

Chapter 6: Raising Awareness of Information Literacy



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A variety of useful models have been developed across the world to help understand, explain and raise public awareness of Information Literacy. The majority of these models have been developed for use in schools and universities where awareness-raising in Information Literacy is felt to have the most impact and the best chance of success.

One of the most popular Information Literacy models is "The Big 6", developed in the United States by two librarians, Mike Eisenberg and Bob Berkowitz. The Big 6 is described by its authors as a problem-solving approach to teaching information and technology skills. In simple terms, the Big 6 model comprises six key steps or stages of problem solving, under each of which are grouped two sub-steps or components:

1. Task Definition
 - 1.1 Define the information problem
 - 1.2 Identify information needed

2. Information-Seeking Strategies
 - 2.1 Determine all possible sources
 - 2.2 Select the best sources

3. Location and Access
 - 3.1 Locate sources (intellectually and physically)
 - 3.2 Find information within sources
4. Use of Information
 - 4.1 Engage (e.g., read, hear, view, touch)
 - 4.2 Extract relevant information
5. Synthesis
 - 5.1 Organise from multiple sources
 - 5.2 Present the information
6. Evaluation
 - 6.1 Judge the product (effectiveness)
 - 6.2 Judge the process (efficiency)⁶³

The Big 6 is a simple model to understand and promote. It is also supported by a very useful website - <http://www.big6.com/> - that provides access to a wealth of resources, links and sample lesson plans for teaching Information Literacy in schools and universities.

Promotional resources available from the Big 6 website include free handouts for adults and children that can be downloaded and printed: <http://www.big6.com/files/Big6Handouts.pdf>

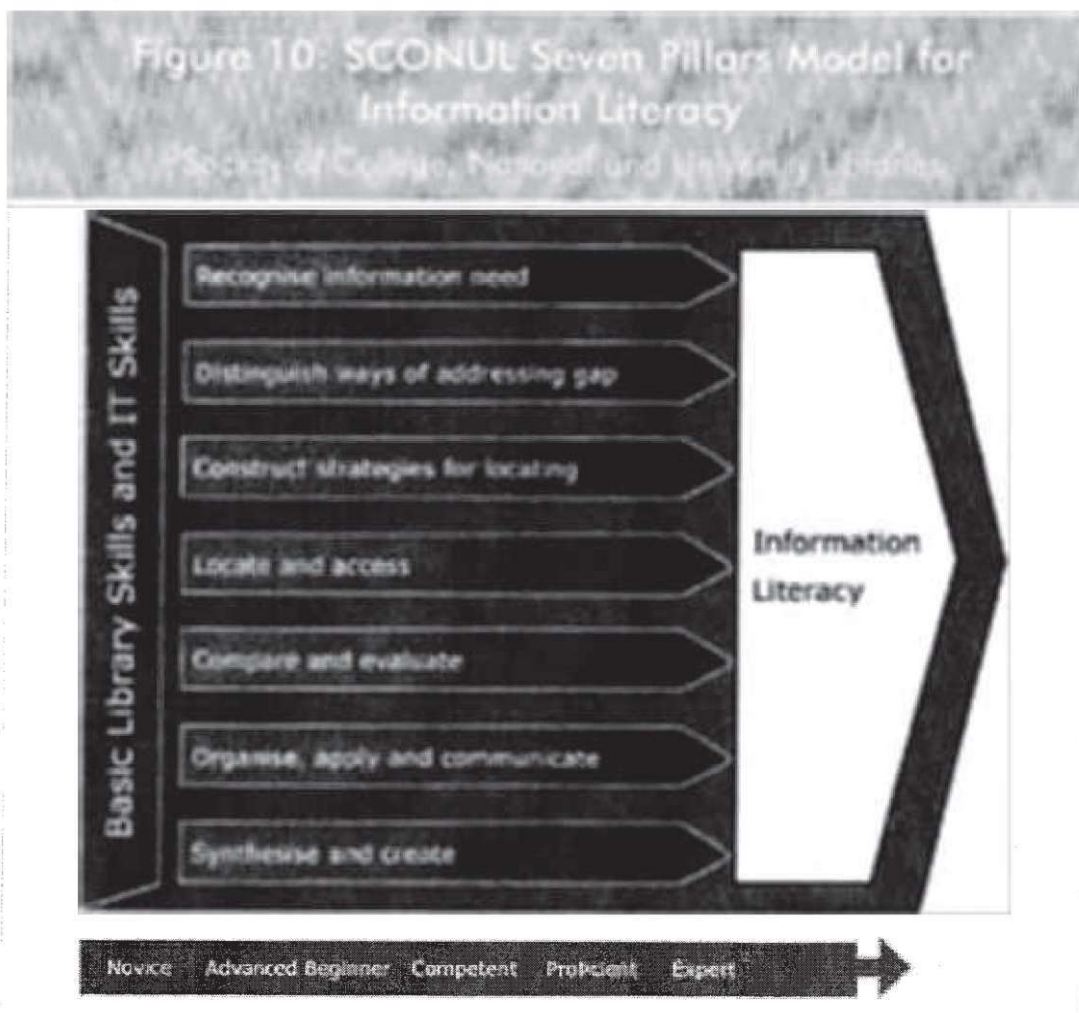
The Big 6 model has arguably two drawbacks however. Firstly, the majority of resources and examples relate to schools and projects in the United States. Secondly, and less significant perhaps, the Big 6 is a commercial product and thus subject to copyright and trademark protection. The authors provide for limited "educational, non-profit use of the Big 6 provided that recognition is properly and

