

Information Literacy : Bangladesh perspective

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Information literacy

The key characteristic of the post industrial 21st century is that it is information abundant and intensive. Information literacy is thus required because of the ongoing proliferation of information resources and the variable methods of access. Individuals are faced with diverse information choices in their studies, in the workplace, and in their lives. Information is available through community resources, special interest organisations, manufacturers and service providers, media, libraries, and the internet. Increasingly, information comes unfiltered. This raises questions about authenticity, validity, and reliability. In addition, information is available through multiple media, including graphical, aural, and textual. These pose special challenges in evaluating, understanding and using information in an ethical and legal manner. The uncertain quality and expanding quantity of information also pose large challenges for society. Sheer abundance of information and technology will not in itself create more informed citizens *without* a complementary understanding and capacity to use information effectively (ANZIIL,2004)

Information literacy combines skills or competencies that together make for effective use of information. As the professional body responsible for the information profession, CILIP sees a need to define the term in a way that is understandable by all information-using communities in the UK. In an era of lifelong learning, this effectively means that information literacy has relevance for all ages from primary school to senior citizens. Information literate people understand more than how to find information, they understand its limitations and the need to examine how they use information, and they understand how to manage and communicate information. Information literacy is an essential and discrete dexterity – everyone relies on information everyday. (Cilip,2004)

Perhaps one important point that can be drawn out, and which it is useful to emphasise here, is that IL is about information in all forms. Information may come from another person, from a paper-based magazine or book, report or newspaper, from a digital source such as a database, a search engine or a e-book accessed through a computer, or it may come from any other form of media: film, video, DVD, radio, television, etc. (Cilip,2004)

Definitions of Information Literacy : Information literacy has been defined by different author, scholar, association and organization in different times. Some of the definitions are discussed in the following, though more or less these are similar to each other :

Information Literacy is defined as the ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use that information for the issue or problem at hand. (www.infolit.org)

"To be information literate, a person must be able to recognise when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information." (American Library Association, 1998)

US National Commission on Library and Information Science in the UNESCO-sponsored Meeting of Experts on Information Literacy in Prague describes information literacy as

"Information Literacy encompasses knowledge of one's information concerns and needs, and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize 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 life long learning."

"Information literacy is an understanding and set of abilities enabling individuals to 'recognise when information is needed and have the capacity to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information'." (CAUL, 2004)

"the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information to become independent life-long learners" - Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). *Criteria for Accreditation*. Sec 5.1.2. p. 55. 11th ed. Dec. 1997. <http://www.sacscoc.org/SectV.htm>

"the abilities to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, effectively use, and communicate information in its various formats" - State University of New York (SUNY) Council of Library Directors. *Information Literacy Initiative*. 30 Sept. 1997. <http://www.sunyconnect.suny.edu/ili/final.htm>

"a new liberal art that extends from knowing how to use computers and access information to critical reflection on the nature of information itself, its technical infrastructure, and its social, cultural and even philosophical context and impact" - Shapiro, Jeremy J. and Shelley K. Hughes. "Information Literacy as a Liberal Art". *Educom Review*. 3.2. Mar./Apr. 1996. <http://www.educause.edu/pub/er/review/reviewarticles/31231.html>

"the skills of information problem solving" - Wisconsin Educational Media Association. *Position Statement on Information Literacy*. 1993.

Information literacy incorporates, and is broader than, fluency in the use of information and communications technology (ICT). With digitisation of scholarly publications and the growth in online delivery, fluency with information technology requires more than the learning of software and hardware associated with computer literacy. Information literacy is an intellectual framework for recognising the need for, understanding, finding, evaluating, and using information. These are activities which may be supported in part by fluency with information technology, in part by sound investigative methods, but most importantly through critical discernment and reasoning. Information literacy initiates, sustains, and extends lifelong learning through abilities that may use technologies but are ultimately independent of them. (ANZIIL, 2004).

