Education’ which has ‘valuing the physically active life’ as its central theme. If you have any questions about this review or the developing model, please do not hesitate to contact me (mark.bowler@beds.ac.uk).

Teaching information literacy online
Thomas P. Mackey & Trudi E. Jacobson (eds.)
Review by Averil Robertson

This book aims to provide models of best practice for faculty-librarian collaboration in developing effective information skills instruction in the academic online environment. It is edited by a senior academic and a librarian at SUNY, with chapters co-written by faculty-librarian teams from a variety of academic settings, including the Open University and Manchester University, as well as a number of US institutions.

The book is divided into two broad sections: Blended and Hybrid Learning, and Open and Online Learning. Within these sections, some chapters focus on a different technologies and subjects, such as Wikis for teaching in the Humanities, and the use of Second Life for a generic programme that could be adapted to any discipline, while others centre on the process of and pedagogy behind developing and embedding online information skills teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

The authors use a number of technologies, including Web 2.0 tools and Second Life, and discuss the pedagogy behind the development of the programmes, planning and assessment.

Instruction is student-centred and emphasis is placed on the need for flexibility according to the needs and demands of different student cohorts and institutional settings. Each chapter is broken down under a standard set of headings that include a literature review, a discussion of the planning process and an evaluation of the impact on student learning as well as assessment of the learning itself, using a variety of means. All chapters include useful bibliographies, while many also have examples of worksheets and results of assessments. It would have been useful to have included more examples of the assessments, as many of them seemed to be self-evaluations, which are not a real measure of skills attainment, but there were some good examples such as the use of discussion board threads to evaluate learning. Such discussions also provide useful narrative information about the way students learn, their misconceptions, and so on! The inclusion of challenges encountered along the way, and the means used to solve them, provide useful guidance on pitfalls to avoid.

Librarians have long promoted the value of information skills development as a means of enhancing student learning and understanding, of developing critical thinkers who are able to evaluate the material they use for their assignments, to
use it ethically (avoiding plagiarism), and by synthesising and blending the ideas of others with their own learning and research to create new knowledge. Information literacy is often confused with IT skills, and indeed the two are inter-related, especially with technology ubiquitous in everyday life. Many students (the so-called ‘digital natives’) come to university believing they already possess the skills needed to find all the information they need for their studies (usually by use of Google!) when in fact they need help and guidance even to learn how to search academic sources effectively, let alone develop the higher skills mentioned above.

It is also widely understood (by librarians at least), as highlighted in this book, that the best way to deliver IL teaching is by integrating it into the curriculum rather than as a ‘one-shot’ session, delivered at point of need and subject-based so that students readily perceive its relevance to their studies. Librarians have had varying success in implementing information literacy programmes, often directly related to the engagement, or lack thereof, of academic staff with the process, and their knowledge of the standards involved, as well as the level of willingness to engage with the wide variety of technology that can be used to deliver instruction. As noted in this book, with many professional bodies (e.g. the RCN) now developing their own standards in line with those produced by the information community, and with many institutions including information literacy as a desirable attribute both for academic success and future employability, as well as making it a requirement in curriculum development, it is vitally important that teaching staff and those who plan and develop teaching programmes recognise the importance of good information literacy skills to their students.

From a librarian’s perspective, this is an exciting book that pulls together current practice and provides practical instruction to inspire those of us who are currently working in the field; a quick search of the literature revealed that, while there are some publications on the use of the online environment for delivering information skills instruction, there are very few titles on faculty-librarian collaboration in existence, so this is a welcome addition to the genre. Much is made of the necessity for collaboration between institutional teams for effective working, with the recommendation that not only librarians and faculty be involved, but also stakeholders such as students, IT staff, media specialists and those designing the curriculum, much as Gilly Salmon advocates in her Carpe Diem model. I was left with a strong sense of the dedication and enthusiasm of the teams, and their shared commitment to their goals; many had to work on these projects outside normal working hours, and several comment on the challenge of trying to engage other staff in their institutions in order to implement the programmes more widely, once the pilots were completed.

In our own institution, the Psychology department has embraced this approach,
embedding comprehensive information skills teaching into the curriculum using a variety of technologies and tools (BREO, TurningPoint, PebblePad, SurveyGizmo etc.), assessing learning and crediting completion of IL tasks. For me, this book will provide guidance in the planned development of more formal assessment measures, and is recommended reading for any members of staff who wish to find out more about the practical aspects of introducing similar initiatives, or indeed developing generic policies and procedures. As the Open University team says: 'As educators we owe it to our students to prepare them for the work contexts in which they practise.'

Research Project: Effective academic posters and poster exhibitions

Peter Norrington
Graduate Outcomes Project Officer, Centre for Learning Excellence

Academic posters and exhibitions look really simple, if you’ve never done one. Really, they offer opportunities to develop and present an interesting and complex interaction of skills.

Skills cover understanding the poster briefing, selecting topic and scope, identifying relevant material, writing to purpose and audience, making appropriate use of figures, designing layout, creating the artefact, presenting the poster at exhibition.

But what do we know about posters and exhibitions? How can we set appropriate poster and exhibition assessments? What do we need to provide to ensure that skills can be developed? How can posters be used with part-time and distance learners? How do learners benefit from posters? How are poster skills useful after graduation?

Scanning for literature, pedagogic or otherwise, there appears to be little in academic publications, and this is scattered. 'How-to' guides for poster creators are widespread, on higher education, commercial and personal interest websites. Yet few of these can be considered thorough, most lack depth, and some are contradictory.

And for those designing the brief for posters or exhibitions, there is even less.

This project addresses the purposes, outcomes and impacts of academic posters and poster exhibitions. It will create resources for use across the University, for students and staff.

Can this project help you?

Do you use – or want to use – academic posters and/or poster exhibitions?