
HERRING, James E. *Improving students' web use and information literacy: A guide for teachers and teacher librarians.* London: Facet Publishing. 2011.

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School librarians are not exactly deluged with practical, quality assured guides for improving services. School librarianship is a gap that Facet Publishing is working to address, with James Herring, the noted authority on school libraries and information literacy (IL), producing another excellent, basic companion for the sector. His range of international examples and the general trends identified within the book, such as independent learning and collaborative working, ensure its relevance to education systems across the world.

The book is targeted at practitioners: school librarians, and teachers – whether or not they have responsibilities for the school library. Herring pushes the advocacy aspect further by claiming its relevance to school managers. IL teaching in schools is variable and, to his credit, Herring does not assume that school managers regard it as an important life skill, or that recognition of its importance merits dedicated space within already full timetables slots and national curricula.

Herring dispenses with the obligatory chapter on learning styles, compressing these into a few paragraphs. This frees him up to deliver on his argument that in order to improve school pupils' information skills it is necessary to improve teachers' and school librarians' information skills. Herring positions basic chapters on web searching, website evaluation, and Web 2.0 before discussions on IL. While there are more comprehensive accounts of these available, these chapters are sensitively applied to the context of the school environment and provide a springboard for those new to school librarianship.

There are occasional references to the author's own PLUS (Purpose, Location, Use, Self-Evaluation) model. Herring has written about this more extensively elsewhere (e.g. Herring 1996, 2004), and in more detail. In this book, however, he provides equal space to a variety of IL models, an approach which reinforces the message that using a model for IL teaching is preferable to not teaching IL at all.

Its key contributions centre on the development of a new school IL programme. Herring makes such a seemingly formidable task manageable, outlining the steps for preparing different communities within a school for IL as an essential part of learning, down to planning a programme and individual lessons within it. As such, Herring provides outlines for teaching IL to teachers, who are then empowered to deliver IL skills within lessons; and for teaching IL to students. These sections (chapters five and six) are outstanding.

Subsequent chapters look at the development and use of targeted, specific learning tools in the classroom. Changes in web-based technologies have afforded users scope to design and build their own, sophisticated websites. Herring shows how the school librarian can design and build learning tools specific to an individual school and pupils' own learning needs, and train teachers in web design and in using targeted sites in teaching.

An ongoing theme throughout the book is the need to engage in a whole-school approach to IL. This is an incredibly positive development, and Herring provides important advice on strategy and planning in order to emplace IL within the school: persuading school management of the importance of IL is crucial; having IL skills embedded throughout the curriculum, so that the web is incorporated into lessons; this is more achievable with inset days for teachers on information seeking, and on website evaluation; developing collaborative and functional links between teachers and the school library. In my experience, have IL inserted into the school development plan: other enablers of IL throughout the school will follow from this.

Facet Publishing has a strong brand identity and this book conforms to the expected Facet format, including typeface; snappy chapters that are preceded by bullet-pointed learning outcomes and followed by references; an inadequate index; and a contents list that doesn't capture all the subheadings within the text. (It really is a much better book than a scan of the index and contents might suggest.) At the time of reviewing, URLs are working. Not all links are listed in the references, such as Intute (<http://www.intute.ac.uk>) and Resources for School Librarians (<http://www.sldiretory.com>), however; for ease of reference, a list of websites mentioned in the text should have been included. It contains a number of judicious illustrations but is not cluttered with screenshots at the expense of content. The strong emphases on planning and evaluation of IL programmes are purposive, salutary, and essential.

The book has few surprises for the experienced school librarian. It will be very useful for new school librarians/teacher librarians. However, its emphasis on developing new IL courses from scratch will be useful for all librarians, at whatever career stage, for advocacy, for setting up new IL courses, or for updating and evaluating existing IL courses.

References

Herring, J. E. (1996), *Teaching information skills in schools*, Library Association, London.

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