Chapter 7
Information Literacy as a Prerequisite for Library Training in South African Academic Libraries

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ABSTRACT

While there is sufficient literature on the role of information literacy in society, more needs to be written on information literacy as a prerequisite for library training in South African academic libraries. This chapter argues that information literacy is central to student academic success, lifelong learning, and enhancing graduate attributes for employability. An oversight of the role played by information literacy in student success and graduate attributes leaves library training in academic libraries vulnerable to fragmentation and unfulfilled graduate attributes. Therefore, empowering students to develop information literacy skills, librarians can contribute to their academic successes and help ensure that graduates become independent and successful lifelong learners after graduation. This chapter can also help academic librarians embrace information literacy as a prerequisite for library training. Furthermore, the chapter significantly contributes new knowledge to understanding information literacy as a prerequisite to library training.

1. INTRODUCTION

Information literacy (IL) is paramount to the success of students in academic institutions. The term IL was first used by Paul Zurkowski in 1974. Zurkowski (1974) describes IL as focused on the ability of individuals or groups of people to identify information needs from an abundance of information sources at different times for different purposes. Zurkowski (1974) saw a need for the concept and thus recommended global information literacy (Jiyane & Onyancha, 2010). Reading through the literature, there are various definitions of information literacy. According to the Information Literacy Meeting of Experts (2003), IL focuses on addressing the concerns and needs of individuals to identify, locate, evaluate, organise, communicate, and effectively use the information to solve daily problems. Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (2005) defines IL as the ability of the individual to know when and why to seek information. In 2018 the CILIP Information Literacy Group expanded on the 2005 definition of IL. According to CILIP (2018), IL is the ability of individuals to think critically about information so that they make balanced judgments about available information; IL empowers people to make informed decisions and participate fully in society. Association of College and Research Libraries (2000) released the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* document consisting of five standards for IL in institutions of higher learning, particularly in North America. While these standards are still being used, they are being mostly replaced by the *Framework For Information Literacy for Higher Education (*Association of College and Research Libraries, 2016*)*.

IL definitions come in different forms, depending on the context and the era in which they were formulated. IL as a concept consists of two terms, information and literacy, two distinguished fields of knowledge. Ifijeh (2010:1), describes information as consisting of data, facts, imaginations, opinions, and cultural values in various media and formats. The concept of information, in its everyday usage, is ingrained in the transmission of knowledge, thus playing a critical role in modern society (Capurro & Hjrarland, 2003). Literacy is a generic concept related to the individual's "ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts" (UNESCO 2005a:21). From the explanation above IL draws from both these influential fields' information and literacy. Therefore, it is important to sensitise students about the dynamics of IL. IL is an important skill required for the achievement of student success and lifelong learning. According to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (2021), IL is recognized globally as critical for lifelong learning.

This chapter argues that IL is central to student academic success, lifelong learning, and enhancing graduate attributes for employability. An oversight of the role played by IL in student success and graduate attributes leaves library training in academic libraries vulnerable to fragmentation and unfulfilled graduate attributes. By empowering students to develop information literacy skills, librarians can contribute to their academic successes and help ensure that graduates become independent and successful lifelong learners after graduation. The chapter starts by addressing the problem, reviewing the literature, presenting the methodology, and concludes with findings and recommendations.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

While there is sufficient literature (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2023; Goldstein, 2019; Arua et al,2018) on the role of IL in society, more needs to be writ-

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