

# **Empowering Information Literacy: The Transformative Role of Libraries in the Digital Age**

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## **Abstract**

In today's information age where information becomes the necessities of our basic life. Libraries' role in information literacy is to reduce the gap and to develop the literate community and it is also focused on the importance of the need for information literacy among the younger generation in the society. Libraries work accordingly to build a bridge between the user and the information sources by stimulating literacy skills among the users. The development of literacy skills is important for the effective use of materials in an ethical manner. It is the library's responsibility to encourage the users to acquire and evaluate the information. New technology skills help to tackle the advanced changes in society.

This article is on the Role of Libraries in Information Literacy, the introductory part consists of the need for information Literacy and the Libraries' contribution to providing Information Literacy covering the area of Academic, University, and Public Libraries. Another section in the article is on the skills development in libraries which is mainly focused on Information Literacy as lifelong learning. So information literacy is important to face the upcoming challenges and competitions towards its changes and to provide the right information, to the right user at the right time.

**Keywords:** Information Literacy, Lifelong learning, Libraries and librarians role, Academic libraries, University Libraries, Public Libraries

## **Introduction**

Due to the advances in technology and socio-economic changes, information explosion is rapidly increasing. Due to this, it becomes difficult to reach out the information easily. Information is a basic need in our daily lives. Consumption of more and more information leads to an increase in our knowledge of our daily needs. Libraries are the storehouse of information. Libraries and information are closely linked together. But this information is useless unless it is accessed by users. The users can take advantage of this information if they have information literacy skills.

Information literacy skills are one of the most important elements in information seeking. Thus, it helps to get the information on time to the needy person. As we know providing the right information at the time to the right user is one of the aims of the library and keeping this in mind we have to access the information to its users at any condition. Information literacy is like a gateway for the users, it directly accesses the information from the users.

Libraries and other information centres have come up to encourage the literacy to acquire the information. The information that is readily available in various media in different formats acts as a challenge for the individual about its validity, reliability, and authenticity. To tackle with this situation literacy plays an important role in understanding the idea of the information in gathering and use of information by the individual.

### **Information Literacy**

Information literacy is the scientific process of acquiring information by knowing where, when, and how to find information and evaluate and use the information followed by literacy skills. The word information which is not only deals with books but also with various media and this information literacy covers all aspects of literacy such as multiple literacy, library literacy, internet literacy, oral literacy, network literacy, etc. Information literacy eliminates the hurdles that are faced while using the information.

The word literacy means to read and write. It mainly deals with the ability of the person with the basic general knowledge of learning. Information literacy is the action of finding information by knowing their needs for the information. The role of the library in information literacy is to educate the individual on locating, accessing, and utilizing the available information by using suitable techniques to meet the expectations of the individual with an adequate amount of information.

### **Need for the Information Literacy**

Information has a role to play in our daily lives. Information has its value in every stage of our life. We are nowhere without the information. Thus, we can't live without information in this modern society. Some of the reasons for the need for the information are given below:

- Due to the rapid increase in information sources.
- Advance changes in the technological environment.
- Evolution of libraries.
- Increasing demands of users for the use of information.
- Information explosion.
- Increase in research on multidisciplinary topics.

These reasons stimulated the need for information literacy and developing a literacy program for the needs of literacy skills is important for the growth of our knowledge and as a part of the lifelong learning process.

### **Review of Literature**

Glenrose Velile Jiyane and Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha have conducted a survey on Information literacy education and instruction in academic libraries and LIS schools in institutions of higher education in South Africa to access the availability and usage of information resources from the library which was mainly focused on the first year students of South Africa which were concluded to conduct the Information Literacy program for more efficient use of Library sources. (GlenroseVelileJiyane & Onyancha, 2010)

Ntombizodwa G. Somi and Karin de Jager surveyed the role of academic libraries in the enhancement of information literacy: a study of Fort Hare Library among undergraduate and postgraduate students, this

study reveals the findings that there is a need for information literacy among developing students. (G.Somi & Jager, 2005)

