

## **National Forum on Information Literacy Meeting Summary**

**Friday, January 10, 2003**

**Meeting host: National Education Association  
Washington, D.C.**

Present:

Patricia Breivik, Chair

Marin Allen, National Institutes of Health

Joan Challinor, National Commission on Libraries and Information Science

Mary Chute, Institute of Museum and Library Services

Mary Ellen Davis, Association of College and Research Libraries

Elisabeth Edwards, American Association of School Librarians

Al Frascella, National Council on the Social Studies

Craig Gibson, Association of College and Research Libraries

Steve Gilbert, TLT (Teaching and Learning with Technology) Group

Martha Gould, National Commission on Libraries and Information Science

Woody Horton, National Commission on Libraries and Information Science

Lorna Jones, Melange, Inc.

Tricia Kelly, Aspen Institute

Becky Lyon, National Institutes of Health/National Library of Medicine

Judith Matz, Association of Research Libraries

Maureen McCarthy, American Psychological Association/Teaching Section

Sarah McPhee, National Association of State Directors of Vocational/Technical  
Consortium

Sylvia Seidel, National Education Association

Marsha Semmel, Institute of Museum and Library Services

Ross Todd, Rutgers University/International Association of School Librarians

Julie Walker, American Association of School Librarians

### **1. Health Literacy/Relationship to Information Literacy**

The Forum discussion at this meeting was led by Dr. Marin Allen, Communication Office and Chief, Office of Health Communication and Public Liaison, National Institutes of Health.

Dr. Allen opened the discussion by mentioned a video “You Can’t Always Tell by Looking”, which is used with physicians to help them improve their communications skills. The premise of this video is that low health literacy is a major national issue, cutting across geographical and class lines.

Some telling statistics: 21% of Americans are functionally illiterate (inability to decipher numbers, charts, figures); 50% have low health literacy; 30% have marginal health literacy; and 20% have acceptable or adequate health literacy. The video deals with the

magnitude of this problem as it relates to the struggles many people have with medical information.

Dr. Allen's research interests focus on language, communication, and visualization. Her position at NIH deals with health communication interests, and particularly with the challenges facing individuals with deafness, auditory processing disorders, others problems (ESL).

Dr. Allen gave several examples of problems with medical information:

- a Wall Street Journal article, dated January 9, 2003, highlights problems with medical information in doctors', other medical offices with Eastern European immigrants

- Families who bring children with ear infections to doctors' offices often do not understand that antibiotics do not help with otitis media (and that ear infections often self-resolve)

Schillinger, a researcher at the University of California at San Francisco, differentiates between the "talk back" or "teach back" methods of communicating medical information; he addresses the challenges of medical jargon and technical terms. An example used is the term "stable weight": does everyone understand this term? The misuse of the term also reveals lack of understanding of health issues.

Related to the issues raised by Schillinger's research are problems of access to information, problems with disinformation, multilingual perspectives, and visual presentation of information for multicultural populations. Nonverbal communications and their meanings (gestures, head nods) are definitely an issue when dealing with multicultural populations.

Other challenges: problems of health literacy with hard of hearing, aging population—issues of informed consent, clinical trials, etc. Oftentimes, there are discrepancies or "disconnects" among specialized vocabularies of different specialist groups (nurses, doctors, audiologists).

Still another challenge: testing of babies for deafness consists of three steps: (1) screening (2) diagnosis (3) intervention. For these three steps (involving different health personnel), there is a lack of integration of medical records.

There is also a problem of "assumed knowledge": assumptions made by various staff and specialists in health care about knowledge of recent immigrants. In rural medicine, there is a definite lack of physicians in rural areas, small towns.

Discussion:

- What can be done in schools and public libraries to promote health literacy?
- The well-known problem of written communication—doctors’ instructions’ vs. pharmacists’ interpretations (or pharmacists’ instructions).
- Problems with finding information on health web sites: need for usability testing on such sites.
- Sheer number of languages in U.S. creates challenges: there are 329 languages either spoken or signed.
- Health literacy and language problems: NLM has attempted to address this challenge by developing a Spanish language version of Medline Plus (online focus groups were used); also, Medline Plus was developed with continuous evaluation in mind to be a consumer health web site. Projects with Native American tribes may include health literacy. “Interactive health tutorials” are popular on NLM Consumer Health web site.
- Another issue: structuring information on health web sites for aging and senior populations.
- Diagnostics instruments are needed to make distinctions between communication “difference” and an actual disorder (for speakers of other languages).
- Science literacy is fundamental to health literacy; a curriculum piece addressing this connection is now being developed and tested with Native American, Latino populations.
- How can public libraries offer adult education/evening classes on health literacy?
  - Medical Library Association has a pamphlet on “medspeak”
  - PLA/MLA had a workshop at the recent ALA Midwinter conference on health information.