⁶³ <http://www.big6.com/showarticle.php?id=16> (accessed 16 March 2006)

duly noted."⁶⁴ Permission to use the Big 6 will not be granted for commercial purposes. Some of the more appealing resources - bookmarks for example - must also be purchased via the website.

The Seven Pillars Model of Information Literacy

In 1999, the Information Skills Taskforce of the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries in the United Kingdom (SCONUL) developed a particularly effective conceptual model - the "Seven Pillars of Information Literacy".⁶⁵



Reprinted from http://www.sconul.ac.uk/activities/inf_lit/sp/model.html

⁶⁴ <http://www.big6.com/showarticle.php?id=120> (accessed 16 March 2006)

⁶⁵ http://www.sconul.ac.uk/activities/inf_lit/sp/model.html (accessed 1 February 2006)

As with the Big 6, the Seven Pillars model should be viewed as a progression from basic information literacy skills through to more sophisticated ways of understanding and using information - the path from novice to expert. The model provides a practical and robust framework with which we can identify and examine the skills an average person in any society across the world requires to be an active and informed citizen.

The Seven Pillars Model can be divided into two core sets of skills:

1. Knowing how to locate and access information
2. Knowing how to understand and use information

Knowing how to locate and access information

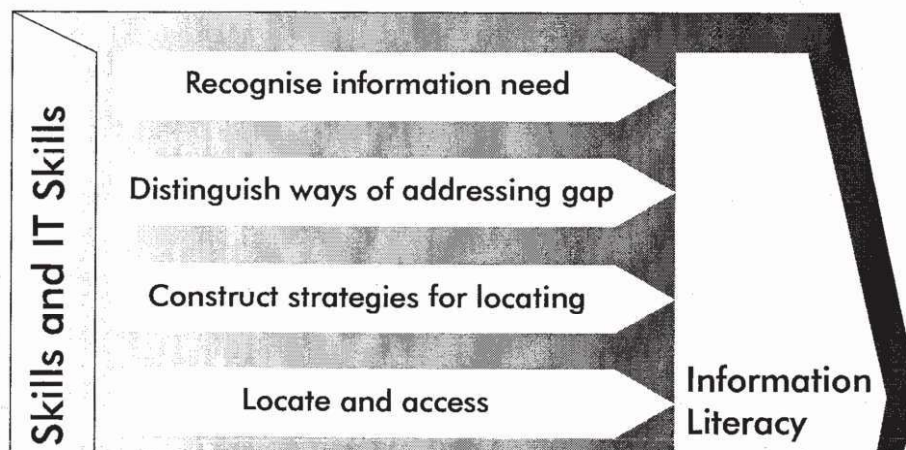
The first four pillars comprise the basic skills required to locate and access information:

(Pillar 1) Recognise our information need - knowing what is known, knowing what is not known and identifying the gap

(Pillar 2) Distinguish ways of addressing the gap - knowing which information sources are likely to satisfy the information need

(Pillar 3) Construct strategies for locating information - in the first instance, knowing how to develop and refine an effective search strategy

(Pillar 4) Locate and access information - knowing how to access information sources and search tools to access and retrieve information



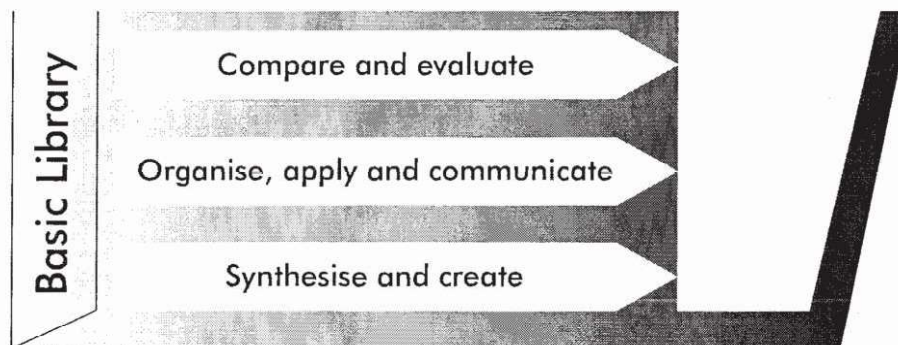
Knowing how to understand and use information

The remaining three pillars comprise the more advanced skills necessary to understand and use information effectively:

(Pillar 5) Compare and evaluate - knowing how to assess the relevance and quality of the information retrieved

(Pillar 6) Organise, apply and communicate - knowing how to associate new information with old, to take actions or make decisions, and ultimately how to share the outcomes of these actions or decisions with others

(Pillar 7) Synthesise and create - knowing how to assimilate information from a variety of sources for the purpose of creating new knowledge



The basic skills of information literacy (pillars 1 to 4) are common to all issues and topics, and may be taught at all levels of education including informal training programs targeted at adults. The skills are also reinforced and enhanced by regular use and ongoing lifelong learning, most often through programs and resources provided to individuals and communities by libraries.



Remember:

Achieving pillars 1 to 4 is realistic in the majority of societies and cultures if the core skills are included in the curricula at all levels of education and opportunities for lifelong learning are provided to adults.

Achieving pillars 5 to 7 is more challenging, in large part because of the same diversity that requires a communication mix in awareness-raising campaigns. For example, every occupation or profession encompasses a highly specialised expertise and with this knowledge usually comes a unique language or 'jargon'. If our information finding and use remains within this known context - health science for nurses, or bridge construction for engineers - we should have no difficulty mastering pillars 5 to 7. Once outside this context, however, we may experience great difficulty understanding and applying information relating to the law or farming.

There are possible solutions though and these include:

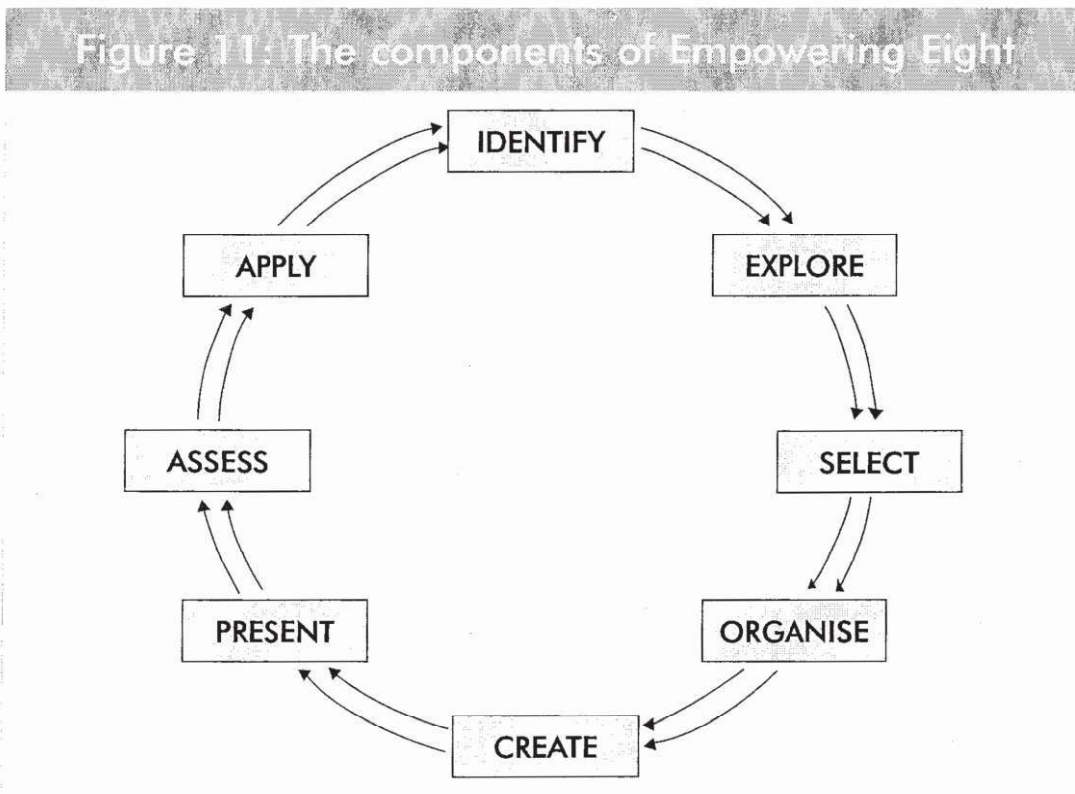
- ◆ Ensuring there is sufficient general information about a topic or issue to enhance the understanding of the average person, regardless of their background, occupation or level of education
- ◆ Providing independent information intermediaries (advisers) to interpret, translate, and where appropriate, re-package information to better suit specific community needs

Ana Maria Ramalho Correia counsels that "realistic goals must be set for our information literacy programs and allowances made for those Information Intermediary activities that enable the average citizen to understand specialized information and convert it into knowledge."

In 2004, participants at the International Workshop on Information Skills for Learning in Colombo, Sri Lanka, helped to develop a new model of Information Literacy for use in South and South East Asian countries. The model is called Empowering Eight or "E8" and as the name suggests, incorporates eight components of finding and using information:

Also included in the model are corresponding learning outcomes for each component: (refer appendix three). These outcomes are aimed primarily at children in schools but may be adapted for training adults.

Although appearing at first to reprise the Seven Pillars model, Empowering Eight is unique in that it recognises "the composite culture and local conditions"⁶⁶ in the countries of Asia. In a 2005 paper for the Sri Lanka Journal of Librarianship and Information Management, Pradeepa Wijetunge and U. P. Alahakoon note: "If an existing model used in a developed country is imposed [on countries in Asia], it would be difficult for the stakeholders to understand the philosophical roots behind the model."⁶⁷



⁶⁶ Pradeepa Wijetunge and U.P. Alahakoon (2005) "Empowering 8: the Information Literacy model developed in Sri Lanka to underpin changing education paradigms of Sri Lanka", Sri Lanka Journal of Librarianship and Information Management, 1(1), p. 31

⁶⁷ Ibid

Empowering Eight is currently being implemented in Sri Lanka by a national implementation committee. The process of implementation should serve as a useful model for other countries in the region and is provided here as a case study in raising awareness about Information Literacy.

Case Study: Implementing Empowering Eight in Sri Lanka

"Those who participated at the workshop from all key institutions of Sri Lanka gathered on 23rd December 2004 to discuss the implementation activities of E8 on different platforms. It was unanimously decided to formulate a national implementation committee. Members unanimously agreed that the positions of Chairperson and Secretary should be with NILIS⁶⁸ since NILIS was responsible for organizing the Workshop. Members also agreed that Prof. Bowden should chair the committee and Mrs. Wijetunge to be the Secretary. They both accepted the posts.