Information Literacy Skills : An early extended definition of information literacy, incorporating a list of skills required, was devised in 1985 by the Auraria Library of the University of Colorado. This gave as a general definition that information literacy was 'the ability to effectively access and evaluate information for a given need'. The characteristics of information literacy, thus defined, were that it was: (BAWDEN,2001, p.238-39)

- _ an integrated set of skills (e.g. research strategy, evaluation) and knowledge (of tools and resources);
- _ not just knowledge of sources;
- _ not solely associated with the library;
- _ distinct from, but relevant to, literacy and computer literacy;
- _ not just information finding;
- _ developed through particular attitudes (persistence, attention to detail, caution in accepting single sources);
- _ time and labour intensive;
- _ a problem-solving activity, and therefore need-driven.

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. This definition implies several skills. We believe that the skills (or competencies) that are required to be information literate require an understanding of: (CILIP,2004)

- a need for information
- the resources available
- how to find information
- the need to evaluate results
- how to work with or exploit results
- ethics and responsibility of use
- how to communicate or share your findings

- how to manage your findings

Information literate people : Information literate people are those who (ANZIIL,2004)

- recognise a need for information
- determine the extent of information needed
- access information efficiently
- critically evaluate information and its sources
- classify, store, manipulate and redraft information collected or generated
- incorporate selected information into their knowledge base
- use information effectively to learn, create new knowledge, solve problems and make decisions
- understand economic, legal, social, political and cultural issues in the use of information
- access and use information ethically and legally
- use information and knowledge for participative citizenship and social responsibility
- experience information literacy as part of independent learning and lifelong learning them.

Why information literacy :

Armed with buzzwords and high hopes, we enter the new age in full force, ready to tackle the jobs, competition, and challenges ahead of us. All the while, paradoxes abound : continuing layoffs and growing shortages of skilled workers; booming economics in one corner of the globe, and busts next door, technology reinventing itself overnight, and predictions of it replacing books, humans, and work that fail to materialize, diversity expanding and proving itself to be productive, along with continued, oftentimes increasing discrimination; more tools to obtain information, and more information than we can possibly use. Optimists would call it opportunity ;skeptics , a vicious circle. Associated buzzwords include intellectual capital, knowledge management, and learning organizations. There are plenty more, but these are particularly important to review because of their close association with information power. Being able to effectively deal with information and knowledge is required in today's workplace. Information power, acquired by being information literate, is crucial for accomplishing work in the twenty-first century. (Goard,2002, p.1)

Generalizing about developing countries and countries in transition is difficult and even more so when making comparisons between them. There are many and big differences in geo-political, economic, social and cultural backgrounds which condition the level of their development and consequently the level of information literacy among their citizens. However, going through similar political, economic and social changes over the last couple of decades, most of these countries, regardless their development level, have certain common points of relevance regarding the information literacy issues, such as: (Pejova,2002)

- new political structures, new functions for state administration, opening of the mass media, and in the case of the countries in transition, the process of integration into the structures of the European Union;
- economic reforms, industrial and organizational restructuring, privatization, mass establishment of new private firms, liberalization and internationalization of the economy, free market principles which call for more entrepreneurial behavior;
- extensive creation of new legislation in all spheres of life as a result of the political and economic changes and the need for compliance with and adoption of international standards;
- development of the telecommunications infrastructure, introduction of the latest information and telecommunication technologies, development of the information services industry;
- adaptation of their education and training systems to the international standards which makes them targets as potential markets of the education and information services industry of developed countries;
- exposure to the unprecedented availability of printed and electronic information sources and the ever increasing number of end users who are conversant with the latest information and telecommunication

Information literacy is essential for overall development of a country. No country can develop properly without a good information literacy program. Importance of information literacy is an undenyng fact. As it is evident from today's competitive world without information no one can develop . Money cannot do anything if you do not have any information. But, if you have information it can develop your economic condition. Farmers has land but they do not have information. If we give information that this type seeds are appropriate for their field, they will be benefited without any doubt. Some people in our society are rich in sense of money but actually they are not rich. Money will not exist for long time. In this age of information it is very difficult to get the information one actually need. Thus information literacy is essential

1. To get appropriate information from a world of information
2. To promote research activities
3. To be a good citizen
4. To improve the economic, political and social condition of a country.
5. To fulfill daily needs of a person through information
6. To promote formal and informal education
7. To utilize modern facilities
8. To evaluate information critically
9. To keep pace with time and so on.

