Information Literacy & Academics: Challenging the Assumptions of Librarians

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Outline of Part 1

• UK Higher Education in the early 21st century
• Why and how of our research
• UK academics' conceptions of information literacy
• UK academics' conceptions of pedagogy for information literacy
• Conceptions compared
• Some popular assumptions challenged by the research
“The world has arrived at an age of cheap complex devices; and something is bound to come of it.”

(Bush*, 1945)

*That's Vannevar Bush
The context for our research: *the academic world in a time of great change*...
• Teaching quality assessment
• Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)
• Funding depends on results from 2 exercises
Change forces

- Government policy - aiming for 50% participation in university education.
- Large growth in student numbers, without same growth in resources.
- Increased focus on employability/key skills: "useful learning".
- Students have to pay more for their education.
- E with everything.
Responses and reactions

- Emphasis on practical knowledge, creativity & multidisciplinarity rather than disciplinary silos
- Critiques of managerialism, & overt state direction of curriculum
- Arguments for a renewed, critical curriculum to meet social, political and economic conditions of “supercomplexity”
- What it means to be a student has changed
  - "Earner learners"
  - Students aware of selves as consumers with rights
"That’s about time pressures. I mean, maybe it’s about promotion, but I suspect it is because the nature of our work has changed hugely. We don’t teach small groups anymore, so if you are running a course, you are running a course for a class of thousands, not your forty undergraduates, so everything becomes more complex. You are accessible to them all because we do leave our doors open and keep office hours, and you are accessible to a huge range of international contacts now, because all our information is available on the web, courtesy of the university." (Marketing 10)
"I think there is a number of ways in which we think about how the students that we teach become skilled users of information, and curiously I think, um, that we’ve begun to think about it because we have to think about it on account of quality assurance procedures. TQA. Internal university reviews ask us to look at, or look for, transferable skills, and in that basket of transferable skills are such things as I would understand as being information literacy" (English 15)
"Well, they come and they can’t write sentences. They can’t write. They cannot communicate. There seems to be an attitude of ‘I go to a lecture and I go to an exam, and nothing happens in between.’ Last year was my first year teaching first years and I’ve never seen anything like it. I really didn’t know whether to laugh or cry." (Marketing 13)

"And I mean the students find that as well. The students have time pressures as well. You have to expect that many of them will have outside jobs as well so these just have to hand-and-hand" (Chemistry 6)
The research: our starting point

• Students pay attention to academics
• Shouldn't we find out more about what these academics are thinking and doing re. Information literacy? …. Including the ones who don't really talk to librarians ….

By clarifying our understanding of academics' perspective we can reduce our reliance on assumptions
Librarian-faculty relations: Notes from a Listserv

Lecturers like ‘delinquent children’ claim librarians!

- They are rude, & don’t know about library jargon.
- They should teach/assess information skills.
- Librarians, however, are afraid to say no or offend lecturers, and prefer to stick with their role as ‘nice people’.

Julien & Givens, 2005
SB: [Laughs.] So you work closely with colleagues, but do you work closely with the library as well?
CHEM02: I’m not sure what you mean by working with the library?
SB: Um, say, uh, in terms of providing information skills to students?
CHEM02: Information skills to students?
SB: Yeah.
CHEM02: I don’t think we bother with that.
SB: They [librarians] don’t come into the class or--?
CHEM20: Oh, God, no! No! I don’t think it would have occurred to either side to do that.

Stuart Boon & Chemists
"I have worked in old universities, new universities, ancient universities, and a management college, so I have tried the whole gamut, and I have worked with some really awful librarians. [...] to actually have a librarian who is positive and outgoing, and supportive and skilled, is just for me a really lucky hit. You always hope, but it’s not always what you get." (Marketing 10)
Assumptions and observations

• Academics must respond enthusiastically if a rational case is put by librarians
• Basic teaching skills will help librarians
• Librarians not sufficiently aligned to the world of academics?
• Congruence as a key strategic aim for collaboration
Disciplinarity: research has revealed

- Differences in information behaviour e.g.
  - Search/ browse/ link
  - Types of source used
- Differences in approaches to teaching, learning & assessment
- So wanted to find whether differences re. Information literacy
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<tr>
<th>Pure</th>
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<tr>
<td>Contextual imperatives:</td>
<td>Draws on hard knowledge domain,</td>
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<td>each new piece of knowledge</td>
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<td>has its place in the picture</td>
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<td>&quot;Discovery&quot;</td>
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<td>loosely knit clusters of</td>
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<td>English</td>
<td>procedures</td>
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<td>Marketing</td>
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Research project

• Three-year Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) - funded project (Nov 2002- Nov 2005)
  To explore UK academics’ conceptions of, and pedagogy for, information literacy

• Sheila; Bill; Stuart Boon (Research Assistant: now lecturing at Strathclyde)
“Phenomenography is the empirical study of the differing ways in which people experience, perceive, apprehend, understand, conceptualise various phenomena in and aspects of the world around us.”