Members also decided that the National Implementation Committee (E8 NIC) should have a focus group with a limited number of members from the key institutions, which will be the stakeholders for implementing the model; NILIS, School Library Development Unit, UGC, National Library, Sri Lanka Library Association, National Inst. of Education, and the commissioner of National Colleges of Education.

It was decided that these focus group members should represent the interests of their respective institutes and that they should report the E8 NIC decisions to their institution and vice versa. E8 NIC Focus Group members are encouraged to establish Sub-Focus Groups within the respective institutions to facilitate communications and inter-actions. Focus group will meet as and when necessary to take key decisions regarding promotion and implementation.

⁶⁸ NILIS - National Institute of Library and Information Sciences

It was decided to invite the following to become members of the main 'Empowering 8 National Implementation Committee'. This will meet to endorse the interim work of the Focus Group and to provide advice on general policies and strategies relevant at the national level.

1. 8 Provincial Education Directors
2. 8 Provincial Library Coordinators
3. Representative from Faculty of Education, University of Colombo
4. Representative from Faculty of Education, University of Jaffna
5. Representative from Dept. of Education, University of Peradeniya
6. Representative from Dept. of LIS, University of Kelaniya
7. Representative from Sri Lanka Teacher Librarians Association
8. A Principal from Type 1AB school
9. A Principal from Type 1C school
10. A Principal from Type 2 school
11. A Principal from Type 3 school
12. A representative from each NCOE
13. Any other person / persons considered as significant for the promotion and implementation of 'Empowering 8'.⁶⁹

Awareness-raising activities of the National Implementation Committee include:

- ◆ An official launch of Proceedings of the International Workshop on Information Skills for Learning and the "E8" logo
- ◆ A national "Empowering Eight" workshop in Sri Lanka for school principals and teachers
- ◆ Translation of the Empowering Eight model into Sinhala and Tamil, the national languages of Sri Lanka- this approach will ultimately provide the model with greater reach by ensuring that information about Empowering Eight and Information Literacy can be disseminated widely to a range of audiences.

⁶⁹ Pradeepa Wijetunge and U.P. Alahakoon (2005) "Empowering 8: the Information Literacy model developed in Sri Lanka to underpin changing education paradigms of Sri Lanka", Sri Lanka Journal of Librarianship and Information Management, 1(1), p.38

The Essential Skills and Values for Information Literacy

To summarise, the essential skills and values required for effective Information Literacy include:

1. Generic Skills
 - * Problem solving
 - * Collaboration and teamwork
 - * Communication
 - * Critical thinking

2. Information Skills
 - * Information seeking
 - * Information use
 - * Fluency with information and communication technology (ICT)

3. Values and Beliefs
 - * Using information wisely and ethically
 - * Social responsibility and community participation

Promoting Information Literacy

"The goal to which we should mutually pledge ourselves is to ensuring that all people are well prepared to seek the truth so that all may experience a better quality of life."⁷⁰

As with awareness-raising in public health, a variety of approaches may be used to raise awareness about Information Literacy. Awareness-raising and promotional efforts around the world to date have tended to focus on five broad strategies:

1. International policy statements - for example, UNESCO's Prague Declaration in 2003, "Towards an Information Literate Society"

⁷⁰ <http://www.ifla.org/III/wsis/High-Level-Colloquium.pdf> (accessed 16 March 2006)

2. Curriculum development for schools, including learning outcomes, competencies and criteria for evaluation and assessment
3. Professional development and training for academics, teachers, librarians and others directly involved with teaching Information Literacy skills
4. Development of Information Literacy teaching and resource materials, including online and distance learning formats
5. Ongoing international dialogues between Information Literacy researchers and practitioners through conferences, workshops and exchange programs - for example, the "International Workshop on Information Skills for Learning" held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 2004

Overall, it is critical that progress in each area of focus supports and reinforces development in the others.⁷¹ More work however is needed to lobby national decision makers and build partnerships with government and civil society.

