



Information Literacy and Higher Education: Theory and Practice

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Presentation Overview

Information Literacy: the concept

Why is it so important in HE?

How do we develop an information literate community?

Challenges and Opportunities



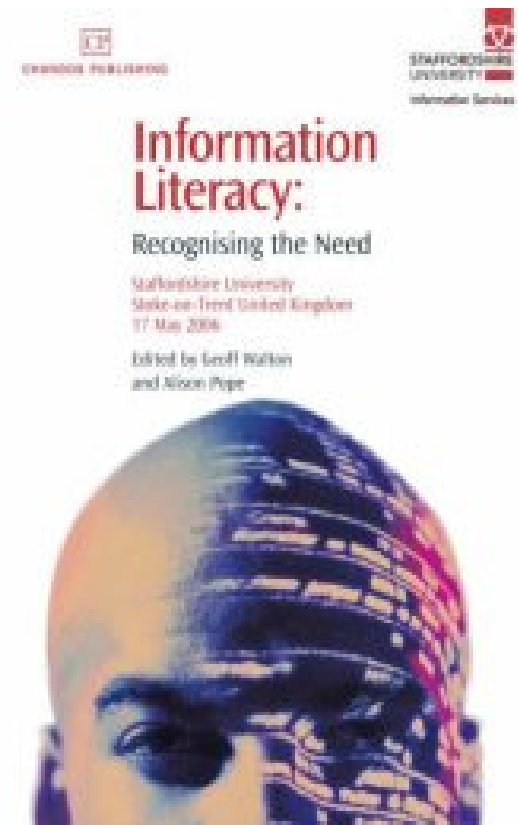
A bit about me....

- 12 years in a university Library...
- Chair, **CONUL ACIL**
- Member SCONUL
WGIL
- Exec Committee
Member of AISHE



What is Information Literacy?

- Lots of definitions, term first coined in 1974
- It's not the same as IT literacy....
- General consensus that it's more than just skills



American Library Association

To be IL, a person must be able to recognise when information is needed and have the ability to **locate**, **evaluate**, and **use** effectively the needed information...

Ultimately, IL people are those who have **learned how to learn**. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is **organised**, how to **find** information...

They are people prepared for **lifelong learning** because they can always find the information needed for any task or decision at hand.

ALA, 1989

Australian & New Zealand Information Literacy Framework

Information Literacy is an intellectual framework for recognising the need for, understanding, finding, evaluating, and using informationactivities which may be supported in part by fluency with IT, in part by sound investigative methods, but most importantly, through **critical discernment and reasoning.**

(Work of LAI WGIL)

Another definition

- “the adoption of **appropriate** information behavior to obtain, through whatever channel or medium, information well fitted to information needs, together with **critical awareness** of the importance of wise and ethical use of information in society”

