SARAWAK COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS (SCILS): COLLABORATION TOWARDS A COMMON STANDARD OF INFORMATION LITERACY FOR SARAWAK

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Abstract
In order to provide a good information literacy guide and assistance towards their patrons, libraries and information centers produce their own rules and standards on how information literacy should be taught. The information literacy standard is a document to be benchmarked to make sure library users are information literate and capable to use information effectively. These standards will highlight what kind of practices and guides that libraries should provide to their users. Normally information literacy standards are prepared on library grounds and catered specifically to the needs of their organizations. SCILS on the other hand grouped libraries in Sarawak from different background to work together in creating a common information literacy standard for all libraries in the state. The project involves libraries and information centres from the academic, public and school background. In order to create and implement a common standard, there are some issues and factors that need to be tackled. With strong commitments and teamwork, this common standard is being developed to promote information literacy among all the communities in Sarawak.

Keywords: Information literacy; Standard, Competencies; Sarawak libraries; Higher education

INTRODUCTION
Information literacy skills are the most important skills for each and every one of us especially for library users. Unfortunately not many of library users really have these information literacy skills. Information literacy skills are basically having, the ability to recognize when information is needed, then to be able to locate and evaluate the appropriate information and use it effectively” (American Library Association 2000). Another way to look at information literacy is by defining it as the ability to know what there is in a landscape and to draw meaning from this through engagement and experience with information.
In this digital era, everything related to information will be referred to some online sources. Unfortunately for most people, when they are able to use the Internet they consider themselves as information literate. Some of them even considered that information literacy is not relevant in their lives and their daily business. A search term of information literacy entered into a search engine or article database and exclude libraries or education from the result will probably end up with very little content.

In order to teach people, especially library users about information literacy, libraries needs to work hard to make sure all the needed information is delivered to the users. To do this, libraries should have certain guidelines on what is information literacy and what to include in the information literacy class. Therefore libraries created modules for their information literacy classes. And the modules are normally created based on certain standards.

**INFORMATION LITERACY STANDARD APPLICATIONS**

Most libraries and library organizations in the world have formed their own information literacy standards. These standards would be the outcome or what they expected for their users. They have listed the characteristics that they want from an information literate person. And these standards do not only cover information in electronic forms but also all sorts of information from various sources.

Standards like Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework and American Library Association (ALA) have not only been used by the members of the organizations, they have been adopted and adapted by many libraries in the world.

In Malaysia, there are many initiatives that have been taken to make sure we are able to teach Malaysians information literacy. Edzan and Mohd Sharif (2005) have come out with the idea of creating an information literate nation. They mentioned that we should have a national information literacy standard with the pertinent performance indicators and learning outcomes. As we yet to have one standard for information literacy for the nation, most libraries in Malaysia have adapted other information literacy standards in order to prepare their information literacy modules. These modules were prepared based on certain standards that they have adapted and customized according to the organization needs.

**PPMKSAR INITIATIVES**

The Librarians Association of Malaysia Sarawak Chapter (PPMKSAR) since 2006 has looked into the importance of information literacy skills to come out with standards for all libraries in Sarawak, namely academic, school and public. These skills are important for library patrons to evaluate and use information correctly to be able to prepare better assignments, reports, theses or research. The most important outcome from information literacy skills is to create a generation of patrons who are able to think critically and have the capacity for lifelong learning.

With the understanding that there is a huge need to have a proper standard for information literacy, PPMKSAR has initiated a project called Sarawak Committee for Information Literacy Standards (SCILS). The committee members include librarians and professionals in information management. The main target of this committee is to introduce one common
information literacy standards for all the libraries in Sarawak. Therefore the committee is looking through all the aspects related to information literacy in all the different type of libraries.

SCILS was started in July 2006 in Miri Sarawak. The first meeting involved librarians from Pustaka Negeri Sarawak and Pustaka Miri to represent Public Libraries and librarians from UNIMAS, Swinburne University and Curtin University to represent academic libraries. As we developed, the committee was joined by UiTM and Maktab Perguruan Batu Lintang in 2008.

In order to create a common standard for all the different types of libraries, there are many issues that need to be tackled. These issues are very important that they would later contribute to the success or failure of the applications of the Information Literacy Standard for Sarawak.

