

July 2014

## On the Road to Information Literacy: from start to ...progress

Colleen Bell  
*University of Oregon*

### Recommended Citation

Bell, C. (2014). On the Road to Information Literacy: from start to ...progress. *OLA Quarterly*, 7(2), 2-5+. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1575>

© 2014 by the author(s).

*OLA Quarterly* is an official publication of the Oregon Library Association | ISSN 1093-7374

---

# On the Road to Information Literacy: From Start to ... Progress

by *Colleen Bell*  
*University of Oregon*

---

In April 1989, disbelief must have rippled through the audience gathered for the LOEX Library Instruction Conference to hear Patricia Senn Breivik. She opened her remarks with a shocking statement: "My inability to be a supporter, any longer, of library instruction may make me an inappropriate speaker..." (Breivik, 1989). Breivik was one of library instruction's most ardent champions, poised to achieve a status comparable to such luminaries as Evan Farber and Carol Kuhlthau.

She went on to say that she now believed "that library instruction encompasses too small a concept for the needs of education in an information society." These opening remarks signaled the beginnings of a true "revolution in education," one that would extend beyond the walls of the academic, school, and public libraries and require cooperation and participation from their partners in the educational process—teachers, faculty, administrators, service agencies, other libraries, and community leaders—to create communities of information-literate life-long learners.

Although a leader in the campaign, Breivik wasn't alone in leading the charge toward this revolution. In 1987, then American Library Association (ALA) President Margaret Chisholm formed a committee of leaders in education and librarianship whose charge consisted of three tasks:

1. "To define information literacy... and its importance to student performance, lifelong learning, and active citizenship;
2. "To design one or more models for information literacy development appropriate to formal and informal learning environments throughout people's lifetimes; and
3. "To determine implications for the continuing education and development of teachers" (ALA, 1989).

In its final report, the ALA committee noted that, "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 decision or task at hand." The committee observed that the "tidal wave of information" has changed so that what used to suffice for literacy, effective knowledge, and a good education no longer is adequate. "People need more than just a knowledge base, they also need techniques for exploring it, connecting it to other knowledge bases, and making practical use of it" (ALA, 1989). The committee concluded their report with five recommendations, all of which have been implemented in the succeeding decade to some degree.

## Recommendations and Progress

The committee's first recommendation, reconceptualizing the information environment, was a powerful charge to libraries:

To the extent that our concepts about knowledge and information are out of touch with the realities of a new, dynamic information environment, we must reconceptualize them. The degrees and directions of reconceptualization will vary, but the aims should always be the same: to communicate the power of knowledge; to develop in each citizen a sense of his or her responsibility to acquire knowledge and deepen insight through better use of information and related technologies; to instill a love of learning, a thrill in searching, and a joy in discovering; and to teach young and old alike how to know when they have an information need and how to gather, synthesize, analyze, interpret, and evaluate the information around them.

The charge would prove to be a daunting challenge. More than a decade later, many libraries and their parent institutions still struggle with the organizational and pedagogical changes that such goals require. However, some strides have been made, particularly in the development of national standards for information literacy, and various efforts by states, state systems of higher education, accrediting bodies, and individual institutions.

The second recommendation was to create a coalition of national organizations and agencies to promote information literacy. In response to this recommendation, the National Forum on Information Literacy (NFIL) (<http://www.infolit.org/>) was created in 1990. The NFIL, a coalition of over 80 national and international associations, businesses, agencies, and other organizations, is active in four areas: 1) through its member organizations, it develops programs that integrate information literacy; 2) it supports, initiates, and monitors information literacy projects both nationally and internationally; 3) it actively encourages the creation and adoption of information literacy guidelines by regulatory bodies; and 4) it works to ensure that new teachers have the ability to incorporate information literacy into their teaching.

