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Exploring Strategies for Integrated Information Literacy: From "Academic Champions" to Institution-Wide Change

Claire McGuinness
University College Dublin, Ireland, claire.mcguinness@ucd.ie

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EXPLORING STRATEGIES FOR INTEGRATED INFORMATION LITERACY

From "Academic Champions" to Institution-Wide Change

Dr. Claire McGuinness, BA MLIS PhD
University College Dublin

ABSTRACT

In this paper, the author critically reviews the strategies that have been adopted by librarians to secure academic support for curriculum-integrated information literacy (IL) instruction, and questions whether the popular approach of targeting individual academics offers a suitable foundation for the establishment of long-term IL programs. The paper suggests that librarians should instead align their IL objectives with the overall academic mission of their institutions and seek out the means to effect a more wide-ranging change in the academic culture, where IL is recognized as a core educational value. Several strategies are suggested by which this aim may be achieved.

INTRODUCTION

While academic institutions fail to recognize IL as a core educational value, librarians continue to seek out innovative ways to integrate IL instruction into the curriculum. Although the literature of Library and Information Science (LIS) is replete with examples of librarians' resourcefulness and drive in promoting the IL agenda in their institutions, evidence suggests that IL is still treated as an elective skill set on the periphery of the core curriculum in most disciplines. One of the key strategies employed by librarians has been to seek out and cultivate the support of individual academics through

identifying topical problem areas for which IL instruction seems to offer a potential solution. Examples include undergraduate retention rates and plagiarism. One of the aims of this paper is to critically examine the effectiveness of this strategy with regard to building and sustaining long-term teaching partnerships between librarians and academics. Through a review of the literature, a number of flaws are identified that call into question whether targeting these so-called individual "academic champions" offers the best means of ensuring curriculum-embedded IL instruction on an institution-wide scale. Although the factors that contribute to successful collaboration and integration can be

difficult to categorize and replicate, an emerging consensus in the literature suggests that the best route to recognition for IL in academia lies in developing a "top-down" approach, through which IL is included as a core value in the academic mission and culture of the institution and is viewed as an essential element of all academic curricula, regardless of discipline. A further aim of the paper is to suggest a number of strategies through which this strategic goal may be achieved, including the identification and exploitation of restructuring opportunities on an institutional level, as well as the inclusion of IL as a professional development opportunity for academics.

CONTEXT: ACADEMIC SUPPORT AS THE KEY TO (SHORT-TERM) SUCCESS

While academic librarians have famously experienced mixed fortunes in their efforts to integrate IL into academic curricula, a factor common to virtually all of the success stories reported in the literature has been the close involvement of one or more academics or even an entire academic department, who have expressed a particular interest in the educational benefits of IL, and who are enthusiastic and willing to work with the librarians to ensure that it is included in their courses. Librarians have long recognized their "power deficit" in relation to undergraduate and postgraduate teaching programs as well as the fact that IL is unlikely to be included in the curriculum without the support of academics (Young & Harmony, 1999; Chiste, Glover & Westwood, 2000). A common perception suggests that most academics are, by virtue of their autonomous and research-focused cultural identity, intrinsically ill-disposed towards the idea of joining forces with librarians to facilitate curriculum-integrated IL and must be persuaded of the benefits of doing so through promotional and outreach strategies (Hardesty, 1995; Haynes, 1996; Holtze, 2002; Stubbings & Franklin, 2006). Much has been written regarding librarians' struggle for professional recognition among their academic colleagues, and the IL movement has served to reignite and revitalize this concern in the community of

