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RETHINKING INFORMATION LITERACY IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

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ABSTRACT

As a profession, librarians have an important and unique role to play in higher education in producing information literate students equipped to be successful in a complex, twenty-first century global society. It is our contention that our guiding professional information literacy definitions and standards need to be reconsidered in order to remain relevant within the global learning context. Our preliminary conclusion is that the predominantly skills-based approach facilitated by the current ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education, is not sufficient to facilitate teaching of twenty-first century "deep information literacy," which we feel encompasses additional content-based engagement with the social, cultural, economic and political contexts of information access, retrieval, use, and creation. Within the global education context, the ways we may engage with such an expanded notion of information literacy and the challenges associated with this, are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Across higher education institutions, important conversations are taking place that are focused on how to best prepare students for productive citizenship in today's complex and increasingly globalized world. To meet these challenges, colleges and universities are re-conceptualizing the student experience, re-imaging themselves, and re-articulating important student outcomes. As higher education grapples with what it means to provide a relevant twenty-first century global learning experience, it is time for librarians to consider our strengths and unique contributions that we bring to this dialog and effort. What is our contributing role as information literacy specialists and educators within this larger context? Our profession has a strong history of engagement with trends in higher education, including demonstrating leadership in the areas of assessment, first-year experience, diversity and information technology, but are we present and relevant as large-scale conversations in higher education continue to evolve to increasingly focus on internationalization and global learning?

> HOW DO LIBRARIANS AS PRACTITIONERS ENGAGE IN THIS EXPANDED NOTION OF INFORMATION LITERACY, GIVEN THE LIMITED TIME MOST HAVE WITH STUDENTS?

The premise of this paper is that as a profession and as educators, librarians have an important role to play and we should be present in these conversations. It is time to rethink what it means to produce information literate students specifically within the twenty-first century global societal context, and our guiding professional information literacy definitions and standards need to be reconsidered in order to remain relevant within the global learning context. In order to begin to conceptualize what the intersection of global learning and information literacy might ideally look like, we have examined higher education literature and university websites and documents that focus on internationalization and global learning; we have been drawn to the information literacy literature that asks us to consider something different than the "business as usual" approach, and have reviewed information literacy definitions and standards put forth by the major professional bodies , including the American Library Association/Association of College & Research Libraries (ALA/ACRL), U.S.A/ Canada; Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL), U.K.; Australian & New Zealand Institute of Information Literacy (ANZIIL); International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA); and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Our preliminary conclusion is that the predominantly skills-based approach facilitated particularly by the information literacy standards with which we are most familiar, the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education, is not sufficient to facilitate teaching of twenty-first century "deep information literacy," which we feel encompasses additional content-based engagement with the social, cultural, economic and political contexts of information access, retrieval, use, and creation. The larger question then becomes,

how do we as practitioners, engage in this expanded notion of information literacy, given the limited time we have with our students? We recognize the inherent challenges posed by this question, and we would like to begin this conversation.

GLOBAL EDUCATION TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is being re-conceptualized to prepare students to become productive global citizens in a twenty-first century world. According to Hans Schattle (2009, 3), "perhaps more than any other concept, the idea of global citizenship has emerged since the late 1990s as a key strategic principle in higher education." Emphasis on problem-based learning, interdisciplinary education, service and experiential learning, and transformative education are examples of now commonly used pedagogical approaches that are particularly conducive to student learning and engagement with complex global issues. Increased emphasis on internationalization of student bodies, study abroad opportunities, and second language learning, have also fallen within the realm of global learning.

At larger universities, offices and administrative positions have been initiated that focus on global education throughout the curriculum, and reflect an institution-wide commitment to its central importance in twenty-first century higher education. For instance, the Office of Global Strategy and Programs was created at Duke University in 2010 (http://www.provost.duke.edu/units/global.html); Ohio State University established the position of Vice Provost for Global Strategies and International Affairs in 2009 (http://oia.osu.edu/vice-provost.html).

