

Report on Librarians' Information Literacy Annual Conference (LILAC)

**18th – 20th April 2011, British Library &
the London School of Economics**

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Abstract

LILAC 2011 encouraged a re-evaluation of information literacy (IL) and our role in supporting people to develop skills. A key area that needs to be addressed is helping users to transfer IL skills between the different arenas of work and study so that they can make the best use of the information available to them.

The 2011 Librarians' Information Literacy Annual Conference was held at the British Library and London School of Economics. The well-attended event offered opportunities for delegates from all over the world to share their experiences of supporting students to become information literate. Several themes emerged from this year's conference including: supporting international students, online support for information

literacy and the changing role of information literacy. The three day conference included three keynote speakers from across the information profession to encourage debate on IL and our role in it.

The opening keynote speaker was Professor David Nicholas from University College London. His paper focused on the changing nature of information and librarians' roles. He encouraged us to adapt our services to people's information seeking behaviour as captured through deep-log analysis of their activity on the internet. Professor Nicholas offered plenty of material for discussion, such as how prominent libraries are in branding the resources they pay for and provide to their users. Is your institutional logo clearly visible on your databases?

The second keynote speaker, was Nikki Heath, a school librarian from Stockport in Greater Manchester, who highlighted some of the fantastic work going on in her sector as our colleagues work to develop the information skills of the next generation. Nikki presented some of the work she had done to help improve the life and work of the students at her school. This included setting up puzzle clubs in the library and running a school wide 'Get Caught Reading' day. This paper provided an interesting insight into school libraries.

The third and final keynote came from Dr Jesus Lau, a member of the committee who developed UNESCO's Media and

Information Cycle¹. Dr Lau described the research the committee conducted to understand the context of information literacy internationally and how the Media and Information Cycle was created.

Several presentations at the conference dealt with the challenge of supporting international students in developing their information literacy and adapting to a different academic environment. Several analogies were used and some useful strategies were shared to help us to learn from one another's good practice. An example was provided by Eileen Bosch and Khue Duong from California State University² who used the analogy of a hamburger, with international students bringing their own flavours and ingredients to the mix. As librarians we must consider the international student perspective; where the students are coming from, as well as what they need to know to succeed academically in our universities. Bosch and Duong did this by becoming involved with the international student community, attending evening events and lunches. A key lesson learnt is that international students often learn from 'home' students' information seeking behaviour; therefore if our home students have a good grasp of information literacy, half the job of supporting international students is already done from our perspective. However, if students choose 'poor' models, i.e. home students who have very little idea of where to find and

¹ See http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15886&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (last accessed 28th July 2011)

² Presentation title: 'Librarians on-the-go: teaming up with co-curricular units on campus to enhance the academic acculturation of international students @ their space'

how to use information, international students face an uphill struggle to adapt and achieve in a foreign higher education environment.

Several conference sessions shared and demonstrated online information literacy tutorials that have been developed to cope with growing demand for IL support. Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Leeds were some of those who shared their experiences in developing tutorials and explaining how they plan to progress with the online support. Cardiff University librarians presented their experiences with supporting distance students using web-conferencing software, which offered an interesting insight into different software limitations and how best to support students remotely.

Another key theme of the conference was the changing role of information literacy. In his keynote, Professor Nicholas clearly stated that everyone is a librarian now, able to find and use information. However, Nikki Heath highlighted how, despite the best attempts to instil information literacy in our students, they still find it difficult to transfer these skills to other areas of their lives and other areas of study. More importantly, Dr Lau questioned whether we were undermining our students and users by inferring they were illiterate, and how within his home country of Mexico, the term 'information skills development' is used. Therefore how can we, as information professionals, help people to be more discerning in the information they use to base their decisions on? With more and more people relying on Google to answer queries and using their mobiles to access

information on the go, it is up to us to step forward and offer a way to support health students and practitioners to make informed choices based on reliable evidence.

During one Pecha Kucha session I came across an interesting presentation on supporting pre-registration nurses in studying for their dissertations by Susan Boyle from University College Dublin³. Presented in the form of 'information literacy triage' Susan offered a humorous insight into how she helped her students. It was effectively a Question and Answer session for nursing students, after they have received their traditional library session. Students have to sign up to the session and had the responsibility to ask questions about what they did not understand, then Susan has various strategies and games to help answer them.

Another interesting presentation was provided by Angela Davies and Deborah Taylor on IL and the transition to professional practice for nursing students at Sheffield Hallam University.⁴ With a large cohort of pre-registration nursing students, IL was integrated into their evidence modules throughout the three years of the programme. Despite this, they found that students failed to use their IL skills when in practice, whether through a failure to transfer their skills or a lack of opportunity. Davies and Taylor were developing closer links with Trust Librarians to provide joint instruction to students in their third year to help them with the transition and to prepare

³ Presentation title 'Using games creatively to enhance information literacy sessions'

⁴ Presentation title 'Information Literacy skills and the transition to professional practice'

them for the different resources available to them in professional practice.

It is very difficult to condense the conference into this report, but hopefully this has provided an overview for those who were unable to attend LILAC this year. Presentations will be made available on the LILAC website and I recommend that we reflect on the key themes of the conference and discuss how best we can support our service users in University and in practice.

Useful weblinks:

LILAC Conference website: <http://lilacconference.com/WP/>

LILAC Programme and abstracts:

<http://lilacconference.com/WP/programme/>

(Links last accessed 10th August 2011)