

WHAT IS IN THE NAME?: 21ST CENTURY LITERACIES EXPLAINED

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ABSTRACT

The ever-changing cyber technology is instigating a rapid advancement in the information landscape hence Information Literacy (henceforward IL) is caught up, as it were, in that dilemma. According to Lankshear and Knobel (2013), what is needed in 21st Century education system is a new understanding of literacy. While IL has persisted for decades as a core concept in Library and Information profession, Librarians have to keep up with the 21st Century or new literacies that come with technology such as Digital Literacy, Metaliteracy, Cyber literacy, Transliteracy, etc. and the way in which literacy is defined in the digital age Newman (2012) and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (2013). IL is a phrase that was coined in the 70s by Zurkowski (1974: 164). IL provided academic librarians a structure when compiling library training programs that would equip students to navigate within different library and information resources, to become lifelong learners and to become responsible information consumers. The purpose of this paper is to bring to light the evolving nature of IL. Academic librarians have been aligning library training to higher education curriculum with IL; therefore there is a need for African academic librarians to understand the connotation of the 21st century or new literacies in the digital age. Librarians need to make the connection between the traditional IL skills and the new literacies skills; furthermore, these new literacies should be identified and explained. The paper concludes that traditional library and information systems continue to be the cornerstone of librarianship. The library is a space where print material and or library training are critical in the digital age. However the new literacies that shifted the focus to 21st century communication skills are necessary in the digital age.