Information Literacy – Resources dept strategy

This is an edited and anonymous version of an Information Literacy strategy created for a Library/Learning Resources service in a general Further Education College

Contents

1. Information Literacy definition and role

Information literacy is: *The ability to identify an information need and to locate, evaluate and use information for the issue or problem identified. (CILIP 2004)*

This skill set is required for study, work and life. The information management (Librarianship) profession is built on both using these skills and supporting people learning and applying them. In this college the dept uses a search cycle to describe the skill set and to consider how these skills are expressed at each level. (appendix)

The impact of the assessment of this skills area within a main subject course is distinctive and profound as*, formative assessment occurs whenever a learner is required to look for information.* There is a consequent impact on learner outcomes, particularly at levels 2/3/4 where increasing levels of independent research are expected.
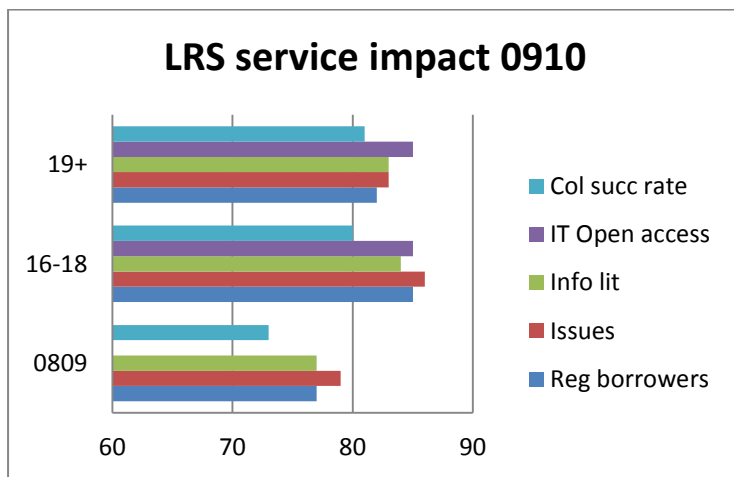
The most recent cif from Ofsted (2012) stresses the importance of learning, not simply teaching. All independent learning, will involve these skills whether the location of learning is LRC, in class, in diverse spaces on, or off, campus.

2. Impact of the dept offer

Up to 2011/12 LRS dept presented an offer of:

E1- L2	Support to teachers to embed these skills in main course
L3 and L4	Delivery of IL sessions that supported a specific assignment. Any dept teaching aimed to focus on the thinking skills required and to demonstrate the transferability (use in future) of what was being learnt.

Sessions had demonstrable impact on learner outcomes at L3

LRS service impact 0910

A horizontal bar chart titled "LRS service impact 0910" showing data for three categories: 19+, 16-18, and 0809. The chart legend shows five series: Col succ rate, IT Open access, Info lit, Issues, and Reg borrowers. The x-axis ranges from 60 to 90.

L3 dedicated IL sessions were dependent on marketing as they were not an automatic part of L3 courses. In the period 2010-12 the number of sessions delivered fell. The introduction of facilitated support sessions, for a significant section of the curriculum , diverted staff resources from promotion of the L3 offer.

The majority of learners continue to learn these skills largely through being tested on their ability to use them. This is happening in both class sessions and the LRC. However, this skill set is best progressed- built on from level to level, to meet current needs, support learning, and to avoid the need for a significant catch up at the higher levels.

3. **Contextual Factors influencing Information Literacy strategy.**

IL as a Functional Skill

IL is a functional skill as it is required for academic study, work and life. It is most closely aligned to the functional skill of "critical thinking". Information Literacy is partially expressed within the functional skills curriculum for English and ICT. However it has not proven easy to include it in mainstream FS teaching as:

FS English- The assessment of functional skills in English nearly always focuses on "real life" scenarios that require written communication . It does not include the use of English for academic purposes. This means that FS teaching does not usually include research skills as they are experienced in a main course.

IL skills are referred to in the Reading section of the Edexcel specifications. However they are implied as there is no mention the skills required to find information sources.

FS ICT - This functional skills area is not consistently offered across curriculum areas. Yet it is within these specifications that **"**Finding information" is recognised as a discreet category, albeit with no specific reference to the thinking involved, or the underpinning English skills of reading and evaluating.

Embedding/Integrating IL

IL is a skills set that does not exist in isolation- but is experienced at a point when information is required. It is therefore best taught "little and often" and in response to the real information needs presented by course teaching. This requires strong curriculum liaison and the IL skill set to be recognized by teachers in the main programme.

The FS integrated skills handbook

That information literacy should be embedded within courses is stated in the college integrated skills handbook, revised in Dec 13. There is some evidence that teachers are developing these skills as a result of course demands but little evidence of how this is understood or carried out.

IL in main programme courses.

IL appears in main programme course specifications but how this is expressed will depend on the awarding body and the level. It is clear that:

Assignments created for courses at L1 and L2 commonly require learners to apply skills to locate information independently.

