Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

Feature Editorial

The 8th International Evidence Based Library and Information Practice Conference (EBLIP8): Special Issue and Reflections

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The 8th International Evidence Based Library and Information Practice Conference (EBLIP8) was held in Brisbane, Australia on July 6-8, 2015. The conference theme "Evidence and practice: Working together" reflected our focus on narrowing the gap between practice and evidence, and in promoting evidence based practice in all parts of the information profession.

Evidence based library and information practice (EBLIP), once based on the medical paradigm, is changing and evolving. We are developing practices and processes particular to the library and information profession and reconfiguring the traditional evidence-based philosophy to suit individual circumstances and locations. Collaboration across institutions and sectors is fundamental to learning through sharing experiences, publication of quality research

results, and a sustainable and connected EBLIP community.

Over 175 delegates attended EBLIP8 from 12 countries: Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Doha, Hong Kong, Malaysia, United States of America, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, United Kingdom and Cameroon. The conference provided a rich and diverse array of experiences; it included 3 keynote addresses, 27 paper presentations, 17 posters, 1 panel session, and 6 workshops. Topics were many and varied, with evidence based practice being critically explored in the context of big data, decision making, information literacy, leadership, open access, and website design. The full conference program is available at http://eblip8.info/program. The conference is an excellent opportunity to network, and EBLIP8 organizers ensured there were plenty of opportunities for delegates to meet colleagues

from around the world with a welcome reception, conference dinner, and a farewell reception.

This special issue begins with reflections by Suzanne Lewis and Virginia Wilson on the challenges and opportunities in being a solo practitioner of evidence based library and information practice. They remind us that the possibilities are endless. Eight of the papers that were presented at the conference follow this editorial. The papers present eight perspectives on evidence based practice and its application within the library and information profession.

Sarah Hayman opens the discussion by acknowledging the important role that effective literature searching has in supporting evidence based practice. The paper outlines the development and evaluation of Smart Searching, a free, self-paced online resource to help librarians to apply an evidence based approach to their own searching practice. Mary Somerville and Niki Chatzipanagiotou note that contemporary organisations must develop workplace environments that enable nimble decision-making and action taking provide a critical discussion of Informed Systems, and have contributed a theoretically grounded approach to support evidence based library and information practice. Matthew Kelly describes the development of a methodology for subject based collection analysis for public libraries. He suggests that the methodology has the potential to improve the practice of collection development by linking subjective decision making with a scientifically based approach to managing knowledge resources.

Claudia Davies and Richard Vankoningsveld outline how evidence based practice has been used at Legal Aid Queensland to make decisions around the future training needs and activities of library clients. Their training needs analysis involving a blend of qualitative and quantitative evidence enabled the refinement of training activities to more closely align with client needs and organisational objectives. Anna Hare and

Wendy Abbott explore the models of indigenous support programs in Australian academic libraries and how they align with the needs of the students they support. Evidence gathered through focus groups and an online questionnaire was used to establish empirically informed recommendations on how academic libraries could improve Indigenous student support. Sandy Rae and Margaret Hunn discuss the design of Research and Writing for Business Students, an online resource for first year students. The positive impact of the resource on student success was demonstrated by the gathering of evidence informed by the Five Senses of Success Framework.

Gillian Hallam and Robyn Ellard report on a study examining the skills requirements of staff across public libraries in the Australian state of Victoria. They used interviews, focus groups and questionnaires to collect evidence on the current skills, and to anticipate future requirements, for the public library workforce. They conclude that research should stimulate debate between practitioners, educators, and professional associations about the future direction of library and information education with the goal of ensuring a strong future for the sector. Ellen Forsyth, Cameron Morley, and Kate O'Grady discuss how the State Library of New South Wales established the Public Library Network Research Committee in 2002. Recognising the lack of research about public libraries in New South Wales, the Committee had input into identifying, recommending, and implementing research projects that will help advance public libraries. The authors discuss the committee's approach of using evidence to inform practice for the long-term benefit to public libraries.

The special issue concludes with commentaries and reflections by four conference delegates. A big thank you to Ruby Warren, Megan Fitzgibbons, Kristie Jones, and Brenda Strachan for sharing their invaluable insights.

An international conference relies on many people contributing their time and energy. EBLIP8 could not have happened without the members of the local organising committee and the international program committee, as well as the student volunteers and session chairs.

We also warmly thank our sponsors who helped make this event possible: University of Saskatchewan's Centre for Evidence Based Library and Information Practice; Charles Sturt University's School of Information Studies; Queensland University of Technology's Information Studies Group; State Library of New South Wales; University of Southern Queensland; State Library of Queensland; Queensland University of Technology Library Services; University of Queensland Library Services; and Elsevier.

The call for expressions of interest to host EBLIP9 went out recently, with the location to be announced early 2016. I hope to see you at EBLIP9!