International Alliance for Information Literacy :

About the Alliance:

Upon a recommendation from the Prague Conference of Information Literacy Experts held September 20-23, 2003, the following organizations are committing to creating an International Alliance for Information Literacy. The evolving purpose for the Alliance is to facilitate the sharing of information and expertise on information literacy across regions and nations of the world. The ultimate goal of the Alliance is to facilitate people's participating effectively in the Information Society, as part of the basic human right of life long learning. The Alliance will consist of organizations that act as nodes around the world. Member organizations will generally be regional or national organizations that are broadly based, including representation from the economic development, education, health, human services, librarianship, public policy, and information and communications technology sectors.

Founding Members:

Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy (ANZIIL)

<http://www.anziil.org/>

The **Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy (ANZIIL)** supports organisations, institutions and individuals in the promotion of information literacy and, in particular, the embedding of information literacy within the total educational process.

The Institute identifies, facilitates, fosters and supports best practice in information literacy through

- Professional Development
- Promotion, Marketing and Advocacy
- Research

Activities and initiatives primarily target vocational and higher education. The Institute works in collaboration with a range of national and international organisations, forums and groups to complement their existing information literacy aims, objectives and initiatives.

In particular, ANZIIL works closely with the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL), Council of New Zealand University Librarians (CONZUL), Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), NWGTLS (National Working Group for TAFE Library Services) and Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA)

European Network on Information Literacy (EnIL) (European Union)

<http://www.ceris.to.cnr.it/Basili/EnIL/index.html>

The European network on Information Literacy (EnIL) is a network of researchers actively involved in Information Literacy, drawn from most of the EU25 countries. The network has been established by initiative of the Italian National Research Council and its aims include:

- the definition of a common research agenda;
- the production of collaborative studies and the collection of comparable data
- the promotion of information literacy in the European Union;
- the advancement of European co-operation in this field;
- the exchange of experiences and the discussion of best-practice examples.

All the members of the network work on a voluntary basis and the network is open to IL experts from all the EU Member States.

National Forum on Information Literacy (United States)

<http://www.infolit.org>

The National Forum on Information Literacy was created in 1989 as a response to the recommendations of the American Library Association's Presidential Committee on Information Literacy. These education, library, and business leaders stated that no other change in American society has offered greater challenges than the emergence of the Information Age. Information is expanding at an unprecedented rate, and enormously rapid strides are being made in technology for storing, organizing, and accessing the ever-growing tidal wave of information. The combined effect of these factors is an increasingly fragmented information base, a large component of which are available only to people with money and/or acceptable institutional affiliations. In the recent past, the outcome of these challenges has been characterized as the "digital divide."

In an information society, ALL people should have the right to information that can enhance their lives. To promote economic independence and quality of existence, people need to be informed and up-to-date. Out of the overabundance of available information, people need to be able to find and use a variety of information to meet a wide range of personal and business needs.

The manner in which our country deals with the realities of the Information Age will have enormous impact on our democratic way of life and on our nation's ability to compete in an international marketplace. Within America's information society, the potential also exists to address many long-standing social and economic inequities. To reap such benefits, people - as individuals, and as a nation - must be information literate. The Forum's work is intended to empower member organizations with ideas and resources to promote information literacy among their memberships and constituents.

The Forum pursues activities in four primary areas. Through its member organizations, the Forum examines the role of information in our lives and integrates information literacy into their programs. It also supports, initiates, and monitors information literacy projects both in the United States and abroad. NFIL actively encourages the creation and adoption of information literacy guidelines by such regulatory bodies as state departments of

education, commissions on higher education, and academic governing boards. And finally, it works with teacher education programs to insure that new teachers are able to incorporate information literacy into their teaching.

