Information Literacy Research & Practice

an experiential perspective

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Information Systems School | Science & Engineering Faculty | October 2013
Information Literacy (IL) is largely invisible. The experiential agenda seeks to make peoples’ experiences of IL visible.
Experience is profound. Experience is rarely defined; it is rather described. What might the experience of IL look like?
Learning about IL is coming to experience it in new ways. Experience is constituted in the inseparable relationship between people & the world.

Experiencing IL involves:

a) Attending critical features of IL
b) Associating it with particular meanings that vary across different experiences
Health IL may be experienced as:

- striving for wellness
- reaffirming wellness
- knowing myself
- protecting myself
- screening knowledge
- storing knowledge

(Yates et al, 2009)
Religious IL may be experienced as:

- Growing faith
- Developing relationships
- Managing the church
- Serving the community
- Outreaching beyond the community

- (Gunton et al, 2012)
Native American IL may be experienced as:

- A communal, shared information experience that informs learnings reflecting the understanding that lives are profoundly connected to both other people & the physical world

- Knowledge is appropriated through ritual, ceremony, art & appropriate technology for use in everyday life’
  - (adapted from Bruce, Somerville, Stoodley, Partridge, 2013)

- Central to IL are values, relationships & spiritual beliefs
  - (Sherman, in press, 2014)
• Information literacy may be said to be about the experience of using information to learn.

• I will explore the unfolding understanding of peoples’ experience of information literacy stemming from this orientation.
• The identification & naming of ‘information literacy’

• Information literacy changes lives
  – socially, physically, professionally, politically, economically, academically

• Relevance to the world around us, transformation & empowerment
Encouraging conformity

• Educating or training people so that they conform to professional or social norms embedded in our systems and processes

Valuing diversity

• Deepening our understanding of people, so that peoples’ experiences of information literacy may be valued, celebrated & woven into the fabric of our society and its’ systems
the 7 faces

1. Information awareness
2. Sourcing information for learning
3. Using information processes to learn
4. Connecting information with learning needs
5. Building a knowledge base
6. Extending knowledge
7. Wise use of information

experienced meanings of information literacy:
Shifting emphasis on information & learning

What varies?
Different experiences of information

- objective
- subjective
- transformational
### parts of the IL experience — and how they vary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tech Center</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Outer</th>
<th>Outer</th>
<th>Outer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information Handling</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information use/learning</td>
<td>Outer</td>
<td>Outer</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Experienced as</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
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- **At the edges of the experience (marginal)**
- **Theme of the experience (background)**
- **Central to the experience (focus)**
Key Learnings

Approaching Information Literacy Differently

• As relations between people and information, rather than attributes of persons

• As different ways of being aware of the world

• As featuring technology less than expected

• As social rather than individual
Key Learnings

Approaching Information Literacy Programs Differently

- Adopting an experiential approach requires finding new ways to do things within systems dominated by the need to measure skills & knowledge

- Portraits of experience need to be adopted & adapted for different contexts

- There are no established, preordained strategies
Acknowledging experiences, valuing heuristics...

Enriching & expanding experiences... making new experiences possible
Key Learnings

Approaching Information Differently

• Not only is information literacy experienced differently, information is also experienced differently.

• The same ‘information’ can be experienced as objective, subjective or transformational.

• What informs? Information can take surprising forms.
Key Learnings

Approaching Skills Differently

• Information literacy experiences govern behavior & skills

• Experiences are deeper & more powerful, they contextualize skills

• Skills may or may not be important to a particular experience
Key Learnings

Approaching Technology Differently in Research

• Only important if technology is the context, e.g. information literacy in social networking

• Direct focus on technology may give us a skewed understanding of the information literacy experience
present directions
Different experiences of IL Research

Diverse

- Literacies – media, digital, trans
- Contexts – workplaces, communities, virtual and classroom learning
- Methods and approaches

Moments

- IL as behavior
- IL as experience
- IL as practice
- IL as discourse

diversification & expansion in the research territory
We can talk about information literacy (experiencing information use in different ways for learning) as informed learning*.

Informed learning is using information creatively, reflectively, effectively & ethically in order to learn in any of life’s paths. It is grounded in the effective information & learning experiences of professional, community & academic life.