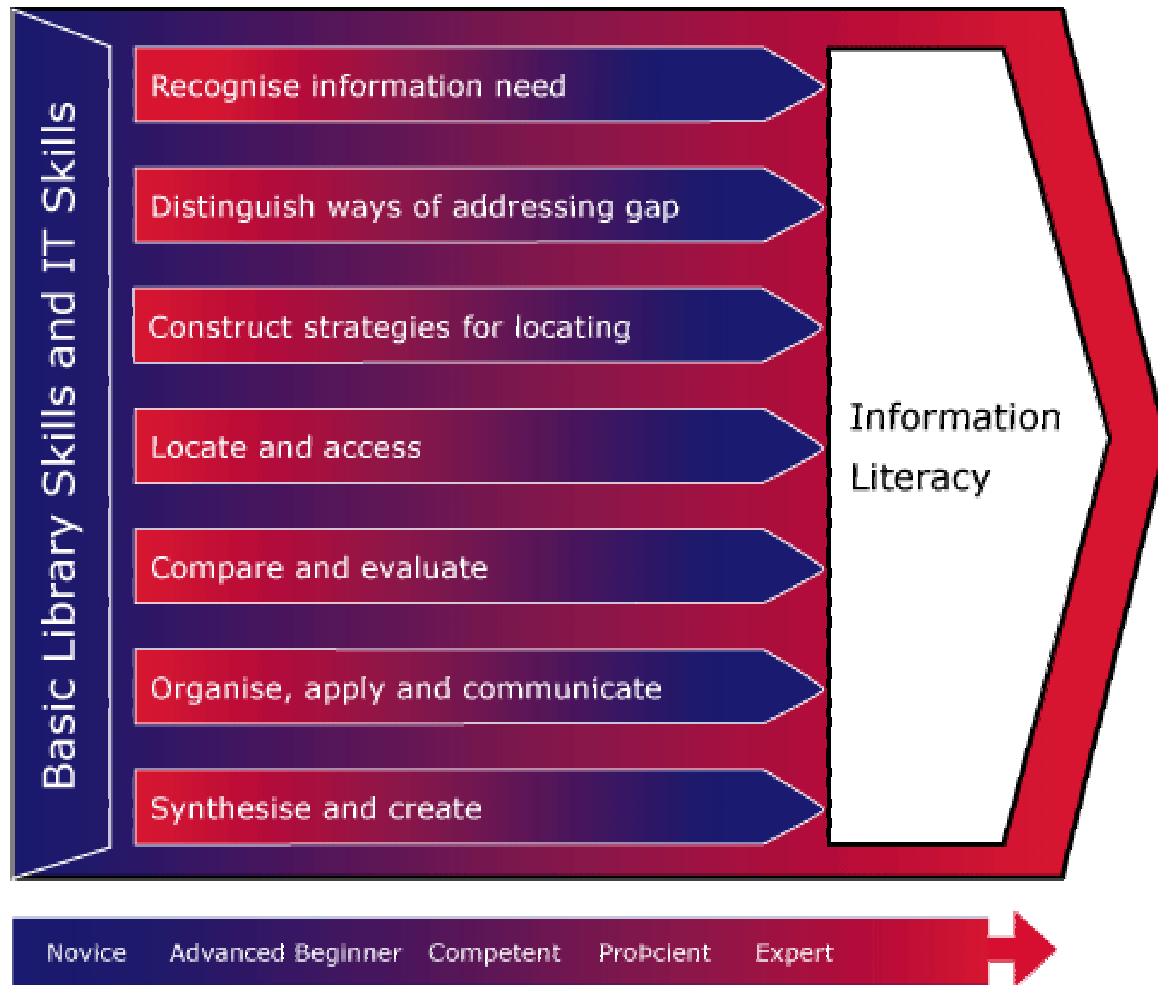
Webber, Johnston, 2006

And....

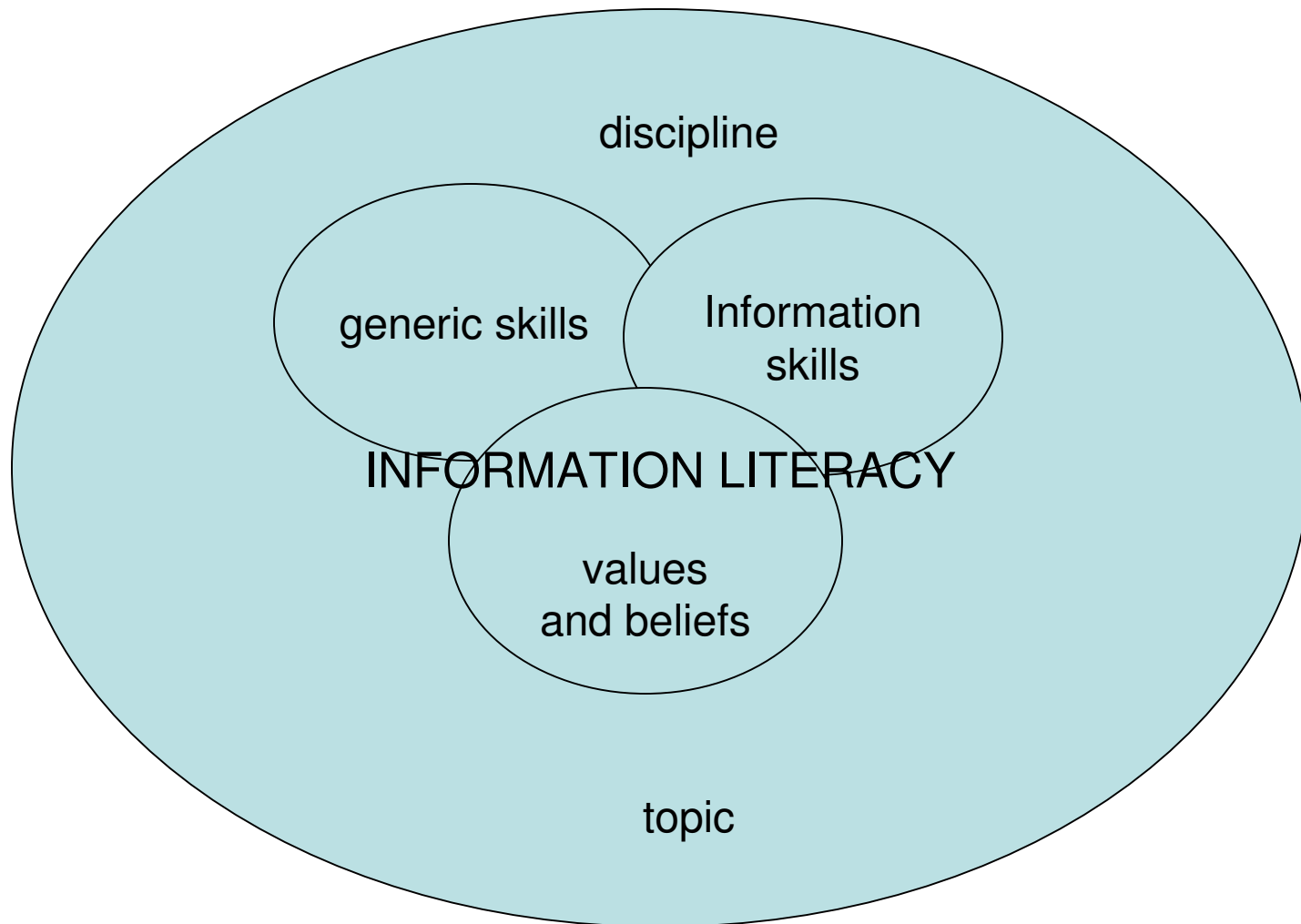
- “knowing when and why you need information, where to find it and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner” (CILIP)

