

IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION LITERACY

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Abstract

Today information literacy has become an important academic product and the user should be educated apart from their day-to-day needs. In this context we have highlighted the importance of the information literacy programmes in academic libraries and how the institution will be benefited by implementing the information literacy programmes. Traditional information seekers expect instant help this puts tremendous demands on the librarians and information professionals to upgrade their tools and techniques. Hence information literacy and continuous professional education and training programmes are needed for working library professionals finally we have focused the information literacy Definition, history, process, important and programmes in academic libraries.

Keywords: Information Literacy, Academic Libraries, Information Literacy training Programme

Introduction

In recent century information is growing at surprisingly fast speed in the society every person whether men or women, rich or poor, adult or child needs information for their work. If you have information at every step then only you can proceed in your life. In today's scenario information is compulsory. Information Literacy is the process of knowing when and why information is required, where to find it and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical way. It is the combination of all the skills that required for the effective and maximum

sue of information. Information literacy is one of such key competency essential in the present century. Information Literacy is the ability to gather, organize, filter and evaluate information and to form valid opinions based on the results. The information literacy has been used as collective term covering all or several of literacies viz. Computer literacy, digital literacy, hyper literacy, information technology literacy, interactive literacy, multiple literacy, network literacy, oral literacy, internet literacy, reading literacy, water literacy and visual literacy etc. Here each of this literacy is necessary to understand specific process has special importance. The users who inculcate in themselves with new and updated methods obtain the quality of creating meaningful work. The whole concept of information literacy is to move from text-based learning to resource-based learning.

Definition

Jeremy Shapiro and Shelly Heghes (1996). Define information literacy as “ As new liberal art that extend 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 philosophical context and impact.”

According to US National Commission on Library and Information Science (2003). Information Literacy defined as “It 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 lifelong learning” (Webb and Powis, 2004).

History of Information Literacy

The phrase “information literacy” first appeared in print in 1974 report by Paul G. Zurkowski, written on behalf of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. He used this 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 molding information solutions to their problems”. In the information society, information and knowledge are the basic resources and access to them is a necessity. The central mission of higher education is to make an objective effort to develop lifelong learners. The never changing life style and fascinating changes that are taking place in all walks of life necessitate the incessant learning practice. Education in general and professional education in particular strives hard to ensure the enhancement of learner’s intellectual abilities, reasoning and critical thinking power. It also endeavors to construct a framework for ‘learning how to learn’ and thus providing a foundation for continued growth indicating learner’s role as informed citizens and members of the community. Effective execution of this objective calls for promoting information literacy.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has highlighted the role of information related competencies in its several reports. The report entitled” The

knowledge based economy”, clearly discusses the increasing demand for more highly skilled workers and states, “the knowledge based economy is characterized by the need for continuous learning of both codified information. As access to information becomes easier and less expensive, the skills and competencies relating to the selection and efficient use of information become more crucial” (OECD), 1996.

It's another report entitled, “ Learning to bridge the Digital divide,” highlights, the skills of finding interpreting information as seen to be more important than the skills of retention and recording. Further, it states that the ability to seek and exchange information using databases and networks is not only simply dependent on access to technology, but requires possession of necessary technical skills. In addition it calls for basic competence in being able to choose, classify, critically evaluate the information that becomes accessible.(OECD,2000). Information Literacy is the adoption of appropriate information behavior to obtain, through whatever channel or medium, to fit into the information needs together with critical awareness of the importance of wise and ethical use of information in society. Information literacy is a means to express personal ideas, develop arguments, refute the opinions of others, learn new things or simply identify the truth or factual evidence about a topic. These days most of the people likely to change careers at least five times throughout their lives. People must become versatile learners who can adapt to new careers through their own ability of learning how to learn. Those who are not information literate are unable to make informed decisions given an information related problem and must rely on others rather than thinking for themselves. Those who are information literate can analyze and interpret information and this ability enables them to respond critically and creatively to problems. Therefore, it can be said that information literacy contributes towards personal empowerment and freedom to learn. When you know how to find and apply information you can teach yourself what you need to learn and essentially you have learned how to learn.

