

WEB LITERACY: A SMART WAY TO USE THE WEB

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ABSTRACT

This article is focused on web literacy and its use in the present era. In the present web era, there is an information explosion that has created a peculiar situation where users feel confused with the abundance of information, available in various forms and formats. Hence, web literacy is an effective tool to enable them to be well equipped with all the abilities and understandings to use the web-based resources optimally and wisely. Web literacy is considered as the 4th fundamental skill next to reading, writing and arithmetic. It is an effective tool in the hands of people to thrive in today's web era that enables them to not only to access, evaluate and use web based resources and services ethically but also to participate by creating and contributing their own content on various digital platforms.

Keywords: Information Explosion, Information Pollution, Media and Information Literacy, Web Technology, Web Literacy

INTRODUCTION

“Where is the Life we have lost in living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in Knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?” (T.S Eliot)

Presently, we all are living in an age in which information is considered as a driving force for the development of the society. Information enhances the quality of life of the citizens and helps them to make informed and timely decisions. Every person is in need to have particular information to bridge his/her knowledge gap. ICT and especially Internet have contributed in providing an innovative and open space to communicate and share informative content in a variety of forms and formats. It has made it possible for people to access a plethora of information round the clock globally. Internet/web has amazingly rehabilitated the information starvation into information abundance that has resulted in an information explosion.

ROLE OF THE WEB IN SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION

The scholarly community has witnessed four revolutions- the first one happened when language was invented to communicate with each other, the second one came when the script was developed for write up, third revolution occurred with the invention of printing press, the fourth revolution came when the telecommunication technology was invented to communicate with the people of distant areas and the fifth revolution has come in the form of internet and web technology in the present era.

The Web technology is just an application of the internet technology that has made it possible for people to access a variety of resources and services as well deliver their own contents for others across the world instantly. It has facilitated the communication and sharing of ideas/views on any particular topic with each other. It has made the world a small village where no one can even think to stay in isolation. It has resulted into a big information revolution in the form of information age in which information and communication technology, especially internet and web has a prominent role to play. The internet has become a paramount for the development of society. Now there is no starvation of

information but an abundance of information. Web 2.0, Web 3.0, Web 4.0, Open Access movement, open source software systems and artificial intelligence are in vogue. Now, people are not only accessing and using web-based resources but also creating and sharing information contents on web. Information is being published in multiple forms and formats on the web but there is no control over it. It has resulted in information explosion and information pollution. Hence, it is very difficult to find authentic and relevant information and to find a difference between good information and bad information. The user is confused and feels drowned in the ocean of information. It is just like finding a needle from a husk, when the needle is moving persistently.

WEB-BASED RESOURCES

“Web resources are networked, re-aggregated, heterogeneous and available in multimedia formats. There is a vast array of digital data formats: text, hypertext, image, sound, video, animation, etc”. (Wang, Hawk and Tenopir, 2000)

“Web-based resources are collections of links to other sites or combinations of links.” (Pitschmann, 2001).

“A resource that is made available on the World Wide Web, hence accessible through a web protocol (e.g., a document, a web service” (Gangemi & Presutti, 2006).

DIFFERENT TYPES OF WEB RESOURCES

Web-based resources are available in a different forms and formats such as E-journals, Web-OPAC, E-theses/dissertations, E-research Reports, Digital Libraries, Online Databases, Online Indexing and Abstracting Sources, Subject Gateways, Institutional Repositories, Blogs, E-lectures, Online Conference Proceedings, E-magazines, E-Newspapers, E-reference sources, Web Portals, etc.

Web Literacy

Generally, web literacy is the ability to read write and participate on the web.

Web literacy comprises the skills and competency needed for reading, writing and participating on the web.

It is described as “both content and activity-web users should not just learn about the web but also how to make their own websites.” (Davidson and Surman, 2015)

Web literacy touches on a variety of competencies-from composing and coding to understanding why privacy matters online-but it allows students to do one essential thing: meaningfully engage on the Internet.” (Chris Lawrenc, 2015)

Web Literacy Vs Digital Literacy

Web literacy is closely related to digital literacy but differs in taking a more holistic approach. It is a specific application of media and Information literacy and digital literacy in the specific field of Internet/web in more comprehensive way. Digital literacy focuses on the people who just become novice users of digital services not on deeper web literacy skills that enable them to prepare the people to think, create and thrive in the connected world.

