

Information Literacy: re-focussing on learning and student choice in the electronic environment

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Background and context of the development

- One 'new' university commissioning an information literacy framework for its VLE to support work across all disciplines
- Research and development at KILT into concept mapping and developing expertise (Kinchin and Hay, 2007 and 2008)
- Work with education librarians about using constructivist approaches and variation theory in teaching IL (Marton, 1998 etc; Bruce, 2007)
- Developing e-learning in King's and other HE institutions



Questions raised by this work 1

Can the ideas of Dewey, Vygotsky, Ausubel, Bruner and Marton be incorporated into a framework?

What should the focus of IL be in the digital environment?

What range of capabilities are we trying to develop? (Do we want to turn out cohorts of 'deep divers' or librarians?)

Do we really expect students to work in a rational, systematic, linear manner irrespective of the context?



Questions raised by this work 2

What can we do about the situated nature of IL? Do we continue to present students with generic IL models/processes?

How important is making appropriate choices for the context; seeing a task through different lenses?

Can students achieve deep understanding and ownership from 'chains'?

How can we structure support to be most effective when IL will be learnt not taught?

In research the relational model of IL is strong but in practice IL too often is:

- *about technical procedures and tools* (right things in the right order e.g. how to access a database, even for postgraduates)
- *discreet skills/abilities* (a shopping list!) to be transferred to different contexts
- deficit model


Focussing on:

- libraries and resources
 - *searching* for information
 - finding the *right* webpage/ information
- A separate subject; a destination***

...and this is reflected in information literacy frameworks

- *presented* as linear, mono-directional, sequential
- not linked to the learning process; underplaying reflection, iteration, trial-and-error...
- too little emphasis on meta-cognitive elements, learner choice and varying strategies; grounded in a technical view of information literacy (specific skills and processes such as citation)
- ignore the collaborative nature of much enquiry
- use a language that does not resonate with teachers and students, does not reflect the language of the subjects

Designed to be taught and assessed.



“The desire to inflict sequences on students is remarkably resilient in the world of information literacy. Even writers who are responding to the Web 2.0 environment tend to present a sequence of processes to be learnt in order to become ‘information fluent’ (e.g. the five-stage process of Jukes, 2007)”

Markless and Streatfield, 2008



What should be the focus of Information Literacy? 1

- Increasing emphasis on students' ability to:
- *formulate authentic questions; construct and present their own positions;* make sense of the information they obtain; transform it to reflect their own emerging views
 - *experience and explore variation* in finding and using information; develop a set of lenses through which to view a task
 - *Choose the appropriate approach* for the context (have a repertoire to draw on)
 - Critical reflection on IL processes



Variation Theory

Learning occurs when variation in ways of understanding or experiencing are discerned; activities should be designed to enable students to develop more complex understandings

e.g. searching as:

- looking for a needle in a haystack
- finding a way through a maze
- using the tools as a filter
- panning for gold

Which is most appropriate in a particular context?



What should be the focus of Information Literacy? 2

- How does IL relate to digital literacies/e-literacy/media literacy/academic literacies/research skills...? Which language should we use?
- How far should information literacy reach into areas such as critical and creative thinking, structured reflection, active construction of subject knowledge and academic writing?

What should be the focus of Information Literacy? The influence of Web 2.0

- Finding less likely to involve systematic searching than using interest groups, peer web pages, social book marking, etc.
- Raises questions of ownership and authority of information; changing expectations of information. Do we need to legitimise elements of students' information-related behaviour by integrating concepts such as 'good enough' information, trial and error, and peer 'expertise' into IL?

New literacies for the 21st century?

(Warlick in Martin and Madigan, 2007)

Reading → assessing, decoding, evaluating → exposing truth

Writing → multi-media communication → expressing ideas compellingly

Arithmetic → processing, manipulating, filtering, importing data → using info.



Attributes of a new framework?

- being flexible
- using language that reflects aspects of learning
- being capable of supporting a wide range of different learning outcomes
- enabling the inclusion of students with different approaches to learning
- Able to adapt to different contexts

