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Communications in
INFORMATION LITERACY

GROWING PAINS

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When Chris Hollister and I originally conceived of our new journal, I believe our greatest unspoken fear was that it would fail outright. Whether due to limited readership or manuscript submissions of limited number or quality, or perhaps due to some massive failing on our own parts that we could not foresee, we quietly worried that *Communications in Information Literacy* would go down in flames, that our entire readership would consist of our wives and mothers, that our best manuscripts would be submitted by junior high metal shop students with names like "Turbo" and "Phreak." We were sure that *CIL* would be a devastating, career-ending fireball and the seared earth would be then be salted to keep anything from growing there ever again. Our vision would be forgotten and lost to the ages.

If only.

Instead, we find now that we are victims of our own success. We do not have too few submissions; we have so many that we had to put out a call for reviewers just to keep up with them all. We have 450 registered users, and a much larger number of general visitors to the site. Every article from the first issue has been viewed over 1000 times (some more than 2000 times) and those articles are now being cited by other authors. The journal is indexed by DOAJ and Google Scholar, and included in *Ulrich's* and WorldCat. In fact, *CIL* has been independently catalogued by over 150 libraries, and this is only our second issue.

As I mulled over topics for this editorial, it occurred to me that, anecdotally, information literacy programming seems to run a parallel track – as information literacy educators, we find ourselves often being "successful victims." If we succeed in the classroom, we are then asked to help work on the curriculum. If the curriculum overhaul for one college or program goes well, we are asked to use it as a model for other curricula. Burnout rates among information literacy librarians are high, and the librarians who remain after others leave find themselves inheriting insanely large teaching loads.

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This practice is not new to libraries in general. If a library budget comes under fire, librarians will find ways to do more with less. When staff lines go unfilled in any library department, other staff members traditionally pick up the slack. We consolidate, conspire, scrimp and save until we simply can do no more, and then administration comes along and sells our space out from under us. This is not every librarian's story, but I bet it sounds familiar to many of us.

Another undesirable side effect of success can be the fear of success. If an information literacy coordinator knows that her program's successes will be met only with more demands and little or no support, then she may feel a chilling effect that keeps her from giving her best effort.

The reward for successful information literacy programming, however, should be its formalization, and a commitment from our administrators to continue funding and expand these programs to meet the demands of our constituencies. Instead of fearing success or becoming its victim, librarians should be given the kind of support needed to build strong educational programs. Successful educational programs from the library should be met with ringing endorsement by campus administrators, not to mention continuous staffing increases, improved educational facilities, and appropriate funding to support these initiatives. Eventually every successful program moves beyond the early developmental years into young adulthood, and with the ongoing responsibilities those information literacy programs engender, so too should they be rewarded with every support mechanism our academic institutions can provide.

We know, as information professionals, what an information-literate citizenry means for the world. For education, information literacy is often the lynchpin for teaching critical thinking via a multidisciplinary platform – a cornerstone for any well-developed curriculum. For business, it means smarter employees who can critically analyze a problem and use the best evidence in developing solutions. For any democratic society, it means the participation of an informed, engaged electorate. Information literacy, as has been said elsewhere, is a basic human right. We cannot fear success; we have to embrace it.

Where *Communications in Information Literacy* is concerned, though we are successful and happily so, this journal is still in its infancy. *CIL* has a long way to go before we can reasonably anticipate the kind of formal support our educational programs rightfully deserve. We do hope that *CIL* will be a first-choice platform for conversations about those programs, however, and we look forward to the continued and gracious support of our reviewers, our editorial board, and our readership. We will always endeavor to be worthy of our success.