



Information literacy: An Indian scenario

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Abstract

Information literacy forms the basis of lifelong learning which is common to all learning environments, information play very dynamic role and person cannot live without information. Information is available in different formats and from various sources. To get the right information at the right time from the abundance of unclassified data/information, the information user must be information literates. Information literacy develops sense-making ability among the users. The ability to access and use information effectively is a vital skill of the people. The information literates have an ability to take decisions, solve their problems and know how to learn. The concept of IL has been gaining more attention in higher education communities throughout the world. Several countries have developed Standards, models and adopted the same. The present paper deals with the concept of information literacy, its needs and importance. Further this paper explores about the information literacy initiatives in India, role of Government, Higher education institutions/organizations and Professional Associations. Researchers describe the significance of information literacy and recommended that academic experts and policy makers have to make all possible efforts to integrate information literacy programme with in the academic curricula of educational systems, starting from the elementary to the higher education, vocational education, professional education and research degree level and there is a need of information literacy policy in India.

Keywords: information literacy, lifelong learning, India

1. Introduction

Information literacy is a lifelong learning process that starts at the younger age and proceeds until post work state where each individual/citizen requires different kind of information in different phases of life. At a younger stage individuals acquire knowledge through secondary and higher education. The teachers and library professionals impart information literacy competency through various academic programs. Besides the formal education they acquire knowledge through several informal ways and update their existing knowledge in their field of interest and Information literacy (IL) also develop sense making ability among the users. The information literates have an ability to take decisions, solve their problems and know how to learn.

2. Information Literacy Concept

Being a literate, the ability to read and write" (Oxford English dictionary, 2013) [22]. This explanation underscores the centrality of reading and writing to being literate in any environment. At the same time, literacy has a complex relationship to technology. The printing press revolution for instance led to mass produced books and the emergence of book culture, library collections and the acceleration of literacy around the world. Eventually the surfacing of mass media and the information society inspired the development of information literacy as a pedagogical response to these changes and the expansion of the Internet and web generated new approaches to Information communication technology (Mackey & Jacobson 2014) [13]. Information Literacy concept

has been fuelled by the increased use of electronic resources/databases as well as the shift in user behavior when it comes to searching and using information for learning, research and work (Ramesh Babu, 2008) [5].

3. Definitions

Information Literacy is "a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognise when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information" (ACRL, 2000) [2].

Information literacy to be information literate, a person must be able to recognize, when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information (American Library Association (ALA) Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, 1989) Information Literacy encompasses knowledge of one's information concerns and needs, and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organise and effectively create, use and communicate information to address issues or problems at hand, it is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the Information Society, and is part of the basic human right of lifelong learning (The Prague Declaration, 2003) [21].

Information Literacy knows when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, 2005) [6].

Information Literacy is the array of knowledge and skills necessary to identify the information needed for a task and then to locate, understand, evaluate, and use that information

efficiently and effectively within appropriate ethical and legal issues (West Chester University of Pennsylvania, 2006).

4. Need for Information Literacy

Information is life blood of human being and it is currency of 21st century, at the same time, there is a rapid and abundant increase in information production. The information is produced in various formats like text, image, video; digital etc., due to the advent of information communication technology, information is increasingly created, stored, processed and communicated through electronic media and internet is free of any geographical boundaries. Information comes to the users in unfiltered formats and raising questions about its authority, accuracy and reliability. All these acts of information resulted into demanding new set of skill to deal with abundantly produced, rapidly increasing, complex and variety of information.

5. Importance for Information Literacy

- To be an independent lifelong learner
- To help close the gap between information poor and information rich
- To have a critical thinking approach. An approach that would lead to progress of a nation
- To have a strong democracy
- To apply a critical faculty approach in searching information in electronic format
- To understand the difficult questions of ownership of information and copyright
- To respect Intellectual Property Rights
- “Prerequisite for participative citizenship, social inclusion, creation of new knowledge, personal empowerment and learning for life”

6. Benefits of Information Literacy

- Expansion of knowledge and creation of new knowledge
- Synthesis of data and information into knowledge
- Access need information effectively and efficiently
- Become aware of wide sources of information in this technological era
- Get problem solving ability through Information Literacy
- Confidence in self directed learning
- Evaluating information and improving ability to select relevant information
- Understand the economic, social and legal issues related to the use of information and to access the information ethically.

