This book focuses on the usefulness of alerting services for LIS professionals. It is a valuable and useful resource as it draws attention to the new and existing current awareness services which can be easily retrieved for updating ones information data banks. The availability of these services does not always mean that they are exploited for advancement of knowledge either by individuals or groups. This book provides a variety of definitions of current awareness services by several authors.

The book is divided into seven chapters, a detailed bibliography and an alphabetical index at the end. In the introductory chapter, the author explains about the need for alerting services and reasons why professionals must use these services. She describes how the challenges affect the professionals in their practice and how they can monitor such challenges through alerting services. For example, she says that there is a need for information professionals to understand their own information behaviour in order for them to make use of the alerting services to improve their knowledge generation.

In Chapter Two, the author explains the concepts of alerting services and the early development of current awareness services (CAS), and the rationale for offering these services. Chapter Three explains the relationship between the environment and the LIS professionals in practice, as well as LIS educators.

The variety of alerting services available for the benefit of LIS professionals are dealt with in the next chapter. The web site addresses provided can be used by novices for monitoring events, keeping track of trends and new research reports. Chapter Five describes in relative detail the information-seeking behaviour of LIS professionals and how this relates to the use of seeking and alerting services. The questions that can be asked are: (1) How do they try to meet their information needs (e.g. bridging the gap)? (2) What knowledge do they need and what do they know that will enable them to use alerting services successfully? (3) What barriers influence their use of alerting services?

The range of topics covered by the different chapters is quite diverse. This makes it a valuable resource for researchers and novice researchers who want an overview of current and alerting services.

The book not only gives a wealth of information on current awareness services both manual and web-based, but also provides detailed accounts of electronic newsletters, discussion lists, article alerting services, weblogs, as well as automated tracking tools. Much has been detailed about the positive aspects of alerting services without neglecting the details of the negative aspects of alerting services and how to deal with them. As seen from the background information provided about each alerting service, one is made to think of the benefits more than the disadvantages of using them. It is hoped that all LIS professionals would be able to relate to the issues discussed concerning alerting services and make greater use of them.

The book will be useful to LIS professionals but to academics and all those interested in keeping abreast with their research. It is very readable, providing valuable information that can be used to benchmark a library, as well as ideas on how to introduce the alerting services to students and staff.

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Information literacy for tertiary education students in Africa
Ayoku A Ojedokun
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So often when reviewing one feels the need to bewail the lack of locally-produced works that tackle the important topics covered by the text under discussion; “How sad”, one writes, “that this information cannot be produced in a form that reflects our circumstances!” As far as information literacy is concerned, there have been several introductory textbooks
produced by local authors which have been well-received and are in use as main readings for the training of professional information workers and for general information literacy courses. Dr Ayoku Ojedokun has used his wide experience at the Kenneth Dike Library of the University of Ibadan and the Library of the University of Botswana to produce a text that can safely be added to this number.

The task is not easy, as anyone teaching information literacy swiftly begins to understand. Although the principles of information literacy can be applied almost regardless of culture, its practice and the way it is presented need careful and thoughtful presentation, if students are to be alerted to local circumstances and not to be deterred by inappropriate examples and services. However, a sanitised and diluted version is also inappropriate: the problems we experience in Africa relating to information literacy are just as complex as elsewhere – and they are different. Encouraging students to discuss the issues and relate them to their communities and social structures is an important step if they are to emerge, not only exemplifying the skills of information literacy, but also capable of passing those skills on to others.

Ojedokun makes clear in his Preface that this book is intended for both working information professionals and students, and has the goal of equipping both for life-long learning. Each chapter is well-supported with references and review questions which have been carefully chosen to provoke discussion and to be largely "future-proof" – that is, they do not mention many examples of technologies that are likely to date quickly.

Chapter 1 considers what the concept “tertiary education” means within an African context, relating this to the knowledge economy and national development, innovation and the development of human resources. The problems of use of Information and Communication Technologies on the African continent are outlined – though, for a South African audience, one would have to add that whilst all of the problems identified apply here, they are not necessarily quite so severe. Nevertheless, the point is made: our access to these technologies is more limited, and certainly more expensive as a proportion of income, than most of the developed world.

The concepts of information and of information literacy are covered in Chapters 2 and 3. Bearing in mind the intended audience and the way in which this text is planned to be used, the author has wisely chosen not to use an epistemological approach but to ground the discussion in practical examples and simple definitions. It would have been useful, however, to have included suggestions for further reading which could have embraced some of these more reflective approaches – The philosophy, politics and economics of information, by Professor Archie Dick (UNISA Press, 2002), for example. In discussing information literacy, Ojedokun identifies one of the key problems of the field: what is meant by the “literacy” concept in this context? He uses the Shapiro and Hughes (Shapiro, Hughes 1996) model, which develops a taxonomy of seven “literacies” and highlights the way in which information literacy skills are now heavily involved with most aspects of curriculum development. This is a good choice, since the approach provides a systematic structure for developing information literacy programmes and also provides scope for discussion. The “Big Six” (Eisenberg, Johnson 2002) steps of information literacy skills – Task Definition, Information-Seeking Strategies, Location and Access, Use of Information, Synthesis and Evaluation (TILUSE) – are then fully-explored in ways that will be helpful to those developing information literacy curricula and to those learning the skills and wanting a reason for their development. Examples using the African context accompany each step.

