

# Information Literacy in Europe: Ten Years Later

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# Content and Structure

- A follow up to the article “*Information literacy in Europe: a literature review*“, **Information Research**, 2003.
- Examines the IL movement in Europe since 2003, and provides an overview of some trends and developments.
- The overview is based on
  - literature reviews,
  - personal observations & involvement, and
  - an exploratory study.

Divided into **three parts**:

- Conclusions from IR paper.
- Selected findings of the exploratory study - results still relevant.
- Review of the current context, conceptual development, strategy & policy and the educational developments of IL.



# Conclusions of my Paper in 2003

Much work was undertaken on the part of librarians to deliver IL.

Interest in IL was illustrated by

- the number of projects,
- conferences, workshops,
- working groups,
- adaptation of IL competency standards,
- teaching initiatives in many institutions,
- development of Web sites
- Web-based tutorials and
- in the area of research.

The majority of initiatives came from **formal education settings** and examples in the workplace, community & CE context were very rare.

- IL initiatives in HE took a variety of forms:
  - stand-alone courses or classes,
  - Web-based tutorials,
  - course-related instruction, or
  - course-integrated instruction.
- **Trends towards the integration of IL into subject areas**



# Conclusions of my Paper in 2003

- References to IL initiatives in Europe were, however, **quite rare and fragmented** (descriptions of innovation).
- The majority of publications came from the **UK**.
- Part of the problem of understanding European IL activities stemmed from the **language barrier** (Virkus, 2003).

# My Observation from 2003

- “... the **constructivist approach to learning** has close connections with the process of information-seeking and use [...] to learn constructively involves active seeking, processing and using of information, critical analysis and metacognition. In this context, information-related competencies may be viewed as **context-** and **content-dependent competencies** which are integral elements in a constructive learning environment and are closely related with the **characteristics of constructive learners** (prior knowledge, metacognition, motivation, and the complex variable ‘learning style’)” (Virkus, 2003).



# **An Exploratory Study:**

Development of Information-related  
Competencies in European Higher  
Open and Distance Learning: An  
Exploration of Contextual Factors



# Exploratory Study

- During the period of 2003 to 2005 an exploratory study was conducted in European ODL HEIs to understand the experience of those involved in the development of IRC.
- The **research problem** was concerned with **why progress in developing IRC in HE has been so** modest and the belief that a better understanding of what academics, senior managers, librarians and students are thinking and doing would help better to engage them in effective development of IRC.
- Research Question: **What is the nature of successful IL educational practice and what are the factors which influence this?**



# Methodology

## A mixed methods approach:

- Survey and
- Multiple-case studies
- **The survey** aimed to find out the size and scope of the development of IRC in EADTU member institutions and to explore the role of libraries within this process.

## Descriptive analysis

- EADTU - the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities, 156 dual/mixed-mode universities + 7 open universities/ providers = **163 institutions**
- E-mail survey (policy/strategy, curriculum integration, staff development, research, supervision, a role of the library) **71 respondents, 16 countries (43.6 %)**

# Multiple Case Studies

- **Multiple Case Studies:** site visits, interviews, observations, document analysis in European ODL institutions.
- 6 best practice institutions in 5 European countries: 2 open universities and 4 dual/mixed mode ODL universities
- 72 semi-structured interviews with **four actors** (views, attitudes, beliefs): 22 students, 21 academics, 21 librarians and 8 senior managers
- The areas: policy and strategy, integration of IRC into curriculum, a role of the library (collaboration, partnership), staff development, research

**Constant comparative  
method of data analysis**



# Survey Results

- Findings from the survey indicated that there were some **promising developments** in terms of
  - institutional policy,
  - faculty-library collaboration
  - staff development.
- **Limited progress** was identified as regards
  - IRC being incorporated into governmental agendas,
  - into teaching and learning
  - developing research and supervision partnerships.

Survey findings showed that European higher ODL institutions were actively involved in the development of IRC but the manifestation of that involvement **was patchy and varied** in the period of this study.



