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Developing Mental Models in the Digital Age: An Information Perspective

By Alan Rosling & Kate Littlemore

Changes within the structure, culture and emphasis of Higher Education within the UK have had a direct impact upon the roles of librarians and information specialists. We are no-longer 'just' librarians. We are seen as another source of information, support and guidance in relation to assessment and research. We are now teachers, with teaching qualifications and busy teaching schedules. This status begs certain questions though in the digital age: How well are our students able to make use of the digital resources we provide, and how, as teachers, do we in fact teach information literacy skills in the digital setting? We will outline the culture and ethos at the University of Northampton and the nature of the students that we encounter directly and indirectly. We will also seek to link together issues surrounding information literacy, how librarians teach and the mental models that students have in relation to digital libraries and online research. A greater understanding of mental models by librarians will further inform our teaching and ultimately improve the learning of students, and hence, their experiences within the digital library.