

---

---

# ROLE OF LIS PROFESSIONALS IN THE E-INFORMATION LITERACY IN DIGITAL ERA

A. Jaya Prakash

V. Krishnama Charya

## Abstract

*We are living in the information age. Information is the basic requirement for every human activity and it is important as food, air and water. Information in itself has no value, but its value lies in its communication and use.*

*Information Literacy is the key competency for the Information age. Every person has a fundamental right to information literacy and information access. It is a necessity for all students, staff and faculty to be accomplished information users. Information literacy is key characteristics of life long learning and an essential element of higher education. Promoting information literacy skills at all levels of education is the collective responsibility of teachers, librarians and administrators. The paper discussed the concept of information literacy and the role of LIS professionals in promoting electronic information literacy in Digital Libraries.*

**Keywords:** Information Literacy, Role of LIS professionals in information literacy, Methods of information literacy.

## 1. Introduction

With the advances in information and communication technologies the libraries are now changing to what may be called virtual or digital libraries. It has affected significantly the nature of delivery of library resources and services. The traditional concepts of organization, bibliographic description and dissemination of information are to be fine-tuned to the new environment by the library and information professionals. So the LIS professionals working in the environment have to face challenges. Hence it becomes important for the patrons/clients also to develop skill in information literacy so that they can identify, evaluate and use the relevant information effectively.

Information literacy is the key competency for the information age. It is valuable as more widely accepted concepts such as computer literacy and medial literacy. Every person has a fundamental right to information literacy and the information access.

In modern era, information in the digital form is rapidly replacing the traditional printed counter parts, resulting in increased computer skills, processing tools and fast communication network connectivity. Digital information or e-information is more abstract dynamic in comparison to printed form. Hence understanding of how to enhance its value and its interaction becomes an important prerequisite for the users in the information society.

In this digital age, users need to more information literate than ever before, while internet, e-mail, www can contain valid and accurate information, its very nature encourages quick and easy self publication. Without editorial or academic review the content is often low quality and there is a need for users to be able to recognize and access authentic and useful resources. Many users fail to properly locate, evaluate and, use Internet based information due to lack of understanding of issues surrounding the nature and structure of internet. Further more, users need to be able to precisely identify and communicate their information needs to clarify a subject or area.

- 
- The need of information literacy may be essential due to the following reasons.
  - Rapid increase in the stream of information due to information revolution.
  - Advent of information and communication technologies.
  - Vast variety of information sources.
  - Changing shape of libraries.
  - Wide dispersal of information.
  - Increase in number of users.
  - Research on complex and interdisciplinary topics.

## **2. Information Literacy**

The word 'Literacy' has been linked with cultural literacy, Information literacy, Library literacy and technological literacy, recently also with digital literacy and multimedia literacy. Traditionally, literacy as a basic concept has been defined as the ability to read and write. Information literacy is the ability to identify, evaluate organize and use the information judiciously.

According to American Library Association Information Literacy as 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". ALA also states that "Information Literacy is a survival skill in the information age". Information literacy forms the basis for life long learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environment, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to master content and external their investigations, become more self-directed and assume greater control over their own learning".

Information Literacy in 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 all the skills (competencies) that are required for the effective and maximum use of information.

Information literacy is an essential component in the educational development of each student. The research process has become increasingly challenging with technology contributing to information overload. Students should be aware of the range of print and electronic resources, including networked databases, the World Wide Web and traditional print resources. They need to be prepared to evaluate and make informed choices about the best sources for their needs. Every institution should foster optional use of its learning resources through strategies designed to help students develop information literacy (the ability to locate, evaluate and use information in order to become independent learners). It is essential to have an active and continuing program of library orientation and instruction in accessing information developed collaboratively and supported actively by faculty, librarians, academicians and other information provides.

## **3. Role of LIS Professionals in Information Literacy in Electronic Era**

In the era of Information technology, Information Storage and retrieval has become unbelievable. Information can be accessed remotely. Globalization of technology and increase in quantity of information from all sources of information like various types of documents media and internet have raised question about information authenticity credibility and reliability. The uncertain quality and expending quantity of information poses large challenges to information users and information science professionals. In this situation only dissemination of information is not only sufficient, the user of information centre should be taught to

---

make the best option provided to them to enhance their knowledge as well as associate knowledge skills to perform a particular task. Information science professionals should teach the user to go beyond the physical boundaries of library to seek knowledge and quickly learn to use other learning resources like internet facilities etc.,.