SCONUL Seven Pillars Model for Information Literacy

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Information Literacy Elements



Why is IL important?

- Knowledge society – transferable skills, lifelong learning
- Changes in HE teaching and learning....
- Complex digital information landscape



Digital Information Landscape

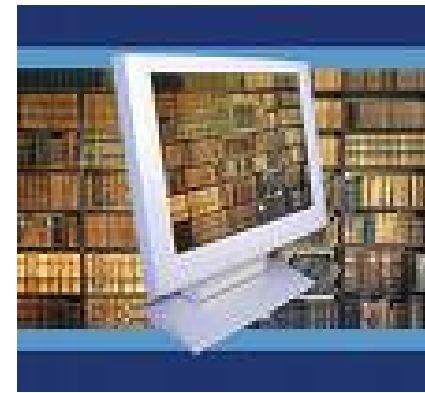
Students are ...navigating in a virtual world where distinctions are increasingly blurred between communication and information, published and unpublished, private and public, free and fee, author and reader, written and spoken, edition and update, original and copy....

(Tula and Giannini)



Information Landscape

- As well the internet, print resources, Libraries now provide access to huge online collections
 - Databases (hundreds)
 - E - Journals, E-Ref, E-books
 - IREL Initiative



Why is IL important?

- Poor IL skills and knowledge impact negatively on academic performance and coursework
 - Poor academic writing skills and basic research skills
 - Concerns about plagiarism (non-intentional)
 - Information anxiety



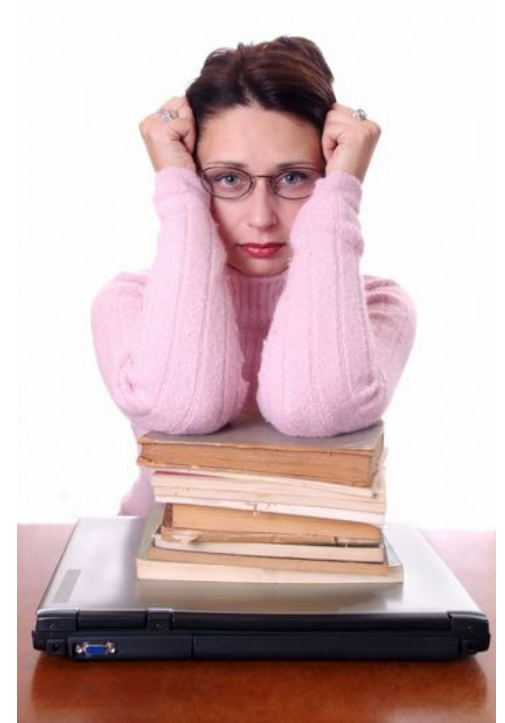
Why is IL important?

