

Information Literacy - Academic Staff

Introduction

“Individuals are faced with diverse information choices in their studies, in the workplace, and in their lives. Sheer abundance of information and technology will not in itself create more informed citizens without a complementary understanding and capacity to use information effectively”.

(Australian & New Zealand Information Literacy Framework, 2004, p3)

Information literacy is a way of thinking and being that encompasses identifying, accessing, evaluating, organizing and communicating information. It is relevant in all learning environments and fields of endeavour. These important principles have been recognized in the University of Auckland Graduate Profiles and Teaching and Learning policy.

Incorporating information literacy into teaching and learning will considerably enhance students' tertiary education experience, and provide a basis for life-long learning, independence and effective participation in their communities.

What is Information Literacy?

Information literacy is much wider than the acquisition of traditional information skills (e.g. how to use a catalogue, how to locate a book, how to access an e-journal). The information literate person uses critical thinking to analyse and evaluate information for use in projects and problem-solving. Information literacy enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning.

Many definitions of information literacy exist. The University of Auckland Information Literacy Policy (2006) adopts the definition and standards of the Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework as developed by the Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy (ANZIIL).

The Framework outlines “six core standards which underpin information literacy acquisition, understanding and application by an individual. These standards identify that the information literate person:

- recognizes the need for information and determines the nature and extent of the information needed,
- finds needed information effectively and efficiently,
- critically evaluates information and the information seeking process,
- manages information collected or generated,
- applies prior and new information to construct new concepts or create new understandings,
- uses information with understanding and acknowledges cultural, ethical, economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information”. (2004 pg 11)

Collectively these standards mirror the following attributes included in all of the University of Auckland Graduate Profiles;

- “An ability to recognize when information is needed and a capacity to locate, evaluate and use this information effectively”,
- “A capacity for critical, conceptual and reflective thinking”.

Information Literacy and the University of Auckland

"The University aims to provide its graduates with key, high-level generic skills such as the capacity for lifelong critical, conceptual and reflective thinking, and attributes such as creativity and originality"

(Academic Plan 2005-2007, p31)

The aim of having information literate graduates is further defined in the graduate profiles. All four graduate profiles include under General Intellectual Skills and Capacities "an ability to recognize when information is needed and a capacity to locate, evaluate and use this information effectively", and "a capacity for critical, conceptual and reflective thinking".

The Academic Plan requires that the graduate profiles are referred to in course outlines and integrated into Faculty Teaching and Learning Plans. (Academic Plan 2005-2007 p32)

To ensure that our graduates are information literate, academic staff, librarians, learning support providers, decision-makers and administration need to work in collaboration. Information Literacy is a university-wide issue. In 2006 Senate approved an Information Literacy Policy for the University.

"The objectives of the Information Literacy Policy are:

- to emphasise the importance of information literacy skills for resource-based, student-centred, lifelong learning
- to ensure that graduates enter the workforce with information literacy skills
- to ensure that information resources are used as effectively as possible in the teaching and learning activities of the University
- to ensure that information literacy is embedded into the academic curriculum of the University
- to articulate the roles and responsibilities of the University's key contributors to the development of information literate graduates
- to ensure that the ethical and legal issues involved with using information resources are fully understood." (2006 p2)

The Information Literacy Policy outlines the roles and responsibilities for University staff with regard to information literacy. For example:

- Deans of Faculties and Heads of Departments and Schools in collaboration with the University Library are responsible for incorporating appropriate strategies in their Teaching and Learning Plans
- Academic staff are responsible for ensuring that information literacy skills have been embedded in the curricula, teaching, learning and assessment processes
- The University Library works with academic staff, the Centre for Academic Development and the Board of Graduate Studies to ensure appropriate information literacy training opportunities for students

Integrating Information Literacy into the Curriculum

Current practice in information literacy can be grouped into the following three broad categories.

- Generic - Voluntary, extra-curricular classes or activities. No connection to a student's course of study.
- Parallel - Extra-curricular classes or activities developed to complement a specific subject area, course or assignment. May be voluntary or compulsory.
- Integrated or Embedded - Classes and activities that have been developed jointly by faculty and librarians to achieve course objectives and outcomes. These activities

are seamlessly incorporated into subject based assignments and form part of the course assessment.

