

National Forum on Information Literacy

Meeting Summary

October 1, 2004

Host: National Education Association

Present:

Patricia Breivik, Chair
Joan Challinor, National Commission on Libraries and Information Science
Marjorie Cook, SIL International
Nancy Davenport, Council on Libraries and Information Resources
Ilona Dorsey, National Association of Black School Educators
Al Frascella, National Council on the Social Studies
Mildred Garcia, National Hispanic Medical Association
Craig Gibson, Association of College and Research Libraries
Steve Gilbert, TLT (Teaching and Learning with Technology) Group
Barbara Holton, National Council on Education Statistics
Woody Horton
Barbie Keiser
Lacey Leegwater, American Association of Higher Education
Carrie Lowe, American Library Association
Ying Lu, National School Boards Association
Ruth Pagell, Emory University
Mary Jane Petrowski, Association of College and Research Libraries
Chandhi Rajakaruna, TLT Group
Tony Sarmiento, Senior Service America
John Saunders, National Forum for Black School Administrators
Sylvia Seidel, National Education Association
Marsha Semmel, Institute for Museum and Library Services
Greta Southard, Public Library Association
Robert Wedgeworth, ProLiteracy
Stanley Winkler, Society for Applied Learning Technologies
Karen Zill, Alliance for a Media Literate America

1. Where Literacy and Information Literacy Meet

Dr. Robert Wedgeworth, President and CEO of ProLiteracy Worldwide, a nongovernmental organization addressing the basic literacy and education needs in the U.S. and 47 developing countries, spoke on the relationship between literacy and information literacy. (Dr. Wedgeworth was a member of the original ALA-commissioned committee on information literacy, and was also involved with the recent Prague conference).

Wedgeworth spoke of “the Silent Billion”, the number of people worldwide who may be illiterate. These include the most marginalized people in the world: ethnic and linguistic minorities, women and girls, refugees, persons with disabilities, and indigenous populations. The official statistics on literacy published by nations mask deep pockets of illiteracy.

International literacy programs are developmental in nature, in the context of regional and local problems: health and nutrition, basic education, fragile ecosystems, and HIV/AIDS.

“Access to Excess”: the quintessential feature of our information landscape. We are surrounded by information of all types, text, audio, video, graphical, and data. The multiple sources and multiple types make information-seeking more difficult. Most information systems have not gotten better, just faster. (Example of Google: its power lies in its mathematical algorithms.)

Information literacy addresses, in part, this question of information complexity. It focuses on the user rather than on academic fields.

However, information literacy focuses mostly on training and it assumes basic literacy skills (and in fact, it excludes those without basic literacy skills. Illiterates live in a digital world as well; we cannot leave them behind.

“Acceptable losses”: Most basic literacy training focuses on the next generation because of the appeal of the innocent, inquiring mind. Uneducated adults, however, are often seen as acceptable losses in the view of policymakers. With “family literacy”, the focus is still on children.

The case for Adult Literacy: there is an immediate “return on investment” (contributions of adults to the workplace, their families, their communities); adult literacy increases the chance of successful education for their children; it creates alternatives to lives of poverty, illness, violence; and it is inexpensive.

The impact of information literacy on basic literacy: it must be an inclusive concept; it has to create awareness before it can advance training; it needs the involvement of the communications industry; and its advocates need to hear the voices of “the Silent Billion.” There is also an important connection between information literacy and critical thinking (critical thinking can be thought of as an overarching rubric for computer literacy, library literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, etc).

Questions and comments:

— Involvement from the communication industry: the industry must have an interest in the concept of basic literacy because of policy-making impact

— Illiteracy in the U.S.: there are large pockets of illiteracy in the U.S. Forty million Americans are functionally illiterate. The increase in immigration is also having an impact.

— Is information literacy a part of basic literacy? Information literacy is an umbrella concept, and it needs to become a public policy concept.

— Illiterate populations are increasing in the context of “access to excess”. This presents new problems and new opportunities to advocates, educators, and policymakers. Increased immigration is a challenge; a new opportunity involves combining training with new technologies. For example, the Dutch have mandated new training for migrants to their country. However, there is a political dimension: it can be difficult to convince policymakers of the value of adult literacy because adult illiterates gain economically, meaning employers may lose them, or have to pay higher wages.

— Performance documentation for information literacy: we need research data to substantiate claims made on its behalf, and to show its value in all sectors of society. (There is a Canadian study that shows direct connection between basic skills and economic growth.)

