

10-22-2012

University Libraries and Digital Learning Environments

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Recommended Citation

Jorgensen, R. (2012). University Libraries and Digital Learning Environments. *Urban Library Journal*, 18 (1). Retrieved from <http://academicworks.cuny.edu/ulj/vol18/iss1/6>

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Dale, P., Beard, J., & Holland, M. (Eds.). (2011). *University libraries and digital learning environments*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate. 278 pp. ISBN 978-0-7546-7957-8. \$114.95.

In some ways, the need for academic librarians to remain “up to date” within the area of digital tools (including databases, productivity software, and electronic infrastructure such as content management systems) is a double-edged sword: Maintaining current knowledge is essential, but the resources a librarian uses for professional development (monographs, journal articles, etc.) cannot keep up with the rate of change. *University Libraries and Digital Learning Environments* is a valiant attempt at providing such necessary information.

This edited work contains 16 chapters on such topics as the impact of digital tools on physical library space, the effect of such tools on reading, the problems created by the need to teach new tools to patrons, and the impact on information literacy and scholarly communication, to name a few. Most of the research focuses upon higher education institutions in the United Kingdom; some chapters present a mix of geographical areas with an emphasis on English-speaking countries, the United States and Australia being the most prevalent secondary geographical subject areas.

A wide range of rhetorical styles is represented in this collection. Some of the chapters are, in essence, extended literature reviews and, as such, are helpful in providing comprehensive overviews of the subject. Chapters 5 and 6 provide reports of original research—about the creation of learning environments and spaces within libraries and the use of chat/IM in reference services, respectively. While each study had a small research population, the results echo what has been found in similar research studies performed in the United States—specifically, that creating, staffing, and maintaining these services is not as easy as it appears. These findings may provide solace to librarians in the United States who are attempting to implement such programs in their libraries.

Three chapters cover subjects that are particularly timely. Chapters 8 and 9 take on the subject of institutional repositories; chapter 8 provides a concise overview of the theoretical basis for and the history of institutional repositories in the United Kingdom, while chapter 9 reports on two case studies of successful IR implementations. Again, these chapters focus upon institutions in the United Kingdom, but their content can be applied to these endeavors in the United States. Chapter 11 discusses the issues that surround remote delivery of resources to students of Further Education Institutions, which are similar to American community colleges. The increasing number of distance programs at the community college, undergraduate, and graduate levels in the United States makes this a timely article. It takes a valuable multifaceted view, discussing the issue from the

student's perspective as well as that of the librarian and addressing the particular needs of disabled students who will need remote access to library resources.

Much has been written on the “digital library” since the advent of computer-based library tools and resources, and much more will be written as these resources continue to evolve rapidly. But, because of the rushing pace of technological change, it can be difficult to publish timely research; this is the primary fault of *University Libraries and Digital Learning Environments*. Nevertheless, the chapters that treat the subject in a more general way will be useful for library science students as a means to ground discussion of digital library services; these chapters would be good additions to curricula focusing on academic librarianship. For practitioners, the extended discussions of current and previous scholarship will continue to provide a useful resource in preparation for implementing digital library services.

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