

Digital Literacy and Public Libraries

Shuchita Singh¹

¹Dy. Librarian, Central Library, B.H.U., Varanasi

Abstract - The article define the digital literacy and its types and throws lights on need of digital literacy to make the people digitally literate. It deals with the role of public libraries in spreading digital literacy among people at local, district, state and national level.

Key Words: Digital, Literacy, Knowledge & Domain...

1.INTRODUCTION

Now a day's digital literacy has become a need of modern libraries. Digital literacy term is the combination of two terms Digital and Literacy where digital means symbolic representation of data and literacy deals with the ability to read for gaining knowledge, to write coherently, and think critically about the written word. The common definition of digital literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, understand, evaluate, create and communicate digital information, an ability that requires both cognitive and technical skills [1]. Digital literacy also includes the ability to effectively use a range of technologies for ex. computers, mobile devices and Internet-enabled sites for ex. Blogs, Twitter, Face book, YouTube. These different components of digital literacy are of equal importance. Without access of the digital resources, people cannot develop digital literacy; without digital literacy, they cannot gain maximum benefit from online resources.

2.REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2013, Momena Khatun, student of Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences has studied on the topic of digital literacy and public library. In her dissertation she has investigated present practices, strength and weakness, influence and challenges of digital information literacy of the Oslo Public Library Professionals.

2007, Horng-Ji Lai student of Graduate Institute of Adult and Continuing Education, National Chi Nan University, Taiwan has also done study on the topic of Information Literacy Training in Public Libraries: A Case from Canada in which he tried to explore the current state of information literacy(IL) training and to identify the strategies and methods used by Canadian public libraries in improving IL skills for their staff and patrons.

3.DIGITAL LITERACY AND ITS TYPES

Digital literacy term combines so many terms related to it which are mentioned as follows:

3.1.Basic Literacy:

Basic literacy is essential for all in order to read, write and analyze the written words and sentences. In this electronic era, the meaning of this term has been expanded in which the ability to use language, numbers, images, computers and other basic means to understand, communicate, gain knowledge and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture are included.

3.2.Technological Literacy:

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) defines technology literacy as the ability to use appropriate technology to communicate, solve problems, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, design and create information to improve learning in all subject areas and acquire lifelong knowledge and skills in the 21st century [2].

3.3.Visual Literacy:

According to Wikipedia (2011), "Visual literacy is based on the idea that pictures can be 'read' and that meaning can be communicated through a process of reading."

Now a day the word visual literacy are being used in other subject areas also such as this term is being used in information and communication technology also in order to read, communicate the meaning of images or pictures.

3.4.Information Literacy:

According to CILIP, Information literacy knows when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner [3].

3.5.Global Awareness:

Global awareness is knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems. Libraries can be helpful in order to spread a global awareness among users about global issues and trends.

4. PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND NEED OF DIGITAL LITERACY

The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. It provides all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users irrespective of their age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status [4].

In this electronic era, there is a need of public libraries that make the people digitally literate due to following mentioned reasons and needs:

- i. Technological evolution is encouraging the people to develop technological skills in order to get acquainted with the new technologies.
- ii. Now a day mostly information is available in digital form, there is need to have a skill of using the information.
- iii. To provide adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups.
- iv. To support and participate in literacy programmes for all age groups, and initiating such activities if necessary.

5. ROLE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN DIGITAL LITERACY

The public library is a library which is concerned with information literacy and lifelong learning. Public libraries can play an important role in spreading awareness about digital literacy among users of remote areas which can be understood in following points

5.1. Informal point-of-use assistance:

Public Libraries are the place of informal learning for their users because it is not affiliated with any school, colleges and universities and its aim is not related with supporting the course curriculum of the educational institutions. Here, one may find the actual knowledge by participating in the informal education programmes of public libraries such as programmes based on the general awareness on various issues, and may familiarize with the government policies and government publications also.

5.2. Formal technology training classes:

Public libraries are now changing their own infrastructure according to the need of modern users in order to meet their requirements. The various types of training classes for example internet skills training and general software use are being run by the public libraries at the district, state and national level. The main purpose should be to make the user to be able not only to navigate and evaluate tools of technology but to use those tools to create meaningful content of their area of interest.

5.3. Online training materials:

The public libraries may run online courses on various topics for various user groups like children, women, working professionals and students. The course may cover the following mentioned areas:

- How to use computer and internet.
- How to improve your English.
- Learning the languages.
- Writing skills.
- How to attend the interviews.
- How to prepare for the examinations.
- How to groom your children.

The schedule of the online courses should be highlighted on the library website so that a user can see that and participate in these courses enthusiastically.

5.4. One-on-one sessions by appointment:

A public library can prepare a schedule for one-on-one sessions for their end users in which following topics can be covered:

- To know downloading E- Books, audio books and magazines to your E- Reader, tablet or other device.
- How to use an iPad, kindle, Android device or Smartphone.
- How to set up an e-mail account.
- How to organize files, photos and music.

A user can apply for these sessions and library staff can provide assistance to users who are attending these sessions.

6. CONCLUSION

The public library should try to satisfy the needs of all age groups and it should have material in hardcopy or softcopy or online relevant to their user groups also. Public library can provide access to their collections and services through modern technologies for their user groups who are fully acquainted with these technologies and should also have traditional collections for users who are not fully aware about modern technologies. A campaign is necessary for making the citizens technologically literate for which public libraries should come forward at local, district, state and national level.

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