Uncovering Information Literacy: Mythology, Myopia and Movement

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Welcome to the Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries

The Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries (CiSSL), as the leading international center dedicated to school libraries worldwide, provides an arena for the international community of school library scholars and practitioners to generate and share a substantial body of rigorous research on the
Overview

- Key milestones and millstones in 40 years of IL discourse
- Key challenges and opportunities in relation to future directions and developments in information literacy as a field of research and practice

MYTHOLOGY, MYOPIA, MOVEMENT
• Significant construct in school and higher education, and range of social contexts

• Roots in emergence of Information Society 1970s: rapid production of information and growth of libraries

• Revisions in the training of librarians, and the use of libraries in teaching and learning

• Barriers to information access

• Advocated as foundation for contemporary education, workplace sustainability and social engagement

• Practice-centric construct: assumption of deficit
Background

Information Literacy


An individual’s capacity to use information tools and information sources to address problems

“Ultimately, information literate people are those who have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, how to find information, and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them. They are people prepared for lifelong learning, because they can always find the information needed for any task or decision at hand”

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.

• The National Forum on Information Literacy (1989) ALA, now 90 national / international institutions and organizations promoting importance of information literacy in all areas of society (National Forum, 2008).

• Prague Declaration (2003), information literacy is firmly embedded in the process of lifelong learning and valued as a human right.

• Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning UNESCO (2005) - development of national information literacy policies to equip people “to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals”
The confusion begins 1990s

Distinction between

- Information literacy
- Bibliographic instruction
- User education
- Information skills
- Library skills
- Library literacy
- Information literacy skills
- Information literacy skills instruction
- Information fluency
- Research information skills

Foster 1993: “A phrase in quest of a meaning”
The confusion continues 2000s

Information literacy?

Alphabetic literacy
Functional literacy
Social literacy
Digital information literacy
Tool literacy
Resource literacy
Social-structural literacy
Emerging technology literacy
Critical literacy
Cyber literacy
ICT literacy
Research literacy
Health literacy
Visual literacy
Media literacy
Visual literacy
ICT literacy
Publishing literacy
Health literacy
Multiliteracy
Multiple Literacies

“Literacy is fueled by information and hence all literacy is information literacy”

SKILLS
Educational Context

METALITERACY
Critique of Skills-Based Conceptions

- Positivist view of information as a tangible object
- Epistemological view of information and knowledge as accessible through attainment of systematic set of procedures
- Text as primary source of information for learning – silences other forms of knowledge and knowing
- Focus on navigating textual landscape of discipline-based discourses
- Limits power of information literacy by binding it to print and digital culture
- Goal: a concept by librarians to create “mirror librarians”
The relational / experiential model of IL (1997)

- Gives insight into interaction with the world of information as people experience it

- A picture or map of the different ways in which information literacy is experienced

- Information Literacy = the sum of the different ways it is experienced: experiences in using information
• **Face one: the information technology conception**
  - Information literacy is seen as using information technology for information retrieval and communication.

• **Face two: the information sources conception**
  - Information literacy is seen as finding information located in information sources.

• **Face three: the information process conception**
  - Information literacy is seen as executing a research process.

• **Face four: the information control conception**
  - Information literacy is seen as controlling information through storage, filing, brain
• **Face five: the knowledge construction conception**
  Information literacy is seen as building up a personal knowledge base in a new area of interest.

• **Face six: the knowledge extension conception**
  Information literacy is seen as working with knowledge and personal perspectives adopted in such a way that novel insights are gained.

• **Face seven: the wisdom conception**
  Information literacy is seen as using information wisely for the benefit of others.
Information Literacy as Experience

• Annemaree Lloyd (Charles Sturt University, Australia)

• From educational / library context to workplace
• The embodiment and transformation of information through socially constructed practices in the workplace
• Driven by the formation of social relationships or collaborative practices
• Development of collective competency in practice
• Coming to know through development of context-specific competencies which may not be solely reliant on effective access to text

• INFORMATION LITERACY AS SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED EXPERIENCE
• Three primary sources of Information:
  • **Textual sources:** facilitate the formation of an institutional view of practice – policy and procedures documents
  • **Social sources:** facilitate formation of an intersubjective view of practice – the everyday experiential and social information of the team
  • **Physical and sensory sources of information:** facilitate embodied learning: the human body

