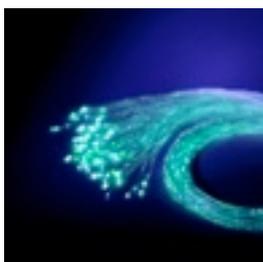# MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY

A resource for Postgraduate Research Students

Guidebook for supervisors, teachers and library staff

Version 1 (November 2010)

MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY

A resource for Postgraduate Research Students

Background

The Media and Information Literacy (hereafter, M&IL) resource was created as the result of a project funded between January and July 2010 by the Higher Education Academy (Information and Computer Science subject centre).

The project revised and repurposed teaching materials which were in use in the School of Education, University of Manchester, UK, and which were used on a course unit, *EDUC61712 Media and Information Literacy* that formed a part of the MA: Digital Technologies, Communication and Education (see www.MAdigitaltechnologies.com). The intention of the project was to orient the materials more toward postgraduate research students (see "Audience" below), and to allow them to be disseminated and thereby available to other institutions.

This guidebook is here to help you with the process of adapting the resource for use in your institution. This should not be a complex task, but:

- there are some resources which we must clarify are subject to reuse restrictions, unlike the majority of resources on the site;

- there are a few resources within which need to be specifically tailored to your own institutional needs;

- the technological model and the pedagogical rationale behind the resource may need some brief explanation;

- some advice may be welcome on how students' work with this resource can be supported and accredited;

- registering your usage of this resource is an option you may wish to explore.

This guidebook provides some brief advice on all these issues.

Audience

The resource is intended for postgraduate research (PGR) students in any subject. It should also be of interest to postgraduate taught, or Masters' level, students if they have to complete a small-scale research project of some kind, such as a dissertation.

Students will find this resource particularly useful at the start of their studies, but it should remain a useful source of advice and information right through until the preparation of the final thesis or dissertation.

Though it is less specifically tailored to their needs, the resource may also be of interest to postdoctoral researchers, research assistants, PhD supervisors and library staff interested in how they may better support research students.

Resources subject to copyright

There are three books from which chapters are used as sample texts. These resources are an *exception* to the open access principle of the rest of the resource. They should not be reused without further permission from the publishers.

The three books, and the course topics in which the digitised chapter appears, are:

- Hess, Charlotte. and Ostrom, Elinor. (eds.), (2007) Managing the Information Commons. (The MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts). The chapter in use is by Peter Levine: 'Collective action, civic engagement, and the knowledge commons.' It is used in topic 6. This resource has been presented with the permission of the MIT Press.

- Thompson, Damian. (2008): *Counterknowledge* (Atlantic Books: London). The chapter in use is chapter 6, 'Living with counterknowledge'. It is used in topic 5. This resource has been presented with the permission of Atlantic Books.

- Whitworth, A. (2009): *Information Obesity* (Chandos: Oxford). There are two extracts in use, neither of which constitutes a full chapter: an extract from chapter 5 (pp. 68-76) used in topic 5; and one from chapter 2 (pp. 11-16), used in topic 7. These resources have been presented with the permission of the original author.

The 'additional resources' page in topic 7 may also include some papers which are published in journals to which you do not subscribe, but none of the resources on this page are central, and if this is the case they can be easily deleted or changed.

Technological requirements

No special technical requirements are needed of users, save the ability to listen to audio files in the MP3 format.

Pedagogical rationale

The pedagogical rationale behind the resource is most fully explained by working through it, but briefly, its foundation is the following journal article:

- Bruce, C., Edwards, S. and Lupton, M. (2006): Six Frames for Information literacy Education: a conceptual framework for interpreting the relationships between theory and practice. *ITALICS* 5/1. [An extract from the article forms part of the materials for topic 1: the full version is available for download at http://www.ics.heacademy.ac.uk/italics/vol5iss1.htm, last accessed 25 July 2010.]

In this article, Bruce *et al* observe that information literacy (IL) can be interpreted in a variety of ways, each of which implies a different form of assessment, different ways of valuing information, and so on. These constitute the six different *frames* of IL.

Whitworth, in a later article in the *Journal of Information Literacy*[1], argued that these six frames in turn represent three forms of value, each of which is interdependent and essential in order to fully assess the value of any given piece of information. These are: *objective* means of valuing information, that is, its scientific validity; *subjective* means, that is, whether it is valuable in the user's personal context; and *intersubjective* value, that is, whether it adheres to value schemes such as laws, ethics, economics and others which are developed collaboratively and politically. This article then went on to explain how the sixth of Bruce *et al*'s frames, the *relational* frame, is that which holds the other five together and should form the foundation for IL teaching.

Teaching in the relational frame requires the development of a space in which students can "explore variation" in the ways they interact with information. The information literate person is not just someone who can competently access databases and perform an information search, though these are nevertheless essential foundational skills, and are thus encompassed by Bruce *et al*'s "content" and "competency" frames. As well as these, information literacy also requires the user to assign value to information in specific contexts (the "personal relevance" frame); appreciate how they generally, and personally, create knowledge from found information (the "learning to learn" frame); and realise how the media, the technologies in use, and political, social and economic issues impact on the availability of information in the public sphere (the "social impact" frame).

The M&IL resource therefore covers all these issues and shows the linkages between them. This distinguishes it from other available IL resources which typically focus on only one or two of these frames, often the content and competency frames, though subject-specific resources may also look at the personal relevance frame.

Supporting and accrediting students' work

The resource is designed to stand alone. The intention is that students follow it independently.

Whether and how to accredit students' work on this resource is a decision that will have to be taken at each institution. At Manchester, where the resource originated, this was done through the PGR progression system, **eProg**. The resource was recommended to students as being amongst the available and approved examples of research skills training which they could benefit from in the early stages of their studies.

You may also decide that students need more active support as they work through the resource. How this is done is a decision best taken at institutional level.

The resource may also be used as an accompaniment to a more focused programme of IL education, whether delivered face-to-face, online or through some blend of the two. Due to the open access nature

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[1] Whitworth, A. (2009). Teaching in the relational frame: the Media and Information Literacy course at Manchester. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 3/2, 25-38.

of the resource and the Creative Commons license under which it has been published, it is quite permissible to select only certain parts of the resource for use with students, so these may be integrated into other courses or classes. However, do note that the resource is intended to be used as a whole, and selections from it should be made carefully.

Indicating your use of the resource

There is no requirement to register or notify anyone that you are using this resource. However, we would welcome this on a voluntary basis, as it will enable us to judge the level and scope of its use, notify users of updates, and create an informal community of users who may at a later date discuss how the resource can be improved, integrated into institutional-level teaching, or further developed in other ways.

If you want to be part of any such community, email Drew Whitworth on andrew.whitworth@manchester.ac.uk. Please also use this email address to notify us of any problems which may arise as you use the resource - e.g. broken links, problems downloading any resources, etc.

It also includes information on the nature of scientific l

Audio file 5A): Reflection on practice
ACTIVITY: Reflecting on your IL skills
ACTIVITY: Developing an IL plan of action