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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].

# All change

There's a lot packed into the label 'librarian' – particularly if you add 'teaching' in front of it.

I was recently asked to write one of those introductory blog posts that are guaranteed to make your mind go blank. When I managed to untangle my thoughts a bit, I found myself writing about real and perceived differences between 'academic' and 'academic support', with the role of the teaching librarian very much at the forefront of my mind. I pointed out that academic librarians frequently teach, support learning, advise on research design, and are experts on situated academic information practices. Many librarians are committed to grounding their practice in evidence and their teaching in theoretically-informed reflection. Some carry out research themselves; a smaller number are even allowed by their institutions to call it that. Yet they are all still hung with the label 'academic support', and if research is indeed a recognised element in their roles – whether under that name or a euphemism like 'research-led practice' – it's generally seen as a kind of luxury add-on, and the first element to go when the pressure comes on.

Why do I say 'they', and not 'we'? Because after a confusing couple of months during which I worked for three days a week as a teaching librarian and two days a week as a researcher, I'm now a full-time Research Fellow at the Centre for Innovation in Higher Education at Anglia Ruskin University. This is a disconcerting, though pleasant, upheaval in who and what I am – an identity crinkle rather than identity crisis. It's causing absolute havoc with my pronouns, and to add to the confusion I've never had more invitations to engage in library and information literacy-related work – conferences, speaking engagements, reviewing and writing. Where before I seemed to have a composite identity that took the form of being a librarian by day and a researcher / editor / speaker / writer by night, now it seems I'm a research fellow by day and a librarian by night.

We talk so much about change in information literacy (IL) discourse: of the transformative potential of learning, which is encountering new information; and on the flipside, of the conceptual and emotional impact of being faced with information that contradicts our world-view. But it can be hard to capture the fluidity of a changing identity in words and constructs. What has struck me most forcefully in this (possibly temporary) leap across the invisible divide between 'academic support' and 'academic' is how little has changed between the two roles in terms of how I spend my time. I wrote in the blog post that:

[w]here once I filled in endless project documentation to apply for my own time in order to design online learning, now I use the same idiom of 'risks', 'resources' and 'deliverables' to write bids for research funding (£50K and counting ...). Where I used to help students, researchers and professional colleagues put together practical, meaningful and ethical designs, now I'm doing that for my own research projects. (Coonan, 2018)

There's even a kind of wry symmetry in the opacity of my job titles. Just as no-one outside libraries ever understood what was meant by 'Information Skills Librarian', no-one at all really understands what the role of 'Research Fellow' entails.

This feeling of 'all change' yet 'no change', with its attendant pronoun confusion (which community do I belong to?), may be why I find the title of this year's LOEX conference – 'New frontiers and uncharted territory' – intriguing and inspiring. Lindsay Carpenter's incisive write-up focuses on empowerment and inequalities, a theme that ran through many of the presentations. Look out too for how the issue of who gets to speak, and how authority is constructed, was not just discussed but enacted at the event.

In our other conference updates Anne-Lise Harding reports on the sweet treat that was ICEPOPS, a playful introduction to copyright – with added karaoke! – while Bethany Sherwood caught up with the winners of the Librarians' Information Literacy Annual Conference (LILAC) 2018 bursaries to ask them about their experiences of the conference and the barriers and challenges to IL in each

of their sectors. Lisa Gardner's companion report 'Thinking of going to LILAC?' recognises that at a conference where 'everything is useful' some strategies for staying on top are essential, and she offers some excellent suggestions for getting the most out of your next LILAC.

The CILIP definition of information literacy has itself gone through a sea-change. The new definition was formulated by the Information Literacy Group (ILG) in 2017 under the guidance of the late and much missed Rowena Macrae-Gibson, and based on a survey of ILG members' views and feedback from LILAC attendees. Jane Secker reports on how the new definition evolved and what it contains. Most notably, the new definition moves away from a sequential, task-focused construction of IL towards a richer, individual and socially situated vision that emphasises the role of information and criticality in contexts outside formal learning environments. This is a deep shift – from a tacitly normative, measurable idea of IL based on competencies, to a recognition of individual agency and responsibility in the consumption, construction and creation of information in social and political contexts.

The same shift in thinking underlay the challenging movement from *Information Literacy Competency Standards* to the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* undertaken by the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) in 2016, and two of this issue's book reviews, by Claire Carter and Rebecca Miller, look at works that explicitly examine how IL teaching changes in the light of this rethinking. Carter finds that Joanna Burkhardt's *Framework*-based activities are both practical and useful, extending the theoretical positioning of the *Framework* to support those at the coalface, while Miller enjoyed the thoughtful exploration of IL threshold concepts offered by Godbey, Wainscott and Goodman in their edited volume.