One of the major issues that need to be tackled is the nature of users in each library. All the three types of library have different type of users. And these users have different approach and understanding towards information. This is due to elements like age, education level, and information usage. Therefore the committee has to understand the different needs of every group of users that we have first before creating a common standard.

The second issue that we need to face is language barrier. In Sarawak, besides Malay and English language there are a lot of local dialects that have been used especially by users in the rural areas. Therefore there should be some sort of training given to the leaders of the community or the managers of the rural libraries in order to deliver the standards to the users in rural areas.

The other issues would be locations of libraries which are sometimes very far from the nearest town or city. Therefore it is difficult to reach the place and it is also difficult for the library manager to get proper training before they could deliver the standards and the information literacy modules to users in secluded areas.

To make sure we are able to tackle all the issues that we faced, to committee is divided into three subcommittees. These three subcommittee are the subcommittee for public, higher education institutions and school libraries will work together to understand the needs and the problems in the three types of libraries and find ways to create a suitable standard for each type of library.

Subcommittee for Public Libraries
Pustaka Negeri Sarawak (Pustaka) plays an important role in shaping the information literacy skills for public libraries in Sarawak. Pustaka initiates the information literacy skills that vary from one library to the other. Pustaka monitors and supervises the information literacy and they send their professionals to train these library staff at the various libraries. The level of information literacy skills in towns, councils and city center libraries are higher when compared to the rural and remote areas. In rural libraries, patrons are being guided by the non professionals including housewives and volunteers who are attached to these libraries.
Pustaka has proposed a draft on information literacy under User Education Program 2008 which is divided into 3 modules:

Module 1 – Foundation level: Understanding the world of information
Module 2 – Intermediate level: Developing information retrieval skills
Module 3 – Advanced level: Evaluating and using information effectively

Module 1 is aimed at library patrons and students to learn and develop information literacy skills. It contains 10 chapters and covers all areas from introduction to information, understanding information and its sources, identify, explore, select and organize information until how patrons review and evaluate information for their research papers, projects or coursework.

Module 2 is aimed to present information retrieval skills and teach patrons how to identify a topic and searching strategies. Patrons will be able to identify and retrieve information to meet their needs or requirements.

Module 3 is meant for advanced patrons. They will be able to evaluate information and use information effectively. Patrons are also competent in locating the right information and they can share and transmit ideas based on the information.

Subcommittee for School Libraries
The subcommittee for the school libraries includes librarians from Pustaka Miri and Curtin University of Technology, Sarawak Campus. Even though they are from academic and public libraries, the member of this subcommittee have done some research on the information needs of school children and they have looked into a few information literacy standards for school libraries before preparing a standard specifically for school libraries in Sarawak.

The standard for the school libraries consist of five standards for users to be information literate. The standards detailed below:

(a) Standard One
The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.

Performance Indicators
1. The information literate student defines and articulates the need for information. Outcomes include:
   a. Discuss with teachers and students in class discussions, peer workgroups, and electronic discussions to identify a topic, or other information need
   b. Develops a project statement and prepares questions based on the information need.
   c. Explores general information sources to increase familiarity with the topic.
   d. Defines or modifies the information need to achieve a manageable focus
   e. Identifies key concepts and terms that describe the information need
   f. Recognizes that existing information can be combined with original thought, experimentation, and/or analysis to produce new information.
(b) Standard Two
The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.

Performance Indicators
1. The information literate student constructs and implements effectively-designed search strategies. Outcomes include:
   a. Develops a project plan appropriate to the investigative method.
   b. Identifies keywords, synonyms and related terms for the information needed
   c. Selects controlled vocabulary specific to the discipline or information retrieval source.
   d. Constructs a search strategy using appropriate commands for the information retrieval system selected (e.g., Boolean operators, truncation, and proximity for search engines; internal organizers such as indexes for books.
   e. Implements the search strategy in various information retrieval systems using different user interfaces and search engines, with different command languages, protocols, and search parameters.

2. The information literate student retrieves information online or in person using a variety of methods. Outcomes include:
   a. Uses various search systems to retrieve information in a variety of formats.
   b. Uses various classification schemes and other systems (e.g., call number systems or indexes) to locate information resources within the library or to identify specific sites for physical exploration.
   c. Uses letters, interviews, and other forms of inquiry to retrieve primary information

3. The information literate student refines the search strategy if necessary. Outcomes include:
   a. Assesses the quantity, quality, and relevance of the search results to determine whether alternative information retrieval systems should be utilized.
   b. Identifies gaps in the information retrieved and determines if the search strategy should be revised.

