

Can Librarians Ignore Information Literacy: a Review

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Abstract:

In the present rapid advances in information technology, greater pressure has been placed on academic libraries and teaching faculty to incorporate information literacy skills into their function. Although these skills have been taught for decades, the principles and concepts of information literacy have taken newly as they are increasingly seen as essential. This article argues that to reach the goals of creating a generation of truly information-literate students, academic librarians need to perform the leadership role. With their multidisciplinary understanding of technology and information management, in addition to their deep understanding of the issues and commitment to the cause, librarians are at a distinct advantage. A discussion of best practices, followed by many case studies of institutions where libraries have developed very different and innovative approaches to reach faculty and students, and an evaluation of the literature on information literacy have demonstrated why libraries are uniquely situated to ensuring that the critical thinking and evaluative skills of students are developed and become an integral part of their learning environment. It is therefore not possible for academic librarians to ignore Information Literacy.

Key words: Information Literacy (IL), Library management, Information technology, National Forum on Information Literacy (NFIL), American Association of School Libraries (AASL), American Library Association (ALA).

The beginning of the 21st century has been called the Information Age because of the explosion of information output

and information sources. It has become increasingly clear that scholars cannot learn everything they need to know in their field of study in a few years of institution. Information literacy equips them with the critical skills necessary to become independent lifelong learners. And Information literacy is a survival skill in the Information Age. Information literacy (IL) is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the required information [1].

Information literacy is also important in the contemporary environment of rapid technological change and proliferating information resources. Because of the complexity of this environment, individuals are faced with diverse, abundant information choices - in their studies, at the workplace, and in their personal lives. Information is available through libraries, community resources, special interest organizations, media, and the Internet and, increasingly, information comes to users in unfiltered formats, raising questions about its authenticity, validity, and reliability. In addition, information is available through multiple media, of graphical, aural, and textual, and these pose new challenges for individuals in evaluating and understanding it. The uncertain quality and expanding quantity of information pose large challenges for society. The sheer abundance of information will not in itself create a more informed citizenry without a complementary cluster of abilities necessary to use information effectively.

It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning.

Definition

To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information. Producing such a citizenry will require that schools and colleges appreciate and integrate the concept of information literacy into their learning programs and that they play a leadership role in equipping individuals and institutions to take advantage of the opportunities inherent within the information society [2]. (American Library Association, Presidential Committee on Information literacy, Final Report, January 10, 1089).

Each institution should foster optimal use of its learning resources through strategies designed to help students develop information literacy - the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information in order to become independent learners. It is essential to have an active and continuing program of library orientation and instruction in accessing information, developed collaboratively and supported actively by faculty, librarians, academic deans, and other information providers [3]. (Commission on Higher Education; Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education; Standards for Accreditation*. 1994 edition)

Information Literacy and Higher Education

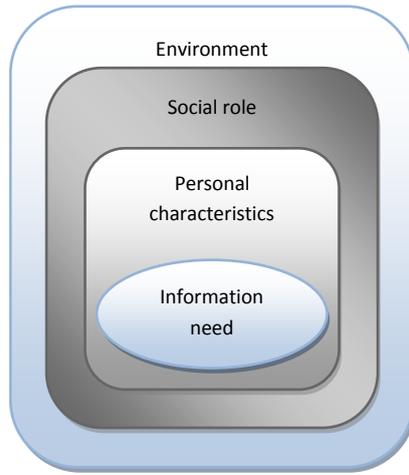
Developing lifelong learners is central to the mission of higher education institutions. By ensuring that individuals have the intellectual abilities of reasoning and critical thinking, and by helping them construct a framework for learning how to learn, colleges and universities provide the foundation for continued growth throughout their careers, as well as in their roles as informed citizens and members of communities. Information literacy is a key component of, and contributor to, lifelong learning. Information literacy competency extends learning

beyond formal classroom settings and provides practice with self-directed investigations as individuals move into all arenas of life. Because information literacy augments students' competency with evaluating, managing, and using information, it is now considered by several regional and discipline-based accreditation associations as a key outcome for college students.

In January of 2000, the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education were approved and in February of 2004, the American Association for Higher Education and the Council of Independent Colleges endorsed them [4]:

- recognize a need for information
- determine the extent of information needed
- access information efficiently
- critically evaluate information and its sources
- classify, store, manipulate and redraft information collected or generated
- incorporate selected information into their knowledge base
- use information effectively to learn, create new knowledge, solve problems and make decisions
- understand economic, legal, social, political and cultural issues in the use of information
- access and use information ethically and legally
- use information and knowledge for participative citizenship and social responsibility
- experience information literacy as part of independent learning and lifelong learning.