Many colleges and universities, large and small, now indicate their commitment to their role in preparing globally competent students directly in their mission statements. For example, Connecticut College's mission is succinct: "Connecticut College educates students to put the liberal arts into action as citizens in a global society" (http://www.conncoll.edu/about/abo_mission_statement.htm). Educating for global citizenship has also become a focal point for university and college marketing, as indicated both on college web sites and in materials sent to prospective students. For example, from the Earlham College home page, one is invited to watch a video of "faculty members discuss(ing) how Earlham teaches students to become global citizens" (http://www.earlham.edu/video/being-global-citizen-earlham-college).

There is a substantive and growing body of higher education literature that focuses on all aspects of global learning, including: what it means to graduate "globally competent" students, the challenges and opportunities associated with this, and curricular restructuring on both macro and micro levels (Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006; Gacel-Avila, 2005; Lewin, 2009; Anderson, 2008; Stearns, 2009). The Association of American Colleges and Universities *Shared Futures* is a national higher education initiative whose focus is on global learning and social responsibility, and on building a national network of educators through which to facilitate curricular change that has at its core both developing an understanding of the interconnected and unequal world in which we live, and developing students who can act in solving global problems (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2011). The notion of educating our students for productive citizenship in a twenty-first century global world has firmly taken root on our campuses.

Libraries are also including the notion of educating for global citizenship in their own mission/vision statements. From the University of Washington Libraries 2006-2010 strategic plan, the last sentence of their vision statement reads: "we prepare students for success in life as information smart global citizens" (University of Washington Libraries, 2011, para. 9). We believe that as information literacy educators, we have a role to play in furthering student understanding of both the local and global information landscape, and how that affects one's ability to access, retrieve, use, and create information. Throughout the years there has been steady discourse on critical reflections of information literacy, which has helped us to formulate our own ideas about what information literacy means in the context of twenty-first century global learning.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON INFORMATION LITERACY

In the United States, the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards of Higher Education, inclusive of performance indicators, have defined what information literacy means in our profession, and we have, as a profession, claimed IL as ours. They have served us well, have provided us with a common language with which to engage ourselves as well as university faculty and administrators, and have guided us down a path that has given us a context in which to articulate what we do. Through this engagement, we have seen the results of our successes in a relatively short period of time. We can cite countless examples of successful integration of information literacy into curricula, faculty-librarian collaborations and partnerships, IL as a general education requirement – all of which has happened through librarian-led dialog and articulation of the principles and practice of effective information literacy instruction. We view this as a necessary and successful maturation process of the concept and practice of information literacy.

We believe that this has us well-positioned to now re-think information literacy, consider an expanded definition that not only takes into account new twenty-first century technology-driven information formats and ways of engagement with information (Mackey & Jacobson, 2011), but which additionally, and perhaps centrally, recognizes the importance of developing an understanding of the greater societal and global contexts of information in all its constructs. At the same time, the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards have been criticized for reducing a complex and iterative set of learning processes and concepts into a simplified list of skills that can then be checked off and progressed through. We also believe that it is this skill-centric approach that has presented barriers to consideration of the more "messy", reflective, content and context-based information literacy education.

Discussions regarding advancement of information literacy theory and practice, and critical reflection upon its teaching and learning, have long been part of the information literacy discourse. Asking us to consider a deeper or more holistic level of engagement with the concept, scholars Shapiro & Hughes (1996, para. 13) suggest that information literacy encompasses being able to place information in a "social, cultural, and even philosophical context." Still recognized as a core information literacy document (Jarson, 2010), they brought to our attention early on that the greater societal context of information provides an important foundation for information literacy.

More recently, Dane Ward (2006) suggests re-envisioning information literacy for more holistic and meaningful external as well as internal engagement with information, through, for example, use of various media to facilitate content-based discussions, reactions, and responses to information in its larger contexts. He suggests that this is only possible through greater collaboration between librarians and teaching faculty, and direct curricular participation by librarians, and impossible to achieve in our traditional one-shot sessions with students. According to Ward (2006, 398), "it is a fundamental responsibility for us as educators to embrace a commitment to a more holistic information literacy that can make a difference in the world."