librarians worldwide (Biddiscombe, 2000). Nevertheless, it has been suggested that this issue may constitute a low priority for academics and that, unlike librarians, they do not consider the lack of collaboration to be a problem (Christiansen, Stombler & Thaxton, 2004). Gordon Thompson, an academic, describes the necessity of "seducing" academics as a prerequisite for successful programs of BI at Earlham College, with librarians adopting the proactive role (Thompson, 1993). Bruce (2001) speaks of the need to identify and exploit innovative "hooks" that will capture the imagination of both academics and administrators, and to win support for collaborative programs. She asserts that the librarians who have set up successful collaborations have tapped into and exploited the "critical features of the university agenda," such as using the broad political interest in the "lifelong learning" agenda to raise the profile of IL or adopting a wider definition of IL that supports university concerns about "core skills" for graduates (p.107). This strategy is supported by Stubbings & Franklin (2006), who describe the approach to collaboration that was employed by librarians at Loughborough University. The authors refer to the "hooks" that were identified as potentially the most appealing to academics, namely: "prevention of plagiarism; the support of initiatives such as Personal Development Planning (PDP), and aligning information literacy competencies with content and with the module learning outcomes" (p.2). The majority of papers published on this topic urge librarians to be assertive and creative, both in the ways that they market their instructional wares, and also in the ways they build and maintain their relationships with academics. Haynes suggests that the obduracy of academics will continue to be instruction librarians' greatest challenge: "it is up to librarians to take the initiative and become active agents of change. This assignment may be exceptionally difficult in view of entrenched attitudes, lack of knowledge and shrinking library faculties with diminished influence" (1996, p.216). Librarians have thus been issued a clear mandate: in order to have *any* hope of building long-term collaborations for IL with academics, they must don their

promoter's hats and hustle for business wherever they can find it.

This directive notwithstanding, it is also suggested in the literature that librarians broadly tend to behave in a primarily *reactive* manner in response to academics' requests for instruction. In fact, Haynes observes that this is the principle means by which many librarians gain access to students in the context of instruction: "The basic stance in many libraries continues to be reactive" (Haynes, 1996, p.217). The overriding problem with this approach is often the ad hoc and unstructured nature of the teaching, with sessions conveniently "slotted in" and designed to satisfy a singular imposed information need that has been identified by the requesting academic. While undoubtedly providing an opportunity for librarians to gain a degree of visibility within the curriculum, this type of arrangement does very little to actually shift the power balance in their favor. MacDonald, Rathemacher & Burkhardt (2000) capture this sense of dependency on academic interest in their description of the original library instruction program at Rhode Island University, which consisted primarily of "one-shot" sessions designed and delivered on demand: "This system of customized library instruction does not operate with an explicit plan or strategy. It depends almost entirely on individual faculty members taking the initiative to request sessions in the library" (p.241). Generally speaking, in cases where librarians are only given "one-off" opportunities to display their wares, the long-term viability of instructional opportunities for IL is not guaranteed.

On this matter, Loomis (1995) asserts that the main problem with initiatives that are driven by, or based primarily on, the support of individual academics is that while such collaborations may be *temporarily* successful, they ultimately prove to be "shaky foundations for our programs in terms of long-term planning, for they are personality, not program, dependent" (p.130). While librarians are, understandably and admirably, loath to refuse any opportunity that may arise to work with academics, the question

of long-term sustainability is often neglected in the initial rush to set up and deliver the IL sessions until the issue is eventually forced by circumstances beyond the control of the librarians. Short-term cooperation is substituted for fully integrated long-term collaboration. Dorner, Taylor and Carlton-Hudson (2001) describe an example of this problem in their account of the "tiered" approach to research skills instruction that was implemented in the nursing baccalaureate program at Ball State University, Indiana. While the initial student and academic responses to the project were positive, the departure of some of the original academic contributors placed the continuing existence of the project in jeopardy: "Though it was discussed and agreed to in theory by the individual faculty involved, some faculty members have changed over the course of the project, bringing into question continued implementation of the program. Naturally, the program only works when all faculty agree to work it into their curricula" (p.139). The solution to this problem was for the project coordinators to try to secure department-wide support for the program through the Nursing Curriculum Committee, which would ensure the continuation of the program independently of individual academic participants. Similarly Chiste, Glover & Westwood (2000) describe the potential consequences for IL modules when the decision-making process regarding the future of the course is taken out of the hands of the coordinators. Despite the positive outcomes that resulted from the two IL courses described by the authors (Management 2530 and Management 3090), neither module achieved long-term sustainability in its original format. One (2530) was dropped entirely, while the other (3090) was not considered sufficiently important to merit inclusion as a core required course in the curriculum. This was a decision made by academics. Although the course remained on the roster, its profile consequently changed considerably: "…the Library's participation dropped to one-third (rather than 50%), and the written communications honors were not, as one detractor described, given to a bona fide professor, but to non-academic staff from an ancillary University department more

accountable for cost recovery than for education" (p.207). Haynes (1996) also warns librarians against maintaining their reactive stance towards IL. She observes that it is fully the responsibility of the librarians to be as proactive as possible, since they "cannot assume that faculty will always approach them when they need their help" (p.217).

