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## Editorial

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Chan, L. et al. 2002. Budapest Open Access Initiative. New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> [Accessed: 18 November 2015].

# The greatness of small things

As I write this in late November I'm just back from attending two events that I found particularly exciting. I was honoured to be asked to speak firstly at i2c2 – the Innovation, Inspiration and Creativity Conference – and later the same week at the annual seminar of Ireland's Consortium of National and University Libraries (CONUL) Teaching & Learning Group.

To have four days in a row of conferencing was an amazing luxury, but on top of that both i2c2 and the CONUL seminar were focused and tightly-knit communities that it was a privilege to be part of. Each was intensely creative and exciting in different ways, and together they brought home to me how valuable smaller events can be alongside the whirlwind exhilaration of big international meetings such as the Librarians' Information Literacy Annual Conference (LILAC), European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL), or Association (ACRL).

CONUL's Teaching & Learning (T&L) seminar was held at Trinity College, Dublin, where coincidentally I worked 20 years ago as a (very) junior secretary in the languages department. Fascinated by the learning and research going on around me, I nevertheless felt excluded from the academic community and rapidly grew to believe I was too unintelligent ever to study for a degree myself. So it was both strange and deeply satisfying to revisit Trinity College four qualifications later, as a conference keynote speaker; and a lived reminder that you should never let yourself believe you can *never* do something: maybe you just can't do it *yet* ...

The CONUL T&L group is a vibrant community of practice that exists to explore, identify and share best practices in embedding information literacy (IL) into higher education learning and teaching. There were around 80 delegates at the seminar, and through slick scheduling and clever use of lightning talks, we were able to hear about a wide range of exciting and innovative projects from all over the country. These ranged from IL support for a course for students with intellectual disabilities, through an accredited digital skills module for PhD candidates, to a thought-provoking final talk on the role of the IL specialist in a project to decolonise the curriculum and the challenges this brings to enacting an 'expert' persona.

We also heard from the winner of the T&L Group's annual award for an outstanding contribution to the IL field, which this year went to an impressive outreach project at the National University of Ireland's Galway's Archives; and about the L2L network – 'Librarians learning to support learners learning' – a two-year national project supporting and validating teaching librarians' professional development. This move towards formally recognising librarians' role as higher education teaching staff is backed by yet another exciting and encouraging development, the government-funded National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

Underpinning the whole day was an extraordinary sense of community, enriched by strongly held, robustly defended professional and pedagogic values. With a smaller number of delegates, everyone can be in the same room and there is a sense of not only sharing experience, but collectively creating it.

The same feeling was evident all the way through i2c2, held in the beautiful Scarborough countryside and framed around playful, creative and disruptive learning. Over three active and immersive days, in informal room set-ups with plenty of Lego, plasticine and craft materials, the 25 delegates (human and canine!) wove a kind of collaborative magic. Although there were scheduled presentation slots – which showcased some inspiring practice – ultimately it didn't feel like an event that consisted of speakers and an audience. Rather, every delegate was actively engaged in creating something transformative that we were all enriched by. The keynote talks shaded into group-wide conversations; we discussed failure and integrity as well as innovation; we played (and designed) games, handled learning objects, made Lego representations of abstract issues and challenges, and learned improvisation techniques to use in our classrooms.

This issue of *JIL* also focuses on themes of community and collaboration, beginning with a case study of another dynamic and collegiate conference showcasing undergraduate students' research. Bury, Craig & Shujah describe the evolution of York University's Undergraduate Research Fair and the associated Information Literacy award, and analyse the information literacy behaviours evidenced in students' award submissions, demonstrating the critical importance of grounding practice in IL theory to support higher-order conceptual development.

Continuing the theme of collaboration, McKeever, Bates & Reilly explore how school librarians in Northern Ireland perceive the IL knowledge and perceptions of the teachers they work with, and the extent to which teachers and librarians work together. While their findings reveal low levels of collaboration, they present a range of recommendations for overcoming the barriers and for developing teachers' understandings of information literacy.

Webster & Whitworth's article on the SPIDER project offers a fascinating analysis of how distance learners can be supported to form a cohesive learning community, and one in which diversity of perspective, thought and geographical location can be fostered as a positive contribution. This paper offers a fresh take on the idea of alterity, and argues that the condition of distance learning can bring a distinct and beneficial quality to building information literacy.

Charlotte Barton's project report outlines her research into students' experiences of library induction sessions, while Paula Funnell reports on a controlled study of the extent to which various audience response systems promote student engagement and learning. Both papers offer practical, reproducible guidance and well-evidenced insights into teaching innovations that will be of interest to IL practitioners everywhere.

I am delighted that this issue also carries a paper by Angela Pashia based on her compelling LILAC presentation. This article describes how the author creates opportunities in her IL teaching for discussions of structural inequality in society and the ways in which privilege is encoded in information and communication. Pashia also critically examines the ways in which libraries have been, and remain, complicit in propagating social inequality, often through a belief in their own neutrality.

Our book reviews, by Lynne Meehan and David Dettman, explore two highly relevant new titles dealing with applications of information literacy. Meehan finds Forster's edited collection *Information literacy in the workplace* an informative read, offering fresh perspectives and practical tips, while Dettman enjoys the challenge presented by Snyder Broussard's depiction of IL teaching as detached from the realities of writing and working towards assignments in *Reading, research and writing: Teaching information literacy with process-based research assignments*.

We round off the issue with a vibrant write-up by Jane Secker of the ECIL conference in St Malo, France. It's so vivacious you can practically taste the seafood!

## **Coda**

In further praise of small things, I'm delighted to report that the *JIL* copyediting team has been augmented by the arrival of not one but two babies! Congratulations to Sharon Lawler on the birth of Mila Hope, and to Sarah Wolfenden on the arrival of Toby Oliver. May you know all the joys, challenges and exhilarations of lifelong learning, and the deep fulfilment of finding and furthering your community.

## Further reading

CONUL Teaching & Learning Group: <http://www.conul.ie/sub-committees-groups/teaching-and-learning/>

i2c2 Conference: <http://i2c2conference.innovativelibraries.org.uk/>

i2c2 2017 Storify: <https://storify.com/JessHaigh/i2c2>