

# Information Literacy: Empowering the End User

By: Rosnitha Gumpar

The concept of Information literacy was introduced in 1974 by the president of the Information Industry Association, Paul G. Zurkowski. According to him "People trained in the application of information resources to their work can be called information literates. They have learned techniques and skills for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information solution to their problems."

After the term information literacy been initiated by Zurkowski, there has been several other definitions evolved but the most significant definition was made by the American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy (1989) "To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information."

In 1990s, several attempts were made to further develop the definition of information literacy. Among them was the Delphi study which expanded the definition of information literacy further. It defined the information literate people as having the "ability to recognize that accurate and complete information is the basis for effective decision making, recognize the need for information, formulate questions based on information needs, Identify potential sources of information, develop successful search strategies, access sources of information including computer-based and other technologies, evaluate information, organize information for practical application, integrate new information into an existing body of knowledge, and uses information in critical thinking and problem solving" (Doyle, 1992).

Then, the information literacy concept was continually developed particularly by the American Library Association when they further concluded the definition of Information Literacy as a set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze and use information (ALA, 2003).

## The Need of Information Literacy at UMS

Information literacy skills are essential at Universiti Malaysia Sabah due to many reasons. The first and for most, is to obtain the highest percentage of ROI (Return on Investment) from huge amount of budget that was initially allocated by university to acquire those vast amounts of library information resources such as online databases, electronic journals, electronic books and other printed resources. The information was made available to the library and its end users to support their needs of teaching, learning and research activities.

Secondly, UMS library has been actively participated in local and international collaboration. The local cooperation includes the involvement on Malaysian University Libraries & National Network (MyUniNet) and PERPUN Catalog (K.I.P). On the other hand, international collaboration includes the participation on K@Borneo publication development and the Medical Library Group (MLG). Thus, it has greatly widened the access to various information resources, information retrieval system and information gateways. Further more, these collaborations built up another opportunity of knowledge sharing among the participating institutions.

Hence, apart from the growing diversity of the information sources and various accessing opportunities, information literacy is also required due to the approximately more than three thousand newly enrolled students each semester that are needed to be exposed to the library services. Due to this critical scenario, the Information Literacy Program is the only efficient and systematic way to help those students.

## The Beginning of Information Literacy Program

UMS Library has put a great end over to provide the whole university's community with the skills of an information literate user. The program is known as 'User Education', which is provided at Reference & Information Desk. It is primarily being conducted three times a week but could also be conducted anytime upon user request. There were three main modules introduced. Those modules are;

- 1) Searching Technique via OPAC
- 2) Searching Technique via Online Subscribed Databases & Search Engine and
- 3) Using Printed Reference Materials.



In 2012, the program has further improved with which the UMS Library Management has widened the access of attending the information literacy course. They started to provide librarian with different stages of internal information literacy course by inviting an expert on the field. Therefore, every librarian has an equal opportunity to learn a proper method of developing information literacy modules. This is one of the library management's efforts to make sure that its librarian would have an ample knowledge in preparing modules that could meet the end-user interest.

In early 2013, as an out come of the Information Literacy Courses, the library began to introduce another set of new modules, which consists of six modules. The modules are;

- 1) An Introduction to Information Resources & Reference Materials
- 2) Locating Information: OPAC
- 3) Information Searching Strategy: Online Databases, OPAC & Search Engine
- 4) Locating Information: Online Database
- 5) Citation Style and
- 6) Evaluation of Information Resources

These modules have gradually improved over time when it was being tested with the end user. Thus, they have been enhanced and revised into three main modules with five sub-modules. Those modules are as follows;

- 1) Library's Reference Materials
- 2) Locating Information: OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue)
- 3) Using Online Database:
  - i. Academic Citation Index (Web of Science)
  - ii. Emerald Management Extra
  - iii. EBSCOhost
  - iv. ProQuest
  - v. IEEE Explore

Therefore, this new set of module will be formally used in upcoming Information Literacy Program and will continuously be evolving and improves. Simultaneously, the module of other databases will gradually be developed.

In order to encourage the end-user to actively participate in this program, the approach of promoting the information literacy program has also become more aggressive. The Library tends to apply various modes of advertising techniques to educate and to encourage them to take part in the information literacy classes. The promotional material such as bunting and flyers has been distributed to each school. Besides, announcements through webmail, Library's website and Library's social network (Facebook) are also actively running 24/7.

Furthermore, the method of implementing the information literacy program has also become more proactive. Apart from offering them the class schedule (which is also available at request) and assisting them at Reference & Information Desk, we are also trying to reach them through our "Library Outreach Program" and looking forward to mutual collaboration between the faculty members to conduct the program consistently.

It is hope that this effort could benefit the end-users of UMS's Library and would create the best information literate community which will in turn produce the good quality of graduates.