



The Impact of Information Literacy on Societal Development: A Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT

Information literacy is an important part of how society grows and changes. It helps people find, understand, and use information in a world that is always changing. This study looks at how information literacy connects to the progress of society, especially in areas like education, business, and personal growth. The research uses a scoping review methodology and proper step-wise criteria have been followed. A total of 25 eligible studies were chosen without a time and year limitation. By combining ideas from these studies, the study finds important patterns, difficulties, and chances for improving information skills, which can help society grow. Research shows that information literacy is important for encouraging critical thinking, helping people make good decisions, helping society move forward, and allowing people to handle the challenges of the modern information world responsibly and effectively. The study says we need to include information literacy in educational institutions, government plans, and community programs. It ends by giving practical suggestions for people in charge to work together and make information literacy a key part of building a better society.

Keywords: *Societal Development, Digital Literacy, Access to Information, Educational Gaps, Civic Engagement, Digital Content, Technology and Society, Social Media and Information, Digital Divide Solutions.*

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Introduction

In today's world, where everything is connected and constantly changing, information literacy (IL) has become a key skill for everyone. It means being able to recognize when you need information, find it quickly, judge if it's trustworthy and useful, and use it wisely in different situations (American Library Association, 2000). IL isn't just important for school or work; it's essential for making smart decisions, thinking critically, and being involved in society, the economy, and politics.

As digital technology becomes more common, the amount of information available is growing very quickly. This brings both chances and problems. According to Cisco's Annual Internet Report (2020), the number of people using the Internet worldwide is expected to go over 5 billion. This will lead to more digital content in every area. However, with so much information, there is also more false information, misleading content, and "fake news." The spread of false information and the growing lack of trust in where we get our news and who we rely on for it are big problems (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Because of this, knowing how to use information well (IL) is super important these days. It gives people the know-how to tell good sources from bad ones, fight back against fake news, and make smart choices.

Information Literacy (IL) really makes a difference across a wide range of areas. For instance, in education, it fosters lifelong learning, creativity, and adaptability—qualities that are crucial in the knowledge-driven society of today (UNESCO, 2013). In terms of the economy, IL increases workplace productivity by empowering employees to properly evaluate and utilize information, which eventually results in better decisions (World Economic Forum, 2020). In public health, the ability to assess internet health information enables people to avoid dangerous disinformation and make more informed health decisions (Chesser et al., 2020). Furthermore, IL empowers citizens to critically evaluate information, so bolstering democracy and reducing susceptibility to online manipulation (Carmi et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the disparity in information literacy remains a global concern. Not everyone has equal

access to technology and information because of disparities in social status, income, and place of residence. This unequal access is a major issue, as van Dijk noted in 2020. To make matters worse, information literacy is not always taught adequately in schools, people may not understand its significance, and there can be significant cultural differences in how people utilize and trust information.

We require a comprehensive approach to address these issues. Integrating Information Literacy (IL) into the curriculum, establishing community-based initiatives that support individuals in enhancing their IL skills throughout their lives, and establishing regulations that guarantee equitable access to technology are all critical. AI and online platforms are two examples of new technologies that have great promise to improve Illinois education and reach a larger audience.

Methodology

This study examines the relationship between information literacy and societal development using a scoping review methodology. The study examined 25 pertinent studies using the Six-Stage Scoping Review framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) as a guide. This included formulating the research topic, identifying pertinent studies, evaluating their suitability, charting the extracted data, and finally compiling and showcasing the results. The framework suggests a sixth step, consultation, but this wasn't part of the current study. So this method includes finding, choosing, and combining relevant research studies in a structured way to give a clear picture of the main trends, problems, and opportunities in this area.

We chose 25 studies that fit well with our research goals and were about information literacy and its effects on society. We did not limit the studies by when they were published, so we could include a wide range of time periods. From these studies, we pulled out important details. Based on this, we created practical suggestions for people involved, such as: adding information literacy to school programs and using information literacy ideas in government plans and community projects.