Priorities for future awareness-raising identified by the 2005 "High Level Colloquium on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning" include:

- ◆ Targeting policy makers in order to promote acceptance of Information Literacy at a national level
- ◆ Identifying and cultivating high profile Information Literacy champions outside the library and education professions
- ◆ Working with civil society organisations such as UNESCO and the World Bank as partners in the promotion of Information Literacy
- ◆ Using research to demonstrate the economic and social value of Information Literacy to communities and societies⁷²

⁷¹ Abdelaziz Abib (2004) "Information literacy for lifelong learning", World Library and Information Congress: 70th IFLA General Conference and Council, p. 4

⁷² Final Report of the High Level International Colloquium on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning, 6 - 9 November 2005, http://www.infolit.org/International_Colloquium/index.htm (accessed 19 March 2006)

Case Study: Approaches to Inculcating the Habit of Reading - the NILAM Reading Programme in Malaysia

NILAM (Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca) or "Reading As The Key To Knowledge" is a reading programme that integrates the various reading activities carried out in schools. This program, initiated by the Ministry of Education, is used to consistently persuade students to read and to instill the reading habit in them. It is one of the Government's efforts to inculcate the reading culture among Malaysians.

The programme includes a number of organized and on-going reading activities carried out in schools. Participants in the programme are assessed throughout the year. The NILAM programme comprises recording, recognition and certification of reading activities. Students record the books they have read into their Reading Record Books. The teacher verifies the records made by the students, and certifies that the students have actually read the books. The assessment of the students' reading progress continues until the end of their secondary school education. The NILAM programme was implemented in 1999, and it is compulsory for all primary and secondary schools in the country.

The aim of the NILAM programme is to inculcate the reading habit in students by encouraging:

- ◆ Students to read more extensively and not merely for the purpose of examinations
- ◆ Schools to generate creative and innovative ideas to instill the reading habit in students⁷³

⁷³ Abdul Karim Bin Hj. Ahmad (2004) "Malaysia: Status of School Library Development", Proceedings: International Workshop on Information Skills for Learning, Colombo: NILIS, p. 66

As the NILAM case study suggests, current examples of Information Literacy promotion tend to revolve around the roles played by schools and libraries, specifically university, school and public libraries. The public library in particular is identified in most developed and developing countries as the "local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users."⁷⁴

Examples of library activities for promoting information literacy and the skills that comprise the various models (Big 6, Seven Pillars, Empowering Eight etc) include:

- ◆ Library orientation tours to make prospective information users feel welcome and promote general awareness of the information resources and services available to them in their community.
- ◆ Library brochures and handouts explaining the key concepts of information literacy, particularly why it is important to the local community and society as a whole.
- ◆ Short classes and tutorials designed to teach the essential skills of information finding and evaluation (pillars 1-4), focusing on specific topics or issues of immediate relevance to the community.
- ◆ Emphasis on the 'information intermediary' functions of libraries: for example, packaging and presenting up-to-date information on infant health and child care to make it more accessible and usable by first-time mothers.
- ◆ Emphasis on personalised assistance with the key processes of finding and accessing information: for example, constructing search strategies and selecting appropriate resources.
- ◆ Libraries have the advantage of being able to reinforce the teaching of Information Literacy skills through the delivery and

⁷⁴ Pradeepa Wijetunge (2000) "The role of public libraries in the expansion of literacy and lifelong learning in Sri Lanka", *New Library World*, 101(1155), p. 107

cross-promotion of other services such as reading and reference books for children, and online databases and websites for adults.

- ◆ As with mainstream literacy, libraries have been particularly effective at promoting information literacy through "a variety of non-print media (posters, pictures, cartoons, banners, films and videos)" that "attract the non-literates to the library so that they will gradually overcome the fear of literary environments and want to learn more by improving their reading and writing skills."⁷⁵
- ◆ Libraries are also typically adept at taking advantage of national and international events and celebrations to promote their services: for example, Human Rights Day or International Women's Day. The global "@ your library" campaign co-sponsored by IFLA and the American Library Association is also providing opportunities for raising awareness of Information Literacy in nearly 30 countries.⁷⁶

Outside libraries, awareness-raising and promotion activities tend to be centred on professional networking projects and the embedding of Information Literacy in schools. Approaches include:

- ◆ Introductory guides to Information Literacy prepared by international and local experts for teachers, librarians and policy makers. Guides should always provide short and compelling answers to key questions such as why (rationales for information literacy), what (definitions), where (learning locations), and how (issues of pedagogy and practice).
- ◆ Development of a modular school curriculum for Information Literacy that is introduced first in teacher training programs and then mainstreamed into classrooms.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 108