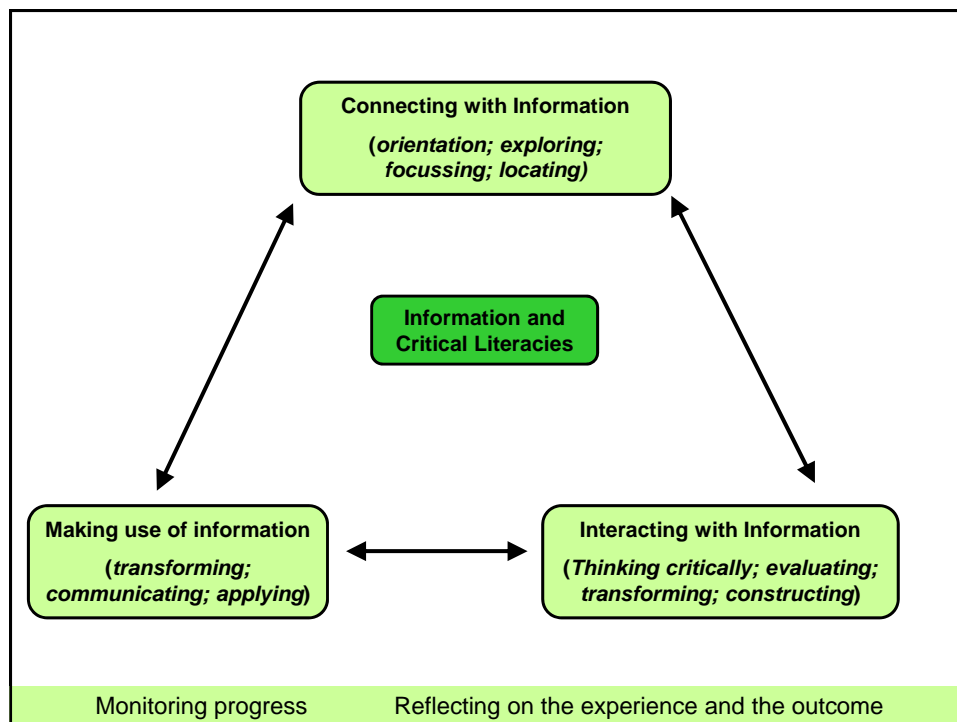


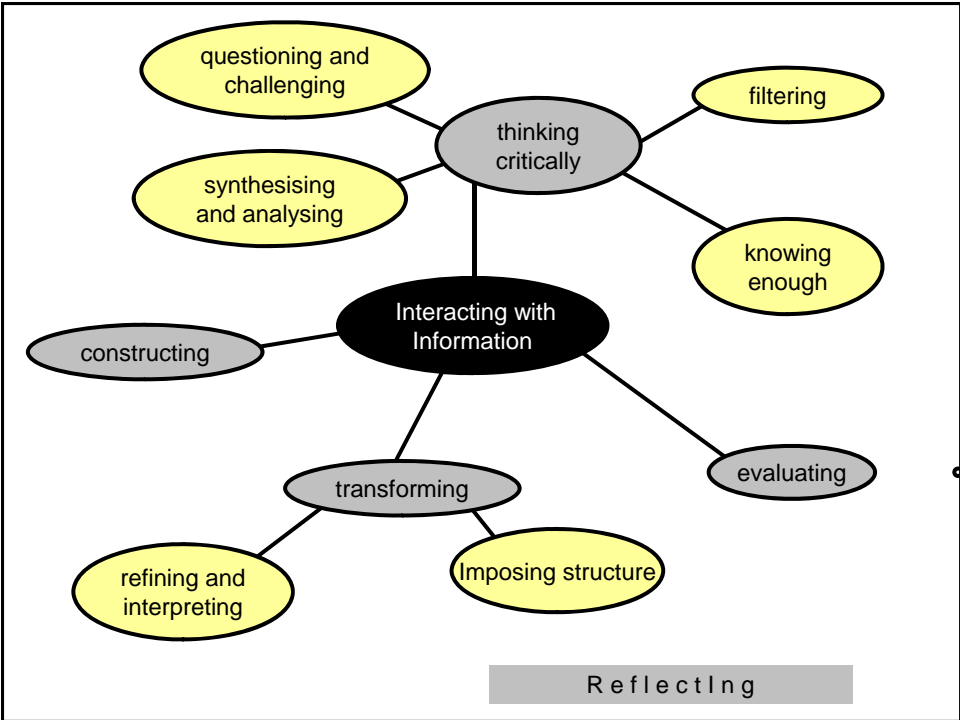
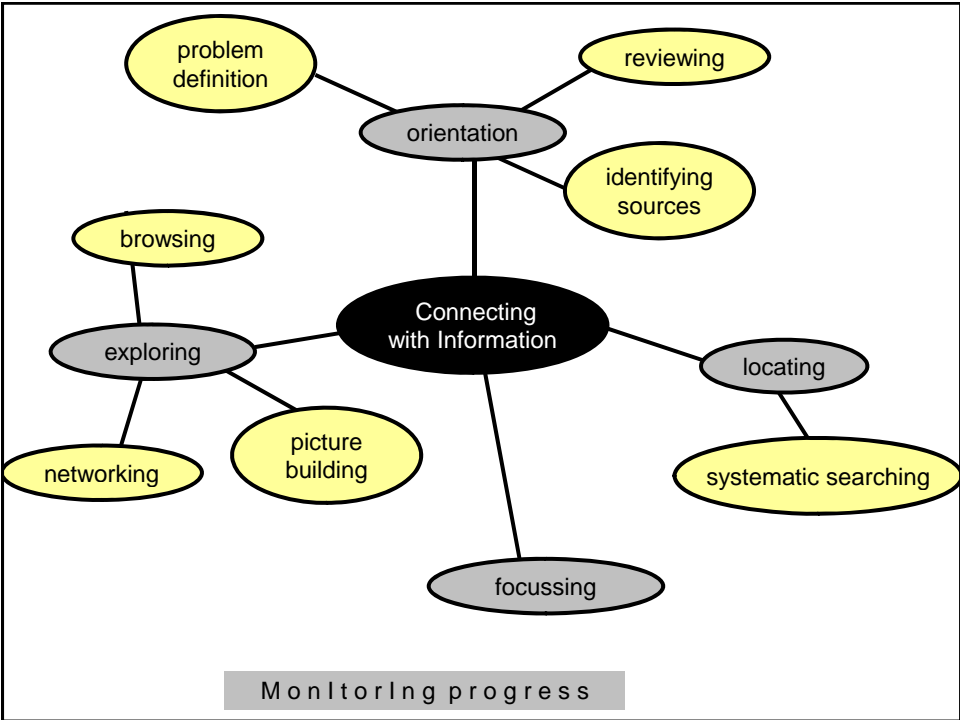
Framework for student choice in a digital environment (Markless and Streatfield in Andretta, 2007)

