Exploring 3 Definitions of Information Literacy

Instructions: *Read and annotate the definitions below. What do you notice? Are there any patterns or repetitions among the various definitions? Given these definitions, how would you define information literacy? In what ways do you feel competent in these literacies? What skills do you need to continue to develop?*

Syracuse University Librarian and Subject Specialist, Dr. Patrick Williams and the

Patrick Willliams defines information literacy as:

"The ability to know when there is a need for information; to locate, identify, and evaluate information; and to effectively use that information for the problem at hand."

ACRL (Association of College & Research Libraries) defines literacy:

Information Literacy Defined

Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information." [1] Information literacy also is increasingly important in the contemporary environment of rapid technological change and proliferating information resources. Because of the escalating complexity of this environment, individuals are faced with diverse, abundant information choices--in their academic studies, in the workplace, and in their personal lives. Information is available through libraries, community resources, special interest organizations, media, and the Internet--and increasingly, information comes to individuals in unfiltered formats, raising questions about its authenticity, validity, and reliability. In addition, information is available through multiple media, including graphical, aural, and textual, and these pose new challenges for individuals in evaluating and understanding it. The uncertain quality and expanding quantity of information pose large challenges for society. The sheer abundance of information will not in itself create a more informed citizenry without a complementary cluster of abilities necessary to use information effectively.

Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning. An information literate individual is able to:

- Determine the extent of information needed
- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically
- Incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base
- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally

Kansas State University Anthropology Professor Michael Wesch, in his TED Talk "From Knowledgeable to Knowledge-able," argues that information literacy is even more important in the digital age, and urges teachers to help students learn to use new technologies to:

- **find**
- **sort**
- **analyze**
- **criticize**
  and, ultimately,
- **create** new information and knowledge.