Journal of Information Literacy

Book review

Secker. J. (2007) "Book review of Martin, A. and Madigan, D. (eds) (2006) *Digital Literacies for Learning*. London: Facet Publishing" *Journal of information literacy*, 1 (3), http://jil.lboro.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JIL/article/view/BR-V1-I3-2007-3.

Martin, A. and Madigan, D. (eds) (2006) *Digital Literacies for Learning*. London: Facet Publishing. 242 pp. ISBN: 1-85604-563-3. £39.95

Reviewed by Dr Jane Secker, Learning Technology Librarian, London School of Economics and Political Science

As someone who's attended several eLit conferences, I was keen to read this book, edited by one of the eLit organisers, Allan Martin. His passion and enthusiasm for what is now being termed 'digital literacy' is infectious and it's what largely got me involved in the information literacy movement. Dan Madigan, the co-editor is also a veteran of the eLit conference and I seem to recall being taught salsa by him at one event! On to the more serious topic of reviewing this book. It's a substantial work, made up of 21 chapters with numerous contributors from around the world. It is divided into two sections, the first looking at Literacies in the Digital Age and the second at Enabling and Supporting Digital Literacies. Contributions come from educators, researchers, IT professionals and librarians. As with the conference, this book seems to fuse my interests in teaching and learning, e-learning and libraries and how we equip the Google generation with the skills they need now and in the future.

Those new to the term digital literacy and wondering how it relates to information literacy would do well to start with Chapter One, written by Martin himself. Pages 8-17 provide useful definitions of the new literacies, including information literacy, media literacy and visual literacy, to name but a few. I also thoroughly enjoyed Chapter Four, by Paul Gilster on 'Digital fusion: defining the intersection of content and communications'. Gilster has written widely on the topic of digital literacy and he captures the challenge of undertaking research in the digital world stating:

"Until the tools become available, the thorough scholar will supplement conventional library research with the search engines that mine the intersection of content and communication." (Gilster in Martin & Madigan, 2006, p.49)

He also argues that it is a fallacy to equate the internet to being in any way like a digital library – it is not like this at all and leads people to view it purely as an information source, when its strength lies in being a communication channel. He alludes to many of the web 2.0 developments that are currently much hyped, seeing the internet currently very much in its infancy.

Chapter Seven (p.80) by Ola Pilerot provides an excellent overview of concepts of information literacy, packed full of references and highly readable. I was also pleased to see a chapter by Hester Mountifield, from the University of Auckland describing the Kate Edgar Information Commons as a student centred learning space. In my opinion Information Commons are fantastic learning spaces and an opportunity to provide a real heart to the university campus. Gill Needham co-wrote Chapter 21 comparing the Open University's information literacy module, MOSAIC with a similar course developed by the Hong Kong Open University. The chapter, while now slightly out of date (MOSAIC is being superseded by a Module known as Beyond Google), is still valuable.

Other notable authors, included Terry Mayes from Glasgow Caledonian University and Jeff Haywood from University of Edinburgh who have both written widely on e-learning. Jesus Lau from Universidada Veracruzana in Mexico who is the Chair of IFLA's Information

Literacy Section writes on the impact of information competencies on socio-economic development in the Southern Hemispheres. Authors less familiar to me but who wrote equally valuable chapters included Martin Jenkins on supporting students in e-learning and Renee Hobbs on media literacy.

The book is a wealth of information and while some of the topics are less relevant to librarians, it provides a wider context in which to place the information literacy movement. My only criticism if any, is that it has such a variety of contributors that one wonder who the primary audience of this book might be. As with the eLit conference, the book seeks to bring together people from different disciplines, from research and academia, from libraries and IT, who all have a common interest in digital literacy. My concern is that while we know we should break out of our silos, this is ultimately where we feel most comfortable! Nevertheless, I'd encourage anyone with an interest in teaching and learning, in any form of literacy and on the development of digital technology to read this book.