



INFORMATION LITERACY TRAINING INITIATIVES AT UNIVERSITY OF MUMBAI AFFILIATED COLLEGES

Mahesh M. Dalvi¹ and Dr. Daya B. Dalve²

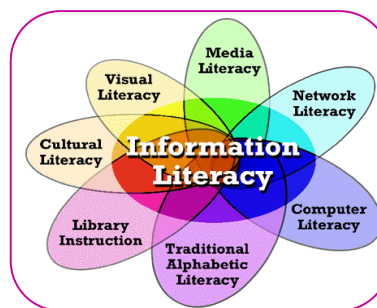
¹Librarian , Satish Pradhan Dnyanasadhana College Dnyanasadhana Marg, Thane ,
Maharashtra.

²Librarian, S.B.E.S. College of Science Aurangpura, Aurangabad, Maharashtra.

ABSTRACT

In the fast growing knowledge society, information literacy has become one of the most important skills and plays a vital role in helping to prepare students for the rapidly changing complex environment. Without instructional and user orientation programs, users cannot use information properly. Considering this paper this paper aims to assess the status of the Information Literacy programs and initiatives by the colleges and to suggest remedial measures if required.

KEYWORDS : fast growing knowledge society, information literacy, orientation programs.



1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years the society has undergone a fundamental shift from industrial economy to a knowledge economy thus the modern information society is characterized by a constantly increasing volume of information. Information and knowledge plays vital role in modern knowledge society. Without information human progress is not possible. In academic sector information is an essential component for development of intellectual activities. The progress of academic sector is totally resting on the information and knowledge. Academicians generally relies on information and, libraries associated with academic institutes serves the purpose. In education system many changes and transformations are visualised, and formal education system (Classroom teaching) is shifting and migrating to self-learning mainly due to digital information resource generation. The information requirement of the academic users are changing, for the qualitative information retrieval users need to be an information literate. Information literacy means “ability to recognise when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the information needed” (ALA 1989).

Information literate academic users is the need of electronic era as abundance of information is generating in all sectors of education. Information Literacy is recognized as an important skill in higher education. Globalization and liberation has brought competition and collaborations, which also leads to drastic changes in the knowledge society and national economy. Considering the vital role of information literacy in the academic environment the National Knowledge Commission, Government of India in its report (July 2007) recommended that the Information Literacy program should be conducted vigorously and effectively. In absence of information literacy policy at national, state or university level the role of the education institution, librarian and teachers play vital role in instilling information skills among undergraduate students.

Although information literacy has been researched and practiced in many countries, especially Australia and the United States of America (Bruce 2000), information literacy research is still in its infancy in

India. Review of earlier studies also indicates that though there are number of research conducted at international level on information initiatives by the librarians; very few are undertaken in Indian context and hardly any in the Mumbai University affiliated colleges. In absence of IL students finds it difficult to cope up to manage information required for their academic courses. The information environment is becoming more complex and changing rapidly, growth of knowledge is of such a nature that university curriculum and course content will always be behind (Bundy, 1999.) To cope up with this ever changing information environment information literacy is very much essential but without instructional and user orientation programs, users cannot use information properly. Hence it is required to investigate the status of Information Literacy training in the colleges and find out the shortfalls to improve upon. This study to assess the Information Literacy training program at undergraduate level.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall aim of the study is to analyse the status of the Information Literacy programs and initiatives by the colleges and to suggest remedial measures if required. The researcher has fixed following objectives to achieve the overall objective of the present study

1. To investigate the current information literacy trainings initiatives by the colleges affiliated to the University of Mumbai.
2. To find out solutions to enrich presently employed tools and techniques for inculcating information literacy skills among the students.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive in nature and suits survey. The method of survey research allows researcher to gather information about target population without undertaking a complete population (Busha, 2004). The data collection tool used is questionnaire. A well-structured the questionnaires was designed and administered to the librarians of the government aided Arts, Science and Commerce colleges affiliated to the University of Mumbai with their prior permission to understand the status of Information Literacy programs and efforts made towards inculcating information literacy among students. The data collected through printed questionnaire as well as through SurveyMonkey (an online tool used) was tabulated and analyzed using Microsoft Excel.

4. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As this study focus on the information literacy programs or initiatives taken by the college librarians of the government aided Arts, Science and Commerce colleges affiliated the University of Mumbai the scope is obviously restricted to the 161 government aided Arts, Science and Commerce colleges affiliated to the University of Mumbai.

5. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

To handle the challenges posed by the modern knowledge society the undergraduate students must acquire the certain information skills. The undergraduate students do not possess such skills for various reasons hence proper information literacy training is essential. In absence of information literacy policy at national, state or university level the role of the education institution, librarian and teachers play vital role in instilling information skills among undergraduate students. Considering this the researcher collected data with an intention to assess the initiatives taken to inculcate information literacy among the students.

The data is collected from the librarians of the colleges through structured questionnaire, total 84 college librarians out of 161 librarians working in the government aided colleges affiliated to the University of Mumbai responded to the questionnaire. The responses are analysed below.

5.1. Information literacy initiatives at institutional level

In absence of a structured information literacy training program at national, state and university level, education institutions needs to take-up major responsibility of making provisions for information literacy training. Hence researcher assess the information literacy initiatives on the basis of information literacy

policy, information literacy training, and formal provision for information literacy, information literacy assessment and assessment tools.

5.1.1 Information literacy policy

A formal policy insure smooth and successful conduct of any course or training program. In absence of formal policy or guidelines at national, state and university level the educational institutions in interest of their students are expected to develop such policy or guidelines. But the legacy of negligence towards information literacy training penetrate from the national level to sate, university and to the higher education institutions as all the 84(100%) librarian respondents mentioned that they do not have any such policy or guidelines for conduct of information literacy training.This will adversely affect the conduct of information literacy training and the lifelong learning.

5.1.2 Information literacy training program

Information literacy as mentioned crucial for the undergraduate students, the librarians of the colleges were asked about the formal information literacy program at institutional level. All the 84 (100%) librarians mentioned that they do not have any such course at institutional level. This further add to the negligence towards the information literacy training which are very much essential for undergraduate students to survive and success in the modern knowledge society.

5.1.3 Provision for information literacy training

The librarian were further asked is there any provision for the information literacy education in the college timetable or a particular slot allotted for information literacy. All the 84 (100%) librarians says there is no such formal provision but while discussing with them they mentioned that they may allowed to engage the free lectures if any or a slot in the timetable as per the availability with prior permission of the principal. This shows that it is not a regular practice and being an irregular practice it fail to attend the desired results.

5.1.4 Information literacy assessment

The librarians of the colleges were asked about the assessment of information literacy at institute level all the librarian mentioned that they do not have any formal assessment strategy or use any methods, tools or techniques to assess the information literacy of the students.

7.2 Information literacy initiatives by the college librarians

Information literacy, though, not just a library issue, librarians are uniquely qualified to support and conduct information literacy training or teach the information literacy skills. In fact librarians are engaged in providing information literacy training since long in form of library orientation, bibliographic training, and user education.Hence major responsibility of information literacy education and training lies on the librarians especially in Indian context where efforts towards it are scattered and unorganized. Considering this the researcher assess the information initiatives by the librarians and their views about the information literacy program.

5.2.1 Information literacy training

In absence of formal policy and training program at higher education level librarians being assisting students to identify their information needs, accessing information, evaluating, using information and as mentioned above uniquely qualified to teach the information skills shoulder the responsibility of training the students. Considering this the librarians were asked whether they conduct information literacy training program for the students. The result are presented in table No. 1

Table No 1
Information literacy training

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Conduct information literacy training program	74	88.10
Do not conduct information literacy training program	10	11.90%
Total	84	100

It can be seen from the table no. 1 that 74 (88.10%) librarians providing information literacy training for the students where as 11.9% do not provide any kind of such training to their students. With all adverse conditions such as absence of formal policy on information literacy, information literacy program / course or without any formal provision in college time table majority of the librarians are providing information literacy training to the students in addition to their routine work.

5.2.2 Information literacy training methods

It is interesting to find out that in absence of any formal provision at the institutional level how the librarians are providing information literacy training to the students, also the success of the information literacy training very much depend on the methods and techniques used. The librarian were asked about the methods they used to provide information literacy training to the students. As few librarians may use more than one method the number of responses may be more than the total number of respondents. The results are presented in table 2.