Although rare when compared to the many programs initiated by librarians, some successful collaborative IL programs have in fact been developed at the behest of single academics with vision. These academics identified IL instruction as the solution to a particular problem that they had been experiencing in their classrooms, such as plagiarism or students' poor research strategies, and they proactively sought out librarians to request their input. This type of arrangement tends to extend beyond the "one shot, one opportunity" approach and lays the foundation for sustained collaboration. Several examples of this scenario can be found in the literature. In the "Engelond" collaborative project at the University of Missouri–Kansas City described by Walter (2000), the impetus for collaboration arose from an academic's dissatisfaction with her students' use of World Wide Web resources, and it was she who approached the library, seeking: "suggestions about the best ways to teach her students to 'sift the web' in their search for resources suitable for academic research in Medieval Studies" (p.36). In the case reported by Courtois and Handel (1998), a course in Human Genetics at the University of Tennessee was taught jointly by professor and librarian following a proactive decision by the Professor in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology to "integrate the teaching of information sources into the course" (p.212). Isbell and Broaddus (1995) discuss another such case in their description of a successful team-taught writing and research course at the University of Arizona West. Factors that contributed to the success of the venture included the complementary nature of the personal relationship between the two parties in addition to the fact that the academic involved was a "committed library user and

supporter" (p.58). In a most unusual case, Hinchliffe (2000), an academic in the Department of Political Science, University of Illinois, describes how his concerns about undergraduate students' research skills led him to modify the assignments for his course in order to create the opportunity for his students to receive "feedback on both the final product of their efforts and, more importantly here, the intermediate steps of their research" (p.281). In completing the assignment, the students received "library use instruction" from both a librarian and, on a more informal level, from Hinchliffe himself, who went with students to the library to offer advice on the appropriate sources to use. However, these extreme examples of "academic champions" represent an anomaly rather than the norm on academic campuses.

Raspa & Ward (2000) describe three levels of interactions that can exist between academics and librarians, and which are differentiated on the basis of the duration and intensity of the arrangement, the distribution of workload, and the sharing of common goals (pp.4-5). Networking, the most tenuous of the three, simply encompasses the "sharing of information for mutual benefit" (Himmelman, 1996), and constitutes a loose unstructured form of professional interaction that is not based upon shared purpose. The interpersonal interaction in this context is of a relatively fleeting duration, and does not involve a sustained or semi-permanent working relationship. By contrast, coordination represents a relationship of increased complexity between the parties, in which "individuals have identified a common goal" (Raspa & Ward, p.4). In this context, shared purpose does not translate into shared *activity*, with all constituent parties working separately and independently towards the achievement of the common goal. Finally, in comparison with the other two forms of interaction, collaboration represents a greater level of commitment from all parties and the establishment of a longer-term and committed working relationship, in which participants negotiate and achieve consensus on the actions that will move them closer to the desired shared

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outcome. The workload is distributed evenly among the participants and takes into account the different strengths and abilities that each brings to the negotiating table. It is this form of relationship that is most desirable to librarians for the attainment of their IL goals.

Evidence suggests that the majority of working relationships in the area of IL development continue to be based on relationships that display the characteristics of the *coordination* model. For example, a single "one-shot" information skills session that is slotted into a course and delivered by a librarian may share the overall course objective of familiarizing students with a particular area of the discipline. But a clear division of labor between librarian and course coordinator is maintained for the duration of the session. Librarians' involvement with the course, and frequently, their working relationship with the course coordinator, begins and ends with that single session, and rarely evolves into a more permanent arrangement. As Curzon (2004) astutely points out: "Most information literacy programs fail because they are parochial and eventually come to be seen only as a library effort" (p.35).

ACADEMIC CHAMPIONS – THE PATH TO POWER?

Loomis (1995), amongst others, observes that the traditional route to collaboration for proactive academic librarians has been to actively target individual academics "who appear sympathetic to the library and open to innovation for program expansion" (p.130). These individuals are frequently referred to as "academic champions," who negotiate the administrative barriers on behalf of the less powerful information professionals and create opportunities for collaboration that would otherwise elude the librarians.