Step 1: Identifying the Research Questions:

This article aims to:

1. Look at how important information literacy (IL) is for the growth of society, showing how it helps in areas like education, the economy, health, and government.
2. Study the obstacles to IL, such as issues with

By looking at these points, this article wants to show why it's urgent to treat IL as a basic skill. It can help with sustainable development, give people more control over their lives, and deal with the challenges of today's information world.

Steps 2 and 3 were done in two rounds, the following figure shows how these rounds were done.

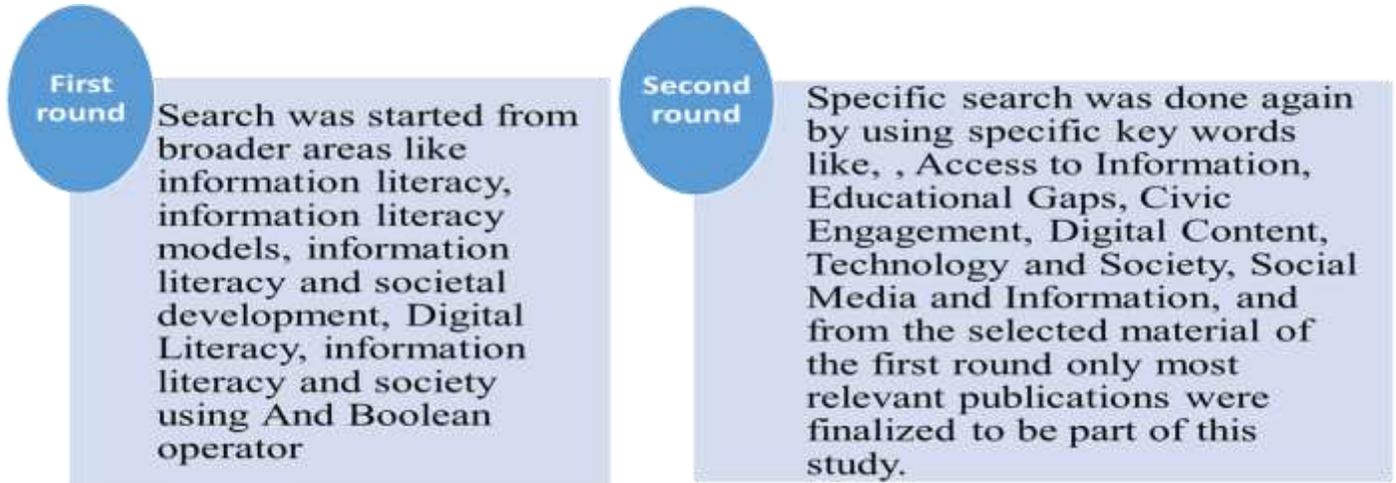


Figure 1: *Identification of relevant studies*

Steps 4 and 5: Charting the Data and Reporting the Results:

We have followed steps 4 and 5 for each of our objectives. Step 4 is presented in the form of tables mentioned below and step 5 Collecting, summarizing, and reporting the results is mentioned after the table in each objective respectively.

Objective 1: The Importance of Information Literacy in Societal Development

Information literacy plays a crucial role in the development of society, particularly in the field of education. An informed society depends on individuals who can effectively evaluate information sources, tell the difference between reliable and deceptive content, and use their knowledge in both academic and professional settings. Schools and other educational institutions are instrumental in promoting information literacy by teaching students how to conduct research, think critically, and use information responsibly and ethically IL also

technology, systems, and cultural differences.

3. Suggest practical suggestions on why to improve IL through education, policies, and technology, so that everyone can benefit from its power to bring change.

Steps 2 and 3: Identify Relevant Studies and Study Selection:

Steps 2 and 3 were done in two rounds, the following figure shows how these rounds were done.