NORDINFOlit (Scandinavia)

<http://www.nordinfoelit.org>

All of the Nordic countries are represented in the NORDINFOlit steering committee. The work of the committee is primarily focused on four areas:

A Nordic summer school for information literacy

Seminars on standards and guidelines for integrating information literacy into higher education

An international conference – Creating Knowledge

A web forum and network for discussing and documenting Nordic best practices for Information Literacy

Members:

Information Science Today (Bangladesh)

<http://www.infosciencetoday.org>

Information Science Today, a voluntary organization, works to develop information systems, promote information literacy, and cooperate with the libraries, information centers, and library organizations around the world. Information Science Today will gradually take different types of dynamic efforts to promote use of information in everyday life. Information systems have been promoted extensively in the developed countries, so it is our responsibility to develop it in the third world countries. Let's be a part of this achievement, contribute generously, and develop use of information in every field.

IST promotes the library and information science field, especially in the third world countries; provides free information to all regarding library and information science; participates in the global information literacy community advocating to make information available and accessible to all; promotes use of information in every field of study; promotes information literacy at the grass roots level; networks with organizations and institutions sharing similar aims and objectives; promotes research activities for the development of information and its uses.

Networking Alliance for Voluntary Actions (India)

<http://www.navaindia.org>

NAVA - Networking Alliance for Voluntary Actions is a corporate expression of NGOs of India. It serves the NGOs to empower themselves to interact more effectively on social empowerment. It is staffed by skilled NGO executives who are having decades of faculty experience in training, motivation, project planning and evaluation. It also conducts training programmes upon requisitions from larger Voluntary Agencies.

NAVA is a non-profit voluntary organisation initiated by a group of experienced social activists in India. NAVA is a *journey in search of development alternatives*, a common expression for development action of 13 Voluntary Organisations and 10 Associate Service Groups, across the country, who in a spirit of participation

help in materialising the programmes. NAVA is Registered under Societies Registration Act and FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act).

Russian Reading Association, Pskov Department

<http://www.infolit.org/members/rrapd.html>

Pskov Department of Russian Reading Association was founded to consolidate people who understand the importance of literacy and information literacy in the modern world. The organization unites teachers, librarians, school librarians, administrators, and parents to share ideas, to suggest new approaches to teaching in schools, to design programs for school librarians who are the main link in helping children to use information effectively and efficiency.

SCONUL Advisory Committee on Information Literacy (United Kingdom)

http://www.sconul.ac.uk/activities/inf_lit/

SCONUL was founded in 1950 (as the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries). In 1994 it merged with COPOL, the Council of Polytechnic Librarians: at that time the British polytechnics were reconstituted as universities. In 2001 SCONUL changed its name to the Society of College, National and University Libraries, having welcomed colleges of higher education into membership.

SCONUL is a UK registered charity (278550) and a company limited by guarantee (England 1436951).

All universities in the United Kingdom and Ireland are SCONUL members: so too are many of the UK's colleges of higher education. Also members are the major national libraries both sides of the Irish Sea. On behalf of all members, SCONUL

- manages reciprocal access and borrowing schemes for library users
- works to improve information handling skills
- influences publishers' pricing policies
- provides staff development opportunities
- shares experience of innovative library design, and many other aspects of library operations
- collects and publishes statistics from our member libraries, enabling benchmarking and other comparative analysis
- engages with parliaments and government departments (UK and European) to emphasise the needs of academic and research libraries in legislation.

Bangladesh Perspective : The independence of Bangladesh was declared on 26 March 1971 following the crackdown by the army on the night of 25 March 1971. Bangladesh emerged as an independent and sovereign country on 16 December 1971 following a 9-month War Of Liberation. After the emergence of Bangladesh Dhaka (previously spelt Dacca) is its capital.