- Over reliance on the web at the expense of quality scholarly sources
 - Search engine is the first choice for finding information: **fast, convenient** and **easy** to use
(OCLC Survey: College Students' Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources)
 - Gen y lack IT skills to support academic work
(Educause Centre for Applied Research, Study of UG and IT, 2006)



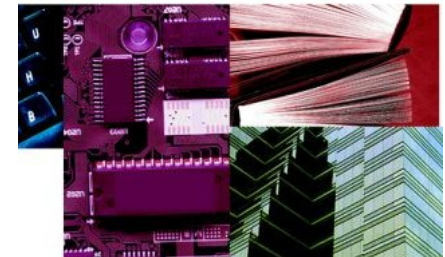
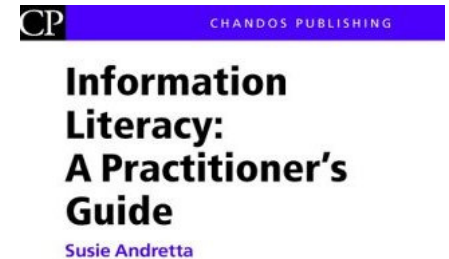
What we see...

- Reading lists: book citation vs journal citation? No copies left!
- Scholarly vs popular journals, variety of sources
- **Lack of understanding of search formulation and review process**
- Problems understanding how to compile a bibliography and cite sources (may also be good at this but not show deep understanding of topic)
- Don't use sources to support an argument, develop a point of view etc
- Lack skills in evaluating information



How do we develop IL skills and knowledge?

- **Library / faculty /unit partnerships!**
- Best practice tell us we should
 - ***Embed IL across all programmes/years***
- Practice aims for this and also includes other strategies....
 - **Stand-alone** (generic, one-shot, supplemental to curric)
 - **Integrated** (requested by individual lecturer for particular assignment, subject, task)
 - Seeing a shift to more collaborative, embedded approach....not easy....



Embed across entire curricula

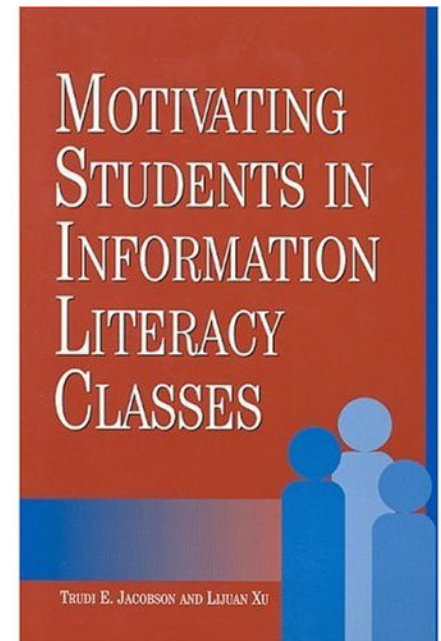
- **Curriculum alignment**

- IL is learnt in context of knowledge creation and scholarly activity of the discipline
- learning outcomes are stated explicitly
 - deliberately taught
 - assessed
 - developed incrementally throughout degree programme

(Lupton, 2004, Biggs, 2003)

- Discipline specific

- Student-centred **active learning** approaches support IL development



Our role is to provide **environments** and **learning opportunities** that enhance Information literacy help people experience the power of **information practices**, that are effective in professional, civic and personal life

Ultimately the aim for Librarians and Faculty must be to help students **learn content** through the processes of **information use**