Specific search was done again by using specific key words like, , Access to Information, Educational Gaps, Civic Engagement, Digital Content, Technology and Society, Social Media and Information, and from the selected material of the first round only most relevant publications were finalized to be part of this study.

shows how it helps in areas like:

- Changing Education with Information Literacy
- Boosting Economic Growth with Information Literacy
- Boosting Community Involvement

➤ Changing Education with Information Literacy (IL)

Information Literacy (IL) helps learners by giving them the skills they need to carefully assess information, solve problems, and make smart choices. It is the basis for doing well in school, using knowledge responsibly, and continuing to learn throughout life in a world that relies more and more on technology. This is applicable in these areas:

- **Academic Studies:** Helps students find trustworthy information, do detailed research, and combine information in a useful way.
- **Using Sources Honestly:** Encourages honesty in schoolwork by teaching how to give credit

to sources and avoid copying others' work.

- **Learning throughout Life:** Encourages a habit of always asking questions and being open to learning new things.

The tables show IL aspects its role and outcomes with references

Table 1. *Aspects of IL, Their Roles, and Outcomes*

Aspect	Role of IL	Outcome	References
Academic Success	Improves the skill to carefully judge, examine, and use information well for schoolwork and studies.	Better grades, improved ability to solve problems, and top-notch research results.	ACRL (2016); Bruce (1997); Head & Eisenberg (2010).
Digital Learning	Encourages the responsible and effective use of digital tools, platforms, and online resources.	Better ability to adjust to online and mixed learning settings, resulting in stronger digital skills.	ACRL (2016); UNESCO (2005); Lloyd (2010).
Professional Growth	Helps professionals understand, assess, and use information related to their work to improve how they do their job.	Better work performance, smarter choices, and moving up in your job.	Bundy (2004); Lloyd (2010).
Social Awareness	Helps you learn how to tell the difference between true information and false or misleading information in a world full of media.	Being a good citizen means taking part in and understanding important issues in your community and the world.	UNESCO (2005); Bruce (1997).

Table 2. *Impact on Education*

Impact Area	Description	References
Changing How We Learn	IL motivates students to take part in practical, question-driven learning tasks, helping them develop the ability to think critically and solve problems.	Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), 2016; Bruce, 1997.
Closing the Technology Gap	IL helps learners use digital tools easily, making sure everyone has fair access to technology and promoting digital inclusion.	UNESCO, 2005; Bundy, 2004.
Getting Ready for the Future	IL helps people stay informed and flexible, ready to do well in a world full of information and constant change.	Lloyd, 2010; Head & Eisenberg, 2010.

➤ **Boosting Economic Growth with Information Literacy (IL)**

A workforce that knows how to find and use information well is key to innovation and economic success. Information Literacy gives people the skills to find, judge, and use information wisely. This helps create a culture where businesses and entrepreneurs make smart decisions and think strategically. These points are applicable to Economic growth:

- **Business Decision-Making:** Helps professionals study market trends, understand financial information, and make smart decisions based on facts to achieve success in their organizations.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Assists entrepreneurs in doing market research, finding opportunities, and creating strong strategies to grow their businesses in a lasting way.

The table represents the Information Literacy contribution and its impacts

Table 3. *Sectors, IL Contributions, and Their Impacts*

Sector	IL Contribution	Impact	References
Workforce	Improves abilities in analyzing data, understanding it, and making smart decisions.	Better work efficiency, innovation, and enhanced business competitiveness.	Lloyd, <i>Information Literacy Landscapes</i> (2010); Bruce, <i>The Seven Faces of Information Literacy</i> (1997).
Entrepreneurship	Offers tools to study the market, plan strategies, and assess risks.	Helps businesses grow, creates more jobs, and boosts the economy.	Bundy, <i>Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework</i> (2004); UNESCO, <i>Information Literacy</i> (2005).
Corporate Sector	Improves how information is handled and makes it easier to use tools to understand business data.	Makes decision-making better and helps operations run more smoothly.	Head & Eisenberg, <i>How College Students Evaluate and Use Information in the Digital Age</i> (2010).
Public Sector	Helps create policies based on facts by doing research and studying information.	Helps with rules and plans that improve people's lives and the economy.	ACRL, <i>Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education</i> (2016); UNESCO, <i>Information Literacy</i> (2005).