— The business community has not fully grasped the importance of information literacy in the workplace. The business and corporate sectors won’t necessarily move toward information literacy even if it’s their own best interest.

— We need a public policy agenda to promote information literacy with policymakers.

— Regarding the lack of assessment or performance data: can this be developed as part of a research agenda, and related to a broader public policy agenda?

The website for ProLiteracy can be found at www.proliteracy.org.

2.Approval of Summary of May 2004 meeting

The summary was approved as read.

3. Members’ Reports

Association of College and Research Libraries—Mary Jane Petrowski

ACRL is working with other ALA units and divisions (AASL, YALSA, ALSC, PLA, OLOS, and Office for Diversity) on project (tentatively titled “Librarians’ Role in the 21st Century Literacy@Your Library”) to develop a toolkit in print and on the web.

The ACRL Board of Directors approved the new strategic plan for 2005-2010. One of the three strategic areas is higher education and research with a learning goal that states, “ACRL and its members are recognized as collaborative leaders in teaching lifelong learning skills, improving techniques for assessing learning outcomes, and in creating environments for discovery.” (See <http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/whatisacrl/whatacrl.htm>)

The Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education were updated last spring to include citation guidelines and endorsement by the Council of Independent Colleges (February 2004).

Applications are being accepted for the ACRL Immersion Program '05. The program will be held at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida, July 29—August 3, 2005.

National Hispanic Medical Association—Millie Garcia

The National Hispanic Medical Association has begun a Health Portal, and is focusing on international outreach.

Public Library Association—Greta Southard

PLA is currently involved in an early literacy initiative focused on better preschool and outreach. Another project is an ALA initiative, 21st Century Literacy that involves the work of multiple ALA divisions.

National Council on the Social Studies—Al Frascella

The national conference for NCSS will be held in November 2005 in Baltimore, and the conference will be promoted with social studies teachers.

Society for Applied Learning Technologies—Stanley Winkler

Stanley's organization is interested in applied technology in K-12, and in science fairs in the Washington, D.C. area. Stanley distributed copies of Instructional Delivery Systems on disk—the theme of this particular issue deals with information literacy.

Pertaining to science fairs, Stanley described his organization's involvement in the statement: **“Science Fairs As A General Educational Learning Tool: A novel and exciting approach to developing information literacy.”** (See attached.)

National Education Association—Sylvia Seidel

Sylvia is managing a network of professional development schools, and teacher training programs are now being pushed to include a core segment on information literacy in their curriculum.

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

The TLT Group continues to co-sponsor online workshops with ACRL, on such topics as assessment, best practices, and collaboration. A new topic for future workshops is “Instructional Resources.”

SIL International—Marjorie Cook

Marjorie's organization is addressing literacy issues in a wide range of countries.

National Commission on Libraries and Information Science—Joan Challinor

Joan discussed her involvement in the Prague Conference (International Leadership Conference on Information Literacy) and mentioned ways that the Prague Declaration could be used by the Forum.

Council on Library and Information Resources—Nancy Davenport

CLIR has a research focus on long-term preservation of scholarly information resources.

National Center for Education Statistics—Barbara Holton

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has two surveys with questions about institutional support for information literacy. Data collection for the Academic Library Survey (ALS) will begin on November 1 and will continue until the end of February 2005. When data processing has been completed, the data file and a report will be released. The web site for this survey is <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/libraries/academic.asp>

Data collection has been completed for the School Library Media Center Survey, a component of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). Data processing is underway. When data processing has been completed, the data file and a report will be released. The web site for this survey is <http://www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass>.

National Forum for Black School Administrators—John Saunders

Economic development and workforce development are driving employers' interest in information literacy; hence John's interest in the work of the Forum.

Institute for Museum and Library Services—Marshal Semmel

Marsha Semmel, Director for Strategic Partnerships at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), reported on several activities and programs.