7. Role of Information Literacy in Academic Libraries

Libraries are becoming centers for teaching and learning. Academic libraries today cater to a wide range of user's category. Traditionally librarians or library professionals used to provide guidance to the users of the library on making use of various bibliographic tools like catalogue, indexes and abstract, so that the library user could find out the required sources of information easily. This was known by the name bibliographic instruction to the fresh users of the library. The importance of this instruction was to help users to find required resources from vast collections of the library. The Information literate students can organise, apply and

communicate information effectively. This skill includes accurate citation, good usage of language, respect for copyright and avoidance of plagiarism. Practitioner approaches to information literacy in practice, takes the form of library user education and it in turn reflects and echoes traditional practices. These include library orientation, library instruction, one-on-one instruction (via reference services) and the use of guides and manuals. With the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), most Universities and Colleges have E-resources. As these electronic devices are introduced, new skills for their use need to be developed.

8. Role of Information Literacy in Higher education

Information literacy forms the basis of lifelong learning which is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to find the right information from authentic sources and extend their investigations, become more self-directed and assume greater control over their own learning. The higher education institutions are established not only to impart education and award degrees to the students but also to make them self-learners and lifelong learners. At the same time, the information environment has become too complex and changing too rapidly. In the information age the students are expected to employ sophisticated information gathering techniques to locate, organise, evaluate and use the information effectively to be successful in their endeavor.

9. Information literacy initiatives in India

Literacy is an important indicator of socio-economic and cultural development. It is regarded as both a means and an end of development. Dreze & Sen (1995) ^[7] has shown that literacy has instrumental as well as intrinsic significance in the dynamic process of development. In fact, literacy is the foundation of all other developmental processes. Basic education is the key to building human capital, the vital ingredient in building a nation Haq & Haq, (1998) ^[10] Thus, basic education and literacy have several valuable features for the enlistment of the society, community and people at large (Azim, 2005) ^[4].

Information literacy programme in India existence in the forms of user education, bibliographic instruction, library instruction and library orientation in the various libraries and information centre's. Many advocates information literacy in India proposed to integrate information literacy programme with the academic curricula of educational systems of India, starting from the school level to the higher education, vocational education, professional education and research degree level.

9.1 Role of Government

In the recent decades India has tried to increase the population of information literate and educated citizens through organizing different programmes like,

9.1.1 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Launched in 2001, the goal of the SSA is to ensure that 'every child is in school and is learning well.' To achieve this goal, the programme promises to provide universal primary education to children between the ages of 6 to 14 through community ownership of

the school system, in a mission mode. It is the primary programme used for delivering the Right to Education. Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life (SSA, 2001) ^[14].

9.1.2 District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) This Programme is Centrally Sponsored Scheme which was launched in 1994 as a major initiative to revitalise the primary education system and to achieve the objective of universalisation of primary education. The objectives of the programme are

1. To provide all children with access to Primary Education either in formal system or through Alternative Schooling Center.
2. Provides Reading Writing Materials and free textbooks to all SC and ST children and General girls.
3. Providing Access to Primary Education for all children.
4. Reducing the Gap among Gender and disadvantaged social groups.
5. Increasing learning achievement of primary school students by 25 percent (DPEP, 1994) ^[9].

9.1.3 Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) is a centrally sponsored scheme of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, for the development of secondary education in public schools throughout India. It was launched in March 2009. The implementation of the scheme was started from 2009-2010 to provide conditions for an efficient growth, development and equity for all. The scheme includes a multidimensional research, technical consulting, various implementations and funding support. The principal objectives are to enhance quality of secondary education and increase the total enrollment rate from 52% (as of 2005–2006) to 75% in five years, i.e. from 2009–2014. It aims to provide universal education for all children between 15–16 years of age. The funding from the central ministry is provided through state governments, which establish separate implementing agencies. The objectives of Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan can be summarised as follows:

1. To improve quality of education imparted at secondary level through making all secondary schools conform to prescribed norms.
2. To remove gender, socio-economic and disability barriers.
3. Universal access to secondary level education by 2017, i.e., by the end of the XII Five Year Plan.
4. Universal retention of students by 2020 (RMSA, 2009).