*{Bruce 2008}
### The Etymology of ‘Inform’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To give form or shape to</th>
<th>To give organizing power to</th>
<th>To give life to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To imbue &amp; actuate with vitality</td>
<td>To animate</td>
<td>To mould</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To figure</td>
<td>To fashion</td>
<td>Webster’s revised unabridged dictionary (1913)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Six Frames for IL Education

Varying Approaches to:
- Learning
- Information
- Information literacy
- Assessment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View of IL</th>
<th>IL is a set of competencies or skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>View of Information</td>
<td>Information contributes to the performance of the relevant capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum focus</td>
<td>What should learners be able to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of learning &amp; teaching</td>
<td>Teachers analyse tasks into knowledge and skills; learners become competent by following predetermined pathways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of content</td>
<td>Content is derived from observation of skilful practitioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of assessment</td>
<td>Assessment determines what level of skill has been achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of IL in the Content</td>
<td>IL is knowledge about the world of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>IL is a set of competencies or skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to learn</td>
<td>IL is a way of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal relevance</td>
<td>IL is learned in context &amp; is different for different people and groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social impact</td>
<td>IL issues are important to society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>IL is a complex of different ways of relating to information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*variation across the frames*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching &amp; learning in the Content frame</th>
<th>Expert teacher transmits knowledge. Learning - a change in how much is known</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence frame</td>
<td>Teachers analyse tasks into knowledge &amp; skills; Learners become competent by following predetermined pathways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to learn frame</td>
<td>Teachers facilitate collaborative learning; Learners develop conceptual structure &amp; ways of thinking &amp; reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal relevance frame</td>
<td>Teachers help learners find motivation. Learning is about finding personal relevance &amp; meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social impact frame</td>
<td>Teachers challenge the status quo. Learning is about adopting perspectives that will encourage social change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational frame</td>
<td>Teachers helps learners see different perspectives. Learning is coming to see the world in a range of different ways</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

variation across the frames
Students experience the relationship between information use & learning as

Linear
I find information then learn from it

Cyclic
I obtain information, learn from it then obtain more information, then learn from it

Simultaneous
as I work with information I am learning

The latter breaks down the seek-find-use distinctions (Lupton, 2008)

linear, cyclic & simultaneous
INFORMED LEARNING

From having information capabilities

To the experience of using information to learn
INFORMED LEARNING

Simultaneously...

Experiencing using information

To learn something

critical, creative, reflective, ethical, wise
use of information (in all forms)
to learn (in all contexts)

Christine Bruce, Informed learning, 2008
PRESENT

Insights from RESEARCH:
Intertwining information & learning experiences
Information may be experienced as:

- Stable & meaningful across time
- Complex, an object needing to be governed
- Sourced internally & externally
- Influencing life style decisions
- Powerful, changing the community
- Relevant across contexts
Learning becomes increasingly:

- Contextualized
- Controlled
- Personal
- Powerful and
- Communal - as the HIL experience shifts from individual to collaborative

(Bruce, Partridge, Somerville, Stoodley, 2013)
Varying experiences of health information literacy indicate an expanding awareness which increasingly acknowledges **learning** as:

- **Contextualized:** *Information* is applicable to a widening environment
- **Controlled:** *Information* is an object in its own right
- **Personal:** *Information* is sourced not just externally but also from within
- **Powerful:** *Information* is sourced not just externally but also from within
- **Communal:** *Information* is a force for change in the community

(Bruce, Partridge, Somerville, Stoodley, 2013)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Health IL is ...</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Absorbing</td>
<td>Intuitive, taking in information for possible future use</td>
<td>Filling a personal reservoir</td>
<td>Learning is about memory &amp; recall</td>
<td>Information is stable &amp; meaningful across time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Targeting</td>
<td>Strategically procedural, organizing information</td>
<td>Managing information</td>
<td>Learning is about assembling &amp; managing information</td>
<td>Information is complex, an object in its own right &amp; needs to be governed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Journeying</td>
<td>Personal, discovering unanticipated destinations</td>
<td>Trusting your own experience of health</td>
<td>Learning is about taking your own experience seriously</td>
<td>Information is sourced internally &amp; externally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Liberating</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial, taking decisions about your lifestyle</td>
<td>Deciding about your health</td>
<td>Learning is about becoming able to carry out change</td>
<td>Information is influential, helping with lifestyle decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Collaborating</td>
<td>Collaborative, influencing each others’ health</td>
<td>Changing the health of the whole community</td>
<td>Learning is about connecting with fellow learners</td>
<td>Information is powerful, changing the community &amp; relevant across a wide context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**what are the parts & how do they vary?**
Information may be experienced as:

- Received
- Personalised
- Shared within relationships
- Corporate and systematic
- Personalised and responsive

(Gunton, Bruce, and Stoodley, 2012)
Using information to learn in church community

- Learning varies from:
  - Solitary and reflective to
  - Communal, evidence based, and kinaesthetic
  - The latter involving learning through practice & acts of service
- (Gunton, Bruce, and Stoodley, 2012)
Using information for growing faith  
(Gunton, 2012)

Informed learning is experienced as understanding and interpreting communication inspired by God to develop a personal faith journey.