It is established practice for L3 courses to require learners to use more than one information source when completing an assignment. L3 is also the point when learners should be learning skills that prepare them for progression to HE.

Independent study sessions and IL 13/14

Timetabled sessions of independent study, supported by a facilitator, are now part of the offer for a significant number of courses. They present a unique opportunity for learners, at all levels, to develop IL skills. Facilitators are not qualified librarians but in the same Dept.

The majority of courses use some of these sessions for the completion of main course assignments, including research. This has therefore presented a new and reliable opportunity for IL activities to be included.

Academic writing standards and plagiarism.

Plagiarism is usually an outcome of poor information literacy awareness and skills. It is an issue which affects learner success and progression at all levels. The need to meet academic standards is therefore a prompt to develop the information literacy skills of learners

Guidance to staff *Managing Academic Standards in students work; A staff guide"* defining expectations for practice at each level is now provided (Feb 14) is now an appendix to the college formal policy on academic standards.

The plagiarism checking software Turnitin is in use. This provides originality reports to support the maintenance of academic standards

The dept learner survey explores the level of plagiarism awareness at the college.

The Teaching and Learning Toolkit

The online Teaching and Learning Toolkit was created in 12/13 by the quality/training dept and is presented in the intranet. It includes a section on Independent Learning within which there is a sub section on embedding information literacy. This toolkit aims to support improvements in teaching quality

The toolkit includes information about teaching theory and strategies such as active learning and Kolb's learning cycle. These have historically influenced the Resources Dept approach to developing IL

### 4. Dept approach to information literacy 2013/14

Aim

To seek to ensure that college learners at any level develop the information retrieval and handling skills they require for success in education, work and life.

Priorities and Targets	lead
1 To support IL within course and curriculum development via:	
• Define and use the complimentary role of libs and facilitators for each level.	
• Promote the delivery of L3 sessions, within RBL if applicable	
• Plagiarism and Academic standards – promoting the use of the appendix to college assessment policy and support the introduction of Turnitin with training/advice.	
• The development of e learning and use of e resources and ensure IL coordination	
• Level 4 course teams and groups- HE in FE strategy and academic writing	
• Exploration of possible income generating course delivering research skills as an additional course (target over next 5 years) and/or e resources that develop IL.	
• Support to teachers embedding IL	
2 To identify and use intervention points that occur	
• Assert an enquiries strategy which requires staff at all levels to include IL teaching elements in their support to individual learners.	
• Use the independent study sessions as an opportunity to intervene and embed the skills	
• Generate guides and activities that might be embedded in timetabled independent hours, by the facilitator, at any level.	
3 To improve quality assurance procedures related to IL	
• To work in conjunction with the HOD quality regarding: curriculum staff training, plagiarism policy across college.	
• To agree how IL impact and strategy will be monitored and reported, not simply the level 3 work, to agree data sources.	
• Ensure regular discussion and training related to IL, to utilize cross service expertise.	

Other resources

The Search Cycle used by the Resources dept

IL is a thinking skill, teaching highlights reflection and the choices made at each stage.
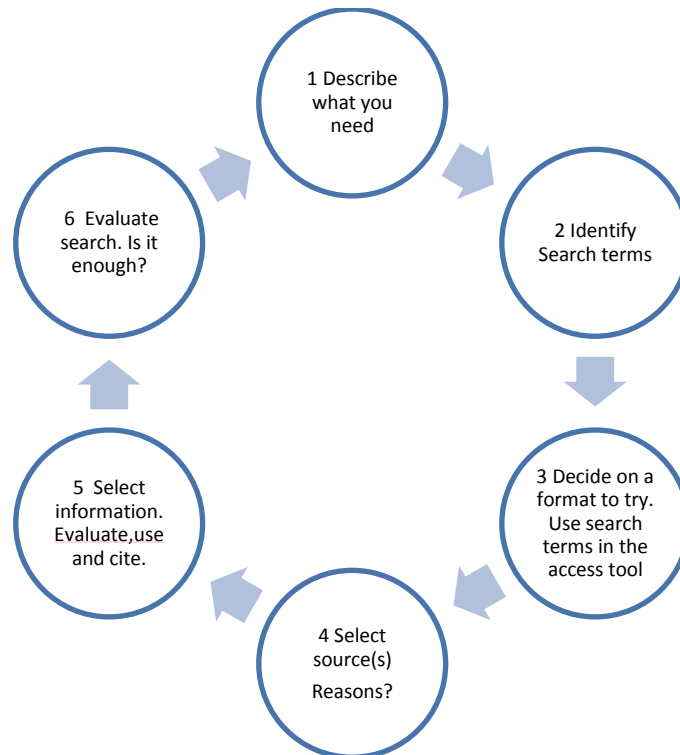
Website of the Information Literacy Group at CILIP. This is under review/ construction.
http://www.informationliteracy.org.uk/

http://information-literacy.blogspot.co.uk/