

## LITERACY CONCEPTS IN THE LIS : INFORMATION LITERACY AND CAPABILITY BUILDING

By

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### Introduction

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 efforts to develop life long learners. The present Information Society is a Learning Society. The ever changing life style, practices and fascinating changes that are taking place in all walks of life necessitates the incessant learning practice. Higher education in general and professional education in particular strive hard to ensure the enhancement of learners 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 learners their role as informed citizens and members of the community. Effective execution of this objective calls for promoting information Literacy. Information Literacy is a key component and contributor to life long learning. Its competencies extend learning beyond formal class room setting and provides practice with self directed investigations from the initial stages to the final stage to understand the role and responsibility of the learners.

### Information and its abundance

Information is available through libraries, community resources, special interest organizations, media and Internet. Most often this information is reaching the user as unfiltered one. Question about its authenticity, validity and reliability is often rised. Further it is available in multiple media, including graphical. aural, textual which poses

problems in evaluation. Uncertain quality and expanding quantity always creates problems and challenges for society. It should be noted that, the abundance of information will not create informed citizenry without a complementary cluster of abilities to use information effectively.

Library is the starting platform for promoting information literacy programme. Basically education for children should have the objective of teaching to locate, identify and organize the needed information and then to present it in the proper context.

### **What of Information Literacy**

Information Literacy is set of abilities requiring individuals to; “recognize when information is needed, have ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information”. (ALA Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report, 1989).

Information Literacy is becoming increasingly important in the present scenario of rapid proliferation of information sources. Because of the escalating complexity of this environment, individuals are faced with diverse and abundant information choices in their studies, workplace and their personal life.

### **Characteristic features of Information literacy**

Information Literacy enables the person to;

- Recognise the accurate and complete information as the basis for intelligent decision making.
- Recognise the exact need for information.
- Formulate the questions based on information needs.
- Identify the potential information source.
- Develop appropriate search strategy.
- Access the information sources using technology.
- Evaluate information.

- Organise the information for practical application.
- Integrate new information into the existing fabric of knowledge.
- Use of information in critical thinking and problem solving activities.

(Doyle, C.S.(1992). Outcome measures for information literacy within the National education goals of 1990. )

### **Origin of Information Literacy**

The term Information Literacy was first used in 1974 by Paul Zurkowski, President, Information Industry Association. According to him information literate people are those who are trained in the application of information resources to their work. They have learned techniques and skills for utilizing the wide range to tools as well as primary sources in finding information solution to their problems. Information Literacy forms the basis for life long learning. It includes IT skill such as use of computers, software applications, information retrieval tools etc,. IT skills have to be developed on a large scale due to the ever expanding Internet universe.

Information Literacy is also a broader area of competence that encompasses the content, analysis and communication of information which is the thrust area of information professionals. Information Literacy instructions must present the political, social, economic and cultural context in which knowledge is created and organised. To be information literate individual one must also be empowered to create knowledge and challenge dominant ideas when necessary. An information literate person needs to be aware of the obligation as a citizen in a democracy to make their voice heard, as well as critically critique on existing knowledge and information. This becomes more relevant in a developing country like India, where it is unusual to believe the successful survival of democracy in a much more exemplary way.

### **Growing importance of Information Literacy**

Over the years consistent efforts are being made all over the world to underline the significance of Information Literacy in school curriculum. Looking at the American economic history, it is noted that the school curriculum was viewed as a means for passing down to the student all the skills necessary for effective citizenship. In the information society it is essential to formulate fertile ground to build critical thinking and problem

solving skills along with the competence in information literacy among the students in the formative age itself. Information Literacy concepts need to develop in the context of school curriculum by appropriate restructuring and assessment so as to fulfill the mission of the education. There are set standards and norms to redesign the curriculum at all levels considering the available infrastructure. Because, information literacy augments student’s competency with evaluating, managing, and using information. Curriculum restructuring incorporating the everlasting teaching components is now seriously taken note of by the accrediting and assessment councils in all the countries.

Information literacy programme is not only concentrating on learning set of skills to make use of the print media, it also embraces the thinking in order to derive meaningful outcome from learning.

As it is a well established fact that technology has made enormous impact on information storing, sharing and transmission. Telecommunication is directing the whole progress. It is here the actual crisis arises; i.e., having the information literacy in telecommunication so as to learn when to use the on-line resources, how to use that information competently evaluate it as to accuracy and pertinence for each need and also to know how to use this information to communicate effectively. All this is required to survive in the present information age.

### **Literacy Concepts in Curriculum**

Strategic planning in incorporating literacy concepts in Library and Information Science curriculum considering the different levels of education goes a long way in giving new direction and dimension to LIS Profession. Imparting of literacy skills requires the collaborative efforts of the faculty, librarians and some selected experts/specialists. Incorporation of literacy concepts in the LIS curriculum is not an extra addition on teaching and training, but it is intertwined into the curriculum structure, content and sequence. This kind of integration helps in many ways to influence learner-centered teaching methods such as problem based learning, evidence based learning and inquiry learning. These enable the learners to reason out course content at a deeper level than is possible through the exclusive use of lectures and text books. Further, it facilitates using thinking skills by the learners to become skilled users of information sources in many locations and formats thereby increasing their responsibility for their own learning.

### **Information Literacy and capability building:**

The increasing role of knowledge as the main source of wealth is recognized by

almost all the nations of the world. Experts have very emphatically opined that over the last 125 years, the world has moved from an era of entrepreneurial capitalism to managerial capitalism to intellectual capitalism. Thinkers like Paul Zame Pilner, John Naisbit, Daniel Bell, Peter Drucker have predicted that the knowledge creates wealth. In his classic book *Unlimited Wealth: Theory and Practice of Economic Alchemy*, Mr. Paul Pilzer has come out with a very scientific formulation  $W=PT^n$ , where W=wealth, P= Physical resources, T=Technology and n= exponential. For that matter Alvin Toffler in his book advocated the shift of power from violence and money to information and knowledge.

Almost a decade and more, Dr. Savage has written a book entitled “Fifth generation management”. This book mainly deals with process of integrating the human organisation which is operating in a primitive style when compared to the present day technological advancement, particularly information technology. Dr. Savage opines that “ if we hope to achieve effective integration, we must make the transition from steep hierarchies to flatter networking organisations”.

Modern technology used in every field of activity is the result of very appropriate strategic and at the sometime cautious application of knowledge and information to produce the products and services required for the good of the human beings. It is also said that revolution eats its own children. And it is also true that the ill conceived technology prove to be highly dangerous t the growth of mankind. Dr. Savage hints at the need for information literacy which is implied in his writings which empowers the creative mind to optimum use the information for productivity and growth. In the process the conception knowledge as wealth indicates the capability of the information society than a pride possession. Well conceived knowledge is the human ability to see the complexity of growth and give the mankind new mastery over time and enables to network with one another.

## **Conclusion**

This workshop is infact, a kind of soul searching of the information professionals in enhancing our own capabilities and capacities by understanding threadbare the actual impact of information literacy. This is a kind of objective experimentation towards ‘visioning” and “knowledging’ paving the way for crystalise thinking. In every respect this workshop is most exiting and also eminently profitable for the all the library and information professionals in giving new insight and new directions in their professional activities in the information society.