• Information literacy beyond textual practices
• Information literacy as transformative process: movement from subjective view of self to collective view: transformation and embodiment
• Constellation of visible and invisible practices and processes that enable the transformation of and embodiment of information
The Transliteracy Research Group at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK

“the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media from signing and orality through handwriting, print, TV, radio and film, to digital social networks”
Complexity and contradictions in information literacy

- Terminological confusion: Plethora of terminology, understandings, definitions, descriptions: overlaid by an territorial battleground for intellectual possession
- Multiple models of information literacy: Competing
- Many models either not built on research, on small-sample research, nor tested and validated as authoritative models across diverse contexts and population
- No strong theoretical foundations: concept resting on the platform of “goodness”
- Built on assumption of well-formed statement of need
- Little exploration of what constitutes meaningful pedagogy for information literacy instruction / interventions
- Limited substantive articulation of the impacts / benefits of information literacy agendas, beyond mastery of a range of information literacy skills
Information Literacy Models

- Information Skills Process
- Information Fluency
- Big 6
- The Seven Pillars Model
- The 8 Ws: (Watching, Wondering Webbing, Wiggling, Weaving, Wrapping Waving, Wishing)
- 10 step Research process
- Action Learning Model
- SAUCE model (Set scene, Acquire, Use, Communicate, Evaluate)
- PLUS Model (Purpose, Location, Use, Self-evaluation)

http://ictnz.com/infolitmodels.htm

- Typically these specify sequences of skills to be developed through instructional practices
Moving forward

• Critique and debate
• Meta-analysis of existing information literacy research: accumulation and aggregation of existing findings
• Establish claims / propositions that enable further theorizing: eg. Kuhlthau: Information Search Process propositions
• Critical need to develop research-based / validated models: substantive research over multiple contexts and populations to test claims and generate frameworks and models
• Move beyond reductionism: Simplistic schema of information skills– do not address the complexity of knowledge development
• Theorizing beyond generic skills: Information experience, Information practice (Bruce, Lloyd, Julien)
Key Proposition: Kuhlthau ISP

- ISP presents a holistic view of information seeking from the user’s perspective in six stages: task initiation, selection, exploration, focus formulation, collection and presentation.
- Information seeking and use involves interactions of three realms of experience: the affective (feelings) the cognitive (thoughts) and the physical (actions) common to each stage.
- The ISP reveals information seeking as a process of construction.
- Affective symptoms of uncertainty, confusion & frustration prevalent in the early stages are associated with vague, unclear thoughts about a topic or problem.
- As knowledge states shift to clearer, more focused thoughts, a corresponding shift in feelings of increased confidence and certainty.
- Affective aspects, such as uncertainty and confusion influence relevance judgments as much as cognitive aspects, such as personal knowledge and information content.
- Principle of uncertainty: Increased uncertainty in exploration stage of ISP indicates zone of intervention for intermediaries & system designers.
A theory of information literacy as information handling / generic skills

Proposition 1: 

Proposition n: 

A theory of information literacy as enacted experience

Proposition 1: 

Proposition n: 

A theory of information literacy as .................

A metatheory of Information Literacy? What are the larger epistemological and ontological assumptions that can inform IL research and practice?
Moving Beyond Reductionism

Realms of Meaning
Philip Phenix (McGraw Hill, 1964)

• Some failure to develop theory (ies) / pedagogy of information literacy instruction, and to engage with theories and frameworks of learning to develop IL instruction

• Various fields of knowledge exhibit distinctive structures or patterns of meaning

• They have different (and complex) ways of “coming to know”: how knowledge is gained in a subject, and how it is validated

• Different methods of inquiry, for creating new knowledge, and for validating claims to new knowledge

• How does the inquirer / investigator go about making discoveries on mathematics, biology, history, science? Developing new knowledge
Information Literacy Practice

- Pedagogical conundrum: typically treat information literacy as a separate skills-based discipline (the librarian teaches information skills; the content is left to the disciplinary instructor)

- Libraries: emphasis on the “found”: We celebrate the found, rather than the understood.

