

E-LITERACY AND E-LEARNING**Arun Anant Pawar ***

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ABSTRACT: - *E-Learning enables learning opportunities to be tailored to librarians and information profession individual needs and interests, improving achievement and increasing engagement. In Literacy, this may mean using e-Learning to raise literacy levels, using devices or software to engage reluctant learners with texts or creating self managing learning opportunities to suit different learning pathways. In the current era, where technology is rapidly evolving, education has also taken the support of ICT and now offers convenient ways to help increase the knowledge, education and literacy status of people. E-learning platform provides anywhere, anytime easy access for up-gradation of knowledge and skills. E-Learning courses provide an enabling platform by virtue of which the professionals can upgrade their knowledge..*

KEY WORDS – Literacy, Internet, Information Literacy, E-Learning, Virtual Learning

Introduction

The development of e-learning is changing education, in many ways making learning more flexible and more tailored to individual needs. E-learning is continuing to, change the role of librarians and information professionals. E-learning has arisen from the information and communication technological revolution and like other forms of technology. It is undoubtedly facilitating change across the education sector. Libraries have always been an integral part of learning, helping learners find, evaluate and exploit resources. Therefore it is unsurprising that

changes in education are being felt in the library profession. With an increasing number of digital resources, librarians have a crucial role in navigating learners through the complex digital information environment. Information professionals in the education sectors in particular, are also becoming important members of an expanding team of learning support staff. The library profession itself there is a marked interest in the set up and delivery of information literacy programmes, as librarians seek to capitalise on their unique role as educators. The wider concept of ‘e-literacy’ is discussed to

identify the skills that both learners and teachers require to fully exploit e-learning.

1. New Professionals

Library profession has changed enormously in the last five to ten years. While the profession has always been evolving, adapting to new technologies, new media, and the ever-changing needs of users, more recently these changes have accelerated to match rapid developments in information and communication technologies. The Internet has dramatically increased the range of information available and the way in which it is delivered. It is hardly believable that the first web browser technology was only invented ten years ago. Similarly, e-mail, something taken for granted by many today, was unknown outside of Higher Education as little as ten years ago. As a library student in the early 1990s students were taught about developments such as 'Gophers' and used telnet connections to connect to other universities online catalogues. Such technologies seem primitive and outdated today since the rise of the World Wide Web and broadband connectivity. It is difficult to imagine what developments the future will bring, nevertheless the library profession will need to embrace these changes and move with the times to meet the needs of users. As the technology changes, so the skills that librarians need as professionals must evolve. Our ability to teach information skills to learners and teachers alike must surely ensure our central role in the education sector. Moreover, traditional skills such as cataloguing and

classification are highly transferable into the e-environment, where the creation of high quality metadata creation is crucial to the success of digital repositories.

2. Information literacy and the Access Paradox

The Information literacy has its roots in library user education, where librarians inducted new users about the services offered by the library and taught them something about finding and evaluating information. With the rise of the Internet and web technology there can be no doubting that access to information has improved. Nevertheless, to assume that because information is available on the web, people will have the skills and knowledge to find, access and use it effectively is naive. Students entering higher education may be assumed to have well developed information literacy skill however there is considerable evidence to suggest that their use of the Internet is at best 'haphazard.' The increasing amount of information available on the Internet has given rise to what has been called by some librarians as the Google generation. Students are frequently using the popular search engine Google as their first port of call when searching for all types of information on the Internet, rather than using subscription databases and quality information resources.

2.1 Definitions of information literacy

Paul Zurkowski 1974 – People trained in the application of information resources to their work can be called information literates. They have learned techniques and skills for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information solutions to their problems.

- Knowledge of information resources in one subject
- Ability to construct effective search strategies
- Ability to critically appraise information sources
- Ability to use information sources appropriately, cite and create references

3. Knowledge and skills:

- Effective information seeking
- Informed choice of information sources
- Information, evaluation and selection
- Comfort in using a range of media to best advantage
- Awareness of issues to do with bias and reliability of information
- Effectiveness in transmitting information to others.