Information need



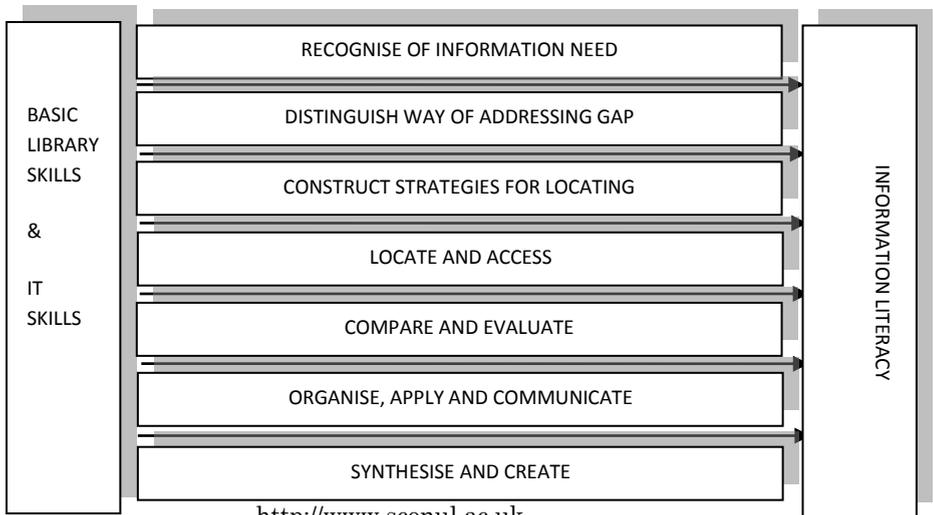
UNESCO TTT T CapeTown 2008

Degree of information need

		Uncertainty	
		Low	High
Importance	Low	1 Low need of information	2 Moderate need of information
	High	3 Moderate need of information	4. High need of information

UNESCO TTT T CapTown 2008

Pillars of information literacy



<http://www.sconul.ac.uk>

Need for Information Literacy

- Life long learning
- For updating the existing knowledge
- Need for new skills
- Fast increase in the stream of information due to information revolution
- Advantage of information and communication technologies
- Vast variety of information sources required
- Changing shape and scenario of libraries
- Wide dispersal of information
- Increase in number of users, and
- Research on complex and interdisciplinary subjects.

Objectives of Information Literacy

- Capabilities of judgment evaluation, selection, organization and processing of information as well as of information creation and communication
- Understanding of characteristics of information society, effect of information user society and human beings
- Recognition of importance of and responsibility for information, and
- Understanding of foundation of information science, learning of basic operation skills of information and information device, particularly computer.

Broadly, the other objectives of information literacy programme may include the development of skills and competencies, which enable a client.

- To recognize an information gap
- To construct alternative strategies to reduce the information gap
- To select a strategy
- To act on a strategy to find and retrieve information
- To assess the effectiveness of a strategy

- To acknowledge the sources of information and ideas, and
- To store the information of future use.

Scope of Information Literacy

Information Literacy includes a range of literacy. The range of literacy may be Traditional Literacy: to read and write

- Information Technology literacy: to understand and operate computers that are interfaces between information and end users.
- Media literacy: to understand different media storing networked information and use them.
- Network literacy: network literacy for library users consists of two aspects: knowledge of networked information and skills to locate, select, evaluate and use the networked information.
- Traditional information literacy: to locate, select, evaluate and use information effectively.
- Visual literacy: to see and understand the information, and
- Web literacy: to locate, select, retrieve and use the information from web.

Benefits of Information Literacy

The following benefits can be obtained from information literacy:

- Expansion of knowledge through substantive operations of knowledge creation
- Synthesis of data and information into knowledge
- Appropriate and critical application of information and knowledge in problems solving
- Enhancement of the critical thinking
- Incorporation of validated information in the personal or corporate knowledge base
- Motivation for self directed learning and
- Appreciation for lifelong learning.

Despite all that has been written about information literacy there is a great deal of confusion about what it actually is. Many people are not able to differentiate information literacy from computer literacy or information technology. To confuse the issue more, there is a little agreement on what information literacy training should look like. This has the potential to "hinder librarians who are attempting to promote the concept to an inter disciplinary audience.

Information Literacy and Information Technology

Information literacy is related to information technology knowledge, but has broader implications for the individual, the educational system, and for society. Information technology skills enable an individual to use computer hardware, software applications, databases, and other technologies to achieve a wide variety of academic, work-related, and personal requirements. Information literate individuals necessarily develop some technology skills. Information literacy, while showing significant overlap with information technology skills, is a distinct and broader area of competence. Increasingly, information technology skills are interwoven with, and support, information literacy. A 1999 report from the National Research Council promotes the concept of "fluency" with information technology and delineates several distinctions useful in understanding relationships among information literacy, computer literacy, and broader technological competence.