- Little attention to “use”: enabling people to something with the “found stuff”: the complex cognitive processes required to use information and to transform information into deep knowledge, actions, decisions, solving life concerns

- Limited application of research-based instructional frameworks

- Kuhlthau: Information Search Process / Guided Inquiry
“Ultimately, information literate people are those who have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, how to find information, and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them. They are people prepared for lifelong learning, because they can always find the information needed for any task or decision at hand.”

ALA
One Common Goal: Student Learning
New Jersey Research Study

Report of Findings and Recommendations of the New Jersey School Library Survey Phase 1

Report of Findings and Recommendations of the New Jersey School Library Survey Phase 2

One Common Goal: Student Learning
Prepared by Dr. Ross J. Todd, Dr. Carol A. Gordon, and Dr. Ya-Ling Lu
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300 pages
180 pages
The overall research agenda (Phases 1 and 2) seeks:

(a) to construct a picture of the status of New Jersey’s school libraries in the educational landscape of New Jersey; Informational, Transformational, Formational

(b) to understand the contribution of quality school libraries to education in New Jersey;

(c) to understand the contextual and professional dynamics that enable school libraries to contribute significantly to education in New Jersey, and

(d) to make recommendations to NJ stakeholders to develop a sustained and long term program of capacity building and evidence-based continuous improvement of school libraries in New Jersey.
• **Resource-based capabilities:** These are abilities and dispositions related to seeking, accessing and evaluating resources in a variety of formats, including people and cultural artefacts as sources. They also include using information technology tools to seek out, access and evaluate these sources, and the development of digital and print-based literacies.

• **Thinking-based capabilities:** These are abilities and dispositions that focus on substantive engagement with data and information, the processes of higher order thinking and critical analysis that lead to the creation of representations/products that demonstrate deep knowledge and deep understanding.

• **Knowledge-based capabilities:** These are the abilities and dispositions that focus on the creation, construction and sharing the products of knowledge that demonstrate deep knowledge and understanding.
• **Reading to learn capabilities:** These are the abilities and dispositions related to the transformation, communication and dissemination of text in its multiple forms and modes to enable the development of meaning and understanding.

• **Personal and interpersonal capabilities:** These are the abilities and dispositions related to the social and personal aspects of leaning about self as a learner, and the social and cultural participation in inquiry learning.

• **Learning management capabilities:** These are the abilities and dispositions that enable students to prepare for, plan and successfully undertake a curriculum-based inquiry unit.
• Investigated the relationships between conceptions & practice of IL in academic libraries.
• Argyris & Schön (1974): professional practice investigated through Espoused Theories and Theories-in-Use
• Espoused theories of IL: conceptions / understandings of IL as expressed in library mission / policy documents, and formal vision / mission statements
• Theories-in-Use were identified by analyzing how IL instruction is delivered through a range of online tutorials
• 11 academic libraries (USA); approximately 150 online tutorials, structured interviews with information literacy leaders at each of these libraries
Findings

- No single consistent conceptualization of information literacy either espoused or in practice
- Considerable incongruity between widely accepted beliefs and its actual implementation and practice in the academic libraries
- Espoused theory: capabilities of knowledge discovery and generation, critical thinking, problem solving and lifelong learning in a globalized and connected world
- Theories-in-use: engagement with information sources, limited reference to knowledge-based competencies of engaging with found information to build knowledge (Kerr, 2010, 300-301).
Findings: (Kerr, 2010)

- Instruction initiatives: procedural skills with resources; ethical approaches to the use of information, procedures for developing research plans with view to creating assignments

- Kerr concluded that practice of information literacy instruction seemed to fall short on realizing knowledge outcomes of universities

- Kerr: “while there may be merit in this rich diversity and individuality in definitions as a means to self-expression and branding of information literacy programs, at a broader level this range of conceptions may indeed contribute to a confused, muddled and chaotic conception of what constitutes information literacy” (Kerr, 2010, 307-308).
Embedding information literacy research and instructional practice in a richer theoretical tradition

Information seeking and use research
- constructivist frameworks (Kuhlthau)
  “Information Search Process”
- cognitive perspective ASK (Belkin)
- sense-making / situational (Dervin)
- social constructivist perspectives
  (Chatman, Vakkari, Savolainen) eg information poverty

Pedagogy of information Literacy
- Situated in theoretical discourses of constructivist learning and information seeking
- Pedagogical models: instructional design framework