- In September, 2004, IMLS and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) signed an agreement for a joint funding initiative, The Partnership for a Nation of Learners (www.partnershipforlearners.org). The goal is to encourage museums, libraries, and public broadcasters to fulfill their educational and community roles more effectively through meaningful content and service collaborations. The Partnership for a Nation of Learners program will provide \$2.2 million in grant support for new and existing community collaborations, as well as professional development opportunities, and on-line collaboration tools and resources.
- On August 30-1, 2004, IMLS hosted a workshop, "Charting the Landscape/Mapping New Paths: Museums, Libraries & K-12," that explored the definition of new relationships and future possibilities for museums, libraries, and K-12 education. The workshop focused on K-12 as a foundation for lifelong learning and full participation in family, community, work, and society. Participants explored ways in which museums, libraries, schools and other institutions can work together to fulfill a community-wide responsibility for learning. Workshop materials can be found at www.imls.gov/pubs/chartingthelandscape/index.htm, and a publication on the workshop recommendations is in preparation.
- IMLS Director Dr. Robert S. Martin served as Head of the U.S. Delegation to the Organization of American States' Intergovernmental Meeting of Ministers of Culture and Highest Appropriate Authorities. The meeting in Mexico City, August 23-25, issued a

declaration on cultural diversity. (More information on this meeting, including Dr. Martin's address, is at www.ims.gov.) In September, Dr. Martin served as co-head of the U.S. Delegation to UNESCO's First Intergovernmental Meeting on the preliminary draft International Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions meeting in Paris from September 20-25. IMLS is also involved in discussions and planning for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, scheduled to be held in Tunis in late 2005.

- For 2005, IMLS is revising its National Leadership Grant guidelines. These grants promote innovative model projects involving museums and libraries and addressing broad goals. The main categories for 2005 National Leadership Grants are Advancing Learning Communities; Building Digital Resources; and Research and Demonstration. Grant guidelines will be posted online at www.ims.gov by early November.
- In mid-July and mid-September, IMLS announced awards in a number of grant categories, including Librarians for the 21st century, National Leadership Grants, and grants for Library Services for Native Americans. A grant to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill will fund a national research study on the future of librarians in the workforce. Many of these awards concern issues of literacy, including information literacy. Information about all grant awards can be found at www.ims.gov.

Woody Horton (formerly of NCLIS)

Woody continues to be interested in the work of the Forum. He was instrumental in developing the Prague Conference by working with UNESCO.

Emory University—Ruth Pagell

Ruth is interested in the work of the Forum pertaining to information literacy on the international scene.

Barbie Keiser

Barbie mentioned a clearinghouse for information literacy for the European Union, particularly for the new members from eastern Europe. She also discussed the information literacy listserv/discussion forum sponsored by Sheffield University that offers an international, cross-sectional focus.

American Association of Higher Education—Lacey Leegwater

At an upcoming AAHE Board Meeting, Barbara Cambridge of AAHE will present on the information literacy agenda. Also, some sessions on information literacy will be offered at the upcoming AAHE-sponsored conference on higher education.

Alliance for Media Literate America—Karen Zill

National Media Education Conference (NMEC)

Planning is well under way for this biennial event sponsored by AMLA, which will take place in San Francisco, June 25-28, 2005. This year's theme, "Giving Voice to a Diverse Nation,"

explores the vital role of media literacy education in empowering all individuals in our increasingly diverse society to:

- participate fully in our information- and media-saturated culture;
- be accurately represented in and by media;
- have the skills, access, and opportunities to tell their stories and hear their stories told.

Workshops and panels will look at a wide variety of topics, among them issues surrounding media education and health; educational uses of video games; how families make decisions about media usage; 21st century skills and media education. A special feature of NMEC is Modern Media Makers (M3), a 3-day production camp for teens who create video messages about the conference. The closing plenary session is devoted entirely to their work. Other youth involvement at the conference will include journalism, participation on panels, and screenings of youth-produced media.

Session proposals will be accepted through the third week of October. For a proposal application and more information about NMEC, go to www.amlainfo.org.

Australian Library and Information Association

The Association has been actively involved in promoting lifelong learning and information literacy as part of two national studies. Responding to the Department of Education, Science and Training's consultation paper "You Can Too—Adult Learning in Australia," ALIA stated: "But libraries also play a very active role in the education of adults by helping them to become information-literate. Simply providing access to new technologies is not sufficient to meet adult-learning needs. Because of their training, librarians are highly-aware of a client's need to develop information literacy skills. Consequently, as new technologies are introduced, librarians and libraries have developed and are continuing to develop education programs which will enable their clients not only to access the multiplicity of resources available—whether in print or electronic format or in other media—but which will also teach them to locate, evaluate and effectively use information to enhance their learning and develop new skills and become information literate." The other response was to the Senate, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee's *Inquiry into the Progress and Future Direction of Life-Long Learning*.