Marton (1994)

Qualitative research aiming for insights
Phenomenographic studies e.g. 

- Education
  - Surface & deep learning
  - Approaches to teaching
- Information e.g. Bruce, Lupton, Edwards
- Healthcare
- Management
- Research
- Etc. etc.
Insights

Us

Interviewee

What is key focus of Interviewee’s conception of IL?

Information Literacy
Pool of interview transcripts

Analysis

Categories

A descriptive ‘snapshot’

Holistic view

Variation not communality

e.g. categories describing different ways of experiencing information literacy
Our analysis process

- Their World
  - Interviewees
  - Presentations/Feedback
  - Research Literature
  - Transcripts
  - Atlas/TI

- Reading, Annotating, Highlighting, Identifying Quotes, Concept Mapping

- Discussion
  - Dimensions of Variation
  - Categories of Description

- Outcome Space
Whole purposive sample

- 80 interviews, 20 per discipline
- 26 universities: 69% from pre-1992 universities
- 61% male, 39% female
- Ages in ranges 21-30 to 61+
- Years of teaching in ranges 0-5 to 31+
- All taught undergrads, 93% taught Masters, 54% PhDs
- 48% course/programme coordinators
- Research Assessment Exercise ratings from 2 - 5*
- Teaching quality grades from Satisfactory - Excellent
Comparison with Bruce?

• "Snapshot" is different
  – Place
  – Time
  – Type of staff

• We are also covering pedagogy for IL
Assumptions: ANZIIL Framework

• Statement of Principles
  – engage in independent learning through constructing new meaning, understanding and knowledge
  – derive satisfaction and personal fulfillment from using information wisely
  – individually and collectively search for and use information for decision making and problem solving in order to address personal, professional and societal issues
  – demonstrate social responsibility through a commitment to lifelong learning and community participation

• Core Standards
  – recognises the need for information and determines the nature and extent of the information needed
  – finds needed information effectively and efficiently
  – critically evaluates information and the information seeking process
  – manages information collected or generated
  – applies prior and new information to construct new concepts or create new understandings
  – uses information with understanding and acknowledges cultural, ethical, economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information
Interviews

• Approx. 45 min. each
• 3 basic questions:
  – What is your conception of IL?
  – How do you engage your students in IL?
  – What is your conception of the Information Literate University?
Conceptions of Information Literacy
Marketing: Information literacy as…

1. Accessing information quickly and easily to be aware of what’s going on
2. Using IT to work with information efficiently and effectively
3. Possessing a set of information skills and applying them to the task in hand
4. Using information literacy to solve real-world problems
5. Becoming critical thinkers
6. Becoming a confident, independent practitioner
English: Information literacy as…

1. Accessing and retrieving textual information
2. Using IT to access and retrieve information
3. Possessing basic research skills and knowing how and when to use them
4. Becoming confident, autonomous learners and critical thinkers
Engineering: Information literacy as…

1. Reading & writing information
2. Access to information
3. Using and applying information
4. Analysis, sense making and knowledge building
Chemistry: Information literacy as...

1. Accessing and searching chemical information
2. Mastering a chemist's information skill set
3. Communicating scientific information
4. An essential part of the constitution/ construction/ creation of knowledge
Discoveries

• Everyone (except possibly one engineer…) could talk about it …
• There were differences between disciplines!
• There were differences within disciplines!
• Some assumptions were challenged…
Comparisons & assumptions
Comparison between disciplines

• Similarities include
  – Access/retrieval categories

• Differences include
  – ‘Real World’ awareness focus in Marketing, Engineering and Chemistry, not in English
  – Extent to which information & information literacy held as centrally important
  – Kinds of information valued e.g. textual information retrieval in English
  – Importance of discipline for Pure disciplines
Comparison with ANZIIL Framework

- Statement of Principles
- Core Standards
Assumption: Academics may be information illiterate

- Challenge:
  - Able to deal with their own needs
  - Problem rather in academics not understanding information literacy needs of students
  - "Library" sources not necessarily the most important
Assumption: IL only happens when librarians are involved?

• Challenge:
  – Librarian viewed as (essentially) illiterate in some areas
  – Greatest collaboration on certain aspects of IL (facilitating access to sources)

• Missed opportunities with critical thinkers if concentrate on sources
Pedagogy for information literacy

• Specific questions included:
  – How do you work with your students?
  – Is IL assessed?
  – What do you see as the outcomes for IL?
  – Do you work with librarians?
Marketing academics' conceptions of pedagogy for Information Literacy as…

1. Someone else’s job
2. Upgrading students’ information toolbox at an appropriate point
3. Facilitating access to a variety of resources
4. Showing students how and when to use information skills
5. Helping students understand how information literacy is critical to them, for marketing & life
English academics' conceptions of pedagogy for IL as ...