Some research has demonstrated that "academic champions" have been shown to possess particular attributes, and to harbor favorable attitudes that single them out as likely collaborators with librarians. For instance, in her unique ethnographic study that focused on

academics who were deemed "heavy users" of library instruction for their courses, Manuel (2005) discovered that the academics who proved most amenable to IL integration in her institution showed themselves to be sensitive to the difficulties experienced by students in doing research, and could sympathetically relate it to their own personal struggles as students (p.144-147). They also appeared to break with a theme that has emerged in previous studies, insofar as they did not believe that students would simply "pick up" information skills themselves depending on their degree of personal motivation (p.145). Equally, they also tended to request library instruction because they subscribed to the view of "librarian as expert," and considered them to be the most appropriate group to undertake this type of instruction. Rather than express concern about the librarians' lack of discipline-specific subject knowledge, they considered their expertise in the area of "information science" as sufficient for the type of instruction they were required to carry out (pp.147-149, 151-152). Furthermore, these "academic champions" for library instruction considered the reference function to be more complex than "just service," instead conceptualizing it as a "venue for individualized learning" (p.151). Some surveys have also suggested that academics' attitudes may vary according to discipline, with academics working within certain subject areas expressing a more favorable view of IL and of potential collaboration with librarians. Studies of academics' attitudes and IL practices, such as those carried out by Maynard (1990), Hardesty (1991), Cannon (1994), Thomas (1994) and Leckie & Fullerton (1999) all found a broad degree of variation between academic departments. For instance, Cannon discovered a greater tendency among arts and humanities academics to invite a librarian to give instruction to their classes, than among mathematics and statistics academics. Thomas' study also found interdepartmental variation, with education expressing the highest level of support for the inclusion of library instruction in subject courses, and engineering the lowest. The law of averages dictates that there are likely to be a number of academics who are favorably

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disposed towards the idea of information literacy instruction on any particular campus, a fact that has been skillfully exploited by many librarians, through a range of promotional and outreach activities. As Manuel observes, however, simply being aware of the range of attributes and attitudes that are characteristic of the "strong proponents of LI (library instruction)" is not sufficient in itself to offer librarians any definitive guidance on how to establish and maintain enduring IL collaborations: "faculty's responses…displayed a range that would make it difficult, if not impossible, to fashion a unified rationale for an instruction program's course-integration initiatives that would be universally persuasive" (2005, p.157). Leckie & Fullerton also pointed out in their study that for academics, simply possessing a favorable attitude towards IL does not necessarily represent a guarantee that they will work collaboratively with librarians to ensure an information literate outcome in their programs. In their study, a high proportion of the academic participants agreed that bibliographic instruction (BI) was an important element of undergraduate education. Overall, 78% of academics surveyed responded that BI was necessary for third- and fourth-year students, while 69% believed it to be essential for first- and second-years, although these percentages did display variation between the different departments (1999, p.13). By contrast, when questioned about their actual pedagogical practices in relation to BI, the results were less encouraging, with half or more of the academics stating that they "never use assignments to introduce library research, and that they never talk about information retrieval, search strategies and tools in class" (p.17). Similarly, the study found that a very high percentage of academics had never made use of any of the instructional services offered by the library (p.20). These finding suggests that, despite harboring favorable attitudes towards the *idea* of BI, "a large proportion of faculty are doing very little or nothing about information literacy in their courses," although again, there was significant variation between the different departments (p.20). This apparent inconsistency between expressed attitude and behavior in

relation to IL has been observed by other authors such as Maynard (1990), Hardesty (1995) and Kotter (1999). In his survey of academics at the Military College of South Carolina (the Citadel), Maynard discovered a "puzzling" gap between the academics' expressed views of the importance of library instruction and their propensity to become involved in delivery of this instruction: "Most of the faculty agreed that library instruction was important, yet less than 17 percent thought they themselves should provide it ... The obvious discrepancy between faculty acknowledgment of need for library instruction and its failure to address that need, makes one wonder how pressing that need is" (1990, p.73).

An additional point concerns the actual extent of academics' influence on the curriculum at large. While professional autonomy and control over one's classroom constitute fundamental tenets of professional academic culture (Hardesty, 1995), academics are themselves often frustrated by the slow pace of change at departmental and institutional level and the "red tape" that prevents them introducing innovative approaches to their teaching activities. In reality, "academic champions" may actually have relatively poor leverage over the pedagogical structures in their institutions, and consequently can offer librarians only limited opportunities for including IL in the curriculum. Stubbings and Franklin (2006) refer to this phenomenon where they observe that the advocative strategies undertaken by librarians at Loughborough University, including the identification of appropriate and imaginative "hooks" with which to attract academic interest, had been "successful in achieving integration of information literacy classes at module level, but not at *program* level" (p.8, emphasis added). While the librarians had managed to integrate IL components into various modules, the overall situation at degree level had not changed substantially.

