INFORMATION LITERACY COMPETENCY :
# THE NEED OF THE HOUR

K Padmini

"We want that education by which Character is formed Strength of mind is increased
The intellect is expanded And by which One can stand on one's own feet" -
Swami Vivekananda

Only Information Literacy (IL) will fulfill the wish of Swami Vivekananda.   Information is available through libraries, community resources, special interest organizations, media, and the Internet—and increasingly, information comes to individuals in unfiltered formats, raising questions about its authenticity, validity, and reliability. In addition, information is available through multiple media, including graphical, aural, and textual, and these pose new challenges for individuals in evaluating and understanding it. The uncertain quality and expanding quantity of information pose large challenges for society. The sheer abundance of information will not in itself create a more informed citizenry without a complementary cluster of abilities necessary to use information effectively, and that cluster of abilities known as Information Literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning.   It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education.

Information Literacy and Information Technology: Information literacy is related to information technology skills, but has broader implications for the individual, the educational system, and for society. 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. Information literate individuals necessarily develop some technology skills.

1.   Need for IL:

- It is the solution to Data Smog.

- It allows us to cope by giving us the skills to know when we need information and where to locate it effectively and efficiently.

- It includes the technological skills needed to use the modern library as a gateway to information.

- It enables us to analyze and evaluate the information we find.

- Gives confidence in using information to make a decision or create a product.

Impact of IL
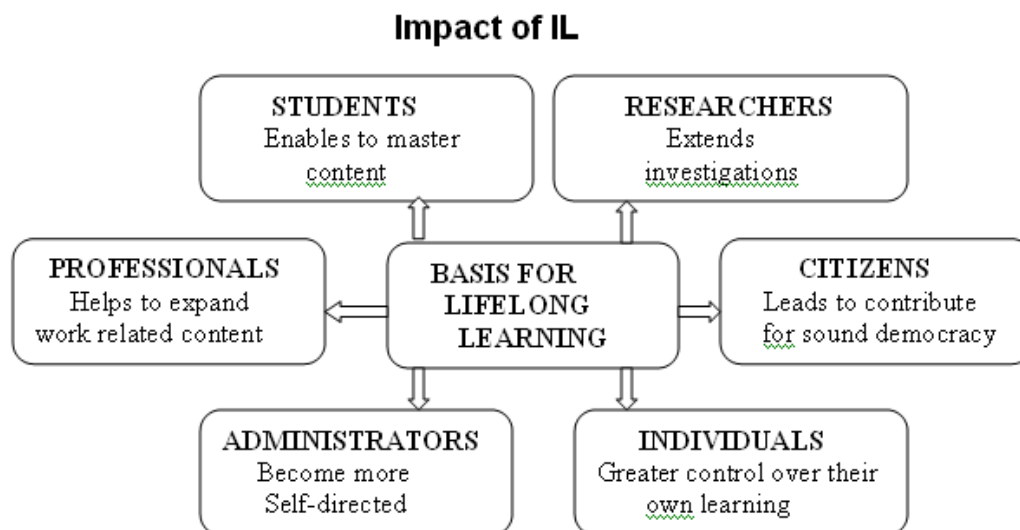
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To improve IL competency proper training is essential.   5 'P's are to be remembered while providing that training.

Right Phase

Information literacy is receiving an increasing importance in the contemporary environment of rapid technological change and proliferating information resources. Because of the escalating complexity of this environment, individuals are faced with diverse, abundant information choices—in their academic studies, in the workplace, and in their personal lives.   Hence, the under graduate level would be the Right Phase to impart IL training.

Right Place

By ensuring that individuals have the intellectual abilities of reasoning and critical thinking, and by helping them construct a framework for learning how to learn, colleges and universities provide the foundation for continued growth throughout their careers, as well as in their roles as informed citizens and members of communities. Information literacy is a key component of, and contributor to, lifelong learning. Information literacy competency extends learning beyond formal classroom settings and provides practice with self-directed investigations as individuals move into internships, first professional positions, and increasing responsibilities in all arenas of life.   Hence, Higher education institutions are the Right Places to impart IL training.

Right Patrons

IL is not just for college students but all of us, as professionals, in the workplace and in our personal lives. Being information literate ultimately improves our quality of life as we make informed decisions when buying a house, choosing a school, hiring staff, making an investment, voting for our representatives, and so much more. Information Literacy is, in fact, the basis of a sound democracy.

Right Persons

IL training requires the collaborative efforts of the trinity of faculty, librarians, and administrators. Through lectures and by leading discussions, faculty establishes the context for learning. Faculty has to take the responsibility of inspiring the students to explore the unknown, offer guidance on how best to fulfill information needs, and monitor students' progress.

Academic librarians coordinate the evaluation and selection of intellectual resources for programs and services; organize, and maintain collections and many points of access to information; and provide instruction to students and faculty who seek information.

Administrators have to shoulder the responsibility of creating opportunities for collaboration and staff development among faculty, librarians, and other professionals who initiate information literacy programs, lead in planning and budgeting for those programs, and provide ongoing resources to sustain them.

Right Procedure

To achieve competency in IL, institutions need to follow suitable procedures, like introducing it in the course curriculum, collaborate with the library, and maintain good public relations with the administrations at various levels to develop the required conducive environment.

Standards

The institutions, which aim to achieve competency in IL need to introduce standards. The standards tool kit is a set of tools, web pages and other resources that will help in using the IL competency standards for Higher education. Some such sources are listed below:

- http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/objectivesinfromation.htm   gives step-by-step introduction to each of the 5 standards.
- http://www.big6.com   provides a systematic approach to information problem solving.

Some institutions at international level, which are listed below initiated this training program of IL.

- http://www.canisius.edu/
- http://www.ncpublicschools.org
- http://www.uen.org
- http://ilp.anu.edu.au
- http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=19812&URL_DO=DO_TOPI

How to achieve IL competency?

- Student centered teaching methods as problem based learning, evidence based learning, and inquiry learning are to be emphasized.
- Achieving competency in IL requires an understanding that this cluster of abilities is not extraneous to the curriculum but is woven into the curriculum's content, structure, and sequence.
- Collaborative efforts of faculty, librarians, and administrators are highly essential.

- Institutions have to review their missions and educational goals to determine how IL would improve learning and enhance the institutions' effectiveness.

- Faculty and staff development is also important to facilitate acceptance of the concept.

- Introducing training programs in libraries with training sessions, workbooks, online tutorials, and library guides.

Finally it can be concluded by projecting the opinion, "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 prepared for lifelong learning, because they can always find the information needed for any task or decision at hand." This is the view of the American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy (January 10, 1989, Washington, D.C.).

2. References

1. http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl
2. http://www.wlma.org

About Author

Dr. K Padmini is working as Associate Professor in Dept. of Lib. Inf. Science, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, Andhrapradesh. She guided a quite number of Ph.Ds and M.Phils scholars. She has published her publications in both at national and international conferences. She is a life member of ILA, IASLIC, SIS, APLA & IATLIS.