Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

Using *EBLIP* to Prepare Future Information Professionals

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As a library and information studies (LIS) educator for many years, my goal has always been to send students out into the workforce well prepared to take on leadership roles as information professionals. To this end, I aim to develop their skills in the areas of critical thinking and problem solving. To support this aim, I rely on the principles of evidence-based practice to bring real-life examples into class discussions, whether based on my own experience and research or on appropriate sources in the research literature. By basing learning on lessons drawn from actual practice, students can better understand the range of options that may be available to them in terms of solutions to a particular problem. This approach is particularly useful in the areas in which I teach—the design and evaluation of information services in organizations.

As we know, evidence based practice provides a structured approach to addressing critical decisions by basing the proposed responses on the best available research in the field. It has been my privilege and pleasure for the past two years to be part of the editorial team that helps to bring much of this relevant research to the field through articles published in the journal of *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice (EBLIP)*. As an associate editor for articles, I have the opportunity of seeing manuscripts describing important research conducted around the world in settings as disparate as high tech research university libraries and low tech rural communities. Each of the manuscripts that is accepted for publication in *EBLIP* provides some special insight into library and information practices throughout the field, and each article can be used by others in the field as a basis for their own research and practice.

In my introductory course on basic research methods, where I used *EBLIP* articles extensively as required readings, I tried to cultivate in my students an understanding of the critical research skills required by information professionals to perform successfully in today's (and tomorrow's) competitive job market. Using evidence based practice as a framework for identifying and articulating the issues to be studied or the problems to be solved helps students to think systematically about the environment in which they are functioning and the needs of the users whom they are serving. Articles published in *EBLIP* provide examples of different research designs that can be applied in a wide range of settings.

The coming generations of students will see changes in the work place in regard to the acquisition, organization, access, preservation, and use of information that we can only begin to envisage; our role as educators is to provide these students with the tools that will allow them to respond nimbly to the changes in our environment that are bound to occur. Many of these tools will, and should, rely on lessons learned from others in the field, and *EBLIP* plays a key role in disseminating these important lessons.