Process of Information Literacy

The process of information literacy requires not only learning of skills, but also a new way of thinking, in order to derive meaning from learning. Technological storage and sharing of information has increased the availability of data tremendously. Much of this information is available only through telecommunications. Information Literacy in telecommunication is achieved when learners know when to use online resources, how to access information completely, how to evaluate as for the accuracy and pertinence for each need and use information to communicate effectively. If learners learn these information literacy skills then they have the lifelong learning skills. Information literate citizens know how to use information for their best advantage both at work and in everyday life. They identify the most useful information when making decisions, when voting or to participate in community life. They are able to evaluate newscasts, advertisements and political campaign speeches.

Increasing attention to information literacy in recent years is partly the result of information overload, especially related to the growth of digital information which has caused a new alignment called “information fatigue syndrome ”and partly because of new focus on student

learning in context .Although there has always been a need to find evaluate and effectively use information , the abilities needed to do so have just grown larger more complex and important in the information communication technology environment.

Importance of information Literacy

Information Literacy is the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze and use information. The beginning of the 21st century has been called the information age because of the explosion of information output and information sources. It has become increasingly clear that students cannot learn everything's they need to know in their field of study in a few years of college. Information literacy equips them with the critical skills necessary to become independent lifelong learners. Too often we assume that as students write research papers and read textbooks they are gaining information literacy skills. This is not so. Information Literacy skills may be introduced but what needed is a parallel curriculum in information literacy forming a strong foundation of a college education.

As the American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy (January 10, 1989, Washington, D.C) says “Ultimately, information literate people are those who have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, how to find information and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them. They are people for prepared for lifelong learning, because they can always find the information needed for any task or decision at hand”.

Importance of Information literacy has been summed up by bound as “Information Literacy is a prerequisite for participative citizenship, social inclusion, the creation of new knowledge, personal empowerment and learning for life”. We see that importance of information literacy as follows

- Information literature is important to understand the difficult question of ownership of information and copyright
- Students should learn to respect author's right
- To be an independent lifelong learner it is essential to achieve a high level of information literacy
- Information literacy is to help close the gap between the information poor the information rich
- Information literacy is required to have a critical thinking approach, that has would lead to economic and cultural progress of nation
- A sheer abundance of information in electronic format has made information literacy increasingly important
- To be an independent lifelong learner it is essential to achieve a high level of information literacy

- Equal opportunities among citizens are important. one of the ultimate benefits of information literacy's to help to close the gap between the information poor and information rich.
- Information literacy is required to have critical thinking approach that leads to the progress of nation.
- information literacy is required for democracy
- A sheer abundance of information in electronic format has made information literacy increasingly important. Traditional print resources could be subjected to a quality assurance process. Whereas on line e resources in the form of web pages look like.' With the Internet sources, none of the quality assurance mechanisms can be assumed.
- Information literacy is also important to understand the difficult questions of ownership of information and copyright.
- Information literacy is a prerequisite for participative citizenship, social inclusion, and the creation of new knowledge, personal empowerment and learning for life.

There are some important aspects with regard to the role of librarians and libraries in Information Literacy. They are

- Although libraries and librarians are unique qualified to support and teach information literacy skills, information literacy is not just a library issue. Because it enables students to be lifelong learners and critical thinkers, it is a fundamental principle of higher education.
- The new pedagogic paradigm emphasizes the empowerment of students and encourages them to take control of their own learning. The student becomes a coach, the teacher-centered university becomes a learners-centered educational environment, and teaching is transformed into the design and management of learning experiences. The new learner's environment for students has a significant impact on academic libraries because they play a central role in the transformation of the learning environment.
- Libraries provide excitement of penetrating sympathy and aroused understanding quench thirst for more knowledge serve as dominant custodians of imagination provoke increased desire to understand to provide details of science and art introduces engagement, reasoned activity ability to concentrate.
- Libraries will take an effective role in understanding the need of their customers, the learners. They need to know how people learn and how the provision of information and information resources contributes to learning.
- Libraries should serve not only as repository of information and place for quiet contemplation but should be a dynamic gateway to information. As such, they should provide active laboratory for students and faculty to explore investigates and retrieves information wherever it may be found locally or virtually.
- Libraries act as partners in information literacy education. ALA, 1989 reports that "Information Literacy is a survival skill in the Information Age". They should be able

to take a lead role in developing and delivering learning support strategies to ensure the true meaning of Information Literacy.

