



EMERGING TRENDS AND TECHNOLOGIES: INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS FOR LIS PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract- What started as a Library Orientation grew into Library & Bibliographic Instruction and finally became Information Literacy. Information literacy is a springboard to lifelong learning and can be viewed as an essential core and transferable skill, required by all those who seek to be active in an online society. This paper defines the meaning of IL and its related terminologies and highlights the need for ICT & IL skill developments of library professionals. It discusses Information Literacy connections with ICT trends and the role of libraries and librarians in an academic pursuit. It also projects how a skilled and information literate librarian can play the role of a 'teacher' successfully in teaching / guiding his users.

Keywords- Trends and technologies, Information Literacy, Library professionals, Information literacy skills.

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Introduction

Information is needed by all. Earlier people depended on traditional / print resources and now due to the emergence of advanced technologies, new avenues for information like online databases, e-journals, subject portals, weblogs, etc. have opened up. The changing role of libraries now includes developing awareness among the academic community regarding the digital resources and e-content sources of information. Information literacy is not only a growing concept in Library & Information Science but also is becoming a important global initiative. In the age of 'information explosion', it becomes very difficult to provide the right information, at the right time, unless the person is an 'information literate'. Information literacy is a complex phenomenon that is much more than acquiring the skills needed for using computers and the Internet. It goes beyond the abilities of finding information and also requires communication skills. Here comes the multi-skilled and a information literate - information professional, to help and guide the users to get the right type of information, at the right time, more effectively and efficiently. Academic library professionals are the natural in-house experts for teaching both students and the faculty members, how to find, use and evaluate infor-

mation effectively. With the access to the advanced ICTs and skilled library professionals, an institution can have well established Information Literacy Programs progressing towards its own growth and development.

Information Literacy

"Ability to recognise when information is needed and to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information" - ALA, 1989. Information is nothing but knowledge. The knowledge acquired in any manner like study, experience or instruction. Information therefore, refers to, acquired knowledge that is received, understood and stored.

The ability to read and write is *Literacy*. But the ability to find, to use and to communicate information is *Information Literacy*. The concept of *Information Literacy* was introduced in 1974 by Paul Zurkowski, President of Information Industry Association. He said, "Information literates were the people trained in the application of information resources". Thus, *Information Literacy* is about people's ability to operate effectively in an information society. It includes awareness of *professional ethics, critical thinking, the need for evaluation and organising of information* to the effective use of

the same.

Information Literacy also refers to a set of skills that are required to recognize, to locate, to evaluate and to use information effectively. Information literacy is a springboard to *lifelong learning* and can be viewed as an essential core and transferable skill, required by all those who seek to be active in an online society. The below defined terms are related to Information Literacy-

Digital Literacy- Ability to use a computer and its software to accomplish practical tasks. And the ability to use the web-technologies to access and communicate information effectively. Also known as *Computer Literacy / E-Literacy*. A broader term linking Information Communication Technology literacy and Information Literacy. It concentrates on the use of ICTs and is closer to *E-Learning*. While Information Literacy deals with the content and communication, *E-Literacy* deals with the technological infrastructure.

E-learning- Refers to the use of network technology to design, deliver, select, administrate and extend learning. The learning materials are found on the computer in various forms like CDROM databases, OPAC, multi-media work stations and web based domains. This not only increases the access to learn but also is faster and low in cost. *E-learning* is becoming an increasingly mainstream feature of educational delivery.

Media Literacy- Ability to decode, analyse, evaluate and produce communication in different of forms.

Others like, Health Literacy, Buisness Literacy, Visual Literacy, Network Literacy, etc.

Information Literate People

"They are the ones who have learnt to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, how to find information and how to use information, so that, others can learn from them. They are the people who are prepared for lifelong learning because they can always find the information for any task or decision at hand.." ALA, 2000.

Information literates are the building blocks for a society that is equitable. Information literates know how to make use of the latest technologies with their ICT & IL skills. They also know how to learn and how to organize the information as they understand the ecology of how information works. They are the ones who are competent enough to face the new world of technologies. These skills should come naturally to library professionals.

Libraries and Information Literacy

ALA, 1989 reports that *"Information literacy is a survival skill in the information age"*.

What started as a Library Orientation grew into Library & Bibliographic Instruction and finally became Information Literacy. Libraries take a lead role in developing and delivering learning support strategies to ensure the true meaning of Information Literacy. They are able to provide the limitless warehouse of information to their users. Information literacy is the fundamental concept of the education process and the IL skills are fostered through the use of active learning strategies, where libraries facilitate activities in information seeking process. Initiatives taken towards implement-

ing information literacy programs also helps libraries to become a learning organizations, in which library professionals are prepared to develop new skills and competencies. With this, libraries and library professionals become true contributors for the success of their organizations and become active partners in Information Literacy programs leading towards lifelong learning. Although the IL concept came in use in 1974, the role of librarians as facilitators and instructors has been well recognized in the early 90s. Besides, 'library services must come to be recognized as an integral resource and not merely an optional part of higher education'.