These reports raise several issues with regard to targeting academic champions. First, it raises the question of how librarians set about identifying academics who possess both a

favorable attitude toward IL *and* the willingness to engage in the appropriate pedagogical practices to ensure this outcome. In practice, this often occurs as the result of informal social meetings between academics and librarians rather than systematic formal interaction, such as library users' committees (McGuinness, 2004) and is partly a function of the personal rapport that springs up between individuals, which is by nature a random and unpredictable phenomenon. In a paper that looks at both sides of the collaborative equation, librarian Glenna Westwood describes how productive she found informal interaction to be: "Frequent contact with my peers in the academic departments has translated into more social activities … It is surprising how much headway we can make during these informal visits" (Chiste, Glover, & Westwood, 2000, p.203). The problem with this approach is that it is frequently a matter of *chance*, and therefore an unreliable way of engaging academic support on a broader, more systematic scale. Conducting surveys of academics to gauge their level of interest is another suggested strategy (Young & Harmony, 1999, pp.12-19). Unfortunately, expressions of interest made on paper or online may not always translate into tangible activity on the ground, a phenomenon revealed in some of the studies referred to above.

The second question relates to the difficulties inherent in creating a "critical mass of B.I. advocates" (Thompson, 1993, p.104) that will generate sufficient influence within the institution to effect sustainable collaboration and change at *program* level, rather than through disconnected modules scattered throughout individual curricula. Ver Steeg (2000) argues that a purely advocative "bottom-up" approach will have only limited success, as librarians cannot force all academics to support their IL efforts: "Because it is everybody's right to accept or reject the value of libraries and library instruction, it does little good to try to promote bibliographic instruction to disinterested faculty" (p.46). She suggests that a more subtle strategy involving word of mouth and gradual change is likely to be more effective in the long term. More significantly, Ver Steeg proposes

that marketing the *library* to academics might not be the most useful means of securing academic involvement. She observes that "it might be more productive to think of ways to promote *learning* at the institution" (p.46, emphasis added), as this approach speaks more directly to the central educational mission of the institution at large and is the concern of all those who are engaged in pedagogical activities.

WORKING FROM THE TOP DOWN

In addition to putting down roots with individual academics, librarians must view their ultimate objective as the full incorporation of IL as a central cog in the pedagogical wheels of their institutions. They must aim high, to ensure a "top-down" approach to the development of an information literate culture on campus. As Curzon (2004) states: "The information literacy program should be introduced as an enterprise-wide solution to an enterprise-wide problem. To catch the attention of academics and academic administrators, information literacy must be part of the academic effort rather than just a toolbox of skills that students learn in order to use the library" (p.35). While targeting "academic champions" offers intermittent success for IL integration, the evidence on the ground suggests that sustainable long-term collaborations depend upon a broader change in the institutional culture that would recognize IL as a central tenet of its educational mission. Other authors also agree with this strategy. Iannuzzi (1998) observes that: "A major shift in the culture of an organization, one that involves the entire organization, requires support from senior administrators and this support must permeate throughout the organization" (p.98). Loomis (1995) asserts that librarians must align their own IL objectives with the overall goals and missions of the institutions at large and tap into the real power structures that shape the educational structures, which determine curriculum content (p.129). While the value of positive academic–librarian relations should not be underestimated (Kotter, 1999, p.301), they should represent just one strand of librarians' overall strategic approach to establishing IL within the pedagogical frameworks of their

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institutions.

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES FOR LONG-TERM IL PROGRAMS

While librarians should not completely dismiss the short-term opportunities that are created through targeting "academic champions," they should focus and direct their energy towards the development of sustainable collaborations that are mandated from the top down and resistant to changes in personnel and other environmental factors. The following strategies take a long-term view of IL development in higher education.

