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Library Review #2
LI822XI

In researching my first submission for the three library review assignments, I grew somewhat concerned at the possibility that the library whose program I'd chosen to examine (in terms of its capacity to support the development of multiple literacies in teens)—the Seattle Public Library—represented some sort of metaliteracy “pinnacle” of public library systems in the United States. And though I never came across any statements from the SPL system making such a claim nor did I find necessarily flattering or laudatory quotes (regarding metaliteracy) from external sources, it may yet be true that Seattle's in-house programs are generally regarded by some or many as being the best (or among the best) supporter and promoter of metaliteracy. As far as libraries promoting multiple literacies through *online* programs, however, I think one would find it difficult to find a library that offers a more comprehensive selection of such resources to its adult patrons than the subject of my second submission, the Los Angeles Public Library system.

From the front page of the library's website (<https://www.lapl.org/>), it's not readily apparent that the online resources they provide patrons (for becoming “metaliterate” or for the further enrichment of preexisting metaliteracies) are necessarily exceptional. The “Online Learning” button located at the left margin is just one of thirteen such links, all of which seem equally unremarkable. It's near the bottom of this list—below such website sections as Veterans Resources, Teens, Kids & Parents, New Americans (for immigrants), Health Matters, Jobs & Money, etc. (These latter two would seem to be geared toward supporting *health literacy* and *finance literacy*, and they certainly do, but following these links reveals they're intended mainly to list and summarize the tangible resources on these subjects which are accessible through the library as well as face-to-face classes offered at many or most of the system's seventy-three branches—very few online resources are mentioned.)

In one sense, this speaks to the (extraordinarily considerable) volume of services and resources offered and hosted by the LAPL system as there's a huge amount of information behind each of these links; none of them is necessarily more significant or substantial in terms of quality or quantity of content than any other, and so it's almost necessary (or inevitable) that none of these links is afforded any extra visual prominence than others. But from another angle, it's a bit unfortunate that the links themselves just aren't very eye-catching at all—they seem almost “built-in” to the left-hand margin and effectively camouflaged (which, in my opinion, conveys a lesser degree of importance than the items that take up the main body of the page--community news items, blog posts, announcements, upcoming events, “What We're Reading,” etc.), and they're entirely uniform in their very dull, light-gray-on-dark-gray appearance. The front page of the site could *really* use a redesign so as to communicate more effectively the significance and sheer vastness of material to

which the links connect—not to mention the pride members of the staff very likely feel by offering all of this information.

The “Online Learning” section is perhaps the most impressive offering of the site (which is clearly fortunate since this review’s focus is the promotion of metaliteracy for adults through online programs). Web-based adult courses essential to receiving an introductory exposure to *numerous* literacies can be accessed through the LAPL’s website, as can subsequent courses that offer continued development for those at intermediate levels, and advanced coursework for yet further refinement of specific knowledge and skills. Some of the many metaliteracies supported are evident in the names of the categories by which all of these courses are arranged, which include (but are by *no* means limited to) Accounting and Finance, Technology, Personal Development, Law and Legal, Healthcare and Medical, Computer Applications, Teaching and Education, and several others.

Should one follow the links for any of these categories, they will likely be shocked at just how substantial and comprehensive the content to which they have free access is. To use one such category as an example, the amount of coursework offered under the Business category is so vast that (just as the classes of all the other categories are) it's sectioned into subcategories. The classes under the Business Communication and General Business Skills subcategories deal primarily with introductory topics and feature such classes as "Effective Business Writing," "Building Teams That Work," and "Administrative Assistant Fundamentals." Other subcategories (of the Business category) serving to delineate and organize the considerably large collections of courses include Grant Writing, Management and Leadership, Project Management, Sales and Marketing, Starting Your Own Business, and Business Software, among several others. Examining the list of courses under specifically the Business Software subcategory—which is certainly one of the more sizable collections under the Business heading—reveals a total of *forty-five* courses offered to LAPL card-carrying adults.

The sheer mountain of instructor-led coursework (tailored specifically for the purpose of developing in adults myriad valuable literacies) that the Los Angeles Public Library system provides its patrons—free of charge—is pretty astounding. But what I find *truly* amazing is that this review barely scratches the surface; I've outlined just one of the several educational content sources (each of which is among the leaders in this industry) the LAPL offers its patrons. It's rather clear, I think, that the huge conglomeration of communities served by the LAPL have been given exceptional metaliteracy-cultivating power, and much of this power exists by virtue of the LAPL giving them not one but several options in terms of the source (provider) of their online educational coursework and content.