

Journal of Information Literacy

ISSN 1750-5968

Volume 12 Issue 2

December 2018

Editorial

Coonan, E. 2018. Reading between the lines: process and mess in writing and research. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 12(2), pp.1–3.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11645/12.2.2563>



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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].

Reading between the lines: process and mess in writing and research

Recently I was talking to a series editor who used a beautiful metaphor for writing. She explained that for the books in her series, it's important to begin by establishing common ground with the reader, then you can 'de-anchor yourself and start to sail'. Uplifted by her analogy I soared momentarily on the gallant white wings of a literary schooner, but then abruptly realised the unfortunate truth that my writing doesn't 'sail' anywhere: it wades. At best, it churns splashily through clear ankle-deep water; more frequently it ploughs heavily through mud and marsh, falling often into unseen potholes, usually with one leaking boot.

'Just write,' I tell myself, time after time. After years of wading, I've amassed some artful measures for conjuring the Muse – free writing, social writing, turning the page to landscape orientation, mindmapping, timeboxing. I remind myself that I've somehow written three dissertations, several book chapters, lots of conference presentations, many, many project reports, some bad adolescent poetry, a bristling forest of emails (some minor rhetorical compositions in their own right), ethics applications, job applications, love letters, a research report on how the higher education sector is responding to the UK Government's *Industrial Strategy*, and, of course, editorials. And yet here I am again – still – in front of the blank page, pomodoro timer counting down empty minutes, tea turning lukewarm at my side. Hemingway's alleged comment that to write 'All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed' feels all too accurate whatever the veracity of its source.

Thankfully, alongside the Muse-summoning methods I've acquired over time, I've also learned the fundamental truth that writing is hard – and rewarding – because it's messy, in the same ways that research is hard and rewarding because it's messy. In both cases it can be difficult to see where either is going while you're doing it: there's a moment of free-fall where you have to yield to the impetus and go where the journey takes you. And even as you slip heavily into yet another concealed dip in the riverbed, there's still an insistent fishtail flicker in the murk: the urge to explore and the need to share the findings.

One of the tricky, tacit demands of academic writing is that the final product should erase all the mess, papering over the effort and compromises that went into its creation. In this issue of *JIL*, as all issues, the papers and reports you read will show few if any traces of the writing struggle. Owing to the hard graft of their authors, with help and encouragement from critical friends and reviewers, they present a smooth, fluent, well-structured facade to the reader. Yet paradoxically, this very structure of 'academese', which disguises all the hard work of writing, can make many practitioners feel as though research and writing are beyond their reach, things that other people are mysteriously able to do but will never be in their own ambit. Academic writing, ironically, has the effect of making readers out of potential researchers.

To all of you who think of yourselves as *JIL* readers but not writers or researchers, I want to emphasise that a fundamental part of what you do as an IL practitioner is support learners to read between the lines, to develop a cool, still criticality towards information which enables them to understand and deal with the inherent messiness of knowledge creation. If you're a *JIL* reader, therefore, you already have the capability and the curiosity to 'read between the lines' of your own context and practice and see what there is to be questioned, to be explored, to be researched and shared. Why not think about taking that next step, as the authors in this issue have?

Several contributions focus on teaching innovations, offering ideas and inspiration for teaching librarians everywhere. Kristen Rebmann describes how she used the iterative principles of design thinking to underpin the development of informed learning provision around open information literacy and scholarly communications for science students. In a similar vein, Silva, Green and Walker employ the user-centred design principle of 'Don't ask people what they need; observe what they do' (see e.g. Priestner, n.d.) to compare students' preferred evaluation behaviours,

elicited through think-aloud protocols, with what they said was important when evaluating information. Spoiler alert: they didn't match!

Another very accessible research method is showcased by Ward, Margolin and Brown, who used the iterative and reflective action research approach in designing their engaging Comics-Questions curriculum. This innovative teaching approach is based on the key principle of starting where the learner is, foregrounding students' questions and existing skills, and channelling them through an accessible medium with the use of comics as source materials.

Amanda Folk anchors her research in the 'funds of knowledge' concept, which focuses on the knowledge, skills and resources acquired by individuals through their historical and cultural interactions, and it further recognises that the funds of knowledge of individuals from marginalised groups may be viewed negatively by those in power. Folk's paper foregrounds learners' identities, lived experiences and voices in a powerful and compelling way.

Two contributions focus on workshop events. Lucinda Rush and her colleagues at Dominion University collaborated with journalists and faculty members to create a thought-provoking event focused on the topic of fake news, while Joseph Yap and April Manabat share how they designed and ran a workshop programme introducing media and information literacy (MIL) to teacher librarians in the Philippines. There's plenty of practical ideas to take away from both and experiment with in your own practice!

Elsewhere, Dana Ingalls offers an insight into information literacy provision specifically for Dietetics students, a group whose future profession will demand not only a high degree of health literacy in their own information practices, but also the capacity to foster it in their clients. Ingalls describes how she redesigned her teaching provision over the course of two years, and how she incorporated elements of the ACRL *Framework* into the new design.

In another readable project report, Bogdana Marchis describes an exciting initiative at Stanford Libraries in the US in which professionally designed and created videos, with significant input from library staff, bring humour into library support resources and promote students' enjoyment of and engagement with them.

Cunningham and Williams present the findings of their wide-ranging research into the views of various stakeholders on information literacy and their information contexts. They use a phenomenographic approach to explore the differing conceptions of no fewer than seven groups of stakeholders in a middle school environment, with fascinating outcomes.

In a paper based on her LILAC presentation, Helena Hollis reviews a range of information literacy measures, asking both a pragmatic question – are these measures functioning well as test instruments and meeting the needs of researchers? – and also a philosophical one: if IL is a universal phenomenon that exists outside of higher education environments, can it be tested for reliably across all contexts and domains? Her findings will be of great interest to anyone using pre- and post-class tests to measure the impact of their teaching.

To round off this wide-ranging issue there is a selection of book reviews to help you drop some hints about what you'd like to see in your Christmas stocking, as well as two enjoyable conference reports from Alison Hicks on ECIL and Tibor Koltay on LILAC. Koltay has also published a paper in Hungarian on *JIL's tenth anniversary issue*, which contained invited contributions from eminent international IL scholars. We wanted that issue to become a landmark publication in IL, and I am very happy to see that it continues to have impact!

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