
Only Connect is a unique, quirky, comprehensive and entertaining title that invites librarians, teachers and administrators to take a fresh look at the importance of relationships in the performance of the information-seeking role. It is a series of narratives about information journeys presented as an eclectic mix which varies in format, context, perspective and voice, writing styles and presentation, including textual chapters, conversations, debates, transcripts of social media, poetry, illustrative and graphic art presentations, cartoons, images, video or whatever else the author might have chosen. The text reviewed is the print version, but the electronic version is the default one, and both versions are released under the Creative Commons Licence.

The first pages of this title offer a ‘chatterbox’ pattern – the folded paper game played by children the world over (with instructions!). This is to suggest that chapters be read randomly rather than in sequence. This light-hearted approach belies the serious intent and content of each of the chapters. The chapters invite the reader to examine information-seeking practices which are divided into ‘mapmaking’ and ‘travelling’. Mapmaking includes the ‘fishscale of academicness’, an educational researcher’s journal, the information quest, the construction of literature reviews and other information journeys where a strategy may be used. Travelling might involve a virtual conversation, memories, documentaries, challenges to the professional perception of an unreliable narrator, and some unique and confronting information journeys.

Information literacy is about developing abilities and awareness to locate, organise, use and communicate information. In school libraries in particular there is a tendency to apply a fixed and static strategy or scaffold for research, but the authors who discuss this assert that information-seeking behaviour should not be independent of context and thus should not be bound by a fixed list of competencies that may negate opportunities for a richness and breadth of interactions. There may even be an important element of emotion in the journey, with a stage of uncertainty, disorientation and confusion which is important in development of a personal map for a successful journey: ‘travels and travails’ must be undertaken by the quester for deep and meaningful encounters with information.

One of the contributing authors asks whether the librarian is a guide, a gatekeeper or a barrier. Every librarian needs to consider this so that
information-seeking behaviour can be creative, experiential, diverse and transformative. Where there is a congruence of the seeker and the service, there is the chance of real potency in the learning outcomes.

This publication is dazzling in its stimulation. The fully researched base of many of the chapters and the first-hand experience of others together offer serious challenges to perceptions and practices of the information service role in public and educational libraries. This is a book to be read more than once and to be used for personal reflection.

Heather Fisher

New England Girls’ School