Praise for *The Academic Teaching Librarian's Handbook*

'Claire McGuinness' *The Academic Teaching Librarian's Handbook* is a timely and substantive contribution as we face rapid changes in the publishing and scholarly communication environment. While library instruction was once about basic information literacy for students, now we must also include topics such as research data management, research integrity and research evaluation, to name a few, and involve a wider audience including researchers at different career stages. The role of librarians as teachers, advocates and leaders is well described and discussed in this book. I would recommend every librarian has it on their shelf as you are sure to need it from time to time!'
Dr Lai Ma, University College Dublin.

'This inspiring publication is an essential resource for academic teaching librarians and students on professional LIS programmes, offering comprehensive guidance to those library and information professionals engaged in teaching from a theoretical and practical perspective.

The publication will enhance the professional skill set amongst academic teaching librarians and the critical insights it provides will encourage the practitioner to engage in reflective self-development and reassess the role of the teaching librarian as they harness the opportunities and possibilities provided by an array of digital technologies.

This timely book offers significant value for professional librarians who teach, providing them with the latest research and best practice in teaching, and a distinctive wealth of knowledge and expertise which will revitalise and empower them as teaching librarians in an ever-changing information services environment.'
Philip Russell, Deputy Librarian, Technological University of Dublin

The Academic Teaching Librarian's Handbook

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The Academic Teaching Librarian's Handbook

Claire McGuinness

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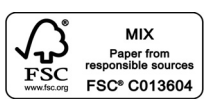

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Introduction

For academic teaching librarians, the world has changed radically in the past two decades. The shifting technological and educational landscapes have not only brought opportunities and challenges, but have also called into question the assumptions, practices and frameworks that were once the foundation of information literacy instruction and constituted the basis for articulating and communicating the librarian's teaching role. While we may have gained greater status and acceptance as educators in our institutions (Cowan, 2014), and reflective practice and expression has given us a deeper appreciation of the nature and purpose of our role (Corrall, 2017), we find that our responsibilities and role expectations are in a constant state of flux. We understand ourselves perhaps better than ever before; however, this understanding also demands a closer, more forensic examination of our role and purpose, and several authors and practitioners have begun to question some of the basic principles of our practice that were previously considered immutable. A good example of this type of questioning is found in Julien's article 'Beyond the Hyperbole: information literacy reconsidered', in which she challenged the 'immense burdens that we have placed on the term information literacy (and its synonyms)' by equating it with 'sustainable human development, participatory civic societies, sustainable world peace, freedom, democracy, good governance, and fostering of intercultural knowledge and mutual understanding' (Julien, 2016, 126). Her contention was that, although 'we see ourselves at the forefront of these great goals when the notion of information literacy is invoked' (p. 127), the goals are beyond the means of what is achievable by librarians working alone. Ultimately, she proposed a reappraisal of our role in relation to the facilitation and promotion of information literacy in different contexts: 'Above all, what is needed is a sense of perspective. Information literacy is not a silver bullet to slay the world's ills, nor sufficient to achieve all of humankind's loftiest goals, but it is an important goal, and should remain on our practice and advocacy agendas' (p. 130). Articles like this suggest a conceptual rebalancing that may

seem at odds with the goals for information literacy and the role of librarians that were established in influential, high-level documents, such as the *Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning* (Garner, 2006), and the report of the Information Literacy Meeting of Experts (Thompson, 2003), otherwise known as the Prague Declaration. These manifestos set a high bar for us as teaching librarians, aligning our work with human rights, economic prosperity, competitive advantage and the 'social, cultural and economic development of nations and communities, institutions and individuals in the 21st century and beyond' (Thompson, 2003, 1).

Cowan also challenged the status quo, but from a different perspective; her starting point was that academic librarians have now 'won the battle' to embed information literacy in higher education, and she claimed that 'information literacy as an educational practice is perhaps the most profound evidence of success in the modern academic library. It is evidence of an assertion of relevance that still has potent force at academic institutions' (Cowan, 2014, 27). She contended that as teaching librarians, our focus is now 'almost entirely on the day-to-day work of "doing" information literacy', and we are 'in all senses completely in the thick of it' (p. 27). Cowan's concern was not that we have gone about things the wrong way, or have aimed too high; rather, it was that in claiming information literacy primarily as a *library* function and under the jurisdiction of librarians, we are missing (or ignoring) the opportunity to safeguard it for the future, which we could do by reframing it to fit the changing educational landscape and by relinquishing some of our 'turf' to other stakeholders in our institutions:

> Information literacy is alive and well. And should be. But perhaps not by that name, and perhaps not in the hands – at least not mostly in the hands – of librarians. Information literacy must, like so many other library services, enter the educational commons, in the sense of a collaborative network of pedagogies and practices that crosses internal and external institutional boundaries and has no 'home' because it lives in no one place.
>
> (Cowan, 2014, 30)