**Forms of information** (what is information):
- The Bible, artistic expression and narrative, craft, stories, drama and song around the same message.

**Learning experiences**  
(How people use information to learn):
- Personal reflection and study, small group/peer discussion, informal conversation, formal education in the form of workshops, seminars and lectures, and learning by doing.

What is information & how it is used vary across the categories.
**Using information for developing relationships**

- Informed learning is experienced as using information generated through social and pastoral interactions to grow relationships.

**Forms of information (what is information):**
- Church notices, sharing of stories and personal experiences, and sharing of beliefs and faith journey and artistic expression through stories, music, song, drama, poetry, etc.

**Learning experiences (How people use information to learn):**
- Community activities, engagement in informal and social interactions; sharing with the wider community in worship services; supporting one another to cope with life experiences. Emerging use of social media.
Using information to serve the community

- Informed learning is experienced as using personal interpretations of gifts & talents in response to needs within the community.

- **Forms of information (what is information):**
  - Text, such as church notices, and verbal information distributed in face-to-face interactions, such as worship services or committee meetings, including digital information.

- **Learning experiences (How people use information to learn):**
  - Learning by doing, using kinaesthetic styles, putting learning into practice; engaging in acts of service.
Informed Learning

• Provides for inclusion of IL in discipline education as part of expert practice in the subject

• Students learn discipline content as they work with information (Whisken 2011)
Anne Whisken’s Questions
For Teachers

• How can we make visible the information practices of the discipline/subject?
• What learning is taking place as students are using this information?
• How is information used in your subject area?
• What good information practices do you want your students to learn?
• What experiences will you design so they can learn them?

(Whisen 2011)
Anne Whisken’s Questions
(... more questions)

• What are students learning by using information?
• From this source
• In this format
• For this purpose
• At this level
• In this language
• For this audience

• What are they learning about this subject?
• About the use of information in this subject?
• About the use of information generally?

(Whisken 2011)
These examples begin to reveal rich pictures of the experience of using information to learn.

Examples from contexts not constrained by academic & ‘scientific’ values reveal different pictures of people’s information literacy experience, suggesting the need to value different ways of experiencing & different approaches to practice.
Core to a phenomenographic understanding of experience is the concept of changing awareness.

As aspects of our environment become more or less relevant to us, our attention is constantly changing focus. Thus, what we perceive as central and peripheral adjusts in our changing circumstances.

These qualitative shifts of awareness indicate critical points for learning & personal change.

(Stoodley et al, in press)
• Information Literacy is about learning in many contexts, many communities, and many cultures

the fundamental interdisciplinarity of IL
How does information literacy change lives?

How do we help people change their lives?

Will lifting our heads to address these things empower & transform us as researchers & practitioners?

What do we need to attend to, in order to make possible information & learning experiences that will empower & transform others?

understanding what matters
IL research and practice must span the rich and the poor, the digitally enabled and the digitally disabled, the psychologically empowered, and the psychologically disempowered* and we must infuse the insights gained into our conventional spaces

* Bruce (2008, p.187)
Inviting the community to share their information experiences & create the potential for new experiences

Auraria Library, August 2012
IL principles helped the people reestablish their identity & revitalized Hispanic social action.

Renewing civil rights, educational access & digital presence.

informed learning & the Hispanic community
In our world, how can information literacy help? Into what spaces should we be taking our interest in information literacy; into what new contexts, new paradigms, new methods, new contexts?

The transformational empowering & emancipatory entering into new spaces
what can the information literacy agenda do for...

Poverty
Hunger
Natural disasters
Child abuse
Status of women
Wellness
Drug abuse
Homelessness
Information Literacy is about transformation, its capacity to make real what is important to people.

“...The future of information literacy rests in our hands. Will we step out of our comfort zones and meet the world where its problems really exist?"

Ward (2001, p.922)
innovative space
Colleagues interested in experiential approaches are developing a book which tackles the idea of Information Experience.

This new direction has been significantly influenced by the information literacy agenda, I commend the thinking involved in experientially grounded research & practice to you all.
The idea of “What matters?” is borrowed from Prof. Ference Marton, Goteborg University & father of phenomenography.

I am as always indebted to...

The QUT & international research team interested in informed learning, information & learning experiences.

The wider IL research & practice community.
In acknowledgement of Turkey’s commitment to peace
An embodiment of the information literacy experience
References

Image References

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