

Book Reviews

Collaborative Information Literacy Assessments: Strategies for Evaluating Teaching and Learning. Eds. Thomas P. Mackey and Trudi E. Jacobson. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2010. 242p. alk. paper, \$85 (ISBN 9781555706937). LC2009-045950.

The research and best practices in information literacy instruction indicate that instruction is more effective when embedded, integrated, and assessed within the context of the course curriculum. This pedagogical approach to library instruction requires close collaboration with teaching faculty, and it is these collaborative methods of information literacy assessment that Thomas P. Mackey and Trudi E. Jacobson address in their new book, *Collaborative Information Literacy Assessments: Strategies for Evaluating Teaching and Learning*. Editors Jacobson and Mackey are established experts in information literacy best practices, with two other books addressing related topics. Providing snapshots of librarian-faculty teams partnering to design and implement information literacy assessment practices, this book will appeal to instruction librarians looking for a practical and informative guide to collaborative assessment in action.

The book is organized into three disciplinary areas—Business, Social Science and Education, and Humanities—and each section contains two or three chapters. Mackey and Jacobson introduce each section with chapter summaries and practical suggestions for applying the collaborative approaches outlined in each chapter. Librarian-faculty teams author each chapter, and all chapters generally follow the same format: introduction, a literature review, a description of the institutional context, a description of the collaborative approach to information literacy assessment, assessment of the model, and a conclusion. Appen-

dices provide examples of the actual assessment tools, and tables throughout the chapters graphically depict assessment findings.

While the disciplinary approach to organization provides a useful framework for navigating the book, it is worth noting that the assessment models and tools described in each chapter case study have the potential to be adapted to just about any subject or setting. The techniques and approaches to assessment in this volume range from summative to formative, from multiple-choice knowledge tests to rubrics to student self-assessment of information literacy skills. And, as the editors contend, these models are indeed portable. In chapter 1, librarian Casey M. Long and professor of finance Milind M. Shrikhande describe the citation analysis assessment tool they developed for use in business classes. However, librarians and instructors in writing classes could also employ this assessment method, for example. Similarly, the information literacy self-assessment technique developed by librarian Leslie Bussert and professor of English Norm Pouliot for use in writing courses, discussed in chapter 6, could be adapted for use in business information literacy instruction.

Assessment of student learning is a topic of increasing importance in higher education, and many library instruction programs must provide evidence of learning in response to institutional initiatives and accrediting bodies. As information literacy becomes further integrated into college and university curricula and, in some cases, is institutionalized as a general education learning outcome, Jacobson and Mackey's volume will provide a necessary and valuable intervention for library instruction programs seeking straightforward and adaptable examples



of real-life assessment in practice. Instruction librarians and coordinators will find helpful assessment models to follow in this volume. The assessment tools described in this book are not necessarily new and different; rather, what differentiates this volume is how the assessment tools are used in faculty-librarian partnerships, so this book will especially be informative and practical for librarians seeking to partner with teaching faculty to enhance and assess information literacy learning. —*Maria T. Accardi, Indiana University Southeast.*

Julian Warner. *Human Information Retrieval.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010. 189p. alk. paper, \$35 (ISBN 9780262013444). LC2009-010120.

In *Human Information Retrieval*, Julian Warner, a faculty member in the Management School of Queen's University at Belfast with a long-standing interest in the intersection of humanistic and technological approaches to information systems, undertakes the ambitious project of rethinking the theoretical framework of information retrieval (IR). Judging traditional approaches to the topic as being overly limited in their concerns or based on theories insufficiently congruent to real-world practice, he seeks to develop a comprehensive perspective on IR that both acknowledges its human dimensions and gives a theoretically adequate account of currently dominant retrieval practices. Over the course of nine chapters, Warner unfolds this agenda by (1) outlining a new approach to IR centered around the concept of human labor and (2) articulating a rationale for full-text retrieval, which, in his view, is the characteristic modality of IR deployed in information technologies today.

After an introductory chapter, in which he carefully outlines the trajectory of argument for the book as a whole, Warner devotes three chapters to an explication of his labor-theoretic approach to IR. In his view, enhancement of *selection power*, defined as "the human ability to make

choices between objects or representations of objects," is the primary aim and core value of IR. Selection power depends upon *selection labor*, the mental work that goes into the processes of discriminating between objects and choosing between them. Although selection labor is an activity of the human mind, some of its processes can be supported by and, in part, transferred to information technologies. Such transfers are possible, in Warner's estimation, because these technologies are themselves the products of human labor and designed with specifically human purposes in mind: historically, there has been a tendency to delegate as many processes of human labor as possible to technological tools.

Selection labor can be further subdivided into two mutually exclusive types: description labor and search labor. *Description labor* is the material and mental work expended in "transforming objects (documents, images, or people) into searchable descriptions that will assist subsequent retrieval," whereas its converse, *search labor*, is the material and mental work spent in searching for objects in an information system. In a library setting, for example, the cataloger preparing (or modifying) a catalog record is engaging in description labor, while the user posing a query to an online catalog or a search of engine is involved in search labor.

Crosscutting the distinction between description labor and search labor is a further distinction between semantic and syntactic labor. *Semantic labor* is mental labor pertaining to the production and determination of meaning, while *syntactic labor* is mental labor used to carry out operations based on pattern matching and the manipulation of symbols. Both descriptive and search labor have semantic and syntactic components: for instance, the assignment of an index term to a document requires semantic description labor and the arrangement of a set of records into a series by the alphabetical order of their entry terms involves syntactic description labor, whereas translating a