Identify and exploit opportunities that arise from major restructuring initiatives in your institution: Librarians should be aware of major curriculum reforms that may offer them a chance to reposition and integrate IL on a more permanent basis within the pedagogical structure of the institution. For instance, when the undergraduate degree program in University College Dublin was redesigned to reflect a modularized semesterized structure in 2005–2006 (the "Horizons" project), the opportunity arose at individual school level to reexamine course offerings and to make changes to existing degree programs. One of the key purposes of the restructuring initiative was to enable more flexible and student-focused learning, a goal that clearly corresponds to the constructivist underpinnings of IL and "lifelong learning." The School of Information and Library Studies (SILS) seized the opportunity offered by Horizons to expand IL within the university at large. Consequently, a new collaborative Stage One IL module, IS10020 "Information Literacy: Information Skills for Effective Academic Writing," was added to the list of modules as a core course for the "Information Studies" major in the undergraduate BA and B. Soc. Sci. Degree programs, and as an elective module for other first year programs. This represents a relatively stable arrangement that can survive in spite of personnel changes. The module is also unique in that it represents a full collaboration between SILS and the library at UCD Dublin.

Identify and exploit opportunities arising from innovative pedagogical initiatives: An excellent example of this kind of initiative is the Centre for Inquiry Based Learning in the Arts and Social Sciences (CILASS) at the University of Sheffield, a development made possible through the competitive awarding of funds by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in 2004 to set up Centers for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) in institutions around the UK (University of Sheffield, n.d.). From a general perspective the aim of a CETL is to "reward excellent teaching practice and to further invest in that practice so that CETLs funding delivers substantial benefits to students, teachers and institutions" (Higher Education Funding Council for England, n.d.). In the case of CILASS, the explicit focus on collaborative inquiry-based learning is linked inextricably to IL, and this is reflected in the objectives stated in the summary document available through their Web site: "to achieve a step-change in the nature and quality of student learning, by:

> Embedding discipline-sensitive, inquiry-based learning at the heart of the learning experience
>
> Exploiting the synergies between collaborative inquiry, information literacy development and networked learning in new and innovative ways" (Levy, n.d.)

Work toward the inclusion of IL modules on the roster of training courses offered to academics by institutional teaching and learning units: Rather than invest all their time and energy in the promotion of student IL training to academics, librarians should work to ensure the addition of IL to the list of professional development modules offered to academics within their institutions. This strategy is supported by Rockman (2004) in her assessment of "faculty development centers" as a useful forum for advising academics on how IL may be integrated into their teaching programs (p.58). Research has shown that academics are often unaware of the benefits to be gained from collaborating with librarians and of the

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importance of IL to learning in general (Cannon, 1994; Leckie & Fullerton, 1999). According to Smith (1997), educating academics about IL constitutes a crucial strategic focus for librarians: "We will develop information literate students primarily by developing information literate faculty who understand how to develop information literacy among their students." Cox & VanderPol (2004) describe the approach of librarians at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, which involved running an orientation workshop for academics that was specifically designed to demonstrate how IL could help to address the problem of plagiarism among students, an issue shown to be of particular concern to academics. Including an IL module as an institutionally endorsed professional development opportunity represents a politically astute move for librarians who are concerned about academics' willingness to attend workshops or seminars that are offered under the auspices of the campus library only.

Lobby for the explicit inclusion of IL in mandates and educational directives that are issued by the highest levels of national governance: The strategic positioning of IL on national political agendas should be an ongoing objective of librarians. For example, since the late 1990s regional accreditation agencies in the US, such as the Middle States Commission for Higher Education, have established "mandates for higher education institutions to implement information literacy programs and to assess the resultant learning outcomes" (Thompson, 2002, p.1). "Information literacy" is the actual term used in several of these directives. As a result of this, educational institutions in these regions have been forced to reconsider and redevelop their pedagogical frameworks, and to recognize the importance of academic–librarian collaboration in pursuit of IL objectives in their programs. In recent years, the political profile of IL has increased significantly on a global scale, and it is endorsed by international organizations such as UNESCO. "Lifelong learning," a movement closely linked with IL, offers a further platform for political change as it already constitutes a high priority for virtually all national governments.

CONCLUSION – IS SUSTAINED COLLABORATION ACHIEVABLE?