---

The committee also recommended the development and implementation of a national research agenda addressing issues identified in the committee's report, as well as the tracking of research and demonstration projects. Various attempts have been made, with a great degree of success, to fulfill the latter (see Grassian and Clark, 1999); however, the former is still largely an unfulfilled mandate. But there are some notable exceptions:

- A 1994–95 national survey measured the extent that information literacy had been assimilated into the curriculum of post-secondary institutions. Results suggested that success in applying information literacy strategies on campuses was possibly linked to building requirements into the accreditation standard (Ratteray and Simmons, 1995).
- Doyle's 1992 dissertation developed a comprehensive definition of information literacy and outcome measures for the concept. Her definition, "the ability to access, evaluate and use information from a variety of sources," is now standard. She tied outcomes to the National Education Goals of 1990, three of which—Goals 1, 3, and 5—were thematically linked to information literacy and lifelong learning (Doyle, 1992).
- In 1997, Christine Bruce published her doctoral dissertation as *The Seven Faces of Information Literacy*. She suggests replacing the behavioral model of information literacy focused on tasks and skills with a relational model of information literacy where students experience information literacy through seven different lenses: information technology, information sources, information process, information control, knowledge construction, knowledge extension, and wisdom (Bruce, 1997).
- A survey of science and engineering faculty investigated faculty perceptions of students' information literacy abilities versus their own pedagogical processes related to information literacy. The survey found that while faculty are generally supportive of the need for information literacy, their practices regarding the integration of information literacy into the curriculum were highly variable (Leckie and Fullerton, 1999).
- As part of the Institute for Information Literacy (<http://www.ala.org/acrl/nili/>), the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) established a committee

to develop a framework for identifying model information literacy programs. This initiative is called the "Best Practices" initiative. The committee is currently identifying the characteristics of a model program; once those have been developed, it will identify programs that exhibit those characteristics.

The fourth recommendation involved creating a climate conducive to students becoming information-literate. State departments of education, accrediting bodies, and academic governing boards were charged with this responsibility. In 1987, both Oregon and Washington developed guidelines for schools to ensure that information literacy was an integral part of the curriculum (WLMA/SSPI, 1987; DOE, 1987). In the mid-1990s Oregon developed new curriculum standards, known as the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) (<http://www.ode.state.or.us/cifs/standards/>), that do not directly refer to information literacy. As a consequence, the Oregon Educational Media Association created the "Oregon Information Literacy Guidelines" ([http://www.oema.net/InfoLit\\_Intro.html](http://www.oema.net/InfoLit_Intro.html)) to address information literacy concerns for school library media specialists in each of the content areas addressed by CIM. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education was the first of the regional higher education accrediting bodies to incorporate information literacy into its standards for accreditation (MSACHE, 1994).

The committee also recommended the integration of information literacy concerns in the formation and expectations of teachers. In May 2000, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) approved revised standards for accreditation of schools, colleges, and departments of education that require that new teachers are able to "appropriately and effectively integrate ... information literacy in instruction to support student learning." These accreditation standards will be applied incrementally beginning in Fall 2001 (NCATE, 2000).

#### National Standards for Information Literacy

Two of the most exciting developments since the committee published its final report have been the development of national standards for the K–12 and higher education communities. These standards have provided librarians, educators, and administrators with a common set of goals and measurable objectives for developing an information-literate citizenry.

In 1998, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) jointly published Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning, a set of nine standards divided into three broad behavioral areas (AASL/AECT 1998a). Each of the standards includes a number of indicators designed to be applied to specific content areas such as language, geography, history, mathematics, science or technology. These standards are accompanied by a broader framework for collaboration, leadership, administration, teaching and learning (AASL/AECT, 1998b).

In January 2000, the board of the ACRL approved the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education, establishing five standards for information literacy (ACRL, 2000) which built on those developed for the K–12 community. Like those developed for the K–12 community, these standards are designed to provide a framework for assessing the information-literate individual. Each standard has several performance indicators comprised of a series of specific outcomes that can be measured or assessed. To provide guidance to librarians in implementing the outcomes, the ACRL Instruction Section developed a set of guidelines for academic librarians (ACRL/IS, 2001).

---

An information-literate person  
“recognizes the need for information;  
recognizes that accurate and complete  
information is the basis for intelligent  
decision-making; formulates questions  
based on information needs; identifies  
potential sources of information;  
develops successful search strategies;  
accesses sources of information  
including computer-based and other  
technologies; evaluates information;  
organizes information for practical  
application; integrates new information  
into an existing body of knowledge;  
and uses information in critical problem  
solving and thinking.”

