

Book Review

[Radical Information Literacy: Reclaiming the Political Heart of the IL Movement](#). Andrew Whitworth, London: Chandos Publishing, 2014. E-book ISBN: 9781780634296, Print Book ISBN: 9781843347484.

Andrew Whitworth, who is the Senior Lecturer in the School of Environment, Education and Development at the University of Manchester (UK) is the author of this book. He has divided the book on two major parts including “Deconstructing IL”, and “Reconstructing IL”.

The first part includes four chapters. The author has tried to clarify the key concepts of IL in the first article, which is entitled as” Basic Concepts and Terminology”. Definition of Information, as a main term which is used in the all sections of the book, is the first attempt of the author.

“The early days of IL” as the second chapter of this book contains a background to emergence and origins of IL. The author tries to mention the definition of IL and then revisit three papers that has been published between the years 1974-76, which are: Zurkowski (1974), Burchinal (1976) and Hamelink (1976). It seems that Whitworth tries to reach the roots of a radical approach to IL and he finds it on Hamelink’s paper. According to the text, there are three approaches to IL which are: 1. A Knowledge Management Approach, 2. Educational Approach, and, 3. Transformational Approach to IL (p. 27).

The author implies that using the term “information literacy” at which appeared in Zurkowski’s article (1970), although Lancaster have used the term in his paper (1970). Description of the Zurkowski’s opinion about the term information literacy is the emphasis of the author. Because of the importance of the Zurkowski’s ideas about the information literacy, the author has quoted directly some of these opinions; for example, see the key passage of Zurkowski’s article on the page 31.

In the next stage, the author has explained the second article mentioned above. It seems the below passage is very notable, where the author believe that:

“... with Burchinal, IL becomes identified as a specifically educational problem: how to develop in people the skills needed for the effective and efficient seeking of information, for problem solving and decision – making. Therefore, though Burchinal, like Zurkowski, takes a high-level view, IL is presented as something more concrete than an epistemology” (p. 35).

The third paper outlines a different form of IL. The author mentions that “Hamelink sees IL as something that has to be developed by populations so they can defend themselves against the cognitive costs of that society” (p.36). He tries to explain the three approaches about IL via comparing three articles and eventually, he concludes these approaches are like a three branches of the IL tree, a real tree, which is growing (P. 44).

The next chapter is about “The diversity of IL”. In this chapter, developing of IL along the 1980s and 1990s is discussed. Improvement of IL in two decades (1970 and 1980) with an emphasis on the two researchers who have a clear effect on IL research, Carol Kuhlthau and Christine Bruce, are among the notable subjects of this chapter.

It seems that pay attention to political/social and situational context of IL learners is very important. So, “The institutionalizing of IL” is the title of next chapter, which emphasis the important aspect of institutionalizing of information literacy. Although the author of book point out the Tuminen et al (2005, 366), where they believe that: “the most important aspects of IL may be those that cannot be measured at the level of the individual alone.... Researchers and practitioners have imposed ‘invisible constraints; on IL by seeing it as comprised solely of individual cognitive skills” (p. 83).

In Part 2, the author of book have pay attention to “Reconstructing IL”. This part also includes four chapters. “Colonising IL” is the first chapter of this part. Nature of cognitive authority and its influence on IL is the main topic of this chapter.

The author tries to explain the key concepts in Bakhtin’s theories of communication and outlines their relevance for the study of IL in a chapter which is entitled: “Mikhail Bakhtin and IL”. The writer of book believes that “Bakhtin’s work shows definitively that information and communication, and the sociolinguistic structures which have evolved over time to shape them, are fundamental to human activity: hence, so is IL” (p. 147).

“Practicing IL” is the next chapter and a practice-based view of IL is the main object of it. The author describes that the need for a practice-based approach is pre assumption of this chapter.

The last chapter entitled “Reclaiming IL” in which the author tries to clarify the notion of Radical IL. Some of his key ideas in this chapter about the Radical IL are: “Radical IL seeks to counter these tendencies, wherever they may be found, and thus reclaim the political heart of IL” and “Radical IL is also a theory that suggests why change is difficult” and also, “Radical IL is not presented as a new ‘standard’ or rubric, nor as a form of assessment or, generally, some new approach which all IL teaching must hurry to adopt. Radical IL is already happening, and has been for millennia. It happens whenever the assumptions around which we base our learning and practice are called into question and scrutinized in democratic, participatory ways” (P.168). The author gives some empirical evidence of a radical approach to the teaching of IL.

Ultimately, the final part of the book contains bibliography and the index. This book has tried to open a new window to one of main topics in library and information science which includes radical approach to IL.. This work is highly recommended for those who tend to think and act on the sophisticated aspects and approaches of Information Literacy.

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