Elements of Web Literacy

Web literacy includes the following elements such as Navigation, Searching Connecting, Evaluation, Protection, Open practice, Contribution, Sharing Designing, Coding, Composing, Remixing, Revision, Evaluation, Synthesis, etc. of information contents on the web.

Essential Elements of Web Literacy

Generally Web literacy includes the following elements:

- **Reading:** It includes the basic mechanism and techniques to locate web based resources and information contents and the ability to check their credibility.
- **Writing:** Building, creating and remixing the information contents on the web by having the knowledge of basic coding and programming skills.
- **Participating:** Connecting to the community and sharing information contents with others on the web along with having the understanding how to keep contents, identity and system safe.

Fundamental Components of Web Literacy

The fundamental components of the Web literacy are given as under:

- **Exploring (Navigation of Web)**
 - **Navigation:** Use of different software systems to explore or browse the web.
 - **Web Mechanism:** Understanding the web system.
 - **Searching:** Locating information, resources and persons on the web.
 - **Credibility:** Evaluating the information critically to find the relevancy, accuracy, authenticity, objectivity, etc.
 - **Security:** Keeping the contents safe and secured on the web.
- **Building (Creating contents for Web)**
 - **Composing for the web:** Creating and curating contents on the web.
 - **Remixing:** Modifying the web resources to make something new.
 - **Design and Accessibility:** Creating communication through web resources across the world.
 - **Coding/Scripting:** Using different software systems.
 - **Infrastructure** (Understanding the whole infrastructure of the Internet).
- **Connecting (Participating on the Web):**
 - **Creating web resources with others:** Content creation collaboratively.
 - **Collaboration:** Providing access to web resources.
 - **Participation:** Involving in communities on web.
 - **Privacy:** Familiar with all measures to maintain privacy on the web.
 - **Open Practices:** Keeping the web resources accessible universally.

USE OF WEB- LITERACY: AN EFFECTIVE TOOL IN THE WEB ERA

Samuel Taylor says ‘Water, water everywhere, and all the boards did shrink; Water, water everywhere ‘Nor any drop to drink;’

Today, there is a crying need to provide the right information to the right person at the right time and in the right way. The role of the information professionals and librarians has been

changed as they are required to play the role of teachers as well to educate the users to use the latest ICT technology optimally, to find the information effectively and efficiently to fulfill their information needs. The users must have all the competencies, skills and understandings to access and use all kinds of web resources and services to quench their thirst of knowledge/ information. Hence, they must be trained to make a difference between the good information and bad information available on the web. Libraries can be the best teaching institutions for users to conduct a series of such literacy programmes on a regular basis.

The web literate person is a critical thinker, and a lifelong independent learner who is well equipped with all the competencies which enable him/her to know the following aspects related to web/Internet technology:

As Internet has become an essential part of everybody's life in the modern era, the people should have the knowledge they need to tap into the full power of the Internet/web. Now, it has become a basic component in communication, education, entertainment and society as a whole.

Experts of the U.S Department of Labour stated it "We are living in a new economy-powered by technology, fuelled by information and driven by knowledge." The online world is becoming very quickly a source for information but on the other hand, it has made it difficult for a user to filter the information in the pinpointed relevant, authentic and precise manner. Hence, the users are perplexed in this situation and feel helpless to make difference between good information and bad information. Moreover, a lack of understanding of the Internet/web technology is a big barrier in the way to utilizing, participating and creating web resources and services on the internet optimally. Hence, only the web literacy enables the people to take full advantage of the internet/web technology as users and producers.

CONCLUSION

Web Literacy is a tool in the hands of citizens to understand and use the web technology and its various resources and services wisely and optimally. Internet based web technology is a boon for the people in the present era provided it is utilized efficiently and effectively. It is the need of the hour is to conduct a series of web literacy programs continuously across the world especially in developing countries such as India that would definitely be beneficial for the people to enable them to ripe the potential benefits of Internet/web technology optimally and wisely. Hence, the information and library professionals are required to play a key role as teachers to equip the users with all competencies, skills, understandings at this juncture to enable them to be critical thinkers and learners who can use the Internet/web technology in the best possible way.

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