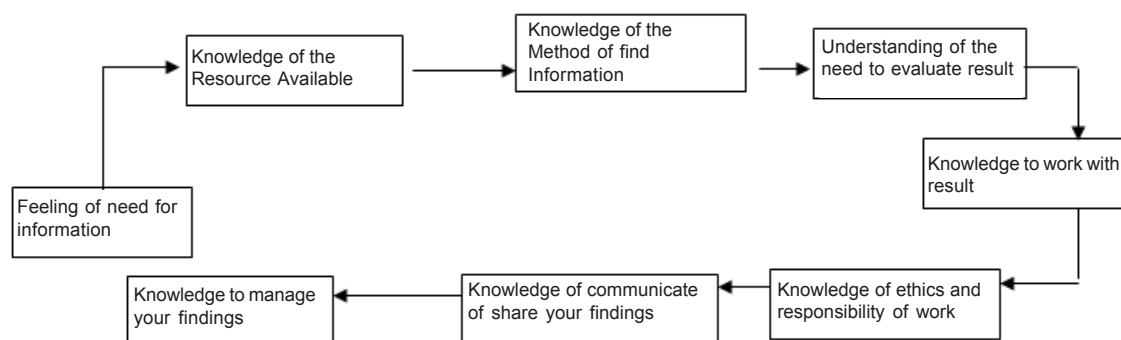
Library has become the centre point of resource – based learning and the role of librarian is changing radically with shifts of education paradigms. The new paradigm emphasizes the empowerment of students and encourages them to take control of their own learning. The students become the learner and the teacher becomes the facilitator. The teacher centered school becomes a learner centered school.

In the teacher – centered learning environment, the librarian was the organizer and guardian of the Library, but now he must actively participate in planning of curriculum, resources and the teaching programmes. Role of the teacher has changed to a more facilitating nature than imparting knowledge. Teacher has only to guide the students while the librarian has to help the students with their independent learning tasks based on resources.

LIS professionals have to play a significant role to promote information literacy in society. There exists a gap between Librarians and the users information needs. To bridge this gap they need to educate and re-educate themselves to acquire new skills and competencies for a new role and they need to cultivate the concept of life long learning of information literacy skills. LIS professionals need to play an important role in the education process by making people aware of a need and motivating the use of information a new knowledge and a new ability. Many Librarians have to identify the best suited mixture of computer knowledge and skills and subject knowledge to produce effective program for educational pursuits. They “must encourage students to question their findings every step of the way in the research process, especially as new formats are made available”. Librarians must build new paradigms and frames of analysis, including new language. They must accept that they are educator and knowledge managers first and foremost.

Traditionally library professionals used to provide guidance to the users of the library on making use of the various bibliographic tools like catalogue, indexes and abstracts, so that a user himself can find out the required source of information. This was known as Bibliographic Instruction. The important intension behind Bibliographic instruction was that the user would develop a capacity to find required resources by oneself later on. Even now the scenario is the same. But the information resources available are of multifarious kinds are in abundance. The resources range from printed documents, e-resources, WebPages, online databases of full text journals and other multimedia format. In this age of flooding information also librarians are able to tell the users regarding the potential resources, build up suitable devices to help in searching the relevant sources and to an extent help the user in evaluating the retrieved resources. Hence the role of librarians is confined to educate the users to take advantage of the new and emerging technologies.

### Role of librarians in Imparting Information Literacy



There is another view among professional librarians that the era of bibliographic instruction is over and today we cannot expect clients to come over to the library in order to get a product. Modern service economy in which we all must now operate, the professional librarianship will simply not survive unless we wake up and provide the users with the tailor made information products. They also fear that our role will be taken over by others who are more accommodative and ready to provide the required service.

#### 4. Methods of Information Literacy Programme

Today information has become a major economic commodity and citizens need to be educated for productive information use from pre-school through post-secondary education. Libraries and Librarians play an important role in the education of people for effective and efficient information use by teaching them information skills at all levels of education to enable them to be informed citizens of the country. Information literacy is considered as a powerful weapon for lifelong learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments and to all levels of education it enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed and assure greater control over their own learning. There are two components of the course information literacy. One is orientation, which is primarily concerned with the way of introducing the users to the general techniques of library usage and services available and to the organization layout and facilities of a particular library. During orientation library staff deliver a lecture, which introduces the program, demonstrates the use of the catalogue and shows students how to access the self-paced on-line tutorial. Students work through the Library Catalogue unit of the tutorial and also complete an exercise. They are able to create a network account and configure an email account during one of their orientation week sessions.

Other is instruction that is concerned with learning to make use of the information resources available with specific subject disciplines. It consists of library staff demonstrating CD ROM network and Web-based databases, and searching the internet using search engines and subject gateways.

#### 5. Methods Used for Advancement of Information Literacy

- Lectures
- Seminars and demonstrations
- Printed guides and books newsletters, promotional leaflets describing systems and databases, database user manual, thesauri, text books.
- Audio visual material like video tapes films and audio cassettes.

- 
- Individual instructions.
  - Online course/tutorials.

The online course/tutorials can again be divide into two main parts.

Orientation is concerned with enabling the users to learn the existence of computer based information retrieval and the services available i.e. where and how search can be carried out. Though orientation students show positive attitude towards internet use (on line information, sources) and the students are able to carry out online searches.

The online tutorial comprises of the following titles:

- Starting your search
- The Library catalogue
- Finding information on the internet
- Searching for periodical articles and using electronic resources

Power Point presentations used in the lectures may also be placed on the student computer network (electronic reserve) for later revision.