1. Someone else's job
2. An add-on or side-effect of teaching the subject
3. Introducing the students to sources of information
4. Engaging with students to show them the value of information and information literacy
Civil Engineering academics' conceptions of pedagogy for IL as …

1. Someone else's job
2. Provision of core information
3. Student centred learning
4. Encouraging independent, confident and critical thought
Chemistry academics' conceptions of pedagogy for IL as …

1. Implicit in teaching students to understand chemistry
2. Designing a pathway for student progression in information literacy through a unified course of study
3. Challenging students to respond independently, critically and creatively with information
Comparison between disciplines

• Similarities include
  – Importance of pedagogic approach
  – "Someone else's job" (except for Chemistry!)

• Differences include
  – Conception of IL not so important to English or Chemistry academics
  – "Add-on/side effect" in English & Chemistry "implicit" approach to teaching
Approaches to teaching

• Compatible with other "conceptions of pedagogy" research, for example as reviewed by Samuelowitz and Bain (2001)
  – Knowledge conveying categories (e.g. transferring knowledge, explaining curriculum)
  – Intermediate categories (e.g. focus on student-teacher interaction)
  – Facilitation of learning categories (e.g. facilitating conceptual change & understanding)
Significance

- Reflecting on role and approach as teachers
- Identifying when issue is academic's teaching, not his/her information literacy
- Understanding and empathising with range of approaches in academics

Facilitating access to a variety of resources

Challenging students to respond independently, critically and creatively with information
Operationalising our research from Two perspectives: Educational Development & Marketing

Two key interrelated roles for librarians
Outline

• Information Literacy: definitions, frameworks and experiences
• IL as a soft applied discipline
• Perspectives on curriculum
• Some approaches to educational development of information literacy
• Marketing relationships
Proclamations, definitions, frameworks and experiences

Forming the discipline
Alexandria proclamation

"the participants in the High Level Colloquium on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina on 6-9 November 2005 proclaim that information literacy and lifelong learning are the beacons of the Information Society, illuminating the courses to development, prosperity and freedom.

"Information Literacy lies at the core of lifelong learning. It empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion of all nations."
Information Literacy: our definition
(Johnston & Webber, 2004)

“Information literacy is the adoption of appropriate information behaviour to identify, through whatever channel or medium, information well fitted to information needs, leading to wise and ethical use of information in society.”

A key discipline of the information society
ANZIIL Framework

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  – engage in independent learning through constructing new meaning, understanding and knowledge
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Experiences

• AHRC research illuminates lecturer’s experiences & suggests change options
• Our combined research, teaching and professional practice illuminates our perspective on Information Literacy
• Our academic and educational development roles illuminate our sense of institutional change
An emerging Soft Applied Discipline

• Evidence of a discipline
  – Research activity, graduate students, conferences, heroes, shared jargon, international community, journals, professional associations. Yes
  – Academic Departments. No
  – Issue here: opposition to the phrase “information literacy”

• A Soft Applied discipline
  – Draws on theory from other disciplines
  – Next important research question is matter of debate; clusters of ideas rather than progressive building blocks
  – New knowledge aims to enhance social/personal life; outcomes may be protocols or procedures
Perspectives on Curriculum

• Information Literacy ‘in’ the subject curriculum
  – Generic
  – Parallel
  – Integrated
  – Embedded

• "The most effective of these components is the embedding of information literacy throughout the curriculum." (Bundy, 2004, p 7)
Our perspective on Curriculum

• Information Literacy ‘as’ a Curriculum for the Information Society
• Educational development of Information Literacy joined to promotion of teaching, learning & assessment (some practical suggestions)
• Marketing strategies to get you where you want to be
Curriculum for the information society: learning issues

- Information Literacy for citizenship
- Information Literacy for economic growth
- Information Literacy for employability
- Developing the discipline of information literacy
- Preparing the citizen for social action and personal growth, not just economic utility
The Information Literate University as anticipatory action

- Universities look forward to achieve new states of social engagement driven by change forces
- Information literacy as a key discipline of the information society provides a coherent vision of the possible future state
- Librarians by adopting new roles become key players in articulating and implementing the vision
Information literate university

Information literate librarians

Management for information literacy
• strategy
• resourcing
• policy
• infrastructure

Information literate students and graduates

Staff development for information literacy

Curriculum
• IL as discipline
• Learning, teaching & assessment

The target: the building blocks
Goals and outcomes for the ILU

• "to assist the student, again going back to this personal development and motivation to want to continue to develop personally" (Marketing 16)

• "to teach students better: to give them, not just more information, but more skills and more confidence. They can go out and they can have a good life with." (English 07)