From Library Instruction to Information Literacy

In 1980's Library Instruction, Bibliographic Instruction, Library Orientation, User / Library Education . *In 1990's* - Information Literacy. *In 21st century* - Information literacy and Resource Based Learning.

Successful IL program needs:

- User-friendly learning environment
- Proper IT infrastructure
- Librarian-faculty co-operation and interaction
- ICT & IL skilled & subject expert faculty

Information Communication Technology Skills

"Enabled by technological changes, we are beginning to see a series of economic, social and cultural adaptations that make possible a radical transformation of how we make the information environment" - Prof. Yochai Benkler, Yale Law school.

Technology is the major driving force for change. Emerging ICT tools have added a new dimension to education. Every user (student) needs to understand at least how to use a library to access resources for their studies with the abundance of information available. *Information skills* refer to evaluative skills of an individual to select the most appropriate resource. Emerging demand for information has tremendously increased due to the World Wide Web. To utilise / to access web resources, they need to have *Information Technology (IT) skills*, which lead to awareness of advanced technologies. *Information skills* and *Information technology* are interconnected and hence referred together as *Information and Communication Technology skills*. If IT is the machine, ICT is the product. While IT implies one-way communication, ICT implies interaction between the user and the data.

Information Literacy Skills

According to Bundy, the below mentioned three distinct dimensions help constitute the IL framework . (Bundy, 2004:7) :

- Generic skills that involves problem solving, critical thinking, communication and collaborative team work.
- Information skills that involves competencies in information search, information use and IT fluency.
- Values and beliefs that include, using information wisely and ethically, social responsibility and community participation.

Information literacy skills are skills that are needed throughout life. We are always seeking information. Information helps us reach conclusions, make our choices, and communicate more effectively. But the good stuff is often buried in heaps of junk. We need to continue to improve our searching, evaluating and communication skills in a changing information environment. In general, IL skills

includes-

- Knowledge of information resources in one's subject ;
- The ability to construct effective search strategies;
- The ability to critically appraise information sources;
- The ability to use information sources appropriately to cite and create references.

Library Professionals and IL Competencies

Information literacy empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and to create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. *Information literates* are the people who have learnt to learn and *Competency* in the ability to perform a specific task, action or function successfully. Acquiring information literacy skills is *information literacy competency*. In brief, *Competencies* are a combination of skills, knowledge and behaviors that are important for an organizational success, personal performance and career development.

Knowing that, *Information Literacy* comprises of the use of ICT to retrieve and disseminate information; the competencies to find and use information in information and the process of recognizing information need, finding, evaluating, and using information to acquire knowledge, library professionals need good teaching and communication skills to teach information literacy to their user community in an academic environment.

There is a need for the library professionals to update their skills and competencies to:

- Help the students and the faculty members to locate, access and evaluate information effectively and efficiently.
- Take better decisions in day to day work.
- Contribute towards the growth & development of the institution.
- Update their own knowledge and skills & optimum use of technologies.
- Get recognized for providing value added library services.
- Understand and do their own research work.
- Survive in the competitive world.

They need to collaborate and team up with academic staff to integrate information literacy programs into the regular curriculum to make the teaching-learning process more effective and useful. The College / University authorities should also understand the need for information literacy programs and support the initiators.

Benefits of Information Literacy Programs

- Key to empowerment, development and happiness.
- Enhancement of critical thinking
- Synthesis of data and information into knowledge
- Motivation for self-directed learning
- Use of information ethically & legally, understanding the economic, legal & social issues around the use & access of information.
- Changes and advances in practice of teaching and learning.
- Higher education identifies the need for more active learning.
- Appreciation for lifelong learning

Conclusion

The National Knowledge Commission, GOI (July,2007) recommended that the Information Literacy Programs should be orga-

nized vigorously and effectively. Information literacy education is of undeniable importance to everyone in an academic environment. The information superhighway has increased public interest in ways to empower people to access electronic networks and use information available through them. But providing complementary skills needed to convert opportunity to success must be the province of all educators. Libraries and library professionals are effective resources for information access. They are able to provide key access points to electronic and print information only if possessing Information Communication Technology and Information Literacy skills and competencies as required. The library professionals should also take initiatives in conducting IL programs in their college / university environment and update their skills by attending various conferences, seminars, workshops & on-job /off job training programs organized by various organizations.

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