(adapted from the Australian & New Zealand Information Literacy Framework, 2004 p6)

Curriculum integration is the best approach for developing information literacy because it aids in student-centred learning at point of need. By using information literacy standards to develop course outcomes and assessment criteria, students can see the direct relevance of information literacy to their studies. It also provides the possibility of systematic and sustainable development of information literacy over a course of study.

Integration into the curriculum provides all students with an equal opportunity to become information literate. The alternative is an unrealistic expectation that every student is information literate enough to recognise their own need for help and motivated to take appropriate steps.

Suggestions for integrating information literacy into coursework:

- introduce information literacy early and sequentially in coursework
- design information literacy tasks in collaboration with librarians and other learning support personnel
- ensure information literacy tasks relate to the curriculum and involve critical thinking skills
- give information literacy objectives and tasks in assignments
- assign marks for the information component
- have a means of checking research – use research logs or annotated bibliographies for evaluation of information

Steps to get started:

- Explore ways that the curriculum can be designed to include information literacy standards,
- Make an appointment with your Subject Librarian at the commencement of your curriculum renewal/development process,
- Discuss with your Subject Librarian what you want your students to achieve or what the learning outcomes or learning objectives are.

Examples

Below are examples that show a range of methods used to improve the information literacy of tertiary students.

Biological Sciences (UoA)

The Biological Sciences Librarian has been working with Faculty Staff for a number of years to provide support to students in various BioSci courses. To assist BioSci 321 students researching plant pathogens, the Librarian runs hands-on workshops on information resources needed for particular assignments. The workshops are voluntary and held in timeslots that complement 321 classes and labs.

BBIM (UoA)

Since the first semester of 2002 Library and BBIM Teaching Staff have been working collaboratively to embed information literacy into the MGMT.191 Introduction to Business course. Five online information literacy modules were created and collectively are worth 5% of the final mark. The modules are prerequisites for the major written assignments and provide students with the opportunity to develop skills for locating and evaluating information. For more information you can read the paper presented at the 2004 LIANZA Conference <http://www.lianza.org.nz/events/conference2004/papers/avdjieva.pdf>

Law (UoA)

The Davis Law Library has been involved in teaching curriculum-based courses since 2000. Part 2 law students must complete the semester long Legal Research Skills, a LAW 221 component, which is compulsory as students may not graduate without its successful completion. Assessment is by way of worksheet, online modules and tests. Within Parts 3 and 4, Davis staff teach, upon invitation from academics, within elective courses during lecture times. In addition, the Davis offers an optional programme for Parts 3 and 4 as well as a generic programme for legal databases.

Post graduate students must complete LAW 788, a compulsory course within the LLM degree which is coordinated and largely taught by the Library Manager, Law.

From 2006, the Legal Research Skills course becomes a separate core course; a new course, Legal Research 2 will be core for Part 3 students, also coordinated and run by the Davis Law Library, and LAW 788 will remain compulsory.

Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

QUT Library has completed a number of projects to aid the development of information literate graduates from QUT. These projects include: creation of an online tutorial; work with faculty to integrate information literacy into the curriculum; development of an Information Literacy Framework and Syllabus endorsed by the QUT Teaching and Learning Committee. One project made possible by a teaching and learning grant was the assessment of over 25 undergraduate courses within the Faculty of Science. Strands of study were selected from different areas of science e.g. Ecology, Geology, Life Sciences. Within these strands the information literacy requirements were assessed by teams of librarians and faculty staff. The course outcomes and assessment were then adjusted to ensure development of information literacy within the strand. For more information on QUT Library's information literacy projects check out their website <http://www.library.qut.edu.au/infoliteracy/>

What help can the Library provide?

Librarians support collaboration with other University staff to improve students learning.

You can contact a Subject Librarian about:

- further information on information literacy
- examples of integrating information literacy into a curriculum and associated assignments
- possible involvement in teaching
- and more...

Contacts

- the first contact is your Subject Librarian
- or you can contact the Information Skills Librarian

References

Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework: principles, standards and practice. (2004). Retrieved Jan 10, 2005, from <http://www.anziil.org/resources/Info%20lit%202nd%20edition.pdf>

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