Editorial

Watchful eyes: Teaching for censorship in the information age

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It's hard to believe the December 2024 issue was published only six months ago given how much the world of research has changed since this date. Grants have been cancelled, databases have been shut down (and re-started), and the independence of journals has been threatened; for Pagel (2025), and others, these actions represent dangerous attempts to align science (and research) with Trump administration ideology. Librarians and other information activists have since started to push back on the suppression of research, with copies of deleted US government webpages and datasets popping up in the Internet Archive as well as in other grass root initiatives. However, I have not yet heard much focus on the impact of this censorship on information literacy. While most of the impact of challenges to intellectual freedom has been felt in the US to date, the important role that North America plays within global scholarly infrastructures means that it is only a matter of time before these issues ripple out to the rest of the world.

I've recently been carrying out research with my colleague, Rebecca Noone, into the impact of the first Trump administration on the work of librarians. In a paper exploring how the term "information crisis" is used (and abused) (Noone & Hicks, 2025), we found that there was a huge growth in literature on how librarians could design information literacy instruction sessions to manage the threat of misinformation within scholarly information environments. Given that the second Trump administration has now, err, banned federally funded research into misinformation (Pagel, 2025), I hope that we might now turn our attention to questions of censorship or how we engage with what is missing from the scholarly record rather than the more typical information overload. This remains an underexplored topic despite the establishment of ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom in the 1960s, and yet, it might appear to be a far richer topic of enquiry than misinformation, which has been plagued by accusations of downplaying "hegemonic orderings of race, gender, rationalism and class" (Hicks & Noone, 2023, p.606) within information systems (also see Kuo & Marwick, 2021).

In another piece of research that I have been carrying out, I have been tracking bookban challenges in UK school libraries (Hicks, 2025a). While it was the suggestion that US religious

pressure groups were infiltrating UK schools that received the media attention (Hicks, 2025b), I was particularly interested in the impact that risks of book bans were having on workplace information literacy or how school librarians integrate these threats to their professional expertise into their work. However, there are evidently many other ways in which a focus on censorship should be informing information literacy research and practice. How, for example, might we adapt teaching about search words given the ever-increasing list of banned phrases (Pen, 2025) emanating from the US government? Simultaneously, how do we accommodate more dispersed and decentralised information environments in our teaching given the ongoing unreliability of scientific, as well as race and gender information resources? While these questions are unpalatable, I hope they might provide a rallying focus for librarian work over the next four years of upheaval.

And now, gloomy predictions aside, it is over to this issue's contributions! Before I present this issue, I want to take a minute to thank Dr Meg Westbury, who is stepping down as Managing Editor after this issue. Meg has been with JIL since 2021 and she has been a tower of strength throughout this time, including, most wonderfully, during the migration of JIL to our new platform. There were multiple spreadsheets, there were data integrity issues, there were some very nail-biting up against the deadline moments, but Meg not only managed to stay calm and collected throughout, she also led the journal through several rounds of improvements, including spearheading our new policies and publication ethics. Thank you for everything, Meg, you will be much missed! I am delighted that we have appointed Jess Haigh as the new Managing Editor. Jess brings a wide range of experience to the role, including as a popular JIL author, and I am very excited about some of our initial plotting. Watch this space! I also want to thank our outgoing Editorial Board member, Professor Annemaree Lloyd, who resigned in January 2025. Annemaree has been a Board Member since 2014, so we are extremely grateful to her for 11 years of service to the journal. Your insightful comments and good humour will also be very much missed at our Board Meetings.

And so- after the bumper special issues of 2024, the June 2025 issue is rather more petite in size, but each article punches far above its weight. The first research article is no exception, with authors Viviane Frings-Hessami and Lisa Kruesi exploring the role that information preservation plays within information literacy. Emerging from research with rural Bangladeshi populations, this article reports on findings from 52 interviews to extend our understanding of the role that material objects play in becoming informed. Focused on physical and digital tools, this paper also stands out for its important emphasis on settings with limited technology and internet access. This paper was copyedited by Lynsey Blandford.

The second research article needs little introduction with author Amelia Haire presenting findings from her research at LILAC as well as through the NLISN Network this spring. If you have somehow missed the hype, this article explores what information literacy literacy looks like for neurodiverse populations. Introducing a welcome (and overdue) focus on inherent ableism within much information literacy research to date, findings from this study also extend workplace information literacy research by drawing attention to the role that information literacy plays within onboarding and new employee induction processes. This paper was copyedited by Andrea Brooks.

We move to Australia for the last paper where authors Kasey Garrison and Kay Oddone draw upon the perspective of teacher librarians to examine the information literacy needs of Australian secondary school students and teachers. Taking a phenomenological approach and

interviewing 19 secondary school teacher librarians, this research article found that both teachers and students are struggling to keep up with changing information environments. The article finishes with practical recommendations which would be useful for anyone involved in IL within school settings. This paper was copyedited by Waseem Farooq.

We also have two project reports for your delight and delectation within this June issue. In the first, Paul Newnham and Clare Shaikh report on the Lancaster University Library's Schools Engagement Project, which aimed to build partnerships between Lancaster University and local schools through supporting sixth form college students (age 16-18) writing their Extend Project Qualifications (EPQ). Aligning with Lancaster's widening participation goals, this project also found that IL instruction provided a useful way to develop a sense of belonging. This paper was copyedited by Tasha Cooper. We also have a project report from Greece where author Georgia Katsira and colleagues reflect on the importance of collaborative information literacy programs for the social integration of refugees and immigrants. Centring on the experiences of the Pyxida cultural centre, this project report also successfully traces the links between IL instruction and multicultural education. This paper was copyedited by Batul Alsaraji.

Lastly, we are delighted to host four reports from LILAC; the first, from Maria King, details key research takeaways from the conference; the second from Karl Weis Fogh, provides a Danish perspective on events in Cardiff; the third, written by Kerrianne Orriss provides a bursary winner perspective on events and the fourth, from Mary Hickford, forms another newcomer perspective. These reports were copyedited by Amber Edwards.

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