While these and other strategies represent a pragmatic approach to the collaboration problem, the root issue still remains: how do we initiate a change in the prevailing *culture* of the institution to ensure that embedding IL in the curriculum through collaboration becomes an accepted "way of life" in our organizations? While some authors would advocate a tenacious approach, slowly and gradually chipping away at resistance through advocacy and persuasion, others suggest that the nature of such a culture is too ephemeral and difficult to define to permit any considered strategy for reform. The famous bibliographic instruction (BI) program at Earlham College, Indiana is one such case, as described by Ver Steeg (2000). Since the 1960s the program has served as the "gold standard" for IL instructional initiatives, reaching almost 100% of Earlham students, and it is fully integrated into the curriculum at all stages of each individual program. Identifying and explaining the success factors that underpin the program in order to offer a template for other institutions has proved to be a complex task; Ver Steeg observes that "The program is so ingrained in the life of the college that it has been called a *way of life*" (2000, p.42, emphasis added). From the beginning it seems that the Earlham ethos of collaborative learning and "emphasis on dialogue and consensus" provided a base culture that was particularly receptive to collaboration for BI. Librarians in Earlham have always been involved in academic matters at a comparatively high level and are viewed as equal to the academics. Ver Steeg notes that the Earlham's origins as a Quaker college may partially account for its open culture, particularly with regard to the value placed on partnership in the teaching and learning context. She also points out that BI is not treated as a library service in Earlham, and that no marketing or promotional activities are undertaken by the librarians. Other external environmental factors that are mentioned include the educational reforms of the 1960s, the broad social changes that underpinned this period in history, and the renewed interest in BI

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in general, that contributed to the success of the program. Despite these outward expressions of the prevailing culture, Ver Steeg also suggests that it defies concrete elucidation: "The campus value placed on collaboration (and, by extension, on relationships) is enmeshed so thoroughly in campus climate that it seems mystical, cabalistic – what can one take from Earlham's experience?" (2000, p.46)

From the point of view of those seeking to initiate cultural change these comments are somewhat disheartening. They seem to suggest that to create a similar environment in one's own institution is virtually impossible, since it depends on the convergence of so many abstract factors that may not be replicated elsewhere, or in short, that Earlham's experience is unique and as such, does not offer any practical strategies for collaboration in other contexts. Equally, it begs the question of whether librarians are doomed to continue their seemingly endless promotional and outreach activities for IL, until once again environmental conditions align in their favor.

THE TURNING TIDE…

In spite of these problems, there is good reason to be optimistic. Firstly, it is probably true to state that we are entering a golden age of IL. Since the publication of the seminal ALA Presidential Committee Report in 1989 (American Library Association, 1989), developments in IL teaching and research have been rapid and dramatic. "Information literacy" has become a key term, a form of lexical currency that has enabled effective communication within the LIS community and also with external sectors. Publications have increased exponentially, and many national and international IL interest groups and organizations have sprouted and flourished, offering a vibrant forum for the exchange of ideas and materials between instructors. Dedicated IL conferences now take place on a regular basis, demonstrating the demand that exists among instructors and researchers for a platform to interact with colleagues and present their research findings. To an extent, the degree

of activity that is currently focused on IL mirrors the intensity of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when instruction was recognized as a key library function, meriting special attention (Lubans, 1974). At that time, the bibliographic instruction movement grew into a powerful force within library and information science, with the establishment of several dedicated organizations, most of which are still operational today, although some of the groups have changed their titles to reflect modern terminology. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the IL movement has benefited from an elevated political profile, and it fits well with the new global emphasis on "lifelong learning" and the desire to eliminate the "digital divide" in nations where inequality and information poverty have caused a troublesome chasm to develop between the information haves and have-nots, leading to social exclusion and hardship (Correia, 2002). From an educational perspective, the increasing popularity of alternative student-focused learning approaches such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Inquiry-Based Learning offers an unprecedented opportunity for librarians to persuade educators of the centrality of IL to active and reflective learning (Breen & Fallon, 2005).

Thus, while librarians may find that marketing and promotional activities and networking with individual academics will continue to form key strands of their IL strategies for the time being, they may also discover a teaching and learning environment that is growing more receptive to the idea of IL. Sustainable IL programs may no longer be a distant dream for the IL community.

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NOTES

1. UNESCO was one of the co-sponsors (along with the NFIL and IFLA) of the recent "High Level Colloquium on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning," held at Alexandria, Egypt , November 6-9, 2005. Available: http://www.ifla.org/III/wsis/High-Level-Colloquium.pdf

2. A number of US-based instructional groups were set up in the early- to mid-1970s, including the California Clearinghouse on Library Instruction (1975), ACRL Bibliographic Instruction Section (1975), ALA Library Instruction Round Table (1975) and the Library Orientation Exchange (1975). The ACRL Bibliographic Instruction Section is now known as the ACRL Instruction Section.