

Evaluating Science Websites for Academic Purposes

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Technology is so much fun but we can drown in our technology. The fog of information can drive out knowledge.

—Daniel J. Boorstin



What is Information Literacy (IL)?

According to the American Library Association's *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (2006), information literate people "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information."

Why is IL Necessary?

- The use and acceptance of electronic resources in academia continues to grow.
- The information sector of the American economy continues to grow.
- Students from Generations X and Y favor electronic resources, especially the Internet, for research related to school and jobs.
- Students entering the workforce may be unprepared to effectively assess and employ information they encounter online, especially if that information is “free”.

Students and Information

Kate Manuel (2005) characterized Generation Y's relationship with information as

- almost solely reliant upon electronic resources
- unsophisticated
- uncritical
- disrespectful of intellectual property

Costello, Lenholt and Stryker (2004) describe these users as

- “superficial”
- “practical”
- “fragmented”

Dihydrogen Monoxide: An Example of IL at Work

<http://www.dhmo.org/facts.html>



Current Problems in Vietnam

Since Vietnam is an emerging country subject to globalization, the following problems are of particular importance;

- Basic reference tools, theories and practices, remain virtually unknown.
- Even with grants from Elsevier, UNESCO and others, a general lack of funding for high quality resources further undermines the development of international standards.
- A larger academic culture unaccustomed to viewing the library as a pedagogical environment, instead viewing it more as a simple storehouse of information.
- A library culture unaware of how to evaluate information and unaccustomed to viewing reference work as “customer service”.

Workshop Goals

- Among other aspects of reference work, teach academic librarians IL theories and approaches
- Discuss the characteristics of information
- Discuss working models of IL involving the usage of science websites among faculty and students
- Introduce IL activities for students
- Create and promote outreach and lifelong learning opportunities within the university through IL initiatives

Free Tools for Finding Credible Science Information

- Google Scholar
- Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)
- Public Library of Science (PLoS)



IL Framework for Assessing Websites and Electronic Documents

Jim Kapoun's (1998) "Five Criteria for
Evaluating Web Pages"

1. Accuracy
2. Authority
3. Objectivity
4. Currency
5. Coverage

Future IL Projects

Address IL as it pertains to the sciences and humanities by

- Integrating it into selected freshman writing courses at Tulsa Community College and the University of Tulsa
- Conducting a workshop for librarians at Cameron University



How Does IL Affect You Outside of an Academic Environment?

- Internally: a capable workforce able to take informed approaches, make intelligent decisions and achieve solid results
- Externally: a positive public perception of the organization and increased consumer confidence