DOYLE 1992

literacy.html) to address the next step: developing information-literate communities. The focus here is on establishing partnerships among libraries, various individuals, organizations, and agencies in the communities in which the libraries exist. Two significant documents are available to help libraries develop these partnerships:

- Information Literacy Community Partnerships Toolkit (<http://library.austin.cc.tx.us/staff/lnavarro/communitypartnerships/toolkit.html>)
- *A Library Advocate's Guide to Building Information-literate Communities* (<http://www.ala.org/pio/advocacy/informationliteracy.pdf>)

Together these two documents provide a framework for all libraries, librarians, and library supporters to become effective advocates for information literacy within their communities.

#### Recommended Readings on Information Literacy

Much of the literature on information literacy comes out of the higher education community. While this selective list of readings is not intended to be a representative sample of the literature available, it provides, when com-

bined with those sources already mentioned, some familiarity with the many facets of information literacy.

Chiste K., Glover A. and Westwood G., 2000. Infiltration and entrenchment: capturing and securing information literacy territory in academe. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 26: 202–208.

While the military theme and language of the article may be somewhat objectionable, the personalities of its three authors and the approaches they used to develop relationships with faculty and departments are intriguing.

Eisenberg M. and Berkowitz B., 1990. *Information Problem-Solving: The Big Six Skills Approach to Library & Information Skills Instruction*. Norwood, Ablex Publishing.

Originally written for school library media specialists, this book reads like a how-to manual for teaching information literacy concepts. As the authors note in their foreword, the Big Six Skills approach is “based on information problem-solving, taught through integration with the subject area curriculum, and generalizable to all information problem situations. [It] gives students the competence and confidence necessary to meet a lifetime of information needs.”

Farber E., 1999. Faculty-librarian cooperation: a personal retrospective. *Reference Services Review* 27: 229–234.

Farber's leadership in the area of cooperation and collaboration between librarians and faculty put Earlham College on the map, and underscored the importance of integrating the library into the curriculum.

Fowler C. and Dupuis E., 2000. What have we done? TILT's impact on our instruction program. *Reference Services Review* 28: 343–348.

The Digital Information Literacy Office at the University of Texas, Austin, created TILT to introduce students to basic information literacy concepts without relying on specific resources. This article describes how the tutorial was used as a warm-up for assignment-driven library classes for freshmen, and the resulting impact on the library's instruction program.

Grassian E. and Clark S., 1999. Information literacy sites. *College & Research Libraries News* 60: 78–81.

This selective list of Web sites is a great starting point for librarians and others just beginning to explore information literacy. It is divided into several categories: directories/megasites, guidelines and reports, programs, discussion groups, electronic journals, articles, and beyond the library.

Iannuzzi P., 1998. Faculty development and information literacy: establishing campus partnerships. *Reference Services Review* 26: 97–102, 116.

Iannuzzi addresses five areas concerning the establishment of faculty partnerships: information literacy and campus culture, campus ini-

tiatives, strategies for partnerships, a faculty development model, and the Florida International University Model for Information Literacy.

McFadden T. and Hostetler T. (eds.), 1995. The library and undergraduate education. *Library Trends* 44: 221–457.

This issue of *Library Trends* is really the first publication to place the spotlight squarely on information literacy and higher education. It includes articles by a number of heavy-hitters in the academic library world, including Barbara MacAdam, Hannelore Rader, Larry Hardesty, and Evan Farber.

Petrowski M.J., 2000. Creativity research: implications for teaching, learning and thinking. *Reference Services Review* 28: 304–312.

In this keynote address at the 1998 LOEX-of-the-West conference in Bozeman, Montana, Petrowski surveys a variety of research approaches in the area of creativity and highlights findings of relevance to teaching and learning.

Rader H., 1999. The learning environment—then, now, and later: 30 years of teaching information skills. *Reference Services Review* 27: 219–224.