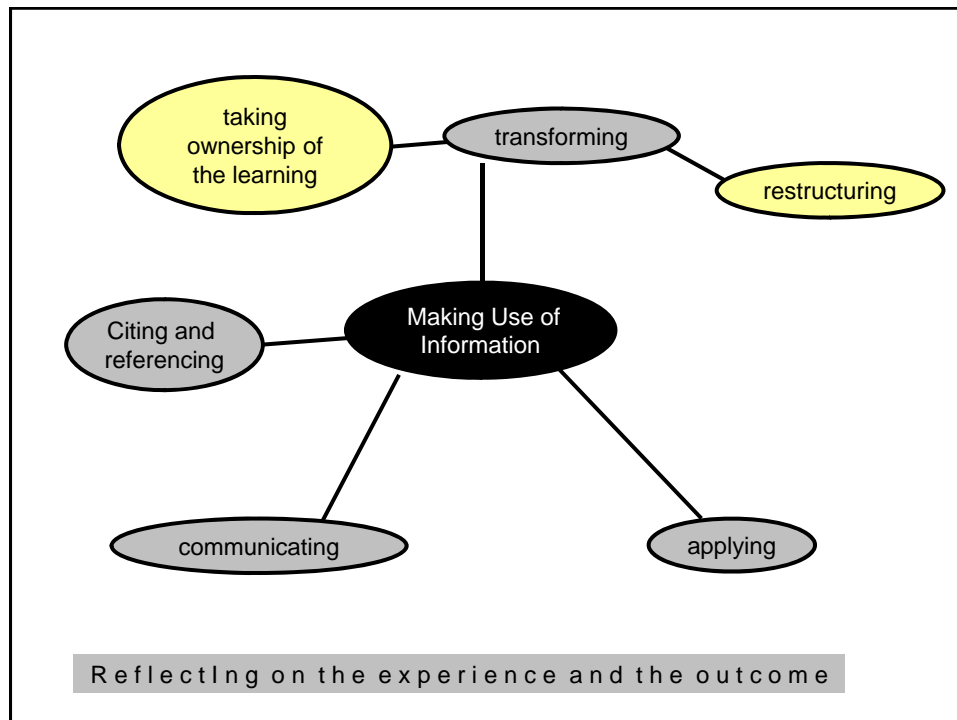
- 1 Based on a fusion of two research-based published models:
 - a model of information and critical literacies offered by Ross Todd in his *Keynote paper to International Association of School Libraries Conference, Auckland, Symposium 2001* and developed in later papers.
 - a non-linear model devised by Allen Foster (Foster, 2006 *A non-linear perspective on information seeking* in Spink, A. and Cole, C. *New directions in human information behaviour* New York: Springer).
- 2 Based on research with staff and students in one university, across the disciplines.



The heavy emphasis on transformation and construction of knowledge is intended to encourage students to stop seeing research tasks or assignments as processes of collecting information and instead to see them in terms of forming their own perspectives and creating new insights.







Using the framework to support learning

Need to populate the framework with:

- High quality, authentic tasks related to academic work-content and process together (e.g. conduct a critical evaluation of sources to construct a position for an essay, rather than tasks on 'how to evaluate information; How has your view of the topic changed from one resource to another?')
- Activities that enable students to illuminate their current strategies and concepts as a basis for development



Using the framework to support learning

Need to build in:

- Links to different subjects; transfer is very problematic
- Ways of capturing the choices made in different contexts (i-maps)
- Support for reflection on choices
- Ongoing library/lecturer collaboration