



Navigating the digital age: The role of librarians in promoting information literacy

Mohamed Riyaz

Librarian, Department of Library and Information Centre, A.R.M. First Grade College, S. Nijalingappa Layout, Davangere, Karnataka, India

Abstract

Information literacy is increasingly recognized as essential in today's information landscape. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the concept of information literacy, with the goal of cultivating information-literate librarians. Information literacy encompasses a range of skills that librarians must possess to effectively locate, retrieve, analyze, and utilize information. It is closely associated with lifelong learning, critical thinking, and the educational principle of learning how to learn. The advancement of information technology and telecommunications has created numerous avenues and tools for accessing, processing, and disseminating information, thereby raising the bar for the information literacy skills needed to navigate this information-rich environment. This paper highlights the significance of information literacy, explores its various dimensions, discusses the librarian's role in fostering information literacy, and outlines the skills and standards necessary for an information-literate individual.

Keywords: Information literacy, information skills, information retrieval, information literacy, sources.

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, we are inundated with information, yet we face significant challenges such as fake news, propaganda, and misinformation propagated through social media. This environment has rendered digital tools increasingly difficult to navigate. As educators, it is our duty to equip our students with a crucial skill known as Information Literacy, enabling them to become adept at discerning and utilizing information effectively, thus fostering lifelong learning. How many of our students truly understand the mechanics behind platforms like Google, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, and their implications in our society? The Business Dictionary defines Information Literacy as the ability to identify problems related to information needs and to systematically search for, locate, apply, and synthesize information while evaluating the entire process for effectiveness and efficiency. The American Library Association further elaborates that Information Literacy encompasses the skills necessary for individuals to recognize when information is required and to locate, evaluate, and utilize that information proficiently. In our current age, information literacy is not just important; it is essential, representing one of the key competencies of the 21st century and a vital aspect of Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills. It enhances our critical thinking abilities and empowers us to make informed decisions regarding the information we encounter. While our schools are staffed with educators specializing in subjects like Math, Science, and Language Arts, there is often a lack of dedicated instructors for teaching Information Literacy skills. From my observations, many students struggle with research and data collection, exhibit little interest in reading, and often lack understanding of how to properly credit or acknowledge the work of others. These challenges have motivated me to delve deeper into the subject, leading me to design lessons and activities focused on enhancing information literacy and fostering a love for reading.

Information literacy, a term first coined in 1974 by Zurkowske, the president of the US Information Industry Association, is a multifaceted concept that has continuously evolved over time. Various experts in the field have endeavored to define and explain the intricacies of information literacy through its different dimensions such as library literacy, media literacy, computer literacy, network literacy, and digital literacy. As a comprehensive skill set, information literacy entails the proficiency to identify problems, seek information, analyze data, and effectively utilize this information for the betterment of end users. It encompasses the ability to discern the necessity of information, locate pertinent sources, critically evaluate content, integrate findings, and convey information coherently. In essence, information literacy is about being knowledgeable about information itself and mastering a range of skills essential for information acquisition and utilization. This proficiency is crucial in the modern world where the ability to navigate complex information landscapes is paramount, highlighting the significance of being information literate for personal success and societal progress. The importance of information literacy, as encapsulated by Bundy, lies in its role as a foundational element for active citizenship, social integration, knowledge creation, self-empowerment, and lifelong learning. Ultimately, information literacy forms the basis for a thinking community that can thrive and adapt in an increasingly intricate information environment, underscoring its indispensable value in contemporary society.

Importance of Information Literacy

As the world experiences a tremendous increase in information through the unprecedented information explosion and the rapid expansion of internet services, individuals, particularly students and society as a whole, are encountering challenges in locating, evaluating, utilizing, and disseminating information effectively. This phenomenon, often referred to as data smog, underscores

the idea that an overwhelming amount of information can prove to be a hindrance in our daily lives. To navigate this vast sea of data, special skills are essential for students and society, enabling them to harness information for educational and economic purposes efficiently. Information literacy emerges as a key solution to combat data smog, empowering individuals to discern when information is needed, where to find it, and how to leverage it optimally. Through honing these information literacy skills, individuals can enhance decision-making processes and improve overall productivity, ultimately benefitting society at large. Universities and schools play a crucial role in fostering these crucial skills by integrating information literacy into the curriculum. Collaborating with library professionals, academic personnel, and administrative staff, institutions can successfully equip students with the necessary tools to thrive in an era dominated by vast amounts of data and information.

ICT and Information Literacy

In today's continuously evolving digital landscape, the abundance of information has reached unprecedented levels and is poised to undergo exponential growth in the foreseeable future. This monumental influx of data is vividly exemplified by a staggering 10,60,000 web pages that populate search results when querying 'Information Literacy' on Google. At the heart of this information deluge lies the concept of information literacy, a multifaceted skill set that not only encompasses information retrieval but also branches out to encompass crucial aspects such as evaluation, organization, and the adept utilization of information to foster fresh insights and knowledge. Against the backdrop of the increasingly intricate challenges posed by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), it is evident that university librarians and other members of library staff must adeptly leverage ICT tools to effectively discharge their professional obligations within this shifting landscape.

