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Library Review

Developing People's Information Capabilities: Fostering Information Literacy in Educational, Workplace and Community Contexts, Edited by Mark Hepworth and Geoff Walton

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Mike Kmiec, Victoria University of Wellington Library

Developing People's Information Capabilities: Fostering Information Literacy in Educational, Workplace and Community Contexts is a fascinating read into the current research around the topic of information literacy.

Much has been written about information literacy since the term was coined by Paul Zurkowski in 1974, and along the way the field has borne some excellent research, as well as side disciplines such as media literacy and digital literacy. This book collects some of the more recent thinking on these topics, showcasing projects that attempt to quantify and qualify what we as information professionals mean by 'information literacy'.

The book is novel in two ways: first, the inclusion of research from across the world. Findings from the Asia-Pacific region, Africa and South America in addition to the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States provide evidence that all information professionals grapple with the challenges surrounding information literacy. The diversity explored here underscores how we are all facing the same sorts of vexations, no matter where our geographical location or who our community. The topics here are location- or context-specific, but in all cases, enough background is provided, allowing the reader a better understanding.

The second distinct factor of the book is how Sections II, III and IV cover several phases and aspects of information literacy and the transitions between them. Travelling from higher education to the importance of information literacy in the working world as well as the wider community gives the book a good flow, as the reader sees how these concepts can progress and morph into each other.

In a way, Section I - Strategic View - encapsulates the main message of the book. Only through active collaboration between information professionals and educators can people become properly engaged with the ideas behind information literacy, understanding and achieving the positive outcomes of lifelong learning.

This idea of the importance of engagement is throughout the book; one author calling the attitudinal aspects of people - their enthusiasm - for information literacy 'integral'. It is on this point that the book lets the reader down, as there are no real ideas on offer of how to overcome this potential obstacle. The book would have been helped by some examples of how this might be accomplished.

The exception to this is the chapter by Stephen Abram, *Workplace Information Literacy: It's Different*. Abram suggests methods by which information professionals can begin to work through the challenges of information literacy, or at least be able to better frame them by asking the right questions so then the work can begin. Abram's chapter also stands out because it is the least academically stylistic one in the book.

The topic of information literacy is a complex one, and the writing here is equally so. This comes as no surprise, as the book is Volume 8 of Emerald's Library and Information Science Series. The material can be quite dense, so not really suited to those seeking straightforward practical advice on how to better the information literacy for their own communities. The book also suffers a few minor typographical errors, and the lack of a comprehensive index - especially for such closely-related subject matter - seems an odd omission.

That said, Hepworth and Walton have done good work in collating an overview of the current state of information, media and digital literacy across the world. It won't necessarily help with the challenges within your community, but it may help you understand the bigger picture and the benefits of working across the various phases of lifelong learning.