An Informative Literate Life: Individual Experience and the Role of Libraries and Librarians

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https://lis.uncg.edu/2012-ideals-summit/
An Honor to Honor an Extraordinary Woman
Cora Paul Bomar
A LIFETIME
A PERSON
What do we wish?

Be able to …

with information so they can …

in order to …
“Regular, wise use of best-suited information to build, change, and/or challenge knowledge in support of decision-making, problem-solving, and growth.”

“Not just an ability or a skill, but also a practice and a mindset.”

Dianne Cmor, Hong Kong Baptist University
“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.”

http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/whitepapers/presidential.htm
“Information literacy should in fact be conceived more broadly as a new liberal art that extends from knowing how to use computers and access information to critical reflection on the nature of information itself, its technical infrastructure, and its social, cultural and even philosophical context and impact -- as essential to the mental framework of the educated information-age citizen as the trivium of basic liberal arts (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) was to the educated person in medieval society.”

Successful with Information

the information technology conception

the information sources conception

the information process conception

the information control conception

the knowledge construction conception

the knowledge extension conception

the wisdom conception

Christine Bruce, *Seven Faces of Information Literacy*, Auslib Press, 1997
Tensions and Possible Confusions

- Fixed/Developmental
- Absolute/Contextual
- Breadth/Depth
- General/Disciplinary
- Cognitive/Affective/Psychomotor
- Literacy/Illiteracy/Aliteracy
- Ends/Means
A SOCIETY
Prague Declaration: Towards an Information Literate Society

“Information Literacy encompasses knowledge of one’s information concerns and needs, and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and effectively create, use and communicate information to address issues or problems at hand; it is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the Information Society, and is part of the basic human right of life long learning.”

“Information literacy and lifelong learning are the beacons of the Information Society, illuminating the courses to development, prosperity and freedom. Information Literacy lies at the core of lifelong learning. It empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion of all nations. Lifelong learning enables individuals, communities and nations to attain their goals and to take advantage of emerging opportunities in the evolving global environment for shared benefit. It assists them and their institutions to meet technological, economic and social challenges, to redress disadvantage and to advance the well being of all.”
“Media and information literate individuals can use diverse media, information sources and channels in their private, professional and public lives. They know when and what information they need and what for, and where and how to obtain it. They understand who has created that information and why, as well as the roles, responsibilities and functions of media, information providers and memory institutions. They can analyze information, messages, beliefs and values conveyed through the media and any kind of content producers, and can validate information they have found and produced against a range of generic, personal and context-based criteria. MIL competencies thus extend beyond information and communication technologies to encompass learning, critical thinking and interpretive skills across and beyond professional, educational and societal boundaries.”
Examining the Context
New Voices Reflect on Information Literacy

Lisa Janice Hinchliffe, Guest Columnist

In this issue, our columnist has compiled four essays written by graduate students who speak to emerging perspectives on information literacy in shifting environments. The essays resonate in their fresh and enthusiastic view of the field, and are the fundamentally clear manner in which they define the questions at issue. For many of us, as practitioners, our view of information literacy is necessarily informed by daily activity. The essays provide an opportunity to reflect on the elemental questions of our work as seen from the eyes of those just entering the profession.

Lisa Janice Hinchliffe is the coordinator for information literacy services and instruction and sometimes adjunct instructor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Lori Arp, Jodi Rose, Catherine H. Archambault, and Heather Tomkiewicz were students in Lisa’s “Instruction and Assistance Systems” course. Lori is now the reference librarian at Bourbonnais Public Library District in Bourbonnais, Illinois. Amy is traveling in Germany for the year. Christine and Heather are completing their coursework—both in the School of Information. Christine Beese presents the complex reality that being information literate means different things to different people depending on the context and on the individual’s beliefs about what constitutes success with information. In spite of our best efforts to conscientize information literacy competency into some very useful standards like Information Power and the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education, the fact remains that being information literate is highly contextual. We hardly need to look further than our own profession’s subject experts in fields as diverse as engineering, music, and maps to recognize that, though a baseline of information literacy skills may be common, a great deal of expertise exists beyond the base line. With respect to learners, considering their lives as a whole, the diversity of information literacy competencies needed is also extremely varied. Consider, for example, the variety of skills needed for the three arenas discussed at the Twenty-first Century Library Summit: education, work, and civic engagement.

What is an information literacy librarian to do? Too often, I say, we focus on our own context, the context with which we are most familiar, and develop instructional programs and learning opportunities that reflect an unnecessarily narrow vision of information literacy. Or, because we fail to acknowledge the other...
In retrospect …

• A significant and early attempt to articulate a library ecology for information literacy.

• Freed information literacy from the schooling settings.

• Highlighted effect of experience.
ECOLOGY
In retrospect …

• A significant and early attempt to articulate a library ecology for information literacy.
• Freed information literacy from the schooling settings.
• Highlighted effect of experience.

HOWEVER …

– Library-centric.
– Normative.
– Assumes a user of privilege.
The Library is Not the Center
The Library is Not the Center

Must Re-Center on the Person and the Community
Normative

• Is there a “right way” to be information literate?
• Libraries aren’t of one type so how can user experience be reduced to a single type?
• Functions as a vision/mission but unattainable ideal?
• Who’s normative?
Privileged

- Information is ubiquitous. But, is access?
- Information is a positive and empowering aspect of life. But, is it really and for everyone?
- Should individuals have a right to be an “information literacy conscientious objector”? If they are, is that information literate?
“Schooling”

- The ultimate privilege is defining what should be
- Awesome responsibility of the educators
  - Direct instruction
  - Modeling
- System has inherent inequalities
- Adopt a critical pedagogy?
  - Resist “banking” concept of education
  - Pursue co-creation of knowledge
- Applicability to non-schooling environments?
Lisa Hinchliffe’s Definition of Critical Information Literacy

“To not only evaluate the information content and context but also ….

to evaluate the systems and structures from which information emerges, including awareness of what does not emerge due to decisions and factors that may or may not be obvious.”
INFORMATION CULTURE
“That is what I want for my students—for them to become habitual askers of questions, seekers of new knowledge, critical thinkers, and informed decision makers.”

Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe,
“Information Literacy as a Way of Life,”
Research Strategies, 18(2)
So, let me leave you with a final question ...
ARE YOU INFORMATION LITERATE?
Questions? Comments?
Challenges? Stories?