

Conference report

LILAC 2024: Significant issues and my thoughts

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11645/18.2.616>

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Keywords

information literacy; librarians; LILAC

Introduction

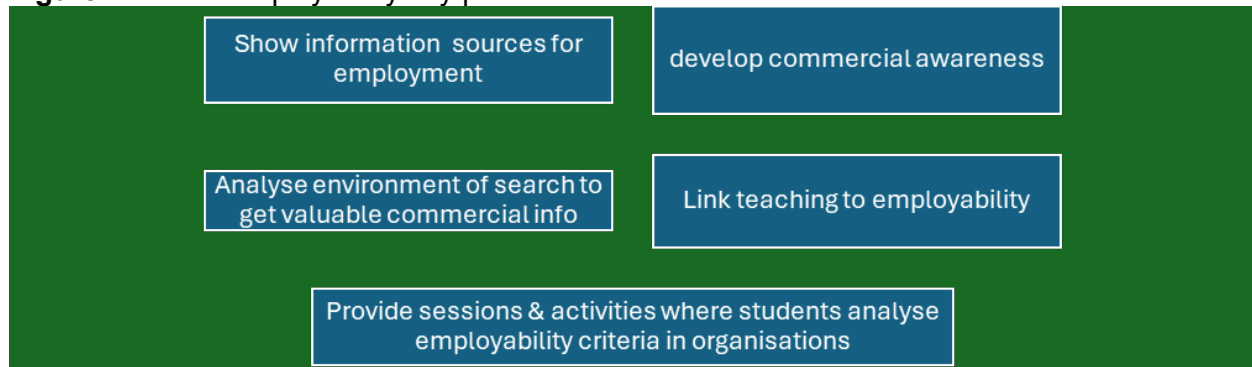
LILAC is an annual conference organised by CILIP's Information Literacy group. It is usually carried out to celebrate the impact of information literacy (IL) and to ensure the development of attendees through sharing best practice. This year's conference marked the 50th anniversary of the Information Literacy Group and it was highly celebrated and merged with LILAC which took place from 25th of March to the 27th, at the Rose Bowl, Leeds Beckett University. There were many sponsored places, and I was among those that received a bursary for the event. This powerfully organised conference, with the presence of an array of publishers, speakers, good food and diverse confectionery provided an evening get-together and a conference party. The keynote speakers talked about Artificial intelligence (AI) and playful and compassionate approaches for inclusive IL instruction. There were diverse sessions self-selected by each conference participant, numbering about eleven in total and there were significant discussions around my sessions, and my thoughts on them, all of which are summarised in this report.

IL within the educational environment and connection to the employment market

In this session, IL was described as a discipline that transcends learning skills within a university environment to an employability literacy skill that leads to employment after graduation. Academic librarians were enjoined to teach students how to source and evaluate commercial information and how to develop relevant skills that would be needed in the job market. Since employability skills start with the selection of the right program, academic librarians were to introduce employability skills before admission to a college or university and to ensure that what was termed as "rip off programs" were not provided in their academic environment. Librarians are to start thinking outside of the box to understand what happens in their surroundings and how it affects their students. This is summarised in Figure 1.

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Figure 1: IL and employability key points.



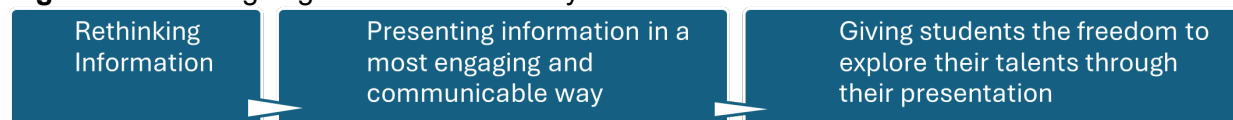
Faculty development and IL: creating a research support program for faculty members

This subtitle is a merger of two sessions that dealt with faculty development through IL. These sessions focussed on how librarians can have *library ambassadors* in lecturers through *teaching information endorsement programs*, for the purpose of imparting relevant IL skills that would help within and outside the classroom. The logic is that if lecturers are taught IL skills, they will be able to evaluate the impact of their teaching and find the right method to give feedback and instructions that bring out strengths and not weakness in their students. The challenge of the unwillingness to participate found in this exercise was resolved through “hiding the vegetables” where their areas of interest become the main draw, with the literacy program infused within.

