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Introduction for Informed Learning Applications: Insights from Research and Practice

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Introduction

Kim L. Ranger

Note: Pre-production copy for deposit into institutional repository. Introduction to *Informed Learning Applications: Insights from Research and Practice*. [2019] Emerald Publishing, Advances in Librarianship series.

I met Christine Bruce in 1999 during my first sabbatical to learn about information literacy while at Queensland University of Technology. While there, I read *The Seven Faces of Information Literacy* (1997) and had questions about putting the ideas into practice. After our appointment, I followed her subsequent work as well as that of related information literacy scholars. In 2016, I had been putting *Informed Learning* (2008) ideas into practice but lacked knowledge about the particular qualitative research method called phenomenography. I queried Dr. Bruce about the possibility of doing a project under her mentorship. While there was not time for a phenomenographic study in a single semester, she urged me to write a book about my work and suggested inviting others to contribute chapters. The project formed the basis for my 2017 sabbatical in the Information Science area of Queensland University of Technology's College of Science and Engineering, School of Information Systems.

Informed learning is “using information, creatively and reflectively, in order to learn” (Bruce 2008, p. viii), an approach to information literacy with a focus on learning disciplinary content while engaging reflectively with information, in academic, professional, or community contexts. Informed learning is the absorption of field-distinctive subject matter while at the same time using information successfully (Bruce 2008, p. 4).

Informed learning is still relatively new. Although a number of articles extend or address aspects of informed learning since Bruce's 2008 book of that title), there are currently only a handful of books that do so. Recent work includes *Information Experience: Approaches to Theory and Practice* (Bruce, Davis, Hughes, Partridge, and Stoodley, 2014), Andrew Whitworth's *Radical Information Literacy:*

Reclaiming the Political Heart of the IL Movement (2014), Information Literacy in the Workplace by Marc Forster (2017), and Clarence Maybee's IMPACT Learning: Librarians at the Forefront of Change in Higher Education (2018). This book, which illustrates collaboration by librarians and academic faculty to improve student learning, will contribute to the broader, global educational and library and information science discourse. The description of practice of informed learning within different disciplines fills a gap for educators from elementary to postgraduate levels. From classroom teachers to professors in higher education, instructors embrace collaborating with librarians to guide student learning in the disciplines. Teachers and librarians may come to understand the various forms of information in their fields, select and provide access to disciplinary information, guide and study information creation and meaning, facilitate the process of creating learning outcomes and goals, assess outcomes, and map information literacy across the curricula. Together we must give students authentic learning experiences that allow them to shape their lives, their professions, and their societies by becoming active citizens who negotiate for and maintain their intellectual and creative rights when they take their place in the workforce. Disseminating the results of these cross-disciplinary partnerships will help others improve their approaches to teaching and learning.

Each chapter is meant to create a clear connection to informed learning, define and emphasize a particular aspect of it, be suited to a practitioner audience, and be written with a tone that is professional and includes a mix of theory and practice. The authors use examples from Norway, Taiwan, the U.S., and the U.K. They represent educational partnerships from the elementary/primary school level to postgraduate higher education. Australia's representative and inspiration for the book, Bruce, emphasizes the significance of informed learning applications in her "Preface."

Chen and Chen lead the eight chapters with examples that combine the Big6 model, inquiry-based learning, and Bruce's informed learning approach in "The Six Frames in Schools: Practices from Taiwan." They have been using these in an instruction program for grades one to six to advance

information literacy in a Taiwanese school. The Chens present student projects as they report on several years of collaboration with classroom teachers.

In “Simultaneous Learning about Research and Filmmaking: Informed Learning and Research Guides,” Woods and Cummins collaborate to teach information literacy for a specific disciplinary course in higher education. They apply universal design for learning as they scaffold student-centered learning activities. Woods and Cummins describe using the subject guide aligned with informed learning principles to help undergraduate student filmmakers create well-researched documentaries.

Leek and Brown’s chapter, in addition to Tucker’s, address curriculum design. Tucker investigates postgraduate students’ experiences of using information in “Ways of Learning of Information Professionals: Concepts, Roles, and Strategies.” She blends informed learning with Meyer and Land’s threshold concepts to redesign master’s courses, and uses information experience to assess students’ transformed learning experiences and relationships with information.

Via “Beyond Information Literacy: Rethinking Approaches to the College Public Speaking Curriculum,” Leek and Brown stress the value of the deliberative dimension of informed learning experience in oral communication. They highlight the need to shift away from teaching sequential information skills to incorporating cyclical student reflections about how the students use information in order to learn about themselves as speakers, about their audience, or about the topic of their speech. Leek and Brown focus on communication curricula and speech centers, peer tutors, speech instructors, and librarians.

Ranger creates a new model, relational liaising, by applying Bakhtinian leadership principles to academic librarianship. Her examples primarily focus on communication-related library instruction combining informed learning and scholarly communication. Ranger builds upon Maybee’s work to describe specific activities and closes by calling for library and classroom faculty to collaborate in guiding students to transformative ways of thinking.

From Purdue University, Fundator and Maybee describe transforming the role of librarians in higher education to one similar to the educational developer. By partnering with teachers, academic librarians are able to shape student education by acting as “informed learning developers.” Fundator and Maybee give insights into ways librarians collaborate with instructors, applying scholarly literature to pedagogy, designing contextual learning experiences, and inviting faculty to reflect on goals and results.

The final two chapters are more theoretical. Cunningham examines selected findings from her recent phenomenographic study that capture the understanding of information literacy held across multiple stakeholder groups in an international school community. Using these findings, she revisits Bruce’s (2008) RACER framework as a compass to champion informed learning throughout an organization. The outcome is to offer a new blended approach to guide practitioners leading sustainable and future-focused information literacy education that represents stakeholders’ information literacy conceptions and perceptions of their information context. Cunningham uses this blended ‘beyond borders’ strategic approach to advance information literacy education for learners of all ages within the international education context and beyond.

“Power and Resistance in Informed Learning” focuses on the political sphere of learning. Whitworth and Webster find that postgraduate educational technology students’ resistance to power changes their information practices. Students push back against having their conversation observed in the traditional academic fashion within a course management system. By moving their discussion elsewhere, students exemplify transformed thinking about their information landscapes and authority; this informs how faculty design future learning activities.

I believe there is plenty of room for additional material, not only on this topic, but also in applying informed learning to library collections management, learning study, the growing impact of robotics on daily life, and most importantly, creating globally sustainable development and existence.