As we consider a more holistic information literacy that places information in a broad societal context in an increasingly globalized world, the reference point to our thinking has been the call from Heidi Jacobs, in her article entitled, "Information Literacy and Reflective Pedagogical Practice", to have "dialogues … surrounding information literacy instruction (that) strive to find a balance in the daily and the visionary, the local and the global, the practices and the theories, the ideal and the possible" (Jacobs, 2008, 258). Influenced by James Elmborg's work on critical information literacy (2006), she asks us to consider the intersection of both the theory and practice of information literacy, and the pedagogy of information literacy within the context of broader educational initiatives that are occurring in higher education. She notes the sociopolitical context of information literacy, the information literacy definitions that have been created in the contexts of academic environments, and asks us to engage with the "messier" Alexandria Proclamation (UNESCO, NFIL, & IFLA, 2005) document that "not only incorporates the recurrent concepts of identifying, locating, evaluating, and using information, but also encompasses engendering lifelong learning, empowering people, promoting social inclusion, redressing disadvantage, and advancing the well-being of all in a global context" (Jacobs, 2008, 257). With this framing of information literacy, there is an inherent broader social justice context, and information literacy becomes "not only educational, but also inherently political, cultural, and social" (Jacobs, 2008, 258).

As we have been thinking about the meaning of information literacy in the context of global learning, we believe that we have a central role to play in what we are calling "deep information literacy" education, an information literacy that not only engages with what has become a largely skill-based approach, but which also focuses as an underlying theme on the larger context of the global information world in which we live. How is it that the information with which we engage is getting to us? What are the societal and economic forces at work that allow us access to unprecedented amounts of information? As we consider our information environment within the context of globalization, what are the consequences of global information inequality? Who has the greatest and least access to information, and why? What about the majority of the world that does not have ready access to information that would lead to increased quality of life, such as health, agricultural, and environmental information?

Engaging with questions such as these asks students to place themselves in the larger information world, and to think critically about the world in which they live. For example, students studying global climate change, in the context of an information

literacy session, may learn about the vast array of databases to which they have access, that provide an entrance into the scholarly literature on this topic, how to use these resources effectively, and about other types of resources and formats of information available on this topic, depending upon one's focus. Asking them to additionally consider, for example, where the majority of the research on climate change originates that appears in the scholarly literature, and the implications this may have on our understanding of a truly global issue (Miguez, 2002), adds both an important dimension of understanding to their topic at hand, as well as allows them to think critically about implications of the larger constructs of our global information world. Achieving an information literacy that encompasses the teaching of important information skills and concepts as well as wider placement of ourselves within the global information context, is, we believe, the essence of a twenty-first century information literacy within a higher education learning environment.

Along with Jacobs, we also believe that in order to engage in such a "deep information literacy", we must re-examine our existing guiding professional standards, consider their shortcomings, and consider a broader information literacy conceptualization such as that which UNESCO's Alexandria Proclamation encompasses. We understand the inherent challenges in such an approach if the predominant model of delivering information literacy instruction continues to be the one-shot session and agree with Ward that the future of meaningful information literacy instruction lies within greater collaboration between librarians and teaching faculty in order to achieve further curricular integration of twenty-first century information literacy concepts.

In a highly cited article, Johnston & Webber (2003), review information literacy in higher education in the U.S., the U.K., and Australia, and further articulate problems with the predominantly surface, skill-based approach that the ACRL standards facilitate, suggesting that information literacy be conceptualized more holistically and be effectively taught as its own subject of study. They further articulate that the higher education information literacy standards in Australia put forward a "broader approach to information literacy than the U.S. original," and recognize the relationship between information literacy, lifelong learning, and participative citizenship (Johnston & Webber, 2003, 338). They favor this more relational approach to information literacy that better addresses its experiential contexts (Webber & Johnston, 2000).

Johnston & Webber (2003, 337) recognize that conceptualizing complex skills through a "tick the box" approach to teaching information literacy "seems to put the individual at the centre of the process." The individual-focused approach to information literacy, emphasizing the creation of individual skill-sets, in our opinion, has had the effect of limiting and marginalizing the contextual content that we feel forms an important base from which to understand the interrelated and external-focused social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of the global and local information environments in which we work.

While there have been timely discussions regarding the need to re-envision a twenty-first century information literacy, such as the recently elucidated metaliteracy put forth by Mackey & Jacobson (2011) that focuses on the impact that social media has had on the way we access, use, and interact with information, a focus on the overarching

global societal context of our information world has been missing from these conversations thus far. The clear theme that has emerged, however, is that it is time for us as a profession to reconsider a totality of what information literacy means within a twenty-first century higher education context.

