



Promotion of information literacy instruction: With special reference to government of India

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Abstract

Information technology has brought a revolutionized advancement in every sphere of life. Earlier it was very difficult to keep pace with the increasing era of knowledge and information. Due to information explosion persons belonging to different spheres have to be information literate adversant with the information tools to equip themselves with the rapid increase in universe of knowledge. There are several organizations, associations at international and national level which are instrumental and taking initiatives for information literacy programmes.

Keywords: information literacy, information literacy programmes, information organizations, associations

Introduction

Technology is the main weapon using which reinventing the society is possible. Day-to-day advancements in ICT bring out revolutionary changes in every sphere of life. Information is regarded as both product and commodity in this ever increasing information society. The production of information is increasing day by day. Exponential growth of information over internet brings birth to information overload. It is found difficult for everyone to select relevant piece from an ocean of information. "With little or no information, individuals have little or nothing to process and consequently make poor decisions. As the amount of information increases, so too does information processing and the quality of decision-making. However, after a certain point is reached, the decision-maker has obtained more information than he can process, information overload has occurred and decision-making ability decreases. Any information received beyond that point will not be processed, may lead to confusion and could have a negative impact on the individual's ability to set priorities as well as remember previous information" (Ruff, 2002). Due to scattering and seepage of information, people required to be equipped with the various cognitive and technological skills to store, organize and access the tidal wave of information. Information literacy is the umbrella term which encompasses all these skills and competencies.

According to Armstrong *et al.* (2005) information literacy is "knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner."

According to Chowdhury & Chowdhury (2001) an information literate person "is expected to have acquired the necessary skills to retrieve information from a variety of sources, printed as well as electronic, to meet his or her information needs at any given point of time."

According to Bundy (2004) "Information literacy is the foundation for the independent learning and lifelong

learning." He graphically shows the relationship between information literacy and lifelong learning as follows:

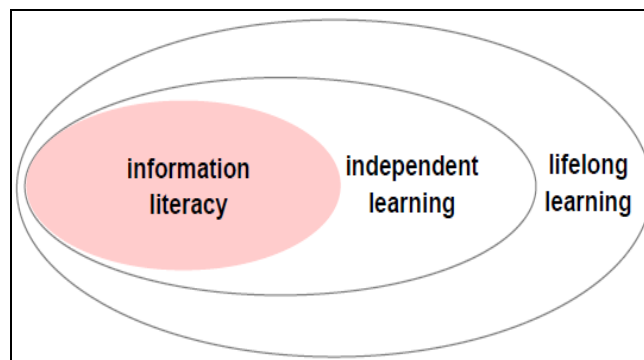


Fig 1: Relationship between information literacy and lifelong learning

Initiatives taken for the promotion of information literacy

The concept of information literacy has become the global concern worldwide from the last two decades. Several national and international organizations and associations have taken initiatives for promoting information literacy. The significant efforts taken at national and international levels are given below:

International level

American Library Association (<http://www.ala.org/>)

ALA is the one of the premier associations which worked for the promotion of information literacy worldwide. ALA Presidential Committee on Information Literacy (1987), US Forum on Information Literacy (1989), Association of College and Research Libraries Institute for Information Literacy (1997) and Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (2000) are some of the major contributions of ALA in the field of information literacy.

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (<http://www.ifla.org/>)

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has developed various plans and strategies for promoting information literacy. IFLA has included information literacy statements in many of its policy documents, including The IFLA Internet Manifesto, and The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto. More recently, one can see the impact of IFLA’s activities in section C4 of the World Summit of the Information Society Plan of Action, which reads, “Everyone should have the necessary skills to benefit from the Information Society” and goes to refer to ICT literacy and later e-literacy (Babu, 2008). IFLA has created a Section on Information Literacy which in 2004 issued International Guidelines on Information Literacy. These guidelines help the libraries to meet current information needs of those who are engaged in educational programs, that is school and higher education. IFLA Information Literacy Standards are the worth mentioning contribution of IFLA for the promotion of information literacy.

UNESCO (<http://www.unesco.org>)

UNESCO has played a historically pivotal role of promoting education and libraries, but it only recently began working, through IFAP, to tackle the global challenges of information literacy. A number of activities have been undertaken, including the drafting of the Declaration of Principles of the

World Summit on the Information Society, and the Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning “Beacons of the Information Society”, as well as the publishing of the monograph Towards Information Literacy Indicators. The creation of information society is the key point discussed in the International Meeting of Experts in 2003, organized by the US National Commission on Library and Information Science and the National Forum on Information Literacy, with the support of UNESCO. Information literacy is the integral part of the Information for All Programme of UNESCO. Along with Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, UNESCO has recently published guidelines for broadcasters on promoting user-generated content (UGC) and media and information literacy (MIL).