Rader traces the development of library instruction and information literacy from the first LOEX conference on library instruction in 1971 through 1998. This article is particularly useful for its attention to national and international efforts in information literacy.

Smith K., 2000. *New Roles and Responsibilities for the University Library: Advancing Student Learning Through Outcomes Assessment*. Washington, Association of Research Libraries. <http://www.arl.org/stats/newmeas/outcomes/HEOSmith.pdf>

Smith examines the changing role of the university library as it addresses shifting customer expectations. He delivered a version of this paper at the ACRL national conference in March, 2001.

### Learning About Information Literacy

Several avenues for professional development in information literacy now exist; it is simply a matter of knowing where to look. This list includes national and regional conferences, institutes, and organizations that routinely provide programs on information literacy.

- American Association of School Librarians (<http://www.ala.org/aasl/>)  
The program for the upcoming national conference will certainly include a plethora of programs on information literacy. Its ICONnect program (<http://www.ala.org/ICONN/onlineco.html>) provides online courses related to technology for library educators.
- American Library Association (<http://www.ala.org/>)

The annual conference usually includes several programs and/or preconferences on information literacy; look for programs sponsored by ACRL, ACRL Instruction Section, Library Instruction Round Table, and AASL.

- Association of College & Research Libraries (<http://www.ala.org/acrl/>)  
The biennial national conference includes many offerings related to information literacy. The 2001 conference included over 40 programs, papers, roundtables, workshops, and poster sessions devoted to information literacy, with countless others related to library instruction.
- Institute for Information Literacy (<http://www.ala.org/acrl/nili/>)  
Provides two immersion programs each year, one national and one regional. Attendance at the national institute is competitive and not just for academics.
- LOEX Clearinghouse for Library Instruction (<http://www.emich.edu/public/loex/loex.html>)  
Provides an annual conference. Locations alternate between the home base in Ypsilanti, Michigan and selected cities in the eastern part of the country.
- LOEX-of-the-West (<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/loexwest/>)  
A biennial conference held in a location in the western part of the country. The next conference is June 27–29, 2002 in Eugene.



### References

American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), 1998a. *Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning*. Chicago, American Library Association.

American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), 1998b. *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*. Chicago, American Library Association.

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

Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), 2000. *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*. Chicago, American Library Association. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/ilcomstan.html>

**See On the Road page 24**

---

## On the Road

(Continued from page 5)

---

Association of College and Research Libraries Instruction Section (ACRL/IS), 2001. *Objectives for Information Literacy Instruction by Academic Librarians*. <http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/is/projects/objectives/>

Breivik P., 1989. Information literacy: revolution in education. In Mensching and Mensching (eds.), 1989 (op. cit.): 1-6.

Bruce C., 1997. *The Seven Faces of Information Literacy*. Adelaide, Auslib Press.

Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSACHE), 1994. *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Standards for Accreditation*. Philadelphia, MSACHE.

Doyle C., 1992. *Development of a Model of Information Literacy Outcome Measures Within National Education Goals Of 1990 (Education Policy)*. Dissertation, Northern Arizona University.

Leckie G. and Fullerton A., 1990. Information literacy in science and engineering undergraduate education: faculty attitudes and pedagogical practices. *College & Research Libraries* 60: 9-29.

Mensching G. and Mensching T. (eds.), 1989. *Coping with Information Literacy: Bibliographic Instruction for the Information Age. Proceedings of the Seventeenth National LOEX Library Instruction Conference, Ann Arbor, May 4-5, 1989*. Ann Arbor, Pierian Press.

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), 2001. *Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Schools, Colleges, and Departments of Education*. Washington, NCATE. <http://www.ncate.org/2000/2000stds.pdf>

Oregon Department of Education (ODE), 1987. *Library Information Skills: Guide for Oregon Schools K-12*. Salem, ODE.

Ratteray O. and Simmons H., 1995. *Information Literacy in Higher Education: A Report on the Middle States Region*. Philadelphia, Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Available from ERIC (ED 388 136).

Washington Library Media Association (WLMA) and State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI), 1987. *Information Skills Curriculum Guide: Process Scope and Sequence*. Olympia, State Superintendent of Public Instruction.