⁷⁶ <http://www.ifla.org/@yourlibrary/> (accessed 18 March 2006)

- ◆ Regional conferences and workshops in Information Literacy where national authorities share their expertise with colleagues and thus communities through a process of "cascade training".⁷⁷
- ◆ Information Literacy pilot projects designed to empower communities and provide success stories and case studies for future programs.
- ◆ Development of websites and other Internet resources in a range of languages for teachers, librarians and others critical to the teaching and promotion of information literacy skills.
- ◆ Development of a network of national and local information literacy resource collections for teachers, librarians and the communities they serve.
- ◆ Support for translations and adaptations of resources to meet specific social and cultural needs, such as has been achieved in Sri Lanka with the translation of Empowering Eight into Sinhala and Tamil.

Case Study: Promoting Awareness of Information Literacy in Nepal

"Due to book-based and electronic-based information sources and services new challenges are emerging. These are: (i) how to establish linkage between book-based information centres and electronic telecentres; (ii) how to orient and train the information users to search, find, analyze and synthesize information for decision-making; (iii) how to bridge the gap between rural and urban areas; and (iv) how to develop the network of information specialists concerned with information literacy issues to share experiences and information.

⁷⁷ Abdelaziz Abib (2004) "Information literacy for lifelong learning", World Library and Information Congress: 70th IFLA General Conference and Council, p. 4, <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla70/papers/116e-Abid.pdf> (accessed 18 March 2006)

Case Study: Promoting Awareness... (Contd.)

Since the representatives of local government, civil society organizations, political parties [and] donor agencies all participate in the preparation of village/district profiles, preparation of Periodic Plans, and determination of development priorities ... an assessment of the people's present information literacy capabilities is crucial. It is also required to orient the people's representatives to improve their level of information literacy through orientation and training.

5. Suggestions for the Promotion of Information Literacy

5.1. In the Formal Education Sector

- (a) Integrate information literacy in the curriculum.
- (b) Integrate information literacy component in the library and information education program.
- (c) Orient/train librarians and information professionals in information literacy to assist the information seekers.
- (d) Develop a time-bound strategy to promote information literacy with machine readable formats (CD-ROM, Microforms, etc.).
- (e) Develop/disseminate standards for promotion of information literacy and insure their effective implementation.
- (f) Organize seminars/workshops to educate/inform the policy makers and planners to develop appropriate policy and programs for promotion of information literacy.

5.2. In the Information Education Sector/Community Level

- (a) Orient/train the representatives of local government about the importance of information literacy.
- (b) Orient/train information users on how to increase their information search and utilization skills.

- (c) Establish a link between the community library/information centres and the proposed community telecentres to assure continuity as the government develops support for information services.
- (d) Develop specific courses for rural information and develop a time-bound action plan to orient/train them.
- (e) Since computer literacy and user-friendly computer software packages are required to promote information literacy in the context of the globalization process, it is necessary to look into the existing constraints and opportunities to develop computer hardware and software strategies and policy decisions.
- (f) Mobilize civil society organizations in the spread and development of information literacy to support poverty reduction, promotion of human rights, and good governance at all levels."⁷⁸

International Information Literacy Resources Directory

A useful repository of Information Literacy materials is now available online at http://www.uv.mx/usbi_ver/unesco

The International Information Literacy Resources Directory has been designed by the Information Literacy Section of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions in a UNESCO-funded project. The aim of the directory is to enable the sharing of information literacy experiences and resources

⁷⁸ Nirmala Shrestha (2002) "Information Literacy for a multipurpose community telecentre: Nepalese perspectives", White Paper prepared for UNESCO, the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, and the National Forum on Information Literacy for use at the Information Literacy Meeting of Experts, Prague, The Czech Republic, pp 5-6

around the world, focusing particularly on country reports, standards and assessment tools.

Access to the Directory is free and the developers hope that international participation will enrich the directory so that it can grow to become a global clearing-house for Information Literacy resources.

Further Reading

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