Information Literacy: a cornerstone for Open Distance Learning

A University of South Africa perspective

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- Dates back to 1873
- Distance education curriculum began in 1946
- 6 Colleges: Economic and Management Sciences, Human Sciences, Law, Science, Engineering and Technology, Education & Agriculture and Environmental Sciences
- 7 Regional centres in Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Limpopo, Midlands, Gauteng and Mpumalanga
- 287,142 students
- 5016 Academic Staff
- Unisa library is an 8 floor building equipped for tuition and research
- 8 library branches countrywide
- Strives to train clients in basic and advanced research skills.
1. Purpose of the study
2. Open distance learning
3. Information literacy in an ODL context
4. Information literacy - the status quo
5. Information literacy training at Unisa
6. What can be done?
7. Recommendations
8. Conclusion
1. Identify the need to boost information literacy training at Unisa.

2. Outline challenges encountered with regard to information literacy training at Unisa.

3. Recommend means for ODL librarians to improve information literacy training at Unisa or other ODL institutions.
A multidimensional approach aimed at bridging the time, geographical, economic, social, educational and communication distance between student and institution, student and academics, student and courseware and student and peers.

Open distance learning focuses on removing barriers to access learning, flexibility of learning provision, student centeredness, supporting students and constructing learning programmes with the expectation that students can succeed. (Unisa ODL Policy, 2008)
Information Literacy

Information Literacy

Media Literacy

Visual Literacy

Network Literacy

Cultural Literacy

Library Instruction

Traditional Alphabetic Literacy

Computer Literacy

(Library Next, 2008)
Independent students are successful students.

~ Prof H. Ngambi (Executive Dean CEMS)

Information literacy is a key competency for independent study, the self-directed learner, life long learning and the foundation of a literate society. Therefore important for student achievement.

(Sacchanand, 2002:3)

Librarians in ODL settings should actively contribute to information literacy instruction
Library instruction and Information literacy modules

1. Library orientation
2. Basic library skills
3. Advanced library skills
4. Computer literacy
5. Internet (basic and advanced)
6. Library catalogue (Oasis)
7. Electronic subject databases
8. Induction

(Unisa IL guidelines, 2006)

IL training is mostly conducted at the Electronic Learning Centre at the Unisa library at the Main campus and at the branch libraries.
3rd year modules in the B. Information Science degree programme:
INS3059- Knowledge and Information Management and INS3036- Using information: the role of information behaviour.

Tutorial letter INKALLE/302- Guides students on how to understand their projects, research a topic, write an assignment, and technical details.

INS1502- Developing information skills for life long learning, is a compulsory 1st year module for B. Inf. students.
30-40% of students:

- Fail to provide detailed explanations/discussions/ sound arguments.
- Plagiarize
- Fail to understand assignment topics
- Only use their study guide as a source of information for their assignment projects
Client Division Services is responsible for IL training. Unisa has IL guidelines and not an IL policy.

- Personal librarians and branch librarians at Unisa conduct IL training for students and academic staff.

- Personal librarians are based at Unisa Main Campus Library.

- Personal Librarians → web survey → to describe IL training at Unisa.

- There are 19 PLs, 10 responded yielding a 52% response rate.
### Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications of participants</th>
<th>Extent of IL training courses</th>
<th>Participants of IL courses</th>
<th>IL Courses</th>
<th>Assessment of IL courses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD 1</td>
<td>• 83% indicated that IL training is an important aspect of ODL.</td>
<td>• 75% stated that they teach academics and postgraduate students</td>
<td>• Mode of learning: face to face classes, one on one tuition, computer based training resources (myUnisa), mobile devices and printed or self-guided brochure</td>
<td>• 66.7% pre-assess client needs via surveys, focus groups, academic feedback and problem analysis</td>
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<td>B.Inf. Hons 2</td>
<td>• 50% pointed out that 25-50% of their work load is committed to IL training.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• 66.7% agreed that IL programmes are integrated with Unisa’s ODL policy</td>
<td>• 100% conduct evaluation after courses using questionnaires.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Bibl Hons. 3</td>
<td></td>
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<td>• Information is used to adapt or improve future programmes, identify trainer needs, demonstrate value and get funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Inf. 1</td>
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<td>M. Inf. 2</td>
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<td>MA 1</td>
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### Findings contd.

