Information Literacy at City University

What is information literacy?

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." [1]

Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning. An information literate individual is able to:

- Determine the extent of information needed
- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically
- Incorporate selected information into his or her knowledge base
- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally

How does information literacy differ from information technology?

Information literacy, while showing significant overlap with information technology skills, is a distinct and broader area of competence. Increasingly, information technology skills are interwoven with, and support, information literacy. Information literacy's focus is on content, communication, analysis, information searching, and evaluation; whereas information technology "fluency" focuses on a deep understanding of technology and graduated, increasingly skilled use of it. [2]

Why is information literacy important in higher education?

Developing lifelong learners is central to the mission of higher education institutions. By ensuring that individuals have the intellectual abilities of reasoning and critical thinking, and by helping them construct a framework for learning how to learn, colleges and universities provide the foundation for continued growth throughout their careers, as well as in their roles as informed citizens and members of communities. Information literacy is a key component of, and contributor to, lifelong learning.

How is information literacy addressed with distance learning?

For students not on traditional campuses, information resources are often available through networks and other channels, and distributed learning technologies permit teaching and learning to occur when the teacher and the student are not in the same place at the same time. The challenge for those promoting information literacy in distance education courses is to develop a comparable range of experiences in learning about information resources as are offered on traditional campuses. Information literacy competencies for distance learning students should be comparable to those for "on campus" students.

What is the role of the faculty in information literacy instruction?

Incorporating information literacy across curricula, in all programs and services, and throughout the administrative life of City University, requires the collaborative efforts of faculty, librarians, and administrators. Through lectures and by leading discussions, faculty establish the context for learning. Faculty also inspire students to explore the unknown, offer guidance on how best to fulfill information needs, and monitor students' progress. Librarians coordinate the evaluation and selection of intellectual resources for programs and services; organize, and maintain collections; and provide instruction to students and faculty who seek information. Administrators create opportunities for collaboration and staff development among faculty, librarians, and other professionals who initiate information literacy programs, lead in planning and budgeting for those programs, and provide ongoing resources to sustain them.

What is the role of the library in information literacy instruction?

The information literacy program is coordinated by the City University Library because much of the information that students search in the academic context is provided by the library. Also, librarians are specifically trained to assist students and faculty with finding, evaluating, and using information. However, the teaching of information literacy skills can and should be part of all programs. In partnership with senior and teaching faculty, librarians are working toward the integration of information literacy instruction into all programs at City University.

Why doesn't the library offer a separate information literacy class?

While stand-alone information literacy classes can benefit students, research has shown that students benefit most when information literacy is placed in a disciplinary context and taught from that perspective.

Notes

1. American Library Association. *Presidential Committee on Information Literacy. Final Report.* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1989)
   http://www.ala.org/acrl/nili/ilit1st.html

2. National Research Council. Commission on Physical Sciences, Mathematics, and Applications. Committee on Information Technology Literacy, Computer Science and Telecommunications Board. *Being Fluent with Information Technology.* Publication. (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999)
   http://www.nap.edu/catalog/6482.html

American Library Association (2003). *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education.* Retrieved July 29, 2004 from the American Library Association, Association of College and Research Libraries Web site: http://www.ala.org/acrl/ilcomstan.html