# Selected Case Study Results

- The integration of IRC into curriculum was in the beginning stage **in all institutions of good practice** in the period 2003-2005.
- Academic staff delivered some of these IRC in their courses themselves (PBL, RBL) or in collaboration with librarians, but there **wasn't a solid enough framework** for thinking about
  - how students develop these competencies,
  - how these are recorded and assessed,
  - how students are made more aware of their development of IRC
  - how to give a range of opportunities to develop those competencies.

# Obstacles for IRC

- Lack of time
- Lack of human resources
- Continuous changes & challenges in educational environment (Lisbon Strategy, Bologna process, technological developments, etc.)
- High workload of faculty and librarians
- Lack of awareness among teachers to either understand or know how to integrate/embed IRC into learning
- A lack of a positive attitude toward IRC integration.
- A lack of good and convincing examples of IRC development
- Poor leadership or few enthusiastic leaders
- The modular nature of the programmes, each course is very free standing [OU]
- University has used to provide the students with all the resources they need
- Difficulties in terms of economy of students' and tutors' time and effort
- A lack of pedagogical skills amongst librarians and
- A lack of the culture of collaboration.



# Obstacles for IRC

*In that a sort of contained course, the tutors are pretty well clear about the material the students will have been using. We have to go certain way in that direction, but I don't think we can make the all courses with that kind of open source approach [ACADEMIC STAFF].*

*We have so many other dimensions on which we have to assess students, if you like, that I can't image that ...IL is ever going to be the leading edge of a course assessment [SENIOR MANAGER].*

*It is connected with persons, unfortunately. Our administration at the moment at the library is very conservative and wanting to have as much results as little money and resources as possible. It has made it very stressful and difficult... [AC. STAFF].*



# Lack of Pedagogical Skills

*Well, to be honest, it was slightly disappointing, I mean they gave you some tick boxes, we worked with tick boxes ... and they rated you, I think out of three ... achieved, well achieved... or something like that [STUDENT].*

*The course seems to me not to have understood why somebody would want to be doing research, the model that they had of learning was the knowledge is out there, all you have to do is to go and hunt for it. This is a librarian's view of the world, it's not the researcher's view of the world [STUDENT]*

*...there is no need at all, it seems to me, for you to determine what it is that should to be investigated as a main project, because if you really do have the expertise that you claim by virtually publishing this course you would be able to check very quickly whether or not there is any particular search, any particular project that was satisfactorily done, it would only take you 10 minutes to do it. So, why not allow your students to investigate the matter of their interest and curiosity... [STUDENT]*



# IL Concept

The nature of the concept was accepted and appreciated among students, academics, senior managers and librarians, but **the term itself created confusion** and was not sufficiently understandable, and therefore was found to be **an obstacle to develop effectively IRC**.



# Concept of IL

*The first time I heard of it was four years ago, when two consultant from the library held a presentation. I remember I thought hmmm, they do have a word for these things [ACADEMIC STAFF].*

*It does not create much interest to be involved if they are not able to determine very exactly what it is we should develop...and how...[ACADEMIC STAFF]*

*Probably they don't talk and probably even don't think about it as IL. But they do see a range of skills what we probably recognise as information literacy skills important to learning, either the name is widely known or widely understood it is the different matter ... [ACADEMIC STAFF].*

*I think that there are some courses where say call these research skills, I don't think that this terminology translates very well to the academic environment. People don't know what we are exactly talking about. I don't know either it means that we as librarians need to talk more about it. Probably yes. Or either we actually need the different term entirely to make it make sense. [LIBRARIAN].*



# Policy supporting IRC development

- The research participants noted that the national policy supported IRC building via different initiatives even the notion of IL or IRC were not explicitly mentioned:
  - in the context of information society developments
  - the Bologna process,
  - electronic or digital library projects,
  - e-learning
  - key skills initiatives and
  - the lifelong learning agenda.



# Leadership – library/university

Emerged from the answers, not asked directly...

