Resistance to Information Literacy: potential causes for undergraduate university students

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WHAT WE KNOW

BACKGROUND
American Library Association (ALA) definition of information literacy (IL): to be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.

Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education.

The ACRL stated that all information literate students should:
1. Determine the nature and extent of the information needed.
2. Access necessary information effectively and efficiently.
3. Evaluate information and its sources critically and incorporate selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.
4. Individually or as a member of a group, use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
5. Understand many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and access to and uses information ethically and legally.

CAUL (Council of Australian University Librarians) added that students should recognize IL as a lifelong learning skill.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH
- Students improve when taught IL (Chevilotte 2001)
- Students resist IL instruction:
  - Observations
- Students themselves
- Students perceive themselves to be good at research however they barely rate as beginners: Gross & Latham (2007); Mittermeyer (2005); Maughan (2001); Kruger & Dunning (1999)

WHAT WE THINK

Because they grew up with a computer students are technologically savvy and therefore think they are good at research.

PREVIOUS ASSUMPTIONS
- In the face of students confidence in their own ability we have been tempted to believe our students when they say “we already know how to do research!”
- Students simply need to be “better” motivated
- Students refuse to go further once they reach a “knowledge plateau”
- Students to not understand the term IL and cannot decode it once faced with it.

WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

KEY QUESTIONS
1. What are the cognitive factors for students’ resistance to information literacy?
2. Is the most frequent cognitive factors found linked to demographical factors, like students age, gender and status (returning or new students and international or Canadian students)?

FRAMEWORK
We know that students resist IL teaching, but we are still lacking the reasons behind this refusal. The cognitivist paradigm states that human actions are a consequence of thinking i.e. when we do something we know why we are doing it. We need to find out these reasons to create effective IL instruction.

METHODOLOGY
To answer these questions the author has broken this project in 5 phases.
Phase 1: systematic literature review
Phase 2: Conduct semi-structure interviews to obtain an exhaustive list of cognitive factors for students’ resistance to IL with librarians and professors teaching IL and volunteer undergraduate students randomly selected from McGill Faculty of Education.
Phase 3: Analyse the answers of phase 2 to create a questionnaire to answer question 2.
Phase 4: Distribute questionnaire to a randomly selected large number of undergraduate students at McGill University.
Phase 5: Analyse data and write.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH
Once we recognize and classify these barriers we could try to find appropriate solution to counteract them. These findings would improve the design of our learning interventions and contribute to an increase in students’ participation and motivation in IL instruction. More research on IL needs to be done to inform the creation of tools, programs and techniques, applied by teachers and librarians to increase the number of students who will enter the workforce equipped with the lifelong learning skills of information literacy.