

**Scholarship, Leadership and Practice: The Post-Secondary Educator's Role in  
Developing Information Literacy in Students**

Alicia Peters, MA, MBA, BSN

Faculty- University of Phoenix College of Nursing and Healthcare Programs

Doctoral Student - Healthcare Administration University of Phoenix

**Abstract**

Many students entering post-secondary institutions today have limited knowledge and abilities in the area of information literacy. Information literacy is a critical skill for post-secondary students. Post-secondary educators, who recognize and accept the literacy limitations of today's students, will be better positioned to adopt their teaching styles and curriculum to cultivate information literacy. Post-Secondary educators can play a vital role in fostering and promoting the required skills to successfully evaluate and apply information to solve problems, regardless of the data source. The college student of tomorrow must understand and embrace information literacy as a means to help achieve academic success.

**Keywords**

Information Literacy

Post-Secondary Education

Role of the Post-Secondary Educator

Academic Writing Sources

Research Development Skills

## Critical Thinking

### Overview

Aristotle (n.d.) proclaimed that “all men by nature desire to know.” Aristotle’s assertion holds truth in that desire is a core attribute of learning. Yet, in order to learn, students need more than desire. They need scholarly material to analyze and critical thinking skills to synthesize information in meaningful ways to maximize the learning experience. Skills such as the ability to locate, critically evaluate, and use information are collectively known as information literacy (Turusheva, 2009).

The students of today are very different from the students of yesterday. Today’s students have grown up in the instant information world of Google, Face Book and online universities. With vast amounts of information readily available, one may surmise that today’s college students must possess a high level of information literacy. Many students entering post-secondary institutions today have limited knowledge and abilities in the area of information literacy. A literature review validates the importance of information literacy. Post-secondary educators are in an ideal position to support information literacy in today’s Internet information age. The importance of informational literacy in post-secondary education will be developed in this essay.

### Importance of Information Literacy

According to Li and Lester (2009), “Information literacy has been recognized as one of the essential educational goals to assess and evaluate a student’s aptitudes for critical thinking, decision making, and problem-solving” (p. 570). Ideally students entering universities should already possess skills in information literacy; in fact, some educators believe basic information literacy instruction should begin in primary school (Badke, 2009). The argument for the early

introduction to information literacy is to thwart the development of poor research habits thus preventing the need for literacy reorientation later in the student's academic career. Russell (2009) indicated that "many post-secondary practitioners agree that there exists a significant gap in the information competencies that students demonstrate during the high school to university transition" (p. 92). Although not ideal, it is not too late to link the importance of information literacy to academic success. Post-secondary educators, who recognize and accept the literacy limitations of today's students, will be better positioned to adopt their teaching styles and curriculum to cultivate information literacy.

The Internet has become increasingly popular with students of all ages, especially when gathering research information. Badke (2009) affirms Google has become the primary source for information for as many as 70-80% of college students. The use of the Internet as a potential source for scholarly information may make finding basic research information faster and more convenient; yet there is no assurance that the content is accurate, unbiased, and valid or that it has been critically evaluated or peer reviewed (Turusheva, 2009).

### **Educator's Role**

Post-secondary educators can play a vital role in shifting the information paradigm from basic Google searches to academic sources such as university based online library systems. University based databases will still allow students the freedom of online access but offer a higher probability that the information will be considered scholarly, which can positively impact overall academic outcomes.

Post-secondary educators can employ the information literacy skills they have amassed and refined over their academic careers to guide students in properly identifying academic sources. At a basic level this knowledge exchange can begin with a demonstration of how to

access and use the university's online library system. Additionally, universities employ librarians who are highly skilled in research and data gathering. These professionals are excellent resources for students who may need more individualized instruction. Some librarians are even tasked with creating course specific library instruction designed for students or faculties use (Russell, 2009).

With steadfast scholarship, practice, and leadership, improved information literacy in the classroom can occur. Students will become more skilled in utilizing information sources, advance their critical thinking talents, and achieve improved classroom outcomes. Only then will they fully understand and appreciate the necessity of information literacy. Concurrently educators will begin to see a shift in literacy standards.

### **Conclusion**

Information literacy is a critical skill for post-secondary students. The college student of tomorrow must understand and embrace information literacy as a means to help achieve academic success. Educators can play a vital role in fostering and promoting the required skills to successfully evaluate and apply information to solve problems, regardless of the data source.

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