- Influences to take IL initiatives
- Influences collaboration/partnership
- Influences the development of IL
- Influences the policy development
- Influences the the image of library and librarian
- Influences the library culture
- Influences staff development
- Influences research



# Leadership

*Ooh..., I think, we had a director at that time who did not like our library education programme. She said that we should do something that no one had seen before ..., and she said things like that, you could almost get afraid of her... [LIBRARIAN].*

*It is connected with persons, unfortunately. Our administration at the moment at the library is very conservative and wanting to have as much results as little money and resources as possible. It has made it very stressful and difficult [LIBRARIAN].*

*They got a new head librarian, not this one, she was a woman before this one, and she was very very very good. She created together with some people this new policy of openness and interaction with the study programmes and et cetera. So, I think, that really changed the attitude of the library, but also the conception of the library for the faculty [LIBRARIAN]*



# Leadership

*Part of that is structural, because [X], our library director, her boss is the pro vice chancellor of learning and teaching and it means she is very close to him. She has a lot of influence on him. And in fact, two weeks ago, he came and spent a half-day with library senior management team. Doing the visioning exercise. That was very useful to find out what his vision is and what our vision is. And he seems to be very committed to IL. [LIBRARIAN].*

*Not in the way that the leader can do everything, but the leader can help create and support the culture, the different culture, depending on what leadership style to use and our leader style was very consultative, emphatic, you know, she had studied Chinese and she was very culturally aware of other people, different cultures, you know, ... if you are aware of differences you can handle it, if you can't see any differences, well, you get a problem [LIBRARIAN].*



# Dimensions Influencing the Development of IRC

- **Strategic Dimension**

- Policy & strategy
- Leadership & management
- Physical & human resources
- Organizational culture

- **Educational Dimension**

- Curriculum development
- Learning & teaching approaches
- Assessment
- Leadership
- Collaboration

- **Professional Dimension**

- Roles & responsibilities
- Competencies
- Collaboration & partnership
- Leadership

- **Research Dimension**

- Research into IL
- Research resources & management
- Supervision
- Collaboration
- Leadership



# Conclusions of the Study

- A **complex interaction of factors** in each of these dimensions that enhance the development of IRC.
- Therefore, the lack of a **holistic approach** to IRC in European HEIs may be an obstacle for the effective development of IRC
- **Differing perceptions & expectations** of different actors' roles & responsibilities in academia might create unexpected behaviours and have an adverse impact on the implementation of activities that facilitate the development of IRC.
- The concept *university as a learning organisation* was suggested as an umbrella construct which ties together the four dimensions and forms a framework which illuminates the overall goal of the strategic, educational, professional and research initiatives within the university



# Web of Science 2003-2013

## World **4690**

- 2013 – 436 (9,3%)
- 2012 – 729 (15,5%)
- 2011 – 673 (14,4%)
- 2010 – 590 (12,6%)
- 2009 – 541 (11,5%)
- 2008 – 467 (10%)
- 2007 – 369 (7,9%)
- 2006 – 286 (6,1%)
- 2005 – 230 (4,9%)
- 2004 – 213 (4,5%)
- 2003 – 156 (3,3%)

## Europe **1252**

- 2013 – 107 (8,5)
- 2012 – 189 (15,1%)
- 2011 – 186 (14,9%)
- 2010 – 167 (13,3%)
- 2009 – 145 (11,6%)
- 2008 – 138 (11,0%)
- 2007 – 113 (9,0%)
- 2006 – 80 (6,4 %)
- 2005 – 51 (4,1 %)
- 2004 – 43 (3,4%)
- 2003 – 33 (2,6%)



# Web of Science 2003-2013

- 2114 (45,1%) - USA
- 379 (8,1%) - UK
- 363 (7,7%) - AUSTRALIA
- 257 (5,5%) - CANADA
- 137 (2,9%) - CHINA
- 128 (2,7%) - SPAIN
- 109 (2,3%) - GERMANY
- 91 (1,9%) - SOUTH AFRICA
- 89 (1,8%) - NETHERLANDS
- 82 (1,7%) - TAIWAN



