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Communications in INFORMATION LITERACY

HAVING SOMETHING TO SAY

Our inaugural editorial

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It has been ten years since the publication of Loanne Snavely and Natasha Cooper's well-known and often cited article, "The Information Literacy Debate" (1997). The authors famously began their article with this anonymous quote: "Information Literacy has a hollow sound. It is empty of content and has the connotation of being a fad." Snavely and Cooper went on to provide a thoughtful and thorough discussion of the term "information literacy," its implications, its importance, and its impact. In conclusion, the authors recommended that librarians should embrace information literacy (IL).

As exemplified by the Snavely and Cooper piece, it was not so long ago that librarians were still quibbling over whether or not the term "information literacy" should replace "bibliographic instruction." Today, however, we do not need to look far to find evidence that information literacy—the term and the concept—is thriving. Entire job positions and academic initiatives are designed around IL. With the exception of a few articles such as Stanley Wilder's recent, "Information Literacy Makes All the Wrong Assumptions (2005)," we find that the argument is, for all practical purposes, over. Information literacy continues to grow beyond the library. It is taking root in widely ranging academic disciplines and in institutional curricula. In short, IL is alive and well.

In library literature, IL is consistently among the most important and most discussed topics, and it has been so for nearly two decades. This is corroborated by the editors of the journal *Reference Services Review* who publish annual bibliographies of the previous year's publications related to information literacy and library instruction. Still, it is noteworthy that only a small number of journals in the discipline regularly publish articles on the topic. And as if to emphasize the point, there is the recent discontinuation of the journal, *Research Strategies*, which has left library literature without a publication dedicated to IL.

Researchers in the area of higher education provide further evidence of the need for journal literature devoted exclusively to IL. In October 2006, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) released preliminary results from a new test, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Literacy Assessment Core Level, that is designed to measure the IL and computing skills of high school and college students. Results from the test showed that "College students and high school students preparing to enter college are sorely lacking in the skills needed to retrieve, analyze, and communicate information

available online" (Foster, 2006). More to the point, only 13 percent of the test takers were deemed to be information literate.

It is for the aforementioned need of an IL journal, and for other reasons to follow, that we have launched *Communications in Information Literacy* (CIL). As noted in our Focus and Scope, CIL is an independent, professional, refereed electronic journal dedicated to advancing knowledge, theory, and research in the area of information literacy. The journal is committed to the principles of information literacy as set forth by the Association of College and Research Libraries, and it is intended for an audience of professionals in higher education who are committed to advancing information literacy. CIL is also committed to the principles of open access for academic research.

Plans for CIL have been in progress since early in 2006. However, the genesis of the journal can be traced back to 2004 and a general discontent that co-founder Stewart Brower and I felt with library literature, the publishing industry, and the process of scholarly communication. While CIL was created to fill an irrefutable information need, the decisions to remain independent and to embrace open access are in response to systemic problems in the publishing universe. The same can be said of our decision to use the Creative Commons copyright model, which allows for authors to retain the rights to their works. Our decision to build on the Open Journal Systems platform is based not only on current structural needs, but also on our vision for the future of CIL. We believe that a new path of scholarly communication is presently being established by new ideas, innovative technologies, and creative publishing models.

CIL has assembled a world-class Editorial Board. Members were selected not only for their proven editorial capabilities, but also for their importance within the IL community, and for their belief, if you will, in the cause. Importantly, members of the CIL Editorial Board have also indicated a willingness to assist in the mentoring of prospective authors. We find this to be particularly valuable and unique in the publishing universe.

Works published in CIL may be theoretical, research-based, or practical in nature. Topics may include: definitions and standards for IL, pedagogies and learning theories, assessment, development of institutional IL strategies, design of IL programs, lesson planning, classroom instruction, online instruction, instructional competencies, to name a few. Librarians will no doubt be the primary audience for CIL. But we also desire to involve the ideas of our friends from all academic disciplines and from institutional administrators.

We hope that you CIL readers will find the journal interesting, provocative, and relevant to your professional pursuits. We subscribe to the publishing mantra, "Have something to say, and say it well." We hope to provide you with useful information in terms of collaborating, decision-making, planning, teaching, and even writing. We also look forward to hearing from you. In order for CIL to forge ahead as envisioned, we will need your comments, ideas, reactions, and suggestions, and we thank you for them.

References

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