

Information literacy – what does it mean?

[Education](#)



The 21st century has been defined as the “ Information Age” due to the fact that there has been an overwhelming amount of “ information output and information sources.” (ACRL, 2006, p. 1) In a report released in 1989 by the American Library Association’s Presidential Committee on Information Literacy stated that, “ No other change in American society has offered greater challenges than the emergence of the Information Age.” (Association of College & Research Libraries, 1989, n. a). In order to combat the growing need for students to adapt to this age of information, professionals began working towards providing an educational environment that focuses on information literacy.

To define Information literacy and narrow it down to one specific interpretation would be impossible, as it has been defined in a variety of ways since 1970. To offer a broad definition, the American College of Research Libraries defines it as, “ the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze and use information. (ACRL, 2006, p. 1) Christina Bruce, has also defined information literacy as “ the overarching literacy essential for 21st century living.” (Bruce, 2004, p. 2)

A number of professionals continue to develop strategies and policies that will enhance the area of information literacy and enable educators to assist students as they take advantage of the information and communication avenues available to them. (Bruce, 2004, p. 2)

Christina Doyle was the first to introduce the Delphi technique into the realm of information literacy, in her 1992 study where a national panel of experts from the National Forum of Information Literacy conducted a study that took

a deeper look into the National Education Goals. (Doyle, 1994, p. 21) This technique was used to reach an agreement among professionals that “ information Literacy is the ability to access, evaluate and use information from a variety of sources.” (Doyle 1992). The outcome of this study defined the framework to show the critical nature of information literacy and the importance of working to create an information society. (Doyle, 1994, p. 21)

The goals established by this committee lead to “ successful education and employment for all Americans.” (Doyle, 1994, p. 21)

Since 1980, a variety of information literacy skill models have been developed by educators, national and state organizations and national associations dedicated to information literacy. These models are designed to support student educators as they attempt to integrate information into their classrooms, assist school librarians as they attempt to provide leadership in the school system, and to assist professionals as they attempt to stay in tune with technology advancements. (Stripling, 1999, p. 54) These models provide educators the means to teach students a series of processes and steps to follow as they evaluate and process information. (Bruce, 2004, p. 3)

Perhaps one of the most popular models is the Eisenberg and Berkowitz Big6 model. Eisenberg and Berkowitz define their approach as, “ a systematic approach to information and problem solving.” (Eisenberg & Berkowitz, 1990, p. 1) They also believe that through the model’s evolution that it has developed two additional definitions – “ 2) six broad skill areas are necessary for successful information problem solving.

Students need to develop a range of competencies within each skill area. 3) a complete library and information skills curriculum are necessary. Often referred to as a scope and sequence the Big Six Skills offers a systematic alternative to traditional K-12 frameworks that focus on location and access skills.” (Eisenberg & Berkowitz, 1990, p. 1) This approach has been widely accepted and implemented by many schools.

Another model used to shape the way that students obtain and evaluate information is the Stripling and Potts Research Process Model. It was originally developed in 1988 and was widely accepted “ because it provided a guide through each state of creating a research paper.” (Reidling & Eisenberg, 2002, p. 7) Stripling and Pitts suggest that students follow a 10 step research process within a outline that shows the student how information literacy skills build upon each other. (Reidling & Eisenberg, 2002, p. 7)

Research continues to progress in the area of information literacy, as information and technology continue to advance. Education requires a learning model that is based upon the foundation of the real world – a model that is active and incorporated with reality, rather than separated. (Association of College & Research Libraries, 1989, n. a). For this reason, information literacy is a means of personal empowerment. It allows people to verify or refute expert opinion, and to become independent seekers of truth. (Association of College & Research Libraries, 1989).

But how much information is too much? In business, Herbert E. Meyer, who has served as an editor for Fortune magazine and as vice-chairman of the

National Intelligence Council, describes in his 1988 book, *Real World Intelligence* (2), the astonishment and growing distress of executives who are discovering that the only thing as difficult and dangerous as managing a large enterprise with too little information is managing one with too much (Meyer, 1987 p. 29). Meyer does, however, go on to stress that companies should focus and rely on public sources that are available to them for a great deal of their information. (Meyer, 1987 p. 36).