# IL in Europe 2003-2013

- UK 379
- SPAIN 128
- GERMANY 109
- NETHERLANDS 89
- TURKEY 57
- SWEDEN 53
- FINLAND 47
- NORWAY 30
- IRELAND 29
- FRANCE 27
- GREECE 27
- ITALY 26
- BELGIUM 25
- SWITZERLAND 25
- PORTUGAL 22
- CZECH REPUBLIC 19
- DENMARK 18
- LITHUANIA 15
- SLOVENIA 13
- CROATIA 12
- ESTONIA 11
- HUNGARY 11
- ROMANIA 11
- AUSTRIA 10
- SERBIA 10
- SLOVAKIA 8
- CYPRUS 6
- POLAND 6
- LATVIA 5
- ICELAND 4
- MACEDONIA 3

**1252 publications  
from 31 countries**

English 1153 (92%)  
Spanish 38 (3%)  
German 16 (1,3%)  
French 12 (1%)



# Research Field 2003-2013

## World

- LIS 1344 (29%)
- Educational Research 986 (21%)
- Computer Science 665 (14%)
- Public Environmental Occupational Health 460 (10%)
- Health Care Sciences Services 327 (7%)
- Psychology 315 (6,7%)
- Nursing 193 (4%)
- Communication 192 (4%)

## Europe

- LIS 428 (34%)
- Educational Research 323 (26%)
- Computer Science 272 (22%)
- Psychology 96 (8%)
- Public Environmental Occupational Health 75 (6%)
- Health Care Sciences Services 61 (5%)
- Communication 44 (3,5%)
- Engineering 44 (3,5%)

# ECIL 2013: the European Contribution

- Albania 1
  - Austria 2
  - Belgium 3
  - Bulgaria 4
  - **Croatia 10**
  - Czech Republic 7
  - Denmark 3
  - Estonia 3
  - Finland 7
  - France 8
  - Germany 9
  - Greece 3
  - Hungary 3
  - Iceland 2
  - Ireland 2
  - Italy 5
  - Lithuania 1
  - Malta 1
  - The Netherlands 3
  - Norway 3
  - Poland 4
  - Portugal 3
  - Romania 1
  - Serbia 3
  - Slovakia 1
  - Slovenia 2
  - Spain 5
  - Sweden 5
  - Switzerland 2
  - Turkey 10**
  - UK 12**
- 126 publications from 31 countries**
- Croatia/Slovenia  
Romania/Norway  
South Africa/Norway  
Colombia/Spain  
Bulgaria/USA  
France/Brazil  
Germany/Brazil  
Estonia/Mexico



# Changing Context

- The information and learning environment has changed significantly since 2003
  - Societal needs
  - Students' expectations
  - Technological developments
  - Innovative Pedagogies (OER and MOOCs)
  - Costs and Cuts
- Information behaviour and learning has changed, information practices and learning practices have changed (LisbonSCOP2013).



# Changing Context

open

Resources crowd media e-portfolios  
reality educational licensing ecosystem mining  
benchmarks flexibility networking change  
digital games leadership access participation data relevance  
seamless textbooks skilling social augmented  
Open analytics responsiveness collaboration accessibility innovation content  
inclusion badges learning Web  
Employability OER  
scalability



# Changes and Challenges

## Societal needs

- The expectations for HE to create personal and societal economic growth are high and increasing.
- Increasing demand for HE means globally building 4 conventional universities with 30,000 students each every week for the next 12 years.
- 650 million youths are neither working nor studying
- Employability is secured through skilling and re-skilling.
- More education is needed to re-educate people for highly skilled jobs.
- Sustainable change towards more flexible, responsive and cost-effective HEIs and systems (LisbonSCOP2013)..



# Changes and Challenges

## **Students' expectations**

- Students increasingly demand flexibility in education, so they can enjoy high quality education anytime, anywhere at low cost
- Flexibility, accessibility, openness, responsiveness, relevance, inclusion, employability (LisbonSCOP2013).



# Changes and Challenges

- How to achieve excellence in teaching and learning with the time of **costs and cuts**?

## Technology

- Access to technology and the Internet revolutionize the opportunities for learning (social networking, mobile technology), innovative pedagogies
- By 2020, 70-80% of the global population is expected to have internet access, up from 35% today
- The current paradigm of HE delivers on-campus lectures, but open and online education has the potential to lower the costs, some claim by 70-80% (LisbonSCOP2013).