- Librarians act as computer literacy mentors. They should be able to assist users in two core skill areas. One is the World Wide Web (WWW) and the second is library databases as database builders. They should provide access to completed studies and researches.
- Librarians are excellent guides in determining sources that are available. They should provide users with limitless warehouse of information. As able troubleshooters, they should possess and practice a medium of technical expertise, trouble shooting skills and assist users in interpreting incorrect messages or how to get out of a problematic solution.
- The librarian must not only be proficient with the wide range of information technologies available today, but they must be able to work with teachers to install information literacy skills in their students.
- It is also very important for librarians to keep up with developments in Telecommunications, Information Storage and Retrieval, Computer applications and instructional design.

Since librarians work in a service-oriented organization, the new roles being played now should also be integrated with total quality service. The philosophy of service quality centers on continuous quality enhancement. Continuous quality enhancement is continuous process improvement which involves improving effectiveness, efficiency and excellence leading to total quality service.

Information Literacy programme in Academic libraries

- To acquaint the users with the power of internet
- To show the usefulness of various web resources
- To acquaint the users with various search techniques
- To establish a direct interaction between users and library professionals
- To explain the necessity of bibliographical citations
- To recognize and communicate information in all formats
- To inculcate the ability to apply the principles of scholarly communication to the problems of information handling
- To infuse the ability to locate and select appropriate information
- To create confidence in communicating, instructing and educating the users

Why Information Literacy programmes are essential in academic libraries

Information and Communication technology is increasing in the contemporary environment of rapid technological change and proliferation of information resources. Because of the escalating complexity of this environment, individuals are faced with diverse and abundant information choices. The librarians need to enhance their ICT skills not only to help their

guests but also to survive in the competitive world, for which they need to update their ICT skills.

The following are the requisites for successful implementation of information literacy programmes

- To increase the availability of resources in the libraries
- To need more support from their authorities
- To require additional staff members
- To improve computer support service
- To recognize the importance of staff and their roles by the faculty
- To acquire additional training in this background
- To construct strategies for locating information
- To recognize a need for information
- To locate and access information
- To evaluate information obtained from different sources
- To organize apply and communicate information
- To support and interact with knowledge resources
- To accept change and adopt new technological developments

Information literacy programme is considered to be very important especially in academic institutions. Schools, colleges and universities have taken it up as one of the most important part of education. With the collaboration of the faculty, the librarians have to play a pivotal role in developing information skills through their user education programmes. But the librarians are still facing problems because of the lack of collaboration from the authorities and the faculty of their respective institutions.

Information Literacy Training Programmes

Libraries should organize Information Literacy Training Programme for their users to help them to navigate their information by creating pathfinders and offering training sessions on how to formulate their search strategies, use various e-resources, databases, etc. therefore training is essential for all the staff members in the concerned institutions. The staff members must be encouraged and deputed to attend continuing education programmes for their skill enhancement to be able to use ICT skills to the fullest extent in developing digital collection and delivering qualitative library services.

Some of the problems while implementing Information Literacy Programme

- Lack of resources to organize information literacy programmes
- Librarians cannot come out of their routine work
- No guidelines and instructions from the government for implementing information literacy programme

- To propagate and create information literacy programmes in this way
- Implementing information literacy to fresh users by designing national information literacy policies, standards and framework. Preparing a model curriculum for information literacy
- Frequently conducting workshops/seminars to upgrade the information literacy knowledge and skills of both librarians and users
- Carrying out surveys and studies about the usefulness of information literacy
- Collaborating efforts between librarian and staff to promote information literacy programme

Recommendations to implement information literacy programmes in Academic Libraries

- Library professionals should be encouraged by the authorities to attend seminars, workshops, training/ orientation programmes
- They should be provided requisite financial benefits for rendering highly technical and modern library services to the users
- To introduce IPL programmes in the curriculum wherever possible
- Collaboration with the college faculty, students, and administrators in promoting information literacy programmes
- The management should stress the need for faculty members to join in teaching information literacy skills
- Co-ordination between the teaching and the librarians is required to implement the information literacy programme

Conclusion

As the technological revolution or the other global revolutions, the information revolution has affected our information society. Latest information technologies affected deeply the information literacy innovation in the which the role of libraries and librarians were really important. Thus, to meet the need of users as well as to deal with the rapid development of information technology all the library professionals have to update themselves with the latest ICT and to educate the users with information literacy for the success of library and satisfaction of users. Thus libraries and librarians are truly and significant contributors to the success of their organizations or institutions, as well as active partners in information literacy for lifelong learning.

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