Information literacy education in higher education institutions in South Africa

The road to Information Literacy: Librarians as facilitators of learning
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Outline of paper

1. Introduction
2. Information literacy: theoretical framework
3. Librarians as facilitators of learning
4. Information Literacy education in SA
5. Information Literacy programs
6. Conclusion
1. Introduction

Gutenberg generation:
Google generation:
2. Information literacy: theoretical framework

“Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information”

(American Library Association)
BIG6

- Stage 1: Task definition
  - Define the information problem
  - Identify information needed to solve the information problem
- Stage 2: Information seeking strategies
  - Determine possible sources
  - Select the best sources
- Stage 3: Locate and access information
  - Locate sources (intellectually and physically)
  - Find information within sources
- Stage 4: Use of information
  - Engage (e.g. read, view)
  - Extract relevant information from a source
- Stage 5: Synthesis
  - Organize information from multiple sources
  - Present the information
- Stage 6: Evaluation
  - Judge the product (effectiveness)
  - Judge the information problem-solving process (efficiency).
Components of IL

1. Recognize/identify information
2. Locate information
3. Analyse/evaluate information
4. Use information effectively
3. Librarians as facilitators of learning
3. Librarians as facilitators of learning

- Information seekers // information providers
- Library: place of learning
- Library staff: information experts
- Interface between users and their information needs
- IL education a core function in libraries across the globe
4. Information Literacy education in SA

- National Benchmark Tests Project: in terms of academic literacy 47% of students proficient in English, the dominant language of higher education and 7% had only “basic” academic literacy skills.
- South Africa’s school system is continuing to fail its learners.
- Huge number of learners are not equipped for demands of higher education
SOUTH AFRICA

- Significant differences between students from historically advantaged and historically disadvantaged environments
- Varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds
- Under-provision of computer and internet facilities & library resources
- Only 7% of schools - functional library
- 11 official languages, for most students English is a second, third or fourth language. English is the lingua franca in South Africa, although only 8% South Africans use English as their home language
4. Information Literacy education in SA

Trends:

- Institutions who offer LIS have declined the last few years, mainly due to the merger of higher education institutions.

- LIS schools - merging with other disciplines - focus on areas such as information and knowledge management, information technology, multimedia, information systems technology, and not librarianship.
4. Information Literacy education in SA

- The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) lists IL as a cross-field critical outcome for students.
- Institutions and libraries are including IL training in their strategic mission statements.
- Not always clear what, when and how IL should be taught.
5. Information Literacy programs

1. Library instruction - subset of IL
2. Full course across the academic curriculum
3. Online: e.g. http://www.lib.uct.ac.za/infolit/index.html
CHELSA (Committee for Higher Education Libraries) IL survey 2011

- All of them (100%) offer an IL training program in their library.
- Components covered in this program: Library orientation/Basic library skills (95.2%), using the library online catalogue (100%), using electronic databases (95.2%), using the Internet (e.g. Google scholar) (90.5%), referencing and plagiarism (95.2%), and other components (47.6%) such as evaluating information, search strategies, identify keywords, and information sources.
- The Information Literacy Program of more than two thirds (71.4%) is subject/discipline/faculty specific.
- The majority of respondents (85.7%) do not have the Information Literacy Program integrated in all curricula.
- Most of the Information Literacy Training Programs (86.4%) are not SAQA (South African Qualifications Authority) accredited.
The responsibility for offering the Information Literacy Training Program at the institution lies with dedicated full time trainer librarian(s) (45.5%), Library and Information Science Department (Library School) (18.2%), Faculty/Academic staff (18.2%) and other such as subject librarians, reference library staff, faculty librarians, and trained lecturers (77.3%).

Student assessment on IL skills is done by a generic assignment with multiple choice questions (84.2%), a formal test (21.1%), a formal discipline specific assignment (26.3%) or a self-marking quiz with results sent to the lecturer/librarians (36.8%).

The majority of respondents (90.5%) have the support of the university management and/or faculty for the Information Literacy Training Program.

All the institutions have an IL Training coordinator.
From this survey it is clear that Information Literacy training is a priority on the agenda of most higher education institutions in South Africa, although a number of issues need to be addressed.
6. CONCLUSION

- Challenges of information technologies demand that students have essential IL skills.
- Information Literacy training is an ongoing process.
- Information technology developments changed the needs of users, as well as the role of librarians. IL education is accepted as part of academic librarians’ mission.
- IL education needs a strong place in academic programs and that the best facilitator of this learning is the librarian. Librarians as IL specialists are educational partners.