9.1.4 National Literacy Mission (NLM) is a nationwide program started by Government of India in 1988 with the approval of the Cabinet as an independent and autonomous wing of the Ministry of HRD. It aims to educate 80 million adults in the age group of 15 - 35 over an eighty-year period. By "literacy", the NLM means not only learning how to read, write and count but also helping people understand why they are deprived and helping them move towards change (NLM, 1998).

9.1.5 Saakshar Bharat this Programme goes beyond '3' R's

(i.e. Reading, Writing & Arithmetic); for it also seeks to create awareness of social disparities and a person's deprivation on the means for its amelioration and general well being. This programme was formulated in 2009 with the objective of achieving 80% literacy level at national level, by focusing on adult women literacy seeking to reduce the gap between male and female literacy to not more than 10 percentage points. It has four broader objectives, namely imparting functional literacy and numeracy to non-literates; acquiring equivalency to formal educational system; imparting relevant skill development programme and promote a learning society by providing opportunities for continuing education. The principal target of the programme is to impart functional literacy to 70 million non-literate adults in the age group of 15 years and beyond. This Includes coverage of 14 million Scheduled Castes(SCs), 8 million Scheduled Tribes(STs), 12 million minorities and 36 million others. The overall coverage of women is aimed at 60 million. 410 districts belonging to 27 States/UTs of the country were identified to be covered under Saakshar Bharat (Saakshar Bharat, 2009) ^[17].

9.1.6 E-Pathshala is a portal jointly initiated by Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India and National Council of Educational Research and Training launched in November 2015. E-pathshala it hosts educational resources for teachers, students, parents, researchers and educators, which is available on Web, Android, IOS and windows platforms. The resources are available in English, Hindi and Urdu languages. The students can get access to all educational material, including textbooks, audio, video, periodicals and a variety of other print and non-print materials through E-Pathshala. These materials can be downloaded by the user for offline use with no limits on downloads (E-pathshala, 2015) ^[18].

9.1.7 National Digital literacy Mission (NDLM) The mission of NDLM scheme is to provide digital literacy to every Indian. Making one person in every family digitally literate is one of the integral components of the Prime Minister's vision of "Digital India". The Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (DISHA) or National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) Scheme has been formulated to impart IT training to 52.5 lakh persons, one from every eligible household in selected blocks in each State/ UT of the country. The objective is to impart basic ICT skills relevant to the need of the trainee, which would enable the citizen to use IT and related applications to actively and effectively participate in the democratic process of the country and further enhance opportunities for their livelihood (NDLM, 2016).

9.1.8 National Knowledge Commission(NKC) In India the initiatives to make the country an information literate society have already been made in the year 2005, with the setting of a National Knowledge Commission (NKC) with a mandate to transform India of 21st century in to a knowledge society (NKC, 2005).

9.2 Role of Higher learning Institutions/Organisations

In the institutions of higher learning in India, user education, library instruction and bibliographic instruction programmes

are provided. Unlike information literacy course for students in colleges and universities there is no formal courses for teachers/students. The universities and research institutes have access to several digital resources on consortium or individual subscription. The publisher or producers of these electronic resources train the information professionals through user training programmes who in turn train their students to access and use databases effectively. The Indian Medlars Centre of National Informatics Centre conducts a user-training programme in every four month on their information products and services, like, IndMed databases, medIND open access journal literature, OpenMED open access archive, UNCat union catalogue databases, etc., ICMR (2014) which are designed mainly for health professionals. Besides many academic staff colleges have been established in the universities with ideas to organize regular orientation programmes and refresher courses for teachers and information professionals to upgrade their skills in changing environment, also impart information literacy competency to the learners. Some national institutes like IITs, documentation centers like National Social Science Documentation Center(NASSDOC) and National Institute for Science Communication and Information Resource (NISCAIR) rest while INSDOC and INFLIBNET center play important role in training the information professionals in the country to acquire and upgrade their skills on retrieval techniques from time to time. In the corporate organizations and corporate R&D centre's, information literacy competency is an essential trait of the researchers and knowledge workers. The researchers and knowledge workers are being taught the about latest discipline oriented information resources available within the organizations and outside the organizations (Ghosh & Das, 2006) [8].