➤ **Boosting Community Involvement**

Information literacy (IL) helps people become well-informed citizens who can actively take part in democracy and support social causes. The applicable key points are:

- Finding and carefully checking reliable news sources.
- Supporting social and community issues with clear, informed views.

Table 4. Boosting Community Involvement

Aspect	Role of IL	Outcome	References
Democracy	Helps people make smart choices when voting, decide wisely, and get involved in democracy.	Improves leadership, builds public confidence, and ensures responsibility.	UNESCO, <i>Information Literacy: A Core Competency for the 21st Century</i> (2005); ACRL, <i>Framework for Information Literacy</i> (2016).
Advocacy	Helps find social issues and suggest practical solutions using proven methods.	Results in better policy updates and more active involvement from the community.	Bundy, <i>Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework</i> (2004); Lloyd, <i>Information Literacy Landscapes</i> (2010).

Objective 2: Bridging the Digital Divide

Information Literacy (IL) is very important because it helps everyone get fair access to digital

tools and resources. This helps reduce differences between people and supports growth that includes everyone.

Table 5. Bridging the digital divide

Population	Challenges	IL Solutions	References
Underserved Groups	Not enough access to digital tools and little knowledge about how they can help.	Programs that focus on specific groups and teach digital skills to improve access and abilities.	UNESCO, <i>Information Literacy: A Core Competency for the 21st Century</i> (2005); Bundy, <i>ANZIL Framework</i> (2004).
Rural Communities	Lack of resources, bad infrastructure, and being far away from others.	Mobile libraries, online platforms for communities, and local digital projects.	Lloyd, <i>Information Literacy Landscapes</i> (2010); ACRL, <i>Framework for Information Literacy</i> (2016).

1. Difficulties in Spreading Information Literacy

Even though Information Literacy (IL) is known to help society grow, there are many problems that make it hard to spread and use widely. These problems include false information, the gap between those who have access to technology and those who don't, differences in education, and not enough people knowing about IL. Solving these issues is very important to help people and communities make better choices in a world that is becoming more complicated and digital.

➤ **False and Misleading Information**

Digital tools and social media have definitely made it easier than ever to get our hands on information. Nevertheless, they have also made it super simple

for false or misleading stuff to spread like wildfire. Misinformation happens when info that is wrong or hasn't been checked out is passed around by accident. On the other side, disinformation is when someone makes up false info on purpose and spreads it around to trick or mess with people. Both of these things make it really tough for us to figure out what sources we can actually trust.

When false or misleading info gets around, it chips away at people's trust in reliable sources like university studies, government documents, and respected news outlets. People are encountering this false information more frequently as they rely more and more on social media and the internet for their news (Friggeri et al., 2014). People find it more difficult to make informed decisions as a result, and it can erode our democracy and feeling of community.

2. Fighting False Information:

Developing critical thinking, media intelligence, and source checking abilities is crucial in addressing the issue of misinformation. We can assist people be more cautious with information and slow down the spread of false information by training them to be a little skeptical and verify facts through initiatives like public awareness campaigns and school programs.

➤ Educational Gaps

Even though more and more people understand how crucial information literacy (IL) is, a lot of schools still don't teach it well in their classes. You can especially see this in elementary and high schools, which still focus mostly on subjects like math and science. Because of this, students don't learn important skills they need to understand the complicated world of information today. This means they won't be ready for problems they'll face in the future.

