

## Book Review

**Bond, H. 2025. Book review of Whitworth, A. 2020. *Mapping information landscapes: New methods for exploring the development and teaching of information literacy*. London: Facet Publishing. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 19(2), pp. 153–155.**

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Whitworth, A. (2020). *Mapping information landscapes: New methods for exploring the development and teaching of information literacy*. London: Facet Publishing. pp. 201. ISBN 9781783304172. £72.50. Hbk.

Whitworth's *Mapping Information Landscapes*, published in 2020, is a book of interest to teachers and educators, especially those in the information profession with a focus on information literacy (IL). The *information landscape*, a term that many of us may be familiar with but have not fully considered, is dissected by the author who guides the reader through how mapping can help learners in navigating this landscape.

With extensive research and theory at its foundation, the author begins the book in chapter one with the fundamentals of IL before diving into the complexities of mapping: “understanding the nature of information literacy requires us to explore how people experience information in context” (Whitworth, 2020, p. 19). We gain insight into how IL is not merely a technical proficiency but a practice that is impacted by many factors including our environment and journey through a landscape.

To ease the reader into how mapping relates to IL, Whitworth provides an engaging introduction to its history in chapter two, enthusiastically explaining how mapping has been used for centuries to help people make sense of information in the world. Relatable examples that may not be considered maps in a traditional sense include spreadsheets, which calculate and display values in relation to each other, and organisational charts mapping non-geographical relationships (Whitworth, 2020, p. 25). With more conventional examples such as the Ordnance Survey and Hereford Mappa Mundi also drawn upon, the author convincingly explains the varied formats of maps and their place in recording, presenting and making sense of information. The differentiation between place and space in chapter two is particularly interesting. A *space* can be thought of as a geographical location, but *place* is more than that. Place is about community and their social practices: “information landscapes are outcomes of

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... place, and the material, cognitive and affective basis of practice” (Whitworth, 2020, p. 29). Also, interesting to consider is how the position of the mapmaker, whether, for instance, geographical or political, impacts mapping and how the map is presented through their understanding and to an audience whose environment may prompt a different interpretation of the information (Whitworth, 2020, p. 50). The author effectively ties together the connection between maps and information in an understandable way.

In chapter two, we move on to mapping and power, a short, impactful section that emphasises discursive mapping, neatly summed up as follows: “the processes of dialogue, abstraction, organisation, representation and communication that [create maps] fundamentally shapes the information practices within social settings” (Whitworth, 2020, p. 51). We move into understanding not physical mapping, as previously outlined, but *cognitive schema* and how information is organised in our minds, a theme that continues through the rest of the book. Particularly enjoyable is the next chapter where Whitworth takes the reader on a tour of three places (Manchester, Crowborough and Seaford), demonstrating through practical examples how an individual navigates physical landscapes of varying familiarity using information in the form of memory and physical aids.

This neatly drives the reader on to chapter five where we move on from what Whitworth describes as intuitive mapping, as seen in the previous chapter demonstrated through navigating a physical landscape, and on to *conscious* mapping (Whitworth, 2020, pp. 85–86). We are walked through case studies and introduced to the Ketso map, a concept mapping tool. Whitworth demonstrates how “concept mapping is ... useful when participants have literacy deficits of some kind ... it could be an *information* literacy deficit, where knowledge must be shared between groups who are not necessarily familiar with keywords or forms of expression used in certain settings” (Whitworth, 2020, p. 90). This chapter focuses on learners doing the mapping and how it can help them “find a way” (Whitworth, 2020, p. 98). The reader begins to see how the process and product of mapping can practically help a learner navigate information.

In the penultimate chapter six, we explore discursive mapping. As in the previous chapter, we are introduced to case studies which demonstrate through student group assessment how discursive mapping and dialogue encourage group judgements as they navigate information: “the design of these activities offers a framework or *practice architecture* in which students get practical experience in building around them an information landscape that helps them meet *collective* learning goals” (Whitworth, 2020, p. 144). The author makes clear that, whilst this kind of discursive mapping is less tangible than a physical graphical map, it is nonetheless valuable in aiding the students’ understanding and navigation of information.

The conclusion, chapter seven, brings the reader back round to IL. We revisit power: “how we are positioned with respect to the *places* in which ... authority is invested ... will shape the definition of information literacy in that context” (Whitworth, 2020, p. 174). The importance of community is raised, and how we collectively create and maintain banks of information which contributes to a sense of place and belonging.

I appreciated the author’s successful efforts to tie together two potentially very separate areas of expertise, maps and IL, to assuredly explain how mapping in various guises can aid teachers and learners in navigating information with practical examples of how this has been and could be achieved in educational settings. The depth of research and presentation of case studies

provides relatable examples of graphical, concept and discursive mapping. I would recommend this book to information professionals who would like a fresh take and inspiration on how to present information and engage learners. Others in the education sector would also benefit from the insight into the information world and how learners can be engaged in its navigation.

## References

Whitworth, A. (2020). *Mapping information landscapes: New methods for exploring the development and teaching of information literacy*. Facet Publishing.