

Information Literacy

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1. Introduction

- First year undergraduates starting at University were born in or around 1994 – grown up with technology.
- Over 400 million Google searches per day (Comscore 2011) and 72 hours of video uploaded to Youtube every minute (Youtube 2011).
- Web 2.0 – Consumption and creation for everyone.
- Vastly different from the way language and literacy was shared in the past.
- Printing houses and publishers traditionally have controlled what could be officially published (Gee & Hayes 2011 p.3).
- An exciting time without precedent, with a glut of information available at will, created and edited by everybody.
- Creates challenges for educators.

2. Advertising

- Information literacy : "knowing when and why you need information, where to find it and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner" (CILIP 2012).
- A person can search a few key words in Google and receive back reams of information.
- Google is a company with 85% of its income coming from advertisements on its own sites (Google 2011).
- Some have argued that this has resulted in us, the web users, not being the customers of Google but instead the product that Google sells to companies.
- Directed at all search engines/social networks such as Yahoo! and Bing, and social networking sites such as Facebook (GIGAOM 2011).

3. Problem

- Students use these *brands* for information, assume the order in which the information is presented is directly related to its validity, accuracy, relevance etc.
- "Information seeking tends to stop at the point in which articles are found" (Rowlands, Nicholas and Huntington 2008 p. 15).
- "Tree Octopus" - students knowing how to use these search engines, but they "do not know how to use the results" (Bhattacharya 2011).
- I have received work where references are pointed to Wikipedia or in some cases, simply "www.google.com"
- The misuse of internet information is something encountered every semester.

4. Causes

- We can assume students are not being taught about IL in earlier education.
- ICT Keystage 4: students should be taught to " select appropriate information from a wide range of sources, showing discrimination in their choices and judging the value, accuracy, plausibility and bias of information" (DfE 2007 p. 134).
- ICT is not a core Keystage 4 subject and not all students who come to University will have studied it.
- Of the core subjects, it would be expected that judging the discrimination, accuracy, plausibility and bias of information would be a staple of Keystage 3 and 4 English.
- English Keystage 4 simply states: "Reading, understanding the detail and gaining an overview of texts from a wide range of sources, including those found beyond the classroom." (DfE 2007 p. 84).
- Only mention of the internet and similar modern technology is that the internet could be used to "interact with writers" and "sharing peer reviews and recommendations." (DfE 2007 p. 98).
- "In many classrooms these devices and the texts produced with them are still perceived to be irrelevant, and even dangerous" (Carrington and Robinson. 2009 p. 2).

5. Multimodality

- A sorely missed opportunity - the Internet and its vast contents contain much in the way of language and literature.
- Gee and Hayes (2011 p. 1) state that language has always been "multimodal (combining words, images, and sounds) as are many messages conveyed via digital media". They continue to compare a textbook or newspaper from 1950 to one of the present day, noting the increase in images, and how these documents are also available online "where they are accompanied by yet more images and video".
- This idea that multimedia has become more ingrained in our language is supported by Lanham, stating "literacy has extended its semantic reach from meaning 'the ability to read and write' to now meaning 'the ability to understand information however presented'" (Cited by Lanksheare and Knobel 2008 p. 2).

-Information literacy should be a perfect fit for English GCSE as it would directly relate to the study of literacy and language.

-“The notion of digital literacy and how it may translate to teaching and learning is not always understood” (Hague and Payton 2010 p. 3)

6. Actions

- Professor Tara Brabazon banned her students from using Google, Wikipedia.
- "I want students to sit down and read. It's not the same when you read it online".(Cited by Chiles 2008).
- Literally, she is correct; the internet provides multimodal information with text, graphics, video and sounds whereas a book, traditionally, is often just text.
- What difference exists between a piece of paper and Amazon's Kindle device?
- Instead of banning we should ensure that students are educated in how to use them.
- Need to be aware of the collaboratively edited nature of Wikipedia, evaluate and pursue the references provided in each article. Wikipedia will even state clearly if an article is incomplete or if citations are needed.

-In my field, much of the student work involves the creation of digital assets using software tools. Is Information literacy less important?

-Information literacy is not just for text

-*Video tutorials* are a common way for games design students to learn how to use a particular software package. Students should ensure they are using information literacy to know which videos will have more credibility, accuracy and reliability.

-Lecturers should include elements of information literacy training into their modules, or a separate module should be created to ensure students are getting the right support.

-An exercise similar to the above "Tree Octopus" could be used, where students are asked to research different topics and the lecturer provides feedback on the use of their sources; a mini-collaborative essay of sorts.

-Although ideally this should be taught at Keystage 4, it would be more feasible for Universities to teach information literacy (especially in the often underused third semester) than to change large parts of the English national curriculum.

-May not be an issue as soon as 2014 - government policy to give Universities control of A-Level study, dictating what students should be taught (Hall, 2012).

- Information literacy needs to be taught earlier, due to its important links to language and literature.

7. To Consider...

- Educators need to patient and understanding in this internet age.
- As difficult as it may be for us to teach students to use information critically and wisely, we must also consider how difficult it must be for the student to develop in a world where they are swamped with information, and where information literacy may seem irrelevant to them.
- As Biggs and Tang (2011 p. 22) state that "the art of good teaching is to communicate the need where it is initially lacking", and this should be followed as opposed to punishing students who are not information literate with poor marks.

8. Research

-This work has consisted of a literature review coupled with my personal experiences. A range of contemporary sources have been used to support the arguments for information literacy teaching throughout a young person's education, from text books, journals, news website articles and government documents. I believe that as a literature review, this has provided a well-rounded account of the issue.

-Lacks primary research which would ultimately increase the value of the work significantly. Being conducted over the summer, there was limited access to students. Access to these students would have allowed me some good primary information.

- Questionnaire: - "How do you believe Google makes money?"

-Would either identify that students are not aware that Google is a company that makes money, or if they correctly identify the answer as advertising, then we could propose that there is a bigger issue with information literacy where students are not creating a link between the adverts and the search results. This could then be explained back to them at a later date.

-Given access to students in class, research could be conducted in the style of the aforementioned "tree octopus", where students are tasked with researching a set of given questions or topics.

-Would provide a set of references, and the students could then be interviewed on their use of these afterwards to help to understand the motivations and their understandings.

-Internet vs Library activity – which provided the better resources?