

Chapter 4

Empowered Minds: Navigating Digital Seas With Emerging Information Literacy Framework

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ABSTRACT

In the digital age, marked by unparalleled technological advancements, our world is intricately connected to the digital realm, transforming how we access, disseminate, and interact with information. This chapter explores the impact of the digital age on information access, emphasizing the need for effective navigation in a vast sea of digital information. Information literacy is positioned as a crucial skillset, extending beyond digital tool usage to encompass critical evaluation, ethical information use, and digital citizenship. The chapter delves into the evolving landscape of information literacy, addressing its intersection with emerging technologies, education, ethics, and hybrid learning. Various information literacy models are examined to provide practical insights for empowering individuals to navigate the complexities of the modern information landscape confidently. This exploration aims to equip readers with the essential tools for discerning, synthesizing, and utilizing information in the digital age, fostering empowered minds.

INTRODUCTION

In a time of remarkable technological progress, our world has profoundly changed, intertwining our lives with the digital realm. The omnipresence of the internet, smartphones, and an array of digital devices has not only revolutionized communication but has fundamentally reshaped how access, disseminate, and engage with information (Wei, 2013). This epoch, often coined the ‘Digital Age’, presents a paradox

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— information is abundant, instantaneous, and easily accessible, yet it introduces formidable challenges (Weymouth, 2023).

The landscape of information access has been redefined by the Digital Age. Information once confined to physical libraries and printed publications is now a mere click away (Panda, 2021). A vast sea of knowledge is at our fingertips, with search engines, databases, and online repositories offering access to an unprecedented array of information sources (LISEDUNETWORK, 2023). However, this accessibility comes with its own set of challenges — the imperative for individuals to navigate this digital sea effectively.

In response to this challenge, Information literacy is vital across demographics, extending beyond digital tool proficiency. In the digital era, information literacy is crucial for effectively navigating the vast sea of information, involving the ability to find, critically evaluate, and ethically use information. While digital literacy encompasses the broader understanding of using digital tools and technology, information literacy specifically focuses on the skills needed to manage, evaluate, and utilize information from digital sources in a discerning and ethical manner. In contemporary society, information literacy is essential for informed decision-making, meaningful discourse, and active engagement in the digital economy.

This chapter delves into the multifaceted realm of information literacy within the Digital Age, exploring the evolving landscape of information access amidst emerging technologies, education, and ethics. The exploration navigates through various models and frameworks, providing practical insights to empower readers in effectively utilizing information in the modern digital landscape.

BACKGROUND STUDY: INFORMATION LITERACY IN THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

In an age characterized by an overwhelming amount of information, possessing information literacy is essential, enabling individuals to decipher, assess, and maneuver through the intricate realm of digital media. In the face of rampant misinformation, bias, and sensationalism, Mahajan (2023) argues that fostering media literacy becomes a vital necessity.

Definition and Components of Information Literacy

Coined by Paul G. Zurkowski in 1974, the term ‘information literacy’ refers to individuals who have acquired the skills to utilize diverse information sources for problem-solving in both professional and daily contexts. It involves the dynamic ability to access, evaluate, use, and ethically communicate information (Zurkowski, 1974). In a world inundated with abundant yet not always reliable information, information literacy empowers individuals to be discerning consumers and creators, transcending mere data retrieval to encompass critical thinking and ethical considerations.

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (2016) defined information literacy as, *“a set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.”*

According to UNESCO (2023), *“Information Literacy empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goal.”*

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