US, where IL is promoted as a way of "engaging students as global citizens". (Kutner and Armstrong 2011).

The speakers pointed out instances where American institutions, such as Conneticut College Library (2008) and University of Washington Library (n.d.), include this global citizenship agenda in their mission and vision statements. In the case of the University of Michigan Library, this initiative was supported by the emergence of a new post, namely the "Global Initiatives Librarian" in 2009. (Library Journal 2009)

Eleni Zazani (left) and Sheila Webber.

The majority of the presentations at LILAC last year promoted the need to measure the impact of IL in order to advocate its value; particularly pertinent in educational contexts such as HE, given the introduction of new working patterns and financial constraints in this sector. Following the implementation of these new practices, I feel that at LILAC this year, we have started to take a step forward towards the implementation of information literacy in diverse contexts.

This article is based on a speech given during the event "Report back from LILAC 2011" which took place in Second Life, on Wednesday 4ᵗʰ of May 2011 at the Infolit iSchool, University of Sheffield. More information about this Second Life meeting can be found at http://information-literacy.blogspot.com/2011/04/report-from-lilac-conference-second.html

LILAC 2011 papers

Papers will be made available at: http://lilacconference.com/ in due course.

Chia, J. 2011. *Assessing models of library instruction: a case of NTU libraries.* LILAC 2011, British Library and London School of Economics, 18-20 April, 2011

Jackson, A. 2011. *22nd century librarians and the death of information skills.* LILAC 2011, British Library and London School of Economics, 18-20 April, 2011

Kutner, L. & Armstrong, A. 2011. *Rethinking information literacy in a globalized world.* LILAC 2011, British Library and London School of Economics, 18-20 April, 2011

Walsh, A. 2011. *Martini information literacy: how does "anytime, anyplace, anywhere" access to information change what information literacy means?* LILAC 2011, British Library and London School of Economics, 18-20 April, 2011. University of Huddersfield Repository [Online]. Available at: http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/9914/ [Accessed: 04 June, 2011]

Wang, L. 2011. *A practical model for curricular integration of information literacy in higher education.* LILAC 2011, British Library and London School of Economics, 18-20 April, 2011

Whitworth, A. 2011. *Challenging the linear models of IL.* LILAC 2011, British Library and London School of Economics, 18-20 April, 2011[online]. Available at: http://prezi.com/3lybv3jdc67b/challenging-the-linear-models-of-il/ [accessed 20 April 2011].

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