Literacy situation in the Bangladesh period : Three censuses were held in 1974, 1981 and 1991. The 1974 census defined literacy as the ability to read and write in any language. This definition was in conformity with the UNESCO one accepted throughout the world. The definition of literacy used in the 1981 census covered only persons of age 5 years and above and included those who could write a letter in any language. The 1991 census also defined literacy as the ability to write a letter in any language but covered persons of age 7 years and above. The effect of change in definition of literate has been reflected in the literacy rates of different census years. Literacy rate among people of all ages rose from 17% in 1961 to 24.9% in census year 1991. For the 7 years and above age group, the literacy rate increased from 26.8% in 1974 to 32.4% in 1991. In all census

periods, the literacy rates were higher among the males than among the females. The female literacy rate, however, rose significantly in the 1991 census. It was 16.4% in 1974 and 25.5% in 1991. Urban rural variation in literacy rate is also quite evident in all census periods. Literacy rates in urban areas are higher than in rural areas in all census periods.

The independence of Bangladesh generated a new enthusiasm in both government and private level in efforts to expand literacy and remove illiteracy. The Bangladesh Constitution of 1972 provides the basis for a policy on universal primary education. The policy has three components: establishing a uniform mass oriented and universal system of education; extending free and compulsory education to all children; and relating education to the needs of society and removing illiteracy. Keeping in view the constitutional directives, Bangladesh committed itself to implement the recommendations of the World Conference on Education for All (1990), The World Summit on Children (1990) and the Summit Declaration on Education for All (1993).

Primary education was recognised as the foundation of preparing literate citizens of the country in all national documents, reports of the commissions, and committees on education. But this stage of education got a momentum only after the enactment of the Compulsory Primary Education Law of 1990. Compulsory primary education under this Act was introduced in 1992 in 68 thanas, and all over the country in 1993. Measures such as satellite schools, community schools, and Food for Education Programme were taken up to increase enrolment and decrease dropout. The new primary curriculum based on terminal competencies was implemented in 1992. These steps resulted in some improvements in various efficiency indicators of primary education such as in gross enrolment ratio and the completion rate and raised the participation of girls in primary education. In addition to state intervention, from the second half of 1980's, the government allowed NGOs to experiment with a variety of delivery mechanisms to cater to the basic educational needs of the disadvantaged population.

According to the Report of Bangladesh Education Commission of 1974, the number of adult men and women illiterates in the country at the time of independence was 35 million. The Report recommended adoption of non-formal and mass education programmes for them. Accordingly, the First Five-Year Plan (1973-78) launched a massive functional literacy programme through NON-FORMAL EDUCATION and allocated Tk 400 million for this subsector. The Second Five-Year Plan (1980-85) attached high priority to eradication of mass illiteracy. Side by side the Universal Primary Education Project, a Mass Education Programme (MEP) was implemented in 1980 for people of the 11- 45 years age group. But the programme was abandoned in 1982, when its achievement in terms of the number of people made literate was an estimated 700,000 against a target of 10 million.

In the Third Five-Year Plan (1985-90) the programme was revived with an allocation of Tk 250 million and a modest target of making 2.4 million adults literate by June 1990. Information from the office of the Integrated Non-Formal Education (INFE) project (former MEP Office) show that only 27 upazilas were covered in this project out of a target of 71 upazilas. A total of 291,600 adults were made literate in five years. In the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1990-95) Tk 235.70 million was allocated. During the Plan period MEP was continued as a spillover under the project and total of 367,660 adult illiterates of 11-45 years age were made literate. In addition, another new project, Expansion of INFE Programme, was initiated to institutionalise a comprehensive non-formal education system in the country. The programme was implemented in 68 thanas of the country. Moreover, under the aegis of the district administration a programme named Total Literacy Movement (TLM) was started in 1995 in LALMONIRHAT and BHOLA districts. It was later extended to 15 other districts. Preparatory work is now under way to extend TLM to 22 more districts.