• "I guess it would mean an information literate university where skills with information are built into the curriculum, uh, and perhaps built in across the university. Which is not true here, I suppose. " (Chemistry 13)
Goals and outcomes for the ILU

"Absolutely universal access. Flexible access that, um, and access that creates a much more of a synergistic interaction between the academics and the librarians." (Chemistry 18)

"I think all the technological side is there. The challenge would be changing the way that academics provide teaching or learning provision, or whatever you want to call it." (Civil Engineering 19)
Goals and outcomes for the ILU

"an ILU would be one that could communicate with the surrounding society about what it's doing and convince or be convincing about its goals or aims" (English 08)

"almost like an ideal like an exchange of knowledge and experience and skills, um... and an university that is highly information literate would provide access to information and advice to a much larger constituency than just students [ ] one that enables those kinds of enriching process of where people interact in many, many unplanned and unlooked-for ways..." (Civil Engineering 16)

"I think it was a sort of kind of utopia where people knew [laughs] about internal information and links to external information that would avoid wasting time ..." (Civil Engineering 10)
Emphasis on Learning design

Learning purposes

Alignment T/L/A for IL

Assessment of learning

Design of Learning & Teaching

Information rich

Course Elements

Proactive

Evaluation/redesign

Developmental

Credit bearing Complex

Constructivist Relational

Constructivist

Relational
Our current perspective on educational development

- Do institutions align curriculum to social change and advanced thinking? (UNESCO; Alexandria conference etc?)
- Curriculum seen as Plan & Pedagogy: subjects, course design, teaching, learning, assessment and student experience, staff scholarship, infrastructure & strategy
- Who gets taught what and why are the fundamental elements of curriculum - Information Literacy is becoming an answer to these questions
Implications for disciplinary curricula: finding a form & focus

- Why change course(s)
- Unpack the big ideas e.g. IL as a discipline
- Engage colleagues i.e. apply the AHRC findings
- Organisational structure and HRM realities need to be factored into the discussion

Focus - *the heroic innovator*?
Why change curricula ..

- **External pressures:** market, social change, political, leadership (sectoral, IL), technical

- **Internal factors:** course reviews, HODs, quality assessment & initiatives, staffing profile, student body profiles, ‘big’ institutional agenda items e.g. student centred learning, employability
Unpacking the big themes: approaches & elements

• Working definitions of IL
• Curriculum frameworks like ANZIIL
• Research on conceptions
• Applying knowledge about teaching, learning & assessment
• Implementing at course level and in teaching practice - which courses?
Engaging Colleagues: Motifs & Realities

- **Phenomenographic**: experience & relational change
- **Staff development**: ambition, reflection, development, promotion
- **Organisational development**: image, resources, prioritisation, strategic management
- **WORKLOADS**: where does the shoe pinch?
Roles for Librarians as...

*Heroic innovators???
Exercise....

Take the list of roles from the last slide and rank order them, to identify...

- Nearest to you
- Farthest from you
OK, so you don’t get paid enough to be heroic, how about …… Marketing!
Assumption: Promotional targets are: one size fits all OR discipline by discipline OR course by course OR individually tailored?

• A fifth way! Our research as market research for a Relationship Marketing strategy
  – Targeting spectrum of conceptions (critical thinker etc.) with different motivations, benefits, services & approach
  – Identifying which "relationships" you want to develop and include in your Relationship Portfolio
Relationship Marketing

“Relationship marketing is marketing based on interaction within networks of relationships”
Gummesson (2002) p3
RM & Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

• Contribution is both-ways: not servant-provider and customer as passive King
  – Creation & recognition of mutual value (win-win)
  – Everyone in the “network” is active
  – What can each party contribute to understanding of IL
  – What can each party contribute to development of curriculum

• Full time and "part-time" marketers
  – Recognising the best part-time marketers
• Different people want different relationships
• Beware seizing on one type of lecturer - using them as ideal when others won't see that as a role model/desirable approach

Facilitating access to a variety of resources

Helping students understand how information literacy is critical to them
RM & Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

- Relationships planned & managed through their life cycles
- Relationship portfolio
  - Consider relationships with different kinds of people or networks
  - Students as active part of the "network of relationships" & part-time marketers
  - How does the networks fit together?
  - Includes deciding which relationships you won't spend time on
Some questions to think about

• What are your best relationships?
• Is there a particular IL/Pedagogy conception dominant in your relationships?
• What relationship would you like to dump - and why?
• Who is the priority in your relationship portfolio? What are short/medium/long term strategies?
Conclusions

• How do academics work?
• Key issues when working with academics
• Embedding and curriculum
• Educational development, Lifelong Learning & change
References


• Weblog: http://information-literacy.blogspot.com

• Project: http://dis.shef.ac.uk/literacy/project/