Information for All Programme

Thematic Debate on Information Literacy

Purpose
The specific purpose of the thematic debate was to consult with researchers and other experts in the field of information literacy, both within UNESCO and within our constituent stakeholders, to identify the particular contribution that the Information for All Programme can make in helping to ensure all peoples have the opportunity to become information literate.

Goals
Invited experts addressed four key questions:
1. What is Information Literacy?
2. What are people's needs?
3. What education programmes are needed to meet these needs?
4. What strategies and actions can UNESCO and IFAP implement?

What is Information Literacy?
- The concept of *Information Literacy* is not well understood by Governments or societies;
- The term does not translate easily into French or other languages and this makes it difficult to promote at an international level;
- WSIS specifically refers to *ICT literacy*, including the knowledge and skills to use ICTs, the capacity to analyse and treat information in creative and innovative ways, share expertise and participate fully in the Information Society;
- Of particular relevance in a digital world are the abilities to evaluate information critically and to create information;
- Information literacy should be a basic human right in a digital world;
- 19 literacies have been identified by researchers Harris & Hodges (1995); information literacy is but one of these;
- The latest definition of Information Literacy, produced by CILIP (2004) is:
  > "Information literacy is knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner."
- This appears to update the 1989 American Library Association (ALA) definition, but retain the same essential elements:
  > "To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information"
- Other useful elements are "how to interpret, evaluate and apply with critical discrimination to build knowledge and to create meaning" – this avoids the ambiguities of the words "use" and "communicate"
- The OECD's DeSeCo project has identified and selected key competencies to function as an individual in modern society:
  - Ability to use language, symbols and text interactively (literacy, numeracy)
  - Ability to use knowledge and information interactively (information literacy)

- o Ability to use technology interactively (ICT literacy)
- Assessment is a necessary element of information literacy, i.e. how we determine if a person is information literate. ALA has worked with Education Testing Service (ETS) in the USA to prepare an assessment tool for K12 students;
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What are People's Needs?
- Information literacy is a concern to all sectors of society and should be tailored by each to meet its specific needs and context;
- Developing countries need to take a more proactive role in determining solutions most appropriate to their needs, as solutions for developed countries may be inappropriate;
- The 2005 EFA Report revealed there are 799 million adult illiterates and 64% of these are women;
- Information literacy enables people to access information about their health, their environment, their education and work;
- People require ICT literacy in order to access digital information; in information societies this is increasingly a necessary pre-condition for information literacy;

What Education Programmes are Needed?
- Recognise the migration from "unconscious incompetent" to "conscious incompetent" and only then to "conscious competent";
- Critical need for an Information Literacy curriculum (at all levels) that is accepted by and implemented by Governments and education administrators;
- Educationalists need to change their focus from information <u>technologies</u> to information;
- Need to recognise that teachers are a barrier in creating more information literate students and therefore education programmes must be directed at them in the first instance;
- Opportunity for information literacy to become a cornerstone component in the delivery of programmes developed as part of the United Nations' Decade for Literacy, especially for women and out-of-school girls

Strategies and Actions

Strategies	Actions
Communicate the concept of Information Literacy	- Identify a popular "slogan" to promote information literacy, noting IFLA's use of "lifelong literacy" - Dialogue with IFLA and ALA on the wording of the definition to include the concept of creating information more explicitly - Publish the agreed definition with explanatory text in a booklet in UNESCO's 6 languages (*Information Literacy in a Digital World*) - Collaborate with IFLA to produce Guidelines for Member States, describing how countries can create more

	information literate societies • Promote flagship initiatives that demonstrate information literacy in action • Initiate global awareness campaign, including national workshops and regional meetings • Support the Alexandria Colloquium in November 2005 • Support the establishment of a global clearinghouse on Information Literacy • Encourage member states to support the development of information literate societies in implementing the WSIS Action Plan and report these to the Tunis Summit
Encourage partnerships within UNESCO in programme development and implementation	• Collaborate with the Education Sector to ensure information literacy is appropriately recognised within the United Nations Literacy Decade • Collaborate with the Education Sector to ensure information literacy is an integral part of Education for All • Collaborate with LIFE (Literacy Initiative for Empowerment), which focuses on women and out-of-school girls in the 33 countries with illiteracy rates over 50% or illiterate populations greater than 10 million • Collaborate with the ASPNet schools in promoting information literacy
Encourage partnerships with key external stakeholder groups	• Collaborate with IFLA and ICA • Collaborate with the US National Forum on Information Literacy • Collaborate with the American Library Association (ALA) • Collaborate with the Education Office at OECD • Collaborate with the World Health Organisation (WHO) • Collaborate with other Information Literacy leaders • Establish an online Reference Group including representatives from the about organisations to partner with UNESCO in implementing these strategies and actions
Engage Governments in dialogue on Information Literacy	• Develop an instrument (e.g. Declaration or Recommendation) to encourage Member States to give greater recognition to information literacy in their societies • Pro-actively advocate Information Literacy to Governments • Encourage IFAP National Committees to have a discussion on Information Literacy in order to develop a better understanding of what it means for their country and their communities
Embed Information Literacy in the curriculum, at primary, secondary and tertiary levels	• Develop model curricula • Promote Information Science as a discipline • Promote Information & Communications as a distinct discipline • Encourage Media Studies professionals to take a more expansive view of media than traditional media

	• Encourage coordination and collaboration amongst media educators and other information professionals • Promote mathematical literacy as a core element of an information literacy curriculum • Promote exemplars of activities that stimulate student interest in becoming more information literate
Embed Information Literacy in the professional development of information professionals, including education and health workers	• Promote initiatives that assist teachers and health professionals to become more information literate
Encourage partnerships between Teachers and Librarians	• Promote information skills professional development for teachers, noting the extensive online resources available to support this activity • Encourage librarians to take a leadership role in promoting information literacy in schools and tertiary institutions
Promote Information Literacy in the Health Sector	• Encourage coordinated national approaches to health information literacy • Develop and promote international standards for health information literacy • Develop pilot programmes that harness the potential of ICTs for people to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing • Promote the concept of an "information literate patient" (ref. *The Resourceful Patient*)