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Book Review

Crawford, J. C. and Irving, C. 2013. *Information literacy and lifelong learning: policy issues, the workplace, health and public libraries*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing. pp 292. ISBN: 9781843346821. £52.50. Pbk.

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Divided into three parts - *Overview*; *Specific Areas*; and *Policymaking Issues for the Future* – this text offers something for both novice and seasoned professional alike. Though offering a largely UK view, it speaks to information literacy (IL) practitioners around the world; as the increasingly international commodity that is information makes it imperative that uniform policies are implemented at state/sector level.

Part one (*Overview)* provides a concise history of information policy, highlighting the shifts in stewardship from industry to government to libraries over the last century and a half. Regarding the 'information sector' CILIP and its previous incarnations are described. The Prague Declaration and Alexandria Proclamation get brief mentions - the 21st century UNESCO-sponsored definitive words on IL - which are followed by a descent into the patchy coverage which constitutes the international view, as to be expected much of it is Eurocentric with offerings from Australasia and North America. The part ends with a cursory look at the issue of introducing IL to early-years children. Today's young people are already 'digital natives' so it only makes sense to raise them as 'IL natives' too. As a policy issue, it's understandable for it to be positioned here; however its content belies its location. An early-years exemplar from the Scottish Information Literacy Project (SILP) is featured (2013) which offers an innovative take on Bloom's Taxonomy. As there is little evidence of other initiatives for this area of childhood education, the chapter makes suggestions for action e.g. more collaboration between public libraries and early-years teachers. References are made to a number of Asian activities and a Swedish one; however they are aimed at primary- and secondary-aged children.

As is suggested in the chapter on early-years, by the time education begins to focus upon IL i.e. in the higher education (HE) years, it is too late to try and introduce this essential concept. Many graduates are already entrenched in questionable searching habits; and finding the time and money to teach the employee, civil servant or patient to become efficient users of information becomes practically impossible without the support of the CEO, mandarin or the NHS bureaucrat. Government has the intention of getting everyone online (information policy at its most basic) but without making comprehensive provision for teaching/learning.

That said, for those who come from an educational library background, Part two (*Specific Areas*) is a welcome introduction to IL initiatives outside of academia. Public libraries; the health agenda; the workplace and employability; and the Scottish Government are considered, with the latter offering a detailed view. This is due to the authors of this book being instrumental in developing and delivering the SILP; which was then implemented throughout the Government by the authors of the chapter. In all sectors including education the predicament is the same: without the buy-in of the major stakeholders, progress is hindered. The Scottish Government however is one example of what can happen when everyone is fully committed. The ongoing issue becomes one of continuity of service, which is usually dependent on funding or some other administrative matter.

For those in the profession, it can be somewhat disheartening to read of excellent initiatives that have foundered for the aforementioned reasons. Nevertheless each chapter is a literature review in its own right, providing references to numerous pieces of research, case studies and strategies. So even those who feel they have 'tried everything' are bound to find something new, especially if

a cross-sectoral search is made. Particularly useful is the chapter on value and impact; something that's paramount when trying to justify the need for time as well as the benefits of IL. The concept can be difficult to quantify, so credit must go to the authors for including practical examples of how to do this.

Part three (*Policymaking Issues for the Future*) consists of one concise chapter, its length being a metaphor for future issues i.e. there aren't many. Crawford and Irving have consolidated examples of best practice and devoted much of the book to them. There is little point in them expounding on what to do next as much work is already being done albeit in isolation. Therefore the chapter briefly suggests the following 'three wishes': fundraising; more collaborative working; and the creation of a government agency to promote IL and aggregate examples of best practice.

All bar the first chapter are bookended by an abstract and keywords section and chapter summary; which in turn aid (skim) reading and digesting of information. The depth and currency of references – eleven pages – is impressive and comprehensive. The majority of them (at time of publication) are less than five years old; and a considerable number of those are less than two years old. Thankfully, many of the studies and research findings have been published online so those who may not have access to electronic journals/subscription databases will be able to access these resources on the open web. This text both provides practical advice and is a welcome primer for those that matter outside of the profession, namely major stakeholders.

References

Scottish Information Literacy Project. 2013. *Questioning – Kilmacolm's innovative Blooming Blooms* [Online]. Available at: http://www.therightinformation.org/temp-exemp-kilmacolm/ [Accessed: 8 May 2014].