Guest Editorial

Australian Information Education Symposium

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The *Australian Information Education Symposium* was held in Adelaide, Australia on June 24th 2012. This was the first national event that brought together educators within the information professions to enable open critical discourse and development around information education teaching and learning. Information educators at all levels (vocational education and higher education) and supporting all facets of the profession – libraries, archives, information and knowledge management, records, schools, museums – were invited to come and share their ideas, explore best practice, develop their teaching scholarship, and collaborate with others.

The symposium took place in direct response to the recommendations from the final report of the *Re-conceptualising and re-positioning Australian library and information science education for the 21st century* project [1]. This project was funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council and involved 11 institutions representing university and vocational information education in Australia. It sought to establish a consolidated and holistic picture of the Australian library and information profession, and identify how its future education and training could be mediated in a cohesive and sustainable manner. The project established a *Framework for the Education of the Information Professions* in Australia that provides a set of strategic recommendations that will inform future directions of Australian LIS education. This national project represented a bold move within Australian LIS education, and provided a unique opportunity for LIS educators across Australia to collectively unite in order to 'future-proof' education for future generations of LIS professionals.

This special issue provides six papers presented at the Symposium. Barbara Combes and Mary Carroll open the discussion by exploring the eLearning experiences of current LIS students and recent graduates across both the higher education and vocational education sectors in Australia. Their work reveals that while the majority of LIS students who are studying online are satisfied with their course content, concerns exist in regard to the online delivery mode. Consequently, Australia's LIS course providers need to recognise the different teaching-learning paradigms inherent in the online environment; and they need to be proactive in working with students to further enhance the eLearning environments offered.

The challenges of implementing eLearning within LIS education are further explored by Leonie Ellis and Jo-Anne Keller. They provide a candid discussion on the design and delivery of an undergraduate subject in which an individual ePortfolio was submitted as a component of a group assessment task. Their ongoing project

will ultimately identify best practices in using ePortfolios to improve student learning experiences, achieve intended learning outcomes, and ensure transparent and fair allocation of grades to students. Deirdre Wilmott also focuses on assessment, through a critical discussion of the use of cloud applications in the assessment practices at the University of Ballarat. The students who elected to use the cloud applications available for the subject's assessment tasks reported higher levels of engagement and satisfaction with course outcomes in contrast to the students who chose the traditional (offline) or course management system-only assessment. Of particular note was the continued participation by students in cloud-based forums beyond the conclusion of the assessment and the subject.

Sue Reynolds, Bernadette Welch and Mary Carroll provide a conceptual paper exploring the use of passion based learning in postgraduate LIS education at RMIT. Student learning environments have been developed to facilitate the acquisition of short-term employability skills for the industry as well as allowing students to connect more deeply with the rich and diverse culture of their new profession and wider LIS community. The authors challenge our thinking in regards the role or purpose of LIS education, suggesting that it should focus less on 'learning to do' and more on 'learning to be'. This view of learning is continued by Hilary Hughes and Christine Bruce, from the Queensland University of Technology, who introduce the concept of informed learning; a pedagogical construct grounded in both information and learning theory. Informed learning is about using information to learn where information is understood to be anything that informs in a particular context. Drawing upon three subject taught at within QUT's LIS and teacher librarianship degrees they explore the use of informed learning to provide a theoretical framework for developing reflective, inquiry-focused curriculum. By preparing graduates who use information flexibly, critically, ethically and creatively for responsible and socially aware problem solving and decision making, informed learning responds to the needs of the LIS profession.

Daniela Nastasie concludes the special issue by presenting a critical discussion on the synergy between research, teaching and practice within the Australia LIS discipline. The discussion paper notes that all three areas of the LIS discipline must be developed in its own right and needs to support and interact with the other areas on a profound level and in a consistent manner. The paper calls on Australia's LIS discipline to be more effective in making this happen.

The Symposium provided a forum for Australia's LIS educators to engage with research and practice in teaching and learning, and to engage with each other on teaching and learning topics. The Symposium provided a new opportunity to profile scholarship in teaching, which, as Daniela Nastasie identifies, is important for the development of the discipline. While this was the first Australian Information Education Symposium, we do not expect it to be the last. The Symposium will become an annual event on the Australian information sectors' calendar.

Reference

[1] H. Partridge, J. Hanisch, H. Hughes, M. Henninger, M. Carroll, B. Combes, P. Genoni, S. Reynolds, K. Tanner, S. Burford, L. Ellis, P. Hider and C. Yates, Re-conceptualising and re-positioning Australian library and information science education for the 21st century [Final Report 2011]. Australian Learning and Teaching Council, Sydney, NSW. Available: http://eprints.qut.edu.au/46915/.