Table No 2
Information literacy training methods

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Organizing library visit	58	78.38
Library orientation lecture once in a year	50	67.57
Library orientation lecture twice in a year	24	32.43
Display of guide cards and instructions	34	45.95
In-collaboration with teachers	16	19.04
Education technology course	10	13.51
Online instructions through institutional portal	8	10.81

From the above table it is clear that 58 (78.38%) librarians organize library visit, 50 (67.57%) conduct library orientation lecture once in year, 24 (32.43%) twice in a year, 16 (19.04%) do it in-collaborate with the teacher, 34 (45.95%) display guide cards and instructions in the library where it is necessary, 12 (16.22%) provides instructions through institutional web portal, 8 (10.81%) conduct educational technology course, 10 (13.51%) assist the students as on when needed in the library. It can be notice from the analysis of the responses that though 88.10% librarians seems to be providing information literacy training to their students restricted their training to one or two orientation lectures, library visits, displaying guide cards and instructions in the library as large number of librarians are doing it. This indicate that tough majority of the librarians are providing information literacy training to their students the efforts not sufficient to bring desired results.

5.2.3 Assessment of information literacy of the students

To design and improve academic program assessment is necessary, it ensure, students as well as teachers realize that learning has taken place. The question was asked to the librarians does they assess the information literacy competences of the students. It was observed that out of 84 respondent librarians only 12 (14.28%) assess the information literacy competences of the students. Further to understand about the tools used by these 14.28% librarians they were asked about the tools they are using. The results are analyzed and presented in table no. 3.

Table No. 3
Assessment of information literacy of the students

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Locally created objective test	6	50
Objective test provided by the university	--	--
Objective test developed by outside testing agency	2	16.66
Project based evaluation for information literacy	4	33.33
Any other please specify	--	---
Total	12	100

From the above table it can be observed that 50% of the librarians assessing information literacy of the students use the locally created test, 33.33% used project based evaluation. Nobody take help of outside testing agency and no such test is made available by the university it is not used by any of the colleges. This clearly indicate that information literacy assessment has not been considered seriously in the affiliated colleges.

5.2.4 Incorporation of research and information skills

Employers and policy makers are demanding research and information skills to make sure that employees handle their job responsibilities effectively and efficiently and also these skills are foundation of lifelong learning should be instill among the students at the undergraduate level. To investigate how these skills are incorporated in absence of any formal information literacy program at university and institutional level, the librarians were asked about the measures they are taking to inculcate these skills among students. The results are presented in table 4. The number of responses look more than the total number of respondent as the librarians using more than one method choose option accordingly.

Table No. 4
Incorporation of research and information skills

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Librarian Provide the skills	72	92.31
Teachers provide the skills	28	33.33
Provide links to the online tutorial or supporting material	14	17.95
The skills are taught in course common to all students	00	00
Students already possess the skills	8	10.25

It can be seen from the above table that 72 (92.31%) librarians provide the information skills, 28 (33.33%) librarians says that teachers provide the skills, 14 (17.95%) librarians provide links to online tutorials or supportive material, 8 (10.25%) are at the opinion that students already possess the skills hence no need to provide it separately. It is again attested that librarians are playing major role in providing information literacy training to the students but if these result are viewed in light of the table no 2 these efforts are limited to one or two library orientations, visit to library, and display of guide cards. Hence these efforts are not sufficient to inculcate the research and information skills among students.

5.3 Librarians views on present information literacy training

In the modern context of complex information and learning environment librarian being active stakeholder of information literacy education play most crucial role. Particularly in the colleges affiliated to University of Mumbai it appear that only librarians are concern about the information literacy education. 100% respondent librarians were strongly agree that students should acquire certain information literacy competencies during their graduation course shows how librarians are keenly interested in imparting information literacy education. Hence to get insight into the present information literacy initiatives opinion of the librarian should be taken into account.

5.3.1 Current Credit Based Grading System and information literacy

The University of Mumbai introduce the Credit Based Grading System for evaluation of student from the academic year 2011-12 to enable the students with knowledge, skills and competencies to evolve in the modern competitive world (University of Mumbai Web site). In today's information centric society the survival and success of an individual person is largely depend on his information skills hence undergraduate students are expected to acquire certain information skills which are crucial to face the challenges posed by the modern knowledge based society. Considering these facts the researcher wanted to analyse the outcome of the current Credit Based Grading System in view of the information literacy skills through the following statement. "Current Credit Based System is capable to inculcate the desired information literacy skills among the students" The responses are tabulated in table No. 5

Table No 5
Current Credit based system and information literacy

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
To a large extent	18	21.43
To a moderate extent	8	9.52
To a small extent	10	11.90
Not at all	48	57.14
Total	84	100

From the above table it can be seen that only 18 (21.43%) respondent librarians are at the opinion that the current Credit Based Grading System is capable of inculcating desired information literacy skills among the students to a large extent, 8 (9.52%) choose the option to a moderate extent While among rest, 58 (69.04%) librarians 10 (11.90%) thought that it helps to a small extent and 24 (57.14%) are of the opinion that it will not at all capable of inculcating desired information skills among under graduate students. The analysis of result clearly indicate that majority of the librarians are of the opinion that the current Credit Based Grading System is not capable of inculcating desired information literacy skills among the students.

