

Journal of Information Literacy

ISSN 1750-5968

Volume 15 Issue 2

June 2021

Book review

Williams, S. Book Review of McGuinness, C. 2021. *Academic teaching librarian's handbook*. London: Facet. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 15(2), pp. 191-192.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11645/15.2.2987>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

Copyright for the article content resides with the authors, and copyright for the publication layout resides with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Information Literacy Group. These Copyright holders have agreed that this article should be available on Open Access and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike licence.

"By 'open access' to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited."

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]

McGuinness, C. 2021. *Academic teaching librarian's handbook*. London: Facet. 304pp. 9781783304622. £55.00. Pbk.

**Suzie Williams. Academic Liaison Librarian, Sunderland University.
Email: suzie.williams@sunderland.ac.uk Twitter: @suziekitchin
ORCID: [0000-0002-0175-8791](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0175-8791)**

The publisher's statement that this book is a comprehensive resource for information and library (LIS) professionals at all stages of their career is bold. Having read the book thoroughly, I can see the benefits that would be derived from LIS students exploring potential career pathways, academic teaching librarians reflecting on their professional practice, and those in senior leadership positions exploring strategic decisions and service development.

Those wishing to research and investigate into theoretical constructs and approaches will welcome the first part of the book which focuses on constructing the academic teaching librarian. The focus here is on setting out the current landscape of teaching librarianship and on librarians constructing their identity in this role. Theories of information literacy (IL), critical literacy and ethics are discussed, together with outlining frameworks produced by organizations such as CILIP, SCONUL and the Association of College and Research Libraries. The book is well referenced, with plenty of references to contemporary literature embedded within the narrative.

Subjects touched on include constructing your professional identity – this is not something that you tend to think about on a regular basis, but the book highlights this as being worth reflecting on. Consideration needs to be given to your intrinsic and extrinsic values, and the impact that context has on your identity. Topics such as roles and responsibilities, strengths, one's self-perception as a teacher, and how to develop a critical literate mindset are just a few of the areas of reflection readers are challenged with. The book inspires you to consider how transformative reflective practice can be on your professional development.

An interesting concept is presented of developing your own personal teaching philosophy. This might involve you writing a 1–2-page narrative written in the first person, to promote mindful awareness, and to help you consider the pedagogic theories most influential to you. This is built upon by recommending ways in which you can document and showcase your work through the creation of a portfolio. This is an excellent suggestion that encourages practitioners to stand back and reflect but in a very practical way which could benefit their career development.

Part 2 focuses on excelling at actually being an academic teaching librarian. Pertinent topics are debated including different terminology used around digital and technology-enhanced learning, and how we should use technology to support pedagogy, always considering whether it answers the needs of the students, rather than using technology simply because it is there. Readers are encouraged to reflect on their own readiness for working within an increasingly digital environment. The ever-changing culture and climate in higher education underpins this discussion and highlights the need to accept that the only constant in this job is constant evolution!

The final two chapters focus on leading, coordination and advocacy of academic teaching librarians. You are challenged to think about where and how leadership is demonstrated, explore leadership in the broadest sense, and consider how a professional may take on a leadership role in different contexts. I like the idea presented of a 'situated' concept of leadership, where focus is on knowledge or skills needed in a specific situation. Challenges in developing an IL culture on your campus are examined, with questions about who has the

power to make changes, and what values, people or policies govern access to change? I certainly identified with the discussion about tangible and intangible conditions for developing good IL practice, and the need to speak the same language as the faculty you are working with. The key is aligning what the faculty want with what we can provide. I love the encouragement to have 'courageous conversations' and to foster inclusive dialogue.

The book has a nice feature that encourages readers in their reflective practice. At the beginning of each chapter are a series of 'personal reflection points', where the reader is urged to consider their own theoretical or practice-based viewpoint on the subject being discussed. Ending each chapter are a couple of exercises simulating real-life scenarios, which you are encouraged to explore. These have potential to be used within a library school environment to encourage students to reflect on what working as an academic teaching librarian may look like, or within academic librarian team meetings as exercises in critical reflection.

To give you an example, here are some of the questions posted in these 'reflective pauses', with the emphasis being on your personal reflective practice and professional development. How do you define fake news? What do I know about learning analytics? How do you describe your role to someone outside the profession? What is your understanding of theories and pedagogies of teaching? What guides your practice? Do I see myself as a leader? How do I contribute to the professional community?

Suggested exercises are quite varied. Plan a career talk to sixth form students about becoming an academic teaching librarian. How would you future-proof teaching librarians? Create an interview schedule which details what questions you would ask candidates to find the best person for the job. Map your own professional profile as seen online and how you'd like to see it develop over the next two to three months. Having these exercises included at the end of each chapter is encouragement not to just put the book down when you have finished reading it, but to think 'okay, now what should I go and do about this?'