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<th>Trainer needs &amp; keeping up to date on IL trends</th>
<th>Challenges and opportunities identified by PLs in the web survey</th>
<th>Challenges identified from literature (Bopape &amp; Constable, 2011; Brown &amp; Mokgele, 2007)</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Only one individual responded to this section.</td>
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<td>• This individual subscribes to an online discussion forum, reads some IL literature and attends conferences on IL.</td>
<td>• No challenges</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• 2 individuals (11%) indicated that they are sufficiently equipped with the right skills and resources to conduct IL courses at Unisa.</td>
<td>• Library staff perceptions and attitudes</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Inadequate resources for training large groups</td>
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<td>• Remote students and inadequate online training materials</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• More emphasis on walk-ins and not other students</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Disadvantaged clients with no access to computers</td>
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<td>• Cultural diversity</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Differing levels of IL and computer literacy</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Lack of policy/guidelines on Web 2.0 tools</td>
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<td>• Insufficient marketing</td>
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<td>• Inadequate collaboration with academic staff.</td>
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<td>• Inaccessibility to certain databases when off Unisa campuses</td>
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What can be done?

- Embedded librarianship is part of an overall strategy to provide “equivalent” library access, resources and services for distance students (Hoffman 2011).

- The embedded online librarian is a librarian that participates in a particular online course by logging into the course management system. Embedded librarian services are established to provide online instruction and develop student research skills. It is a collaborative effort between academics and the librarians.

- **Discipline based Information literacy:** Daly (2010) reports on their embedded librarianship venture that involved including librarian contact details, and resources linked to course sites. The results were that students benefited from more personalised research guidance and more course success.
Recommendations

Effective IL training programmes in an ODL environment require constant research.

ODL librarians should not forget that they are lifelong learners too.

Improve collaboration between librarians and academic staff.

Take advantage of learning management systems e.g. myUnisa to improve IL integration within the ODL curriculum.

Set a clear IL policy that will guide IL practices at the institution.

Library Links

From your librarians

We enjoyed working with you as you began your research for MWIP2, and we look forward to seeing you again on April 1. If you have questions in the meantime, don’t hesitate to contact us:

Emily Daly, Perkins Library
emily.daly@duke.edu
660-5379

Lynn Eaton, Special Collections
lynn.eaton@duke.edu
660-5333

Best wishes with your research!

Conducting Research for Writing 20

Tips for using Duke’s Databases

Click on Databases from the Libraries homepage. Enter database name, or click Find Databases by Subject (then select “Social Sciences” as your category and “Sociology” or “Women’s Studies” as your sub-category, for instance).

Databases are labeled as Primary Source, Abstract/Index and Full Text; use these and the information provided as guides for selecting the best databases for your research.

To locate the full-text for items you find in the databases, click Get it @ Duke—a box will pop up and tell you if the item is available online or in print, if the item is not available through Duke, consider requesting it from another library using Interlibrary Loan.

Exploring Duke’s Resources

Consider searching the following magazines for advertisements:

- House and Garden (in print in Lilly)
- Ladies Home Journal (in microfilm in Perkins; in print in Special Collections)
- Life (in microfilm in Perkins; in print in Lilly and Special Collections)
- The Saturday Evening Post (in print in LSC—use the request button)

Consider searching the following databases for advertisements (Ad*Access) and scholarly articles (all others).

Ad*Access includes over 7,000 advertisements printed in U.S. and Canadian newspapers and magazines between 1911 and 1955. Covers radio, television, transportation, beauty and hygiene, and World War II.

Academic Search Premier contains full-text articles and images from over 1000 journals on nearly every academic field of study. Note that Academic Search Premier, MLA, and America History and Life may searched simultaneously.

MLA International Bibliography is the premier database for literary studies, including citations to articles from 1936 to the present.

America: History and Life is the premier database for articles, books, and dissertations in American history. Limit your search by time period (1800-1860, 1860-1910, 1910-present) if needed.
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• Improve collaboration between librarians and academic staff.

• Take advantage of learning management systems e.g. myUnisa to improve IL integration within the ODL curriculum

• Set a clear IL policy that will guide IL practices at the institution.
Information literacy remains a crucial part of ensuring student success and developing lifelong learners at Unisa and other ODL institutions.

As the ODL delivery mode landscape progresses, librarians should therefore seek ways to develop themselves as IL trainers and strive to implement suitable IL programmes for students and academics.
Thank you!

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