

Information Literacy and its Application

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Abstract- *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. It helps the learners to become a master of self-learning. It also helps learners to become independent, critical thinker and life-long learner. The concept of information literacy has gaining more attention in higher education communities throughout the world. In the present paper, authors describe the information literacy and its application in higher education institutions of India.*

Indexed Terms- *Information literacy, Information literacy Model, Higher Education.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The term information literacy was first used by Paul Zurkowski¹, the President of Information Industry Association in 1974. He used the term in a proposal submitted to the US National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS). According to him information literate peoples are those who trained in the application of information resource in their work. They have learned techniques and skills for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information solutions to their problems. Now-a-days the term „Information Literacy“ has become a buzzword and can be used by several authors in different ways as info literacy, informacy, information empowerment, information competence, information literacy and skills, information handling skills, information problem solving skills etc.

“In current era , an ‘educated’ graduate will no longer be defined as one who has absorbed a certain body of factual information , but as one who knows how to find, evaluate ,and apply needed information”

Today’s information revolution ,computer, internet, and handheld wireless devices are driving the knowledge world and made changes in the way pictures, voice and information are being created , transmitted , accessed and stored .The increasing amount of information available on the internet has given rise to what has been called by some librarians as ‘the Google generation’. But learning computer and media technologies are not enough if Nations, Institutions and individuals are to reap the full benefits of the global knowledge societies. In this context, ‘Information Literacy’ has become a new paradigm and plays a vital role in the information and communication landscape.

The Alexander Proclamation adopted by the High Level Colloquium on Information Literacy and Lifelong learning in November 2005 defines Information Literacy as a mean to “empower people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals”.

II. INFORMATION LITERACY’S APPLICATION

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2008) in its position statement on describes information literacy as “the set of skills needed to find, access, retrieve, analyze, synthesize and use information effectively and ethically”. Information literacy skills are particularly important now with the increasing wealth of electronic resources available .Borah characterizes this as the “Access paradox” where an increasing amount of information exists in electronic format, but that users are less able to find what they need because they don’t have sufficient skills. There is a real challenge in equipping learners with the skills: they need to function in the electronic environment. Information literacy is just one of these skills, but librarians have an important role in helping

learners to find quality resources in whatever format they exist.

Information literacy means the set of skills attitudes and knowledge necessary to know when information is needed to solve a problem or make a decision, how to articulate that information need in searchable terms and language, then search efficiently for the information, retrieve it interpret and understand it, evaluate its credibility and authenticity , access its relevance, communicate it to others if necessary, than utilize it to accomplish bottom-line purposes : Information Literacy is closely allied to learning to learn, and to critical thinking, both of which may be established, format educational goals, but too often are not integrated into curricula, syllabi and lesson plan outlines as discrete , teachable and learnable outcomes; sometimes the terms, are used in different countries, cultures or languages, in preference to the term Information Literacy.

Information literacy (IL), a set of skills requiring students to “recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” American Library Association (ALA), 1989 .IL is becoming increasingly important in today’s society, where library technological upgrades, the Internet, and the way individuals gather and ever-abundant amount of information has become more difficult and complex.

III. INFORMATION LITERACY CONCEPT

Information literacy also known as information competency, is a set of skills that helps students sift through the mass of information now available to them in order to locate and retrieve what is relevant and reliable for their research needs.

According to Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, UK defines information literacy as “knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate in ethical manner”.

According to Association of College & Research Libraries(ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, Information literacy means “ the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective

discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning”.

The concept has been defined in numerous ways by authors in the field, but it is generally understood to include the following skills.

- Knowledge of information resources in one’s subject
- Ability to construct effective search strategies
- Ability to critically appraise information sources
- Ability to use information sources appropriately, and create references.