Klipfel and Cook's *Learner-centred pedagogy*, reviewed by Shazia Arif, has a UK background and makes clear links between the role of the teaching librarian and the UK's recently introduced Teaching Excellence Framework. The work discusses the psychology of learning and the need for teaching librarians to help learners develop a growth mindset through IL sessions – again moving away from end results such as meeting competency standards, and instead focusing on the learning process and the learner's own development.

A similar focus on the individual and on process underlies the innovative practice described in several of this issue's project reports. In particular, the Escape Room activity outlined by librarians from the University of Surrey offered students at all levels – not just first year – the opportunity to interact with the library and IL in ways they found both engaging and meaningful. The authors share not only their findings but also the realities of designing and running the escape room, including making a case for the activity and unforeseen events both negative and positive.

With a similarly practical approach, Alice Schmidt Hanbidge, Nicole Sanderson and Tony Tin describe the creation of their Mobile IL Tool offering 'anytime, anywhere' access to IL support, while Lis Pankl, Dale Larsen and Shane Wallace relate how they integrated institutional teaching frameworks and learning outcomes to create a coherent set of guidelines for teaching librarians. This report too describes the nuts and bolts realities of trialling and implementing collaborative guidelines, offering valuable insights for libraries considering similar initiatives.

I am delighted that the paper by Ann De Meulemeester, Heidi Buysse and Renaat Peleman presents a statistical analysis in such an accessible manner – at last I have some understanding of what Cronbach's alpha actually does! Their development and validation of an IL self-efficacy scale is robust quantitative research in its own right, enriched with enormously helpful explanations of each phase of the analysis as well as a discussion of the concept of self-efficacy in relation to IL.

Jing Shen's exploration of flipped learning suggests that while learners express enthusiasm about online independent learning opportunities, they nonetheless hesitate to take control of the process themselves. The report by Eleanor Dommert also focuses on flipped learning, and similarly finds a

gap between the positive experience described by students and visible progression in putting learning into practice.

Diana Hackett's paper discusses her textual analysis of public libraries' discourse around IL, and her sobering discovery that while in governmental narratives the role of public libraries is closely identified with digital inclusion, there is no practical commitment to, nor a good understanding of, the active role that libraries should be taking to deliver this. Hackett's research shows unequivocally that the reality does not bear out the rhetoric.

A second paper by Lee Webster, authored with Helen Gunter, continues the analysis of data from the SPIDER project begun in volume 11(2) of *JIL*. Here Webster and Gunter explore power relations in the classroom (and online classroom), not shirking the uncomfortable reality that a teacher's intentions to empower learners may be in tension with their enactment of authority and discipline in practice.

These kinds of discussion around authority, discourse, inclusion, the distribution of power, and the gaps between learning design and learning, have been central to my identity as a teaching librarian. My understanding of their urgency and their social as well as pedagogic importance was, and is, created through conversations: by participation in a community of practitioners, some expert, some – like me – explorers, all learners. And without doubt the strangest effect of my identity change has been the discovery that these are conversations I'm hearing much less in my new role.

This brings me back to the point made earlier about who gets to speak, and in particular who gets to speak *to* and *on behalf of* a community about how it understands, constructs and addresses the world. We – librarians as well as non-librarians – shouldn't underestimate information professionals' long-standing awareness and critical foregrounding of issues around power, information and inequality. For years now we have raised questions about the implications of routinely collecting data on patrons; around our own positioning, professional neutrality and vocational awe; about how power inequalities play out not only in terms of access to knowledge but also in questions of who gets to speak and whose voice is silenced. However, the tone of our discourse often seems to deprecate our knowledge and experience, as though we feel that while as librarians we can see much of the problem, there are others better placed and with greater expertise or authority to articulate it and suggest solutions. Yet from my odd position perched on the periphery, I can see that all we need to change is our belief in ourselves and our professional knowledge. Librarians have recognised for years, if not decades, that a society is a mechanism for propagating inequality, and have argued for the importance of critically examining the status quo. It seems to me that the 'uncharted territory' open to us to explore is a recognition of our own abilities and standing to put these questions, rather than waiting for others to license us to do so or to offer us an opening to speak.

Not that it helps at all with the pronoun confusion, but this realisation is why rather than just describing myself as a research fellow, I also find myself adding 'and former academic librarian'. That is, after all, the core of who I am.

## References

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