Information Literacy and Global Learning: What is our Role?

We believe that it is our job as information literacy educators to articulate both to ourselves and to the campus community what the intersection of global learning and information literacy comprises, and what we bring to this effort and conversation. While we, as instruction librarians, are aware that conversations regarding global learning have been going on for some time on our campuses, it seems that on a meta level, we have been under-engaged both in these campus-wide conversations, and in internal conversations regarding our role as information educators within the global learning context. It is our feeling that it is time to become an active part of this discourse, to consider what we bring to it, and to utilize our leadership as the information literacy experts on campus, in an age where one of the fundamental attributes of the world today is that we are part of a digital globalized information society, where the inability to access information and use information, for any multitude of reasons, is a substantive disadvantage.

Additionally, our students are engaging in more experiential-based and problem-based global learning, and are increasingly becoming producers of information in addition to information consumers. Therefore, understanding the global and societal contexts of information takes on another level of importance, and we feel that teaching these contextual constructs is within our realm of information literacy educators. We do, however, recognize the present inherent challenges within our teaching models, the challenges involved in adding new content to our teaching that we may or may not feel prepared to teach, and the broad challenges involved in re-envisioning what we do as information literacy educators as defined by our guiding professional standards.

There are many compelling reasons to re-envision the scope and meaning of information literacy in a twenty-first century learning context. We believe that this conversation and reflection should happen within our profession at three levels: 1) Pedagogical: why do we teach what we teach as information literacy, and how do our information literacy programs support the broader educational initiatives at our institutions? What could we be doing differently, and better, to support current higher education emphases and outcomes? 2) Pragmatic: how do we balance the reality of limited time we spend with students with an expanded notion of what we should teach as information literacy? While significant inroads have been made in incorporating information literacy directly into curricula, on the front lines this is still often not the case. 3) Information literacy standards: it is time to update our guiding professional standards to more adequately reflect the holistic, relational, and experiential nature of information literacy, and to make adequate room for engaging with the "messier," less easily measurable contextual aspects of information within the larger framework of the globalized world in which we live.

We believe that our guiding professional standards have truly been defining documents for the way we engage with information literacy on our campuses and have given us common language that we speak to our various constituencies. Therefore, any fundamental change in our conception of information literacy must occur at the professional standards level in order to translate into a broadly actionable re-envisioning of information literacy that we can then articulate to our constituencies.
As Jacobs (2008) suggests, this could mean paying greater attention to broader information literacy documents not written primarily for a higher education environment, such as UNESCO's Alexandria Proclamation, which places information literacy in a global societal context , and focuses on information literacy for lifelong learning. Antonesa (2007, 28), in a short discussion piece on information literacy and global citizenship observes: "higher education institutions are no longer producing graduates and are instead expected to produce lifelong learning global citizens." She affirms the important role that information literacy plays in this goal, and she supports the Australian articulation of information literacy as experiential and relational, as a meaningful way to consider what IL means within the context of educating for global citizenship. Others have also lauded the efficacy of the Australian information literacy standards as a meaningful document that places IL in the context of lifelong learning and participative citizenship, and provides a more relational approach that allows for the prominence of these larger contexts (Johnston and Webber, 2003). The new SCONUL (U.K.) model illustrates a more holistic way of perceiving information literacy that moves away from a linear approach and progression of skills, and therefore holds potential for engaging more deeply with overarching information constructs.

As the notion of educating for global citizenship is becoming ubiquitous in our higher education institutions, it is time for us as a profession to rethink our articulations of what information literacy encompasses, and place it within this larger context. In order to do so, this means considering our role in teaching our students about what it means to live in a globalized information world, and engaging in a "deep information literacy" that incorporates an additional understanding of the larger context of the information environment in which we live. As a profession, we should ask and reflect: What is the core of what we teach? What is marginalized? What do we feel comfortable teaching? What do we feel less comfortable teaching? How do we get to a place where we can integrate those less comfortable things into our usual practice? And, ultimately, how do we stay relevant as the conversations in higher education continue to evolve to increasingly focus more on educating for a global world?

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