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### Carolyn Gamtso and Patricia Halpin travel to Ireland

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## Carolyn Gamtso and Patricia Halpin

**Carolyn B. Gamtso, Associate Professor/Reference & Instruction Librarian at UNH Manchester ~ Ireland**  
**Patricia A. Halpin, Assistant Professor of Biology at UNH Manchester ~ Ireland**

In August 2014, we travelled together to Limerick, Republic of Ireland to participate jointly in a panel discussion at the Information Literacy Section Satellite Meeting of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) World Library and Information Congress. Hosted by the Limerick Institute of Technology, the conference's theme was "[Facing the Future: Librarians and Information Literacy in a Changing Landscape](#)." The topics discussed and debated (information literacy and social media; information literacy as a "meta-literacy"; information literacy and distance learning) relate directly to conversations our UNH Manchester colleagues are having about how best to teach our students the transferable critical thinking skills they will need both as members of the workforce and members of their communities. We were very excited to have our presentation proposal accepted at this competitive conference. Our presentation was an opportunity for us to share our teaching practices and our research with an international audience of librarians and educators. It was also a chance to meet and network with colleagues from around the world, colleagues who, like us, are dedicated to developing students' information fluency in an environment of constant technological change. Our trip was generously funded by the UNH Center for International Education, the UNH Manchester Humanities Division, the UNH Manchester Science & Technology Division, and the UNH Manchester Deans & Chairs.



Carolyn Gamtso (l.) and Patricia Halpin (r.) at King John's Castle in Limerick, Ireland

Our current research into student learning and information literacy in an online environment is the result of years of successful classroom collaboration. We have worked together to provide research instruction to non-science majors in selected biological sciences classes at University of New Hampshire Manchester, offering library instruction to students in Diseases of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (BSCI 421) and in Biotechnology and Society (BSCI 422). In partnership with the UNH Manchester Library Instruction Team (including Information Literacy Specialist Rachel Blair Vogt), we have designed in-class library instruction and online learning tools, as well as homework assignments aimed at developing non-science majors' information literacy (IL) skills. Through an array of innovative technologies and pedagogical models, we have sought to engage non-science majors in the scientific discourse and to encourage them to access and assess reputable online science materials. We have worked with students in both hybrid and online courses.

In spring and summer 2014, Prof. Halpin taught two sections of Diseases of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, one an accelerated 8-week hybrid class and one a 5-week online class. The two courses provided us with the chance to assess the information literacy skill level of non-science majors and to explore the effects of various online library instruction pedagogies on their information seeking strategies. We sought to determine the ways in which the IL curriculum for non-science majors in Diseases of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century effectively meets established IL goals and to identify areas for improvement.

Our presentation at the IFLA Information Literacy Satellite Meeting in Limerick reported on the positive results of our study and reflected on its implications for library distance learning

initiatives. Entitled "Tailoring Library Instruction for Non-Science Majors Taking Hybrid and Online Science Classes," our talk discussed how we use tools such as screencasts (short online films), Twitter discussions, electronic homework assignments, and "embedded librarianship" (point-of-need, personalized research assistance from a class-linked librarian) to offer information literacy instruction and support to students in an online academic environment. We were very excited to join panelists from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Singapore Management University, and Oslo Norwegian Business School in discussing student learning outcomes at our various universities.

Our IFLA conference attendance provided us with ample and various opportunities to discuss teaching and assessment strategies with librarians from all over the world. From the "meet-and-greet" at Limerick's historic Nancy Blake's pub, to formal keynote addresses and conference panel discussions, to the music-and-dance-enhanced conference dinner, we made new connections with international educators who were eager to exchange ideas and expertise. We also forged new research relationships: several of the librarians we met in Ireland are interested in partnering with us on future research projects. Our trip to Limerick was a professionally stimulating experience, as well as a warm and welcoming visit to a beautiful country. We are very thankful to the CIE, the UNH Manchester Humanities Division, the UNH Manchester Science & Technology Divisions, and the UNH Manchester Deans & Chairs for providing us with such a rich opportunity for international engagement.



Patricia Halpin (l) and Carolyn Gamtso (r) at Nancy Blake's Pub



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