

Secker, J. (2010). Book Review Secker, J. 2010. Book Review of Welsh, T.S., and Wright, M. 2010. Information Literacy in the Digital Age: an evidence based approach. Cambridge: Chandos. Journal of Information Literacy, 4(2), pp. 103-104.



**CITY UNIVERSITY  
LONDON**

[City Research Online](#)

**Original citation:** Secker, J. (2010). Book Review Secker, J. 2010. Book Review of Welsh, T.S., and Wright, M. 2010. Information Literacy in the Digital Age: an evidence based approach. Cambridge: Chandos. Journal of Information Literacy, 4(2), pp. 103-104.

**Permanent City Research Online URL:** <http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/17595/>

### **Copyright & reuse**

City University London has developed City Research Online so that its users may access the research outputs of City University London's staff. Copyright © and Moral Rights for this paper are retained by the individual author(s) and/ or other copyright holders. All material in City Research Online is checked for eligibility for copyright before being made available in the live archive. URLs from City Research Online may be freely distributed and linked to from other web pages.

### **Versions of research**

The version in City Research Online may differ from the final published version. Users are advised to check the Permanent City Research Online URL above for the status of the paper.

### **Enquiries**

If you have any enquiries about any aspect of City Research Online, or if you wish to make contact with the author(s) of this paper, please email the team at [publications@city.ac.uk](mailto:publications@city.ac.uk).

# Journal of Information Literacy

ISSN 1750-5968

Volume 4 Issue 2

December 2010

## Book Review

Secker, J. 2010. Book Review of Welsh, T.S., and Wright, M. 2010. *Information Literacy in the Digital Age: an evidence based approach*. Cambridge: Chandos. *Journal of information literacy*, 4(2), pp 103-104. <http://ojs.lboro.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JIL/article/view/BR-V4-I2-2010-5>

**Copyright for the article content resides with the authors, and copyright for the publication layout resides with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Information Literacy Group. These Copyright holders have agreed that this article should be available on Open Access.**

“By 'open access' to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.”

Chan, L. et al 2002. *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> [Retrieved 22 January 2007].

**Welsh, T.S., and Wright, M. 2010. *Information Literacy in the Digital Age: an evidence based approach*. Cambridge: Chandos. Xvii, 218pp. ISBN 9781843345152. £47. Pbk.**

**Jane Secker, Learning Technology Librarian, London School of Economics.  
Email: J.Secker@lse.ac.uk.**

This book examines both familiar literacies (computer, media, and network literacy) and less familiar literacies (ethical, government and financial literacy). Nicely illustrated and containing practical exercises, the book also contains four appendices, three of which take the form of research papers on information literacy.

Chapter one introduces the authors' model of information literacy, a definition using the DIKW (data, information, knowledge and wisdom) hierarchy, and explores what recent research tells us about information literacy and the importance of being information literate in the digital age.

Chapter two examines cultural literacy, defined as understanding one's history and background. It covers the development of an oral tradition, early language and alphabets. Though interesting in itself, it isn't made explicit how cultural literacy relates to information literacy.

Chapters three and four look at library literacy. I was surprised to find a brief history of libraries through the ages, from Babylonian libraries, through the Middle Ages to modern libraries. Chapter four, subtitled "information sources, classification systems", looks at types of information sources (primary and secondary sources, reference sources, etc.) before discussing classification systems such as the Dewey Decimal System. At this point I began questioning who might read this book other than librarians.

Chapter five looks at ethical literacy, including scholarly communication and publication, the academic code of conduct, copyright and plagiarism issues. The exercises in this chapter might be useful examples to use in teaching students about academic writing and plagiarism as they show how original paragraphs have been paraphrased.

Until now the "digital age" aspect hadn't featured; however, chapters six, seven and eight look at database searching, the internet, and computer literacy. The chapter on database searching provides definitions of bibliographic and full text databases, and covers basic principles of choosing and searching databases (Boolean logic, phrase searching, etc.). It also looks at evaluating information sources and provides useful example exercises. The computer literacy chapter is a historical overview of the development of computers, hardware and software and binary code. Chapter eight examines the internet and is again historical and descriptive in its approach. For those who like to pepper their information literacy sessions with anecdotes this book is a mine of information and also covers Web 2.0 and the semantic web.

Chapter nine examines media and visual literacy, and is something of a hotch-potch of topics. While the concept of media literacy is fairly well established, this chapter barely scratches the surface. It concentrates on old and new media (termed "e-media"), before discussing computer-mediated communication and providing guidance on how to write effective emails. The chapter goes on to examine visual literacy, giving us an overview of good and bad design, spatial analysis, digital multimedia collections and free online books. The exercises here range from using email to creating a blog using Blogger to basic HTML coding. It also covers how to find and save images from the web and how to create a podcast.

Chapter ten examines what it terms “government literacy”. As a chapter of five pages (including exercises and references) it can only offer an extremely broad examination of governments around the world, starting with Mesopotamia before racing through the origins of democracy in ancient Greece, the Roman Republic, the influence of the Magna Carta and (somewhat bizarrely) the Freemasons. The two examples of governments presented are a constitutional monarchy (Great Britain) and a constitutional federal republic (USA).

Chapter eleven addresses financial literacy. It defines this term and discusses some recent research findings that show levels of financial literacy amongst high school seniors are low. Two further issues are then discussed – credit reports and compound interest. It concludes with a list of additional resources and three exercises but is another very short chapter.

The final chapter stands alone and describes how to write a research paper. Although it is short, it provides useful guidance on topics like selecting your topic, grammar, and the format of a research paper. The chapter concludes with one page of top tips on evaluating information from the web which, while useful, might have been better suited to chapter eight.

Overall I was disappointed with this book, despite finding it readable, as I wasn’t sure who it was aimed at. Librarians will find some of the information fairly basic, yet for someone new to information literacy it lacks the required depth. I also wasn’t convinced it represented an evidence-based approach, despite the exercises in each chapter and the research papers in the appendices. One of my biggest criticisms is the lack of signposting – I was often left wondering where the book was going next, and was unsure how the appendices fitted into the book. I also thought that both the introduction and conclusion could have been expanded.