## **6. Advantages and Disadvantages of Information Literacy Methods**

Printed material has the advantage that it is one of the cheapest and the most effective method for searching. And it is available for use as and when required by the users. Students can work at their own and repetition is possible but the disadvantage is that it does not give the user the opportunity to experience interactive searching.

Lecture method is one of the traditional methods to educate large number of users. But it has the disadvantage that without proper equipment for display, the interactive element of online searching cannot be presented moreover the speed of delivery can not be controlled by the receiver and repetition is not possible unless print handouts are available.

Seminars and demonstrations are given to small number of users. The advantage is that the atmosphere is formal and there is interaction between students and library staff. The students can be motivated. But the problem is that in the absence of source materials students are not able to learn the use of specific tools for information retrieval.

Audiovisual materials are used effectively for demonstrating the online searching. They are able to show moving images generated in computer search so creating a feeling of reality. Material prepared carefully can be used many times. These methods can be used even when the host computer/node/telecommunication lines are down. But the disadvantage is that they do not allow the students personally to experience the interactive capacity of computer based information retrieval system.

The online training enables the students to carry out information searches on line. They are able to understand the concept of information retrieval better, but it involves high cost.

No single method of promoting information literacy is effective. Choice of training method depends not only on the learning effects but also on resources , equipment, cost of use, etc. so the method should be chosen after assessing the resources a of the organization and evaluation of the methods in the scenario.

---

## 7. Conclusion

The information society is witnessing vast and ever increasing quantities of information embodied in a variety of formats and unprecedented advancement of technology. To lead a successful life is inevitable for the students to be information competent. Therefore, it is one of the urgent tasks of the educational institutions to help the students to develop this competency and become information wise citizens of information and technology society.

In digital era, the role of library professional is changing. There is a specific role for library professional to play in matching the user with correct information source. Library professionals with their expertise, knowledge and techniques of where to look up and how to find out information for given query can help the users in their search for information by extending personal help and assistance. Library professionals should acquire such skills in handling the information sources and users tactfully and render satisfactory information service in the fast changing digital library environment.

A few strategies which can be considered for the inductive of information literacy programmes at various levels are given below:

- Government should make efforts in preparing policy guidelines and standards at national level and should come out with the NILP and establish the National Task Force to monitor the information literacy programmes.
- To conduct national and regional level seminars , work shops, conferences be organized to redefine and restating the role of information literacy in the growing digital environment.
- Launching a dedicated information literacy websites to facilitate the sharing of resources and where the information regarding information literacy programmes can be made available.
- Every library of information centre in our country should be attached with Internet and should create a home page. Technologies such as e-mail and web provides tremendous opportunities for library and information scientists to delivery information to the desktop of our users.

To conclude, apart from the skills of reading and writing, the students of 21<sup>st</sup> century need more complex and analytical skills. The technological tools of information age computer networks, tele-communication system, digital information resources and databases have put an unprecedented volume of information at in finger tips. In Indian universities, in spite of the fairly good exposure of younger generation to modern technology, there are still some inherent difficulties like lack of knowledge of how information is organize, unawareness of search strategies, retrieval techniques etc., Further the students are hardly able to make distinction between internet sources and electronic information sources. Therefore, it is necessary to teach the students to acquaint with what is available , when to use it and how to find it. Information literacy is one such potential toll that empowers all learners. Information is the life blood of democracy and it is considered as the vital sources of power. But the real information power lies in having the right information at the right time for the right purpose which is the quitness of five laws of Library and Information Science.

## 8. References

1. Ivery (Ruth), Information Literacy: how do librarians and academics work in partnership to effective learning programmes Australian Academic and research libraries, 34(2); June 2002.

- 
2. Rader (hannelore B), Information Literacy: an emerging global priority. White paper prepared for UNESCO, the national Commission on Libraries and Information Science and the National Forum on Information Literacy, for the Information Literacy Meeting of Experts, Prague July, 2002.
  3. Bawden (D), Information and digital literacies: a review of concepts, *Journal of Documentation* 57(2) 2001.
  4. Vengan, R. Digital Library: A challenge to library and information professionals, INFLIBNET: Caliber-2000. Chennai.
  5. Doyle (C S), Information literacy in an information society: a concept for information age, Syracuse New York, ERIC Clearing House on Information technology, 1994.
  6. Pastine Maureen D "integrating library use skills into the general education curriculum with additional commentary" *the Reference Librarian*, 1995.
  7. Siltonen Leena 1996. Information Literacy: Gaps between Concept and applications proceedings of 62<sup>nd</sup> IFLA General Conference; August 25-31.

**About Authors**

**Sh. A. Jaya Prakash** is working as Librarian Assistant in University Library, Kakatiya University. Warangal.

**Sh. V. Krishnama Charya** is working as Librarian Assistant in University Library, Kakatiya University. Warangal.