Maxwell C.C. Musingafi and KudzayiChiwanza revealed an argument in the article on the role of Public Libraries in promoting Literacy in Zimbabwe on the positive side of information literacy and their effects on the developing country. (C.C.Musingafi & Chiwanza, 2012)

Praveen Kumar V and Srinivasa Rao Ganta in their article on Information Literacy and the role of Librarians discussed the skills required for the effective use of information and concluded with the problems faced in accessing information literacy to its users. (V. & Ganta)

Ratko Knezevic in his article on Information Literacy and the role of Libraries in IT is based on the importance of Information literacy in society by adopting the role of academic and public libraries and supporting learning through lifelong learning. (Knezevic, 2013)

### **Information access in libraries**

Libraries' information is closely related to each other. Libraries are the information repository. The information is available in print and non-print and other multimedia form. However, this collected information should be used to satisfy the requirements of the users, who can access the library physically or virtually. Information is gathered by browsing it in various ways. The usage of information literacy depends on different formats of information which are readily available in different formats. Media literacy involves information to access, analyze, and organize for a specific purpose whereas computer literacy where the literacy level required to create and handle the data and documents by computer software. Network literacy is required to create awareness among the users of the highly available information at the global level. Continuous addition of information leads to the exploitation of information to avoid its implication and understanding the information at the network level and helps to retrieve the information by using various strategic tools, find and evaluate the information, and apply its value for its needs and purpose for the information.

### **Role of Different Libraries in Information Literacy**

#### **Academic Library**

Academic Libraries play an important role in the educational system and have a significant change in the structure, functioning, and services of academic libraries. Educating the student about the usage of information literacy has made a great impact in identifying, finding, evaluating, and applying that information in their work. Students mostly visit the library to acquire information for assignments or project purposes. However, it is impossible to fulfil their needs without the knowledge of information literacy. Helping the students and encouraging them to get authentic information at the right time is one of the duties of the librarian. Librarians should have good communication skills enables them as a helping hand to the students. Literacy skills are important for the usage of library materials, reading ability, and computer usage of information. Information Literacy takes place for the growth and development of knowledge. Libraries should devote their time to the literacy program as this is the growing stage and easily adopt literacy education which further encourages them to get information without any difficulty.

#### **University Library**

Evolution in the library system has brought the idea of information literacy as the lifelong process of eva

luating information sources. University library has a major role in the development of the nation. The users of the university library are not the academicians but also the other members of the faculty and research scholars who form an important element in the university library. They are thrust for information, information literacy acts as a key to achieving the goal through information literacy for the effective use of information. Librarians should have well-developed skills in information literacy and should organize workshops to put in use the OPAC and other online databases its users to access the information. Lectures should also be organized to develop literacy skills, more time should be provided for the education as the improvement of information literacy. It can also help to empower the future by accessing the research studies.

University library identifies the problems faced in getting access to information sources and services. They work towards it to solve the problems. The ability to access, evaluate, and synthesize is the main context in the professional field. Therefore information literacy is valuable in university libraries. Assessment should be done on the awareness of the need for information literacy and developing the learning. Computer literacy is also a part of literacy in university libraries. It is useful for locating, and evaluating online information resources. The availability of readily available information makes it difficult to evaluate the available information and this can be eradicated through literacy programmes. Instructional guidance is like a gateway for browsing purposes. It has a role in the university library for the successful understanding and utilization of the information sources and effective learning.

### **Public Library**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century where information is collected through cell phones, the internet, books, magazines, and other multimedia sources there is a lack of awareness to evaluate the credibility of the available information and it is only programmed through information literacy. Besides the Academic and University Library levels to educate information literacy, the Public Library has a role to play in information literacy in developing countries by acquiring high-quality information sources for the general public. However, the accumulation of information is not useful until it is put into use by someone and made useful for their purpose. Public libraries are placed in a position in the development with regarding information, knowledge, and culture. Open access criteria are a key element for the development of society. Citizens of the nation should locate, evaluate, and use the information independently. Libraries organize the documents and they should educate the individual in such a way that the document should be used by avoiding hurdles in accessing the documents.

