Journal of Information Literacy

Conference corner

I

The Second European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL), Dubrovnik, Croatia, 20-23 October 2014

Maria Bell, Learning Support Services Manager, London School of Economics and Political Science.
Email: m.bell@lse.ac.uk

The second European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL 2014) took place in Dubrovnik in October and is already a fixture in the calendar for the information literacy (IL) global community. Many delegates had attended the inaugural conference in Istanbul in 2013 but were joined by new delegates, many of whom had made extensive journeys. All were excited to be in beautiful Dubrovnik with the opportunity to discuss IL and its place in society. Delegates enjoyed a packed programme of invited talks, research papers, pecha kucha presentations, discussions of best practice, workshops and poster presentations. Themes discussed included the relationship between IL research and practice, IL assessment, evidence-based learning, self-efficacy in learners, active learning, and IL and democracy.

The view from the conference venue

Maria-Carme Torras spoke on behalf of International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) President Sinikka Sipla about The Lyon Declaration, launched at the IFLA conference in August, which highlights how access to information is critical in empowering people and in supporting development in society.

Michael B. Eisenberg**,** co-developer of the Big6 Model for IL, gave a passionate opening keynote on *Lessons learned from a lifetime of work in information literacy.* He reflected on the milestones in his 44-year career and shared how he saw the benefit of inquiry-based learning when an intern in the 1970s. He acknowledged the importance of a supportive doctoral supervisor and recalled how library science spoke to him. He stressed that resources and technologies change but, if the process of information-gathering and use is understood, it will enable students to adapt. His concern was that the focus on information was being lost as the scope of IL was broadened. Challenges exist - IL programmes at many institutions remain only partial or bolt-on - but, encouragingly, the time is now for IL. The challenge is to reach all students, enabling them to not just cope but thrive in an information-intensive world, and also to ensure that IL programmes are comprehensive.

Frameworks, models and terminology featured in many discussions. David Bawden's keynote *Being fluent and keeping looking,* considered the many concepts and models of IL – digital literacy, media literacy, transliteracy and the even wider metaliteracy. How do they fit together? Does one replace the other? Is there one literacy to rule them all? Bawden favours the concept of information fluency and argues that a multiple-level model with information fluency at the top keeps IL relevant.

UK delegation members Jane Secker and Maria Bell.

Ross Todd, of Rutgers University, was concerned by a preoccupation with many models, concepts and even tribes in IL research. IFLA's work within the UN Post-2015 Development Framework was shared by Maria-Carme Torras. She explained how IFLA's toolkit *Libraries and the UN post-2015* (IFLA 2014) aims to support libraries and other institutions in their advocacy role. The IFLA *Trend Report* states that new technologies will both expand and limit who has access to information at a time when digital content is predicted to double every two years.

Andrew Whitworth, of the University of Manchester, advocated a move *Towards a radical information literacy*. "A radical IL would be one that redistributed authority over information practice. It would not be institutionalized in libraries or HE, but could and must take place anywhere there are information exchanges among peers." He argued that radical IL is going on everywhere – we need to learn to see it.
The relationship between IL research and practice was explored by a panel comprising Bill Johnston, Louise Limberg, Ola Pilerot and Sheila Webber. If this gap exists, what can be done to close it? Ideas put forward included increasing practitioners' involvement in research, improving dissemination of research to practice, and more in-depth study of the application of research in practice.

Self-efficacy in learners was examined in several papers, for example, Geoff Walton's and Eleanor Johnston's study to demonstrate that an embedded IL can enhance students' perceptions of their own self-efficacy within a widening participation programme. (Walton and Johnston, 2014). Professional development is being addressed at the University of Bologna in a programme for librarians which was of great interest to a learning support team leader seeking to ensure our team has the skills needed for effective IL teaching. (Collina et al, 2014). IL and democracy was explored in Lauren Smith's paper *Young people's critical information literacy and political agency* (Smith 2013). You can read more of Lauren's work in JIL issue 7(2).

Workplace IL was examined in the panel *Transferability of information and data literacy beyond higher education.* Stéphane Goldstein, Ralph Catts, Jane Secker and Geoff Walton discussed how transferability of IL in to the workplace can be problematic. InformALL, a new organisation managed by the Research Information Network (RIN), is examining how information-related skills and know-how acquired in the context of HE might relate to the needs and expectations in realms beyond HE. An impressive range of best practice was

shared. We heard how games, online courses, enquiry-based and collaborative learning approaches are being used. For example, the RADAR game was developed at Loyola Marymount University seeking to improve student engagement with IL. (McLean and Acosta 2014). The value of open educational resources in developing online tutorials was demonstrated by Philip Russell of the Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT), Dublin, Ireland in *If you build it, they will use: creating and sharing open educational resources to advance information literacy.* Open educational resources have enabled ITT to enrich the learning experience for students. (Russell 2014).