- **Limited Integration in Curriculum:** In many countries, information literacy (IL) is not officially included in school programs. When it is, it is usually taught as a separate subject instead of being connected to other subjects (Crawford & Dwyer, 2018). As a result, students might not learn how to think critically about information until much later in their education, or they might not learn it at all.

- **Teacher Training:** Many teachers are not trained in information literacy, which makes it harder for them to teach students how to judge sources, think critically about digital media, and handle information well (Head & Eisenberg, 2010).

3. Fixing Education Gaps:

To fix these gaps, we need to clearly include information literacy (IL) in school lessons, starting when kids are young. Programs that train teachers should also focus on IL so that teachers can help students learn how to handle information wisely. We should also work more on teamwork between libraries, teachers, and tech experts to create a complete and connected way of teaching IL.

➤ Low Awareness of Information Literacy

Even though information literacy (IL) is becoming

more important, many people still don't know what it is or how it affects their everyday lives. This lack of understanding makes it harder to create a society where everyone sees information literacy as a key skill and a shared responsibility.

Many people don't realize how important it is to think carefully about the information they come across and decide whether it's trustworthy. It's possible that this happens because we don't learn enough about how to evaluate information, either in school or just in general. Because of this, people tend to take information at face value without checking if it's true or where it came from (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017).

4. Dealing with Low Awareness:

Spreading awareness of the importance of information literacy (IL) is vital. We may accomplish this by putting forth public awareness campaigns, interacting with the media, and collaborating with educational institutions to incorporate Illinois education into their curricula. By hosting workshops and offering materials to assist people in developing those essential IL skills, libraries and community centers can also take the initiative.

Objective 3: Strategies for Promoting Information Literacy**Table 6.** *Strategies for promoting information literacy*

Strategy	Implementation Methods	Expected Outcome	References
Incorporate IL in Education	Include information literacy (IL) in school and college courses.	Teach skills for thinking critically and using information responsibly.	Bruce, C. (2008). <i>Information Literacy as a Catalyst for Educational Change</i> . Emerald Group Publishing.
Community Programs	Hold workshops in places that don't have enough resources.	Help close the gap in access to technology.	UNESCO (2017). Global Framework for Information Literacy. Retrieved from unesco.org.
Leverage Libraries	Train librarians to teach information literacy (IL) using programs and resources.	Make education easy to access for everyone.	ALA (2020). Role of Libraries in Promoting Information Literacy. Retrieved from ala.org.
Policy Advocacy	Ask governments to make IL a required part of education plans.	This will help it spread widely and be used in an organized way.	Wilson, L. (2016). <i>Advocacy for Information Literacy Policy Development</i> . IGI Global.
Technology-Driven Solutions	Create apps and tools to make IL training fun and interactive.	This will help reach more people and keep them interested.	Johnson, L., et al. (2020). <i>The Role of Digital Tools in Enhancing Information Literacy</i> . Journal of EdTech.
Awareness Campaigns	Use social media and other public platforms to spread the word about IL.	More individuals will become aware of it and participate as a result.	Pew Research Center (2021). Social Media as a Tool for Literacy Advocacy. Retrieved from pewresearch.org.

Conclusion

Information literacy (IL) is not only a useful personal ability; it is a critical component of our society. As the volume of information on the internet continues to grow, IL becomes progressively more important in preventing misinformation, encouraging innovation, and strengthening communities.

Despite its importance, Illinois confronts some significant challenges. Roadblocks that prevent many individuals from acquiring these essential abilities are caused by disparities in digital access,

flaws in our educational systems, and different cultural perspectives on information use. We need a comprehensive plan to address these issues and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to improve their information literacy. But we can get past these challenges. Teachers, libraries, IT corporations, and community organizations must collaborate with the government. They ought to promote IL by enacting wise laws, including it into classroom instruction, and educating the public. AI and online education are examples of innovative technologies that can help make IL more accessible and beneficial for a wide range of individuals.

Conflict of Interest

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