It is important that a focus is placed upon differentiating between information literacy and information technology. Information technology skills “ enable an individual to use computers, software applications, databases, and other technologies to achieve a wide variety of academic, work-related, and personal goals.” (American Library Association, 2000, p. 3)

Information literacy is, “ a set of abilities requiring people to ‘ recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information.” (American Library Association, 2000, p. 2) Information literacy consists of more than searching through library reference materials – it’s a goal for learners and does not consist of just one technique or method. (Gilton, 1994)

The traditional way of library research is being abandoned as our society turns to the Internet for electronic resources. “ Increased access to technology has altered the way that students study, while the variety of electronic information resources has widened the potential resource base for all students.” (Orr, Appleton, & Wallin, 2001, p. 457)

Approximately 75% of schools today have internet access and it is quickly becoming an important teaching tool in the educational classroom. (German & Bartolo, 2001, p. 1) Multiple studies have been done showing the impact that the Internet is having on students. It has been shown that 20 % of the college students do not make any judgment about the quality or reliability of the information that they obtain from the Internet or other sources. (Zabel, 2004, p. na)

With the onset of the Internet and the challenge it has posed on the information literacy curriculum, professional organizations are partnering with educators to work with students in educational systems of all levels. Austin Peay State University's Woodward Library was one of 23 universities that created a program to assist students to " evaluate information available on the World Wide Web." (Austin Peay State University Quick News, 2001, p. na) This venture supporting the tactics of Information Literacy was supported by the Association of College and Research Libraries and funded through the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services National Leadership Grant. (Austin Peay State University Quick News, 2001, p. na)

In an effort to support the importance of Information Literacy, efforts are being made to create evaluation tools for both students and educators to enable both to use the internet as an effective resource. Project 2061, a project sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, has been created to reinforce the methods of information literacy in the area of science and mathematics. (German & Bartolo, 2001, p. 1)

Information literacy is challenged by the constantly changing environment of the Information Age. The challenge of education is to continue to develop “creative and rational thinkers who can solve problems and who can be reflective.” (Doyle, 1994, p. 44) The Big6 approach to information problem solving is still the most widely used model to reinforce and teach information literacy, as approximately 84, 000 teachers have been trained in the program. (Serim, 2002, p. na)

Both national and international organizations are reacting to the digital age and the implications on education by designing effective intervention programs and methods. (Serim, 2002, p. na) Though there is a great deal of work yet to be done, the foundation and practices of information literacy provide an environment where students can strive to meet the challenge.

References

Acrl. (2006, August 28). Association of College and Research Libraries.

Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlissues/acrlinfolit/infolitoverview/introtoinfolit/introinfolit.htm#what>

<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlissues/acrlinfolit/infolitoverview/introtoinfolit/introinfolit.htm#what>

Ala. (2000). Information Literacy Competency Standards (Publication). Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries.

American Library Association. (2000). Information Literacy Competency Standards (Publication). Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries.

American Library Association. (2000). Information Literacy Competency Standards (Publication). Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries.

American Library Association. (2000). Information Literacy Competency Standards (Publication). Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries.

<https://assignbuster.com/information-literacy-what-does-it-mean/>

Austin Peay State University Quick News. (2001, July 30). APSU works on information literacy. Austin Peay State University Quick News. Retrieved from <http://www.apsu.edu/quicknews/2001/0730/literacy.htm>

Bruce, C. S. (2004). Information Literacy as a Catalyst for Educational Change (Rep.). Yeppoon, Queensland: Queensland University of Technology.

Chisholm, M. (1989). Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report (Rep.). Washington, D. C.: Association of College and Research Libraries American Library Association.

Doyle, C. S. (1994). Information Literacy in an Information Society: A Concept for the Information Age. Syracuse, New York: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information & Technology.

Eisenberg, M. B., & Berkowitz, R. E. (1990). Information problem-solving: the big six skills approach to library & information skills instruction. Norwood, New Jersey: Alex Publishing Corporation.

German, L., & Bartolo, L. M. (2001). Science and Information Literacy on the Internet: Using the Standards Created by the Association of College and Research Libraries and Project 2061 to Create a Science Web Page Evaluation Tool (Rep.). Denver, Colorado: Association of College and Research Libraries.

Gilton, D. L. (1994). A World of Difference: Preparing for Information Literacy Instruction for Diverse Groups. *MultiCultural Review*, 3, 54-62.

Orr, D., Appleton, M., & Wallin, M. (2001). Information literacy and flexible delivery: Creating a conceptual framework and model. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 27, 457-463.

Reidling, A. M., & Eisenberg, M. (2002). *Learning to Learn: A Guide to Becoming Information Literate (Teens the Library Series)*. New York, New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc.

Serim, F. (2002, May/June 10). The Importance of Contemporary Literacy in the Digital Age: A Response to Digital Transformation: A Framework for Information Communication Technologies (ICT) Literacy. The Big6: Information Skills for Student Achievement. Retrieved from [http://www. big6. com/showarticle. php? id= 157](http://www.big6.com/showarticle.php?id=157)

Stripling, B. K. (1999). *Learning and Libraries in an Information Age: principles and practice*. Englewood, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited.

Zabel, D. (2004). A Reaction to "Information Literacy and Higher Education. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 30, 17-21.