

Information literacy programme in Libraries

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Introduction - Today is the era of information explosion. The beginning of the 21st century has been called the Information Age cause of the explosion of information resources. It has become increasingly clear that students cannot learn everything they need to know about their field of study in a few years of college. Information literacy equips them with the critical skills necessary to become independent learners. Too often we assume that as students write research papers and read textbooks they are gaining sufficient Information Literacy skills. This is not so. Information Literacy skills may be introduced but what is needed is a parallel curriculum in Information Literacy forming a strong foundation of a college education.

ALA Definition of Information Literacy

“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”“Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. 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.”Information literacy has been championed by librarians nationwide as a set of competencies that everyone should have to get the most from the online world. The American Library Association defines information literacy the ability "to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information. This is not a new or radical departure from instructional activity conducted by librarians prior to technological innovations. Librarians have been in the business of teaching individuals to be independent researchers for years, albeit at reference desks, and not in classrooms, with or without the aid of computer technology.

Students develop the kinds of skills referred to in these quotations over time, and the most successful way to cultivate information literacy among them is to integrate essential concepts into the academic curriculum, where the necessary skills can be learned in context. Although most students are very comfortable users of the Internet, they may find the prospect of navigating their way through the Library's scholarly resources to be daunting and intimidating.

The nature of information literacy

A widely used and accepted definition of information literacy from the American Library Association Presidential Committee, states that 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’ (ALA: 1989).The widely agreed characteristics of information literate persons are defined by De Jager and Nassimbeni (2002:168) as those who can:1. ‘Recognize the need for information; 2.Access information efficiently and effectively; 3. Evaluate information and its sources critically; 4.Incorporate selected information into one’s knowledge base; 5.Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose; 6. Understand the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information; 7.Access and use information ethically and legally.’ Adler (1999) and McClure (1994:115-116) made it clear that that information literacy is not the same as library literacy, media literacy, computer literacy or network literacy; but is a concept that encompasses other literacies. Langford (1999) and McClure (1994) describe an information literate person as a person who should be able to locate and access information in all its forms. Langford then perceives information literacy as a goal which can be attained through a process that relies on the continuous learning of specific and evolving behaviors, and as a cluster of abilities which individuals can employ to cope with and take advantage of the unprecedented amount of information which surround them in their daily life and work. Information literacy presents a broad approach that offers the opportunity to educate students to understand the importance of information, and have the competence to locate, evaluate and manage it. In that way, it contributes towards a higher level of literacy and lifelong learning (Makhubela and Koen, 1995:13).Computers and web skills are essential today, but this does not mean that emphasis should be on teaching students to be computer literate or web literate only. Acquiring these competencies do not guarantee that information literacy is achieved. Students are information literate when they are comfortable in using all information formats.

Information Literacy Program objective

- students use of information and learning resources
- Address information literacy outcomes through library instruction units
- Offer students a variety of learning opportunities
- Encourage effective use of information resources in course and Research
- Support students in achieving learning outcomes for information literacy
- Explore general information sources to gain knowledge about a topic
- Identify a variety of types and formats of information sources, such as multimedia, database, website, AV, book.
- Recognize how information is formally and informally produced, organized and disseminated

- Decide a search strategy using keywords, online protocols and search parameters
- To use a variety of technologies to manage and organize information
- To differentiate between the types of sources cited and the elements and correct .

Importance of Information Literacy

A term Data Smog coined by author David Shenk, it refers to the idea that too much information can create a barrier in our lives. This data smog is produced by the amount of information, the speed at which it comes to us from all directions, the need to make fast decisions, and the feeling of anxiety that we are making decisions without having the information that is available or that we need.

Information literacy is the solution to Data Smog. It includes the technological skills needed to use the modern library as a gateway to information. It enables us to analyze and evaluate the information we find, thus giving us confidence in using that information to make a decision or create a product. The ability to locate, evaluate and use information has always been important, but in today's Information Age, with the explosion of online library and Internet resources, these abilities take on a new urgency. Having more information from which to choose can make research more difficult rather than easier. Often the easiest information to find is unfiltered or unreliable, making information literacy skills more important than ever.

Information literacy skills are important for students academic, work and personal lives. An information literate student is a lifelong learner, with the skills necessary to continually find and evaluate information about new developments. In an information era, students will need information literacy skills to succeed in the work force, whether they are creating a marketing proposal for a new product. Information literacy skills also enrich students personal and civic lives.

How is information literacy taught?

Students are more likely to learn the concepts and skills in the context of an academic course when they have an information problem to solve. For that reason, information literacy best practices recommend integrating the teaching of information literacy into the curriculum. Ideally, information literacy competencies are sequenced and integrated into the curriculum of an academic department. As students move through their major, they master increasingly sophisticated competencies.

The Library will use the Academic Board's "Guidelines for Good Practice in Teaching and Learning" as a basis for its information literacy programs. Evaluation of information literacy programs will be undertaken at various levels. The Library will continue to develop complementary generic programs where appropriate, for example introductory and orientation programs. The Library will monitor and evaluate external programs for potential use in its information literacy programs.

Role of Library

- The development of information literacy skills and knowledge throughout the Academic community is an essential element of the Library.
- The responsibility for supporting the development of information literacy knowledge and skills is a partnership between the Library and academic and other staff.
- The Library has particular expertise to support staff and students in the development of their own information literacy.
- Information literacy is an essential for the Library, and Library staff will be supported with appropriate time to time.
- Library Staff development and training courses.
- Use of Resources - e.g. teaching spaces, technology.
- Teaching and learning planning processes.

Programm

1. Credit courses
2. Orientations, tours, and workshops
3. Subject-specific and general bibliographic instruction
4. Individual instruction
5. Web-based instruction/tutorials
6. Consultation with faculty/assignment design

Reference:

- 1) *The role of academic Libraries in enhancement of information literacy : a study of ford hare library by zodwa Thomas, SA Journal Libs & Info Sci 2005, 71(3)*
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- 3) <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/aboutinfoit.html>
- 4) <http://www.ala.org/acrl/issues/infoit/overview/intro>
- 5) University of Sydney - Academic Board. Guidelines for good practice in teaching and learning. [Sydney]: University of Sydney, 200