Public libraries are free from academic restrictions by providing any form of literature and raising literacy level skills. With continuous changes in technological, economic, and political environments public libraries should provide the most up-to-date information. Education and profession play a crucial role in our social life. To achieve the goal in every stage of our lives, literacy has its value in each level of education because human knowledge can be developed by converting information into knowledge. The library is mainly responsible for socio-economic development through the library information. In the age of the information explosion, the knowledge industry, and public libraries have built a new society in the development of the country.

### **Libraries social role in information literacy**

Libraries store information to serve the purpose of people and this information can be accessed by the people with the help of the librarian, they fill the gap between the user and information, and fulfil the

purpose of society. But with the emergence of information of communication technology, the role of librarian is eliminated and it is replaced with the World Wide Web. Due to these changes in technology, the information available on the internet is rapidly changing and making it difficult to choose the right information people are spending most of their time searching the information on the internet. To eliminate this difficulty libraries should begin to encourage information literacy and should begin to focus on the user's needs. Because information is gained for the development of knowledge libraries should cope with the changes in society. Information literacy plays a significant role in the successful socio-economic development of the country.

### **Role of librarian in information literacy**

Emergence of information technology, various changes have been made in the structuring and functioning of the library. The library consists of many information sources and besides provides lots of information making the centre for learning. The librarian's role in the libraries is to access these information sources and make them available according to the changes in the library. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century due to advances in education increase in the demand for resources. Which has been changing from print and non-print material therefore the librarian should provide the most up-to-date and authenticated information to its users and meet the needs of the user. As information becomes the product in this 21<sup>st</sup> century and everyone is demanding high-quality products so, it's the librarian's responsibility to act like a middleman and create a direct connection between the customer and the product by locating, evaluating, and disseminating the appropriate information on time. In addition to that it should allow access to other materials like online database searching, and computerized library information systems. This helps them to fulfil the goal of consumer satisfaction. The librarian aims to educate every citizen of the country at every level of information literacy, to make them aware and informed citizens of the country.

Librarians should select the appropriate information materials by keeping the library goal in mind. More attention should be given to online products product as a decrease in traditional information and online information has more meaning than traditional information. New criteria for the evaluation the credibility have developed with new technologies. Information should be evaluated according to the new existing technology. Librarians plan the literacy programs so that the user's capabilities match with the information through the literacy skills. They are creatures of information technology because they manage the information in all disciplines. The traditional method of searching is through the modern technique of the World Wide Web. Librarian plays a major role in information literacy and eliminates the gap between the users and information resources. Librarians should keep themselves up to date to tackle any challenges in the library. They should encourage, and motivate towards the use of information technology and accept the changes in the library. Librarians organize some information literacy programs to direct the users toward the use of library sources in an ethical manual.

- Orientation is one of the most familiar programs for the usage of information services and information by adopting various changes in the library. Education is provided through an orientation program gives an idea about the utilization of various services and information sources in different media. Education is provided through the lecture and demonstrates the use of catalogues and other online sources for their usage.
- Other instructions are provided by demonstrating the online databases, another subject gateway for their search topic, and adopting information in every aspect of life through the lifelong learning



process. Today libraries have acquired a great place in the growth and development of the information literate community.

### **Information literacy skills development**

Information literacy has an essential role in accessing the information. Different literacy level has its position in educating the users. Librarians should have literacy skills for the information literacy development. The information literate can find the information independently to know the needs for the information accordingly they involve themselves in gathering that information to fulfil their needs. It is the task and function according to it to find valuable and high-quality information for their work. How, where, and when to find information depends on the nature of the information followed by various technical methods. We can identify the information literate person if he can recognize, find, and evaluate the information and utilize it for acquiring the knowledge from that information. The evaluated information is synthesized scientifically by using tools and techniques.