Collaboration between librarians and teachers in designing IL for the classroom

IL focussed collaboration on designing literacy programs for students can be hugely beneficial for students. The aim was to design programs that would allow students to communicate assignment responses using their own expressions and to show their strengths in the various activities they participate in. The aim was to know that it is not always about the information sourced, but how the information is used to communicate. This is summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Co-designing Information Literacy.



Collaborative reading circle and IL skill

This session was significant for the way it linked collaborative reading circles to learning and research. It showed the essence of diversity and how it provides a wealth of critical thinking, ideas and interpretation, and how it can provide robust learning and research. Participants were grouped into discussion facilitators, visualisers, and the connectors, who were then required to interpret a document. The facilitator, as it relates to students, is the lead and provides documents to be read; the connector analyses the document and brings up connections to other concepts, thereby contextualising the article, while the visualiser draws pictorial ideas that could form research posters. This then provides a robust information or assignment that communicates in different ways.

Figure 3: Collaborative reading.



Using photovoice to understand international students' IL practices

This session focussed on photo information as a research method for data gathering. In this session, international students were trained and given assignments, which they are to respond to through photos that communicates feelings and unspoken words. A discussion was facilitated around the photos for purpose of analysis, then contextualised and exhibited. This method is seen as a different angle for responding to assignments and feedback, where international students can communicate through unwritten words that bring clearer understanding. This session outlined that pictures which depict “normal interpretation” can always be interpreted differently when viewed and analysed by someone else from a different background or with disparate experience.

How to support students reading journey from School, through to university

This session focussed on how students with a range of diverse backgrounds can be supported in their academic reading journey. The key points in this session highlighted how to handle reading lists, how to arouse passion for reading, reading techniques and the lack of pedagogy on how to teach reading. Reading was tied to the selection of appropriate academic resources, reading completion within required time, enjoying reading academic resources, understanding parts in a book and digital reading skills. This session highlighted that reading skills are not being taught because instructors believe they are innate skills. However, attention was drawn to the difference in old and new generations, and the need to teach reading and writing skills to new generations. Initiating the early teaching of reading skills would get students ready for dissertation writing with ease.

IL dissemination and how it can help international students and immigrants in dire need

This session focussed on the dilemma immigrants face due to information gaps and how IL can close that gap and provide aid. Though the research work was on immigrants, the discussion also focussed on international students in the UK. It highlighted that requested information was often a lifesaving tool linked to other dire needs—each positive response given or reference made can provide help towards accommodation, employment, visa, family reunion, etc. Hence, they are often time bound and should elicit an attitude that reflects IL and good communication skills. Public libraries and university libraries were encouraged to train to provide information, referral, documents, or signage that helps, as every question we might think of as simple is actually “begging” for an attentive and genuine response.

Keynote Speeches

The keynote speeches addressed issues such as Artificial intelligence (AI) and academic integrity and learning through playful and compassionate approaches. The use of AI in academic institutions was explained as something that is contextual and dependent on the intended objective—either to cheat or to learn. Hence, the aim justifies the use and determines whether it is academically wrong or not. An analogy is where a student who is supposed to carry out an academic writing assignment shifts the duty to a machine; then there is already a

misrepresentation and deceit as the student didn't carry out the work and would not proudly state "AI did it". However, where AI is used to carry out a search for learning or research, then the learner is only being assisted to learn just as any human would, so there is no impropriety. Hence, AI is part of digital literacy and should not be totally ignored, and librarians should teach the use of AI for learning and research as part of IL.

The keynote on imparting knowledge in the classroom through playful and compassionate approaches brought up some methods for learning. The method of passing notebooks around for students to write down anything they like and later responding to them was seen as a way of giving a voice to students who are shy or afraid to ask questions in the classroom. In addition to this, techniques such as having a positive approach when talking to students, can help to recognise and minimise distress, thereby making learning student-centred.

Conclusion

My first LILAC 2024 experience was highly impactful, and the knowledge acquired will make a difference in the way IL is applied in teaching, learning and in job roles; and I am grateful to LILAC for the sponsorship.

Declarations

Ethics approval

Ethics approval was not considered necessary for the nature of this report.

Funding

Not applicable.

AI-generated content

No AI tools were used.