Chapter 2

Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning

With contributions by
Forest Woody Horton, Jr.

Information literacy and lifelong learning have a strategic, mutually reinforcing relationship with each other that is critical to the success of every individual, organization, institution, and nation-state in the global information society. These two modern paradigms should ideally be harnessed to work symbiotically and synergistically with one another if people and institutions are to successfully survive and compete in the 21st century and beyond.

Inter-relations of the two concepts. Both of these concepts:

- Are largely self-motivated and self-directed. They do not require the mediation of an outside individual, an organization, or a system beyond the individual himself or herself, although advice and assistance from a respected friend such as a mentor or coach can be helpful.
- Are self-empowering. They are aimed at helping individuals of all age groups to help themselves, regardless of their social or economic status, role or place in society, gender, race, religion or ethnic background.
- Are self-actuating. The more information literate an individual becomes, and the longer the individual sustains good information literacy learning and practices those habits, the greater the self-enlightenment that will occur, especially if practiced over an entire lifetime.

Theoretically one could pursue the goal of becoming more information literate but not continuously over one's lifetime. Conversely, one could pursue the goal of lifelong learning but without having first become information literate. Taken alone, neither path maximizes the potential of the individual to "learn to learn."

Information literacy and lifelong learning. Harnessed together, information literacy and lifelong learning substantially improve the:
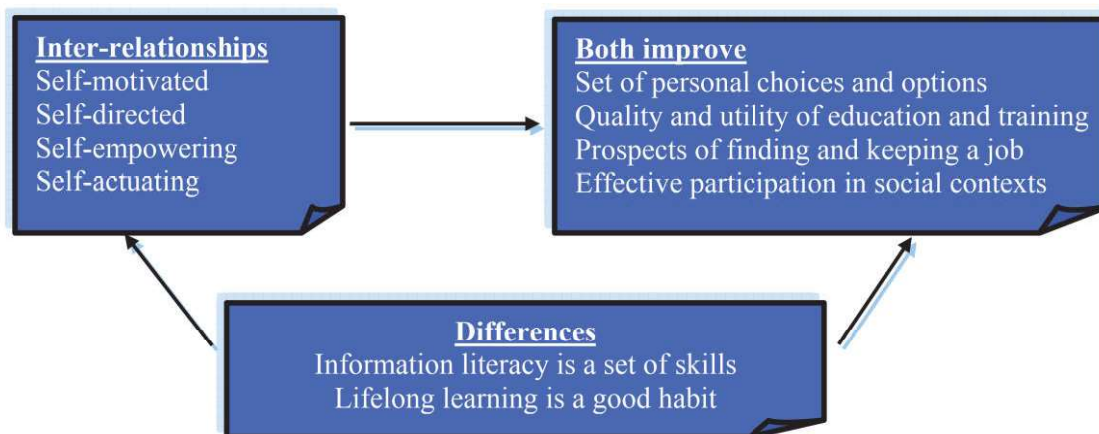
- Set of personal choices and options opened up for, and offered to, an individual in the context of personal, family and societal matters.
- Quality and utility of education and training in both formal school settings preceding entry into the workforce, and later in informal vocational or on-the-job training settings.
- Prospects of finding and keeping a satisfying job and moving up the career ladder rapidly and with appropriate rewards, and making cost-effective and wise economic and business decisions.

- Participation of the individual effectively in social, cultural and political contexts, both at the local community level and at higher levels, and in identifying and fulfilling professional goals and aspirations.

Information literacy is a "set of skills" that can be learned. That set of skills includes a certain attitude toward learning itself, the use of tools, such as online tutorials, the use of techniques, such as working with groups, and the use of methods, such as a reliance on mentors, coaches and ombudspersons.

In contrast, lifelong learning is a good habit that must be acquired and accompanied by the adoption of a positive frame of mind. The willingness to change and a curiosity or thirst for knowledge are very helpful pre-conditions to lifelong learning.