Information Literacy vary but generally include the following knowledge and skills:

- Effective information seeking
- Informed choice of information sources
- Information evaluation and selection
- Comfort in using a range of media to best advantage
- Awareness of issues to do with bias and reliability of information and
- Effectiveness in transmitting information to others

IV. MODELS OF INFORMATION LITERACY

A variety of approaches and models have been successfully used to integrate information literacy formally into the curriculum and courses. As in the schools arena, several models or frameworks for developing information literacy have been generated in the higher education domain .There is no room here to review all of them. But the Big Blue model focuses on the changes sought in the behavior of information literate students. The main points to review are:

- Recognizes an information need
- Addresses the information need
- Retrieves information
- Evaluates information critically
- Adapts information
- Organizes information
- Communicates information
- Make use of information

V. INFORMATION LITERACY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education institutions are pioneers in society to provide higher education to the people's society. They must meet society's requirements by producing highly skilled people. They act as a leader for societal change and set an example for society to follow. The inclusion of information competencies as a graduation requirement is the key that will fully integrate information literacy into the curricula of academic institutions. Information literacy instruction in higher education can take a variety of forms: stand-alone courses or classes, online tutorials, workbooks, course-related instruction or course-integrated instruction.

State-wide university systems and individual colleges and universities are undertaking strategic plan to determine information competencies, to incorporate instruction in information competence throughout the curriculum and to add information competence as a graduation requirement for students.

Academic library programs are preparing faculty to facilitate their student's mastery of information literacy skills so that the faculty can in turn provide information literacy learning experiencing for the students enrolled in their classes.

As librarians and information professionals become more involved in providing information sources in electronic form it is even more necessary to review the training needs and development of information skills of users. The central theme of Higher Education institutions (HEIs) in many parts of the world is to develop lifelong learners with the intellectual abilities of reasoning and critical thinking. Any training in skills provided towards this direction not only leads to the use of the library systems effectively but also add value to them. Information skills, information literacy and other forms of user education training have become important strategic issues for universities and college libraries and information services.

There are many information literacy programs on higher education campuses, the literature of information literacy and the concept of information literacy as a variable academic subject remain hidden

to most professors and academic administrator. Information literacy is invisible to academia because it is misunderstood, academic administrators have not put it on their institutions agenda, the literature of information literacy remains in the library silo, there is a false belief that information literacy is only acquired only by experience, there is a false assumption that technological ability is the same as information literacy, faculty culture makes information literacy less significant than other educational pursuits, faculty have a limited perception that information literacy has a viable position in higher education. The new information age demands that these barriers be overcome and information literacy take a prominent place within the academic world.

VI. INFORMATION LITERACY IN INDIA

Information literacy is the vital process in the modern changing world which is mostly used for higher education particularly at university level. In our information-centric world, students must develop skills early on so they are prepared for post-secondary opportunities, whether in the workplace or in pursuit of higher education. It "enables people to interpret and make informed judgments as user of information sources, as well as to become producers of information in their own right. Information literacy means information awakening in person about the needed information. Information literate people are able to access information about their health, their environment, their education and work, empowering them to make critical decision about their lives, e.g. in taking more responsibility for their own health and education". Government of India has planned to run many programmes to make people information literate.

VII. ROLE OF INFORMATION LITERACY IN INDIA

In the recent decades India has tried to increase the population of information literate and educated citizens through organizing different programs like, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan(SSA), District Primary Education Program (DPEP), National literacy mission and so on and established the community information center and village knowledge centers are the addition to this effort that would transform India into an

information society where information and knowledge resources are considered as critical ingredient for development.

CONCLUSION

It can be that higher education institutions of India have an opportunity, and a challenge, to prepare students to meet the demands of the information age. Institutions need to identify what graduates should know and be able to do. Institutions must be accountable for how far their students go from the freshman year to graduation. The educated graduates of the 21st century should be the information literate graduates, one who should be able to find, evaluate and apply needed information. Universities and other institutions of higher learning should be responsible for producing such graduates. Administrators must set the tone for the entire campus, by incorporating information literacy into the curriculum and developing information literacy programs effectively using model and standards that immerse students into information literacy throughout their higher education. Higher education institutions should go beyond the goal of producing graduates who are not simply equipped to enter the workforce, and broaden their scope to produce enlightened graduates who are able to freely lead happy lives and shape the information society of which they are a part.

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