# Changes and Challenges

## OER and MOOCs

- The opportunity to enable everyone to attain all the education they desire
- Informal learning opportunities by OER and MOOCs (Elearningeurope has become [openeducationeurope.eu](http://openeducationeurope.eu) and now listed 270 MOOCs from Europe)
- But Open Educational Practices struggle to take off. The current models for HE don't favour an open educational culture. They don't give incentives for OER or Open Access. In short, are not optimized for Open Knowledge, open knowledge sharing, open educational ecosystems (LisbonSCOP2013).



# European Commission Responses

- Through a series of documents, the EC has committed itself to a programme of transformation in the education systems of Europe between now and 2020.
- A range of documents is prepared on rethinking education and investing in skills and competencies (e.g. *Supporting Jobs and Growth: an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems* (September 2011) ).
- The **Opening up Education** initiative is a positive contribution to the EC's Modernisation Agenda in HE.
- The EC has placed open and flexible learning at the heart of this vision for the future (Keywords: Collaboration, Leadership, Innovation) (LisbonSCOP2013).



# Conceptual Discussions 2003-2013

- A number of different understandings of IL and debates of its relationship to other literacies (DL, media literacy, basic literacy etc.) A lack of shared conceptual understanding (Bawden, 2008; Rantala, 2010, Andretta, 2011).
- Tuominen et al. (2005) believe that the IL debate is a necessary one because background assumptions and theories have crucial effects on how IL training is implemented.
- Our understanding of IL has shifted from the generic functional skills/individual skills-based approaches to the **situated social practices** (Tuominen et al., 2005; Sundin, 2005; Sundin, 2008; Sundin & Francke, 2009; Papen, 2013), Walsh & Coonan, 2013).



# Conceptual Discussions 2003-2013

- IL is understood in varied ways and is related to various practices as these are being shaped in institutions, disciplines, discourses or occupations. IL ultimately derives its meaning from the cultural, material and historical contexts where it is defined and applied (Limberg et al, 2012, p.118).
- It is recognised that a "one size fits all approach" to developing IL is not effective: what will work well with one person in one context may be unsatisfactory for another person in another context (different educational levels, LLL, geographical locations, cultural settings. IL takes different forms in different social & cultural context and therefore multiple approaches and delivery channels need to be used (Virkus et al, 2005, O'Brien & Russell, 2012; Hampson Lundh & Lindberg, 2012).



# Conceptual Discussions 2003-2013

- There is no right or wrong way to be information literate, there are simply ways that work, or don't work, for an individual in their current context (Walsh and Coonan, 2013).
- Various forms of ILs in different contexts and therefore IL is perceived as a **plural construct** and terms like information literacies, multi-literacies and metaliteracies are recommended (Limberg, 2010; Pilerot & Lindberg, 2011; Whitworth et al, 2011; Hampson Lundh & Lindberg, 2012).



# Conceptual Discussions 2003-2013

- It is believed that a socio-cultural approach to learning and practice is a new emerging framework for IL that offers a view of IL as ‘a dimension of modern literacy’ (Lundh & Limberg, 2008; Sundin, 2008).
- Influence of literacy studies on IL has become more visible (various perspectives and methodologies, the focus on social and cultural issues, ICT influence - New Literacies & New Literacy Studies).



# Conceptual Discussions 2003-2013

- Limberg & Sundin (2006) and Julien & Williamson (2010) have identified differences between practitioners' and scholars' conceptions of IL
- Practitioners define IL mainly instrumentally and scholars more conceptually.
- While information seeking is a foundational concept for information science scholars, IL has been a concern primarily of practitioners;
- The relationship between these concepts has not been fully explored and largely ignored in the research literature (Julien and Williamson, 2010).