Four elements of an IL Program

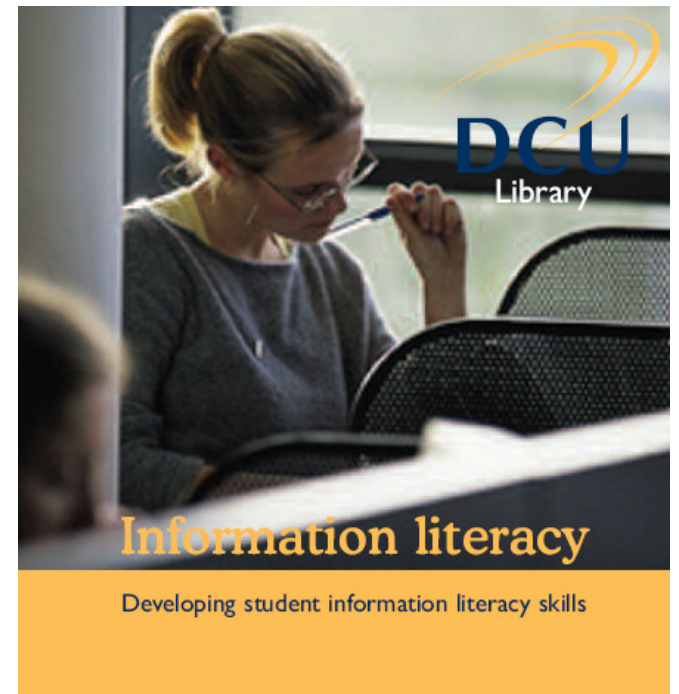
- Resources to facilitate the learning of specific skills, eg web based information skills enhancement packages, other point of need, or self paced instruction.
- Curriculum that provides the opportunity to learn specific skills, either early in a course or at point of need, (from self-paced packages, peers, lecturers, librarians)
- Curriculum requiring engagement in learning activities that require ongoing interaction with the information environment.
- Curriculum that provides opportunities for reflection and documentation of learning about effective information practices
- Christine Bruce (2002) Information literacy as a catalyst for educational change: a background paper. White paper prepared for UNESCO, the US NCLIS and National Forum for Information Literacy. <<http://www.nclis.gov/libinter/>>

Examples of IL programmes in Irish HE institutions

www.conul.ie (seminar presentations)

DCU Library

- Programmes aimed at undergrads, postgrads, staff (research and teaching)
 - New university wide programme for PhD students
- Examples of IL embedded at module and programme level
- High percentage integrated



Examples of IL programmes in Irish HE institutions

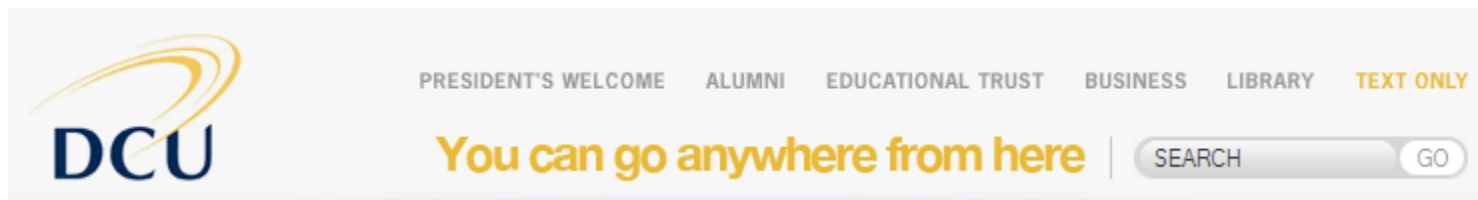
DCU Library....

- Stand-alone used at key points in year to support student work
- Practical element in all sessions!
 - e.g. comparing sources in groups
- Use of online quizzes, forums
- Training rooms....mentoring suite
- **And at policy level....**



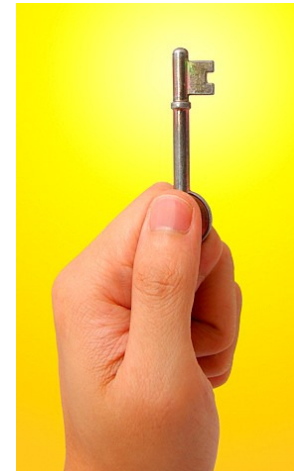
DCU Learning Innovation Strategy

- Developing a distinct learning environment which will result in“students with a high level of information literacy”
- Development of VLE
 - KPI: Library resources embedded throughout VLE
- Support for new learners.....
 - KPI: Provision of online resources (tutorials etc) to develop study skills, **information literacy** etc



Issues, challenges and opportunities

- Bottom up, top down approach...(McGuinness, 2007)
 - Champions, success at module level, alignment with university goals, structural changes....
- Meeting the demand....
- **Teaching skills and Librarians**
 - Keeping our own skills updated... (e.g. wikipedia debate)
- Programmes for Academic staff (in collaboration with T&L units)





Thank you, questions?

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Sample assignments, tasks

- Compile an annotated bibliography
- Compare sources or set up teams to use different sources (a discipline specific database vs multi-disciplinary database vs google)
- Review journal article and consider how an hypothesis/ argument was developed, what evidence did they use? – how was this reported in a popular publication? Alternative viewpoint?
- Keeping / sharing a diary of information seeking process (planning and reflection)