Singh and Klingenberg (2012) [24], Agricultural university libraries in India are already ahead with their user education programmes focused on teaching information literacy skills to Postgraduate and PhD students. The agricultural universities of India follow the land grant pattern colleges of American Universities of Agricultural Sciences. User education was considered important and was made part of the curricula to teach the students on use of library and its resources and to develop their information skills. These courses are generally one or two credit hours and integrated into the academic curriculum. Some of the institutions like the IITs are using audio-visual methods to orient their users. University of Hyderabad Library conducts user training sessions in small groups with hands-on experience for all users about the OPAC. This university library conducts training programs throughout the year, as a part of orientation program. A number of college libraries organize information literacy programme for new students at the beginning of the academic year. With limited time and a large number of students, this programme provides an introduction about the library, about the various resources available in the library, services provided by the library etc. And also give orientation on how to use the library and its resources. Library tour is the preferred method of use in almost all libraries.

9.3 Role of Library Associations

Library associations exist in most of the states and union

territories of India apart from those at the national level. State level library associations are very active in public and academic libraries development in their respective states. Some library associations, e.g. Bengal Library Association conduct refresher courses for the in-service public librarians, in the areas of managing and accessing information in ICT environment. National level library associations are now proactive in spreading the information literacy competency for the librarians and library users. In December 2005, Indian Library Association (ILA) organized 51st All India Conference with the focus on "libraries, information literacy and lifelong learning", where many librarians felt the importance of information literacy in lifelong learning and optimizing the usage of information in the libraries. In this conference, ILA also recommended to form a National Information Literacy Mission and the National Information Literacy Task Force to implement information literacy competency development programmes throughout the country without further delay. ILA (2005) Another International Workshop on Information Literacy was held at the Punjabi University, Patiala, India in October 2005, to promote information literacy in South and South East Asia growth with support from UNESCO, IFLA-ALP and DLIS Punjabi University, Patiala. In September 2003 at Prague, the International Alliance for Information Literacy was formed where India's Networking Alliance for Voluntary Actions a network of NGOs, became a member. In 2010, the National Conference on Knowledge Management in Globalised Era focused information literacy as one of the important theme for discussions (Singh, 2010) [23].

10. Conclusion

The persons who want to survive in the knowledge world have to be a competitor. To become a competitor he must cultivate some essential skills, those skill are the survival skills of information age i.e. information literacy skills. To acquire information literacy skills and to become information literate person is not an easy task, it needs continuous update of knowledge and skill in the competitive knowledge world. Information Literacy is the way to energetic contribution in the information driven society. It provides learners the necessary skills and inspires lifelong and independent learning skills which are a prerequisite for problem based and problem solving. Now a day's ICT has changed our society. People should be allowed to access abundant and increasing information. For this government of India and academic institutions, organizations should conduct workshops, seminars, programmes to make more and more people information literate. Today IL has become a worldwide matter. As a result several countries have taken initiatives and adopted IL Models and Standards. IL Models start with need arise of the information and ends with satisfaction of accessing information with in legal context. IL Models and standards are very much essential for a person acquire essential skills survival for the present information world. But in India majority of academic institutions have not even paid sufficient attention to provide effective Information literacy programmes for guiding their users to use information effectively and efficiently in this ever increasing electronic environment. Academic experts and policy makers to make all

possible effort to integrate information literacy programme with in the academic curricula of educational systems, starting from the elementary to the higher education, vocational education, professional education and research degree level.

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