Initiatives taken for the promotion of information literacy in India

In India, the concept of information literacy is very recent although information literacy related programmes in the form of user education, bibliographic instruction and library orientation existed in various libraries and information centres. A study of information literacy initiatives reveals that major initiatives were taken by government at primary and secondary school level. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and National Literacy Mission are some of them.

Table 1: Information literacy programmes conducted by Government of India

Sr. No	Information Literacy Programmes	Date Held/ lunched	Government Projects Initiatives
1.	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)	2001-2010	India’s flagship Programme to the achievement of Universal Elementary Education in India, Department of Elementary Education and Literacy, MHRD, Government of India, New Delhi. < www.educationforallinindia.com/ssa.htm >
2.	District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)	Initiated in 1994	Universalisation of Upper Primary Education Assam, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, M.P., Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Gujarat, Andra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa. < www.educationforallinindia.com/page81.html >
3.	National Literacy Mission	1988 lunched	National Literacy Mission Programme is an Indian programme which aims to make 80 million adults in the age group of 15–35 literate. < en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Literacy_Mission_Programme >
4.	TARA Akshar	2005-06	Developed its own Hindi literacy programme that would take a very short time with minimal dropout rates. < www.tarahaat.com/Literacy.aspx >
5.	CBFL ‘computer-based functional literacy’		Making this possible is a remarkable initiative from the Tata Group that has changed the lives of thousands of adults in different parts of India. Born of the Tata Group’s ever-enduring commitment to community causes and bred by its expertise in information technology, this is a project as novel in methodology as it is ambitious in scope.< www.tataliteracy.com/index.htm >
6.	Portal of Government of India		This section introduces you to the Government of India, its origin, and the governance process being followed in the Country.< http://ngo.india.gov.in >

Source: Gedam & Agashe, 2009 [5]

Table 2: Information literacy programmes conducted by National Institutions/Organizations in India

Sr. No	Information Literacy Programmes	Date Held/ lunched	Aims
1.	Information Literacy Programme in colleges The Hindu (e-newspaper)	Oct 04, 2006	The programme aims at bridging the awareness divide between colleges in the urban and rural areas and to enable students in the latter category of colleges access subject-related information across a variety of formats. The Information Literacy package aims to provide students the basic information about IT tools, to introduce to them electronic sources of information, train them in searching for information stored in a multi-media format, train students to use computer-aided instruction packages, introduce various online search programmes and methods to identify sources of information, including subject gateways, in the Internet and train students to use the ‘Online Public Access Catalogue. < http://www.hindu.com/2006/10/04/stories/2006100409900400.htm >

2.	Central Library, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras	27-09-2007	1. Springer Link Database		
		17-09-2007	2. JCCC		
		13-07-2006	3. CAPITALINE: CORPORATE DATABASE, Chennai		
		21-02-2006	4. Science Direct and Scopus by Elsevier India, New Delhi		
		16-18 July, 07	5. National Workshop on E-Resources Management for Excellence, Education Programme		
		03-11-2006	6. Web Resources and Services available at the Central Library of IIT Madras		
		30-10-2006	7. Half-Day Workshop on Information handling in Digital Era		
		16-03-2006	8. Role of Electronic Databases in R&D Excellence by Edutech India Pvt. Ltd		
		16-11-2005	9. Presentation on Web of Science and J-Gate by Informatics India, Bangalore		
		07-03-2005	10. Role of Knowledge Centre in 21st Century, Director DELNET		
		09-08-2005	11. Convincing Multi Faculty Users in a Modern Learning Resources Center, Bhopal Noida, Campus		
		13-01-2005	12. Digital Information Management, Anna Malai University		
		16-17 Dec, 04	13. National Workshop on Building Digital Libraries using DSpace		
		23-08-2004	14. Web of Science , Informatics India		
		21-01-2004	15. Tutorial on Development and Management of Digital Resources		
				13-08-2003	16. Seminar on Web Resource Management
				24-09-2003	17. Presentation on Web Searching Techniques
01-04-2003	18. Presentation on Web of Science				
22-02-2002	19. Industrial Information Services < www.cenlib.iitm.ac.in/docs/library/index.php?page=infolit >				
3.	RTI India		The complete Online Portal for Right to Information in India. The RTI literacy programme being conducted in the district with the objective of spreading information among the sections < www.rtiindia.org/.../15883-right-information-literacy-programme.html >		
4.	'SALIS' (Society for the Advancement of Library and Information Science)	6-10 Nov. 2006	1. The primary focus was to provide need-based service to the profession and to work for the advancement of Library and Information Science (LIS). The current focus of SALIS is to reach the unreached LIS professionals with rural settings in order to minimize the digital divide.		
			2. The Society for the Advancement of Library and Information Science (SALIS), in collaboration with UNESCO and the Madras School of Social Work (MSSW), is organizing a Workshop on Information Literacy Competency Development for Library and Information Science Professionals and Special Educators at MSSW < lists.spc.int/pipermail/piala_lists.spc.int/2006.../000121.html >		
5.	International Information Literacy Workshop in India (New Delhi)	06-10-2005	An international workshop to promote information literacy in South and South East Asia presently working in Panjabi University Patiala in India with the support of UNESCO and other participants.		

