

BAISL Position Paper: Information Literacy

Executive Summary

Presents Bay Area Independent School Librarians' position on information literacy in independent school libraries. Includes a brief introduction and definition of the term as BAISL will use it, lists necessary core competencies, and argues that school librarians should lead in planning and delivering information literacy instruction. *{BAISL recommends the creation and strengthening of robust information literacy instruction-- programs, services, and materials in independent school libraries -- and recommends librarians as faculty who lead this instruction.}*

Information Literacy Definition

Information literacy is not a new concept. Paul G. Zurkowski defined it in 1974 as meaning, "being able to find what is known or knowable on any subject."^[2] More recently, the American Library Association defined it as, "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. To be information literate, then, one needs skills not only in research but in critical thinking."^[3] Information literacy concerns are much the same as they were a generation ago; [1] [2] what has changed is the scale and complexity of this competency. We now can find information from a massively diverse range of sources and formats--as such, the ability to discover, accurately evaluate, and apply this information requires a skill set best gained through well-designed instruction. Where once information was shared using a few outlets, today it is transmitted in nearly countless channels and formats, many of which invite participation by the information user. Therefore, a modern information literacy program not only teaches the skills of gathering,

evaluating, analyzing, synthesizing, and using information, it also prioritizes collaborating to create, integrate, and share information.

Core Competencies

Our first four suggested Information Literacy core competencies are derived from CSU Chico Meriam Library with an additional fifth item relating to the concept of metaliteracy^[4]. BAISL suggests the core competencies of information literacy are the ability to:

1. *Identify an information need* and develop a strategy that resolves it.
2. Skillfully *find* information sources related to the information need.
3. Think critically in order to *evaluate* sources' reliability, and to *synthesize* information sources.
4. *Ethically use* and *interact with* information.^[5]
5. *Share* and *create* new information, including in collaborative and/or online environments.

It is BAISL's hope and expectation that every high school matriculating senior comprehends and is able to perform the above skill set before graduation. With that, we believe that the library is uniquely suited to achieve said goals.

The value of the school librarian/information professional

Librarians are best positioned to teach information literacy to students and other colleagues. The school librarian's role in regard to Information Literacy Instruction cannot be undervalued if a school's goals include producing students who can confidently learn in multiple environments, use diverse educational tools, and who can skillfully navigate and evaluate complex materials and transform this research into meaningful new content.

Librarians' educational experience and area of expertise are not confined to a traditional siloed subject area. Instead they include organization, evaluation, and dissemination of information such that it may be transformed into knowledge. While faculty in other departments have expertise in their subjects (Physics, History, Biology, etc.) and *may* have secondary skill sets that include research and information evaluation, librarians' *primary* skill revolves around metaliteracy; librarians' goals in regard to information literacy are *not* the end-result comprehension of a specific topic, but rather the transmission of a research skill-set Information Literacy such that students are able to educate themselves in any subject using strong research, evaluation, and application skills, and thus continue their life-long learning.

Because school librarians are responsible for staying abreast of current media, technology, and theories of information literacy, they are uniquely suited to not only maintain a school's information commons but also actively teach the principles of metaliteracy--defined by the Association of College and Research Libraries as:

[expanding] the scope of traditional information skills (determine, access, locate, understand, produce, and use information) to include the collaborative production and sharing of information in participatory digital environments (collaborate, produce, and share). This approach requires an ongoing adaptation to emerging technologies and an understanding of the critical thinking and reflection required to engage in these spaces as producers, collaborators, and distributors. (Mackey and Jacobson, 2014. Line 594. Accessed from <http://acrl.ala.org/ilstandards/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Framework-for-IL-for-HE-Draft-2.pdf> on January 22, 2015)

Therefore, schools cannot expect to consistently produce information literate students if they require this pedagogical task be added to other faculty members' work-load in their respective departments. Because Information Literacy can be taught and learned in multiple formats and contexts (i.e. as a library Information Literacy class or embedded in other classes) a school librarian is necessary to lead specific courses, strengthen Information Literacy instruction in other courses through collaboration with classroom teachers, lead Information Literacy curricular design, and be present in the library to facilitate knowledge acquisition with students and faculty on a one-on-one basis.