Figure 2. Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning

Inter-relationships
Self-motivated
Self-directed
Self-empowering
Self-actuating

Both improve
Set of personal choices and options
Quality and utility of education and training
Prospects of finding and keeping a job
Effective participation in social contexts

Differences
Information literacy is a set of skills
Lifelong learning is a good habit

Libraries and librarians as partners in an information literacy/lifelong learning team. This is an IFLA document, and it is clear that IFLA is concerned with libraries and librarians. However, putting an information literacy/lifelong learning program in place cannot be done exclusively by librarians in libraries. This enormous task is the responsibility of all the learning community: teachers, faculty, parents, students and society in general. A team must be formed, and partners identified who can work with the librarian. For example, in the context of school libraries, the partnership team might include one or more teachers, an outside expert, a school counselor and possibly others. In a public library context the partnership team mix would be somewhat different.

Libraries and librarians as information literacy change agents. Information literacy is important beyond the domain of libraries and librarianship. Therefore librarians can serve as change agents to help other domains develop and put their information literacy policies, programs and projects in place. In this context the librarian can serve as an expert

consultant and should not be bashful about offering his/her services in other domains. For example, in a private enterprise context, information literacy/lifelong learning is important to the entire company, not just to librarians and other information professionals. Librarians should play a consultative role to help other departments and units within the enterprise develop their own information literacy programs. The same goes for government agencies at all levels.

Big or small, your library has an IL role. Regardless of its size and resources, the library has the important role as part of an institutional information literacy program, if not the precursor of the IL change. Librarians and other information specialist should be promoters of information literacy programs and activities because their library or information center is a: Remove comma before because

- Repository of knowledge
- Information reservoir in multiple formats
- Center with librarians who are information experts
- Department with learning spaces
- Place for interaction with learning peers and teams
- Space for knowledge socialization
- Place with information advisers / reference specialists and consultants
- Center with computer access, processing and communication of knowledge
- Gateway to the Internet, a world of information

Programs and revised curricula are only one potential product. Information Literacy/Lifelong Learning programs and revised curricula are only one potential product or outcome from this initiative. Equally important are information literacy/lifelong learning:

- Principles
- Policies
- Programs
- Pilot Project
- Models
- Workshops
- Tutorials
- Brainstorming sessions
- Techniques, tools, methods

In short, there is a family of possible products and outcomes that could result from this endeavor that management should prioritize and act upon.

References

Bundy, A. (2002). Essential Connections: School and Public Libraries for Lifelong Learning. *Australian Library Journal,* Vol. 51, pp.47-70.

Candy, P. (2002). *Lifelong Learning and Information Literacy.* Retrieved October 20, 2004 from web site: http://www.nclis.gov/libinter/infolitconf&meet/papers/candy-fullpaper.pdf

Case, D. (2002). *Looking for Information: A Survey of Research on Information Seeking, Needs and Behavior.* New York: Academic Press.

Ford, N. (2003, April). Towards a Model of Learning for Educational Informatics. *Journal of Documentation*, Vol. 60, pp.183-225.

Hancock, V. E. (2004). *Information Literacy for Lifelong Learning.* Retrieved October 21, 2004 from Web site: http://www.libraryinstruction.com/information-literacy.html

Hepworth, M. (2004, March). A Framework for Understanding User Requirements for an Information Service: Defining the Needs of Informal Careers. *Journal of the American Society of Information Science and Technology*, Vol. 55, pp. 695-708.

Hiscock, J and Marriott, P. (2003, March). *A Happy Partnership Using an Information Portal to Integrate Information Literacy Skills into an Undergraduate Foundation Course.* Australian Academic and Research Libraries, Vol. 34, pp. 32-41.

Kapitzke, C. (2003). *Information Literacy: A Positivist Epistemology and a Politics of Outformation. Educational Theory*, Vol. 53, No. 1 pp. 37-53.

Langford, L. (2001, June). *Critical Literacy: A Building Block Towards the Information Literate School Community.* Teacher Librarian, Vol. 28, pp. 18-21.

Mednick, M. (2002*). Information Literacy: The New Challenge*. California. 17 p.

Nimon, M. (2002, March 24). *Developing Lifelong Learners: Controversy and the Educative Role of the Academic Librarian.* Australian Academic and Research Libraries, Vol. 33, pp. 14-24.

Pappas, M and Tepe, A. (2002). *Pathways to Knowledge and Inquiry Learning.* United States of America, Colorado. (Information Literacy Series). 149 p.