Book Review

Foundations of information literacy, Taylor, Natalie Greene, and Paul T. Jaeger. ALA Neal-Schuman, 2022

Jennifer Campbell-Meier
Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand
E-mail: jennifer.campbell-meier@vuw.ac.nz

With the importance of Information literacy evident during the pandemic, individuals needed to find relevant information online that helped them understand the world around them. Information literacy provides individuals with a framework to employ critical thinking skills to negotiate information for their jobs, their health, and includes aspects of digital literacy, and media literacy. Examining the role of information literacy in social, cultural, and political contexts, Natalie Greene Taylor, University of South Florida, and Paul Jaeger, University of Maryland, discuss both the how and the why of information literacy and its necessity for an engaged citizenry.

The first chapter dedicated to the foundations for the title and outlining the content and acts as a foreword and introduction. The authors provide a holistic definition of information literacy in this chapter (page 5):

> *Information literacy is a constantly refined practice of processing, accessing, understanding, critically evaluating, and using information in ways that are relevant to one's life. Information literacy relies on a social structure that promotes the agency of individuals in their communities and in the legal, political, educational, communication, and economic structures in their lives. Practicing information literacy is an iterative learning process that occurs throughout an individual's lifetime.*

The first section, chapters 2–5, defines information literacy within the context of information behaviour. Often identified as a set of skills needed to find and evaluation information, standards and frameworks have developed within academic and school contexts. Over time, information literacy models have been expanded, revised to critically explore frameworks for life-long learning. The discussion follows the development of information literacy skills and frameworks, noting that the skills models are easier to operationalise, but that frameworks identify threshold concepts and the philosophical underpinnings. The standards and frameworks do not supersede one another, but add to do what Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe identifies as a "constellation" with recognisable touchpoints (Hinchliffe, 2016). More holistic models of information literacy have developed focusing on everyday life, not just academic life or work, as information literacy skills are needed to support an engaged citizenry. Thus building an argument for the authors' definition of information literacy and the inclusion of digital literacy, media literacy, and

numeracy. Chapters 4 and 5 provide pragmatic examples of how information literacy initiatives are operationalised across libraries and archives. There is a heavy contextualisation to North American models and practices, however the chapters (4 and 5) include examples from Europe, Australian and New Zealand. These chapters may be of interest to academics and educators developing information literacy plans.

The second section, chapters 6–9, view information in social, cultural, and political contexts, exploring how definitions of information literacy may lead to different policies and to different outcomes. Arguing that Information literacy as a human right based on the wide range of social, cultural, economic, legal and political forces shaping information and the rights of citizens. While information professionals cannot change the algorithms that are used online for searching and recommending misinformation, they assist people finding information, sharing appropriate tools, and providing frameworks for evaluating information. Without strong information policies and information literate policymakers, those in need may never acquire the skills necessary to avoid misinformation and disinformation. The section discusses how policies and laws impacts on rights to information as well as on information professionals, standards, and cultural institutions. Consideration of rights is essential to ensure the information behaviour (the ways individuals interact with and use information) is enabled for all populations. These chapters provide a library and information science perspective that may be a useful supplement for social justice, and government courses exploring human rights.

Chapters 10–12 discuss information illiteracy, misinformation, and disinformation. Misinformation is more than "fake news", as Taylor and Jaeger identify its use to obscure the goals of those providing incorrect information. The authors note that "fake news" has been used to describe both *misinformation*, incorrect information spread without ill intent, and *disinformation*, incorrect information spread with malicious intent, using QAnon as an illustration. While individuals have a choice to be information literate, they also have the choice to be *information illiterate*, deliberately choosing incorrect information and belief in "alternative fact", which impacts society as seen in acceptance of covid-19 responses. Noting access in not just about physical access, but requires the user is able to make sense of it, articulate it, and share it. The authors continue the discussion of misinformation, disinformation and illiteracy. Framing misinformation in a historical context by connecting current misinformation to the confidence men in the late 1800s with social change leading to a quest for answers. The discussion of advertising and propaganda turns to social media, discussing its impact on covid 19 misinformation and disinformation. These chapters provide background that may be a useful for policy makers, as well as academics in government, law, and media studies.

The final section, chapters 13–16, discuss the role of libraries and librarians, as trusted community members, to provide information literacy instruction. Providing a call to action for librarians to advocate at all levels of government that information literacy is a human right and that as a social good, information literacy efforts should be supported (and funded). A key point in this section, many policymakers do not have the information literacy skills needed to avoid misinformation or disinformation let alone to lead to information policy. These chapters will be of interest to information professionals, especially those interested in social justice, as well as those working in public policy, and local government initiatives.

Taylor and Jaeger build a definition of information literacy that is needed to develop an informed populace. A definition that includes digital and media literacy, as well as ensuring individuals have the necessary skills for context-specific literacies (e.g. data or health). While the book is aimed at information professionals, particularly in the United States, its structure provides access points for different audiences. Of specific interest to those teaching policy, the authors identify threats to information literacy and the consequences of misinformation, disinformation, and the lack of information literacy have on society.

In addition, the discussion of information literacy as a human right and the role of lifelong information literacy may be of interest to those working in education, public policy, and local government initiatives. End of chapter questions also provide helpful discussion prompts for academics in the social sciences and law.

Reference

Hinchliffe, L.J. (2016). The ACRL Information Literacy Constellation. https://lisahinchliffe.com/2016/06/19/information-literacy-constellation/.