A traditional dance ensemble at the gala dinner

The diversity of ECIL was demonstrated in the variety of work presented from Latvia, Croatia, Botswana, Singapore, Germany, Slovenia, Brazil, Montenegro, Pakistan and more. Higher education was the prevalent sector represented but the work in other sectors is evident.

It is impossible to reflect on all the papers. Sheila Webber has blogged from many sessions providing a great record of the conference. (Webber 2014). Bill Johnston, in an excellent review of the themes that emerged from ECIL 2014, praised the achievement of bringing together such a global community. It is important to remember that access to information, devices, or power is not equal and IL can be used to fight inequalities. The IL community needs to be involved in the big issues, e.g. politics, health and climate change. The Scottish referendum saw people engaged with the issues demanding and needing pertinent information. Sustainability of IL will need to be explored. Scalability of the work presented could be a problem – what happens when everyone wants to be involved? Forward planning is needed. Finally, we must spread the word about the Lyon Declaration.

The days were intense but a wonderful social programme enabled delegates to relax – including a welcome reception in the former monastery of St. Klara in in the Old Town, and a relaxed and lively conference dinner in Konavle. A folklore group introduced the dance and music traditions of the area and the delicious local food, wine and liqueurs were thoroughly enjoyed. The organising team, led by Serap Kurbanoglu (Hacettepe University) and Sonja Špiranec (University of Zagreb), did another fantastic job in creating an environment where learning, sharing, debate, development and collaboration could occur. The proceedings, *Information Literacy: lifelong learning and digital citizenship in the 21st century* will be published in February 2015. Look out for the call for papers for ECIL 2015 in Tallinn, Estonia, *Information literacy in the green society*.

References

Collina, E., Renditiso, A. and Zauli, F. 2014. Information literacy teaching: the trainer librarian. The Second European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL), 2014. Available at: http://ecil2014.ilconf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ecil2014_abstracts.pdf#page=176. [Accessed 14 November 2014.]

ECIL. 2014. The second European conference on information literacy (ECIL) 2014, Dubrovnik, Croatia, abstracts. Available at: http://ecil2014.ilconf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ecil2014_abstracts.pdf. [Accessed 14 November 2014.]

IFLA. 2014. Toolkit: Libraries and the UN post-2015 development agenda. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. Available at: http://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/topics/libraries-development/documents/ifla-post-2015-a2i-libraries-toolkit.pdf. [Accessed 14 November 2014.]

Johnston, B. 2014. ECIL Conference, Dubrovnik, 20-23 October. The right information: information skills in 21st-century Scotland. Available at: http://www.therightinformation.org/blog/2014/11/7/ecil-conference-dubrovnik-20-23rd-october-2014.html. [Accessed 14 November 2014].

Kurbanoglu, S. et al (eds). 2015. Information literacy: lifelong learning and digital citizenship in the 21st century. In Second European Conference, ECIL 2014, Dubrovnik, Croatia, October 20-23, 2014. (forthcoming) Available at: http://www.springer.com/computer/general+issues/book/978-3-319-14135-0. [Accessed 14 November 2014.]

McLean, L. and Acosta, E. 2014. Taking active learning to the next level: increasing student engagement by blending face-to-face instruction and digital learning objects. The Second European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL), 2014. Available at: http://ecil2014.ilconf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ecil2014_abstracts.pdf#page=152. [Accessed 14 November 2014.]

Russell, P. 2014. If you build it, they will use: creating and sharing open educational resources to advance information literacy. The Second European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL), 2014. Available at: http://ecil2014.ilconf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ecil2014_abstracts.pdf#page=182. [Accessed 14 November 2014.]

Smith, Lauren. 2013. Towards a model of critical information literacy instruction for the development of political agency. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 7(2), pp. 15–32. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.11645/7.2.1809.

Walton, G. and Johnston, E. 2014. Can an information literacy intervention promote self – efficacy in learners? The Second European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL) 2014. Available at: http://ecil2014.ilconf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ecil2014_abstracts.pdf#page=65. [Accessed 14 November 2014]

Webber, S. 2014. Various posts labelled #ecil2014. Information Literacy Weblog [Online]. Available at: http://information-literacy.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/ecil2014. [Accessed 14 November 2014.]

Resources

- ECIL 2014 film. YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmAAUOFYwZM
- Big6: Information and Technology Skills for Student Success: http://big6.com/
- InformALL, information know-how for all:
  http://www.researchinfonet.org/infolit/ridls/
- ITT, Dublin Online Tutorials: http://library.ittdublin.ie/screens/tut.html
- The Lyon Declaration: http://www.lyondeclaration.org/
- The RADAR Game: http://electra.lmu.edu/TheRadarGame/story.html