The Fifth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) adopted an ambitious objective to achieve the goal of Education for All (EFA) by the end of Plan period 2002. The major objectives are to increase gross enrolment in primary schools to 110 percent (net 95%) with particular emphasis on enrolment of girls and on increasing completion rate of primary education to at least 75 percent by the year 2002. The Fifth Plan also set up some important objectives of mass education consistent with the overall objectives of achieving the goal of EFA and fulfilling the educational needs of 30 million adult illiterates. These objectives are to increase literacy rate of adults (15 years and above) to 80% by the year 2002, to empower learners with technical skills, entrepreneurial traits and leadership skills, to empower skills related to literacy, numeracy and communication, to reduce gender gap in literacy rates in both rural and urban areas, and to develop continuing education programme for neo-literates. (Khatun, 2004)

Information Literacy in Bangladesh :

When comparing developed and less developed countries regarding the situation of promotion and implementation of information literacy, we see in developed countries the following: (Pejova, 2002)

- strong, massive movements and networks of organizations and professional associations engaged on the information literacy promotion and implementation;
- well developed library and information systems and networks;
- a significant turning of the schools and universities' attention to the lifelong skills of learning how to learn, that is of educating pupils and students to find, evaluate, and effectively use information;
- well educated and trained information and library professionals and enthusiastic educators acting energetically and in many cases on self-initiative;
- plethora of information literacy curricula and syllabi, many of them available on Internet, accompanied by innovative approaches of how to teach information literacy (objectives, standards, measures);
- users who have through all their schooling been exposed and have been taught to use the rich and well organized information resources.

As opposed to:

- lack of co-operation among professional organizations and lack of well articulated and/or promoted information literacy policies and programs;
- underdeveloped library and information systems and networks;
- expensive telecommunication infrastructure services;
- shortage of information and library educated and trained professionals who would give the necessary impetus to the information literacy promotion and implementation;
- intimidated users who are not so well acquainted with the nature of information and its creation, how information is published and disseminated (the pattern of flow of information within a discipline), that is without the mental map of the information and publication world.

Bangladesh is a developing country where every sorts of problems exist as stated by Pejova.

In Bangladesh the term 'Information Literacy' is not a popular one. Peoples are confused about this term.

Recently Information Science Today conducted a survey on the understanding of information literacy meaning among students, teachers, businessman and some other professionals. But the result is a a very frustrating.

Around 93% respondent do not know the actual meaning of information literacy where 5% give a vague answer and only 2% know about information literacy and give a satisfactory answer. These are the real situation prevailing in Bangladesh. In such situation comprehensive training program is necessary. First the term should be popularized. Then different seminars, symposium, conferences should be organized by different educational institutions. A continuous program should be developed by government and non-government organization.

International cooperation is must in this regard.

Information Science Today has taken a Five years(2005-2009) plan to popularize the term through posters, books, seminars, media writing etc. and provide comprehensive training on information literacy to mass people, so that they can utilize information to their own needs properly. To make this plan a successful one throughout the year Information Science Today will publish different leaflets, posters and host information literacy relevant materials on their website and also will conduct information literacy relevant training and seminars. No doubt these job is not easy at all. It needs support and cooperation from national and international body. Thus Information Science Today seek support from national and international body.

Conclusion : Information literacy incorporates, and is broader than, fluency in the use of information and communications technology (ICT). With digitisation of scholarly publications and the growth in online delivery, fluency with information technology requires more than the learning of software and hardware associated with computer literacy. Information literacy is an intellectual framework for recognising the need for, understanding, finding, evaluating, and using information. These are activities which may be supported in part by fluency with information technology, in part by sound investigative methods, but most importantly through critical discernment and reasoning. Information literacy initiates, sustains, and extends lifelong learning through abilities that may use technologies but are ultimately independent of them. (ANZIL,2004)

Information literacy program cannot be a successful one in developing countries without national and international cooperation and coordination. On the other hand without a good information literacy program proper development of a country may be hampered. The best way to develop information literacy program in developing countries is to call developing country's organization that are willing to develop information literacy activities to come developed countries and get training on information literacy activities, with a view to give them a guideline to launch information literacy program in their respective country.

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