Chapters 4 and 5 provide a framework for understanding the different types of information source, their uses and means of gaining access to them. The conventional “primary”, “secondary” and “tertiary” framework is used and there is coverage of the importance of “grey” literature, non-book and electronic sources and people, as well as the more familiar sources. In a revised edition, it would be desirable to explore more fully the concept of people and the community as an information source, especially in the context of oral cultures. This could provide valuable case-studies on the need for verification and the effect of social organisation on patterns of transmission and belief.

Information search strategies and their development are described in Chapter 6, following a conventional study sequence (preparation, query formulation and so on). The astute teacher will want to expand considerably the points made about definition and understanding of search terms and to illustrate the problems inherent in the use of both controlled vocabularies and natural language. The author provides a table of search tools that includes several sources including types other than search engines, which is expanded and explained further in Chapter 7. The author cautions against the unthinking use of search engines when it would be more appropriate to use a structured search tool such as a Subject-Based Information Gateway (SBIG) or Virtual Library; however he asserts that “Search engines are currently the best means of finding information from the web” (page 104). This is certainly contentious and hardly coheres with the need for further reading which could have embraced some of these more reflective approaches. Evaluation is a key factor in selecting information sources to use. Chapter 8 provides a rationale and criteria for this task, following the usual conventions of coverage, currency and so on. The process of evaluating of web pages is supported by a useful table but the neophyte will need further assistance to understand the difficulty posed by the “free-form” structure of many web pages. A brief discussion of metadata – and how to view it – would be a useful addition.
The discussion of copyright (Chapter 9) is brief but will provide an adequate foundation if due care is taken in teaching to discuss legislation relevant to the local jurisdiction. Chapter 10 introduces the concept of citation and avoidance of plagiarism, providing clear examples of footnoting and endnoting styles; in particular, the use of the American Psychological Association, the Modern Language Association and the Harvard author-date system is illustrated in some detail.

The book concludes with a brief overview of the chapter review questions, a glossary of terms, an appendix of common Internet error messages and a skeletal index of twenty-nine entries. One hopes that a revised edition will include an adequate index, at least as an example of the importance of such devices in ordering our complex information world.

There are occasional "typos" (e.g. "Vein" for "Venn" on page 86, "cashes" for "caches" on page 88). Several of the web addresses provided in the references are out-of-date.

This text is largely to be welcomed. Used by a confident and competent instructor it will provide a largely-satisfactory adjunct to a course on information literacy; used for self-instruction it will provide a solid base for understanding.

References


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Libraries and Google®

Eds. William Miller and Rita M Pellen
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Wherever librarians gather, brows furrow as the vexed question of Google is raised. Whilst its services are regarded with great favour by many users – and not a few librarians – the profession remains cautious and sceptical. Rightly so, because our training and experience should make us distrust any “one stop” solution to the complex problems of searching for information.

The topic of this collection of papers is interesting and highly relevant because it encapsulates many issues that managers of library services are confronting with funding agencies. We are living in changed circumstances where some of our deepest professional beliefs are being challenged: could it be that a university, for example, could design a campus without including a library? This is rumoured to have happened in the United States and we are probably all aware of comments within the communities we serve, calling into question the need for our services in the “Google Age”.

William Miller introduces the volume with a thoughtful overview of its contents. For this reviewer, the most provoking point he makes is that Google declined the opportunity to add a paper: “We have to face the fact that libraries are small potatoes in the Google universe. It will not accommodate itself to us; we will have to come to terms with it” (p. 4). My hackles are raised by this, especially as one recalls the hubris of the recent “dot.commers” with their confident predictions. I do not think we should abandon the insights that research on information-seeking has had to offer just yet. He goes on to comment, very sensibly, that we do need to explore and understand the Google phenomenon: whilst Google is not “the enemy”, it is too soon to embrace it without question.

Mark Sandler continues this theme with a brief history of Google’s digitisation project, aiming to identify the reasons for the project and the responses and motivations of those libraries entering into partnership with it and those who are waiting to see what happens. A disturbing factor is that few partner libraries have made the contractual details of the arrangements public – thus, it is difficult to assess the implications and to consider appropriate responses. In a telling phrase he captures the essence of one of the problems: “Google is all about scale, not tailored services. They are the Wal-

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