Conclusion

The notion of "information literacy" has existed for just over forty years^[6], but even today many educators are unclear on what the term actually means. Part of this confusion exists not only because of the expression's broad meaning, yet also because of the fluid nature of information itself. This uncertainty is clear evidence to BAISL that information professionals are necessary to act as facilitators of an increasingly complex body of knowledge in which they have mastery.^[7] The Librarian thus should be the point person of Information Literacy across the curriculum, intimately connecting with curriculum directors or department heads to make sure strong Information Literacy education is happening across all classes and subjects.

By necessity, this paper is limited in length to suit its purpose, so many facets of Information Literacy and instruction have not been included. What follows are online resources for further research.

Resources:

Professional Organization Statements

- ALA 21st Century standards (<https://standards.aasl.org/beliefs/>)
- AASL publication Standards for the 21st Century.
<http://www.ala.org/aasl/standards-guidelines/learning-standards>
- Association of College and Research Libraries. “Research as a conversation.”
<http://acrl.ala.org/ilstandards/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Framework-for-IL-for-HE-Draft-2.pdf>.
- Young Adult Library Services. “The Future of Library Services for and with Teens: A Call to Action.” Linda W. Braun, Maureen L. Hartman, Sandra Hughes-Hassell, and Kafi Kumasi, and Beth Yoke. January 8, 2014.
http://www.ala.org/yaforum/sites/ala.org.yaforum/files/content/YALSA_nationalforum_final.pdf

Online Essays and Articles

- **“Information Literacy: A Neglected Core Concept” (EDUCAUSE Quarterly):**
<http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/information-literacy-neglected-core-competency>
- Esther Grassian. “Teach Information Literacy & Critical Thinking!”
<https://sites.google.com/site/teachinfolit/>

Useful Websites

- **Project Information Literacy.** <http://projectinfolit.org/>. *Research on college students, but focuses on what’s needed to transition from HS to college.*

Partnership for 21st Century Skills

(http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/P21_Framework_Definitions.pdf)

INFORMATION LITERACY

Access and Evaluate Information

- Access information efficiently (time) and effectively (sources)
- Evaluate information critically and competently

Use and Manage Information

- Use information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand
- Manage the flow of information from a wide variety of sources
- Apply a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the

access and use of information

ISTE standards

(http://www.iste.org/docs/pdfs/20-14_ISTE_Standards-S_PDF.pdf)

Research and information fluency

Students apply digital tools to gather, evaluate, and use the information.

- a. Plan strategies to guide inquiry
- b. Locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media
- c. Evaluate and select information sources and digital tools based on the appropriateness to specific tasks
- d. Process data and report results

Big6

(<https://thebig6.org/>)

1. Task definition
 2. Information seeking strategies
 3. Location and access
 4. Use of information
 5. Synthesis
 6. Evaluation
-

^[1] Future of Library Services

for and with Teens: A Call to Action. Linda W. Braun, Maureen L. Hartman, Sandra Hughes-Hassell, and Kafi Kumasi, and Beth Yoke. YALSA, January 8, 2014

^[2] Zurkowski, Paul G., and Washington, DC. National Program for Library and Information Services. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. *The Information Service Environment Relationships And Priorities. Related Paper No. 5.* p.23. 1974. ERIC. Web. 24 Mar. 2015.

^[3] "Information Literacy" American Library Association Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services, last accessed February 2, 2019, <https://literacy.ala.org/information-literacy/>.

^[4] Defined, in brief, as including information skills, but expanding these to include collaboration, sharing, and an ongoing adaptation to emerging technologies and media.

^[5] "Information Literacy at California State University, Chico," Merriam Library, CSU Chico, last modified August 26, 2013, <http://www.csuchico.edu/lref/InfoLit/infolit.html>.

^[6] Zurkowski, Paul G., and Washington, DC. National Program for Library and Information Services. National Commission on Libraries and Information

Science. *The Information Service Environment Relationships And Priorities. Related Paper No. 5.* n.p.: 1974. ERIC. Web. 24 Mar. 2015.

[7] It should be noted that media literacy and visual literacy are considered by the authors as subsets of information literacy and the core competencies listed here are relevant across the information/media/visual literacy spectrum.
