# Why Does Information Literacy Matter in the 21st Century?

In the 21st century, winning hearts and minds is a huge challenge given the proliferation of fake news, Internet hoaxes and trolls that make modern information sources less reliable, less credible and less trustworthy.

Educating people about how to navigate the dynamics of the information world is essential and involves far more than our basic print literacy skills. Gone are the days when being 'literate' simply meant being able to read and write. With the development of the digital world, multimodal literacy skills are needed to comprehend the messages embedded in clever visual texts that include movement and sound. Think about the power of the video advertisement compared to the print poster.

The expansion of the mass media from local newspapers and TV and radio networks into global broadcasting corporations has led us to consider questions about who is controlling the media and whose values and ideologies are promoted. Being able to ask and answer these questions means that you are media literate. If you understand how texts influence audiences for a purpose, and if you question the social impact they may have and whether it is ethical, you are considered to be critically literate.

Information literacy is all this and more. Given the overwhelming amount of information we confront every day, we need to be able to define and identify the information we need and then locate and access it. We need to recognise its purpose and appreciate that most information is created to gain profit or power. This means questioning and evaluating the information that is presented to us for accuracy, authenticity and credibility. When we find a website answering our Google search, more often than not we will soon

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question
source
find
evaluate
combine
share
apply
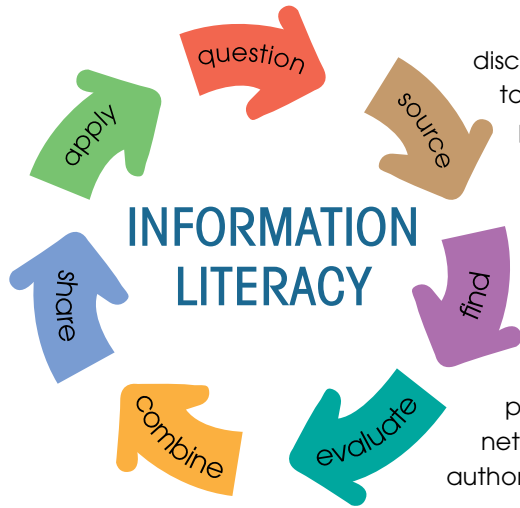
discover, upon careful examination, that it is selling us something, thanks to the algorithm used by Google to determine our search habits and preferences.

As we need to know how to find reliable and trustworthy sources, we also need to be able to extract and organise the information we need, and such processing requires IT skills. These skills also allow us to create our own information for our own purposes and therefore participate in society through the cyber-world by contributing our own content. Understanding the role in society of information providers such as the Internet, libraries, museums and broadcasting networks is also important for monitoring and ensuring the credibility and authority of the information they provide.

To do this, we must be able to recognise the values and stereotypes implicit in the information they offer and to identify misrepresentations and lack of representation. Texts powerfully shape societal values and norms and it is important for social cohesion to be inclusive and to allow all voices to be heard. This leads us back to the overarching criteria for information literacy, and that is the ability and willingness to provide and communicate information ethically and responsibly. Information literacy is more than technical skills and critical thinking. It is also an attitude that involves ethical judgments and a determination to make the world a better place where violent extremism has no voice.

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