The report notes that "computer literacy" is concerned with rote learning of specific hardware and software applications, while "fluency with technology" focuses on understanding the underlying concepts of technology and applying problem-solving and critical thinking to using technology. The report also discusses differences between information technology fluency and information literacy as it is understood in higher education. Of these are information literacy's focus on content, communication, analysis, information searching, and evaluation, whereas information

technology "fluency" focuses on a real understanding of technology and increasingly skilled use of it.

"Fluency" with information technology may require more intellectual abilities than the learning of software and hardware associated with it "computer literacy", but the focus is still on the technology itself. Information literacy, on the other hand, is an intellectual framework for understanding, finding, evaluating, and using information - activities which may be accomplished in part by fluency with information technology, but most important, through critical discernment and reasoning. Information literacy initiates, sustains, and extends lifelong learning through abilities which may use technologies but are ultimately independent of them.

Information Literacy and librarian

The role of librarian is to educate library users about how to access information effectively and independently. This includes formal instruction and various types of library activities. A librarian is necessary because it is assumed that library users are not able to use library facilities efficiently or effectively. Because the information system management and search tools are complicated, library users may fail to find all the information they need, or they may waste time unnecessarily.

In a broader view, it can be said that a librarian is required for the lifelong learning of an individual. Therefore, a librarian is essential and considered as part of the library services. Conventional librarian focuses on educating library users on the availability of library resources and services by emphasizing on searching skills and tools as well as searching strategies for information access. On the other hand, a modern librarian focuses on the value of information gained (such as resources selection, database searching, and database searching techniques), information evaluation (especially information retrieved from World Wide Web), information usage, electronic citation styles, and techniques for analytical thinking Libraries

have long been understood as signal resources supporting teaching, learning, and research.

They are the main contributors to the ‘repository of knowledge’ characteristic of a university which sets it aside from other institutions of higher learning. Even these times where the “ownership/access” debate is frequently aired, and the proponents of “just-in-time” debate with those of “just-in-case” the reality is that it is not a case of “either/or” but of “both/and” and librarians in these difficult times have an enhanced role assisting users to find relevant information in the most appropriate format in a timely fashion.

The introduction of technology into teaching, changes in scholarly communication patterns, the increasing variety of media, more demanding students requiring services to be available as, and when where they want them, all require that librarians ensure, more than ever, that they are user-focused, user-friendly, and able to assist users to gain information literacy skills which will help them to be to a greater degree self-sufficient. The library is not the only place for accessing information, though it is expected to remain the main source for many to access local resources which are owned and leased, and those which are obtained from a distance place in response to individual requests. The librarian’s role in managing information and knowledge resources and in continuously re-examining the appropriate balance of ownership and access, and which medium to hold or access is one of continuing challenge, stimulation and even delight.

Selected Information Literacy Initiatives

In 1989, the American Library Association (ALA) Presidential Committee on Information Literacy issued a final report which defined four components of information literacy: the ability to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information. (See

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/publications/whitepapers/presidential.cfm>)

In 1990, the National Forum on Information Literacy (NFIL) was founded as a response to the recommendations of the ALA Presidential Committee Final Report. NFIL is a "coalition of over 75 education, business, and governmental organizations working to promote international and national awareness of the need for information literacy and encouraging activities leading to its acquisition." Forum members promote information literacy nationally, internationally, and within their own programs. (See <http://www.infolit.org/index.html>)

In March 1998 NFIL issued A Progress Report on Information Literacy: An Update on the American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report. <http://www.infolit.org/documents/progress.html>

In 1998 the American Association of School Libraries (AASL) and the Association of Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) published Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning. The AASL/AECT standards detail competencies for students in K-12.

Since 1989, in the absence of national standards, many states, school districts, state university systems, and local institutions have developed information literacy competency standards.

There are several national and international conferences dedicated to information literacy. There is an annual satellite conference associated with the IFLA World Library and Information Congress organized by the IFLA Information Literacy Section. Within the UK, since 2005 there has been a Librarians Information Literacy Annual Conference or LILAC for short, organized by an Information Literacy Group that is now a special interest group of CILIP. The European Conference on Information Literacy, or ECIL held its first conference during October 2013 in Istanbul, Turkey.

Conclusion

In conclusion, library instruction methods should be changed to give more emphasis on information literacy in order to help students to think and act in an informed way, as well as to be independent and keen to gain knowledge continuously throughout their lives. The key personnel in the library instruction process include institutional teachers or lecturers, and librarians and teacher librarians working within the educational institutions' libraries. In the Information technology age it has become necessary to know and understand Information literacy for all librarians in the university libraries.

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