## **2. Approval of meeting summary**

The meeting summary of October 4, 2002, was approved as read.

## **3. Member reports**

Association of College and Research Libraries—Mary Ellen Davis

ACRL is the recipient of an IMLS Grant entitled “Assessing Student Learning Outcomes in Information Literacy Programs”; the grant is intended to train librarians in developing baseline data to support the value of information literacy programs.

The final version of the document resulting from the “Best Practices” initiative is now available.

ACRL is collaborating with the TLT Group to offer a number of web-based courses focused on information literacy, beginning in spring 2003.

Melange, Inc.—Lorna Jones

Lorna is a trainer and consultant whose company deals with small and medium-sized companies of issues of workforce development as it relates to information literacy.

American Association of School Libraries—Elisabeth Edwards

Elisabeth is an alternate representative to the Forum on behalf of AASL.

Rutgers University/International Association of School Librarians—Ross Todd

Ross is a faculty member at Rutgers University and is a transplanted Australian; information-seeking and use is his area of research.

IASL’s information literacy agenda has recently focused on developing countries. The most recent IASL conference was held in Malaysia; the Malaysian conference saw a major media focus, with key national figures involved. The next IASL conference (2004) will be held in Durban, South Africa.

National Association of State Directors of Vocational Technical Education Consortium—Sarah McPhee

Sarah will take information on health literacy from this meeting of the Forum back for use in her organization.

National Library of Medicine—Becky Lyon

For the past two to three years, a particular focus of NLM has been consumer health information. One specific result of this initiative is the web site, ClinicalTrials.Gov.

Attempts are being made to link together all kinds of consumer and health information to make access easier. Evaluation of the consumer/health web site is done through online surveys, focus groups, and continuous evaluation.

NLM is giving \$2 million to libraries, community organizations through grants. Up to 50 projects focus on information access to digital libraries, some of these focused on health literacy.

The ACP Foundation has prepared a kit of materials for physicians to assist them in improving communication with patients. Another pilot project in North Carolina

involves the University of North Carolina/Chapel Hill library school and public libraries—to link local health information with Medline Plus.

Institute of Museum and Library Services—Marsha Semmel

IMLS has strategic partnerships with different governmental and non-governmental organizations; Marsha's experience has been at NEH, as well as in directorships of various museums.

TLT (Teaching and Learning with Technology) Group—Steve Gilbert

The TLT Group, working with ACRL, will offer a number of online courses on information literacy. This builds on a previous collaboration in offering webcasts beginning in February 2002, with Tom Kirk and others.

The online workshops envisioned by the TLT Group focus on: starting information literacy programs; assessing information literacy programs; collaboration; and best practices. All of these workshops, in fact, emphasize the importance of collaboration among all the “players” in higher education to develop information literacy programs and student learning outcomes.

Steve also participated in the ACRL “Best Practices” conference held at ALA Annual in 2002. Two important points that he gained from this conference are: successful information literacy programs bring together at least two parts of an institution; and they have an administrator of sufficient stature to advance the information literacy agenda locally.

National Education Association—Sylvia Seidel

The NEA is attempting to help classroom teachers with the current testing imperatives and teacher standards, even when funding is not available from government sources to make these programs work.

Aspen Institute—Tricia Kelly

Tricia described the Aspen Institute's Communications and Society Program, which will hold a forum this year on communication technologies and public health outcomes in developing countries.

Institute for Museum and Library Services—Mary Chute

Mary was previously Delaware State Librarian.

Mary described IMLS' goal of being connected to other organizations, such as the ones represented at this meeting of the Forum. She described the IMLS National Leadership Grant programs, and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learner program, two key initiatives.

#### Association of Research Libraries—Judith Matz

SAILS, Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills, is a project being developed at Kent State University to create a tool to measure information literacy and assess its impact on student learning. The project is developing a tool that is standardized, easily administered, and is valid and reliable. The instrument is based on the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education and will be able to be administered at any type of institution to provide data for both internal and external benchmarking. Information on SAILS can be found at <http://sails.lms.kent.edu/>.

SAILS has been endorsed by the ARL Statistics and Measurement Committee as part of a New Measures Initiative and placed on the agenda of the Learning Outcomes Working Group who are addressing issues of higher education outcomes. Kent State University has received a three-year grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services for \$252,000 to continue development of SAILS. This includes testing with other institutions across three phases:

Phase I: Implementation at 10 institutions, Spring 2003

Phase II: Implementation at 30 institutions, Fall 2003 & Spring 2004

Phase III: Implementation at 100 institutions, Fall 2004 & Spring 2005

ARL will coordinate and manage the process of participation for all institutions whether they are ARL members or not. This includes calls for participation; making arrangements for planning meetings, training workshops, and follow-up meetings; and marketing and public relations for the project.