# Conceptual Discussions 2003-2013

- An increased interest in the relationship between **IS research and IL**, and in the connections between **information use and learning process** in the last decade (Limberg and Sundin, 2006; Kari and Savolainen, 2010).
- Five main relationship categories of information use and learning have been identified: (a) learning is a part of information use; (b) information use is a part of learning; (c) learning affects information use; (d) information use affects learning; and (e) information use and learning interact (Kari & Savolainen, 2010).
- These offer differing points of view from which to consider these phenomena, combined efforts from information studies, pedagogy and psychology are needed in this area.



# Information Seeking

- IL as Seeking information for learning purposes, i.e. “IS for a purpose beyond itself”
- IL as Learning information seeking and use, i.e. “IL as the object of learning”
- IL as Teaching information seeking, i.e. “IL as the object of teaching”
- IL as Learning from information, i.e. highly related to ways of using information, meaning-making from information, transforming information into meaning
- Information seeking and use as tools for learning (Limberg, 2013)



# Conceptual Discussions 2003-2013

- Transformative aspect of IL - transform individuals and society (Limberg et al, 2012). Transition to different environments, educational levels, landscapes – transliteracies (Andretta, 2011; Martin, 2013).
- Both internal and external forces shape an individual's IL development.
- Integration of behavioural, cognitive, metacognitive and affective learning (Martin, 2013).



# Conceptual Discussions 2003-2013

- Critics of the **detailed competency standards** and models: if you fix IL in too much detail you can create something lacking in life and meaning (Walsh and Coonan, 2013).
- IL is not a fixed set of skills and cannot be measured as a percentage or grade. The diversity of ways we can be information literate (Walsh and Coonan, 2013).
- However, models provide guidance to help practitioners with implementation and advocacy

# Conceptual Discussions 2003-2013

- A lack of clarity with regard to the term of IL and what it means can often be an obstacle for formulating an institutional or national policy as well as collaborating institutionally, nationally or internationally and develop efficient the curricula (Ponjuan, 2010; Virkus, 2011).
- It is also believed that it can lead to IL ‘not being fully embraced by practitioners and can contribute to a lack of recognizing IL’s importance amongst policy-makers, the public, and indeed, library users and patrons’ (Ponjuan, 2010; Johnson et al., 2012).



# Some References from 2012

- “At a political and social level, literacy is much more of a priority in Ireland with IL lacking any real explicit understanding or meaning outside of the library arena” (O’Brien & Russell, 2012, p.4).
- Language and terminology seem to remain problematic albeit with a growing acceptance around usage of the phrase and international IL logo (O’Brien & Russell, 2012, p.5).
- IL means different things in different sectors and people apply IL specifically to meet their own users’ needs. Despite this fairly obvious lack of consensus, the recognition for IL was clearly evident (O’Brien & Russell, 2012, p.5).



# Some References from 2012

- No cohesive national strategy, policy guidelines or approach to IL, the lack of an integrated approach for IL development in Ireland.
- IL activities have been fragmented and ad hoc
- Struggling with time-constraints, inadequate resources, and a congested curriculum, uneven development of IL programmes, lack of time, inadequate resources (funding, facilities, qualified or suitable staff), indifference and lack of appreciation from end-users and the wider community, poor understanding and awareness of the necessity and importance of IL, insufficient training and CPD initiatives to up-date staff, ICT infrastructure, Web 2.0 and technological issues. The need for continued leadership and guidance at institutional and national levels (O'Brien & Russell, 2012, p.5).



# Some References from 2012

- EU-funded EMPATIC (*Empowering Autonomous Learning Through Information Competencies*) project
- Frequent lack of complete and reliable information about particular IL actions in Europe.
- No coherent Information Literacy policy actions are undertaken by the interested “industries” or societies, often a lack of involvement, commitment and funding from the government agencies, local authorities or the EU is observed within the selected “cases”, the strategic thinking is frequently missing.



# Conclusions

- During the last decade our understanding of IL has shifted from skills-based approaches towards a broader and more social understanding of information practice.
- However, there is still confusion around the term
- IL is embedded in European strategy and policy documents, although not always explicitly mentioned but no coherent policy and strategy at international, national and often institutional level
- Many successful projects and initiatives (research & practice)
- The lack of a holistic approach to IRC in European HEIs, many obstacles for developing IRCs in a systematic and sustainable way.



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