Chapter 14
E-Leadership and Information Literacy

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ABSTRACT

In the information society, learners need to locate and evaluate resources carefully as well as determine how to use relevant information to solve problems and make wise decisions. As more students learn in online environments, resources and support must be available to optimize their success. Information literacy offers a series of processes as a means to deal successfully with information. By melding information literacy and content matter in e-learning environments, instructional designers can create authentic experiences for students to hone their skills. E-leadership is a core factor for successful experiences. E-leaders orchestrate people, processes, and systems to optimize education’s operations and impact. Within that charge, technology plays a central role.

INTRODUCTION

“Information is Power.” This phrase resonates loudly in the Information Age. Now in the Knowledge Age a more accurate truism would be “The use of information is power,” a phrase that is now in common usage. In a digital world where the amount of information doubles every two years, students need to locate and evaluate resources carefully as well as determine how to use relevant information to solve problems and make wise decisions. Authentic tasks within coursework offer opportunities for learners to hone these skills. As more students learn in online environments, resources and support must be available to optimize their success. To that end, 21st century information literacy requires 21st century leadership so that the conditions for elearning are optimized.

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Living in an Information Society

In today’s world, people find it hard to digest and use the overwhelming tsunami of information, a situation that has been exacerbated by technological advances, globalization, and the changes that they evoke. In the United States, almost three-quarters of jobs include technology, and people need to be retooled throughout their lives, particularly since they are likely to change jobs as much as jobs change themselves (Handel, 2003). For digital immigrant adults, this digital world of information can be especially frustrating and unmanageable.

At the 2003 World Summit on the Information Society, governments and world leaders “made a strong commitment towards building a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society for all, where everyone can access, utilize and share information and knowledge” (United Nations, 2006, p. 6). In this information society, information replaces material goods as the chief driver of socio-economics. Knowledge capital has higher currency than material capital, and intellect is needed to optimize the use of material resources. For this reason, people in the 21st century need to be:

• information literate: able to access, evaluate, and use information purposefully
• lifelong learners: pursuing interests, read, and generate knowledge
• socially responsible: cooperative, ethical and legal.

DEFINITIONS

The interactions among information literacy, e-learning, and e-leadership reflect a complex system. To understand that complexity, these terms need to be defined and explained.

What is Information Literacy?

In order to survive in today’s world, people need to be functionally literate, which involves a continuum of skills that enables them to be able to do something: procedural knowledge. However, for people to do something, they have to know what to do (declarative knowledge), when to do it (conceptual knowledge), and why they should do it (experiential knowledge) (Hubbell, 2010). Furthermore, to sustain their literacy, people also need metacognitive knowledge: thinking about thinking, knowing how to learn. This cluster of knowledge is considered information literacy. Other specific literacies such as numeracy and visual acuity are also implicated because knowledge can be represented in so many forms. Indeed, a new term describes the ability to comprehend and use ideas across communication channels: transliteracy (Ipri, 2010).

Standards for information literacy have been developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (2000). Competency includes the ability to:

• determine the extent of information needed
• access the needed information effectively and efficiently
• evaluate information and its sources critically
• incorporate selected information into one’s knowledge base
• use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
• understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally.

Information literacy is often associated with research, which is the application of procedural knowledge in support of finding and using information. Many academic fields include information competency components, but they are not always
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