

Book Reviews



"All That Glitters: Prospecting for Information in the Changing Library World. Eds. Steven Vincent and Sue K. Norman. Stamford, Conn.: JAI Pr. (Foundations of Library and Information Science, v. 44), 1999. 186p. \$82.50 (ISBN 0-7623-0602-5). LC 99-047314.

This volume grew out of a 1997 ALA poster session on methods for teaching library users to evaluate information found on the Web. Following the editors' introduction are nine full-length essays and a section called "Exercises," consisting of five shorter pieces. The volume also features nine light-hearted cartoons drawn by Kappa Waugh. Regrettably, the unevenness of the essays requires the reader to do the same "sifting down to the gold" process with this book that students must learn if they are to become effective researchers.

First, the good news. Several essays are thought provoking and describe class sessions, in-class exercises, or worksheets that instruction librarians can adapt. Steve Black, whose article, "Obstacles to Teaching Novice Researchers How to Evaluate the Quality of Web Resources," explains that students may lack sufficient background knowledge, particularly in fields new to them. The time it takes students to read a source and assess its quality, particularly at the median reading rate of college freshmen, also may be a barrier. Students' critical thinking skills may be far less developed than faculty would hope. Black recommends that faculty limit the number of "open" Web sites students can use for assignments, require students to use high-quality sources, give them criteria for assessing quality, and show them examples of high-quality versus inferior sources.

Carol Doyle and Janet Martorana, in "Evaluation Workout," recommend evaluating Web resources by the same basic criteria used for other sources. They describe in detail the Web evaluation exercises used in their quarter-long course and one-shot

presentations at the University of California, Berkeley. Their examples are usefully arranged and labeled by type of skill, such as "using domain type as an evaluation tool" and "comparing information retrieved from the Web vs. a journal database."

Trudi E. Jacobson describes two Web evaluation sessions used at the University of Albany. One session uses a fake, librarian-created Web page containing a pseudo-bibliography on Internet addiction. The second uses an exercise in which students compare and evaluate selected Web and print sources on the same topics.

Dan Ream's essay on using tabloid literature describes some interesting, well-designed assignments used in a quarter-long course taught collaboratively by instructors from the University of Tennessee's undergraduate library and its library science program. Students examine a tabloid article on Buffalo Bill Cody, which describes him as effeminate and undeserving of his tough-guy reputation, then compare it to an article from a reference book. Next, they look at a tabloid article, "Vampirism Can Be Inherited," first researching in biographical sources both the article's author and the experts he cites. Then, they compare the tabloid article's factual statements to a *Newsweek* article on the topic published a few weeks after the tabloid article.

Particularly intriguing is Natasha Cooper's "Anderer Eye Test" exercise. Developed for an introductory nursing course in which students are required to read numerous recent journal articles, it uses the analogy of an eye exam: "Which is better?" Cooper begins the instruction session by showing a transparency of an eye chart, first out of focus and then in focus. She asks students to begin thinking of library sources in a similar way—"Which is likely to be more helpful to

me?" The exercise has students choose the more useful item from pairings of citations from search results—for instance, popular and scholarly; appropriate length and too short; dated and current; off target due to keyword searching and on target due to controlled vocabulary searching. An interesting extension would be to have students take notes on the criteria they use in choosing from each pair, then rework the notes into an evaluation checklist to use with database searches.

Now the bad news. This collection's usefulness is marred by the editors' insufficient attention to conceptualizing the volume and, in some cases, to readying the essays for publication. The essays show a good deal of repetition of content. Seven of the fifteen include discussions and/or checklists of (very similar) criteria for evaluating Web sites. Several duplicate discussion of how the publishing process and library selection practices ensure that library users find high-quality information sources, whereas the Web generally leaves judgments of quality entirely to the user. The space taken up by this repetition could have been better used by selecting articles with more varied approaches to the topic or by asking the authors to replace the repetitious content.

Also disconcerting is the fact that four articles either read like transcripts of instruction sessions (explaining, for instance, how search engines work and how Web pages are constructed) or shift points of view, confusingly and without warning, between "talking to librarians" and "talking to students." One transcript/essay would have been enough to serve as a model of the tone, examples, and analogies that could be used in an instruction session on evaluating Web sources.

Two essays contain stylistic flaws, numerous grammatical errors, and rambling, unfocused prose. They simply were not ready for print. One example of the errors the editors allowed to creep in is this sentence fragment: "Librarians Crawford and Gorman, Oberman, and Stoll, though not a librarian but one of the pioneers in the online world who has

joined the librarians in concern about the Internet." Another lapse is the editors' description of the book's final section as "exercises used by librarians in teaching Web evaluation in various settings." Surprisingly, only one of the five exercises deals directly with teaching about Web resources. The first one, in fact, deals almost exclusively with printed maps and atlases. The problems mentioned above are so numerous and noticeable that this volume, especially at the price of \$82.50, cannot be recommended as a first-order purchase.—*Glenn Ellen Starr Stilling, Appalachian State University.*

The Digital Library: Challenges and Solutions for the New Millennium; Proceedings of an International Conference Held in Bologna, Italy, June 1999. Eds. Pauline Connolly and Denis Reidy. Wetherby, Eng.: IFLA, 1999. 201p. £20 (ISBN 0953243974).

The Digital Library: Challenges and Solutions for the New Millennium includes most of the papers presented at an international conference in Bologna, Italy, in 1999. The conference was organized by the British Library, the British Council, and the Italian associations of librarians and documentalists. The table of contents and the abstract for each paper are presented in both English and Italian. The proceedings are divided into six sections: copyright, electronic publishing, practical case studies, standards and protocols, projects, and electronic document delivery.

Brian Lang, chief executive of the British Library, points out that "there has been an enormous increase in the demand for documents and information to be supplied in electronic format generally and in digital format in particular. The digital library holds challenges ..." The first challenge addressed was copyright. An Italian legal consultant addresses the new problems raised by electronic works and provides several guidelines for negotiating agreements for information provided via technology; a British librarian describes the new opportunities that copyright of electronic documents offers for finding balance