

# Chapter 2

## Developing Information Literacy Skills in the Post-Pandemic World

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### **ABSTRACT**

*It is important to teach students information literacy skills. For university students this is often demonstrated by their ability to craft a research question, determine the information needed to support their research, find and evaluate that information, and ethically use the information. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged librarians to think outside the box about ways to connect with students and disseminate the necessary information literacy skills. Librarians created LibGuides, videos, tutorials, and conducted virtual information literacy sessions. This chapter aims to provide insights on the COVID-19 pandemic on both student and librarian perceptions of information literacy skills. In addition, the chapter will also offer a few suggestions to mitigate the roadblocks to successful dissemination of information literacy skills by librarians.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The library space and its resources are for use. Electronic Resources acquisition has become the norm, outpacing their print counterparts. Librarians spend significant time making these electronic resources discoverable to users by ensuring sufficient metadata to aid discovery and actively managing electronic resources to resolve technical issues as efficiently as possible. Outreach and information literacy sessions are essential tasks that must be undertaken by librarians to engage users to become information literate users. However, electronic resources are expensive. The cost of electronic resources creates inequalities in access to information as students from developing countries are left to rely mainly on freely available resources on the internet for their information needs. Inequalities to access impacts students' perceptions and librarians' efforts in disseminating information literacy skills (Dukic & Striskovic, 2015; Chen & Chengalur-Smith, 2015).

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The author's library expanded their reference services during the Covid-19 pandemic, providing more options for students to connect with a librarian and seek help. Guides on the research process and freely available resources were created. Usage data indicated an increase in the number of searches conducted on the library catalogue but showed a decrease in use for individual databases and collections. What does this imply? Were students unable to find the resources they needed? Was the process so onerous that they gave up? Was it something else altogether?

The Covid-19 pandemic trend in usage confirmed that assessment decisions cannot be made solely on usage statistics. There are other factors that must be assessed when making collection development decisions. Usage statistics only provide a glimpse into the behavior of library users. The academic literature from the last 20 years provides context of the following:

- How information literacy has been approached by librarians?
- What skills are students expected to learn during the information literacy sessions?
- What are the challenges to students becoming information literate users?
- How have information literacy skills impacted electronic resources usage?

This chapter will delve into these areas in an effort to understand both students and librarians' perceptions of information literacy skills and information literacy sessions.

## **BACKGROUND**

In order to prepare students for a successful future, it is important to teach them the basics. The "basics" must include information literacy skills to acclimatize students to the academic research process and foster lifelong learning for the pursuit and use of information beyond the academic setting. Koufogiannakis & Wiebe (2006) cited the National Forum on Information Literacy which provided the definition of information literacy as the ability to identify a need for information, search, locate, evaluate, and use the selected information for a particular purpose. According to the Association for College and Research Libraries' *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (2015), information literacy encompasses the ability to effectively discover information, evaluate it for its purpose and value and reproduce it to create something new or to learn from it in an ethical way. Libraries information literacy sessions are often based on the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.

Studies on information literacy have been deemed to lack a clear purpose and methodology, making it unclear to determine correlations and learning outcomes. The literature of the past two decades revealed a gap in assessment of students understanding of information literacy skills as a measure to apply those skills to assignments and for their own personal needs. Assessments are often incomplete; hence, an incomplete picture is what librarians have to contend with. Information literacy sessions have the potential to improve information literacy skills among students and assist librarians and instructors in designing information literacy sessions that focus on students' performance and perceptions of information literacy skills (Dunn, 2002). For the most part, information literacy sessions conducted by librarians are one shot and last for approximately an hour. Some institutions have reported pilot studies of semester long integration of information literacy sessions but those are less frequent.

It has not been an easy path for librarians and instructors to design engaging information literacy sessions pre-Covid-19 pandemic, during the pandemic and beyond. Online instruction, the prominent

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