#### **Criteria for Participation in Phase I:**

- One point person for coordinating all SAILS activity at the institution
- Access to undergraduate students for testing
- Ability to provide Web access for students to take the test
- Technical support for creating a Web page/interface that collects student information and generates a unique institutional identifier to be sent to the SAILS server at Kent State University
- Ability to provide demographic data about students (e.g., GPA, gender, ethnic group, class standing)
- Ability to get approval from local Institutional Review Board
- Ability to send point person or representative to a two- to four- hour organizational meeting at ALA Midwinter (January 2003) and follow-up meeting at ALA Annual (June 2003)
- Willingness to allow SAILS to use collected data

**Selection Factors for Phase I:**

- Geographical location
- Diversity of student body
- More than 500 students to take the test
- Ability to participate in Phases II and III

**Fee:** As with other New Measures initiatives, an administrative fee will be charged to cover the deliverables and the costs of managing and coordinating the project by ARL and Kent State University. The cost to participate in Phase I is \$2,500 per library.

**Expression of Interest:** Institutions interested in participating in Phase I of the SAILS project should send an indication of interest and contact person name to Julia Blixrud <jblix@arl.org> as soon as possible. The original deadline of December 31, 2002, has been extended.

**For further information,** contact Julia Blixrud <jblix@arl.org>.

National Council for the Social Studies—Al Frascella

The NCSS has 26,000 social studies teachers, K-16.

A primary concern for the NCSS (with connections with information literacy) is citizenship education in the social studies. NCSS has developed standards relating to this topic, standards now adopted by 20 states. The standards have ten thematic tracks, and information literacy is one track.

Another major concern for the NCSS is that some states are replacing authentic or performance-based assessments with off-the-shelf tests.

The NCSS' national conference was held in November 2002.

American Association of School Librarians—Julie Walker

The AASL held a joint institute with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. There were 450 participants in the first course dealing with collaboration between teachers and librarians to promote information literacy.

The ALA-sponsored “@ Your Library” campaign gathered some important qualitative research that revealed that many parents think that students completing elementary school have learned all they need to know about research.

### National Commission on Libraries and Information Science—Woody Horton

The International Leadership Conference on Information Literacy, with 35 experts representing different sectors of society, is still planned for spring 2003. Funding has still been a problem, but NCLIS, in working with UNESCO, still intends to hold the conference. Experts including educators, librarians, policy experts, and others have written commissioned papers for the conference.

33 of the 35 commissioned papers are now available on the NCLIS web site at [www.nclis.gov](http://www.nclis.gov).

Woody distributed a matrix showing content analysis of an “Information Literacy Life Cycle”, based on work of the 33 contributors of the commissioned papers for the Leadership Conference.

This month the United Nations launched the “Literacy Decade.”

### National Commission on Libraries and Information Science—Joan Challinor

Globalization and information literacy are intertwined. Ireland is the leading globalized country in its workforce and approach to education. Innis, Ireland, is a wired community with a broader level of information literacy than is commonly understood in the U.S.

Announcements:

--On the topic of computer literacy, an important article in the National School Board Association journal by Mike Eisenberg is entitled “What Does it Mean to be Computer Literate”?

--The Australian library association (ALIA) is interested in setting up a group similar to the Forum, with 9 key stakeholder groups.

--Patricia mentioned reports and contacts with SCOUNL (the U.K. group focused on information literacy), and Slovenia.

--Patricia will be rewriting, with co-authors Gordon Gee and Lou Albert, the 1989 book Information Literacy: Revolution in the Library, published by the American Council on Education.

## **4. Update on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies Project**

Ken Kay, of Infotech Strategies/Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, met with the Forum at its October 2002 meeting, and discussed some of the definitional challenges relating to information literacy, technology literacy, and computer literacy.

A definitional summit was held October 18—November 1, 2002, attended by Julie Walker; the meeting blended representatives from business and education. A major emphasis on digital rather than print resources was obvious at this meeting.

As part of the Bush Administration's focus on "No Child Left Behind," the Department of Education is making a major commitment to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Project. Patricia Breivik has been in contact with Doug Simon from the technology office of the U.S. Department of Education related to this project.

## **5. Report on U.S. Navy Program on Information Literacy**

Gretchen Schlag reported that a CD-ROM tutorial on information literacy has been distributed through the CIO Council of the Federal Government. This is the first tutorial of its kind on the federal level, and a new version of the tutorial will soon be released.

## **6. Consideration of topic for next meeting**

Possible discussion topics related to information literacy:

- adult basic literacy
- small business development
- media literacy
- citizenship and information literacy

*The May meeting will be on May 2.*

## **7. Setting of meeting dates**

Fall 2003: October 3

January 2004: (undecided)