General reports and announcements:

- Iowa has held a statewide conference on information literacy. It was originally planned by two community college librarians, and from the conference an initiative to develop a statewide plan for information literacy is now underway.
- Patricia Breivik has received inquiries from a number of countries about the work of the Forum. Inquiries have come from: India, where a "Network Alliance" for voluntary action might form the basis for comparable activities to those of the U.S. Forum; also from India, an inquiry was received from Information Science Today; from Russia, from

the Russian Reading Association; from Thailand, from an individual faculty member; and from Australia, from a group of public libraries.

- IMLS is offering a “Librarians for the 21st Century” grant program, with \$20 million in grant monies. Information is available on the web site at www.ims.gov.
- News from the U.K. (Sheila Webber at the University of Sheffield):

— The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (formerly the Library Association/Institute of Information Scientists) has completed a definition of information literacy, which will be released together with a list of key skills:

“Information literacy is knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use, and communicate it in an ethical manner.”

This definition implies several skills, including understandings of: the need for information; the resources available; how to find information; the need to evaluate results; how to work with or exploit results; ethics and responsibility of use; how to communicate or share findings; and managing findings.

This definition will be used for several purposes, including lobbying to get Information literacy higher on the agenda of Government Departments.

— The CILIP Information Literacy Special Interest Group now has a home page at http://www.cilip.org.uk/groups/csg/csg_ilg/index.html and has planned a conference in April 2005. Sheila Webber is on the special interest group committee and is taking a special remit for information literacy research. The Chair of the group is Debbi Boden.

— Sheila is also one of the individuals invited to speak at a seminar being held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, 25-26 October 2004, “Information Literacy initiatives and programs for CEI Countries,” with delegates invited for Central and Eastern European countries. From the U.S., Barbie Keiser is also involved in the Organization, but the initiative came from Zdravka Pejova at ICPE and the Emphasis is on information literacy supporting economic growth.

— At the IFLA Conference in Oslo (August 2005) there will be a joint (4- hour) session of the Management and Marketing Section and the Information Literacy section, “Information Literacy: a voyage of discovery for citizens and librarians”. Sheila proposed this session, along with Christina Tovote. There will also Sessions on information literacy at the recent IFLA Conference in Buenos Aires.

— The discussion list hosted at Sheffield University is available at: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/information_literacy

4. UNESCO and International Initiatives

Patricia asked for feedback on the draft guidelines, “International Guidelines on Information Literacy” prepared by Jesus Lau, Chair of the Information Literacy Section of International Federation of Library Associations. (See attached.) People are encouraged to send suggestions directly to Lau at jlau@uacj.mx.

5. Discussion of Proposed Global Conference on Information Literacy

The Forum discussed a proposed Global Conference on Information Literacy, for which an initial planning draft was outlined and first distributed at the 2004 IFLA Conference in Buenos Aires, by Abdelaziz Abid of UNESCO.

This idea centered on teams of experts from groups of countries gathering to offer customized guidance to certain representatives at the IFLA Conference.

However, the concept behind this conference would not preclude a more general conference (as a followup to the Prague conference).

Suggestions for Mr. Abid (which Patricia will relay on behalf of the Forum):

- Purposes of the conference should be to raise public awareness, establish standards, provide model programs
- Proposal needs to address lifelong learning and information literacy more directly
- Should there be regional (more than one country) umbrella organizations for information literacy?
- the “Group of Experts” could serve as a planning group for a larger, more inclusive international conference
- the Prague Declaration needs to be the key intellectual framework for the second international conference
- this draft proposal from Mr. Abid is very academic-focused (need to draw connections between formal education settings and communities)
- The proposal needs to call for ‘customizable templates’ (examples: the BiblioRed outreach program in Colombia; the project in Aarhus, Denmark, facilitating free public access to technology)
- the conference should facilitate countries’ construction of a culturally-sensitive approach to information literacy (using a regional approach, groups of countries).

6. ETS/ICT Skills

The new ETS/ICT Skills Test will be ready in Spring 2005. Possible ideas for supporting the use of this new test: IMLS is considering convening a group to develop policy regarding the use of the test; another group could review the test to see possible connections with the NSSE (National

Survey of Student Engagement); once student ICT learning levels are documented, what should result; and others could develop the linkages between the test and the ACRL Best Practices Project.

7. Setting of meeting dates

January meeting: **January 28, 2005** — topic will be health literacy

May meeting: **May 13, 2005**