Barbara Allen’s new book on library training certainly lives up to its title by avoiding much of the jargon which can infiltrate works of this kind. Of the headings included I only failed to recognise (or had possibly forgotten) one concept with which I should have been familiar. Somehow the theory of ‘blended learning’ had become unfamiliar to me, although it is carefully defined in Chapter 7 as the bringing together of online and face-to-face interaction.

Blended learning is one of the key themes to this guide, since most of the training in libraries involves use of the latest technologies available. The danger is that technologies don’t remain new for very long. After only a year or two QR codes already feel slightly outmoded for instance.

For many students using the library is a means to an end. That end is getting good grades, a good degree qualification and ultimately a good job. In a sense this has made things both easier and harder for librarians to justify their existence. We know that academics value our worth (or at least hope they do), but there are blurred lines about where or support overlaps with other kinds of study support equally responsible for improving grades. There are almost as many enquiries for an academic librarian these days about paraphrasing and particularly referencing, as there are about searching.

The book seems to be mainly aimed at the academic market, and from personal experience I cannot remember receiving inductions or training in a public library setting. There is however scope for one-to-one sessions with individuals joining a public library, and wanting to make best use of the resources offered. It was many years before I discovered for example that the local town library held local cemetery records on CD ROM. If I had declared local history as part of my interests in joining this could have formed a valuable part of my induction.

I enjoyed this book’s use of case studies, and particularly the way different types of training are recommended for different learners. The Cephalonia method for example is advocated as a way of getting interaction from shy or introverted students. Students are given prompt cards with questions to ask about learning resources. These are they answered by library staff. We find this to be the case with large groups of international students who at an early stage of their course may not know each other well. It’s also a good way to get students to practice public speaking skills.

I was shocked, however, to find that the method was pioneered at Cardiff University, and merely borrowed its Greek name from tourist inductions.