So, where do we find ourselves now? They are just two examples of how the academic teaching librarian's role is currently under review, and it gives us pause for thought as we move forward. It is interesting to examine these challenges in relation to the recent history of academic teaching librarianship. Just a decade ago, it appeared that the information literacy movement had achieved one of the highest forms of recognition with the United States *Presidential Proclamation*, which was issued to launch 'National Information Literacy Awareness Month' during October 2009. In it, the then US President

Obama called upon the people of the USA 'to recognize the important role information plays in our daily lives and appreciate the need for a greater understanding of its impact'. In Europe, large-scale national initiatives, such as the UK-based Scottish and Welsh National Information Literacy frameworks, were helping to advance the agenda through a combination of research, lobbying and outreach, and international organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) expressed support for the continued development and promotion of information literacy at the highest levels. Alongside this public recognition, the teaching role of the academic librarian continued to evolve, both conceptually and in the day-to-day details of professional practice (McGuinness, 2011). While the overall view was positive and progressive, some research studies and anecdotal accounts suggested a degree of uncertainty and anxiety among practitioners regarding this aspect of their work (Davis, 2007). For instance, Julien and Genuis highlighted this in their study where they noted, 'while instructional work is important, librarians are *not universally accepting* of their instructional roles. Previous research suggests ambivalence, and sometimes hostility, towards instruction' (Julien and Genuis, 2009, 927). A strong emergent theme during this time was the lack of formal pedagogical training available to librarians to prepare them for teaching work in their institutions (Walter, 2006; 2008), as well as the ongoing debate about the nature and extent of knowledge and skill required by librarians to be effective teachers. The question of collaboration with faculty and other institutional stakeholders to embed information literacy into academic curricula and programmes also loomed large in discussions of the librarian's teaching role. During this period, the increasingly teaching-oriented role of academic libraries in response to changes in the educational landscape was viewed as a paradigm shift:

> In the area of student learning, academic libraries are in the middle of a paradigm shift. In the past, academic libraries functioned primarily as information repositories; now they are becoming learning enterprises . . . This shift requires academic librarians to embed library services and resources in the teaching and learning activities of their institutions . . . In the new paradigm, librarians focus on information skills, not information access . . . ; they think like educators, not service providers.
>
> (ACRL, 2010, 37)

However, the dependence of librarians on 'one-shot' information literacy sessions within academic programmes was frequently identified as a barrier to effective curriculum-integrated teaching, and a source of frustration for

librarians (Zai, 2015). A small number of qualitative studies at the time had also begun to explore academic librarians' subjective experiences of teaching and teacher identity, and to identify the issues and challenges that affected their sense of self-efficacy and confidence in relation to their teaching work (Walter, 2008; Julien and Pecoskie, 2009; Julien and Genuis, 2009; 2011). In 2015, Vassilakaki and Moniarou-Papaconstantinou published a comprehensive account of the core themes and issues affecting the development and perception of academic librarians' teaching roles over this period in their systematic review of emerging roles for LIS professionals. They identified the 'Librarian as Teacher' as one of six main roles for LIS professionals, with the observation that 'the role of librarians as educators is proving to be more important than ever' (Vassilakaki and Moniarou-Papaconstantinou, 2015, 37). Their analysis also identified several significant factors reported as affecting or impeding academic librarians' teaching work, including:

- academics' disagreement and the misconceptions of information professionals acting as partners in the learning process
- the need for the academics and librarians' roles to be clarified to build working relationships
- the need for effective collaboration among the two groups
- the confidence that collaboration should extend from personal to institutional level
- the need for time commitment for teaching preparation and work
- the librarians' knowledge to assume teaching responsibilities, and the level of required pedagogical knowledge
- the way the librarians develop this knowledge and how it contributes to their teaching activities
- the need for LIS professionals to expand their professional expertise and obtain knowledge in pedagogy within the framework of LIS education.

(Vassilakaki and Moniarou-Papaconstantinou, 2015, 41)

Ariew's historical account also provided a succinct overview of the status of teaching librarianship as it stood during this period, and affirmed the issues of institutional support, pedagogical approaches and teacher identity that were highlighted by Vassilakaki and Moniarou-Papaconstantinou:

> the role of the teaching library was not quite on solid ground in the early part of the 21st century; it was still subject to the politics of administrative support, somewhat ambivalent attitudes towards the role of academic librarians, a lack of understanding about the teaching mission of the academic library, and a

> disagreement about what content should be taught by librarians, if indeed they were teaching at all
>
> (Ariew, 2014, 216)

So, as we enter the third decade of the 21st century, it is time to reflect. How have the changes of the past 20 years affected our practice – and what are the important issues and trends which exert the most powerful influence on the academic teaching librarian's role today? These are the principal questions at the core of this book, which seeks to provide a reflective framework for developing, enhancing and above all, *enjoying* your career as an academic teaching librarian, regardless of your starting point.