Source: Gedam & Agashe, 2009^[5]

Government agencies at state and national levels are working continuously to move information literate society forward. Besides the above mentioned programmes, government has launched various schemes for empowerment of people of the country. Some of which are worth mentioning:

Jan Shikshan Sansthan (<http://nlm.nic.in/jss.htm>)

The scheme of Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) is a unique scheme crafted by the Government of India. JSSs are institutes of Peoples Education focusing on the poor, the illiterates, the neo-literates, the under-privileged and the un-reached. The Jan Shikshan Sansthans are unique in that they do not provide just skill development, but link literacy with vocational skills and provide large doses of Life Enrichment Education (LEE) to the people. They do not work in isolation but aim for convergence with other stakeholders in society. It is their endeavour to shape their beneficiaries into self reliant and self-assured employees and entrepreneurs. The Jan Shikshan Sansthans are unique also because they offer quality vocational skills and technical knowledge at a very low cost; offer a multi-faceted skill-knowledge-awareness enhancement and outlook-formation trainings and inputs and empowerment-oriented interventions in respect of social, economic and health status improvement of women and adolescent girls. The Jan Shikshan Sansthans offer a large number (371) of

vocational training programmes from candle making to computer courses.

InfoLit India (<http://infolitindia.org/>)

InfoLit India, the school information literacy project launched by the Library Media Centre of Kendriya Vidyalaya in April 2012, is a pilot project on information literacy for the new generation learners to make them effective users of information available in any format. The project is aimed at developing the essential 21st century literacy skills (Information, Media and Library) in the students of Kendriya Vidyalaya Pattom, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala (India) through instruction, training and research. The project has three main components.

1. Internet Literacy ("Web Challenge")
2. Media literacy ("Media matters")
3. Library Literacy ("Face-a-book")

The project aims at selecting a group of students and carrying out a planned information literacy programme for the coming one year. This is the first school in India launching this project on information literacy. The project is conceived on a basic information literacy curriculum developed according to the needs of students in an Indian education environment.

Several efforts have been made by institutions and organizations for promoting information literacy in India.

National Institute of Science Communication and Information Research (NISCAIR) organizes various information literacy programmes. In addition to an advanced two years Associateship in Information Science, it conducts a few short-term training courses on the topics such as e-commerce fundamentals, bibliometrics, e-publishing, Internet access, online information retrieval, library automation, resource sharing, and use of Microsoft Office software. Documentation Research and Training Centre (DRTC), Bangalore has been conducting several information literacy programmes for library and information professionals in different areas such as library automation and Internet for librarians. Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) of the University Grants Commission (UGC), India is conducting several programmes to create awareness and develop e-resource use capabilities among the users for the use of UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium. In addition, it promotes the information literacy through computer application to library and information services (CALIS), a four-week intensive training programme focusing on the practical aspects in the use of computers in libraries, and Convention on Automation of Libraries in Education and Research Institutions (CALIBER). Professional bodies, such as the Indian Library Association (ILA), the Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres (IASLIC), the Society for Information Science and Developing Library Network (DELNET) are also involved in continuing professional development in this area through their several periodical activities (Bhatt, 2011).

Conclusion

The study of information literacy programmes in India reveals that major initiatives have been taken by the government at school level. However for higher education in India, no tested model and standards for information literacy have been initiated. In the institutions of higher learning in India, user education, library instruction and bibliographic instruction programmes are provided. In universities for research degree programmes, a course on research methodology is offered, in which library research techniques are also included. Some universities and research institutions subscribe to the electronic resources on consortium basis or individual basis. The producers or vendors of these electronic resources conduct user training programmes for use of those resources. Some orientation programmes and refresher courses also impart information literacy competency to the learners. In the corporate organizations and corporate R&D centres, information literacy competency is an essential trait of the researchers and knowledge workers. The researchers and knowledge workers are being taught about latest discipline oriented information resources available within the organizations and outside the organizations (Ghosh & Das, 2006). A number of seminars, conferences and discussions are being organized by various universities in India but these are more focused on the need and importance of information literacy than on practically implementing it. The need of the hour is to integrate the information literacy content in the academic curriculum of higher educational institutions which should be practical-based and learner-centred. Teacher-librarian collaboration is required while designing information literacy content.

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