Features of an information literate person are successfully capable of recognizing, evaluating, and utilizing the information based on their intelligence, the person automatically identifies his needs for information and chooses the techniques which are directed towards that information needs. To locate the information with the help of different sources, advanced skills are the topmost level to search the information needs from the sources, accessing, evaluating the information, and successful application of the evaluated information. The evaluated information generates new knowledge and adding the new information to the existing is a tool for problem solving which leads to critical thinking.

Whatever the information literacy format may be the literate person may be able to identify the desired information by locating and evaluating the information skilfully. The person should have special skills in the search and use of information sources for the effectiveness of its information and successful application of information and decision-making process. It is the lifelong learning process that is applied in individual, educational, and institutional organizations. Because information plays an important role at every level of learning in society. Information literacy skills can be developed in various ways in different libraries.

- Public libraries mainly deal with the general public and their profession covering the areas of business, government, and education. Identifying organizations to serve information literacy to fulfil their needs by encouraging the membership. Encouraging the individual and organization for the application of tools and techniques as a part of information literacy. Developing awareness of information literacy through the forum and another awareness programme which may also include the implication of information literacy among the individual. Promote the individual to locate, gather, evaluate, and synthesize the information for the application of knowledge. It not only focuses on schools but also businesses and other organizations.
- As the school library literacy skills are essential for identifying and using the information effectively. One of the roles of the school library program is to encourage the students to develop thinking skills and develop new ideas. The information literacy concept is wholly or partially important in all curricular areas, the school library is mainly focused on the students' learning and provides literacy for the information resources which are mainly related to students learning by accessing all formats, students should be encouraged to read, view, and using the information. Design the different techniques to satisfy the needs of the students.

- Developing literacy skills at the University level to guide the individual to search for information sources independently, to become self-directed learners. At this stage, the student spends most of the time in class and library. The level of utilization of information resources increases at this level, which can be physical or virtual making the wide range of needs for information literacy. To understand and acquire the services, for their reliability, and validity the available sources literacy is important. Basic literacy skills are also needed to acquire, store, and disseminate the information. Students are very useful at this level this is the growing stage in society and directed to be self-learning for the utilization of valuable information.

### **Libraries' principles in information handling towards information literacy**

- Timely – the library should provide the data on time to avoid time constrain.
- Accurate – the available data should be correct for its valuable use.
- Cost – the data collection should be of moderate amount to meet the needs of the users.
- Valid – the data should be measured for its validity and reliability to provide the up to date information to its users.
- Pertinent –The library should provide valuable information for effectiveness.

### **Conclusion**

In this globalized environment where the various formats of information rapidly change from the traditional to the modern, from simple to complex continuous changes beyond our imagination developed the need for literacy skills for information recognition, and utilization in an ethical manner. Our general literacy level is behind in facing the upcoming complex changes in information formats. In today's world, everyone is dependent on information. Without information, our position in society is nowhere. Information is readily available everywhere, it may be on television, pictures, cell phones, the internet, posters, books, and many more. It is difficult to obtain information from different information sources without having the appropriate literacy skills. Learning is directly related to the library which is connected through a wide range of information. Libraries are the keepers of materials that are presented in different forms and also provide high-quality services to their users.

The educated and skilled staff are the chief element for providing the quality of information to its users. Libraries are like the gateway that directs the users towards their needs. Librarians try their best to develop the excellent product in marketing strategies. There is an increased demand for more and more information which also increases the responsibilities of the libraries. It is the role of the libraries to guide and provide a successful literacy level to its users. Learning is a lifelong process but it is not possible from the individual basic skills thus, libraries are the helping hand to serve the purpose of its users and its sole responsibility to provide information literacy in each sector of society. To conclude the thought based on the role of libraries in information literacy is that libraries are the main component for the promotion of literacy skills among the growing society and developing countries.

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