

INFORMATION LITERACY AND LIBRARIANS

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Abstract

Information Literacy is gradually becoming a necessity in the information world. The purpose of this paper is to present a broader analytical insight to the information literacy concept, in order to achieve an information literate librarian. Information literacy is a set of skills required for Librarian to find, retrieve, analyse and use information. Information literacy is directly linked with lifelong learning, critical thinking, and learning to learn concepts of education. The development of information technology and telecommunication provides various channels and applications for accessing, processing and distributing information, which also proposes higher requirements of information literacy skills for dealing with information. This paper emphasize on the importance, the various dimensions of information literacy, role of librarian in information literacy, skills and standards required for an information literate person.

Keywords: *Information literacy, information skills, information retrieval, information literacy sources.*

Introduction

Librarians and information professionals in universities and colleges make a vital contribution to teaching and learning. We all rely on information everyday and knowing how to find, understand and use it is vital. The key characteristic of the post-industrial 21st century is that it is information abundant and intensive. So Information literacy is important because of the on-going proliferation of information resources and the variable methods of access.

Individuals are faced with diverse information choices in their studies, in the workplace, and in their lives. Information is available through community resources, special interest organisations, manufacturers and service providers, media, libraries, and the internet. Increasingly, information comes unfiltered. This raises questions about its authenticity, validity, and reliability. Therefore people need special skills called Information Literacy (IL), for obtaining the specific information to meet their range of personal and business needs. The uncertain quality and expanding quantity of information also pose large challenges for society. Sheer abundance of information and technology will not in itself create more informed citizens without a complementary understanding and capacity to use information effectively.

Definition

1. According to *the American Library Association Final Report of the American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, Chicago: American Library Association, 1989*, "Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring

individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information.”

2. According to The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in the UK (*CILIP*) “Information literacy is knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner.”
3. *The Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL)* define Information Literacy as: “Information literate people will demonstrate an awareness of how they gather, use, manage, synthesise and create information and data in an ethical manner and will have the information skills to do so effectively.”

Importance of Information Literacy

Due to the information explosion, expansion of internet services and data smog all students and the society face many difficulties to locate, evaluate, use and communicate information. Data Smog refers to the idea that too much information can create a barrier in our lives. Especially students and the society require a special skill to handle this fast increasing information, in order to use their educational and economical purposes more effectively. Information literacy is considered as the solution for the data smog. ACRL (2006). Information literacy allows us to cope with the data smog, by equipping us with the necessary skills to recognize when we need information, where to locate it, and how to use it effectively and efficiently. Consequently it will help decision making and productivity which is beneficial to the society. The Information literacy curriculum plays a major role in order to cultivate these skills among the university and school students. The curriculum can be implemented by the library professionals with the help of academic and administrative staff.

ICT and Information Literacy

The world is flooded with information these days and the magnitude is going to increase exponentially in near future. Google search on ‘Information Literacy’ yields a whopping 10, 60,000 web pages. The concept of information literacy stems from information retrieval and extends to evaluating, organizing and using it effectively and efficiently to develop new understanding. In view of the present challenges and complexities of ICT, it is clear that university librarians and other library staff will need to use ICT to fulfill their professional responsibilities in the changing scenario. Therefore it is essential that they must develop both traditional literacy skills and fundamental computer literacy skills. The librarians are required to have managerial abilities in order to change their libraries from traditional “control- oriented” to modern “value-driven” and user oriented information centers.

Role of Librarian in Information Literacy

Due to technological impediments the Librarians require sound knowledge in collection, organization of knowledge and dissemination of information according to the demands of the user.

- A technically qualified librarian with sound knowledge over the technologies and with innovative mind in the need of the hour can make information literacy successful all the way;
- So it is indeed an opportune time for librarians to establish themselves as leaders in preparing students for the information age, helping the users to find new and improved methods of teaching curriculum construction and they become a leader, educator and trainer in the arena of the information globalization.

Dimensions of Information Literacy

- Information Fluency
- User education
- Library Instructions
- Bibliographic Instructions
- Information Competencies
- Information skills
- Development of information skills

Information Literacy Skills

Skills required to be information literate require an understanding of:

- A need for information
- The resources available
- How to find information
- The need to evaluate results
- How to work with or exploit results
- Ethics and responsibility of use
- How to communicate or share your findings
- How to manage your findings

Core Standards for Information Literacy

The principles frame six core standards which underpin information literacy acquisition, understanding and application by an individual are:

Standard 1

The information literate person recognises the need for information and determines the Nature and extent of the information needed.

- defines and articulates the information need
- understands the purpose, scope and appropriateness of a variety of information sources
- re-evaluates the nature and extent of the information need
- uses diverse sources of information to inform decisions

Standard 2

The information literate person finds needed information effectively and efficiently

- selects the most appropriate methods or tools for finding information
- constructs and implements effective search strategies
- obtains information using appropriate methods
- keeps up to date with information sources, information technologies, information access tools and investigative methods

Standard 3

The information literate person critically evaluates information and the information seeking process

- assesses the usefulness and relevance of the information obtained
- defines and applies criteria for evaluating information
- reflects on the information seeking process and revises search strategies as necessary

Standard 4

The information literate person manages information collected or generated

- records information and its sources
- organises (orders/classifies/stores) information

Standard 5

The information literate person applies prior and new information to construct new Concepts or create new understandings

- compares and integrates new understandings with prior knowledge to determine the value added, contradictions, or other unique characteristics of the information
- communicates knowledge and new understandings effectively

Standard 6

The information literate person uses information with understanding and acknowledges Cultural, ethical, economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information

- acknowledges cultural, ethical and socioeconomic issues related to access to, and use of, information
- recognises that information is underpinned by values and beliefs
- conforms with conventions and etiquette related to access to, and use of, information
- legally obtains, stores, and disseminates text, data, images, or sounds

Information Literacy - Specific Information Journals

There are a few library journals that focus specifically on information literacy and instruction in libraries:

- **Communications in Information Literacy:** "The journal is committed to the principles of information literacy as set forth by the Association of College and Research Libraries." Published since 2007.
- **Journal of Information Literacy:** "Is an international, peer-reviewed, academic journal that aims to investigate information literacy (IL) within a wide range of settings." JIL is published only electronically.
- **Research Strategies:** "Provides the library profession with the latest thinking and research on instructional services and the educational mission of the library." Published from 1983-2006.

Service-Oriented Journals

Other library journals that focus on public service often include articles on information literacy and instruction:

- Reference Services Review
- Reference and User Services Quarterly
- Portal: Libraries and the Academy

Information Literacy Blogs

- Information Literacy Weblog (international focus) <http://information-literacy.blogspot.com/> The Information Literacy Land of Confusion <http://www.information-literacy.net/>
- The Kept-Up Academic Librarian <http://keptup.typepad.com/academic/>
- Information Wants to be Free <http://meredith.wolfwater.com/wordpress/index.php>
- Library Assessment <http://libraryassessment.info/>
- Pegasus Librarian <http://pegasuslibrarian.blogspot.com/>
- ACRLog <http://acrlog.org/>
- In the Library with the Lead Pipe <http://inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/>

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