

## What about creating and organizing?

Isto Huvila

According to the internationally widely accepted American Library Association “Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education”, information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to “recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.” [1]. The definition is illustrative of the abilities based view of information literacy that was prevalent before and during the 1990’s [2]. Bruce argued in 1997 [3] for another kind of viewpoint based on a more comprehensive user-centred view of information literacy that has become influential in the recent discussions on information literacy [8]. Even though the term information literacy may be considered to refer to a idea of *using* information in a broad non-specific sense, the conceptions of information literacy discussed in the literature have tended to focus on the seeking, locating, receiving and evaluating information [13, 16, 19, 7, 8, 14]. There are exceptions [4, 15], but the idea has not really reverberated to practice. As Limberg and Sundin remark, the gap between policies, research results and practices seems to be a general tendency in the area [8]. Marcum criticised the narrow view of information literacy concept and argued for widening the perspective towards learning and more comprehensive socio-technical competence [9]. The perspective has been elaborated further by Tuominen et al. [17] who stressed the importance of seeing information literacies in the context of communities and their sociotechnical practices. Wilder [20] suggested that the weakness of the notion of information literacy is that users do not conceptualise their information related problems as difficulties to *search* or *seek* relevant information. The problem is rather in *finding* relevant high quality information. Another argument put forward by Wilder is that information literacy centric reasoning emphasises the complexity of retrieving and using information, a viewpoint that reminds of the tendencies to use information literacy as an advocacy of the library profession [12]. A more sensible and productive approach would be to try to reduce the complexity instead of attempting to teach a large group of people to master complex, but only instrumental, skills.

Most of the information sought by the information literates and illiterates is created by fellow human beings. Therefore, an evident approach to help users is to reduce the complexity of information and

its expressions. The focus should be shifted from an extensive problematising of information seeking and use to explicating the creation, organisation and management of information. Finding information in the fast digitalising world requires some specific skills that are different from the skills of the print era and the first generations of web services [18]. At the same time, however, the advances in information retrieval research and practice have made searching and accessing information easier than ever and compensated significantly the need to acquire a new set of complex skills. Technology has also simplified creation and organisation of information, but in this area, the advances have been considerably less spectacular. Creating and editing information in such form that is certainly findable is not quite easy as web designers and information architects have discovered and emphasised for a good reason [10, 11]. In an ideal world, every information creator (in the age of participatory web, everyone of us) would be an expert in producing information and information searching would be a problem only rarely.

The proposed line of research, discussed in more detail in [5] and [6], develops the notion of information literacy with a specific focus on integrating creation and organisation of information as central aspects of being information literate and highlights the implications of information creation processes for information professionals and users using examples from the literature. The research has potential implications both to how information literacy could be learned and taught in the future, and to the notion of what information literacy is and that what an information literate person should be capable of.

## References

- [1] Information literacy competency standards for higher education. Technical report, The Association of College and Research Libraries, Chicago, 2000.
- [2] D. Bawden. Information and digital literacies: a review of concepts. *Journal of documentation*, 57(2):218–259, 2001.
- [3] Christine Bruce. *The Seven Faces of Information Literacy*. Auslib Press, Blackwood, 1997.
- [4] R. Catts and J. Lau. Towards Information Literacy Indicators. Technical report, UNESCO, Paris, 2008.
- [5] Isto Huvila. Entä informaatiokirjoitustaito? In *Reader- and User-Oriented Communication: National Conference of Communication Studies 2007*, number 152 in Vaasan

- yliopiston julkaisuja, selvityksiä ja raportteja, pages 22–27, Vaasa, 2008. University of Vaasa.
- [6] Isto Huvila. The complete information literacy? unforgetting creation and organisation of information. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, forthcoming.
- [7] A.M. Johnson and S. Jent. Library instruction and information literacy. *Reference Services Review*, 33(4):487–530, 2005.
- [8] Louise Limberg and Olof Sundin. Teaching information seeking: relating information literacy education to theories of information behaviour. *Information Research*, 12(1), 2006.
- [9] J.W. Marcum. Rethinking information literacy. *Library Quarterly*, 72(1):1–26, 2002.
- [10] Peter Morville. *Ambient Findability*. O'Reilly, Sebastopol, CA, 2005.
- [11] Peter Morville and Louis Rosenfeld. *Information architecture for the World Wide Web*. O'Reilly, Sebastopol, CA, 3rd edition edition, 2006.
- [12] Lisa O'Connor. Information literacy as professional legitimation: the quest for a new jurisdiction. *Library Review*, 58(7):493 – 508, 2009.
- [13] Hannelore B. Rader. Information literacy - an emerging global priority. White paper, UNESCO, the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, and the National Forum on Information Literacy, for use at the Information Literacy Meeting of Experts, Prague, The Czech Republic, July 2002.
- [14] Reijo Savolainen and Jarkko Kari. *Informaatio, informaatiolukutaito ja oppiminen*, chapter Tiedonkäytön ja oppimisprosessin yhteyksistä - informaatiotutkimuksen näkökulma, pages 33–55. Tampere University Press, Tampere, 2009.
- [15] Eero Sormunen and Esa Poikela. *Informaatio, informaatiolukutaito ja oppiminen*, chapter Informaatiolukutaito ja oppiminen, pages 9–30. Tampere University Press, Tampere, 2009.
- [16] Caroline M. Stern. Information literacy 'unplugged': Teaching information literacy without technology. White paper, UNESCO, the U.S. National Commission on Libraries

and Information Science, and the National Forum on Information Literacy, for use at the Information Literacy Meeting of Experts, Prague, The Czech Republic, July 2002.

- [17] K. Tuominen, R. Savolainen, and S. Talja. Information Literacy as a Sociotechnical Practice. *The Library Quarterly*, 75(3):329–345, 2005.
- [18] Kimmo Tuominen. Information literacy 2.0. *Signum*, (5), 2007.
- [19] Sirje Virkus. Information literacy in Europe: a literature review. *Information Research*, 8(4), 2003.
- [20] S. Wilder. Information literacy makes all the wrong assumptions. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 51(18):B13, 2005.