Who should read this book?

This book is relevant for all academic library professionals, including students on professional LIS programmes, who wish to pursue an instructional role in their work and to develop this aspect of their professional lives in a holistic way throughout their careers. It is suitable for early-career professionals at the start of their teaching journey, as well as mid- and late-career librarians who may have moved into managerial roles, and who wish to advance their teaching role to the next level. The theme of reflective practice runs throughout the book, and readers are free to use the various exercises as much or as little as they choose. It is also a useful resource for LIS instructors who teach courses on instructional skills for information professionals.

Overall, the book has four key objectives:

1. To provide a comprehensive resource on teaching and professional development for an audience which includes LIS students, LIS instructors and practising information professionals at all careers stages.
2. To explore the current landscape of teaching librarianship, and highlight and discuss the important developments, issues, and trends that are shaping current and future practice.
3. To examine the roles and responsibilities of the academic teaching librarian in the digital era, and explore the essential areas of development, skill and knowledge that will empower current and future teaching librarians to perform well in these roles.
4. To inspire prospective and current teaching librarians to adopt a broad conception of the role that goes beyond the basic idea of classroom-based teaching, and to give them practical tools to engage in personal development and career planning in this area.

The content is presented in two parts. The first, which covers Chapters 1–3, focuses on **Constructing the academic teaching librarian** and addresses the early stages of choosing to follow a teaching pathway in your career and developing your sense of professional identity, as you reflect on the role, consider the issues shaping it, and plan for the future. To set the scene, Chapter 1 explores the landscape of academic teaching librarianship and identifies six critical issues with the potential to disrupt and reshape the role of the academic teaching librarian as we currently experience it. Chapter 2 invites you to reflect on what it means to be, and to become, an academic teaching librarian through considering how professional identity is constructed, how 'teacher identity' is formed, and what roles and responsibilities are associated with the role of academic teaching librarian. It also explores the contribution of reflective practice to identity formation and gives you an opportunity to develop a personal teaching philosophy statement, which captures the beliefs, values and motivators that influence and shape your approach to teaching. Chapter 3 encourages you to explore your suitability for an academic teaching librarian role by reflecting on your career aspirations and the professional choices you can make that will align with your own values, attributes and goals. It also provides some practical tools for career planning and professional development, as well as a teaching portfolio template for you to document and showcase your instructional work.

The second part, covering Chapters 4–6, focuses on **Excelling as an academic teaching librarian**, and covers the areas of practice and professional development you might expect to encounter as you progress further in your career. Chapter 4 zeroes in on the transformative potential of digital learning within higher education and explores the impact of recent technologies on pedagogical practice, student engagement, instructional design and the work of academic teaching librarians. The Digital Learning Knowledge Domains model presented in this chapter offers a framework for you to develop an enhanced understanding of yourself in relation to the use of technology in facilitating student learning. Chapter 5 turns to the managerial and strategic aspects of academic teaching librarianship and invites you to reflect on leadership and co-ordination in the context of your work, as well as consider how an institutional culture conducive to information literacy might be fostered in your workplace. It also explores the personal and professional benefits of participating in the wider community of academic teaching librarians. In Chapter 6 the concept of advocacy as it relates to the role of academic teaching librarians is considered, and you are encouraged to reflect on how you might develop this aspect of your professional identity. Practical strategies for advocacy are discussed, and a specific focus on writing for academic publication brings this book full circle, as you reflect on how you

might choose to write about your own experiences for publication in the future.

Rather than present basic teaching skills, competences, and methods which are very effectively covered elsewhere (e.g. Grassian and Kaplowitz, 2009; Booth, 2011; Blanchett, Powis and Webb, 2012), the focus of this book is on professional self-development and reflection – understanding and constructing your identity as an academic teaching librarian, as you move in and out of different roles and responsibilities during your career. This sense of identity is partly shaped by the informational, educational and professional landscapes in which you operate, and by the trends, conceptual shifts and breakthroughs which lead to the most profound changes in thinking and practice. Sometimes these changes feel organic – other times, it seems as though they are imposed by external forces. Either way, it is our responses to these changes – individual, institutional and global – that determine how our role will develop and evolve. The first step begins with reflection and understanding. Each chapter contains 'personal reflection points', reflective pauses and exercises at various stages, which you can use as helpful prompts to guide your individual reflection, or as starting points for wider group discussions or debates.