4. Repeats the search using the revised strategy as necessary. The information literate student extracts, records, and manages the information and its sources. Outcomes include:
   a. Selects among various technologies the most appropriate one for the task of extracting the needed information (e.g., copy/paste software functions, photocopier, scanner, audio/visual equipment).
   b. Creates a method for organizing the information.
   c. Differentiates between the types of sources cited and understands the elements and correct citation style for a wide range of resources.
   d. Records all related citation information for future reference.
   e. Uses various technologies to manage and organized the selected.

(c) Standard Three
The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.
Performance Indicators

1. The information literate student summarizes the main ideas to be extracted from the information gathered. Outcomes include:
   a. Reads the text and selects main ideas.
   b. Restates textual concepts in his/her own words and selects data accurately.
   c. Identifies accurate material that can be then appropriately quoted.

2. The information literate student articulate and applies initial criteria for evaluating both the information and its sources. Outcomes include:
   a. Examines and compares information from various sources in order to evaluate reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, and point of view or bias.
   b. Analyzes the structure and logic of supporting arguments or methods.
   c. Recognizes prejudice, deception, or manipulation.

3. The information literate student synthesizes main ideas to construct new concepts. Outcomes include:
   a. Recognizes interrelationships among concepts and combines them into potentially useful primary statements with supporting evidence.
   b. Utilizes computer and other technologies (e.g. spreadsheets, databases, multimedia, and audio or visual equipment) for studying the interaction of ideas and other phenomena.

4. The information literate student validates understanding and interpretation of the information through discourse with other individuals, subject-area experts, and/or practitioners. Outcomes include:
   a. Participates in classroom and other discussions.
   b. Participates in electronic communication forums designed to encourage discourse on the topic (e.g., email, bulletin boards, chat rooms).
   c. Seeks expert opinion through a variety of mechanisms. (e.g., interviews, email, listserves, etc.)

5. The information literate student determines whether the initial query should be revised. Outcomes include:
   a. Determines if original information need has been satisfied or if additional information is needed.
   b. Reviews search strategy incorporates additional concepts as necessary.
   c. Reviews information retrieval sources used and expands to include others as needed.

(d) Standard Four
The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.

Performance Indicators

1. The information literate student applies new and prior information to the planning and creation of a project. Outcomes include:
a. Organizes the content in a manner that supports the purposes and format of the product (e.g. outlines, drafts, storyboards).

b. Articulates knowledge and skills transferred from prior experiences to planning and creating the product.

c. Integrates the new and prior information, including quotations and paraphrasing, in a manner that supports the purposes of the product.

d. Manipulates digital text, images, and data, as needed, transferring them from their original locations and formats to a new context.

2. The information literate student revises the development process for the product. Outcomes include:
   a. Maintains a journal or log of activities related to the information seeking, evaluating, and communicating process
   b. Reflects on past successes, failures, and alternative strategies

3. The information literate student communicates the product or performance effectively to others. Outcomes include:
   a. Chooses a communication medium and format that best supports the purposes of the product or performance and the intended audience.
   b. Uses a range of information technology applications in creating the product or performance.
   c. Incorporates principles of design and communication.
   d. Communicates clearly and with a style that supports the purposes of the intended audience.

(e) Standard Five
The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

Performance Indicators
1. The information literate student understands many of the ethical, legal and socio-economic issues surrounding information and information technology. Outcomes include:
   a. Identifies and discusses issues related to privacy and security in both the print and electronic environments.
   b. Identifies and discusses issues related to free vs. fee-based access to information.
   c. Identifies and discusses issues related to censorship and freedom of speech.
   d. Demonstrates an understanding of intellectual property, copyright, and fair use of copyrighted material.

2. The information literate student follows laws, regulations, institutional policies, and etiquette related to the access and use of information resources. Outcomes include:
   a. Participates in electronic discussions following accepted practices (e.g. "Netiquette").
   b. Uses approved passwords and other forms of ID for access to information resources.
   c. Complies with institutional policies on access to information resources.
   d. Preserves the integrity of information resources, equipment, systems and facilities.
   e. Legally obtains, stores, and disseminates text, data, images, or sounds.
f. Demonstrates an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and does not represent work attributable to others as his / her own.

