



INFORMATION LITERACY: OBJECTIVES AND SUBJECT

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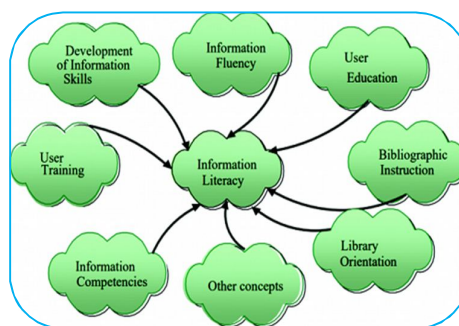
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ABSTRACTS

The term information literacy first appeared in print in a 1974 report by Paul G. Zurkowski. It was written on behalf of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. Zurkowski used the phrase to describe the “techniques and skills” known by the information literate “for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in finding information solutions to their problems (Zurkowski, 1974).

KEY WORDS : Information Science, library & research skills, Training, Research Skill, Literacy.



INTRODUCTION

Information literacy has been known by many different names: library orientation; bibliographic instruction; user education; information skills training. There is considerable degree of overlapping in the meaning of these terms. Library orientation concentrates on how to make optimum use of library resources; and bibliographic instruction and user education focuses on the mechanics of using particular resources. Information skills training and finally information literacy concentrates on cognitive and transferable skills, such as problem solving, evaluation and communication skills. We often confuse information literacy with information management. Many associate it with accessing online information. There are people who associate information literacy with library & research skills. In general, the information literacy in the layman’s language is the ability to find, understand, evaluate and use information in various forms to create for personal, social or global purpose.

DEFINITION

The United States National Forum on Information Literacy defines information literacy as “ ... the ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use that information for the issue or problem at hand.” Other definitions incorporate aspects of “skepticism, judgment, free thinking, questioning, and understanding...” or incorporate competencies that an informed citizen of an information society ought to possess to participate intelligently and actively in that society.

In UK, information literacy is defined by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals as: “Information literacy knows when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner.”

ALA defined information literacy as “set of abilities that enables an individual to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to effectively locate, evaluate and use the needed information.”

According to ACRL, Information Literacy is the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyse and use information. Shapiro and Hughes (1996) have defined information literacy as “... a new liberal art that extends from knowing how to use information to critical reflection on the nature of information itself, its technical infrastructure, and its social, cultural and even philosophical context and impact.”

What does it mean to be Information Literate?

- Becoming a lifelong learner
- Using the library effectively
- Understanding what you read
- Using information wisely
- Organising resources
- Developing ideas
- Using IT
- Knowing where to look
- Interpreting, summarizing
- Understanding how information works.

Further definitions have expanded on the theme, broadening the scope “...to address issues or problems at hand that face individuals, communities, and nation” (Thompson, 2003, p3); “...knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner” (CILIP, 2004).

Early definitions of Information literacy has led to the identification of a list of attributes or competencies an information literate person is supposed to exhibit, for example an information literate individual requires 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 findings
- How to manage findings.

OBJECTIVES OF INFORMATION LITERACY

The main objectives of information literacy programme is to make the individual proficient in the optimum, effective and judicious use of information for not only enhancing the understanding but productive utilization of information resources. In other words the main focus is on making the people information literate through the infusion of information literacy skills.

Importance

Research shows that people evaluate more effectively if causes are revealed, where available. Such initiatives would help people become more information literate. As a society, we must critically evaluate information to establish a public demand for high information quality.

Information literacy skills are vital because:

- Information literacy skills must be taught in the context of the overall process.
- Instruction in information literacy skills must be integrated into the curriculum and reinforced both within and outside of the educational setting.

Now the information literacy has become a part of the core curriculum in many universities particularly in developed countries. The information overload and the need to search and retrieve correct and reliable information from different sources and channels compels the people to be information literate. This calls for information literacy programmes in the form of courses or training to be imparted to people by different agencies including libraries. The information literacy skills are to be developed to make the people information literate.

In the present digital age, the users need to be more information literate than before. Though Internet is expected to contain valid and accurate information, its very nature encourages quick and easy self-publication without any review, content is also of low quality and there is need for the user to be able to recognize and access authentic and useful resources. There is a need to be able to analyse and evaluate information sources, retrieve for value, relevance, quality and suitability. The information literacy helps the individual to acquire and develop the skills. The skills of critical thinking, research and evaluation are increasingly required to make sense of the world.

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