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Book Review: Not Just Where to Click: Teaching Students How to Think About Information

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[BOOK REVIEWS]

NOT JUST WHERE TO CLICK: TEACHING STUDENTS HOW TO THINK ABOUT INFORMATION

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Not Just Where to Click (*NJWTC*) is very much a case of the right book at the right time. These collected essays illuminate theory with practical considerations, encouraging librarians to examine their teaching in order to support students as critical information consumers and producers. Against the background of earlier revisions to the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (2000)*,* and the development of the new ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (2015), the book's contributing authors map the continuing development of information literacy instruction (ILI) and suggest new directions for research and teaching.

In *NJWTC*, Troy Swanson and Heather Jagman bring together authors from diverse academic settings and with varied perspectives. Their essays shed light on many *why* questions: why academic librarians (and indeed other faculty in higher education) teach the way that they do; why it is important to examine the structures and assumptions behind practice; and why students need to understand information in a deeper way. This collection prompts the reader to reflect on these questions, and even the most theoretical pieces provide concrete examples of how changing perspectives are influencing teaching and learning.

Several key, current conversations in higher education in general—and information literacy in particular—are evident in these essays and concern critical pedagogy, postmodernism, and threshold concepts. Lane Wilkinson's opening chapter "Theories of Knowledge in Library and Information Science" uses the controversy over Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccines to illustrate varied conceptions of knowledge, and to demonstrate how these influence information literacy instruction. He makes a compelling case that by approaching knowledge from the perspective of social epistemology, librarians can focus on helping students understand information in more nuanced ways. In "Through a Mirror Darkly: A Postmodern Approach to Teaching Expertise, Authority, and Bias," Stephen Sanders describes postmodernism in a manner that challenges the effects of modernist thinking in librarianship. He uses the central metaphor of a

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hallway with windows, where each provides a different perspective on a single landscape. Sander's examples of ILI practices encourage librarians to reappraise and question their own practice. Beth McDonough's chapter "Beyond Tools and Skills: Putting Information Back into Information Literacy" provides an equally excellent entry into important, current conversation concerning critical information literacy. She encourages readers to examine their own biases, even as they teach students to interrogate information sources. In these and other chapters, authors challenge the pre-eminent place of the scholarly article in academic discourse, an authority that is constructed in ILI daily (Badke, Chapter 9; Walls & Pajewski, Chapter 12).

A number of chapters are connected by the notion of reconceiving both author and source authority as more complex than the familiar dichotomy of scholarly versus popular sources. These essays consider the importance of information literacy beyond the higher education classroom and in

relation to media literacy and journalism (Sanders, Chapter 13; Miller, Chapter 15), and archives and special collections (Halpern & Lepore, Chapter 17; Mulroney & Williams, Chapter 18). Rebecca Halpern and Lisa Lepore contend that students need to be encouraged to see themselves as authors with *authority*, a perspective that is also present in Brian Young and Daniel Von Holten's chapter "Student Author(ity): Engaging Students in Scholarship." Young and Von Holten describe a project where students undertake local research that in turn serves as a resource for students in subsequent semesters. Attention to the local is another theme that runs through multiple essays. In his chapter "Search Epistemology: Teaching Students about Information Discovery," Andrew Asher uses local vocabulary to highlight for students the power dynamics that are implicit in controlled vocabularies, and the ways in which information structures and tools may replicate and reinforce social constructs. In "Knowledge Societies: Learning for a Diverse World," Alison Hicks provides a well-documented study of instruction in which she draws on critical Internet studies in order to foster students' transcultural understanding of information environments.

NJWTC includes many ideas that librarians can implement in their own instruction, that may inspire research, and that may serve as catalysts for big-picture reconsiderations of both individual teaching practices and entire information literacy programs. After reading Andrew Asher's "Search Epistemology: Teaching Students about Information Discovery," this reviewer reshaped instruction in which she addresses search engines with students, in order to include a

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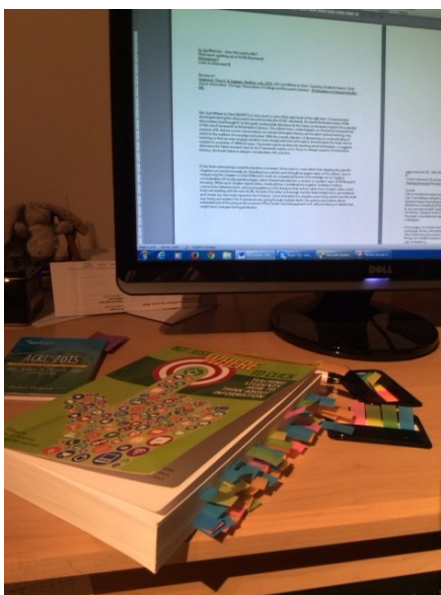
deeper discussion of filters. Readers may also find that they are inspired to undertake new research projects to replicate, adapt, or extend the reported studies (the photograph in Figure 1. illustrates this review author's use of the book for a current project). Some chapters report small-scale studies, while others reference more ambitious efforts such as Project Information Literacy, The Citation Project, and Ethnographic Research in Illinois Academic Libraries (ERIAL). A number of essays are appropriate to share with disciplinary faculty colleagues, as they contribute to contemporary discussions about teaching and learning in the academy.

NJWTC also provides a unique vantage point from which to consider the influence of threshold concepts on recent discussions of ILI and the development of the new ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*. Threshold concepts and the language of the Frames surface in multiple chapters, connecting discussions of faculty (Fister, Chapter 4) and student (Cole, Napier & Marcum, Chapter 5) epistemologies with information literacy practice and academic assignments. Reciprocally, the theoretical discussions and practical examples that are provided in *NJWTC* also serve to introduce threshold concepts and the *Framework*, illustrating what instruction informed or influenced by the *Framework* might entail.

While each chapter in the book stands alone, a cover-to-cover read makes evident many connections among the essays, and among the sources that the contributing authors cite (the chapter endnotes alone could keep this reviewer reading for some time). The editors' care in sequencing the chapters is apparent: Wilkinson's work on competing

theories of knowledge sets up Fister's consideration of faculty epistemologies, which flows organically into a cluster of chapters that are concerned with students' ways of thinking and knowing. The consistent integration of theory and practice throughout suggests that the editors thoughtfully influenced final drafts, and the breadth of experience and ideas presented here is a tribute to the editors' careful curation.

This unique collection explores information literacy instruction at a most exciting time in its development. The book's authors and editors provide multiple pathways for librarians to consider when engaging students in developing a profound and critical understanding of information. The experience of reading *NJWTC* can be compared to attending an intense and fulfilling symposium on the most exciting current topics in ILI and, as the title suggests, *NJWTC* demonstrates that ILI is concerned with so much more than teaching students "where to click".

RELATED RESOURCES

Association of College & Research Libraries. (2015). *Framework for information literacy for higher education.* Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework

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