5.3.2 Dependency on text-books and information literacy

Self-learning is one of the core objective of modern education system where students are expected to become more independent with greater responsible towards quality of their efforts to learn. But it has been observed while checking library circulation records of the libraries of the affiliated colleges that majority of the students make use of libraries for reading and lending only textbooks. Keeping this in mind researcher has tried to get the opinion of librarians of the affiliated colleges through following statement. "Dependency on textbooks adversely affect the self-learning process of students" The responses are tabulated in table No. 6

Table No. 6
Dependency on text-books and information literacy

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
To a large extent	72	85.71
To a moderate extent	6	7.14
To a small extent	6	7.14
Not at all	00	00
Total	84	100

From the above table it is notice that out of 84 responses 72 (85.71%) strongly believes that dependency on textbooks adversely affect the self- learning process of the students, 6 (7.14%) each believes it affect to a moderate extent and to a small extent. Not a single librarian completely disagree with the statement. As mentioned above a large number of students use library for lending only textbooks shows that they excessively depend on textbooks and the librarians are at the opinion that it adversely affect the self-learning process of students. This clearly indicate that even after the implementation of Credit Based Grading System

students are heavily depending on textbooks and this too much dependency on textbooks adversely affect the self-learning process of students. To boost the self-learning process is one of the prime objective of modern education system and is not fulfill here raise question about the success of Credit Based Grading System.

5.4 Information literacy as an integrated part of regular curricula

Integrating information literacy into the curriculum is about developing skills for independent and lifelong learning in a logical manner throughout a course or program. It is also known as intra-curricular approach where information literacy education is integrated into curricula through collaboration between librarians and academic staff and librarians. It has been already proved by the previous research that integration of information literacy components into regular curricula helps to bring desired results. In light of these facts and being a stakeholder of information literacy, researcher decided to investigate what librarians think about inclusion of information literacy in the regular curricula. All the librarian either agree or strongly agree for inclusion of information literacy component in regular curricula. Thus there is complete uniformity among the librarian respondents that information literacy should be a part of regular curricula.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The study was undertaken with the objectives to assess the current information literacy initiatives, to find out the shortfalls or lacunas in present tools and techniques and to suggest remedial course of action if required. The results of the study clearly indicate that information literacy training is neglected competency in Indian academic environment as there is absence of formal policy or guidelines at national, state, university as well as college level confirm it, no provision for information literacy training in the college timetable and provision for assessment of information literacy of the students at institutional level.

With all the above adverse conditions in the colleges affiliated to the University of Mumbai librarians being uniquely qualified to support and conduct information literacy training or teach the information literacy skill, are the only source for information literacy training to the students but the information literacy training is restricted to the one or two orientation lectures, library visits, displaying guide cards and instructions in the library as majority of librarians are doing it. Lack of collaboration among the faculty and librarians also adversely affect the information literacy training in the colleges affiliated to the University of Mumbai.

Students are unnecessarily depend on text-books which adversely affect the self-learning process. The University of Mumbai introduced Credit Based grading System from the year 2011-12, but the librarian are at the opinion that is not capable of inculcating desired information literacy skills among the students. Hence all the librarian unanimously recommended information literacy as part of regular curricula. Considering this the University of Mumbai should take imitative to improve the information literacy of the students and incorporate it into regular curricula.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- American Library Association. 1989. *Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final report*. Chicago: ALA.
- Bruce, Christine. 2000 (a). Information literacy programs and research: an international review. *Australian library journal*, 49 (3): 209 - 218.2.
- Bundy, A. (1999). Information literacy: the 21st century educational Smartcard. *Australian academic and research libraries*, 233-250.
- Busha, Charles H & Harter, Stephen P, (1980). *Research methods in librarianship: techniques and interpretation* Academic Press, New York
- Kothari, C. R. (2007). *Research Methodology*. New Delhi: New Age International Publishers.
- P. S. G. Kumar (2004): *Information and Communication*. Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation. P. 6.
- Sinha, M.P. (2004). *Research methods in English*. New Delhi: Atlantic publishers and distributors.