Therefore, it is crucial for these individuals to develop not only their traditional literacy skills but also to establish a strong foundation in basic computer literacy. Librarians are not only required to adapt to this change but also to demonstrate strong leadership skills in guiding the transition of their libraries from traditional, control-focused organizations to modern, user-centered information centers driven by value. The changing expectations and needs of library patrons require librarians to move beyond their traditional roles as information caretakers and to become active facilitators of knowledge dissemination and key collaborators in enhancing information accessibility and comprehension for the benefit of their user communities. As guardians and mentors in this ever-growing information landscape, librarians are on the brink of a significant transformation, where their roles will increasingly depend on their ability to leverage technological advancements while remaining committed to their fundamental task of being sources of knowledge in a time characterized by an abundance and fluidity of information.

Role of librarians in information literacy

The landscape of libraries has been transformed by advancements in Information and Communication Technologies. Libraries now serve as hubs for resource-based learning, marking a significant shift in the role of

librarians within evolving education paradigms. The transition from text-centric to resource-centric learning necessitates a greater reliance on library materials, as well as a growing demand for diverse media resources encompassing both print and non-print formats. Information has emerged as a vital economic asset in today's society. Librarians are tasked with the responsibilities of sourcing, acquiring, disseminating, and tracking a wide array of information resources, which may encompass tasks such as database searches, interlibrary loans, monitoring internet newsgroups, and maintaining computerized library information systems. These duties call for managerial proficiency and strong information literacy skills. Information literacy is essential for all individuals to effectively utilize information for productive purposes. Librarians and libraries play a vital role in educating individuals to become informed citizens by teaching them valuable information skills across all levels of education. Librarians are tasked with curating age-appropriate and age-specific literature, while also exploring online and electronic sources to meet the diverse information needs of their patrons.

Acquisitions and selection criteria take on a new significance when considering access to online services, as traditional measures for evaluating materials may not be applicable to internet sites. New paradigms for selection and evaluation are necessary with the emergence of new technologies and their integration into the classroom and resource center. Librarians play a crucial role in implementing resource-based programs, as they have the expertise to design an information literacy curriculum tailored to readers' abilities. They are well-versed in new information technologies and have experience in utilizing information-finding tools, enabling them to effectively incorporate new tools such as the World Wide Web. Librarians must recognize their skills as educators and managers of knowledge, positioning them as leaders in fostering an information literate community. It is imperative for library and information science professionals to advocate for information literacy in society by bridging the gap between librarians and users' information needs. This can be achieved through continuous education and upskilling to adapt to new roles and actively promote lifelong learning of information literacy skills. LIS professionals have a critical role to play in raising awareness and encouraging the utilization of information literacy for the betterment of society.

Conclusion

Libraries play a crucial role in addressing the information needs of their users. In today's society, the flow of information and knowledge significantly influences overall progress. Therefore, easy access to this information is vital. Libraries serve as foundational pillars of education. Information literacy, or IL, acts as the essential framework that supports the broad field of knowledge and information. The relationship among education, libraries, information, and IL is strong and interconnected. As stated in the fifth law of library science, a library is a growing organism. This idea reflects that libraries must adapt to new opportunities and shifts in society. Traditional roles of librarians are no longer sufficient. Modern librarians must innovate and stay current with new technologies and methods. This approach is necessary to meet the changing needs of library users effectively.

In the context of today's libraries, it is crucial for librarians to recognize the importance of information literacy. This involves teaching users how to find, evaluate, and use information effectively. When libraries prioritize information literacy, they enhance their ability to fulfill their mission. This focus not only helps patrons but also ensures the longevity and relevance of libraries in an ever-evolving landscape.

Librarians must embrace their role as educators, guiding users in navigating vast amounts of information. By fostering a culture of learning and information literacy, libraries can better serve their communities. They must engage with users and provide resources that promote critical thinking. As information continues to grow, libraries must ensure they remain a trusted source for knowledge and a hub for lifelong learning.

Information literacy (IL) serves as a strategic framework designed to support and meet the needs of users. It plays a crucial role in libraries, employing a wide range of techniques and skills that integrate the latest technological advancements and networking capabilities. These tools enhance the processes of searching for, managing, manipulating, and retrieving information. Information literacy encompasses a series of procedures that include identifying, locating, storing, recording, retrieving, and assessing information gathered from various sources. Ultimately, this process leads to the creation of new knowledge or insights.

Historically, librarians have acted as providers of information and managers of knowledge. Their main duties and responsibilities have remained consistent since libraries first began. However, with the rise of new technologies, the methods and forms of library services have transformed dramatically. As a result, librarians are now seeking innovative strategies to meet the evolving expectations of their users, and the promotion of information literacy programs stands out as one of these initiatives. The significant growth of technology and the abundance of information have reshaped the entire educational environment, requiring librarians to adapt their approaches accordingly.

Information abundance and technological advancement have created a confusion and dilemma among the information seekers. Searching, locating, assessing, analysis of needed information within the stipulated time is difficult. In the vast area of information, reliability and credibility is a question. Without proper training and practice, users can't proceed effectively and efficiently. Application of IL program is started to face these problems. An information literate person can recognize when an information is needed, he knows the organization of the knowledge base, can surf and navigate in information pool productively and can filter the desired information, can use the captured information to create new knowledge or to incorporate new knowledge in the existing information field. IL make people self-reliable and cater to lifelong learning, promotes problem-solving efficiency, reasoning ability, contribute to academic success and professional competency. Hence, IL is vital in surviving in the modern information age and is critical for the existence of both librarians and the users.

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