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Citation:

Wilson, JL (2014) Book Review of Heine, C. and O'Connor, D. 2014. Teaching information fluency: how to teach students to be efficient, ethical and critical information consumers. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 8 (1). ISSN 1750-5968 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11645/8.1.1898>

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# Journal of Information Literacy

ISSN 1750-5968

Volume 8 Issue 1

June 2014

## Book Review

Wilson, J. 2014. Book Review of Heine, C. and O'Connor, D. 2014. *Teaching information fluency: how to teach students to be efficient, ethical and critical information consumers*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 8(1), pp.104-105.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11645/8.1.1898>

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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].

**Heine, C. and O'Connor, D. 2014. *Teaching information fluency: how to teach students to be efficient, ethical and critical information consumers*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press. 230 pp. ISBN 978-0810890626. £33.46. Pbk.**

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“When change is constant, the ability to locate and select reliable and relevant digital information is essential” (p.165). Is there a risk in the near future of a digital Dark Ages, a time of information without illumination, where mistrust and fear will rule over the World Wide Web? Hacking and fraudulent behaviour online manages to make fools of big businesses, individuals and even whole financial systems, and the question of who to believe and trust is becoming more complex as people do more, and live more, digitally. In academia there is an opportunity to address this, to help students become discerning consumers, and to develop a sense of responsibility and ownership of trustworthy information sources.

Heine & O'Connor's *Teaching Information Fluency* focuses on the relationship between technology, information and the consumer by exploring how confidence and ability appear to have little relation with one another; the assumption is that if you can use Facebook then you can use the internet. *Teaching Information Fluency* goes one step further than many textbooks on the subject to explore the complex relationship searchers have with information when they use the internet, namely that printed text comes from authority and must be believed. The structure of the book is clear and simple. Divided into only five parts, it concisely works through the elements of digital information, approaches to searching, ethical use of information and finally instructional applications.

*Teaching Information Fluency* does what it sets out to do. It provides background, theory and practical exercises to help teach students to become information fluent. In concise, engaging language it discusses the emergence of the information age and how this has shaped the relationship between ‘searcher’ and ‘information’. In this book there are some satisfying arguments as to why we search and consume information the way we do; this helps considerably when thinking about how to correct these behaviours, and the exercises are concrete, measurable and stimulating. The exercises are based on direct observations and clear theoretical arguments, and allow adaptation to suit different subjects and interactions.

This book is pleasurable to read, the style is easy and engaging, and would be suited to students, practising instructors and tutors alike. I must admit to expecting to learn nothing new from this book; I like to think I actively keep up to date. However, I found the clever observations of human behaviour translated into real exercises very interesting. Typically, books on the subject are full of theory, or exercises which can quickly date, or are just not engaging enough. I think this book has considerably more staying power due to the way it links well-observed behaviours with clear and easy exercises that enable the students to see their assumptions made false.

Reading this book from the point of view of teaching undergraduates in the UK, I found the exercise levels pitched at high school students to be ideal. The assumption that students have the necessary skills for university has the potential to undermine a student's ability to achieve. It is understood that many undergraduates do not have the adequate information skills required for this level of study, yet these skills are now expected of them in all areas of their life. From exercises

exploring humorous online myths through to offensive or disturbing misleading content, this book has a wide selection of exercises to suit different subject and user group needs.

Making reference to a choice of excellent industry services, from social media services like Delicious and Scoop.it, through to leading authorities like JSTOR and TED talks, and less on subscription services, makes this resource more readily accessible, and easier to adapt than certain others on this subject. Though the text leans to the new American framework of Common Core Standards, which focuses on English and maths competencies at pre-college level, it does not detract from the message to any other audience, rather it confirms that competencies in the major subjects requires underpinning with information skills training. This book recommends “blending search challenges with other instruction” (p.174) to ensure a strong context which gives meaning. All too often information instruction is an add-on, and again this book strengthens the argument for information skills to be valued beside the subject, not in addition to them.

In conclusion, this book is excellent value for money, is stimulating and pleasing to read, and is written in support of tutors’ and instructors’ attempts to embed information skills training as beneficial to the future of the internet, and their students’ continuing participation in the digital world.