3. The information literate student acknowledges the use of information sources in communicating the product or performance. Outcomes include:
   a. Selects an appropriate documentation style and uses it consistently to cite sources.
   b. Posts permission granted notices, as needed, for copyrighted material.

**Subcommittee for Higher Education**

In Malaysia’s public and private higher learning institution, information literacy activities exist and are conducted by librarians but there is yet a framework that will include the principles, standards and practices that will support information literacy education in all sectors which is why the National Information Literacy Agenda (NILA), was proposed (Edzan & Mohd.Sharif 2005).

SCILS has come up with its own version of Information Literacy standard for Higher Education. The standard is tailored according to what is deemed basic information skills sufficient for students in higher learning institutions in Malaysia. Focusing on library resources; the five standards have been identified as follows:

**(a) Standard One**

1. The Information literate student uses library and other information services, collections and facilities effectively.

   **Performance Indicator:**
   - a) The information literate student knows the existence of library services, facilities and collection that can help their learning and research activities.

   **Outcomes include:**
   - a) Able to identify the correct services to be used according to information need.
   - b) Able to provide feedbacks to library administrators on services, collection and facilities.
   - c) Recognize and uses library services and other information services, collections and facilities to his or her advantage.

2. The information literate student is able to differentiate library and non library resources.

   **Outcomes include:**
   - a) Knows the types of information available in the library in terms of format and use.
   - b) Knows the advantage and disadvantage of library resources as oppose to internet resources.
   - c) Identify scholarly and non scholarly resources and uses them according to purpose and intended audience.

**(b) Standard Two**

The Information literate student is critical of information and its sources.

   **Performance Indicator:**
1. The information literate student evaluates information sources and the extent of information needed.

Outcomes include:
   a) Able to assess credibility and validity of information in terms of its accuracy, authority, timeliness, and point of view or bias
   b) Able to recognize prejudice, deception, or manipulation of information.

(c) Standard Three
The information literate student values online academic resources.

Performance Indicator:
1. The information literate student uses online academic resources effectively and efficiently.

Outcomes include:
   a) Identifies the types of online academic resources available in the library such as citation databases and full text database and how to make use of these databases.
   b) Realize that databases are either multidisciplinary or subject specific and uses these resources accordingly.
   c) Apply appropriate relevant search techniques such as “Boolean Search” whenever necessary.
   d) Able to construct keywords and search terms from key concepts, ideas and research questions.
   e) Uses dictionary, thesauri and other language tool to diversify keywords and concepts.

(d) Standard Four
The information literate student uses information sources legitimately.

Performance Indicator:
1. The information literate student is able to employ the correct method of integrating information source into his or her own work.

Outcomes include:
   a) Able to restates concepts and ideas in his or her own work.
   b) Cite information sources accurately, using specified citation style.
   c) Uses the method such as quoting, paraphrasing and summarizing information to integrated information from other sources into their own work.

(e) Standard Five
The information literate student understands that there are ethical and legal issues that bind the use and access of information sources.

Performance indicator:
1. The information literate student follows laws, regulations, policies and etiquette related to access of information and usage of information sources.
Outcomes include:
   a) Understands privacy and security issues in usage of print and electronic information sources.
   b) Understands intellectual property, copyright and use of copyright materials.
   c) Understands the differences between fee-based and free access to information.

SCILS FUTURE PLANS
With all the three standards that we have documented, it is now our role as a committee to combine all the standards and simplify them so that each members of the community are able to understand the standards. Besides that, modules are being developed and updated in order to meet the requirements of the information literacy standards. All the modules are being prepared according to the standard and customized based on the needs of all the different types of libraries that we have in Sarawak.

This standard will also come in English and Malay version for easier access and soon will be translated into local dialects to reach more users throughout the state. These common standards will also be published in printed and electronic version. This is to make sure that everyone in the state and even in other libraries is able to access to the standard.

CONCLUSION
SCILS is a progressing initiative by PPMKSAR. Though it is still in the framework stage, we librarians in Sarawak believe that the standard will be applied and there would be updates and development to be done in the future to make sure the standard will meet all the information literacy needs of the nation. The major outcomes are having information literate and critical thinking community who are able to adapt lifelong learning. They can use information creatively to upgrade their standard of living and to produce new and bright future generations.

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