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Book Review

Baker, K. 2013. *Information literacy and cultural heritage.* Cambridge: Chandos Publishing. 198 pp. ISBN: 978-1-84334-720-0 £47.50. Pbk

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This is a useful, well-written book that presents an interesting synthesis of information literacy (IL) (as a field of library, or information, science), and cultural heritage, positing a framework for teaching IL skills and cultural heritage awareness.

The emphasis on digital curation and preservation is especially thoughtful – the author addresses the issue that 'access' goes far beyond making content accessible online, and also notes that digital preservation alone does not secure access to content over the long term, as other studies have noted in raising the wider issue of the distinction between technical and intellectual sustainability that must not be neglected (Denbo et al 2008). Similarly, studies have shown that putting digital cultural heritage content online does not necessarily ensure access (Warwick 2008).The book therefore provides a welcome approach to understanding wider issues of access to cultural heritage collections, and I would not hesitate to recommend it to colleagues interested in a deeper understanding of these issues.

The book comprises six chapters and a conclusion. Chapter 1 explores the topic of cultural heritage in the context of museums, libraries, and archives, defining and mapping this complex domain into a generic model for critical analysis. This chapter notes that libraries could learn from museums and archives regarding issues of contested memory and identity in cultural heritage. Chapter 2 addresses cultural heritage within digital information contexts, including an overview of digital cultural heritage and the new modalities and mediation it affords. There is an interesting discussion of preserving cultural heritage through digital media, raising issues of authenticity through the instability of the medium. These themes have been addressed by John Ippolito through the variable media context which developed approaches to the curation of work in ephemeral formats (Variable Media Initiative 2014, see Resources), and by Neil Silberman (2008) in the field of public heritage interpretation and presentation. Their work would make an interesting compliment to some of the issues raised in this section of Baker's book. The chapter also addresses, in a good degree of detail, issues of the digital divide, and ways in which the digital can exacerbate contested histories.

Chapter 3 presents a rigorous overview of existing models of IL processes in the library context, and will be very useful to students in information studies. Chapter 4 explores the learning outcomes that can be delivered by IL, especially critical thinking, as part of a continuum of lifelong learning. These outcomes are explored with direct reference to cultural heritage examples, and this chapter presents the key justification for the books central aim, the development of a model of IL and cultural heritage for lifelong learning, in a convincing fashion. Chapter 5 proposes a generic model for this, incorporating a helpful consideration of different perspectives and learning styles. Chapter 6 presents a set of guidelines and tasks that can be used by those implementing the model locally, incorporating local collections, constraints and communities. The conclusion summarises the earlier findings and notes the broad

applicability of the model in developing combined lifelong learning programmes, teaching both IL skills and awareness of cultural heritage.

Overall, the book is a helpful overview of cultural heritage in the museum, library and archive context, and discusses intelligently important social, intellectual, political and practice-led issues raised in the new context of digital information in these organisations. The generic Model of Information Literacy and Cultural Heritage for Lifelong Learning model proposed by this book, and the guidelines for adapting it locally, will be helpful to many audiences and disparate communities of practice navigating this complex terrain.

Information Literacy and Cultural Heritage explores this landscape, and covers perspectives from museums, archives and libraries, highlighting the role of memory and contested history in the collection, description and presentation of cultural heritage. The book argues that the convergence of libraries, archives and museums in digital preservation should be extended to include the development of combined lifelong learning programmes, teaching both IL skills and awareness of cultural heritage.

The book proposes a closer allegiance between libraries, museums and archives around cultural heritage and IL, and provides some examples of collaboration and indeed convergence, including the portals EUScreen and Europeana. This is certainly to be welcomed, but certainly in the field of digital humanities and digital collections, the boundaries between the different types of institutions are less inflexible than was once the case, and the reader could certainly look to the work of initiatives like the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organisations (ADHO), especially work presented at the Association's annual international conferences, to see examples of hybrid practice and convergence across institutions around the digital representation of cultural heritage content (See Resources). Similarly, the European Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities (DARIAH) is bringing together cultural heritage practitioners from a range of organisations in order to discuss the creation, management and use of digital content as part of a shared infrastructure. (See Resources)

The book would be useful for researchers and students in information science departments, staff and managers in cultural heritage institutions, especially librarians, archivists, and museum scientists. It will also be of particular interest to lifelong learners and those engaged in continuing professional development in the cultural heritage sector, as the philosophical debate that it presents will be of interest to those who have practical experience of delivery of cultural heritage in the digital age.

This review relates to the paperback version. An ebook version is also available: 978-1-78063-386-2

Resources

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