4. E-literacy and E-learning

Many librarians will be familiar with the term information literacy, but e-literacy is a relatively new term emanating from notion of e-literacy is based on the assumption that there are

skills, awareness and understandings which will enable individuals firstly to survive and secondly to be more effective, in their e-encounters. He goes on to define e-literacy as being comprises of computer, information, media, moral and media literacy. In many ways these e-literacy skills are more relevant to librarians involved in e-learning initiatives than simply considering information literacy in isolation. However, one of the advantages the term ‘e-literacy’ has over information literacy is the use of the ‘e’ word. Just as e-learning as a concept has very quickly fallen into mainstream use, so perhaps e-literacy will give librarians the edge when selling their skills?

5. Information Literacy for Academic Staff

Much of the work on information literacy has concentrated on skills and education for students or learner, however, a crucial area must be the information literacy levels of staff that are responsible for the development and implement of e-learning. It was a general lack of staff awareness about information skills and a lack of training for staff, in particular nonteaching staff. Where training existed it focus primarily on the development of ICT skills and where staff had received training in the development of information skills, this was mainly in the form of a one-off training session to support the introduction of a new service or resource. Developing information literacy skills, or e-literacy skills, is essential for academic and other support staff to be able to fully engage and exploit library resources in the e-learning system.

Engaging with academic staff to develop their own skills also makes them more likely to see the value of building these skills into their courses for students. Library staff will need to play an important role in delivering this type of e-literacy education to staff. E-literacy skills for staff might include knowledge of the range of resources available in the digital library, such as which journal titles are available in electronic format. But it would also include teaching a member of staff to build an online reading list and add stable links to electronic journal articles. E-literacy also involves knowledge about copyright and licensing arrangements for electronic resources. It is important that the training is offered as widely as possible and is available to other learning support staff.

6. Need for continuing professional development

Continuing professional development has always been important in the library profession, with numerous training courses and conferences in which practitioners and researchers can share experience and learn new skills.

7. Extending Network

Networking between librarians has always been well established, with high levels of participation. However, arguably librarians now need to consider extending their network beyond the library profession and getting involved in other external groups. A danger is that if librarians continue to network and talk only with others in

the profession they will become marginalized instead of playing a central role in the learning support field.

8. Practical approaches

This concludes with a summary of a number of practical ways that librarians can become involved in e-learning through information literacy programmes and the development of online tutorials.

9. Developing online tutorials

One of the most common initiatives being developed by librarians are self-paced online tutorials available from the library website. These are designed to allow students to learn topics as and when they require the knowledge at a time and place convenient to them. However a major criticism of these packages is they can be badly designed and structured with little interactive features that engage the learner. It is often difficult to obtain feedback In order to develop these packages, there are a range of skills the librarian must learn, or they must acquire from an educational technologist or web designer. If you are planning on developing an online tutorial it is essential that you consider the following:

- Knowledge of web-authoring and web?
- Knowledge of pedagogy and how to teach online, or access to someone who does?
- How will you engage the learner and develop interactivity into the package?

- Will there be some form of assessment in the package? Or how will the learner be able to check their progress?
- How will you monitor usage of the package and evaluate its benefits?

10. Advantages of web-based tutorials

Materials made available from the library website can be used by any library user. They are particularly valuable for generic sessions, such as a virtual tour of the library, where library visitors as well as members of the institution may wish to use the tutorial. You may consider making the package available on the web but password protecting it, or making it available via an Intranet so that only authorised user, in the case of a university, this would be registered students and staff, can access it.

11. Disadvantages of web-based tutorials

Web-based tutorials are not without problems, in particular:

- They need a lot of work to develop, and to update, particularly if produced using flat HTML pages. Consider using a VLE or a content management system for ease of updating;
- They often require detailed knowledge of web design, educational technology;
- It can difficult to make them interactive.

12.Virtual learning environment

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The making of information literacy materials available on the web is to use the virtual learning environment software. Materials can be embedded into existing subject based courses or a separate information literacy module can be made available to students. The advantage of using the virtual learning environment is that the course will be easier to set up and not require specialist web design skills. The virtual learning environment also has a number of inherent tools that can be utilised to make the course interactive.

Conclusion

E-learning is changing the role of information professionals and offering them new opportunities to capitalise on their expertise. Through the delivery of information literacy which is both timely and integrated, partnerships with teaching and learning support staff can be strengthened. Librarians need to work with new group of professionals they need to develop new skills, in particular teaching skills. E-learning is offering exciting and new possibilities which the library profession need to reach out and seize. Librarians need to ensure their place in the virtual world of learning is as central as it was in the physical world.

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